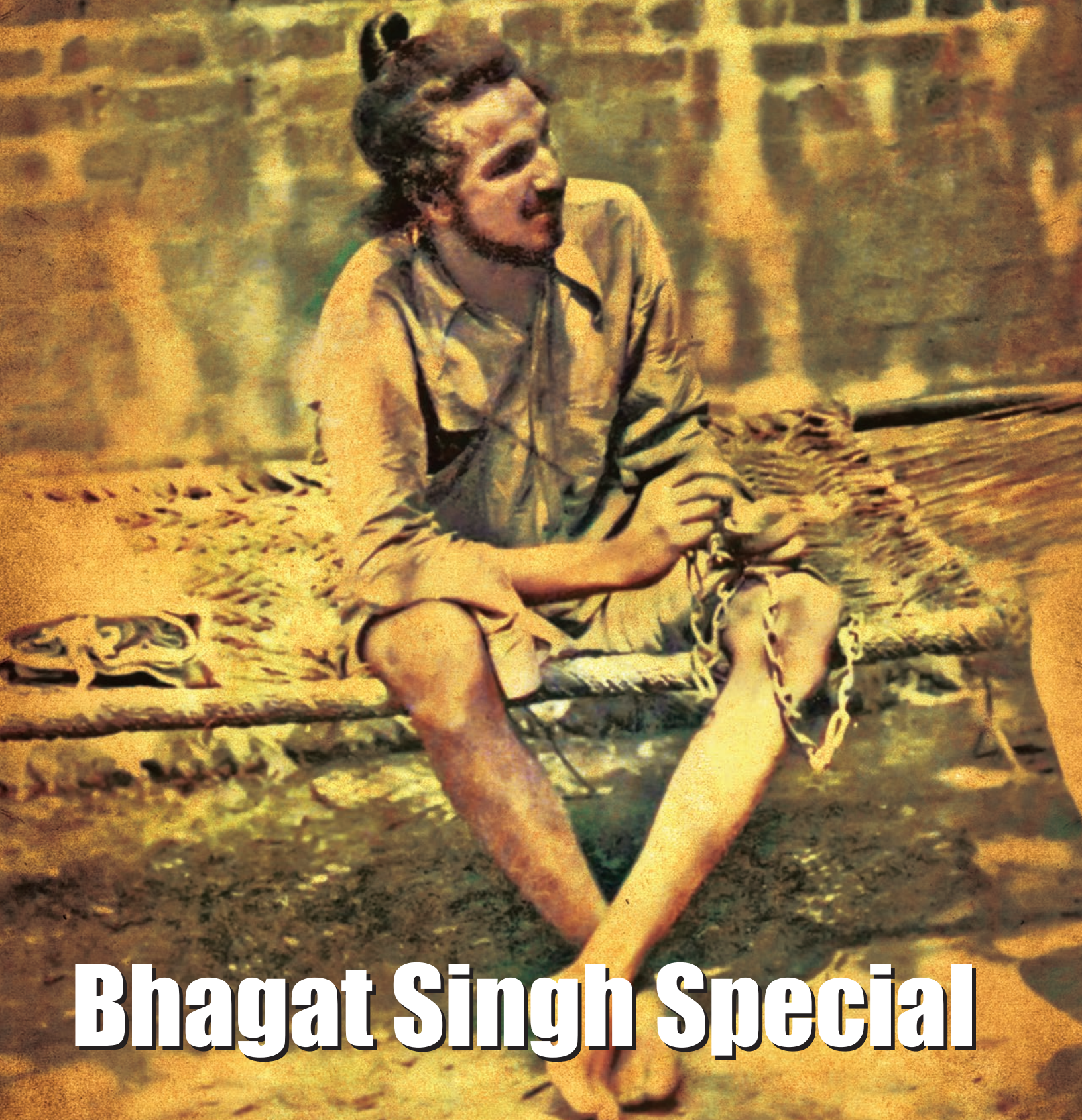


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Bhagat Singh Special



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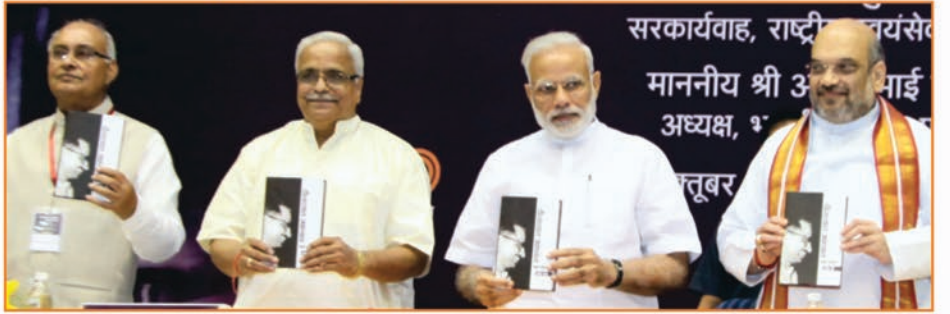


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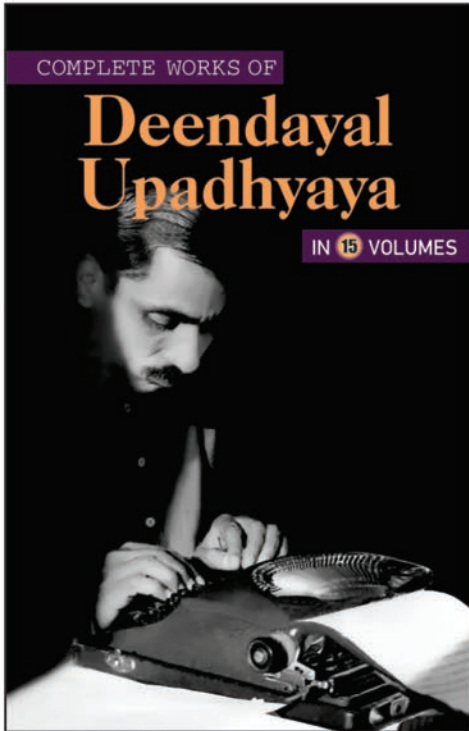
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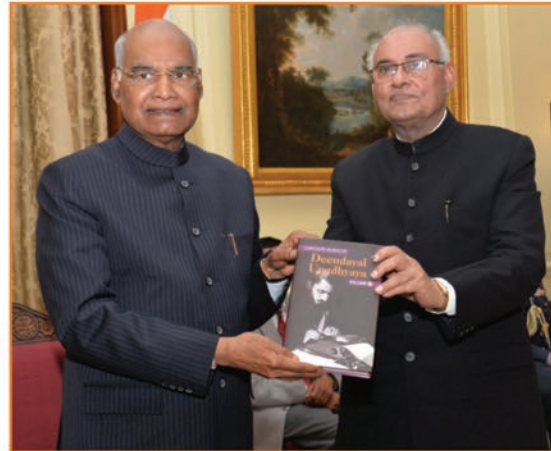
दीनदयाल उपाध्याय संपूर्ण वाङ्मय (पंद्रह खंडों का सैट)



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Bhagat Singh Special

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Cover Photo Introduction: This photo of Bhagat Singh was secretly taken in Lahore railway police lock up on May 29th, 1927 when he got arrested for the first time.



Revolution is an inalienable right of mankind. Freedom is an imperishable birth right of all. Labour is the real sustainer of society.

Bhagat Singh

Contributors' Profile

Dr. Chander Pal Singh teaches History at PGDAV College, University of Delhi. He has authored two books - 'Bhagat Singh Revisited: Historiography, Biography and Ideology of the Great Martyr' (2011) and 'National Education Movement: A Saga for Quest for Alternatives to Colonial Education' (2012). Besides revolutionary movement and history of education, his research interests include origins and making of Indian Constitution and census studies. Contact: 9891249977, Email: chanderpal.singh2@gmail.com

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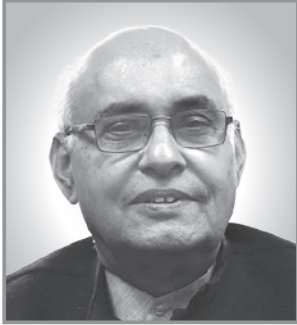
Dr. Radha Kumari is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Delhi University. She has also taught at Jain Vishva Bharti University Rajasthan and Mata Sundri College for many years. She has published chapters and articles in books and national Journals. Her area of interest is Gandhian Peace Studies.

Pradeep Deshwal is an engineer by profession and is posted as Executive Engineer at the prestigious Netaji Subhash Technological University located in the Dwarka suburb of Delhi. He has a keen interest in the history of India's freedom struggle, particularly the revolutionary movement. He also runs a YouTube channel by the name of 'Rashtra Vandana' where he provides authentic information on India's freedom struggle. He has produced hundreds of videos on a host of revolutionaries including Bhagat Singh. Presently, he is running a video series on the illustrious stories of Netaji Subhash. Apart from this, he writes nationalistic poems as well which are well appreciated on various fora.

Pro. Rasal Singh is Professor and Head, Department of Hindi and Other Indian Languages, Central University of Jammu. Along with this, he also discharges the responsibilities of the Dean of the University, Dean of Faculty of Languages and student welfare. Prior to that, he used to teach at Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi. He has been an elected member of the Academic Council of Delhi University for two terms. He has published 6 books and more than 200 research papers/articles on various literary and socio-cultural subjects. He can be contacted at: 8800886847

Harish Jain is a publisher by vocation and a scholar of history and literature by instinct. He has edited "Bhagat Singh's Jail Note Book: Its Context and Relevance" (Unistar Books, Chandigarh, 2016)

Editorial



Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma

Appreciation for the K.R. Malkani Special Issue has been obtained, for which I am indeed grateful.

The second special issue for the year 2023, on Sardar Bhagat Singh, is in your hands. We were privileged to have Dr. Chander Pal Singh as the guest editor for this issue. He has played a decisive role in its compilation, providing appropriate guidance for the research effort so essential for the same. It was Dr. Chander Pal Singh who himself took on the onerous responsibility of editing every article. I humbly accord my respect to him.

The consultative role of Shri Pradeep Deshwal in shaping the research undertaken for this special issue, and that of Harish Jain in enhancing the material used in the issue has been simply invaluable. The new generation of researchers who have been involved in this issue have all essayed important roles. I am happy to accord my felicitations to all of them. The explanation and analysis of India's freedom struggle is by no means a straight-line affair. After all, how can the explanation of history, which follows a convoluted path, be a simple matter? Armed resistance was one of the most radical streams of the various paths that our struggle for freedom took. It is this aspect that *Manthan* through this special issue has tried to encompass in discourse.

Sardar Bhagat Singh is symbolic of the revolutionary movement, which also included armed resistance to colonial rule. Armed resistance has had a hair-raising history and is intertwined with innumerable sagas of regional and *vanavasi* resistance and fightback. It is not possible to incorporate this entire saga in one single issue. Readers will be able to glimpse only a symbolic presentation of the revolutionary movement through the pages of this issue. This issue is one of research-oriented homage to Sardar Bhagat Singh, who embraced martyrdom born of his supreme commitment to a purpose.

The next issue too will be a continuation of this very stream. The culminating phase of armed struggle against foreign rule proceeded under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. It was this phase that played a decisive role in India's independence. The next edition (July-September) will be a Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Special Issue, which will examine this fact in more detail.

Manthan has always benefited from the good wishes of readers who themselves share a commitment to research and study. We always await and value your suggestions and responses.

mahesh.chandra.sharma@live.com

Guest Editorial

Why a Special Issue on Bhagat Singh?



Dr. Chander Pal Singh

In the year of ‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’, the nation is celebrating and commemorating 75 years of freedom. A grateful nation is recalling and retelling the glorious sacrifices and achievements of its national heroes, Manthan’s special issue on Bhagat Singh is a humble tribute to the great son of India who became the symbol of martyrdom and still continues to inspire countless Indians.

Revolutionaries along with peasants, workers, tribals and many other sections of Indian society have been relegated to stray mentions, footnotes and appendages in the history of our freedom struggle. India’s freedom struggle is largely seen as a non-violent movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. Revolutionaries and armed struggle have long remained on the margins of the historiography of the Indian freedom movement. There is hardly any comprehensive account of the revolutionary movement. Historians have mostly viewed revolutionary groups as small bands of heroic youth who fought an unequal armed battle with the mighty British Empire. The histories of revolutionary movement do not justify the popularity of those heroic figures in the masses and the impact they made on the contemporary events. Given the dominance of Mahatma Gandhi in the official narratives of nationalist movement, visual anthropologist Christopher Pinney was shocked to note that images of Bhagat Singh were more prevalent than those of Mahatma Gandhi in both pre-independence and post-independence times. Off late, Kama Maclean’s *A Revolutionary History of Interwar India* has highlighted complex engagements and relationships between the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association and ‘mainstream’ national movement.

Revolutionary movement has produced hundreds of great sons of India whose valour and sacrifice was second to none. Names of Vasudev Balwant Phadke, Chapekar brothers- Damodar and Balkrishna, Khudiram Bose, Madan Lal Dhingra, Prafulla Chaki, Kartar Singh Sarabha, Basant Kumar Biswas, Ramprasad Bismil, Ashfaq Ullah Khan, Jatin Das, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru, Surya Sen and many others, too numerous to enumerate here, ring in our ears.

While each martyr deserves our utmost respect, Bhagat Singh has become an icon of martyrdom. Subhash Chandra Bose said after the hanging of Bhagat Singh that he is “not a person, but a symbol. He symbolises the spirit

of revolt that has taken possession of the country.” When we study Bhagat Singh closely we find that he was more than a revolutionary martyr. Unlike other revolutionary heroes his legend was made in jail by courting arrest, through his extraordinary statements in the courts intellectually justifying the revolutionary actions and exposing the colonial administration, his epic hunger strike, arguing his case not to save themselves but to expose the British legal system and popularising revolutionary actions, and making colonial magistrates a laughing stock. Through meticulous planning and still unknown networks, his exploits were widely reported by the press in India and abroad and thus Bhagat Singh, from an unknown revolutionary became one of the most popular figure of his time. Bhagat Singh’s resolve for martyrdom was remarkable. He not only planned, invited, and timed his martyrdom but also failed all attempts to save him. Bhagat Singh was also a first rate intellectual having opinion on almost all burning issues of the time, a brilliant author who wrote in several languages, and a bibliophile in true sense whetting his appetite of studying visually who-is-who of his times and international revolutionary movements while waiting for the hangman’s noose and taking careful notes of the books he read. He singlehandedly changed the image of revolutionaries from misguided patriots to popular heroes loved by all classes thus giving revolutionary movement a human and popular face. He achieved all this before he turned twenty four.

His popularity continues to cross all barriers of region, religion, language and ideology. Naturally, various ideologies and parties have tried to appropriate him. Most vigorous and systematic attempt to appropriate him has been made by the Left who presents him as a Marxist ideologue rather than a martyr only. Left in India is trying to use Bhagat Singh’s legacy in a bid to survive the impending political extinction they are heading towards. To achieve this they are recklessly attributing writings ‘discovered’ after his death to him and at the same time ignoring his family legacy as well as his early influences like Arya Samaj.

Bhagat Singh can also be a role model for today’s youth drifting towards mindless and purposeless materialism. Bhagat Singh’s personal traits of being well read, extremely articulate, gentlest of souls, tenacity of purpose, bravest of brave, selfless patriotism need to be popularised. At the same time, wilful hijacking of the great martyr’s legacy by subversive and anti-national elements needs to be exposed and countered.

In the present issue, Chandan Kumar has given a sweeping account of armed resistance to British rule starting from 1922 when the Non Cooperation Movement was suddenly called off. Though the armed struggle by Indians renewed soon after the crushing of 1857 Revolt in the form of Vasudev Balwant Phadke, 1922 marks the beginning of a new and decisive phase culminating with Royal Indian Navy Revolt in 1945. Lezia Lakhvir’s article on the Bhagat Singh’s lineage talks about five generations of a family offering themselves for the nation. Swami Sumedhanand Saraswati has written about the role of Arya

Samaj in shaping Bhagat Singh. Rasal Singh has brought out Bhagat Singh's views on problem of language and script in the context of strengthening national unity and problem of coloniality in English language. Harish Jain has given an insightful account of literary corpus of Bhagat Singh including rarely known facts about his earliest biographies and writings dated before he courted arrest in Central Assembly on 8th April 1929. Pradeep Deswal has taken up commonalty and dichotomy between Gandhiji and Bhagat Singh besides the burning debate about what Gandhi did to save Bhagat Singh. Dr. Radha Kumari has documented Bhagat Singh's lifelong quest for martyrdom. Yours truly has written about the attempts of Leftist academia and political parties to appropriate the legacy of Bhagat Singh as well as an assessment of his ideological journey. Finally, a lot of disinformation has been spread for obvious reasons with regard to both Bhagat Singh and Savarkar, the two have been cast on opposite sides of a false Hindutwa-secularism dichotomy. This false notion has been demolished in one of the supplementary articles entitled 'Savarkar and Bhagat Singh', adopted from Vikram Sampath's *Savarkar: A Contested Legacy 1924-1966*.

The present issue was ambitiously planned to bring to the readers an in-depth analysis of various aspects of life and times of the great martyr. But due to circumstances beyond control, articles on 'Bhagat Singh the Reader', 'Bhagat Singh in British Documents', 'Bhagat Singh in the Eyes of his Contemporaries', 'Impact of Bolshevik Revolution on Indian Revolutionary Movement' and 'Role of Armed Revolutionaries in India's Freedom Struggle (1857-1920)' and 'Savarkar and Bhagat Singh' could not be incorporated in the present issue. We will try our best to get the research on these topics done soon.

We are eagerly looking forward to your valuable comments and suggestions.
Vande Matram! Jai Hind!



Dr. Chander Pal Singh



Dr. Chander Pal Singh

Ideology of Bhagat Singh and the Left

While the common man on the street loves Bhagat Singh for his selfless patriotism, fearlessness, tenacity of the purpose and embracing of martyrdom at the age of twenty three, a look at most of the scholarly books and journal articles on Bhagat Singh published in the last few decades would make us believe that Bhagat Singh was a left ideologue besides being a popular martyr. A little more perusal would lead to the fact that Bhagat Singh is being used to push through Left's political agenda on nationalism, caste, and language. Rather they are using writings attributed to Bhagat Singh 'discovered' after his martyrdom, as he was a budding intellectual who found time to write on various issues, albeit with pseudonyms.

Communists Reduce Bhagat Singh to a Party Icon

In a recent compilation of Bhagat Singh's writings, S. Irfan Habib, the editor writes: "Bhagat Singh was committed to *Inquilab* or revolution but it was not merely a political revolution he aimed at. He.... espoused a revolutionary vision to transform independent India into a secular, socialist, and egalitarian society."¹

But this is only a milder side of the Left academia. Extreme left goes

further to use Bhagat Singh's legacy. For Vinod Mishra, General Secretary of CPI (ML), Bhagat Singh is the real hero because like Lenin, Bhagat Singh urged the young men to work to generate class consciousness among the workers and peasants and build a Communist Party of Professional revolutionaries.² Various factions of the fragmented Communist movement in India have been trying to project the ideology and image of Bhagat Singh in their own mould. CPI (M), in one of its official publication, called upon to consciously take to the people "four remarkable stands in the life, work and thought of Bhagat Singh and his comrades.... (a) uncompromising struggle against imperialism (b) unflinching resistance to communalism and caste oppression (c) unbending opposition to bourgeois land-lord rule, and (d) unshakable faith in Marxism and Socialism as the only alternative before the society."³ Another CPI(M) publication finds 'special relevance' of Bhagat Singh to fight 'American imperialism', 'imperialist globalisation', and 'neo-colonialism' — jargons used worldwide by Communists.⁴

Indian communists went as far as to claim no one but only the Left has the right to commemorate Bhagat Singh. *Liberation*, the mouth piece of CPI (ML) in its issue of October 2006 wrote: "Bhagat Singh

An account of the leftist intelligentsia's attempt to appropriate Sardar Bhagat Singh and a realistic analysis of the great martyr's ideological bent

can be an inspiring icon only for the revolutionary people of India”⁵ The Left reacts in an offensive manner to any non-Marxist interpretation of Bhagat Singh. Prof Chaman Lal, who has produced perhaps the largest number of publications on Bhagat Singh, writes:

“There is a great deal of effort today by various forces to appropriate the legacy of Bhagat Singh. The mainstream nationalist historiography, and its concomitant political current, the Congress, holds him up as a selfless patriot, but totally ignores his strong anti- Congress stance. In particular, the Congress eludes Bhagat Singh’s Marxist ideology. Far greater injustice is done to Bhagat Singh by the Hindu Right- the RSS and its affiliates – who are also out to appropriate the revolutionary’s legacy. In an effort that can only be termed obscene, the Hindu Right would have us believe that Bhagat Singh was a votary of a greater Hindu homeland and a devotee of Bharat Mata. Even a mere

glance through the Notebook and other writings of Bhagat Singh is enough to expose these as lies.”⁶

When Hindi weekly *Panchajanya* brought out its Bhagat Singh issue on 25th March 2007, Left raised a foul cry. Kishore Jamdar wrote an ‘open letter to editor of Panchajanya’ which was published in several forums including *Hamsa* (edited by Rajendra Yadav) and *Filhaal* (edited by Preeti Sinha). Jamdar squarely accused the RSS and its ancillary organisations: “You don’t have any concern for Bhagat Singh’s ideology. Your only purpose is to cash his popularity, even if this requires distortion of history which is a child’s play for you.”⁷

Prakash Karat, the then General Secretary of CPI (M) while speaking at a national seminar⁸ on Bhagat Singh in Bombay, commemorating the centenary celebrations, used the occasion for hitting at his political rivals:

“Entire outlook and the ideology which Bhagat Singh

came to subscribe was the very anti-thesis of the Hindu communal ideology and politics espoused by the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha..... To cover up the strong secular, anti-communal socialist ideology which Bhagat Singh came to represent, that the RSS reduces him to a pantheon of heroes which includes V.D. Savarkar and Aurobindo Ghosh who represented Hindu radicalism.... To reduce Bhagat Singh to a brave young martyr minus his clear vision of an India free from communal and casteist vices and a society based on Socialism is to do injustice to his memory.”⁹

Karat summed up his speech by emphasizing that “Bhagat Singh should be a shining exemplary to counter the reactionary and retrogressive forces.”¹⁰

Rahul Foundation, a Lucknow based extremist Left group, has played an active role in decimating Bhagat Singh’s Marxist image. The Foundation’s declared objective is to bring about a ‘new proletarian revolution’ after destroying the present societal setup based on rampant capitalism which it claims was the unfulfilled dream of Bhagat Singh and his comrades.¹¹ The Foundation published a 692 page collection of documents of Bhagat Singh and his comrades at a very low price, besides separately publishing Bhagat Singh’s jail note book and other booklets. Satyam, the editor of the collection, has written in the introduction that Bhagat Singh’s significance lies in the challenges posed by new forms of imperialism, capitalism and failure of the party democracy in India:

“There is an objective basis



to assume that if Bhagat Singh had remained alive and had an opportunity to form a communist party of his own, or had he, after joining the communist party, given it a new direction according to his own understanding, perhaps the history of the communist movement or even the history of this country would have been written differently.”¹²

In a booklet entitled *Vicharon Ki Saan Par* (2006), Satyam attacks the parliamentary Communist Party, by turning parliamentary after 1951 ‘has lost the right to being heir to the ideals and dreams of Bhagat Singh.’¹³

‘Terrorist’ During the Freedom Struggle

While the present day Left would like the world to see Bhagat Singh as their hero, ideologue and icon, it is an eye-opener to find the contemporary Communist opinion about the great martyr and his fellow colleagues during the freedom struggle. Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries of HSRA are squarely termed as ‘terrorists’ and ‘petty bourgeois’ in the documents and statements of Communist Party before 1950s. Communist Party’s official response to HSRA’s policies and programme of action is best summed up in the collective statement of some of the accused in Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-33) - G. Adhikari, V.Ghate, K.M. Joglekar, P.C. Joshi, M.A. Mazid, Muzaffar Ahmad, S.S. Josh and Shaukat Usmani - all of them were early leaders of the Communist movement in India:

“We oppose terrorism not because of any sentiment on the subject of violence but

While the present day Left would like the world to see Bhagat Singh as their hero, ideologue and icon, it is an eye-opener to find the contemporary Communist opinion about the great martyr and his fellow colleagues during the freedom struggle. Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries of HSRA are squarely termed as ‘terrorists’ and ‘petty bourgeois’ in the documents and statements of Communist Party before 1950s

because we are convinced of its uselessness as a practical revolutionary party ... Individual terrorism is essentially a petty bourgeois policy ... It arises from an exaggeration of the role of the individual, who conduct the attack ... as the mass movement develops and its potentialities as a revolutionary force become clearer, the terrorists tend to some extent to come over the mass movement and such parties developed on the Socialist Revolutionary Party in Russia (or Agrarian Terrorist Party) and, at an earlier stage, the Socialist Republican party in India. But while the policy of terrorism remains on the programme, it tends to absorb all the energies of the most active and self-sacrificing members and quite unnecessarily to deliver over to the police not only themselves but all their fellows. Consequently we oppose it even as subsidiary line of policy.”¹⁴

P.C. Joshi who later functioned as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India from 1935 to 1948 later disclosed that “the stand we took in the joint statement made before the Sessions Judge of Meerut was squarely based on the Sixth Congress (1928) line” of the Communist International.¹⁵

Referring to the activities of Bhagat Singh and his comrades,

a contemporary Communist journal *Workers’ Weekly*, the weekly organ of the Communist Party in its issue of 13 November 1930, explained the policy of individual terrorism as a psychology of revenge and not revolution.¹⁶ As late as December 1951, the CPI was denouncing the means and methods adopted by the revolutionaries as counterproductive and irreconcilable with Marxism. In a ‘Perspective Tactical Line of the Indian Revolution’ adopted by CPI’s Special Party Conference in Calcutta in December 1951, the party reduced the heroic revolutionary actions to ‘individual terrorism’ unacceptable in Marxism:

“Individual terrorism is directed against individuals of a class or system and is carried out by individuals or groups and squads. The individuals who act may be heroic and selfless and applauded or even invited by the people to act and the individuals against whom they act the most hated. Still such actions are not permissible in Marxism. And why? For the simple reason therein the masses are not in action. Ultimately it leads to passivity or inertia of the masses, stops their own action and development towards revolution and in the end results in defeat.”¹⁷

Communist U-turn on Bhagat Singh

So while the Left termed Bhagat Singh and his colleagues as ‘terrorists’ and disapproved their heroism throughout the freedom struggle, it is worth noting how they came to see Bhagat Singh as their preferred icon in independent India. The beginning of this shocking U-turn goes to the early 1950s, when *Bhagat Singh: The Man and his Ideas* was published in 1953. This book was authored by G.M. Telang under the pseudonym Gopal Thakur, who was commissioned by Ajoy Ghosh.¹⁸ Author concluded that Bhagat Singh shared the understanding of the Communist pioneers on the course of the Indian freedom struggle. Bhagat Singh, through his study of Soviet literature, was coming nearer to accepting the organisation of workers and peasants for their economic demands as important task along with fight for freedom but British gallows denied him the opportunity of carrying out that task and further studying the works of Marx, Engles, Lenin and Stalin. Shiv Varma¹⁹ — Bhagat Singh’s revolutionary colleague in HSRA, who was now a member of the Communist Party, wrote in his forward that Bhagat Singh was the link between revolutionaries and the

communist movement.²⁰

CPI’s u-turn on Bhagat Singh was a part of the larger turnaround CPI reversed its position on Indian independence, constitution, Telangana, Gandhi and freedom movement in general.²¹ Reversal of CPI’s understanding and projection of the freedom movement and much more was the result of instructions from Comintern and Stalin in December 1950 prompted by new geo-strategic realities.²² CPI celebrated 15 August as independence day for the first time in 1951. Telengana struggle was formally withdrawn in October 1951. In the same year they celebrated the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. CPI also decided to participate in the first general elections. The entire Communist version of Indian history and in particular the freedom movement as presented by M.N. Roy (*India in Transition*, 1922) and Rajni Palme Dutt (*India Today*, 1940) was revised and reinterpreted. Veteran Communist leader Mohit Sen elaborated the new stand in his autobiography:

“Far too long our national revolution been denied the status of a revolution. It had now become fashionable to deride it.... Gandhi, in particular, was derided as a compromiser,

conservative, superstitious leader who put brakes on the revolutionisation of the masses, thereby helping the British colonialists. He was assessed as being, at best, the representative of the Indian capitalists. Nehru was assessed as his faithful lieutenant who deceived the masses...”²³

Use of Bhagat Singh’s ‘writings’ to depict his socialistic credentials started with publication of Shiv Varma’s *Sansmritiyan* in 1969 wherein *Introduction to the Dreamland* first came to light. Varma reached the conclusion that Bhagat Singh was a pioneer among revolutionaries moving towards Marxism. In establishing Bhagat Singh’s Marxist credentials a crucial role was played by Mitrokhin, a Soviet scholar researching on the influence of Lenin in India. To this end he wrote three books — *Everest among Men* (1969), *Lenin in India* (1981), and *Lenin and Indian Freedom Fighters* (1988). In his books, Mitrokhin paid special attention to Bhagat Singh and tried to establish that Bhagat Singh was getting deeply influenced by Marx and Lenin through their writings during his last days.

Left academics picked up Bhagat Singh in early 1970s. In his article “The Ideological Development of the Revolutionary Terrorists in North India in 1920s” (1972), Bipan Chandra concluded that though there were a series of contradictions between their socialist ideology and their work, “the Socialist within him [BhagatSingh] had finally overcome the terrorist.”²⁴ Bipan Chandra’s hesitancy regarding

CPI’s u-turn on Bhagat Singh was a part of the larger turnaround CPI reversed its position on Indian independence, constitution, Telangana, Gandhi and freedom movement in general. Reversal of CPI’s understanding and projection of the freedom movement and much more was the result of instructions from Comintern and Stalin in December 1950 prompted by new geo-strategic realities. CPI celebrated 15 August as independence day for the first time in 1951

ideology of Bhagat Singh finally evaporated in 1979 when he declared “Bhagat Singh was a critical revolutionary mind in the best traditions of Marx, Engels and Lenin.”²⁵

In 1984 CPI leader A.B. Bardhan authored a booklet on Bhagat Singh. Bardhan was convinced that final destination of Bhagat Singh was communist movement, had he escaped the British gallows:

“It is more than evident that Bhagat Singh was steadfastly evolving from a ‘revolutionary terrorist’ to a Marxist. Fate did not provide him with opportunity to demonstrate his maturing into a Marxist-Leninist. But the course along which he had set his ship of life would assuredly have brought him in the communist movement, as it did to most his colleagues, had not his life cut short in its prime by the British hangman’s noose.”²⁶

The process of ideological colouring of Bhagat Singh was completed by Shiv Varma with the publication of *Selected Writings of Bhagat Singh* in 1986. Shiv Varma’s compilation was brought about with the objective of clearing the deliberate ‘distortions’ about revolutionaries in general and Bhagat Singh in particular, such as: “Revolutionaries started as and remained Hindu nationalists till the end.....The object of the movement was just to drive out the British and establish a Hindu Raj in India....They upheld only the socialistic ideals of the Soviet Russia but not the dictatorship of the proletariat established in that country.”²⁷ According to Varma, Bhagat Singh accepted Socialism as a goal in 1928, but hangovers from the past still

remained. Intense studies in jail and discussions ultimately made him a confirmed Marxist just near his end. On the basis of a newly discovered version of a document dated 2nd February 1931, Shiv Varma concluded: “Bhagat Singh comes out openly for Marxism, for communism and for a communist party.”²⁸

Bhagat Singh’s Ideology

“My life has already been dedicated to a noble cause - the cause of freedom of India,”²⁹ wrote a sixteen year old Bhagat Singh to his father while leaving the home to join the revolutionary movement. Seven years later while awaiting death sentence in the prison cell in October 1930, Bhagat Singh pondered over his life in an essay titled ‘*Why I am an Atheist*’: “With no selfish motive or desire to be awarded here or hereafter, quite disinterestedly, have I devoted my life to the cause of *independence*, because I could not do otherwise.”³⁰ Burning patriotism thus remained the guiding spirit of Bhagat Singh throughout his revolutionary career.

Bhagat Singh had inherited the legacy of patriotism and sacrifice from his family. Born in a Sikh family, sacrifices of the Sikh Gurus formed the folklore. Ingrained in his inherited values was the Arya Samaj’s message of nationalism. Arya Samaj was the nursery of patriotism in the early 20th century Punjab. Bhagat Singh’s formative influences included the martyrdom of Kartar Singh Sarabha and other Ghadar heroes, the tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh, the valour of Babbar Akalis and a cumulative impact of his close contacts with die hard patriots like Jai Chandra

Vidyalankar, Bhai Parmanand, and Sachindra Nath Sanyal. As a result of these early influences he nursed the highest form of patriotism i.e. martyrdom or the ideal of supreme sacrifice for the nation, so as to awaken and inspire the people against the colonial rule. Throughout his revolutionary career idea of martyrdom remained his foremost ideal.

Bhagat Singh’s career as a revolutionary started in Kanpur in the illustrious company of revolutionaries like Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, and Chandra Shekhar Azad. The revolutionary party had firm belief in ideal of martyrdom. The dictum: “*The food on which the tender plant of liberty thrives is the blood of the martyr*”, was mentioned in the manifesto of HRA and HSRA.³¹

Bhagat Singh’s ideas on patriotism and self sacrifice were further strengthened and refined by his study of patriotic literature. He was particularly fond of revolutionary novels like Gorky’s ‘*Mother*’; Victor Hugo’s ‘*Ninety Three*’ and ‘*Les Miserables*’; Dickens’ ‘*Tale of Two Cities*’; and Sinclair’s ‘*Jungle*’, ‘*Boston*’ and ‘*King Kol*’.³² Such novels must have added to the romance of martyrdom present in Bhagat Singh’s mind. Bhagat Singh’s devotion to the ideal of patriotism and his veneration for martyrs are evident in most of his writings for the various magazines and journals. He considered such writings as the most potent means of mass awakening. “Vishwaprem” (published in November 1924 in *Matwala*) and “Yuvak”(May 1925, *Matwala*) are soaked in love for nation and humanity, calling out to Indian

youth to awake, rise and offer themselves for the motherland.

His writing, “Holi Ke Din Rakt Ke Chheetein” (March 1926, *Pratap*) glorifies the martyrdom of a group of Babbar Akalis. “Kakori Ke Veeron Se Parichay” (May 1927, *Kirti*) and “Kakori Ke Shaheedon Ki Phansi Ke Halaat” (January 1928, *Kirti*) bring to light the outstanding qualities of the revolutionary heroes convicted in the Kakori case. Bhagat Singh also translated Dan Breen’s classic ‘*My Fight for Irish Freedom*’ into Hindi for greater dissemination of Irish revolutionary’s exploits. He also contributed in the preparation of a compendium of biographies of martyrs in the special “Phansi” issue of ‘*Chand*’ (November 1928). Other journalistic writings of Bhagat Singh were also drenched in the patriotism. Most of them were dedicated to the martyrs who laid down their lives for the cause of the nation.

Bhagat Singh’s essay, “*Punjab Ki Bhasha Aur Lipi Ki Samasya*” (1925) was a brilliant exposition of the role of language in nation building. In this essay, he cited with reverence, names of Guru Govind Singh, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda, Swami Ram Tirtha, and Guru Teg Bahadur among others for their nationalistic message.

If the patriotic family background and inspiration from

martyrs laid the ideological foundation of Bhagat Singh, his studies enriched his ideas for the emancipation of the motherland. As he stressed in his only autobiographical work *Why I am an Atheist*, the experience of Kakori dacoity case (August 1925) made him turn towards serious studies. It was the internalization of this experience which made Bhagat Singh head and shoulders above the other revolutionaries. In the opinion of his compatriots, some books played a deep role in shaping his personality and viewpoint. Jaidev recalled about *Ninety Three*, Victor Hugo’s classic on French revolution, “this book inspired Bhagat Singh very much, it made his character, what sort of man one should be what is good, what is bad and in what circumstances how one should behave.” Dan Breen’s *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, in the opinion of Jaidev, was ‘his gospel’.³³ For a wider dissemination of this work among the people, revolutionaries translated it into Gurmukhi and Hindi. Hindi translation, done by Bhagat Singh himself, was banned by Government in May 1929. Raja Ram Shastri, the librarian of Dwarka Das Library in Lahore, adds to the list of favourite books of Bhagat Singh the biographies of V.D. Savarkar, Mazzini, and Garibaldi and Upton Sinclair’s *The Cry for*

Justice among others.³⁴ He got printed Savarkar’s banned book *War of Indian Independence* clandestinely and secretly circulated it.³⁵

Rajaram Shastri’s memoirs provide us a fair idea of the chronological development of Bhagat Singh’s ideological journey through the books he read and the thoughts he shared with Shastri who reached Lahore in 1926 and functioned as the librarian of Dwarka Das Library there. As Shastri recalled, initially, Bhagat Singh was obsessed with the heroic accounts of the revolutionaries. His studies of the international revolutionary movements brought him in contact with Anarchism. Anarchism attracted him because it advocated daring acts to awaken the society through self sacrifice and frighten the despotic rulers. Anarchism was thus closer to the ideal of martyrdom. Anarchists used court proceedings as a means to publicize their revolutionary thoughts. Among the Anarchists, the French anarchist August Vaillant (1861–1894) made a lasting impression on a young Bhagat Singh’s mind. Shastri has written in detail about Bhagat Singh’s first encounter with Vaillant through the book *Anarchism and Other Essays*.³⁶ Vaillant had thrown a bomb in the Chamber of Deputies inside the French parliament on December 8, 1893. When asked in the court, Vaillant gave a long statement and asserted that he did not wish to be defended. Bhagat Singh learnt this statement by heart. The red pamphlet thrown in the Central Assembly by Bhagat Singh and Dutt on 8th April 1929 began by quoting Vaillant’s famous sentence- “*It takes a loud*

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voice to make a deaf hear". The impact of Valliant on Bhagat Singh is also evident in the way he followed his idol in displaying astonishingly carefree attitude during the trial and even the dialogue with the magistrate near the scaffold. Among the other Anarchist thinkers, Bakunin and Prince Peter Kropatkin also had deep impact on Bhagat Singh. Bakunin's *God and the State* was one of the favourite books of Bhagat Singh. This book helped in providing a rational basis to Bhagat Singh's atheism which itself was a manifestation of deep humanism of Bhagat Singh. Sohan Singh Josh who first came into contact with Bhagat Singh in April 1928, recalled Bhagat Singh often quoting Prince Kropatkin: "Single deed makes more propaganda in a few days than a thousand pamphlets..... One human being in revolt with torch or dynamite was able to instruct the world."³⁷ Bhagat Singh's refusal to submit a mercy petition, in the face of overwhelming pressure from the nationalist leadership, also reveals Anarchist influence along with his dauntless faith in the ideal of martyrdom.

From Anarchism, the focus of Bhagat Singh's studies shifted to Socialism and Marxism. In his own words, he studied "something of Marx, the father of communism, and much of Lenin, Trotsky and others- the men who had successfully carried out a revolution in their country."³⁸ Anti-imperialist image of Soviet Russia and the untested dream of an idealistic society had a romantic effect from a distance. Bhagat Singh, a young man of nineteen, developed a romantic curiosity

Present order of things, based on manifest injustice, must change. Producers or labourers, in spite of being the most necessary element of society, are robbed of their labour and deprived of their elementary rights... The whole edifice of this civilization, if not saved in time, shall crumble. A radical change, therefore, is necessary and it is the duty of those who realize it to reorganize society on the socialistic basis

to know Marxism and Leninism which claimed to have created in Socialist Russia a dreamland of society, free of exploitation and inequality. We must note that the impact of Russian Revolution was not limited to the young Bhagat Singh, virtually the whole Congress leadership was enamoured with it.

Shift to study of Socialism is also rooted in the after-effect of the Kakori case: Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) was on the verge of being wiped out and needed to be reorganized. Bhagat Singh and his colleagues, who were left with the task of survival of the Party and its reorganization, felt that objectives and methods of the revolutionary party also needed to be revised. Police crackdown and subsequent convictions had exposed the weakness of the secret revolutionary activities. The earlier methods of the revolutionary party and their consequences - decoities to meet financial needs, lack of contact with the masses leading to lack of public sympathy- all these made Bhagat Singh to rethink. Rooted in the opposition to Gandhi's methods of non-violent struggle, the revolutionary party was desperately in need of an alternative ideological position. In this context, Socialism, as an ideal of anti-imperialism and

socio-economic emancipation, offered the ideology Bhagat Singh was looking for. Also, the socialistic experiment in Russia, which the Bolshevik propaganda declared to be immensely successful, attracted the revolutionaries. Bhagat Singh's insistence on re-christening of the party by the addition of the word 'Socialist' to HRA to make it Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) during the September 1928 Delhi meeting is symbolic in that regard. No other change was made in the previously existing constitution of the revolutionary party.

Significantly, none of Bhagat Singh's writings or statements mentioning Socialism or Marxism can be dated prior to his arrest in 1929. The first writing in which elements of Socialism can be traced is his joint statement with Batukeshwar Dutt in the Sessions Court on 6th June 1929. This statement presents elaboration of their conception of a socialist society:

"Present order of things, based on manifest injustice, must change. Producers or labourers, in spite of being the most necessary element of society, are robbed of their labour and deprived of their elementary rights... The whole edifice of this civilization, if not saved in time, shall crumble. A radical change, therefore, is

necessary and it is the duty of those who realize it to reorganize society on the socialistic basis. Unless this thing is done and the exploitation of man by man and of nations by nations is brought to an end, suffering and carnage with which humanity is threatened today cannot be prevented... By "Revolution", we mean the ultimate establishment of an order of society which may not be threatened by such breakdown, and in which the sovereignty of the proletariat should be recognized and a world federation should redeem humanity from the bondage of capitalism and misery of imperial wars."

"This is our ideal and, with this ideology as our inspiration, we have given a fair and loud enough warning"³⁹

During the trial in Lahore Conspiracy Case, Bhagat Singh and his fellow under-trials sent a telegram on Lenin's death anniversary on 21 January 1930: "We join our voice to that of the international working class movement. The proletariat will win, Capitalism will be defeated. Death to Imperialism."⁴⁰

Two other oft-quoted writings attributed to Bhagat Singh which deal with the Marxist-Leninist conception of society and politics are "Introduction to

Dreamland" and "Message to the Political Workers". Both of these pieces are believed to have been written during last few months of his life on 15th January 1931 and 2nd February 1931 respectively. In these writings, Bhagat Singh comes across as a political thinker believing in mass action to reconstruct the society on a socialistic basis rather than an advocate of violent means. Bolshevik revolution in Soviet Russia is seen as the role model for bringing up a revolution and subsequent reconstruction of society. In his "Introduction to Dreamland", written by Lala Ram Saran Dass, Bhagat Singh writes: "We the revolutionaries are striving to capture in our hands and to organize a revolutionary government which should employ all its resources for mass education, as is being done in Russia today. After capturing power, peaceful methods shall be employed for constructive work, force shall be employed to crush the obstacles."⁴¹ But it must be kept in mind that discovery of "Introduction of Dreamland" after more than three decades of its writing raises several questions on its authenticity

"Message to the Political Workers" has several versions which its publicists have not been able to explain

satisfactorily. Even insiders like Manmathnath Gupta, have raised questions on the authenticity of this writing. In this writing attributed to Bhagat Singh, the objective of the revolutionary party is described as complete independence, meaning, not merely transfer of power from British to Indian hands but to transfer power to those hands that are committed to a socialistic society. For this it is necessary to organize workers and peasants. In the same document Bhagat Singh distanced himself from the utility of violent methods: "Let me announce with all the strength at my command, that I am not a terrorist and I never was, except perhaps in the beginning of my revolutionary career. And I am convinced that we cannot gain anything through these methods. One can easily judge it from the history of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association."⁴² But this essay, different versions of which were circulated at different times, has issues regarding its genuineness.

In his last letter dated 20 March 1931 to the British authorities, Bhagat Singh emphasized that the war against imperialism was also a war against exploitation and inequality.⁴³ This war shall continue until the exploitation of toiling Indian masses is continued, irrespective of the fact whether the exploiters are British or Indian. The war "shall be waged ever with new vigour, greater audacity and unflinching determination till the socialist republic is established and the present social order is completely replaced by a new social order, based on social prosperity, and thus every sort of exploitation is put to an end and the humanity

Message to the Political Workers has several versions which its publicists have not been able to explain satisfactorily. Even insiders like Manmathnath Gupta, have raised questions on the authenticity of this writing. In this writing attributed to Bhagat Singh, the objective of the revolutionary party is described as complete independence, meaning, not merely transfer of power from British to Indian hands but to transfer power to those hands that are committed to a socialistic society

is ushered into the era of genuine and permanent peace.”⁴⁴

The documentary evidence quoted above leaves no doubt about the last phase of Bhagat Singh's ideological journey towards Socialism. But, at the same time, it cannot be said that Bhagat Singh had shrugged off all his earlier influences which made him what he was. Asaf Ali, who was his counsel in the Assembly bomb case and who read out the famous statement in the Sessions Court later recalled that Bhagat Singh was not smitten by Communism.⁴⁵ Yashpal also expressed doubts whether Bhagat Singh would have agreed with the Communist Party, had he lived.⁴⁶ Most qualified statement on the subject comes from Ajoy Ghosh, revolutionary colleague of Bhagat Singh who later became the general Secretary of Communist Party, when he declared in 1945, “We did not look upon communists as revolutionists - revolution for us meant primarily armed action.”⁴⁷ About Bhagat Singh, Ajoy Ghosh famously declared “It would be an exaggeration to say that he (Bhagat Singh) became a Marxist.”⁴⁸

References from Bhagat Singh's prison note-book are often projected as proof of his conversion to Marxism. The jail notebook contains copious notes from the books which he read in jail, and citations from many authors including Marx and Lenin. About the jail notebook, A.G. Noorani seems to be nearer the truth when he says, “The notebook testifies to his vast reading and his readiness to learn. He was a blind follower of no leader and uncritical supporter of no ideology ... It is not

possible to say in what directions his study and reflection would have taken him over the years, had he but lived. The notebook is very catholic in its selection of quotations.”⁴⁹

Bhagat Singh's atheism is sometimes cited as an evidence of his conversion to Communism. But his celebrated essay “*Why I am an Atheist*” makes it very clear that Bhagat Singh's atheism had nothing to do with Marxism. In this essay, Bhagat Singh has described his evolution into a confirmed atheist, from his days in National College (1921), to the end of 1926. Bhagat Singh's studies of Marxism started later. His atheism was a product of his sensitive mind, profound humanism and rational approach. It cannot be attributed to any philosophical or ideological conviction. He himself admitted: “Let me admit at the very outset that I have not been able to study much on this point. I had a great drive to study the oriental philosophy but I could not get any chance or opportunity to do the same.”⁵⁰ He saw the reality around him in terms of human miseries: “This world of woes and miseries, a veritable, eternal combination of numberless tragedies. Not a single soul being perfectly satisfied.”⁵¹ Rampant inequality, exploitation, suffering and poverty moved him to question the idea of omniscient, omnipotent God and His purpose to create a world full of suffering. Later, through his studies, the concern for a just, equitable and poverty-less society coupled with his yearning for independence into a vision of independent, socialist India.

To conclude, Bhagat Singh's ideology cannot be placed in any

water-tight compartment whether it is Marxism, Anarchism or the ways of the early Indian revolutionaries. It must not be forgotten that he was not even twenty-four when he became a martyr. He was continuously evolving and his short revolutionary career witnessed rapid ideological cross-currents. It will be a foolhardy exercise to speculate what his ultimate destination would have been, had he not died so young. Also, throughout his ideological evolution, he retained all elements which he considered useful in meeting his ultimate objective-freedom of the motherland. He was ready to follow any path and ideology which brought freedom of the country nearer. That Bhagat Singh's ideological moorings rested on varied foundations viz. traditional as well as modern, Indian as well as foreign, is clear from the following extract from his joint statement with Batukeshwar Dutt in the Sessions Court, Delhi wherein they said, “The new movement which has arisen in the country, and of that dawn we have given a warning, is inspired by the ideals which guided Guru Gobind Singh and Shivaji, Kamal Pasha and Raza Khan, Washington and Garibaldi, Lafayette and Lenin.”⁵² Patriotism formed the *summum bonum* of his ideology in which all the other influences got integrated or absorbed. It must not be forgotten that right from his childhood, till his last moments, he remained a firm believer in the tradition of martyrdom, which could awaken the slumbering Indian masses and specially the youth. The epithet- *Shaheed-i-Azam* or ‘the Prince among Martyrs’ befits him because he invited

his martyrdom, and resisted all efforts to save his life. There cannot be an iota of doubt that if there was any continuity

in his thought process, it was intense patriotism; if there was a persistent dream, it was the freedom of the motherland;

and if there was one passion which seized him throughout his short life, it was to embrace martyrdom. ●

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Dr.Chandan Kumar

Role of Armed Struggle in Indian Independence Movement

The struggle for India's independence was going on in many streams. But there were mainly two streams – One was the non-violent movement and the other was the armed revolution. Here is an account of the armed struggle

The valiant revolutionary activities began as a by-product of the growth of nationalism, the first phase of which started as a result of the movement to boycott foreign goods and adopt Swadeshi (indigenously manufactured goods). It continued till 1917 while the second phase started as a result of non-cooperation movement. The sudden withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement disillusioned many youths and they began to question the basic strategy of the nationalist leadership and their emphasis on non-violence. At the same time, they also started looking for alternatives.¹ But since the patient, dramatic and creative work of the Swarajists was not appealing to these young nationalists, they were more attracted to the idea that only armed revolution and violent means could liberate India.

The contribution of armed revolutionary activities to India's struggle for freedom from the British rule has not been properly documented or openly written about. Hence, the general public has limited knowledge of it. The national leaders have appreciated only in a very constrained manner the role played by the revolutionaries in this important chapter of our history. There is a need to acquaint the nation with the contribution of these revolutionaries

in our freedom movement, and this article is a sincere effort in that direction.

The third decade of the twentieth century is a landmark one in modern Indian history in more ways than one. While on the one hand, this period marked the entry of the Indian masses into the national movement, on the other hand, it led to the emergence of diverse political perceptions as they embodied positive or negative responses to it.² Almost all the prominent leaders of the revolutionary stream were enthusiastic participants in the non-cooperation movement. They included Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Surya Sen, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Chandrashekhar Azad, Shiv Verma, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Jaidev Kapoor and Jatin Das. Two distinct groups of revolutionaries had emerged during this period – one in Punjab, United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) and Bihar, and the other in Bengal.

Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were tried in the Lahore conspiracy case while several other revolutionaries were put to trial in other cases. In the prison, these revolutionaries protested the terrible living conditions thereby resorting to hunger strike and demanded dignified and decent treatment as political prisoners. Jatin Das became

the first martyr on the 64th day of his fast. Chandrashekhar Azad was involved in the December 1929 attempt to blow up Viceroy Irwin's train near Delhi. In 1930, a series of violent actions broke out in the towns of the Punjab and the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh). In Punjab alone, 26 such incidents had occurred that year. Azad died in a police encounter in a park in Prayagraj (Allahabad) in February 1931 while Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged on 23rd March 1931.³

Prominent personalities like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Dayanand Saraswati ushered in a new era of national awakening through their writings and speeches. Appealing to the youth, they said, "Our country now wants muscles of iron and nerves of steel."⁴ Though the Ramakrishna Mission tried not to indulge in politics, it could not keep itself completely aloof from the developments taking place around it either. Many Swamis of the Mission used to go to the centre of Kolkata's Anushilan Samiti, a secret revolutionary organization, and guide the youth there.⁵ Swami Vivekananda's work was carried forward by the Theosophical Society under the aegis of Smt Annie Besant who openly declared her faith in the superiority of the Hindu way of life over Western civilization.⁶

Surya Sen & Chittagong Armoury Raid

Surya Sen was a teacher at the National School in Chittagong who used to participate in the non-cooperation movement. He was imprisoned from 1926 to

1928 for revolutionary activities and continued to work in the Congress even afterwards. He was the secretary of the Chittagong District Congress Committee and used to say that "humanism is a special quality of a revolutionary."⁷

Surya Sen, along with his associates Anant Singh, Ganesh Ghosh and Loknath Baul, decided to organise an armed rebellion with the aim of proving that it was possible to challenge the armed strength of the mighty British empire. They planned to capture the two main armouries in Chittagong, to destroy the telephone and telegraph lines and to supply arms to the revolutionaries by linking up the Chittagong railway line with that of the rest of Bengal. The raid was carried out in April 1930 and involved 65 workers under the banner of the Indian Republican Army, Chittagong branch. The raid was a great success, with Sen unfurling the national flag, taking the salute and announcing a Provisional Revolutionary government. Later, they moved to neighbouring villages and raided government establishments. Surya Sen was arrested in February 1933 and hanged in January 1934, but the Chittagong raid ignited the imagination of revolutionary-minded youth and gave them a direction.⁸

New Phase of Revolutionary Movement in Bengal

Women in large numbers had joined Surya Sen in the Chittagong armoury raid. Prominent women revolutionaries in Bengal during this phase included Pritilata Wadadar, who was killed during the raid; Kalpana Dutt,

who was arrested along with Surya Sen, tried and sentenced to life imprisonment; Comilla schoolgirls Shanti Ghosh and Suniti Choudhury, who had shot dead the District Magistrate; and Bina Das, a member of Chhatra Sangha who had fired 5 rounds at Governor Stanley Jackson while receiving her degree from him at the convocation in February 1932.⁹ Their experiments emphasized group action on the organs of the colonial State rather than individual efforts. The purpose behind it was to set an example for the youth and demoralise the bureaucracy.

Localised Violence and Parallel Governments

The first parallel government was set up in August 1942 in Ballia in eastern Uttar Pradesh under the leadership of Chittu Pandey, who claimed himself to be a Gandhian. This parallel government succeeded in persuading the District Collector to hand over the power to it and release all the arrested Congress leaders.¹⁰ However, it did not last long and when the troops arrived a week later, they found that the leader had disappeared.

A 'Jatiya Sarkar' (national government) was also established on 17th December 1942 at Tamluk in Midnapore district of Bengal and lasted till September 1944. Tamluk was a place where Gandhi's creative work had made significant progress. It was also the site of many mass struggles in the past. The national government had helped people with cyclone relief, availing school grants and formation of an armed power corps. It had also established arbitration courts. However, it could continue with its operations

relatively easily as the area is relatively remotely situated.

A similar government in the Satara region of Maharashtra had become the world's longest and most effectively running parallel government. The people of the region were involved in the Quit India movement since the inception of this government. In the first phase, which began in August 1942, thousands of people marched in the headquarters of this local government in Karad, Tasgaon and Islampur. This was followed by acts of sabotage, attacks on post offices, bank robberies and snapping of telegraph wires. Its most important leaders were Nana Patil and Y.B. Chavan, who had links with Achyut Patwardhan and other underground leaders.¹¹ However, it had ended by the end of 1942 with around 2,000 people being arrested. The underground workers began to regroup in early 1943, and by the middle of the year, they had successfully reconsolidated the organization.

Origin and First Phase of Indian National Army

The idea of creating an army with the Indian prisoners of war (POWs) originally came from an Indian Army officer Mohan Singh. He decided to turn to the Japanese for help. The Japanese had by then encouraged Indian citizens to form anti-British organisations. They handed over the Indian prisoners of war to Mohan Singh, who tried to recruit them into an Indian national army (INA). After the fall of Singapore, many prisoners of war were ready to join Mohan Singh. By the end of 1942, around 40,000 men were ready to join the INA. The intention

behind it was the INA would act only at the invitation of the Indian National Congress and the people of India.¹²

The INA got a boost with the Quit India movement in India. The first Division of the INA was formed with 16,300 men in September 1942. With the Japanese planning to invade India, the idea of formation of an armed wing of the INA seemed more relevant to them. But soon, serious differences emerged between the INA officers led by Mohan Singh and the Japanese over the role to be played by the INA. In fact, the Japanese wanted only a token force of 2,000¹³ whereas Mohan Singh wanted to raise a much larger army. Mohan Singh was then taken into custody by the Japanese.

Subhash Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose reacted violently to any insult to the Indians by the Europeans. When it became clear to Subhash Chandra Bose that he could not follow Gandhiji's path, but the Congress was determined to follow Gandhiji, he decided to go ahead with his own ideas for carrying out the freedom struggle. Netaji called a conference at Ramgarhin March 1940. It was a joint effort of the Forward Bloc and Kisan Sabha. The conference resolved that a worldwide struggle should be launched on 6th April, the first day of 'national week'. He called for resistance to all forms of exploitation of Indian resources for the imperialist interests.¹⁴ There was enthusiastic participation of the people in the struggle launched on 6th April.

Netaji was arrested in July when he protested against the proposed memorial to Holwell in Kolkata and tried to launch a Satyagraha. He was later released from prison and placed under house arrest in December 1940.

However, Netaji fled under the pseudonym Ziauddin with the help of Bhagat Ram on 26th January 1941 to reach Britain via Peshawar. From Britain, he approached Russians for helping Indians in their struggle for Independence. But he was disappointed when Russia joined the Allies in the war in June 1941. After this, he went to Germany. With the help of Hitler there, Netaji formed a 'Freedom Army' which included all prisoners of war of Indian origin captured by Germany and Italy. Dresden was made the German headquarters of the Freedom Army. The people of Germany started calling him 'Netaji' and he gave the famous slogan 'Jai Hind' from the Free India Centre in Germany.¹⁵

Netaji started regular broadcasts from Berlin Radio in January 1942, which exhorted the Indians a lot. He left Germany in early 1943 and travelled by German and later Japanese submarines to reach Japan and then Singapore in July that year. Under the pseudonym Abid Hussain, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose reached Tokyo in June 1943 and called on Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo. When he was asked by the Japanese to lead the INA, Netaji agreed to it. He then went to Singapore and met Rash Behari Bose there. Later, the control and leadership of the Indian Independence League and INA was transferred to Netaji in July 1943. He became the Supreme Commander of the

INA or Azad Hind Fauzon 25th August 1943.¹⁶

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose formed the Provisional Government of Free India on 21st October 1943 in Singapore with H.C. Chatterjee (Finance Department), M.A. Iyer (Broadcasting Department), Lakshmi Swaminathan (Women's Department), etc. He had given the famous slogan "You give me blood, I will give you freedom" while he was in Malaya. This Provisional Government declared war on Britain and the United States and was recognized by the 'Axis powers'. New recruits were trained and funds were raised for the INA. Netaji also formed a women's regiment named 'Rani Jhansi Regiment'.

The INA headquarters were then moved to Rangoon in Burma (known as Myanmar now) in January 1944, and the army recruits were to march from there with the war cry "Chalo Dilli" (march forward to Delhi) on their lips. The Japanese forces handed over the Andaman and Nicobar islands to the INA on 6th November 1943. The islands were rechristened as Shaheed Dweep and Swaraj Dweep respectively. On 6th July 1944, Subhash Chandra Bose addressed Mahatma Gandhi on Azad Hind Radio as the 'Father of the Nation' and sought Gandhi's blessings for "India's last fight for independence."

An INA battalion commanded by Shahnawaz was allowed to accompany the Japanese forces to the Indo-Burma front and participate in the Imphal campaign. However, the Indians meted out with discriminatory treatment by the Japanese forces. Maltreatment like depriving them

of ration and weapons, forcing them to do menial jobs for the Japanese units, etc. demoralised the INA units. Somehow, the INA soldiers crossed the Burma border and stood on Indian soil on 18th March 1944 and the units later marched to Kohima and Imphal. On 14th April, Colonel Malik of the Bahadur Group raised the INA flag for the first time on the Indian mainland at Moirang in Manipur amid chanting of slogans like 'Jai Hind' (Hail India) and 'Netaji Zindabad' (Long live Netaji) enthusiastically.¹⁷ For three months, the INA units carried out the military administration duties in Moirang but then Allied forces recaptured the area.

The continued retreat of Japan thereafter limited any hope of the INA liberating the nation. The retreat continued until mid-1945. Japan finally surrendered in World War II on 15th August 1945 and the INA too had to surrender along with them. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose died mysteriously in a plane crash in Taipei (Taiwan) on 18th August 1945. But when the INA prisoners of war were brought back to India for court martial after the war, a powerful movement emerged in the country in their defence.¹⁸

Mutiny in Indian Navy

The mutiny first started in the Navy's 'INS Talwar'. British commanding officers resorted to racial insults and retaliation when sailors complained of poor food. The sailors went on a hunger strike on 18th February 1946 over the issue. The very next day the strike spread to castle and fort barracks as well as 22 ships lodged in Bombay harbour. A 'strike committee'

was elected on 19 February. The sailors' demands began with better food and equal pay for White and Indian sailors, but later demands like release of Azad Hind Faujjawans and all political prisoners as well as withdrawal of troops from Indonesia were also included.

As the news of the mutiny spread, Indian navies from Karachi, Calcutta, Madras and Visakhapatnam and the Coast Guard at Delhi, Thane and Pune also joined the strike. The strike reached a crescendo on 22nd February when 78 ships, 20 coastal installations and 20,000 marines joined the agitation. On the same day, there was a general strike in Bombay on the call of the Communist Party. Workers protesting peacefully in support of the marines were brutally attacked by troops and police units, in which about 300 people were killed and 1,700 were injured. In the morning of the same day, the ship 'Hindustan' could be surrendered only after heavy fighting in Karachi. The situation was critical for the British also because the air force pilots and airport staff of Bombay too were on strike around the same time protesting against racial discrimination. Pilots of Calcutta and several other airports also went on strike in their support. The British were scared by the intelligence reports of rising discontent and the possibility of mutiny even within the Army from the cantonment areas. Therefore, sensing the crisis all around, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced on 20th February 1947 about the British intention to finally leave the Indian subcontinent.

Conclusion

There were two groups among the early revolutionaries with regard to the methods to be adopted to achieve their objectives. One group believed in an armed struggle against the British with the help of Indian troops. They put their faith in the international developments which could create a favourable opportunity and bring in the necessary help from outside. While the other group said that eliminating of British officers would create a fear psychosis, paralyse the government machinery and bring it to its knees. However, both felt an urgent need to create a revolutionary spirit in the country at large, so that the people would remain prepared to attack at the right time. Imparting military training and collection of arms clandestinely were the programs common to both the groups.¹⁹ Though they failed to

achieve the stated objectives of attaining Independence through armed rebellion, yet they were successful in stirring up the people and removing fear of the British regime from their minds as well as instilling the same in the hearts of the rulers.

In fact, the revolutionary movement was neither the product of revenge nor it was the result of despair. It was something very significant and life-giving. This new ideology was heralded and declared as a fundamental axiom of political philosophy, that for the development of self-consciousness in life, it is fatal to continue with the foreign domination or hegemony in any shape or form – political, industrial, intellectual, social or religious. The movement was not primarily a protest against a bad government. It was a protest against the continuation of British control, regardless of whether the

rule was exercised well or poorly, justly or unjustly. It was born out of the firm belief that the time had come when India should become a great, free and united nation. The reason for this belief was that by the turn of the 19th century, the shame of slavery had started pricking the consciousness of Indian youth. After some time, this agony became very intense and some of these youths began to act audaciously with a view to eradicating all vestiges of British rule. These 'dared devils' were presented as 'terrorists' and 'anarchists' by the then authorities whereas they were neither terrorists nor anarchists.²⁰ And their intention behind creating scare was directed towards the British regime alone and not towards the public. In fact, all the revolutionaries were true patriots who sacrificed or ever ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of Mother India. ●

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Dr. Lezia Lakhvir

The Great Family of the Great Martyr

It was the nursery of family where the sapling named as Bhagat Singh got nurtured and grown as the giant tree of martyrdom. Let's have a look into the tradition of rebellion in his family

Individual is a product of both heredity and environment. In the case of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, long lineage of patriotism in the family and environment of Punjab in those times combined perfectly to produce the 'Prince of the Martyrs'. His lineage can be traced from Sardar Fateh Singh. Fateh Singh, who was adamant on the promise of "*Sir Jave Ta Jave Mere Sikhi Sidhak Na Jave*" (if I die then so be it, but may my faith in Sikhi remain strong)," held a high position during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign. After Ranjit Singh's demise, in the changed circumstances, many high-ranking officials turned greedy and sided with the British Government. Fateh Singh had also been offered money and a position by the British government. However, Fateh Singh not only refused the British government's offer to occupy the land of his Punjab but by doing so, he and his family became permanently suspicious of the British Empire. As a result, not only his family, but the future generations had to bear the consequences until the British rule was uprooted.

By 1857, Indians had become desperate for independence after 100 years of injustice, persecution, and humiliation under British rule. Although ultimately, India's first rebellion for independence was unsuccessful, the rulers were terrified.

It was in this year of the Great Revolt of 1857 that an illustrious grandson namely Sardar Arjan Singh was born in the Fateh Singh's family. Arjun Singh turned out to be a remarkable man; he produced in his family some of the best known patriots of Punjab- Ajit Singh, Kishan Singh, Swarna Singh, and Bhagat Singh. Arjun Singh was also among the first Sikhs to join the Arya Samaj in Punjab. Arjun Singh was not content by merely becoming a lay follower of Arya Samaj, he made a deep study of Arya Samaj literature and went on to become its spokesman of Arya Samaj in his region. Arjun Singh deeply imbibed the Arya Samaj's message of social reform and attacked the practice of untouchability and superstitions in his village.

Arjun Singh was a versatile man; apart from being a leading Arya Samaji he was also a cultivator, a *Unani hakeem* and a *munshi*. He defied convention and learned five languages, including Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu, Persian, and Gurmukhi Punjabi through his own efforts. When Government offered 25 acres of land to every family settling in northwest Punjab, Arjun Singh did not let go the opportunity and settled in village Banga of District Lyallpur (now in Pakistan). There he worked hard on the virgin land to become a prosperous farmer. Most remarkable trait of Arjun

Singh was his progressive and nationalist attitude. He could have become a very rich cultivator or a famous 'hakim' but he accorded priority to the work of Arya Samaj and Congress. It is said that even Dadabhai Naoroji was attracted towards him.¹ He was one of the first Jat Sikhs to send his sons not to a Khalsa school but to Saidas Anglo Sanskrit High School in Jalandhar. He participated in all the political movements of his time. What more can be said about the patriotism of a person one of whose son (Swarna Singh) died of torture in jail, other (Ajit Singh) was in exile in foreign lands, one was in jail (Kishan Singh) and he still had the heart to pledge publicly his grandsons (Jagat Singh and Bhagat Singh) to the cause of the nation on the occasion of their *Yagyopavit*.² Bhagat Singh spent his childhood under the protection of his grandfather, as his father and both uncles were forced to leave the house due to revolutionary activities. Arjan Singh died in July 1932 AD, just a few days after Bhagat Singh's hanging.

Sardar Kishan Singh, eldest son of Arjun Singh was born in 1878 AD, Sardar Ajit Singh was born on February 23, 1881 AD, and Sardar Swarna Singh was born in 1887 AD in Khatkar Kalan Jalandhar.

While studying at Saidas Anglo

Sanskrit School, Kishan Singh along with his younger brother Ajit Singh was greatly influenced by the patriotic teachings imparted by Sundar Das, the headmaster of the school. Sundar Das was the son of a Arya Samaji leader Saidas.³ Kishan Singh started his public life under the guidance of Lala Hansraj, the noted Arya Samaji leader and head of DAV College, Lahore.⁴ Kishan Singh rendered exemplary public service in different parts of India affected by natural calamities viz. the famines in Berar and Gujarat in 1898 and 1900 respectively, the Kangra earthquake in 1904, and flood in Jhelum in Srinagar in 1905. The apathy of the Government towards disaster-struck areas further strengthened his revulsion against the colonial and foreign nature of the British government. In 1905-06, he jumped into extremist politics during Swadeshi Movement along with his younger brother Ajit Singh. In Punjab this movement acquired the nature of a popular upsurge centred around peasant issues like Colonisation Act, Bari Doab Act and revenue hike. To coordinate the movement, '*Bharat Mata Society*' was formed by the joint efforts of the leading stalwarts of that time like Sufi Amba Prasad, Ajit Singh, Kishan Singh, Lala Hardayal, Swarna Singh, Kartar Singh Kesargarhiya, Lal Chand

Falak, Mahashaya Ghasita Ram, Mehta Anand Kishore, Jia ul Haq, Kedar Nath Sehgal and Lala Pindi Das. The society also brought out a newspaper "*Bharat Mata*" in Urdu. It has been aptly said that Kishan Singh was the *arm* of this movement, while Ajit Singh was the *heart*; Sufi Amba Prasad was the *soul*, and Hardayal the *brain*.⁵ Kishan Singh also edited the revolutionary organ *Sahayak* for sometime. Kishan Singh possessed the qualities which remain the hallmark of a seasoned revolutionary. As an organizer he was a genius, he could work secretly and effectively even when under heavy surveillance and most importantly, he was able to keep his cool and maintain his mental balance in difficult conditions.

During the First World War, Kishan Singh supported the Ghadar Party movement financially and by other means. He had links with the leading revolutionaries of his time including Sachindra Nath Sanyal. He had also helped Ras Bihari Bose after the Harding Bomb Case. The British Government was aware of the activities of Kishan Singh and considered him a danger to the empire.⁶ As a result, he had to face many trials and went to jail several times. While in jail, several times he opposed torture. He was one of the pioneers to hungerstrike for reform in jail rules. His son Bhagat Singh was himself to lead an epic hunger strike some years later for the same cause. Bhagat Singh later summed up his father's influence on himself in the following words- "It was through his teachings that I aspired to devote my life to the cause of freedom."⁷

Even after Bhagat Singh's

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martyrdom, Kishan Singh's family remained a thorn in the British Empire's side. His other sons were forced to live in captivity. During his final days, Kishan Singh felt disabled due to paralysis. Nonetheless, he took a stick and engaged in public welfare work with the help of his self-confidence and determination. He was elected to the Punjab Vidhan Sabha on the Congress ticket in 1938.⁸ Kishan Singh, who spent his entire life fighting but never conceded defeat, passed away in the free air of independent India in 1951. In the words of Virender Sindhu, his grand daughter, "he was a born rebel and remained a revolutionary till his last day."⁹ Bhagat Singh later summed up his father's influence on himself in the following words- "It was through his teachings that I aspired to devote my life to the cause of freedom."¹⁰

Sardar Ajit Singh, like his elder brother Kishan Singh, was also a product of the Arya Samaj and patriotic environment. He studied in D.A.V. College, Lahore. He wrote numerous pamphlets and tracts for Arya Samaj out of which '*Vidhawa Ki Pukar*' (*Widow's Cry*) became very famous.¹¹ He was appointed as a school teacher after passing intermediate in 1896. After studying law for a while, he began doing social work as well as teaching. It was during this period that Ajit Singh travelled to Bengal and met revolutionaries. In 1903, during the Royal *Darbar* organized by Lord Curzon, Ajit Singh, then a young man of twenty two, secretly tried to incite the native princes to recreate the 1857 type revolt.¹² When Lord Curzon in 1905 partitioned Bengal leading to a nationwide agitation, a meeting was held in this regard

Bhagat Singh's youngest uncle, Sardar Swarna Singh, took charge of an orphanage established by Sardar Kishan Singh in 1904-05. In 1905-06, he collaborated with Ajit Singh on the work of the Bharat Mata Society. In 1907, Swaran Singh was apprehended and sentenced to nine months in jail. On appeal, he was granted bail

under the leadership of Dada Bhai Naoroji. This meeting was attended by Sardar Kishan Singh and Sardar Ajit Singh. Congress was split into two factions at the time - moderates and extremists. Both brothers chose the extremist faction led by Lokamanya Tilak.

Ajit Singh's most spectacular feat was organisation of 'Pagri Sambhal Jatta' agitation, a peasant movement. At this time, Amba Prasad and Ajit Singh co-founded the Bharat Mata Society. This society's other prominent leaders included, Sardar Kishan Singh, Sardar Swaran Singh, and others. This society founded the Bharat Mata Book Agency, whose mission was to publish and distribute anti-Raj literature. Among the many books published by this organization was *1857 Di Bagavat*, *Desi Fauj*, *Jabar Janah*, and *Baghi Masih*, the last one being a biography of Ajit Singh written by Sufi Amba Prasad. This book became very popular. Oratory of Ajit Singh was legendary. His moving speeches attracted even the soldiers from the cantonments thus creating hopes of an army insurrection. The government was greatly alarmed by the movement which threatened to create a general revolt among peasants and soldiers. According to a government report Ajit Singh was "the most violent public speaker at political meetings; he had frequently advocated active resistance to Government, and

his utterances are largely directed to exciting discontent among the agricultural classes and the soldiery."¹³

Ajit Singh was arrested on 2nd June 1907 and kept in Mandalay fort along with Lala Lajpat Rai. While in jail, Ajit Singh wrote a compilation of biographic accounts of revolutionaries of world namely '*Muhibbane Watan*' which was proscribed by the Government. After his release in November 1907, Ajit Singh again tried to give vigour to the work of Bharat Mata Society but soon found that Government was preparing a conspiracy case against him and on the advice of his colleagues decided to secretly leave India. Ajit Singh left India in 1909 and wandered in many countries including Iran, Turkey, central Asia, Germany, France, Switzerland, Brazil, and Italy. There, he met with revolutionaries and continued to work for the cause of Indian independence. Due to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's efforts, he returned to India after India's independence and died on August 15, 1947 in Dalhousie.

Bhagat Singh's youngest uncle, Sardar Swarna Singh, took charge of an orphanage established by Sardar Kishan Singh in 1904-05. In 1905-06, he collaborated with Ajit Singh on the work of the Bharat Mata Society. In 1907, Swaran Singh was apprehended and sentenced to nine months in jail. On appeal, he was granted

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bail. Later again he was sentenced to one year and six months in prison. He contracted tuberculosis while in prison and died at the age of 23, one and a half years after his release.

The rites of this family were the reason why this family continued to follow this path from generation to generation. The sacrifice of the women of the family, who raised heroes and warriors, cannot be overlooked. Bhagat Singh's grandmother Jai Kaur, married a social revolutionary, had revolutionary sons and had revolutionary grandsons. She hosted many revolutionaries and was a great nurse to the wounded and disabled. She remained unflinched in difficult circumstances. Once the famous revolutionary Sufi Amba Prasad was hiding in his home, surrounded by police on all sides. Jai Kaur's intelligence and wit allowed Sufi Sahib to escape the police cordon.¹⁴ Jai Kaur yearned to get Bhagat Singh married. The family included Jai Kaur's three daughters-in-law, Bhagat Singh's mother, Vidyavati, aunt Harnam Kaur, wife of Ajit Singh, and aunt Hukam Kaur, wife of Swaran Singh. One can imagine the anguish of a mother whose two daughters-in-law are living a miserable existence right in front

of her eyes. She was honored by being elected head of the village. Jai Kaur died in 1940.

Vidyavati, Bhagat Singh's mother was married when she was eleven years old. She came from a modest family, but her in-laws' home was the hub of social and political activity. They had six sons and three daughters: Jagat Singh, Bhagat Singh, Kulveer Singh, Kultar Singh, Rajinder Singh, Ranveer Singh, and Amar Kaur, Samitira, and Shakuntala. Bhagat Singh's three daughters were all younger than him, and his eldest son, Jagat Singh, died when he was young. Vidyavati's life was spent in struggle with circumstances and pain. She would often reminisce that after Bhagat Singh was given the death sentence she could not even cry in public as Bhagat Singh would silence her by saying, "what will people say that Bhagat Singh's mother is crying?" Vidyavati's family experienced a severe economic crunch from 1931 to 1934 while Kishan was bedridden due to paralysis. Since the time of Bhagat Singh's arrest and his trial, all of the house's furniture was sold. Her sons Kulbir Singh and Kultar Singh were imprisoned in 1939-40. Despite severe financial crisis and mental torture, Vidyavati maintained patience.

She would manage the home, tend to fields, and also participate in demonstrations and meetings. In 1963, a statue of Sardar Bhagat Singh was erected in Khatkar Kalan. Vidyavati was dubbed the Punjab Mata. She passed away on 1 June, 1975 and was cremated on the same spot where the last rites of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru and Batukeshwar Dutt were performed at Hussainiwala in Ferozepur at the bank of River Sutlej.

Other women in Bhagat Singh's family also suffered a lot in the freedom struggle. Harnam Kaur had no idea if her husband Ajit Singh was alive or dead. Hukum Kaur became a widow at the age of twenty and bore the burden for the next 56 years. She too lavished love and care on Bhagat Singh and his siblings. This was why Bhagat Singh ji was so fond of his aunts. His letters make this abundantly clear that Bhagat Singh adored Haraam Kaur very much. Harnam Kaur died in Ferozepur in February 1962 AD. Her final rites were performed near Bhagat Singh's Samadhi, as per his wish. Amar Kaur was the younger sister of Bhagat Singh. She actively participated in both political and social activities of the freedom struggle. She raised the Indian tricolor in Lahore and later helped many Muslim women find their way to Pakistan during the partition. She was honored with the President's Award in 1955 AD.¹⁵

Bhagat Singh was born into this family on September 28, 1907 in the village of Banga, district of Lyallpur, Pakistan. At the time Bhagat Singh was born, political activities in the entire country were at an all-time high. Outrage against partition of Bengal was at

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its peak, for the first time masses had come on streets against the British Government during the Swadeshi movement, and the leading revolutionary newspapers of Bengal, such as *Yugantar*, *Sandhya* and *Bande Matram*, were full of calls for complete independence. Congress was abandoning political begging and returning to struggle; Lal, Bal, and Pal had become national political symbols. Punjab was witnessing fiery speeches of Ajit Singh, Sufi Amba Prasad and Lal Lajpat Rai. There was a general sense of unrest throughout the country.

On the day, Bhagat Singh was born, his father, Kishan Singh, his younger uncle, Swaran Singh, and his uncle, Ajit Singh, were all released from jail. Everyone referred to him as fortunate -bhagonwala. As a result, his grandmother, Mata Jai Kaur, gave him the name Bhagat Singh.¹⁶ Bhagat Singh attended the village school for his primary education. After he completed his primary education Bhagat Singh's father enrolled him in Lahore's college

D.A.V. College. Although it was widely assumed that Sikh students only got education in Khalsa colleges/schools, Bhagat Singh's father got him to D.A.V. rather than Khalsa. In fact, the management of Khalsa colleges was in the hands of those who were loyal to the British at the time, and here, devotion to the state trumped devotion to the nation. He wished to educate Bhagat Singh in a nationalist and patriotic atmosphere. During the Non-Cooperation movement, Bhagat Singh left D.A.V. College to take admission in National College, Lahore. Bhagat Singh may also be seen as a product of nationalist Educational institutions.

The role of Arya Samaj in shaping Bhagat Singh has been discussed separately in this issue. It would suffice here to say that Arya Samaj was the nursery of nationalism in North India and more particularly in Punjab. Events such as Ghadar movement, Jallianwal Bagh incident and Non-Cooperation movement electrified the political atmosphere of

Punjab. Punjab had witnessed the arrests, trials and sentences of Ghadarites. The whole province was resonating with stories of martyrs and heroes of the Ghadar Party. Young Bhagat Singh regarded Ghadarists' teenager leader Kartar Singh Sarabha as his idol. Kartar Singh Sarabha was hanged when Bhagat Singh was only ten years old. He kept a photograph of Kartar Singh Sarabha in his pocket at all times. When Bhagat Singh's mother would inquire, he would respond, "My dear mother, this is my hero, friend, and companion."¹⁷

To conclude, Bhagat Singh was inspired by his family's tradition and the nationalistic environment of Punjab during early 20th century to fight against the British rule. His entire family was so consumed by patriotism and love of country that they were oblivious to their personal suffering. When we look into this family's history, from Sardar Fateh Singh to Bhagat Singh, five generations of this family willingly suffered and sacrificed them for the country. ●

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Letter to Father

[In 1923 Bhagat Singh's father Sardar Kishan Singh was seriously trying to get his son married. When Bhagat Singh came to know of it he quietly left the home, and left this letter for his father.]

RESPECTED FATHER, NAMASTE.

My life has already been committed to a noble cause - the cause of the freedom of india. For that reason comforts and worldly desires have no attraction in my life.

You must be remembering that at the time of my sacred thread ceremony, when I was quite young, Bapuji (grandfather) had declared that I was being pledged for the service of the country. I am therefore honouring the pledge of that time. I hope you will excuse me.

Yours obediently Bhagat Singh

"Translated from the Urdu original.



Swami Sumedhanand
Saraswati

Sardar Bhagat Singh and Arya Samaj

Sardar Bhagat Singh is repeatedly projected solely as an 'atheist'. But it is conveniently forgotten that the whole family of the Shaheed-e-Azam was Arya Samaji for many generations and the Arya Samaj had a deep impact on his own life as well. Here is a look at the facts

To awaken India's national pride, Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati rephrased the glory of our country, religion, language and culture. His brilliance and sacrifice-filled life gave birth to an ideological revolution in the whole country, due to which even the newly educated Indians, who were influenced by the Western civilization and education system, could come to know about their ancient culture and glorious past as well as awaken the patriotic feelings in them.

Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati was a 'vitarag sanyasi' (an ascetic free from all worldly attachments), who is often seen as a 'bairagi' (recluse), but his heart was filled with waves of patriotism along with devotion to God. With this spirit, he had written in the eleventh Samullas of Satyarth Prakash Granth: "There is no other country on this earth like this one called Aryavart. That's why the name of this land is 'Golden Land' as it produces gold and gems. All the countries in the world praise this nation and hope that the story of 'Parsmani' (the mythical philosopher's stone) they have heard about may be false, but Aryavarta is such a pure Parsmani that as soon as the foreigners touch it, their iron-like poverty turns into gold-like prosperity."

While explaining the sixth

mantra of the first chapter of Yajurveda, Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati writes: "A man should always keep two purposes in front of him and all his actions should be directed towards fulfilling them. The first purpose is that he should achieve his empire-like glory by putting up utmost efforts while maintaining his health, and the second one is that after studying all the teachings, he should spread them all around.

Paraphrasing a mantra of the Atharvaveda, the sage writes: "People who are 'karmayogis' (achievers by hard work) and the first ones to unite, then they attain 'swarajya' (self-rule) and there is no other kingdom above that." Here, two intentions of the sage are revealed – one is that having unity or getting organised is the first imperative for a free nation. The second thing is that progress is possible only through self-rule.

Inspired by these thoughts of the Maharshi, Lokmanya Tilak declared in 1916 that "self-rule is a birth right." After this, Congress declared about achieving complete self-rule in its Lahore session in 1928. Maharshi Dayanandji had, however, already demanded this 55 years before that. Many people were impressed by Maharshi Dayanandji's devotion towards freedom and the social reforms. Sardar Arjun Singh,

Manthan

grandfather of 'Shaheed-e-Azam' Sardar Bhagat Singh, was among those great men.

Impressed by the movement launched by Arya Samaj, most of the revolutionaries of that time veered towards it and were influenced by the ideology of this organization. The family of Sardar Bhagat Singh was also influenced by this ideology.

Arya Samaj Influence on Bhagat Singh's Family

Sardar Arjun Singh's coming in contact with the Maharshi, visiting him and listening to his discourses had proved to be a turning point in his life.

Martyr Bhagat Singh's niece Virendra Sindhu writes: "The atmosphere at home was fiercely Arya Samajist and in those days, Arya Samaj meant taking pride in your own country. Sardar Arjun Singh was a fierce leader of the national movement led by Arya Samaj. After 'havan' (oblation), he used to pray to God daily to be bestowed with brave sons. Who would not agree that this used to create a special atmosphere in the house?"

Sardar Bhagat Singh's father Sardar Kishan Singh, his uncles Sardar Ajit Singh and Sardar Swaran Singh, together with their friends, chalked out the plan to run a nationwide movement. Two

decisions were taken in this context: (1) Building up a revolutionary organisation and (2) Giving birth to brave sons who would lead that organization. The younger brothers told Kishan Singh, "We will do all the work needed to build the organization, but you have to do the other work (giving birth to brave sons)." This way, even before the birth of Sardar Bhagat Singh, the foundation of his revolutionary life had already been laid.

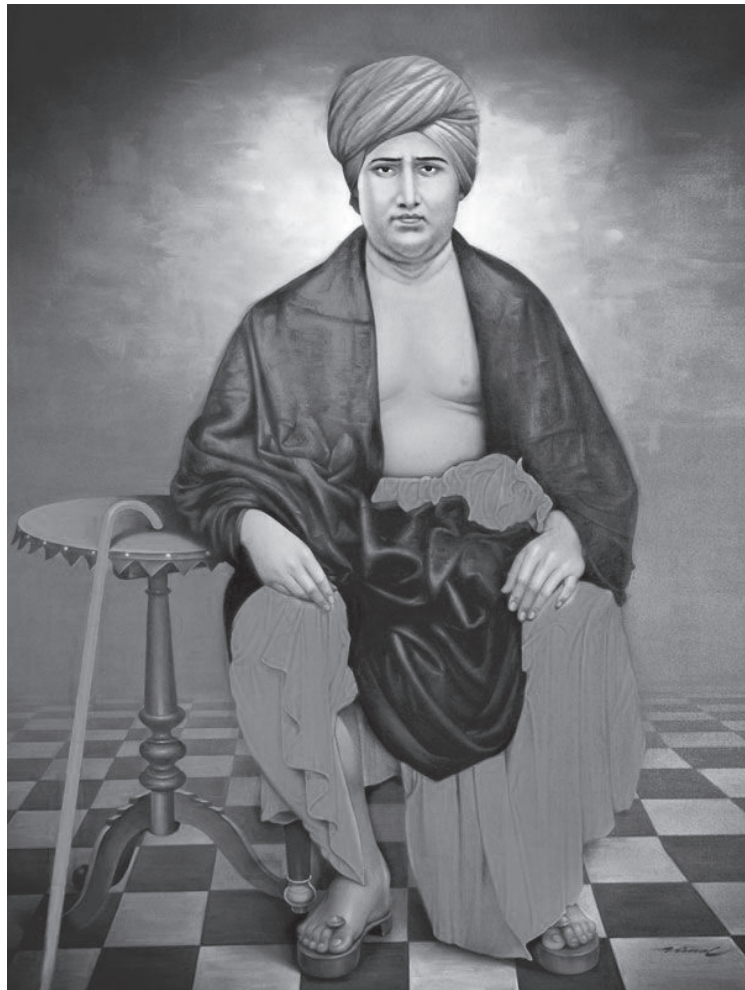
Sardar Arjun Singhji had taken the inspiration of patriotism and social reform from Maharshi Dayanandji. Sardar Bhagat Singh's father Sardar Kishan Singh and uncle Sardar Ajit

Singh studied at Saidas Anglo-Vedic School in Jalandhar. Their teacher Lala Sunderdasji had sowed the thoughts of patriotism in their life and nurtured the values they had inherited from their father.

Maharshi Dayanand used to inspire people to keep meaningful names. The birth name of Sardar Bhagat Singh's mother was Indi, but it was changed to Vidyavati and she was also imparted education. This was the result of the influence of Maharshi Dayanandji and Arya Samaj.

Sardar Bhagat Singh's name-giving and sacred-thread ceremonies were done as per the Vedic method. The sacred-thread rituals of Bhagat Singh and his brother Jagat Singh were performed by Pt. Loknath Tark Vachaspati, a scholar of Arya Samaj. Bhagat Singh was 11 years old at the time. He used to write 'Om' and 'Namaste' as greetings in his letters. His younger brother Sardar Kultar Singh tells that Bhagat Singh was a skilled writer in Hindi. Padmashree Acharya Kshemchandra 'Suman' too has written underlining this fact.

It is indisputable truth that if Arya Samaj had not brought such revolutionary changes in the ideological field, then Hindi literature would not



have been able to get such prolific and brilliant writers like Shri Premchand, Shri Sudarshan, Shri Chatursen Shastri, Yashpal and Rahul Sankrityayan. Expressing his regret, Acharya Kshemchandra has written that Sardar Bhagat Singh was not given his due place and respect in the field of Hindi journalism. It is notable the DAV institution of Arya Samaj had immensely contributed to Sardar Bhagat Singh's turning so meritorious.

Admission in National College, Lahore

National College in Lahore was the last stop of Sardar Bhagat Singh's educational life. This college has special significance in his life. At that time, the influence of Arya Samaj was as follows: Great patriot and social worker Lala Lajpat Rai was the founder of National College. In a meeting presided over by Annie Besant in Madras, Lalaji declared that "Arya Samaj is my mother and Vedic religion is my father." On his return from Mandalay (Burma) in 1907, Lalaji said: "The organisational skills instilled in me is the gift of Arya Samaj." He further said, "I owe so much to Arya Samaj that I can never repay that debt."

Sardar Bhagat Singh met his

childhood companions Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan Bohra and Yashpal in this college. Sukhdev and Yashpal were from Arya Samajist families only. Bhagwati Charan Bohra was also among the close friends of Arya Samaj scholar Pandit Udayveer Shastri.

God-like Bhai Parmanand was a professor in this college. He was sentenced to death in the Lahore Conspiracy Case but his capital punishment was later converted to 'Kala Pani' (imprisonment in seclusion). Bhai Parmanand was an Arya Samajist who used to inculcate the feeling of freedom in the youth while teaching in the class. He used to prepare them mentally to bear the pain and sufferings in the jail.

Shri Jayachandra Vidyalankarji, Professor of History in this college, was a graduate of Gurukul Kangri, Haridwar. He taught the students to evaluate history on the basis of logic and other criteria. At that time, Shri Jayachandraji was the only person in Punjab who was in touch with the revolutionaries of Bengal. Bhagat Singh's quest for studies was fulfilled only because of Shri Jayachandraji. Their relationship had gone deeper.

Bhagat Singh and his

comrades met revolutionary Shri Shachindra Nath Sanyal of Bengal at the house of Shri Jayachandraji. This way, the credit for Bhagat Singhji entering the revolutionary field goes to Shri Jaichandraji only. Later when Bhagat Singh went to the office of 'Arjun Samachar' newspaper in Delhi, it was Shri Jayachandraji who himself had written a letter to Shri Indra Vidyavachaspatiji.

Shri Indrajai was the son of immortal martyr Swami Shradhanandji, who was the supreme ascetic of Arya Samaj, founder of Gurukul Kangri in Haridwar and also the pioneer of Shuddhi (purification) or 'Ghar Wapsi' (a euphemism for converting back to Hinduism) movement.

Besides the college, Lala Lajpat Raiji had established the Dwarkadas Library too. Arya Samaj scholar Shri Rajaramji Shastri was its chief and Bhagat Singh was his dear friend. The detectives of the police used to keep an eye on this library all the time. Shri Shastri made Bhagat Singh a member of this library.

This way, this library and Shri Rajaram Shastri had a special contribution in making Bhagat Singh a revolutionary. It was Shri Rajaram Shastri who gave Bakunin's book titled 'Anarchism and Other Essays' to Bhagat Singh. It was only after reading this book that Bhagat Singh got the idea of throwing pamphlets in the Delhi Assembly.

From the above facts and incidents, it is clearly proved that Arya Samaj had a special impact on Bhagat Singh's life. After deserting home, Bhagat Singh left Lahore and reached Kanpur. Shri Ganesh Shankar

National College in Lahore was the last stop of Sardar Bhagat Singh's educational life. This college has special significance in his life. At that time, the influence of Arya Samaj was as follows: Great patriot and social worker Lala Lajpat Rai was the founder of National College. In a meeting presided over by Annie Besant in Madras, Lalaji declared that "Arya Samaj is my mother and Vedic religion is my father." On his return from Mandalay (Burma) in 1907, Lalaji said: "The organisational skills instilled in me is the gift of Arya Samaj

Vidyarthi gave him a job in the editorial department of 'Pratap' newspaper.

But Bhagat Singhji did not get the job here just like that. Shri Ganesh Shankarji sought advice from Arya Samaj scholar Acharya Udayveer Shastri to know the mission and trustworthiness of Bhagat Singhji. After receiving Shri Shastri's letter, Vidyarthi was confirmed that he has got a young man of substance.

In 1926, someone threw a bomb in the Dussehra fair in Lahore. In 1927, Sardar Bhagat Singh was arrested and imprisoned but he was released on a bail of Rs 60,000 in this case. At that time, availing of a bail of Rs 60,000 was not a normal thing. Of this, Rs 30,000 was given by Lahore's famous Arya Samaji barrister Duni Chandji.

Before Sanders murder, Bhagat Singhji had gone to Chaudhary Rajmal Zaildarji staying in Khanda Khedi village of Hansi tehsil in Jind district of Haryana. Zaildar Sahib was a prominent Arya Samaj leader of the region and was a close friend of Shri Kishan Singh, father of Bhagat Singh. Seth Chhaju Ramji of Calcutta (now Kolkata) was also a resident of a village near Hansi. While talking to him, Bhagat Singhji collected the Kolkata address of Seth Chhaju Ram.

After Saunders' murder,

Immortal martyr Ramprasad Bismil, who was a staunch Arya Samaji, had a special influence on the life of martyr Bhagat Singh. Finally, in the words of Shri Hansraj Rahbar, an intimate associate of martyr Bhagat Singh's friend-like Principal Chhabildasji in Lahore's National College, "The basic values that Shri Bhagat Singh had inherited stemmed from the devotion of his grandfather Arjun Singh, father Kishan Singh and mother Vidyavati towards Arya Samaj ideology

Sushila Didi had hid him at Seth Chhaju Ram's bungalow in Kolkata. For some days, Bhagat Singh stayed in the Arya Samaj office situated on the Vidhan Sarani lane in Kolkata. Seth Chhajuramji was anyway an Arya Samaji. But Durga Bhabhi and Bhagwati Charan Vohraji were also influenced by Arya Samaj while Sardar Bhagat Singh had a special relationship with Arya Samaj.

I think it is necessary to mention a few more incidents here but in brief so that this article does not get too long. Bhagat Singh used to stay at different establishments of Arya Samaj from time to time, and this can be found a mention in his diary. Name of the places like Arya Samaj establishments at Chawdi Bazar in Delhi, Agra, Karkera in Kanpur, Gurukul Indraprastha in Faridabad (Haryana) and Gurukul Kangri in Haridwar are particularly mentioned in that diary.

Immortal martyr Ramprasad

Bismil, who was a staunch Arya Samaji, had a special influence on the life of martyr Bhagat Singh. Finally, in the words of Shri Hansraj Rahbar, an intimate associate of martyr Bhagat Singh's friend-like Principal Chhabildasji in Lahore's National College, "The basic values that Shri Bhagat Singh had inherited stemmed from the devotion of his grandfather Arjun Singh, father Kishan Singh and mother Vidyavati towards Arya Samaj ideology."

His educational foundation was laid at the DAV School, Lahore, and the National College established by Lala Lajpat Rai there. He had special love for Sanskrit, Hindi, Guru Govind Singhji and Veer Shivaji. He had adopted the path of revolution inspired by the proponents of Indian culture like Pt. Jayachandra Vidyalkar, Bhai Parmanand and Shachindra Nath Sanyal. His association with Arya Samaj continued unabated till 1928. ●

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The personality and works of Veer Savarkar had inspired revolutionaries across the country. One of them was the great martyr Sardar Bhagat Singh. The attachment of both of them towards each other is also evident from their writings. Vikram Sampat has discussed this in his book '*Savarkar: A Contested Legacy 1924-1966*'. An article from this book of historical importance

Savarkar and Bhagat Singh

Savarkar's house in Ratnagiri that always had the saffron flag atop it as a notable identifier had a black flag hoisted to grieve for the young brave hearts. Savarkar also composed a poem in honour of Bhagat Singh immediately after the news of his execution trickled out. The poem was sung in different parts of Maharashtra where tribute meetings for the martyr were held. Children in Ratnagiri also took out a procession singing this poem.

Ha, Bhagat Singh, hi ha!
 You galloped on the gallows, oh hai for us!
 Rajguru, you ha!
 Veer Kumar, martyr in National warfare Hi ha!
 Jai Jai Ha!
 This ah of today will win tomorrow
 Royal crown will come home
 Wore you crown of death before that.
 We will take arms in our hands
 The ones with you were killing the enemy!
 Who is a sinner?
 Who does not worship the unmatched sanctity of your intentions,
 Go, martyr!
 We take oath with testimony. The fight with arms is explosive, We are remaining behind you Will fight and win freedom!!
 Hi Bhagat Singh, Hi Ha!¹



Four months later, Savarkar wrote another article in *Shraddhanand*, reminding people of Bhagat Singh and his associates and their brave martyrdom.²

Savarkar and his works inspired revolutionaries across India. Bhagat Singh had the fourth edition of Savarkar's book on 1857 secretly published in India.³

There are references of how Bhagat Singh was deeply influenced by a small English biography of Savarkar that he read in the Dwarkadas Library of Lahore.⁴ Copies of the book were found in the course of the raids on all the members of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) who were accused in the Lahore Conspiracy case (1928–31), including Bhagat Singh. This fact is bolstered by a first-person account given by Durga Das Khanna in an interview in 1976.⁵ Khanna was the former chairman of the Punjab Legislative Council in independent India, but was a revolutionary in his youth days. He recalls his first meetings with Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev. During their recruitment drive for the organization, they had met Khanna, spoken to him on politics and a wide range of issues to gauge his political orientation, and also suggested several books to read. These

included Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhensky's *The ABC of Communism* (1920), Daniel Breen's *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (1924) and Chitragupta's *Life of Barrister Savarkar*. It hence becomes clear that Bhagat Singh and his associates expected new recruits to the HSRA to not only read about the Russian Revolution and the Irish Republican Army, but also the life story of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.

In fact, six quotes from Savarkar's book *Hindu Pad Padashahi* were noted down by Bhagat Singh in his own handwriting in his Jail Diary. The quotes are as follows:

- 1) Sacrifice was adorable only when it was directly or remotely but reasonably felt to be indispensable for success. But the sacrifice that does not ultimately lead to success is suicidal and therefore had no place in the tactics of Maratha warfare (*Hindu Pad Padashahi*, p. 256).
- 2) Fighting the Marathas is like fighting with the wind, is to strike on the water (*Hindu Pad Padashahi*, p. 254).
- 3) That remains the despair of our age, which has to write history without making it, to sing of valorous deeds without the daring abilities and opportunities without actualizing them in life (*Hindu Pad Padashahi*, pp. 244–45).
- 4) Political slavery can be easily overthrown at any time. But it is difficult to break the shackles of cultural domination (*Hindu Pad Padashahi*, pp. 242–43).
- 5) No freedom! whose smile we shall never resign. Go tell our invaders, the Danes, 'That's sweeter to blood for an age at thy shrine. Than to sleep but a minute in chains!' (*Hindu Pad Padashahi*, p. 219, Savarkar quoting Thomas Moore).
- 6) "Rather get killed than converted." This was the prevalent call among

Hindus at that time. But Ramdas stood up and exclaimed, 'No, not thus. Get killed rather than converted is good enough but better than that. Do not get either killed nor get violently converted. Rather, Kill the violent forces themselves and get killed while killing to conquer in the cause of righteousness' (*Hindu Pad Padashahi*, pp. 141–62)⁶

In an article titled '*Vishwa Prem*' published twice in the *Matwala* of 15 and 22 November 1926, Bhagat Singh had this to say about Savarkar and what he perceived as the latter's tender heart despite being a revolutionary: 'World-lover is the hero whom we do not hesitate a little to call a fierce insurgent, staunch anarchist—the same heroic Savarkar. Coming in the wave of world-love, he used to stop walking on the grass thinking that the soft grass would be mowed under the feet.⁷ In March 1926, Bhagat Singh also wrote about Savarkar and his equation with his protégé in London, the martyr Madan Lal Dhingra:

The impact of the Swadeshi movement reached England as well and Mr. Savarkar opened a house called 'Indian House'. Madan Lal also became its member. . . . One day, Mr. Savarkar and Madan Lal Dhingra were

The impact of the Swadeshi movement reached England as well and Mr. Savarkar opened a house called 'Indian House'. Madan Lal also became its member. . . . One day, Mr. Savarkar and Madan Lal Dhingra were talking for a long time. In a test of daring to give up his life, Savarkar pierced a big needle in his hand by asking Madan Lal to lay his hands on the ground, but Punjabi Veer did not even say ah. Tears filled the eyes of both. The two hugged each other

talking for a long time. In a test of daring to give up his life, Savarkar pierced a big needle in his hand by asking Madan Lal to lay his hands on the ground, but Punjabi Veer did not even say ah. Tears filled the eyes of both. The two hugged each other. Oh, how beautiful that time was. How invaluable and indelible that teardrop was! How beautiful that match was! So glorious! What should we know about that emotion, what cowardly people who are afraid of even the thought of death, know how high, how holy and how revered are those who die for the sake of the nation! From the next day, Dhingra did not go to the Indian House of Savarkar and attended the Indian students' meeting organized by Sir Curzon. Wylie. Seeing this, the boys of the Indian House got very agitated and started calling him even a traitor, but their anger was reduced by Savarkar saying that after all he had tried to even break his head to run our house. And due to his hard work, our movement is going on, so we should thank him! On July 1, 1909, there was a meeting at the Jahangir Hall of the Imperial Institute. Sir Curzon Wylie also went there. He was talking to two other people, that was when Dhingra suddenly pulled out a pistol. He was put to sleep forever. Then after some struggle Dhingra was caught. What to say after that, there was a worldwide cry! Everyone started abusing Dhingra wholeheartedly. His father

sent a telegram from Punjab and said that I refuse to accept such rebel, rebellious and murderous man as my son. The Indians held large meetings. There were big speeches. Big proposals moved. All in blasphemy! But even at that time Savarkar was the hero who favored him openly. At first, he offered an excuse for not letting the motion pass against him that he is still on trial and we cannot call him guilty. Finally, when the vote was taken on this proposal, the Speaker of the House, Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal, was saying that if it is deemed to be unanimously passed by everyone, then Savarkar Sahib stood up and started the lecture. Just then, an Englishman punched him in the mouth and said, "Look, how straight the English fist goes!" A Hindustani young man put a stick on the head of the Englishman, and said, "See, how straight the Indian club goes!" There was a noise. The meeting was left in between. The proposal remained unpassed. Well!⁸ Quite evidently there was mutual admiration between these two revolutionaries—Bhagat Singh and Savarkar. An article published in Savarkar's [article in] *Shraddhanand* titled 'The Real Meaning of Terror' was published by Bhagat Singh and colleagues in *Kirti* in May 1928.⁹ An article written by Savarkar expressing solidarity and support for Bhagat Singh and his companions was titled 'Armed but tyrannical'.

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(Reproduced with gratitude from Vikram Sampath's *Savarkar: A Contested Legacy 1924-1966*, Penguin Books, pp. 160-169)



Dr. Radha Kumari

Bhagat Singh's Resolve for Martyrdom

“**B**hagat Singh is not only one more martyr. For thousands today, he is the martyr.”¹ *The People*, a weekly newspaper from Lahore, summed up the phenomenon of Bhagat Singh after his execution. Ninety-two years later, the first name which comes to mind hearing the term *shaheed* is Bhagat Singh; he became immortal by embracing his death gracefully and courageously. Subhash Chandra Bose termed Bhagat Singh ‘not a person, but a symbol, who symbolized the spirit of revolt that had taken possession of the country.’²

Bhagat Singh, with his revolutionary colleagues Rajguru and Sukhdev, was hanged on March 23rd, 1931, in the Lahore Conspiracy Case by the British Government. Throughout his life, he cherished the dream of becoming a martyr for his nation. All his statements and actions point out his single-mindedness with no other alternative worth consideration. He lived for his countrymen and died for them with astonishing courage. The prefix *Shaheed* has become integral to his name.

A Journey from ‘Bhagat’ to ‘Shaheed Bhagat Singh’

Bhagat Singh had nerves of steel right from his childhood. The spirit

of sacrifice was running in his blood. He belonged to a family of proud patriots with a tradition of suffering and sacrifice for the motherland. When Mehta Anand Kishore, his father’s friend, and a Congress worker, asked four-year-old Bhagat Singh what was he sowing in his field? He answered- “I am sowing guns in the field to free my country from the clutches of British and to bring my uncle back home.”³

An instance from the early life of Bhagat Singh is sufficient to show what kind of lineage had passed into his blood. His grandfather, Arjun Singh, an ardent *Arya Samaji*, on the day of the *Yagyopvita* ceremony of his grandsons Jagat Singh and Bhagat Singh, announced to dedicate them to the service of the nation. Bhagat Singh’s niece, Virender Sindhu, proudly recalls her great-grandfather’s spirit:

“What more can be said about the patriotism of a person whose one son Swarn Singh died out of torture in jail, second Ajit Singh was in exile in a foreign land, the third was in jail (Kishan Singh), and he still had the heart to bequeath his grandsons (Jagat Singh and Bhagat Singh) publicly to the cause of the nation.”⁴

Sindhu has written in detail about the sacrifices made by the entire family. However, she doles out a special mention of Bhagat Singh’s

For Bhagat Singh, who had conquered the fear of death, martyrdom was not a punishment, nay the highest award for patriotism

distinctive zeal for martyrdom.

“Bhagat Singh did not look here and there for fuel, but fuelled his life, created a gust, and raised the flames to full height so that it spread all over the country; every courtyard of the country became a fire pit.”⁵

In many of his writings, Bhagat Singh concedes that revolutionaries and philosophers are products of the circumstances. The events in India of that time are also significant from this perspective; the sensitive mind of Bhagat Singh could have responded to them that way only. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre left a deep scar on Bhagat Singh's tender heart. Moved by the national calamity, he brought the blood-soaked soil from the Bagh in a bottle to worship. At the age of twelve, he made a promise to himself-

“No, no, from now on, we shall not get shot but shoot the British who shed the blood of our innocent people. We shall eliminate the people who have enslaved us. I swear by this soil. I swear by the martyrs. I shall definitely avenge their death.”⁶

His teachers from National College Lahore, particularly Bhai Parmanand and Jayachandra Vidyalkar, fuelled his desire to sacrifice for the nation. Bhai Parmanand was a hero for him for being awarded capital punishment for his role in the first

Lahore Conspiracy Case, later to be commuted to a life sentence. Jayachandra Vidyalkar, a historian, had links with Bengali revolutionaries. Through his links, Bhagat Singh encountered Sachindra Nath Sanyal. On the advice of Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Bhagat Singh left home knowing his family's plans for his marriage. On being asked by his intimate friend Jaidev Gupta why he did not want to get married, Bhagat Singh's reply to his friend is a testimony of his resolve at sixteen. He asked why there should be more widows for weeping and wailing when there were already two widows at home. His response revealed the clarity of his mind about his final destination.

Although published with pseudo names, Bhagat Singh's writings exhorted the youth of India and enthuse them with the sentiments of love for their motherland. In one such article published in *Matwala*, he wrote:

“...You have to descend into the battlefield of action like Govind Singh, the true son of the Motherland... You will have to struggle throughout your life like Rana Pratap... Sacrifice yourself to liberate your Motherland. Get ready to spend your whole life in the Andamans to free your captive mother. Get ready to die to keep the sobbing mother alive.”⁷

Bhagat Singh used to take a keen interest in the martyrdom stories of revolutionaries of his time. Most of his articles published in *Chand*, *Kirti*, and *Pratap* deal with martyrdom. In fact, almost all the short biographies of martyrs compiled in special issue *Phansi Ank* were written by him and his colleagues.

Kartar Singh Sarabha, probably the youngest revolutionary in the Ghadar movement, had an indelible impact on Bhagat Singh. Sarabha's preference for capital punishment over life term kept inspiring him for the ultimate sacrifice.⁸ According to his mother, Bhagat Singh always used to keep Sarabha's photograph in his pocket. The words of martyr Madan Lal Dhingra, going to the gallows, kept reverberating in Bhagat Singh's ears throughout his life.

“As a Hindu, I felt that wrong to my country is an insult to God. Her cause is the cause of Sri Rama, her service is the service of Sri Krishna. The only lesson required in India at present is to learn how to die, and the only way to reach is by dying ourselves. Therefore, I die, and I glory in my martyrdom.”⁹

Bhagat Singh was a voracious and versatile reader who spent much of his time outside and in jail reading patriotic and revolutionary literature. Books such as Tilak's *Gita Rahasya* and Savarkar's *War of Indian Independence* to Bakunin's *God and The State* and French Anarchist Vaillant's *Anarchism and Other Essays* were part of his readings. His favourite novels-like Gorky's *Mother*, Sinclair's *Jungle*, Victor Hugo's

In many of his writings, Bhagat Singh concedes that revolutionaries and philosophers are products of the circumstances. The events in India of that time are also significant from this perspective; the sensitive mind of Bhagat Singh could have responded to them that way only. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre left a deep scar on Bhagat Singh's tender heart

Ninety Three, etc., inspired him towards romance of martyrdom. He studied Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, and many others-the men who had successfully carried out a revolution in their countries.

Auguste Vaillant, a French anarchist, had a lasting imprint on his mind. Vaillant had thrown a bomb in the French parliament in 1893, got himself arrested, gave a lengthy statement in court, and declared that he did not wish to be defended. In fact, along the lines of Vaillant, he and his comrades planned and finally carried out the event of throwing bombs in the legislative assembly. The phrase 'to make the deaf hear' and style of showing protest were borrowed from Vaillant. He also used to take notes of relevant quotes in his jail diary. A few months before his hanging, he noted the citation of Thomas Jefferson - "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."¹⁰ This was like his party's dictum, 'The food on which the tender plant of liberty thrives is the blood of the martyr.'¹¹

Humanist Martyr or a Misguided Patriot?

The general notion about revolutionaries is that concern for human life is secondary to their objective. On the contrary, Bhagat Singh was mindful of the propriety of revolutionary means and never justified their improper and unnecessary use. He and his party even expressed sorrow for the killing of Saunders as the death of a man but thought that to be inevitable as the victim was part of the unjust system. Shiv Verma, after the murder of Saunders, observed that despite Bhagat Singh himself offering to

take revenge for Lala Lajpat Rai's murder by killing the culprit, he remained agitated for days. His objective was to make entire humanity happy, so his concern for human life was evident.¹² His statement made in the sessions court explains the aims and objectives of the revolutionary movement and a proof of his love for humanity.

"We are next to none in our love for humanity. Far from having any malice against any individual, we hold human life sacred beyond words. We are neither perpetrators of dastardly outrages and, therefore, a disgrace to the country." he further emphasizes, "...We repeat that we hold human life sacred beyond words and would sooner lay down our own lives in the service of humanity than injure anyone else. Unlike the mercenary soldiers of the imperialist armies who are disciplined to kill without compunction, we respect, and, in so far as it lies in our power, we attempt to save human life..."¹³

He realized the limitation of violent methods in a movement. In one of his articles written in jail, he conceded that using force was justifiable when resorted to as a matter of terrible necessity: non-violence as a policy indispensable for all mass movements.¹⁴

Explaining the meaning

of their slogan, 'Long Live Revolution,' to the editor of *Modern Review* Bhagat Singh wrote, "... the phrase never means that sanguinary strife should ever continue and nothing should ever be stationary or even for a short while...revolution did not necessarily involve sanguinary strife..."¹⁵ He regretted that people who exploited the word for their vested interest gave an impression of blood-stained horror, whereas the term was sacred for them. Their only objective was to bring better change in people's lives.

Asaf Ali, Bhagat Singh's advocate, describes Bhagat Singh as perhaps one of the gentlest and the most affectionate in temperament- the very antithesis of a hard and blood-thirsty revolutionary.¹⁶

In a letter to his brother Kultar Singh just a few days before his death, he accepted a natural desire to stay alive like any other human being. He wrote that he was full of charms for his life but wanted a life of freedom for all humanity.

Why Martyrdom?

"With no selfish motive or desire to be awarded here or hereafter, quite disinterestedly, have I devoted my life to the cause of independence because I could not do otherwise."¹⁷ Bhagat Singh expressed these sentiments in his

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article, *Why I am an Atheist*, about a week before the final judgment of capital punishment, which he was fully confident about. On the one hand, this article is a testimony of Bhagat Singh's high intellect, clarity of thought, and firmness of his resolve to become a martyr. On the other, it shows his craving for selfless service to the nation. In the same article, he wrote further:

"A God-believing Hindu might be expecting to be re-born as a king, A Muslim or a Christian might dream of the luxuries to be enjoyed in paradise and the reward he is to get for his sufferings and sacrifices. But what am I to expect?"¹⁸

Bhagat Singh's stature had risen so high near his martyrdom that there was no coming back. And he was fully cognisant of this fact. While openly accepting before the prisoners of the second Lahore conspiracy case a natural desire to live (only on the condition of his freedom not being curbed), he said,

"..Ideas and sacrifices of revolutionary party have placed me on a high pedestal. It is such a high pedestal that I may not be able to do justice to it as a living being. My weaknesses are not known to the public. If I am saved from the gallows, they would become known to everybody. Thus, the symbol of revolution would fade and even dissolve, but if I die wreathed with smiles, Indian mothers would wish their children to become Bhagat Singh, and thus the number of formidable freedom fighters would increase so much that it would be impossible for satanic forces of imperialism to stop and stem the march of revolution."¹⁹

Bhagat Singh wanted young

Bhagat Singh was so determined to become a martyr that all the attempts to defend him were failed by himself.

Shiv Verma describes Bhagat Singh's death-defying courage remembering a conversation during the latter's visit to the Borstal jail in July 1930

people to be enthused with such a spirit of selfless service for humankind. In all his statements before the court, his only concern was to clarify his objective behind the act; he never cared for the punishment. He was ever-ready to offer his youth on the altar as incense; no sacrifice was too big for him for the freedom of his motherland. Bhagat Singh's growing popularity proved his faith in martyrdom entirely true.

Approaching Martyrdom (*Kahin Phansi Na Ruk Jaye*)

Bhagat Singh was so determined to become a martyr that all the attempts to defend him were failed by himself. Shiv Verma describes Bhagat Singh's death-defying courage remembering a conversation during the latter's visit to the Borstal jail in July 1930. Anticipating the decree of death sentence for himself, Bhagat Singh said in his usual style,

"This is the highest award for patriotism, and I am proud that I am going to get it. ... Bhagat Singh dead will be more dangerous to the British enslavers than Bhagat Singh alive. After I am hanged, the fragrance of my revolutionary ideas will permeate the atmosphere of this beautiful land of ours ... I am anxiously waiting for the day when I will receive the highest award for my services to the country and my

love for people."²⁰

Under fatherly compulsions, Bhagat Singh's father made a last appeal to the viceroy before the court's final judgment, arguing that his son was not even present in Lahore on the day of Saunders's murder. Knowing this, Bhagat Singh was so baffled that he wrote a strict letter to his father dated 4th October 1930, reproaching him for his 'cowardly' act.

Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Bhagat Singh's revolutionary friend, describes the latter's apprehension of commutation of capital punishment when an appeal was to be filed before Privy Council for general amnesty by Pt. Moti Lal Nehru. Knowing this, Bhagat Singh uttered, "*Bhai aisa na ho ki phansi ruk jay* (Brother, let it not happen that the hanging is stayed)." Bhagat Singh's greatest fear was that he would then be deprived of the opportunity of becoming a martyr. Sinha further adds that Bhagat Singh almost yearned to die. Under massive pressure from all quarters, the commutation of the death sentence seemed a possibility. It made Bhagat Singh nervous that his long-cherished dream might not come true.²¹

Bhagat Singh, in his last meeting with his comrade, Jaidev Kapoor, in Lahore Central Jail, a few days before his martyrdom, said, if by sacrificing my life, I am able to spread the slogan 'Inqilab Zindabad' all over the country, I shall consider myself

to be fully rewarded.....Today I can very well hear crores of my countrymen shouting the slogan, even while I am confined behind the thick walls of my death cell... I trust this slogan would continue to inspire our liberation struggle against Imperialism.”²²

Bhagat Singh’s ‘mercy petition’ put a final blow to all attempts to save him. In his letter to the Punjab Governor exposing the hypocrisy of the British legal system and challenging it, he wrote. “.... according to the verdict of your court, we had waged war and were, therefore, war prisoners. And we claim to be treated as such, i.e., we claim

to be shot dead instead of to be hanged....²³ With his two dear and brave revolutionary friends (Sukhdev and Rajguru), Bhagat Singh embraced his ‘beloved’ glorious death of a martyr. The last song sung by them echoes their patriotism.

“*Dil Se niklegi na mar kar bhi vatan ki ulfat,
Meri matti se bhi khushbu-e-wafa aayegi*”

(Death may mingle my mortal remains with dust My love for my country shall never part;

The fragrance of that love will ever dart, Like fountain from the depth of my heart.)²⁴

Though not agreeing with

Bhagat Singh in his methods, Mahatma Gandhi conceded after his martyrdom, “There never has been within living memory so much romance around any life as had surrounded that of Bhagat Singh.”²⁵ Moreover, in *Navjivan*, on 29th April 1931, Gandhi wrote that Bhagat Singh did not subscribe to the religion of violence. He had conquered the fear of death. Let us bow to them a thousand times for their heroism.²⁶

For Bhagat Singh, who had conquered the fear of death, martyrdom was not a punishment, nay the highest award for patriotism. ●

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Dr. Pradeep Deshwal

Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagat Singh – How Close, How Far!

There was two poles of India's freedom struggle – Gandhiji and Bhagat Singh. The ideals of both were same but the path was completely different. Here is an in-depth analysis of that part of our history

Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagat Singh were such warriors of India's freedom struggle who have remained relevant even after 75 years of Independence. However, the great ideals which they were devoted to and the great society they dreamt of creating are still incomplete. Gandhiji wanted to make India independent so that 'Ramrajya' could be established in the country while Bhagat Singh kissed the noose so that after end of the British empire, India could be established as an exploitation-free nation where social justice is ensured to every person. Both were basically committed to the welfare of humanity. There were a lot of similarities in their ideals but there was also a deep contradiction as well. One was a messenger of non-violence while the other was a revolutionary. One recruited soldiers to fight on behalf of the British in the First World War and yet was called a "priest of non-violence" while the other killed an oppressive British officer and yet became the subject of condemnation from almost all the leaders of India, leave apart the British. It is another matter that the latter was not a worshiper of violence but considered non-violence indispensable for mass movements.

Talking about Mahatma Gandhi, he is the identity of India in the whole world today. His statues at the United

Nations headquarters in New York, the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva and the Parliament Square in London are the living signs of his global popularity. Gandhiji has been an inspiration to many of the world leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela. His birthday, 2nd October, is a national holiday in India and his portrait is printed on the currency note of India.

On the other hand, there is Bhagat Singh who was 38 years younger than Gandhiji and was martyred by hanging at the tender age of 23 only. 23 years is too short a life span for any individual to leave a lasting mark on history. But Bhagat Singh had become a legend at such a young age. Going by the version of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Bhagat Singh's popularity in those days was equal to that of Gandhiji all over India.¹ Jawaharlal Nehru was also surprised that why everyone was thinking only of Bhagat Singh in those days and his popularity was amazing.² Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose believed that Bhagat Singh was a symbol of new awakening among the youth.³

Hundreds of books have been written about Bhagat Singh in many languages and many films too have been made on his life. In 2008, 'India Today' magazine conducted an online survey of 60 greatest Indians. Bhagat

Manthan

Singh came first with 37% votes, Netaji Subhash second with 27% votes and Gandhiji third with 13% votes. However, such surveys cannot be said to be completely correct and the results may be completely different in any other survey. Yet it can be inferred that even today's generation sees its ideal hero in Bhagat Singh. Whether it is his birthday on 28th September or Martyrdom Day on 23rd March, hundreds of small and big programs are organized across the country and most of these programs are organized by the common people themselves and not at the mercy of the governments.

Pictures of Bhagat Singh can be found decorating the walls of every house. According to art historian Professor Christopher Pinney of University College London, the statues of Bhagat Singh are more popular than those of Mahatma Gandhi in India.⁴ But appalled by the indifference of Indian historians, Prof. Pinney writes that Bhagat Singh's extraordinary prominence in Indian visual culture and his

neglect by historians in the 20th century Indian history, on the other hand, is an enigma.⁵

Coming back to Gandhiji, many controversies are associated with the name of the person who had dedicated his whole life to the nation and human service. One of the allegations is that he did not make serious and sincere efforts to save Bhagat Singh from the gallows. The seriousness of the efforts made by Gandhiji to save Bhagat Singh has always been in question. After Bhagat Singh was sentenced to death by the British court, the hope of the whole country rested on Gandhiji, because in those days discussions were going on about an agreement being reached between Gandhiji and Viceroy Lord Irwin.

Gandhiji and Irwin had met 8 times between 17th February and 5th March in 1931, but when the agreement was reached, there was no mention of Bhagat Singh and his companions in it. Finally, on 23rd March 1931, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged in Lahore Central Jail. Then what was the talk Gandhiji and Lord

Irwin had about Bhagat Singh? If Gandhiji had tried to save Bhagat Singh, how did he fail? Was he jealous of Bhagat Singh? If yes, then why? There are many such questions, the answers to which however cannot be found by emotionally searching on social media. For this, it is necessary to wipe off the dust of time from over the pages of history and read the blurred words with full caution. Let us search nectar by churning the ocean and even if poison comes out during this effort, let us show courage to accept it with full honesty.

Bhagat Singh left home in 1923 to liberate the country when he was only 16 years old. His public life was only for seven years which ended at the early age of 23 while Gandhiji's public life started at the age of 23 when he went to South Africa in 1893 and became a victim of Apartheid. Gandhiji had made non-violence and Satyagraha his weapons. For him, non-violence was not just a policy but a creed that was non-negotiable. He had gone to the extent of even calling off the whole non-cooperation movement when it was at its peak, following the Chauri Chaura violence on 4th February 1922.

Ironically, in the Boer War that began in South Africa in 1899, Gandhi himself went to the war front to help wounded British soldiers.⁶ He was in England when World War I broke out in 1914. He again formed the Ambulance Corps to help the British soldiers.⁷ This decision of the 'priest of non-violence' had confused even his own followers⁸ whereas he himself admits that "even after serving the soldiers wounded in the battle, one cannot be absolved of the war crimes."⁹ But he writes



about his own state of mind in those days: "I felt that Indians living in England should do their duty in the war. English students have appealed to let them serve in the army. So, Indians too should not be left behind."¹⁰

In the year 1918, he travelled on foot from village to village in Gujarat appealing to the Indian youth to join the army and tried his utmost to motivate them for this. He got pamphlets printed and distributed in which it was written: "If you want to learn to use weapons, then this is a golden opportunity."¹¹

Which principle of non-violence was this? To take up arms to help the enemy is justified but to raise them against the enemy is unrighteous! "His (Gandhiji's) approach towards violence has always been and will always be casual and ambivalent."¹² He knew that an unarmed India could not compete with British might through isolated incidents of violence. Addressing the people gathered at the Sabarmati Ashram on 10th March 1930, just two days before starting the historic Dandi March, Gandhiji had said, "I don't think even a single one of you would have come here, had you been encountered with bombs and gunfire."¹³ Perhaps that is why, he was adamant on non-violence while fighting against the British regime.

To avenge the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, Bhagat Singh and his comrades killed British Assistant Superintendent of Police J.P. Saunders in Lahore on 17th December 1928. Almost all the prominent leaders of the country including Gandhiji had strongly condemned it at that time. Writing an article in 'Young India' on 27th December 1928, Gandhiji

The next day, the historical statement of Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt was read out in the Delhi Sessions Judge's court on 6th June 1929. The statement was like blowing the conch shell of the revolution. Bhagat Singh knew that the entire statement would not be included in the court proceedings, so he had already sent it out of the jail, which was published in full in many newspapers in the country and abroad

had described this incident as an 'act of cowardice'.¹⁴ After this, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw bombs in the Central Assembly on 8th April 1929, in protest against the Public Safety Bill and Trade Disputes Bill as well as to spread the message of revolution across the country. All the prominent leaders condemned this incident too, even in harsher words this time. Since Bhagat Singh did not intend to kill anyone, the bombs did not contain any solid projectiles, which was common in those days.¹⁵ Most of the bomb fragments recovered from the Assembly hall were found to have calcium carbonate, which reduces the firepower of the bombs.¹⁶ On 5th June 1929, in the court of Sessions Judge, Middleton in Delhi, these things were proved by the answers to the questions asked by the Chief Inspector of Explosives Dr. Robson.

The next day, the historical statement of Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt was read out in the Delhi Sessions Judge's court on 6th June 1929. The statement was like blowing the conch shell of the revolution. Bhagat Singh knew that the entire statement would not be included in the court proceedings, so he had already sent it out of the jail, which was published in full in many newspapers in the country and abroad. Even Jawaharlal Nehru published it in

the 1st July issue of the Congress Bulletin. When Gandhiji read it, he reprimanded Nehru by writing a letter the same day. Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt began the historic hunger strike from 15th June 1929 to protest the poor conditions of political prisoners in jails, which had a tremendous impact across the country. Even the language of the leaders and newspapers, who did not miss any opportunity to condemn the revolutionaries till the day before, had changed.

But Gandhiji was still adamant on his opinion. He wrote: "I read the latest issue of the Congress Bulletin. I think it was wrong to publish that statement in an official publication which is meant only to record the activities of the Congress. Even if we talk on the basis of merit, I understand that the statement was prepared by their (Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt's) lawyer. It was not the voice of their inner conscience as you and I understand it. Nor did I like you advocating and endorsing their hunger strike. In my opinion, there is no point in their hunger strike, and even if there is any meaning to it, it is like using a heavy Nasmyth hammer to kill a fly."¹⁷

Gandhiji had not used the name of Bhagat Singh anywhere in the entire letter. In any writing, when you mention a person for the

first time, you take his name and later refer to him with pronouns like 'he', 'they', 'his', 'their', 'him', 'them' etc. Gandhiji also cast doubt on Bhagat Singh's statement in the court. Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt's lawyer Asaf Ali himself said that the historical statement was prepared by Bhagat Singh himself. Even Nehru wrote to Gandhiji in his letter dated 13th July 1929, "You have misunderstood. I know that the statement was written by him himself and there is no contribution of the lawyer in it."¹⁸

But Gandhiji said that that statement was not the voice of Bhagat Singh's inner conscience. Gandhiji also opposed the hunger strike of Bhagat Singh and his companions. He termed their hunger strike as 'meaningless' while he himself went on hunger strike several times which was called 'fasting'. That letter of 1st July 1929 raises doubts whether Gandhiji was jealous of Bhagat Singh! There is no doubt that Gandhiji's contribution in turning the freedom struggle into a mass movement is enormous. But that doesn't mean that he didn't have any human weaknesses. Gandhiji himself never made such a claim.

Asked by comrades jailed with him, Bhagat Singh had written a day before his execution: "Today my weaknesses are not seen to the public. If I escape the gallows, the weaknesses will become evident and the symbol of revolution will be dimmed or possibly destroyed. But in case of me being hanged laughingly in a spirited manner, Indian mothers will wish for their children to become Bhagat Singhs."¹⁹ It means that there cannot be a human being who does not have any shortcomings. The contribution of individuals

should be assessed as a whole. The greatness of Gandhiji and his contribution will also have to be evaluated with a logical approach and fair attitude instead of being a blind devotee of the person.

Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa in 1915, started the non-cooperation movement in 1920 and the whole country stood with him, including 12-year-old Bhagat Singh. Lokmanya Tilak died in 1920 and Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das in 1925 while Jinnah left Congress in 1920 itself. Later, all the prominent leaders – Sardar Patel, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Azad, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, etc – accepted the leadership of Gandhiji at that time. Gandhiji had become the supreme leader of the Congress and the country. There was no one to challenge him at that time. In such a situation, it is natural for a human being to become stubborn and arrogant as it is human nature. But it is objectionable to say so about Gandhiji. Even logical criticism of a person, who is considered godlike, is not accepted easily. Bhagat Singh writes in his article 'Why I am an atheist': "Oppose any popular sect or criticise a hero – a great man who is generally considered above criticism – and the force of your argument will compel thousands of people to accuse you of being pretentious."²⁰

By the way, Bhagat Singh was not a proponent of violence. He writes: "Non-violence should be the essential principle of all mass movements."²¹ In a message sent to the Punjab Students' Union session on 19th October 1929, instead of asking the youth to pick up bombs and pistols, Bhagat Singh had given them a clarion

call to go to the factories, slums and dilapidated huts in the villages across the country, and spread the message of revolution.²² It is clear from his writings that Bhagat Singh was not a supporter of violence, but he opposed 'imaginary non-violence'. He says: "The use of force for aggression is violence and cannot be justified from the moral point of view, but when it is used for a just purpose, it is moral. The absolute prohibition of the use of force is imaginary."²³ In view of Bhagat Singh's historic hunger strike in prison and the way he fought that case, Neeti Nayyar, Professor of History at the University of Virginia in the US, describes him as a 'Satyagrahi'.

Now, let us look into the allegation wherein it is said that Gandhiji did not make any effort to save Bhagat Singh from the gallows. Irwin writes about his meeting with Gandhiji on 18th February 1931: "Finally, he (Gandhiji) mentioned Bhagat Singh without attaching it with other matters. He did not ask for a pardon, although he himself being opposed to the killing of any living being, he would have done so (pardon Bhagat Singh). He also think that doing so (hanging Bhagat Singh) would affect the peace. But, in the prevailing circumstances, he only asked for the hanging to be postponed."²⁴

About his conversation with Irwin that day, Gandhiji himself said: "I talked about Bhagat Singh. I told him (Irwin) – it (raising Bhagat Singh's case) has no bearing on our conversation and it probably isn't fair that I should mention it. But if you want to make the present situation more favourable, then you should postpone the execution of Bhagat Singh." He told Irwin further:

“Had I been there, I would have released him but I do not expect this from any government. Even if you don't answer to this (his request), I won't mind.”²⁵

It is clear that Gandhiji was talking about postponing, not cancelling the execution. It is possible that he would have thought that once the execution is deferred, it can even be cancelled later. But then his statement that ‘he would have released him, had he been there at the helm but he did not expect such magnanimity from a government’ and that ‘he would not feel bad even if Irwin did not even give an answer to him on the issue’ itself weakens the pressure on Irwin to postpone the hanging.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose met Gandhiji on 16th March 1931 and discussed about the release of political prisoners. Gandhiji told him that he did not make the release of the revolutionaries a condition for the settlement because he did not believe that they (Bhagat Singh and his comrades) would not indulge in violence again.²⁶ Thereafter, Gandhiji met the Viceroy again on 19th March 1931. On his way back, he told Irwin that he has read in the newspaper that Bhagat Singh would be hanged on March 24 but the day would be a very unfortunate one because the Congress President would reach Karachi on the same day when the atmosphere would be quite tumultuous there.²⁷

At that time, the Congress session was going to start in Karachi and Gandhiji was worried that if Bhagat Singh was hanged, the atmosphere would not be favourable for the Congress President in Karachi that day. Gandhi wrote a letter to

Gandhiji did not make cancellation of Bhagat Singh's hanging a condition in the agreement with Irwin. He was negotiating for the release of those who had been arrested for participating in the civil disobedience movement led by him. It's hard to say whether it was a question of morality or political foresight or compulsion or something else for Gandhiji. The truth is that Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged at 7 pm on 23rd March 1931 in Lahore Central Jail

the Viceroy on 23rd March 1931. After reading the letter, one would feel that he was really serious about saving Bhagat Singh. He writes: "Public sentiment, fair or unfair, is in favour of cancelling the hanging. When there is no principle at stake, it becomes a duty to respect it. In this case, if pardon is granted, there is every possibility that internal peace can be maintained. If the execution is carried out, peace will undoubtedly be endangered. The revolutionaries have assured me that they would give up violence if their lives are spared. I feel that it is an inviolable duty to postpone the hangings till the time the revolutionaries are not resorting to any further killings."²⁸

But perhaps, it was too late by then. Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged on the same day. Pattabhi Sitaramaiya writes: “Gandhiji definitely told the Viceroy – if these youths have to be hanged, then it would be better to do it before the Congress session instead of doing it after. This will give the country a clear idea of the real status of the hangings so that people do not nurture false hopes in their hearts.”²⁹

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those who had been arrested for participating in the civil disobedience movement led by him. It's hard to say whether it was a question of morality or political foresight or compulsion or something else for Gandhiji. The truth is that Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged at 7 pm on 23rd March 1931 in Lahore Central Jail. Though Gandhiji had not made cancellation of hanging a condition in the agreement, he had urged Irwin and had also given arguments on his behalf. So, now the question is: why did his arguments and his request become ineffective? Maybe due to the opposition from the British bureaucrats of Punjab province. Further, though some contemporary writers have speculated that Gandhiji had threatened a mass resignation on the issue, there is no evidence available to substantiate it.³⁰

Another big question: Did Bhagat Singh want his execution to be cancelled or postponed? Under heavy pressure from all sides for sending a mercy petition, he had written a letter to the Governor of Punjab on 20th March 1931. From that letter, it becomes completely clear that Bhagat Singh was determined to go for the ultimate sacrifice for that great oblation of India's independence, and no pressure, fear or greed could not

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have distracted him from his path of duty. He wrote: "The charge of waging war against the emperor has been proved against us in your court. Therefore, we should be treated like prisoners of war, that is, instead of being hanged, we should be shot dead."³¹

A few days before the verdict in the Lahore conspiracy case came, he wrote to Sukhdev: "I wish that we should be hanged when this movement is at its peak. If it ever becomes possible to reach an honourable and fair settlement, let the case of persons like us not be a cause of hindrance or difficulty in its way. When the fate of the country is being decided, the fate of individuals should be completely forgotten."³²

This statement of Bhagat Singh is very important. One thing is sure that he wanted the flame of his pyre to light up the torch of revolution in every nook and corner of the country. Secondly, he had already anticipated that talks would be held with the British in the coming months regarding the settlement and at that time, the matter of his execution would come up for sure. That is why he had already taken this burden off the shoulders of Gandhiji and the Congress leadership. In his last letter to his comrades on 22nd March 1931, Bhagat Singh had written that historic line: "In case of me being hanged laughingly in a spirited manner, Indian mothers will wish for their children to become Bhagat Singhs."³³

Bhagat Singh laughed his way to the gallows shouting 'inquilab zindabad' (long live the revolution). When Gandhiji reached Karachi to attend the Congress session, he had to face huge opposition from the youth. He was shown black flags and presented with garlands

of flowers made of black cloth. Gandhiji respectfully accepted the flowers and addressed the youth standing there. Bhagat Singh's childhood friend Jaidev Gupta, who himself was present in the Karachi Congress session, says: "There were two factions, one in favour of Gandhiji and the other against him. But Mahatma Gandhi was such an orator that he was able to satisfy everyone with his logical arguments, pep talks and calm mannerisms."³⁴

The Karachi Congress passed a resolution in honour of Bhagat Singh and his fellow martyrs, which read: "While dissociating itself from and opposing all forms of political violence, the Congress appreciates the valour and sacrifice of late Bhagat Singh and his comrades Shri Sukhdev and Shri Rajguru and expresses its sympathy with the bereaved families."³⁵

This resolution was prepared by Gandhiji and a large number of people were angry with it because it praised the sacrifice of Bhagat Singh but condemned his act at the same vein. There was a lot of uproar over this. To pacify the atmosphere, "excellent stage-management was conducted. Bhagat Singh's father Sardar Kishan Singh was brought on to the stage to support the Congress leaders. The party's strategy was amazing."³⁶ Sardar Kishan Singh spoke for more than half an hour and narrated stories related to the life of Bhagat Singh. The audience was spellbound and emotional hearing him. There was thunderous applause and sky-high slogans of 'Bhagat Singh zindabad (long live)' were raised. In such an environment, Sardar Kishan Singh appealed to the youth for restraint and self-control.³⁷ He

also appealed to the masses to support their 'General' (Gandhiji) and other Congress leaders so that the country could be liberated.³⁸

Appreciating Gandhi's role in preventing the people of India from associating with the revolutionaries, Alan Wilkinson, who later became Britain's Education Minister, had described Gandhiji as "the best policeman the British had in India."³⁹ In a letter to journalist Darcy Lindsay on 8th May 1931, Gandhiji writes: "Based on the information I have gathered about Bhagat Singh, I can say that he was a man of impeccable character and extremely courageous." In these words, Gandhiji praises Bhagat Singh in open voice. But he writes further: "He had a great influence on some youths." Whereas the fact was that Bhagat Singh's influence was not only on 'some' youth, but Bhagat Singh's picture was imprinted in the hearts of most of the youth of the country.

Another important event took place on 28th April 1931 when a meeting of prominent leaders of Punjab took place in Lahore, wherein it was decided to build a memorial in the memory of Bhagat Singh and other martyrs. Anand Kishore Mehta was elected general secretary of the All India Martyrs Memorial Committee. Mehta wrote a letter to the prominent leaders of the country seeking their cooperation in this work. But the British were restless as to how to stop the martyr's memorial from being built. However, they breathed a sigh of relief after receiving a letter from Gandhiji. In the letter written on 20th June 1931, Gandhiji had categorically refused to cooperate in any manner for construction of the said memorial.⁴⁰ Earlier, on 31st

May 1931, Gandhiji had written a letter to Anand Kishore Mehta on the same subject, advising him to disband the committee.

Gandhiji tried his best to save Bhagat Singh from the gallows but he could not make it a condition of the settlement as he did not want to stand with the revolutionary prisoners. When the Viceroy

realised this, it made a big impact on his decision.⁴¹ Gandhiji was adamant on his principles while Bhagat Singh was dedicated to his ideals. Both were great sons of India and will continue to inspire generations for centuries. The debate – whether or not Gandhiji tried to save Bhagat Singh from the gallows – will continue. Whatever

may be the truth, Bhagat Singh is still the biggest icon of the youth because he was the embodiment of an ideal hero and an influential thinker, had a modern and scientific outlook, was a staunch nationalist and unblemished character and was committed to creation of an exploitation-free society and nation. ●

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On December 23rd, 1929, the revolutionaries of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association tried to bomb Viceroy Irwin's train. However, Irwin survived the incident. Mahatma Gandhi wrote an article on this in Young India titled 'The Cult of the Bomb' (January 2nd, 1930). In response to this, an article titled 'The Philosophy of the Bomb' came from the revolutionaries. Its authors were Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Yashpal. Bhagat Singh is said to have seen this article in jail before publication and appreciated it

The Cult of the Bomb

There is so much violence in the atmosphere immediately surrounding us, politically minded part of India, that a bomb thrown here and a bomb thrown there causes little perturbation and probably there is even joy over such an event in the hearts of some. If I did not know that this violence was like froth coming to the surface in an agitated liquid, I should probably despair of non-violence succeeding in the near future in giving us the freedom which we are all violently-minded and non-violently minded people yearning for.

Happily I have a certain belief based upon ceaseless experience during my tour in the heart of India for the past twelve months very nearly, that the vast masses who have become conscious of the fact that they must have freedom are untouched by the spirit of violence.

In spite therefore of sporadic violent outbursts such as the bomb explosion under the Viceregal train I feel that non-violence for our political battle has come to stay. It is because of my increasing faith in the efficacy of non-violence in political warfare and the possibility of its being practised by masses of people that I propose to reason with those who may not be so much saturated with violence as to be beyond the pale of reason.

Let us think then for a moment what would have happened if the Viceroy had been seriously injured or killed. There certainly would have been no meeting of 23rd ultimo and therefore no certainty as to the course to

be adopted by the Congress. That surely would have been, to say the least, an undesirable result.

Fortunately for us the Viceroy and his party escaped unhurt, and with great self-possession he went through the day's routine as if nothing had happened. I know that those who have no regard even for the Congress, who hope nothing from it and whose hope lies only through violence, will not be affected by this speculative reasoning.

But the others, I hope, will not fail to realize the truth of the argument and to put together several important deductions that can be drawn from the hypothetical case put by me.

Take again the net result of political violence practised in this country. Every time violence has occurred we have lost heavily, that is to say, military expenditure has risen. As against this, I am willing to put the Morley-Minto reforms, the Montagu reforms and the like. But an ever widening circle of politicians is now beginning to realize that they have been like toys given to us against heavy economic burden.

Whilst paltry concessions have been made, a few more Indians have found employment under Government, the masses in whose name, and for whose sake, we want freedom, have had to bear greater burdens without having any return whatsoever therefor. If we would only realize that it is not by terrorizing the foreigner that we shall gain freedom, but by ourselves shedding fear and teaching the

villager to shed his own fear that we shall gain true freedom, we would at once perceive that violence is suicidal.

Then consider its reaction on ourselves. From violence done to the foreign ruler, violence to our own people whom we may consider to be obstructing the country's progress is an easy natural step.

Whatever may have been the result of violent activities in other countries and without reference to the philosophy of non-violence, it does not require much intellectual effort to see that if we resort to violence for ridding society of the many abuses which impede our progress, we shall but add to our difficulties and postpone the day of freedom. The people unprepared for reform because unconvinced of their necessity will be maddened with rage over their coercion, and will seek the assistance of the foreigner in order to retaliate. Has not this been happening before our eyes for the past many years of which we have still painfully vivid recollections?

Take now the positive side of the argument. When, that is in 1920, non-violence came to be part of the Congress creed¹, the Congress became a transformed body as if by magic. Mass awakening came no one knows how. Even remote villages were stirred.

Many abuses seemed to have been swept away. The people became conscious of their power. They ceased to fear authority. The system of begar² vanished like mist in Almora and several other parts of India, wherever the people had become awakened to a sense of the power that lay within themselves. Such as it was, it was their freedom that they had attained by their own strength. It was true swaraj of the masses attained by the masses. If the march of non-violence had not been interrupted by events culminating in Chauri Chaura, I make bold to say that we would have been today in full possession of swaraj. No one has been found to dispute this proposition. But many have shaken their heads as they have said, 'But you can't teach non-violence to the masses. It is only possible for individuals and that too in rare cases.'

This is, in my opinion, a gross self-deception. If mankind was not habitually non-violent, it would have been self-destroyed ages ago.

But in the duel between forces of violence and non-violence the latter have always come out victorious in the end. The truth is that we have not had patience enough to wait and apply ourselves whole-heartedly to the spread of non-violence among the people as a means for political ends.

We are now entering upon a new era. Our immediate objective and not our distant goal is complete independence. Is it not obvious that if we are to evolve the true spirit of independence amongst the millions, we shall only do so through non-violence and all it implies?

It is not enough that we drive out Englishmen by making their lives insecure through secret violence. That would lead not to independence but to utter confusion. We can establish independence only by adjusting our differences through an appeal to the head and the heart, by evolving organic unity amongst ourselves, not by terrorizing or killing those who, we fancy, may impede our march, but by patient and gentle handling, by converting the opponent, we want to offer mass civil disobedience. Everybody owns that it is a certain remedy. Everybody understands that 'civil' here means strictly non-violent, and has it not often been demonstrated that mass civil disobedience is an impossibility without mass non-violence and without mass discipline? Surely it does not require an appeal to our religious faith to convince us that the necessity of our situation, if nothing else, demands non-violence of the limited type I have indicated. Let those who are not past reason then cease either secretly or openly to endorse activities such as this latest bomb outrage. Rather let them openly and heartily condemn these outrages, so that our deluded patriots may for want of nourishment to their violent spirit realize the futility of violence and the great harm that violent activity has every time done.

Young India, 2-1-1930 [Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi]

The Philosophy of the Bomb

Recent events, particularly the Congress Resolution on the attempt to blow up the Viceregal Special on the 23 December, 1929, and Gandhi's subsequent writings in Young India, clearly show that the Indian National Congress, in conjunction with Gandhi, has launched a crusade against the revolutionaries. A great amount of public criticism, both from the press and the platform, has been made against them. It is a pity that they have all along been, either deliberately or due to sheer ignorance, misrepresented and misunderstood. The revolutionaries do not shun criticism and public scrutiny of their ideals or actions. They rather welcome these as chances of making those understand, who have a genuine desire to do so, the basic principles of the revolutionary movement and the high and noble ideals that are a perennial source of inspiration and strength to it. It is hoped that this article will help the general public to know the revolutionaries as they are and will prevent it from taking them for what interested and ignorant persons would have it believe them to be.

Violence or Non-Violence

Let us, first of all, take up the question of violence and non-violence. We think that the use of these terms in itself, is a grave injustice to either party, for they express the ideals of neither of them correctly. Violence is physical force applied for committing injustice, and that is certainly not what the revolutionaries stand for. On the other hand, what generally goes by the name of non-violence is in reality the theory of soul-force, as applied to the attainment of personal and national rights through courting suffering and hoping thus to finally convert your opponent to your point of view. When a revolutionary believes certain things to be his right he asks for them, pleads for them, argues for them, wills to attain them with all the soul-

force at his command, stands the greatest amount of suffering for them, is always prepared to make the highest sacrifice for their attainment, and also backs his efforts with all the physical force he is capable of. You may coin what other word you like to describe his methods but you cannot call it violence, because that would constitute an outrage on the dictionary meaning of that word. *Styagraha* is insistence upon truth. Why press, for the acceptance of truth, by soul-force alone? Why not add physical force also to it? While the revolutionaries stand for winning independence by all forces, physical as well as moral, at their command, the advocates of soul-force would like to ban the use of physical force. The question really, therefore, is not whether you will have violence, but whether you will have soul-force plus physical force or soul-force alone.

Our Ideal

The revolutionaries believe that the deliverance of their country will come through revolution. The revolution, they are constantly working and hoping for, will not only express itself in the form of an armed conflict between the foreign government and its supporters and the people, it will also usher in a new social order. The revolution will ring the death knell of capitalism and class distinctions and privileges. It will bring joy and prosperity to the starving millions who are scathing today under the terrible yoke of both foreign and Indian exploitation. It will bring the nation into its own. It will give birth to a new state a new social order. Above all, it will establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and will forever banish social parasites from the seat of political power.

Terrorism

The revolutionaries already see the advent of the revolution in the restlessness of the revolution in the restlessness of youth,

in its desire to break free from the mental bondage and religious superstition that hold them. As the youth will get more and more saturated with the psychology of revolution, it will come to have a clearer realisation of national bondage and a growing, intense, unquenchable thirst for freedom. It will grow, this feeling of bondage, this infuriated youth will begin to kill the oppressors. Thus has terrorism been born in the country. It is a phase, a necessary, an inevitable phase of the revolution. Terrorism is not the complete revolution and the revolution is not complete without terrorism. This thesis can be supported by an analysis of any and every revolution in history. Terrorism instills fear in the hearts of the oppressors, it brings hopes of revenge and redemption to the oppressed masses, it gives courage and self-confidence to the wavering, it shatters the spell of the superiority of the ruling class and raises the status of the subject race in the eyes of the world, because it is the most convincing proof of a nation's hunger for freedom. Here in India, as in other countries in the past, terrorism will develop into the revolution and the revolution into independence, social political and economic.

Revolutionary Methods

This then is what the revolutionaries believe in, that is what they hope to accomplish

This then is what the revolutionaries believe in, that is what they hope to accomplish for their country. They are doing it both openly and secretly, and in their own way. The experience of a century long and world-wide struggle, between the masses and the governing class, is their guide to their goal, and the methods they are following have never been known to have failed

for their country. They are doing it both openly and secretly, and in their own way. The experience of a century long and world-wide struggle, between the masses and the governing class, is their guide to their goal, and the methods they are following have never been known to have failed.

The Congress and the Revolutionaries

Meanwhile, what has the Congress been doing? It has changed its creed from Swaraj to Complete Independence. As a logical sequence to this, one would expect it to declare a war on the British government. Instead, we find it has declared war against the revolutionaries. The first offensive of the Congress came in the form of a resolution deploring the attempt made on the 23 December, 1929, to blow up the Viceroy's Special. It was drafted by Gandhi and he fought tooth and nail for it, with the result that it was passed by a trifling majority of 81 in a house of 1,713. Was even this bare majority a result of honest political convictions? Let us quote the opinion of Sarla Devi Chaudhrani who has been a devotee of the Congress all her life, in reply. She says: "I discovered in the course of my conversations with a good many of the Mahatma's followers that it was only their sense of personal loyalty to him that was keeping them back from an expression of the independent views and preventing them from voting against any resolution whatsoever that was fathered by Mahatmaji." As to Gandhi's arguments in favour of the proposition, we will deal with them later, when we discuss his article The Cult of the Bomb which is more or less an amplification of his speech in the Congress. There is one fact about this deplorable resolution which we must not lose sight of, and that is this. In spite of the fact, that the Congress is pledged to non-violence and has been actively engaged in carrying on propaganda in its favour for the last ten years, and in spite of the fact also that the supporters of the resolution indulged in

abuse, called the revolutionaries ‘cowards’ and described their actions as ‘dastardly’ – and one of them even threateningly remarked that if they wanted to be led by Gandhi, they should pass this resolution could only be adopted by a dangerously narrow majority. That demonstrates, beyond the shadow of a doubt, how solidly the country is backing the revolutionaries. In a way Gandhi deserved our thanks for having brought the question up for discussion and thus having shown to the old at large that even the Congress – that strong-hold of non-violence – is at least as much, if not more, with the revolutionaries as with him.

Gandhi on War Path

Having achieved a victory which cost him more than a defeat, Gandhi has returned to the attack in his article The Cult of the Bomb. We will give it our closest attention before proceeding further. That article consists of three things – his faith, his opinion and his arguments. We will not discuss what is a matter of faith with him because reason has little in common with faith. Let us then take such of his opinions as are backed by arguments and his arguments proper, against what he calls violence and discuss them one by one.

Do the Masses Believe in Non-Violence

He thinks that on the basis of his experience

He thinks that on the basis of his experience during his latest tour in the country, he is right in believing that the large masses of Indian humanity are yet untouched by the spirit of violence and that non-violence has come to stay as a political weapon. Let him not delude himself on the experiences of his latest tour in the country

during his latest tour in the country, he is right in believing that the large masses of Indian humanity are yet untouched by the spirit of violence and that non-violence has come to stay as a political weapon. Let him not delude himself on the experiences of his latest tour in the country. Thought it is true that the average leader confines his tours to places where only the mail train can conveniently land him while Gandhi has extended his tour limit to where a motorcar can take him, the practice of staying only with the richest people in the places visited, of spending most of his time on being complimented by his devotees in private and public, and of granting Darshan now and then to the illiterate masses whom he claims to understand so well, disqualifies him from claiming to know the mind of the masses. No man can claim to know a people’s mind by seeing them from the public platform and giving them Darshan and Updesh. He can at the most claim to have told the masses what he thinks about things. Has Gandhi, during recent years, mixed in the social life of the masses? Has he sat with the peasant round the evening fire and tried to know what he thinks? Has he passed a single evening in the company of a factory labourer and shared with him his vows? We have, and therefore we claim to know what the masses think. We have, and therefore we claim to know what the masses think. We assure Gandhi that the average Indian, like the average human being, understands little of the fine theological niceties about Ahimsa and Loving one’s enemy. The way of the world is like this. You have a friend: you love him, sometimes so much that you even die for him. You have an enemy: you shun him, you fight against him and, if possible, kill him. The gospel of the revolutionaries is simple and straight. It is what has been since the days of Adam and Eve, and no man has any difficulty about understanding it. We affirm that the masses of India are solidly with us because we know it from personal experience. The day is not

far off when they will flock in their thousands to work the will of the Revolution.

The Gospel of Love

Gandhi declares that his faith in the efficacy of non-violence has increased. That is to say, he believes more and more, that through his gospel of love and self-imposed suffering, he hopes someday to convert the foreign rulers to his way of thinking. Now, he has devoted his whole life to the preaching of his wonderful gospel and has practised it with unwavering constance, as few others have done. Will he let the world know how many enemies of India he has been able to turn into friends? How many O'Dwyers, Readings and Irwins has he been able to convert into friends of India? If none, how can India be expected to share his 'growing faith' that he will be able to persuade or compel England to agree to Indian Independence through the practice of non-violence?

What would have Happened

If the bomb, that burst under the Viceroy's Special, had exploded properly, one of the two things suggested by Gandhi would have surely happened. The Viceroy would have either been badly injured or killed. Under such circumstances there certainly would have been no meeting between the leaders of political parties and the Viceroy. The uncalled for and undignified attempt on the part of these individuals, to lower the national prestige by knocking at the gates of the government house with the beggar's bowl in their hands and dominion status on their lips, in spite of the clear terms of the Calcutta Ultimatum, would have been checkmated and the nation would have been powerful enough to kill the Viceroy, one more enemy of India would have met a well deserved doom. The author of the Meerut prosecutions and the Lahore and Bhusawal persecutions can appear a friend of India only to the enemies of her freedom. In spite of Gandhi and the Nehru and their claims

There might be those who have no regard for the Congress and hope nothing from it. If Gandhi thinks that the revolutionaries belong to the category, he wrongs them grievously. They fully realise the part played by Congress in awakening among the ignorant masses a keen desire for freedom. They expect great things of it in the future

to political sagacity and statesmanship, Irwin has succeeded in shattering the unity between different political parties in the country that had resulted from the boycott of the Simon Commission. Even the Congress today is a house divided against itself. Who else, except the Viceroy and his olive tongue, have we to thank for our grave misfortunes? And yet, there exist people in our country who proclaim him a Friend of India!

The Future of the Congress

There might be those who have no regard for the Congress and hope nothing from it. If Gandhi thinks that the revolutionaries belong to the category, he wrongs them grievously. They fully realise the part played by Congress in awakening among the ignorant masses a keen desire for freedom. They expect great things of it in the future. Though they hold firmly to their opinion, that so long as person like Sen Gupta whose wonderful intelligence compels him to discern the hand of the CID in the late attempt to blow up the Viceroy's Special, and persons like Ansari, who think abuse the better part of argument and know so little of politics as to make the ridiculous and fallacious assertion that no nation had achieved freedom by the bomb, have a determining voice in the affairs of the Congress, the country can hope little from it; they are hopefully looking forward to the day, when the mania of non-violence would have passed away from the Congress,

and it would march arm in arm with the revolutionaries to their common goal of Complete Independence. This year it has accepted the ideal which the revolutionaries have preached and lived up to more than a quarter of a century. Let us hope the next year will see it endorse their methods also.

Violence and Military Expenditure

Gandhi is of opinion that as often as violence has been practised in the country, it has resulted in an increase of military expenditure. If his reference is to revolutionary activities during the last twenty-five years we dispute the accuracy of his statement and challenge him to prove his statement with facts and figures. If, on the other hand, he had the wars that have taken place in India since the British came here in mind, our reply is that even his modest experiment in Ahimsa and Satyagraha which had little to compare in it with the wars for independence produced its effect on the finances of the Bureaucracy. Mass action, whether violent or non-violent, whether successful or unsuccessful, is bound to produce the same kind of repercussion on the finances of a state.

The Reforms

Why should Gandhi mix up the revolutionaries

Why should Gandhi mix up the revolutionaries with the various constitutional reforms granted by the government? They never cared or worked for the Morley-Minto Reforms, Montague Reforms and the like. These the British government threw before the constitutional agitators to lure them away from the right path. This was the bribe paid to them for their support to the government in its policy of crushing and uprooting the revolutionaries

with the various constitutional reforms granted by the government? They never cared or worked for the Morley-Minto Reforms, Montague Reforms and the like. These the British government threw before the constitutional agitators to lure them away from the right path. This was the bribe paid to them for their support to the government in its policy of crushing and uprooting the revolutionaries. These toys – as Gandhi calls them – were sent to India for the benefit of those, who, from time to time, raised the cry of ‘Home Rule’, ‘Self – Government’, ‘Responsible’, ‘Full Responsible Government’, ‘Dominion Status’ and such other constitutional names for slavery. The revolutionaries never claim the Reforms as their achievement. They raised the standard of independence long ago. They have lived for it. They have ungrudgingly laid their lives down for the sake of this ideal. They claim that their sacrifices have produced a tremendous change in the mentality of the people. That their efforts have advanced the country a long way on the road to independence is granted by even those who do not see eye to eye with them in politics.

The Way of Progress

As to Gandhi’s contention that violence impedes the march of progress and thus directly postpones the day of freedom, we can refer him to so many contemporary instances where violence has led to the social progress and political freedom of the people who practised it. Take the case of Russia and Turkey for example. In both countries the party of progress took over the state organisation through an armed revolution. Yet social progress and political freedom have not been impeded. Legislation, backed by force, has made the masses go ‘double march’ on the road of progress. The solitary example of Afghanistan cannot establish a political formula. It is rather the exception that proves the rule.

Failure of Non-Cooperation

Gandhi is of opinion that the great awakening in the people, during the days of non-cooperation, was a result of the preaching of non-violence. It is wrong to assign to non-violence the widespread awakening of the masses which, in fact, is manifested wherever a programme of direct action is adopted. In Russia, for instance, there came about widespread awakening in the peasants and workers when the communists launched forth their great programme of Militant Mass Action, though nobody preached non-violence to them. We will even go further and state that it was mainly the mania for non-violence and Gandhi's compromise mentality that brought about the disruption of the forces that had come together at the call of Mass Action. It is claimed that non-violence can be used as a weapon for righting political wrongs. To say the least, it is a novel idea, yet untried. It failed to achieve what were considered to be the just rights of Indians in South Africa. It failed to bring 'Swaraj within a year' to the Indian masses in spite of the untiring labours of an army of national workers and one and a quarter crores of rupees. More recently, it failed to win for the Bardoli peasants what the leaders of the Satyagraha movement had promised them – the famous irreducible minimum of Gandhi and Patel. We know of no other trials non-violence has been blessed with one result – Failure. Little wonder, then, that the country refuses to give it another trial. In fact Satyagraha as preached by Gandhi is a form of agitation – a protest, leading up invariably, as has already been seen, to a compromise. It can hardly be of any use to a nation striving for national independence which can never come as the result of a compromise. The sooner we recognise that there can be no compromise between independence and slavery, the better.

Is it a New Era

'We are entering upon a new era', thinks Gandhi. The mere act of defining Swaraj as Complete Independence, this technical

change in the Congress constitution, can hardly constitute a new era. It will be a great day indeed when the Congress will decide upon a country-wide programme of Mass Action, based on well recognised revolutionary principles. Till then the unfurling of the flag of Independence is a mockery and we concur with the following remarks of Sarla Devi Chaudhrani which she recently made in a press interview.

"The unfurling of the Flag of Independence", says, "at just one minute after midnight of the 31 December, 1929, was too stogy for words – just as the GOC and the assistant GOC and others in gaudy uniforms were card board Grand Officers Commanding.

"The fact that the unfurling of the flag of Independence lay hanging in the balance till midnight of that date, and that the scales might have been turned at even the eleventh hour fifty-ninth minute had a message from the Viceroy or the Secretary of State come to the Congress granting Dominion Status, proves that Independence is not a heart hunger of the leaders but that the declaration of it is only like a petulant child's retort. It would have been a worthy action of the Indian National Congress if Independence was achieved first and declared afterwards." It is true that the Congress orators will henceforth harangue the masses on Complete Independence instead of Dominion Status. They will call upon the people to prepare for a struggle in which one party is to deliver blows and the other is simply to receive them, till beaten and demoralised beyond hope of recovery. Can such a thing be named a struggle and can it ever lead the country to Complete Independence? It is all very well to hold fast to the highest ideal worthy of a nation, but it is nonetheless necessary to adopt the best, the most efficacious and tried means to achieve it, ere you became the laughing stock of the whole world.

No Bullying Please

Gandhi has called upon all those who are

not past reason to withdraw their support from the revolutionaries and condemn their actions so that “our deluded patriots may, for want of nourishment to their violent spirit, realise the futility of violence and the great harm that violent activities have every time done”. How easy and convenient it is to call people deluded, to declare them to be past reason, to call people deluded, to declare them to be past reason, to call people deluded, to declare them to be past reason, to call upon the public to withdraw its support and condemn them so that they may get isolated and be forced to suspend their activities, specially when a man holds the confidence of an influential section of the public! It is a pity that Gandhi does not and will not understand revolutionary psychology in spite of the life-long experience of public life. Life is precious thing. It is dear to everyone. If a man becomes a revolutionaries, if he goes about with his life in the hollow of his hand ready to sacrifice it at any moment, he does not do so merely for the fun of it. He does not risk his life merely because sometimes, when the crowd is in a sympathetic mood, it cries ‘Bravo’ in appreciation. He does it because his reason forces him to take that course, because his conscience dictates it. A revolutionary believes in reason more than anything. It is to reason, and reason alone, that he bows. No amount of abuse and condemnation, even if it emanates from the highest of the high can turn him from his set purpose. To think that a revolutionary will give up his ideas if public support and appreciation is withdrawn from him, is the highest folly. Many a revolutionary has, ere now, stepped on the scaffold and laid his life down for the cause, regardless of the curses that the constitutionalist agitators rained plentifully upon him. If you will have the revolutionaries suspend their activities, reason with them squarely. That is the one and the only way. For the rest let there be no

doubt in anybody’s mind. A revolutionary is the last person on earth to submit to bullying.

An Appeal

We take this opportunity to appeal to our countrymen – to the youth, to the workers and peasants, to the revolutionary intelligentsia – to come forward and join us in carrying aloft the banner of freedom. Let us establish a new order of society in which political and economic exploitation will be an impossibility. In the name of those gallant men and women who willingly accepted death so that we, their descendants, may lead a happier life, who toiled ceaselessly and perished for the poor, the famished, and exploited millions of India, we call upon every patriot to take up the fight in all seriousness. Let nobody toy with nation’s freedom which is her very life, by making psychological experiments in non-violence and such other novelties. Our slavery is our shame. When shall we have courage and wisdom enough to be able to shake ourselves free of it? What is our great heritage of civilisation and culture worth if we have not enough self-respect left in us to prevent us from bowing surveillance to the commands of foreigners and paying homage to their flag and king?

Victory or Death

There is no crime that Britain has not committed in India. Deliberate misrule has reduced us to paupers, has ‘bled us white’. As a race and a people we stand dishonoured and outraged. Do people still expect us to forget and to forgive? We shall have our revenge – a people’s righteous revenge on the tyrant. Let cowards fall back and cringe for compromise and peace. We ask not for mercy and we give no quarter. Ours is a war to the end – to Victory or Death.

Long Live Revolution!

(Letter, Writings and Statements of Shaheed Bhagat Singh and his Copatriots)

Courtesy: Shiv Varma (ed.), Selected Writings of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Samajwadi Sahitya Sadan, Kanpur, 1996, pp. 157-165.



Pro. Rasal Singh

Bhagat Singh and the Issue of Language and Script

The country's freedom was not the sole focus of Bhagat Singh's thinking. His vision also encompassed subtler issues like language, script and cultural integration. A perspective...

Indian languages even today live in insecurity from and apprehension of the colonial language English and are under constant attack from the latter. It is slowly absorbing Indian languages. The supremacy of English and the necessity of the English medium is a huge challenge today.

Crores of children of Dalits and backward, the poor and rural folk as well as farmers remain unable to contribute fully in the country's development because the gradually increasing compulsion of the English medium has narrowed their possibilities. That is why it is necessary to resist the supremacy of English and the mentality it spawns. English is not merely a language or subject, but a symbol of the feeling of colonial superiority and cultural supremacy. English can be adopted as an international link language, but it should not be imposed as a medium of instruction or as the link language of India. Indian languages alone can be India's voice. Instruction in the mother tongue is of utmost importance from the point of view of maximum development of the intellectual abilities of the learner and propagation of Indian languages. This is the cornerstone of the ambitious project of making India a global knowledge power i.e. Vishwaguru. The take-off point of the consecration of India's cultural

pride is the interaction, dialogue and organizing of Indian languages.

The Ballia speech of Bharatendu Harischandra, the architect of modern Hindi, is particularly worthy of mention in this regard. In this address, Bharatendu propagated the importance of one's mother tongue, saying, "Nij bhasha ki unnati ahai sad Unnati ko mool. Bin nij bhasha gyan ke mitat na hiya ko sool" (the development of one's language is the basis of all advancement. Without the knowledge of one's language, one cannot be rid of incisive shortcomings that afflict the self).¹ It bears mention here that all litterateurs, satyagrahis and revolutionaries used Hindi and other Indian languages as a weapon against British imperialism. Prominent among them was Sardar Bhagat Singh, who is also known as Shaheed-e-Azam. The Hindi language played a central role in the fight against colonial slavery and Western domination. Today, once again to combat the domination of English, Indian languages need to come closer to each other. There is a need to establish Indian thought and Indian languages against the misrepresentation of Marx and Macaulay's progeny. The challenge of English and the colonial way of thinking can be tackled only by the organization, coordination and harmony of India's languages.

There is today a need to make efforts towards eradicating the mutual ignorance and isolation of Indian languages. The Devanagari script can have a decisive role in the development, propagation and mutual communication of Indian languages. There is a need to transcribe the best literature of all Indian languages into the Devanagari script and bring it to the majority and numerically wider Hindi community.

Considering the necessity and possibility of a national script, it would be very useful to learn about Bhagat Singh's thinking regarding language and script. During the year 1924-25, there was a dispute about both language and script in Punjab. The point of consideration—and also contention—was which script ought to be adopted as the script of the Punjabi language. Sardar Bhagat Singh wrote a long and pithy essay on this subject. Mentioning this essay, Yashpal writes in *Sinhavlokan*: “I remember an incident of 1925. The Hindi Sahitya Sammelan had been newly established in Punjab. Very few people were interested in a Hindi conference in Urdu-dominated Lahore. ...the Sammelan announced a prize of fifty rupees for writing the best essay on any one topic. ...the judges ranked the three essays as being of the same level. ... Of those three essays, one was mine. ... The second essay was of

Bhagat Singh and the third one was of the niece of Jayachandra (an official of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan).”² The title of the essay written by Bhagat Singh was “The Problem of the Punjabi Language and Script”. This article was preserved by the chairman of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan Bhimsen Vidyalkar and after the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, was published in *Hindi Sandesh* on February 28, 1933.³

Bhagat Singh at the beginning of this essay explains the mutual relation between literature and society and underlines its importance:

“A country keeps moving in the very direction in which its literature flows. Exalted literature is needed for the uplift of any race. As the literature of the country becomes exalted, the country also progresses. Patriots, whether they are only social-reformers or political leaders, pay utmost attention to the literature of the country. If they do not produce new literature in accordance with their social problems and circumstances, all their efforts might go in vain and their work may not be lasting.”⁴

The same thing has been stated by eminent scholars of Hindi as well. Balkrishna Bhatt has considered literature as “The development of the heart of the masses”, while Acharya Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi considers it to be a ‘mirror of society’. It is worth

mentioning that almost a decade later, Acharya Ramchandra Shukla wrote in his historical work *Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas* (The History of Hindi Literature) almost the same important issue that an adolescent Bhagat Singh had written about literature in his essay:

“The literature of every country is a cumulative reflection of the mindset of the people there; then, it is certain that along with the change in the mindset of the people, the form of literature also keeps changing. ...the mentality of the people is very much in accordance with the political, social, communal and religious situation.”⁵

By literature, Bhagat Singh did not mean only creative writing. He also essentially included ideological writings in the category of literature. He not only himself wrote a lot of revolutionary literature, but also translated books like Veer Savarkar's work *The 1857 War of Independence*, banned by the British in various Indian languages and had them distributed. That is why in this essay, by citing examples of Mazzini, Rousseau, Voltaire, Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky and Karl Marx, etc., he underlined their contribution to the unification of Italy, the French Revolution and Russian Revolution respectively. Quoting from the literature of Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Arjun Dev and Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, he explained their role in organizing Sikh society. In this regard, Bhagat Singh also mentions Baba Banda Bahadur, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramtirtha, Devendra Nath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen, Guru Gyan Singh, Swami

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Dayanand Saraswati and Mahatma Hansraj. Underlining the role of literature in the upliftment and direction of national life, Munshi Premchand, while presiding over the first convention (1936) of the Progressive Writers' Association in Lucknow, had said: "It (literature) merely the truth that follows patriotism and politics, but also the truth that walks ahead of both, holding a torch."⁶ Senior and mature litterateurs like Acharya Ramchandra Shukla and Premchand seem to affirm Bhagat Singh's literary thinking. Their approval is evidence of Bhagat Singh's ideological maturity.

Expressing concern over the lack of an universally accepted script in Punjab and making the language a religious issue, Bhagat Singh wrote:

"...the Muslims here have taken to Urdu. There is a complete lack of Indianness among Muslims, which is why they want to propagate the Arabic script and Persian language all over India, without understanding the importance of Indianness. They do not understand the importance of having one language for the whole of India and that too Hindi. That is why they have kept on harping on their Urdu and remained aloof."⁷

Criticizing the linguistic narrow-mindedness and prejudice of the Sikhs, he further writes:

"All of their literature is in Gurmukhi. There is a considerable amount Hindi in the language, but the main language is Punjabi. Therefore, the Sikhs adopted the Punjabi language written in the Gurmukhi script. They could not forsake it in any way. They have clung to it by making it a religious language"⁸

It bears mention that in that period, there were three views prevalent in Punjab with regard to language and script – first, the radical opinion of Muslims regarding Urdu language and Arabic script; second, of the Arya Samajists and Hindus regarding Hindi language and the Devanagari script; and the third, the Sikh opinion regarding Punjabi language and the Gurmukhi script. Bhagat Singh was not oblivious to this contemporary reality. But he was also well aware of the need and importance of one language and one script in national integration and the national freedom movement. He writes:

"The most important issue at this time is to make India a nation. To make a nation it is necessary to have one language, but this cannot happen immediately. One has to proceed step by step for that. If we cannot make one language for all of India, then at least one script should be created."⁹

Bhagat Singh considered the insistence on different languages by different religious/sub-ethnic communities to be an obstacle in the way of national integration. This clearly reveals the peril of all Indians being isolated instead of coming closer to each other. He believed that 'Bharatoddhar', i.e., India's uplift would be possible only when Muslims and other communities become Indians while remaining true to their religion. However, looking at the issue of language and script from a communal or ethnic point of view creates a problem. A national approach is needed to solve the language issue. Explaining his national outlook regarding language and script, Bhagat Singh writes:

"One language, one script, one literature, one ideal and one nation will have to be established in the entire country, but before all these unifications, it is necessary to have one language so that we can understand each other well. A Punjabi and a Madrasi should not sit together and merely stare at each other's face, but should try to know each other's thoughts and feelings. But this should not happen not in the foreign language English, but in India's own language Hindi."¹⁰

Further, pointing to the limitations of the Gurmukhi script and Urdu (Arabic script), Bhagat Singh proposes the adoption of the Hindi (Devanagari) script:

"This script is more inadequate than even Urdu. When we have a comprehensive Hindi (the Devnagari script) based on scientific principles, what is the hesitation in adopting it? The Gurmukhi script is only a corrupted form of Hindi alphabets. Only by adopting a holistic and complete script will the Punjabi language start progressing. Indeed, the Hindi language will eventually become the single language of all of India. Punjabi becomes like Hindi only by the adoption of the Hindi script. There will then be no distinction. This is essential, so that the general public can be educated and this can be done only through the literature of its own language."¹¹

Apart from Bhagat Singh, many other luminaries like Lokmanya Tilak, Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Krishnaswami Iyengar, Mohammad Currim Chagla and Bineshwar Brahm from time to time spoke about

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adopting the Devanagari script as the national script or link script by all Indian languages including Punjabi. Balkrishna Bhatt on April 1, 1882 wrote publicly for the first time about a national script in the editorial of *Hindi Pradeep*: "What a good thing it would be if the Nagari script were made prevalent in administrative work of all of India...Instead of the Persian script, all writing work in the court should be conducted in Nagari and all books in Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, Punjabi etc. ought be printed only in this script."¹² Moving ahead in this direction, Justice Shardacharan Mitra established the Lipi Vistar Parishad in Calcutta in 1905. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore too was among the first members of this organization.

The unfamiliarity, mistrust and distance between Indian languages will be dispelled by having one script for all of them. They will be able to come closer to each other. There will be more intimacy between them and fraternity would increase among them. This is a project of far-reaching importance. This can be started by adopting the Devanagari script as the script for Indian languages derived from Sanskrit and languages and dialects devoid of script. Proposing this idea, Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his editorial of *Hindi Navjivan* on August 27, 1925: "Having one script for the whole of India is a distant ideal. But for all those people who speak languages derived from Sanskrit, including the languages of the South; having one script is a practical ideal, if we all shed our provincialism"¹³

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, in his presidential address

to the 51st Haripura session of the Congress in February 1938, emphasized the adoption of a link language and a national script for national integration.¹⁴ Today, it is time to rise above narrow politics and regional/regional identities and move forward towards realizing that dream. Bineshwar Brahm, the 'contemporary deity of Devanagari' even sacrificed his life for this dream.

There are many languages and dialects of Jammu-Kashmir, North-East, Andaman-Nicobar and Goa etc., which face an existential crisis due to lack of a script. These gradually disappearing languages have a very rich tradition of oral literature. That rare literature not only needs to be preserved; but also needs to be taken to and disseminated in the wider society, which has hitherto remained unaware of it. The devotional literature of the Nayanar-Alvar saints, Jayadeva's *Geeta Govindam*, Nanakdev's Guruvani, Shankardeva's verses, Lalleshwari's *Bach*, Tulsidas' *Shri Ramcharitmanas* and Tagore's *Gitanjali* should be read by every literate Indian. This will enhance social cohesiveness and cultural intimacy.

Indian languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam etc., which have their own separate script; by adopting the Devanagari script as their co-script, can be divested of much socio-cultural narrowness. India's language policy has been the centre of discussion and contemplation for a long time. India is a multilingual country with a plurality of scripts. But despite this plurality, the undercurrent of Indianness is its greatest salient feature. Like

the national language Hindi, the national script Devanagari script can play a huge role in further strengthening this undercurrent of Indianness. Shedding all the opposition and narrow politics, Hindi has today become the natural language of communication of the country. It is also the vehicle of national integration. Similarly, the country's people should become organized and active to make the Devanagari script the link script of the whole of India. Devanagari can also be partially modified/amended to accommodate the specific phonetic sounds of a particular language. Devanagari for its part should show flexibility and a liberal approach so that its natural closeness and affinity with more and more Indian languages can be established.

All linguists lay stress on the four linguistic skills of learning any language—listening, speaking, writing and reading. The two linguistic skills of listening and speaking are the first stage of language-learning, whereas writing and reading are considered as the second stage. The second stage of language learning is related to the script. The complex process of language learning can be made very simple and accessible by adopting a single script for Indian languages. By doing this, several new languages can be learnt with the first step itself. Owing to the difficulty of the second stage, in any linguistic community, people who are proficient in the first stage i.e., listening-speaking are much more in number than those who are skilled in the second stage i.e., reading and writing. The first phase will also be much easier as the cultural context and

vocabularies of Indian languages from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Kutch to Kamrup are quite similar. The fundamental reason for this is that many Indian languages have been derived from the Vedic language, i.e., Sanskrit. It is also the key to make Indians multilingual. Educated Indians will be able to read and write many languages easily and will become familiar with their rich literature and underlying cultural traditions. It is also a remarkable fact that Indian languages are not mutually competitive, but complementary. Adoption of the Devanagari script will gradually increase this richness and complementarity. Friendship and interaction, not animosity, is essential among India's languages.

The script of most languages of the Arab world is Arabic and that of several languages of Europe and America is Roman. That is why they not only have a better social and cultural connect and interaction, but trade and tourism too flourish among them. Markets and languages today have an interdependent relationship. Markets expand through language and languages are propagated through the market. That is the

reason Hindi is developing and expanding to this extent. Other Indian languages would not only be culturally enriched by being in lockstep with their elder sister Hindi through the Devanagari script, but will be able to obtain their place in the employment, trade and tourism sectors as well. Being a language of a large market increases the recognition and demand of a language internationally. It can also make decisive interventions in the determination of foreign policy by influencing international diplomacy. Indian languages can forge a united front on the basis of shared cultural background, common vocabularies and the Devanagari script to counter the linguistic dominance of English. The original script of the Dogri language was Takri and Sharda of Kashmiri language. But in course of time, Dogri adopted Devanagari and Kashmiri adopted Nastalik (the Persian script). Today Dogri is read and understood by the Hindi community as well. But Kashmiri as a language is gradually shrinking. It too can join Hindi and Indian languages by adopting the Devanagari script, and can grow and spread. Even otherwise,

the Devanagari script has evolved from Kashmiri's original script Sharda. So naturally, its script should be Devanagari.

This is by no means a plan to eliminate or usurp the place of any Indian language or its script; rather, it is a project to increase the mutual understanding, partnership and brotherhood of India's languages. This project will not pose any threat to any Indian language. If anything is at risk, it is the vestige of colonial supremacy. Before the Roman script grabs the place of the common script of Indian languages, we should take active initiatives towards dealing with this menace.

Politics is a function of manipulation, of joining and splitting. That is why it unites as well as separates. But culture—if it really is culture—only unites. That is why the responsibility of taking this project to fruition is more of those who are active in the cultural realm, than politicians. The former should come forward and unanimously contribute to this project of national integration and preservation of language. Only by doing this can we build the India of the dreams of revolutionaries and freedom fighters like Bhagat Singh. ●

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Harish Jain

Bhagat Singh: A Note on His Literary Corpus

Besides being a revolutionary, Bhagat Singh is well known as a thinker as well. An account of his contribution to the world of letters

Biographies depicting Bhagat Singh's life had begun appearing as early as 1930 when his case was in progress at the Tribunal, though, banned without much fuss. These early biographies were mainly culled from the material appearing in the press and did not have much detail. The first serious effort happened under the tutelage of Jayachandra Vidyalankar at Patna where his magazine *Mahavir Searchlight* was located. Titled *Shahid Sardar Bhagat Singh*, it mentioned author as Chandrawati Devi wife of Jagdish Narayan, still remains a mystery. But it did not proceed beyond the first four chapters (about 40 pages from the supposed 150 pages) when the colonial administration seized the printed and unpublished manuscript from the press itself.¹ So, the credit for the first full biography came to Jitendra Nath Sanyal, one of his colleagues in the Lahore Conspiracy Case who was spared any punishment and released. He had full access to the martyr's family, and his friends and was largely conversant with his work, ideas, and personality and also with that of the revolutionary party. Sanyal's work also earned the immediate wrath of the state but survived the vicissitudes of time and is still in print and widely read and cited². It appeared in the early

second half of 1931 and almost for four decades, no serious attempt was made to write on the life of the martyr till the publication of *Yugdrashta Bhagat Singh aur Unke Mritunjay Purrkhe* in 1968 by his niece, Virender Sandhu, daughter of his younger brother Kultar Singh. It was path-breaking work. It detailed the whole of the family in the minutest manner in a literary flavour. For many of the family details it is the only available reference. Virender had access to all the papers, newspapers, and collected material that the family could save and bring with them during the partition. Apart from this, she was in contact and in correspondence with all the surviving colleagues and friends of the martyr.³ So, she had the chance to weave a rich tapestry of his life and works, and she did. She also used letters, court documents, and other published material to enrich her work. This was almost the first use of martyr's and his comrades' writings. In 1974 she followed it up with a slim volume in Hindi of the letters and other writings of the martyr, titled '*Patra aur Dastavej*',⁴ which she had gathered for her earlier work. Her final contribution was '*Mere Krantikari Sathi*'⁵ in 1977 in which she collected biographical accounts of martyrs of many movements which she believed were written by

the martyr. These biographical accounts were earlier published in the special 'Phansi' issue of 'Chand' magazine in November 1928.⁶ These were pioneering works and with these, she opened a new window to gaze at the martyr in an entirely different way; not through his actions only but through the written word also. And with this, the compilation work of the martyr and his compatriot's writings had its beginning.

One of the things of interest in Chandrawati's partially published book mentioned above was a list of some of the books consulted given just after the introduction of Jayachandra Vidyalankar:⁷

1. Three long letters from a lady companion living in Amritsar.
2. Conversations with a volunteer on the occasion of the Lahore Congress.
3. The complete file of the *Punjab Kesri*.
4. Correspondence with Sardar Kishan Singh
5. Two unpublished books in regard to Sardar Bhagat Singh
6. Cuttings from the newspapers, *Desha*, *Milap*, *The People*, and *Bishavmittra*.

7. One old issue of a published bulletin from the office of the All-India Congress Committee at Allahabad.

Now, this is an eclectic list, a veritable archive of the times. But its fate is not known. Whether it ever surfaced or any later author or compiler could get access to it is not known. But it raises the possibility of the existence of such archives which can come into light. We cannot even rule out the possibility of the availability of this collection in part or full to Virender as all the actors of this episode must have been in her contact. Therefore, the collection of material about Bhagat Singh and his writings had begun almost in his lifetime. Chandrawati's collection was independent of the documents coming in the martyr's family's way with the day-to-day happenings after his arrest in the Assembly Bomb case. Here, I have not mentioned many other attempts in the early 1940s to write about the martyr like that of Ram Dulare Trivedi, one of their colleagues. But none had added anything of significance.

Moving further, we find one more member of the family who had equal if not more interest in exploring the life of

the martyr and his comrades. Jagmohan Singh, son of martyr's younger sister Amar Kaur, earned an engineering degree from Guru Nanak Engineering College, Ludhiana. Being based in Ludhiana he had a blessed opportunity to constantly remain in the company of his grandmother Vidyawati, mother of the martyr. Jagmohan had the legacy of the martyr and also his equally glorious mother. At an early age, he had come to the conclusion that the life, times, and work of the martyr cannot be studied in isolation and necessarily has to appear in tandem with his compatriots. He took a keen interest in the revolutionary movement and turned into an avid collector of material about the martyrs and their living comrades. He was privy to all the documents and papers available with the family at their Saharanpur house and also the work of his cousin Virender, with whom he was very close. That was not the age of the photocopier. So, he used to make copies in long hand as far as possible.⁸ One such document which he copied in its entirety was the martyr's Jail Notebook and that was its first ever copy. But he hardly made an effort to compile, edit or publish the material with him. It does not mean he was not active. He along with his former teacher Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich published a small magazine in Punjabi and used to hold photo exhibitions of photographs of martyrs of various movements. They translated a few letters of martyrs and published them in their magazine. In 1968, he published a Punjabi translation of *Sansmritiyan* by Shiv Verma.

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With Amarjit Chandan, on 23 March 1976, Jagmohan published a first-ever Punjabi compilation of martyr's letters and some writings though, most of the material was culled from his magazine⁹. It is interesting to note a lament in the unsigned introduction to the volume saying, "Editing and publishing of these documents is an individual effort which brings shame upon those revolutionary parties and organizations which thrive in the name of the masses."¹⁰ This slim volume attracted the interest of many and a cooperative of ten friends under Sukhdarshan Natt was floated in Moga to translate and publish martyr's papers and with-it Radical Publications came into existence. With Jagmohan, they collectively scoured sources like newspapers and magazines and martyr's associates to add flesh to the slim volume. Dr. Bipin Chandra extended a helping hand with the search of the National Archives and Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML). This cooperative effort was ready by 1984 and released in May 1985.¹¹ This volume was way ahead of the earlier compilations. By this time *Why I Am an Atheist* had been discovered. 'Kirti' files, *Chand 'Phansi'* issue, *The People* etc. added muscle, though some of it is very tenuous. This was the first-ever compilation of martyr's writings at this scale in any language. This was soon reprinted by Jagmohan under his editorship. This turned out to be the most successful and became the foundation of Bhagat Singh's corpus. But both the cousins, unexplainably, remained silent about the martyr's Jail Notebook. It was another cousin Abhay Sandhu, son of martyr's younger

It can be said that the three cousins Virender, Jagmohan, and Abhay Sandhu are the architects, who laid the foundation on which the edifice of Bhagat Singh and his compatriot's corpus has been erected. Their efforts were supplemented by Mathra Das, younger brother of Shaheed Sukhdev who had suffered most at the hands of the British Government. He gathered family papers which included Sukhdev's letters to the family and other archival material which he could retrieve

brother Kulbir Singh who made xerox copies of the notebook with his signatures on its first page and deposited them with NMML, National Archives, and Gurukul Indraprastha, Tuglaqabad. It was Gurukul's copy that got disseminated and the rest is history.¹²

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Naujawan Bharat Sabha¹⁵ who contributed "*Introduction to the Dream Land*" of Lala Ramsaran Das and Bipin Chandra¹⁶ who located a copy of *Why I Am an Atheist* published in *The People* in September 1931 and some archival material. But there certainly are many unknown and unidentified who helped families to link their hallowed members in their search of building their life and times.

In fact, Virender's release of *Patra and Dastavej* created a stir in the placid waters and started a sort of chain reaction. Three years after its publication in 1974 Mathra Das Thapar wrote to Virender on 1 April 1977 requesting her to provide originals of Bhagat Singh's two letters to Sukhdev or their facsimiles and if that may not be possible to reveal to him the source from which she obtained the letters, he told her that he is looking for every material linked to the life of his brother especially letters written by him or addressed to him. He was thankful that now at least he had the contents of the letters with him. Virender replied on 18 June that she definitely did not have the originals with her and she had taken the contents from newspapers that had published these letters, though she did not

remember which.¹⁷ She told him that all these newspapers were preserved safely with her father Kultar Singh at Saharanpur. Mathra Das wrote to Kultar Singh to which he replied on 15 September 1977 that the first of the letters was part of the court proceedings and the second one has been published a number of times in Punjab in *Milap* and *Pratap* etc. Kultar Singh told him that Kranti Kumar used to tell him that he had the original with him but alas he was no more. He assured him that he would search Urdu papers and whatever he could find he would send across.¹⁸ Mathra Das corresponded with many known associates of his brother along with Hans Raj Vohra, State and Central Governments, and of Pakistan¹⁹ in search of information and documents. These were passionate and dedicated efforts.

Virender and Jagmohan's work attracted many other enthusiasts. But they had nothing to add of value to what had been achieved. There were many errors and shortcomings in these volumes in every field and needed updating. But nothing of the sort happened. All the later and present volumes providing complete or selected documents in Hindi, English, or other languages are entirely

based on the above edifice with minor accretions or deletions, or new arrangements for compiling the documents. All the volumes in Hindi and English, Punjabi, or other languages that followed carried the same errors and limitations and generally further compounded them. Apart from the errors in the text, headnotes accompanying various items are full of howlers, misstatements, inaccuracies, misrepresentation of facts, bad chronology, context, stretched authorship, and their origin.²⁰

In *Patra aur Dastavej* Virender included 34 writings out of which 18 are letters to family, friends, and publications, 2 statements in the Sessions and High Court, 5 letters to the courts and government, 2 leaflets, and 7 other articles. In *Mere Krantikari Sathi- Sardar Bhagat Singh*, as mentioned earlier, there are 47 writings picked from Chand and all are biographical sketches of Martyrs belonging to various revolutionary movements and one article. As indicated in the title of the book she gave clear authorship of the articles to Bhagat Singh. If we segregate the sketches and article according to movements following table can be worked out:

1. Ghadar Movement 20
2. Babbar Akali Movement 9

3. Bengal-based Movements 6
4. Kakori Case 4
5. Hardinge Bomb Case Delhi 4
6. Maharashtra 1
7. India House London 1
8. Kisan Movement Punjab 1
9. Kuka Movement 1

Here we are not discussing the merits or demerits of any inclusion for authorship, chronology, suitability of any nature, or any other limitation. But what is apparently clear is the overwhelming presence of martyrs who are in one or another way linked with Punjab. They were either born and brought up in Punjab or their revolutionary action was linked to Punjab or their trials happened in Lahore.

On the other hand, Jagmohan's collection *Shaheed Bhagat Singh ate Ohna de Sathian dian Likhtan* in Punjabi is a culmination of work he did with his colleagues like Amarjit Chandan to produce *Collected Works of Bhagat Singh and his Comrades* in 1974 and later on with Darshan Natt and others, and they produced a comprehensive publication of Martyr's writings containing 105 writings.⁷ It was first published in March 1985 under the banner of Radical Prakashan, Moga, and later a revised edition was published in 2000 and it is the 2000 edition that is in circulation for the last two decades. While producing this volume he moved many steps ahead of his cousin Virender and expanded the ambit of his work. He was the first one to treat Bhagat Singh one among the equals of his friends and colleagues. He considered Bhagat Singh and his comrades' work a sort of collective, a product of the joint churning of minds, each giving a hand, voice, and meaning to the other. Bhagat

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Singh may be the keystone but to build the arch and enable it to stand on its own all the other stones are needed; even one missing stone will make the arch fall.²¹ With this approach, he gave equal space to all documents linked to Bhagat Singh and his comrades that he could locate. He included members of HRA and HSRA on equal footing. But, in his zeal to collect and compile the most, he is often criticized for adding extraneous material to the volume. It may be difficult to vouch for the genuineness of many inclusions. But he has his justifications and for many of his inclusions in the volume he has not claimed any authorship for the martyr in his headnote.²² The major problem is felt with his inclusions from *Kirti* magazine which was published in Amritsar, Punjab. Apart from *Kirti* there are inclusions from his pre-jail days from *Pratap*, *Matwala*, *Maharathi*, *Chand* and *Hindi Sandesh*. Overall, his collection of 105 writings can be segregated grossly into the following segments:

1. Selections from *Kirti* 44
2. Selections from above mentioned five publications 8
3. Posters or pamphlets 3
4. Letters to family, friends, and

- publications 19
5. Statements in the Sessions and High Court 2
6. Messages and telegrams 4
7. Letters to the courts and government 11
8. Manifestos 2
9. Articles sent out from jail for publication 6
10. Sukhdev and Mahabir correspondence 6

All the 34 writings included by Virender in *Patra aur Dastavej* were incorporated into Jagmohan's collection, but from *Mere Krantikari Sathi* only three were included. So, if the remaining 44 sketches of *Mere Krantikari Sathi* are added to Jagmohan's collection then the total number of Bhagat Singh's and his comrade's writings swells to 149.

His pre-jail 52 writings can be classified in the following manner also. This classification should overlap with the 47 writings contained in the *Mere Krantikari Sathi*.

1. International Movements 3
2. Kakori Case 6
3. Kuka Movement 2
4. Lord Hardinge Bomb Case 2
5. Devghar Conspiracy Case 2
6. Kissan Movement Punjab 1
7. Gadar Movement 3
8. Lala Lajpat Rai 3

9. Religion and Communalism 2
10. First War of Independence 1
11. Contemporary issues 10
12. From Other Known Sources 2
13. On Issues of Interest 11
14. Babbar Akali Movement 1
15. India House London 1
16. On Language and Script 1
17. Martial Law 1

By comparing the two tables and adding the figures from similar movements we get the following:

1. Ghadar Movement 21
2. Babbar Akali Movement 10
3. Bengal-based Movements 8
4. Kakori Case 10
5. Lord Hardinge Bomb Case Delhi 6
6. Maharashtra 1
7. India House London 2
8. Kisan Movement Punjab 1
9. Kuka Movement 3
10. First War of Independence 1
11. Martial Law 1

This makes a total of 64 (3 articles were common to the two volumes) biographical sketches and articles on movements and martyrs and that is a good 43 percent of his total writings as collected by the two cousins. These writings reflect his dedication to the cause of Indian freedom and were part of his family legacy. His writings belonged to that particular style of writing of the period a matter-of-fact, functional, precise narrative but rhetorical, pungent, pugnacious, prickly, invoking some higher lofty purpose, provoking to act and having a sort of physicality to create a visceral reaction in the gut, a revulsion to the existing scheme of things which were exploitative and demeaning to the human dignity and immoral. The objective was not to inform or entertain but prepare the reader

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for something expected of him as the son of the soil and inheritor of the great civilisation, a holder of the baton passed by his or her great ancestors. As a nation, to become a nation and to grow has to remember and celebrate her heroes and has to do it again and again and every day. These writings were a contribution to serve the greater cause, his offering to the Bharat Mata. He did not write for the sake of writing or to fulfill some inner urge or to fill some vacuum. By writing on the martyrs, he was not urging only others to follow but calling upon himself also to move and act in the process was toning and invigorating his spirit in a perpetual motion. These 64 pieces of writing now collected in various volumes may have been written jointly or severally by two or more authors and now trying to identify and differentiate the authors does not go well with the objective of their writing. A majority of them were written for party work. Much of the material was drawn from other published sources. But it does not make them any lesser writing. Some scholars' straining of muscles to give authorship credit to one or another does not carry us anywhere. How do we differentiate between Bhagat Singh and Shiv Verma and what we shall get out of this? Soon these writings will complete a century of their life and it is a matter to rejoice as we need our martyrs and heroes to be remembered in perpetuity. But these writings being nationalistic in nature do not have political significance.

Moving to the remaining 85 writings, our above-given classification table provides 19 letters to family, friends,

Three leaflets or posters have also been included. Out of these two are on Saunders' assassination and were found to be in his handwriting. The third poster was thrown in the Assembly at Delhi after the throwing of bombs by him and B. K. Dutt and available evidence link it to them unequivocally. The first two posters are announcements of the killing of J. P. Saunders in revenge for the brutal death of Lala Lajpat Rai and also to make it clear that his killing is political

and publications which have been written from 1918 to 1931 and include ones written to his grandfather, aunts, father, younger brothers, B. K. Dutt and his sister and also include two letters to Sukhdev. One letter is to the editor of the *Modern Review*. Letters to the family are poised, poignant, and concerned especially the last four letters to his younger brothers. These letters bring a family man out of him who for a larger purpose failed to fulfill his worldly duties. Letter to the *Modern Review* is a joint letter with B. K. Dutt and a rejoinder to an article by the editor Ramanand Chatterjee denigrating the raising of the slogan "Long Live Revolution". In their letter, they explain what they meant by the slogan. Letters to Sukhdev are virtual essays on two subjects of love and suicide in which he presents his perspective on two issues in the context of the prevailing circumstances. The originals of both letters are no longer available and concern can be raised about the original language of their writing as is generally believed. As the period of writing indicates, these letters are spread over his pre-arrest and later jail days. Letters to Sukhdev and Ramanand Chatterjee do have political overtones.

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the ideation and authorship of the poster.²³

In one of the above tables, writings from *Kirti* and other publications have been classified under various heads and apart from the martyr biographies which have been dealt with earlier, we can skip 10 writings grouped under the heading 'Contemporary issues' and 2 writings under the head 'From other sources'. 'Contemporary issues' appeared in *Kirti* and the events or the opinions expressed do not have much relevance. The other 2 writings are clearly by other identifiable authors so should not be considered. Similarly, writings on Lala Lajpat Rai may be left behind. With this, we are left with 3 articles on 'International movements', 2 articles under the head 'Religion and communalism', 11 different articles grouped under the head 'Issues of interest', and 1 article on language. These 17 articles begin in 1923-1924 and end in October 1928 and constitute his major writings before Saunders' murder.

To start with the earliest of those '*Punjab Ki Bhasha Aur Lipi Ki Samasya*' was written for a competition but was a burning issue of the time. It is well written and argued article full of anecdotes, citing the greats of the land but primarily remains

on the cultural plane and ignores the linguistic issues altogether. On the solution to the problem, he takes a nationalistic view and propounds Devnagri to be a common script for the nation. He was a co-winner with Yashpal as another recipient of the prize. For a youngster, this was not a small feat. Two articles 'Vishva Prem' and 'Yuvak' appeared in 1924 and 1925 in *Matwala* under the name Balwant. After these two articles, there is a long hiatus till he appears in *Kirti* and after that, all his writings appear in *Kirti* only till these dry up in October 1928. The remaining 14 articles are listed for convenience.

1. Firkoo Fasad Ate Unah De Ilaj (June 1927)
2. Do Begunah Kirtian da Khun (August 1927)
3. Sako Ate VeZati Di Shahidi (September 1927)
4. Raj- Paltau Khufia Sajishan (January 1928)
5. Har Sambhav Tarike Nal Angreji Raj Ton Bahar Puran Sutantarta (May 1928)
6. Majhab Ate Sadi Ajadi di Jang (May 1928)
7. Tashadad De Asli Arath (May 1928)- Translated from Shardanand Bombay
8. Anarchism Kaya Hai? (May, June, and July 1928) --Vidrohi
9. Achhut Da Sawal (June 1928) --Vidrohi
10. Pulis Dian Kaminian Chalan

(June 1928) -- Editorial

11. Vidyarthi Ate Politics (July 1928) --Editorial
12. Naven Leadran De Jude Jude Khyal (July 1928)
13. Roos De Jug Paltao Nihilist (August 1928)
14. Sajishan Kyon Hundian Han (September 1928)

Till May 1928, his pen name 'Vidrohi' appeared in May 1927 and January 1928 only, and it was in his writings on Kakori martyrs. Overall, pen name 'Vidrohi' appears in 8 articles and out of these 4 are on martyrs or movements, three times it appears in the three parts of his essay on 'Anarchism' and in the essay 'Achhut Da Sawal'. The last essay among the above eight is dated October 1928 and is on Kuka Movement. There is enough anecdotal evidence of his using 'Balwant' and 'Vidrohi' pen names but the inclusion of 44 articles from *Kirti* of which the above listed are part, do not have any simple explanation except the judgment of the editor of the volume. But since 1985 these inclusions from *Kirti* have been assimilated and mainstreamed by way of further compilations and translations and these have been more or less accepted as part of his literary corpus.

I have purposely divided his writings into martyr writings and non-martyr writings. Former has almost a clear authorship in Bhagat Singh and Shiv Verma, and these had a purpose to serve, were nationalistic in character, and hardly had any political overtones. But for the latter something more is called for. Take the case of his period of stay in the *Kirti* which may account for the inclusion of some of the editorial pieces which are

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normally unsigned, and of which there is a good number. But as he was on the Urdu staff, more editorials should have come from the Punjabi editors and not from him, but the number of inclusions does not attend to it. But he could have been more prolific and aggressive and tuned to the changing circumstances of the country to find more space in the columns. One thing is certain selected pieces from *Kirti* are not the only anonymous pieces. *Kirti* was frequently raided and its issues were banned. If the editors were to face the music anyway, they could keep the authors safe by not signing their authorship or giving a pseudonym. Also, the contributors being limited, to show the variety of the contributors to their readers' publications often used such gimmicks. Started by Santokh Singh in 1926 after returning to India, *Kirti* served as a communist mouthpiece in Punjab. It was well connected to Ghadriles and they were among the contributors especially in writing verses and biographical pieces of the martyrs of the Ghadar and Babbar movements and all political sufferers. There were translated pieces from and on Soviet Russia and some news on trade and labour unions. There was some political news. Overall, the magazine had a staid and laidback style, continuously grinding in the same groove. It lacked the spark and verve of a political magazine. So, from such a menu it was not difficult to pick the outliers and then link them with some common denominator and that is what I think the editor of the volume did. With some effort this thread is discernable and the echoes of his pre-Saunders

There has been a question regarding the number of documents related to him. This is a futile question as this is only a work in progress. Only in the last few years, this author has been instrumental in releasing more than a dozen of such documents which are now part of many available compilations and more of these can be added. There is an inch-thick file related to the Lahore Conspiracy Case which contains their letters and only some of them have so far reached us

murder writings beginning with 'Universal Love' can be heard in all his jail writings starting with the poster thrown in the Assembly Hall and ending with the message sent to the comrades on 2 February 1931. Arguments raised in Sessions Court and High Court, with Special Court or The Tribunal, petitions to the Government or the officials all had something from those writings. A phrase, a usage, an anecdote, a citation, a reference, an example, or some description or an error can be found to have a link, however tenuous it may be, but nevertheless a link to his later writings and a visible and viable continuity. One can have apprehension about the inclusion of these writings in his corpus but one also does not have much to deny the telltale signs also. Translations into English virtually lent them an aura of final acceptance as these have already been cited and commented upon by a large number of national and international scholars. But there is no final word on it especially on the inclusions from *Kirti*; whether what has been picked up is all genuine or all of the genuine writings have been picked up as I can mention a few which are equally worthy of inclusion but left behind. But whatever may be the case his

two-year association of 1927, and 1928 with *Kirti* had been most productive. Even the writings for *Chand* are also its offshoot. After Virender, Jagmohan deserves our gratitude for mining *Kirti* for us as without *Kirti* we would have been totally oblivious of his pre-Saunders murder writings.

So far discussion has remained limited to his pre-Saunders murder writings as comments on his later writings will be beyond the scope of this article. Even otherwise there is less ambiguity about the majority of the later documents and their provenance can be easily established.

There has been a question regarding the number of documents related to him. This is a futile question as this is only a work in progress. Only in the last few years, this author has been instrumental in releasing more than a dozen of such documents which are now part of many available compilations and more of these can be added. There is an inch-thick file related to the Lahore Conspiracy Case which contains their letters and only some of them have so far reached us. There are a number of archives to be explored. It looks like a long journey.

It is ironic to agree with Amarjit Chandan that all work around Bhagat Singh had been

an individual effort and no institutional or organizational help has been there. In fact, what collection we have before us is something culminating by individual offerings of family and some concerned people. There has been no systematic search for his writings and related documents on a scientific basis.

A significant part of his active life was either underground or in jail. He published anonymously and circulated his writings clandestinely. We are ignorant of all his networks through which he was channelizing the information and are also blissfully unaware which publications were giving space

to him in their columns except a few of them which have been exposed to us incidentally or by someone concerned. This situation demands change. There has to be a concerted effort to prove the known and locate the unknown and we owe this to all of them who laid down their lives for our present. ●

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BOOK REVIEW

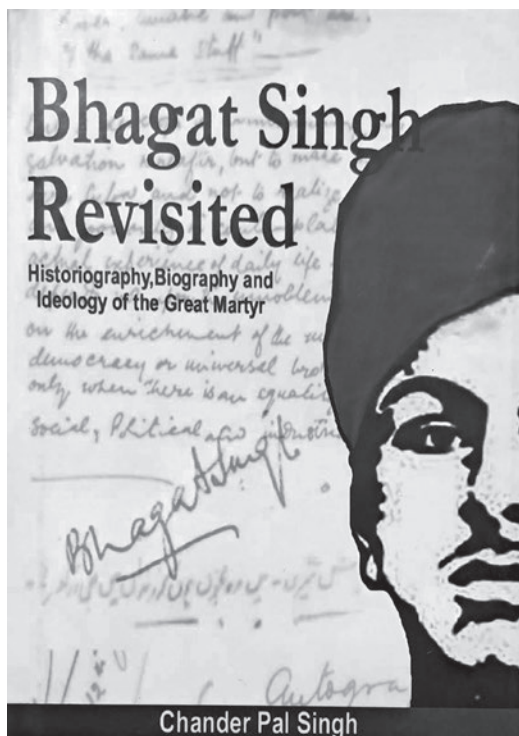
Bhagat Singh Revisited Historiography, Biography and Ideology of the Great Martyr

Dr. Rahul Chimurkar

Bhagat Singh still remains a symbol of courage, valour and supreme sacrifice for the nation. He embraced his martyrdom at an age of 31 just to cause maximum impact on British empire. There are several books written on Bhagat Singh but most of these books revolve around his portrayal as a Marxist thinker, attraction towards socialism, his stay in jail, etc. None of these books every tried to reflect upon his patriotism, which constituted the core of his ideology. What distinguishes this book is the meticulous and painstaking research which went into exposing the entire Marxist understanding of great martyr Bhagat Singh as a Marxist ideologue. They have used him as an icon in order to sell their ideology amongst the youths of the country and orient them towards a false understanding of Bhagat Singh's ideas and thoughts. It, therefore, examines

the authenticity of all existing documents attributed to Bhagat Singh by Marxist intellectuals and showcase their deliberate intention of ignoring the role of early influences, traditions and events which shaped Bhagat Singh's personality. Another false narrative created by the Marxist

historiography is to showcase the fact that Gandhi, because of Bhagat Singh mass popularity, did not do anything to save Bhagat Singh's life. This book brilliantly deconstructs this narrative with full facts and evidences and examines Gandhi's efforts to save his life till the last moment. It makes an attempt to re-examine his legacy in a correct context with a detailed study of both primary and secondary literatures available till the writing of this book. It is a timely contribution to understanding of a great martyr to whom freedom of the country was more important than anything else.



**Bhagat Singh Revisited: Historiography,
Biography and Ideology of the Great Martyr**
By Chander Pal Singh Originals,
New Delhi, 2011
Price (Hardbound): ₹595
Paperback: ₹295

The book is divided into three sections - Historiography, Biography and Ideology. Each unit is further subdivided into sub sections. Unit on Historiography discusses about all the sources available which includes his own writings, government record, press reports, secondary sources etc.. Despite abundant literature available on Bhagat Singh, there are conflicting opinions over dates of certain significant events of his life like date of birth, his movement to Kanpur, birth of Naujawan Bharat Sabha. In this section, author reconstructs the entire chronology of Bhagat Singh's lifespan into three phases i.e. 1907-1923; 1923-8th April 1929 and 8th April 1929 - 23rd March 1931 with the help of related events. It later dwells on the number of influences since his childhood that impacted his personality and strengthened his resolve to devote his life for the nation. For instance, revolutionary spirit created by peasant unrest of 1907 led by Ajit Singh under banner of Bharata Mata Society, execution of youngest Ghadr leader, Kartar Singh Sarabha on 13th September 1915, Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919, Bhai Parmanand who taught him virtues to be followed by true revolutionary and Jayachandra Vidhyalankar whose writings gave an impetus to Bhagat Singh's belief that an armed revolt was inevitable to free India from repressive British rule. The author brilliantly exposed the left agenda of appropriating Bhagat Singh's legacy in their narrative and showed the real influences from which he derived revolutionary zeal to fight for his country's independence. Later on, the futility of armed revolt against British Raj was realised by Singh after the Kakori case which left the whole movement directionless and leaderless. This pushed Bhagat Singh to adopt a realist approach and come up with innovative methods/actions which would not only bring public closer to the objectives of the revolutionary party but also mobilise them

on popular causes and instil self confidence amongst them to fight the British Raj. That is how he changed the name of the party from Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) in order to project party's socialist ideals with greater rigour and establish an egalitarian social order. The death of Lala Lajpat Rai after a lathi charge on protesters demonstrating against Simon Commission gave an opportunity to HSRA for its first action to capitalise on public anger. Subsequently, they made a plan to kill J.A Scott who was responsible for death of Lala Lajpat Rai but mistakenly killed J.P. Saunders, another policeman. He, despite heavy police surveillance, was able to move to Bengal, from where HSRA decided to bomb Central Assembly. The motive behind the bombing was to arouse public awakening and also to show it to the Britisher that Indians will no longer tolerate their repressive rule and could challenge their authority with equal strength of force. Bhagat Singh decided not to escape after the attack, rather would utilise the opportunity to popularise their ideology and programmes during the trial, which may encourage the masses to make sacrifices for independence. Eventually, they (Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt) offered themselves for arrest while chanting slogan 'Bande Mataram'.

The author in chapter 6 'Bhagat Singh, The Naujawan Bharat Sabha and the Kirti Group : A Brief Encounter' discusses less talked out relationship between Naujawan Bharat Sabha, a political association Bhagat Singh was associated with till October 1928 and Kirti group. He clearly brings out the ideological stand of both groups, one reminding youths of their duty towards the motherland and other mobilising youths to spread Communist ideology in Punjab as per the dictates of Communist International. Sabha was created to achieve 'complete independence' and to develop

the spirit of patriotism among the youths. As an offshoot of Ghadr movement, Kirti group was formed by former Ghadrites living in US, Kabul, Tashkent to spread Communism in Punjab by making use of sympathies for local Ghadr heroes. Sohan Singh Josh, editor of Kirti journal made all attempts to belittle NBS but couldn't get successful. Despite the ideological differences, both NBS and Kirti remained associated for the fact that Sabha required funds and Kirti required a platform to mobilise youths. This lasted till Karachi session of Congress in March 1931. It took place after the execution of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru. Kirti group, as per instructions of Communist International, used this platform to label Congress as a bourgeois organisation and accuse it for not been able to save the lives of three martyrs. It took all measures to discredit Congress leadership and also capture Naujawan Bharat Sabha till its merger with Congress Socialist Party in 1934. In the next chapter, author dealt with the jail life of Bhagat Singh which contributed to making of the great legend. People across all ideological spectrums showered their appreciation on Bhagat Singh for his courage, determination and sacrifice for country's freedom. During the trial, both conveyed their real intention behind the attack to give a 'timely warning' and not to kill. They could have easily escaped after the attack but got themselves arrested to challenge British government from within . It also aimed at preventing the assembly from passing two controversial bills- Public Safety Bill and Trade Dispute Bill which would have penalised Indian workers. Whatever Bhagat Singh did during his stay in was to arouse political awakening of the indian masses and expose the evil intentions of British Raj. They said in their statement - " Force when aggressively applied is 'violence' and is therefore, morally unjustifiable, but when it is used

in the furtherance of a legitimate cause, it has its moral justification." Even after the announcement of death sentence on 7th October 1930, they never missed any opportunity to publicise their views and awaken the masses. Even after the rejection of appeal by Privy Council, Bhagat Singh did not submit any mercy petition even though Gandhiji was putting his efforts to save their lives till the last day of their hanging i.e 23rd march, 1931.

Gandhi's failure to save Bhagat Singh provided a convenient weapon to Leftist intellectuals to malign his image. Scholars showed their reluctance to deal with this contentious issue but the Chander Pal Singh in chapter 10 'Gandhi vs Bhagat Singh : Myths or Facts' examined this issue in full details and reflected upon all possible efforts made by Gandhi to save Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev till the last moment. Author has thrown light on Gandhi's perception on HRA and revolutionaries in this chapter alongwith his efforts in saving their lives. These self proclaimed intellectuals fail to understand that saving Bhagat Singh's life would have benefitted Gandhi more than anybody else. Gandhi-Irwin talks began on 17th February 1931 and continued till 5th March. Gandhi, for the first time, raised the issue of Bhagat Singh on 18th February itself and requested for suspension of the sentence in order to prevent chaos in the country. This is recorded in Lord Irwin's report to Secretary of State on the same day. People also criticise him for asking for suspension rather than commutation. Gandhi was aware of the fact that legally, Commutation was not possible after the Privy Council's decision . Therefore, his plan was to prolong the suspension for some time and wait for the right time to ask for remission or release of the three revolutionaries . Gandhi again tried on 21st March requesting Irwin to reconsider their decision. Even on 23rd morning , Gandhi wrote a personal letter

to viceroy (addressing him as dear friend) for commutation of death sentence of three revolutionaries. He, in addition to putting pressure on British officials, also deputed Aruna Asif Ali to convince revolutionaries to reject violence. This could have given Gandhi more power to push for reducing the sentence, but it was rejected by Bhagat Singh. The whole narrative of demeaning Gandhi by Left is proved baseless by the author. The next chapter dealt with the most pertinent question - Was Bhagat Singh a Marxist? A person who sacrificed his life for the motherland is unjustly hijacked by left intellectuals in order to save their discredited ideology in today's world. Selected writings of his are being used to portray the Shahid-i-Azam (the great patriot) as a staunch communist. Be it Vinod Mishra's introduction to "Why I am an atheist", Nazirul Hasan Ansari's article "Bhagat Singh for Today", Irfan Habib's writings etc., all of them have been trying hard to sell their redundant ideology through the iconic status of Bhagat Singh. None of the literature available has attempted to showcase the difference in principles and ideals followed by Communist and HSRA led by Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries which the author has discussed in details in chapter 11 Was Bhagat Singh a Marxist? Author argues that, Marxist historians forget the fact that his parents were Arya Samajist and patriotism was their core ideology from which Bhagat Singh also derived inspiration from. It is undeniable that he got attracted towards Socialism during the last few years of life but one has to understand the circumstances too in which he developed an interest towards socialism. His attraction towards socialism and Marxism doesn't in any way diminish all the early influences which made him to fight for the national interest of the country. The crackdown on revolutionaries left the HRA headless,

lack of connection between public and party, success of Bolshevik Revolution in Soviet Union led Bhagat Singh to look for some alternative ideological position to revive the old party and awaken masses for independence. HSRA adopted only those aspects of communism which did not come into conflict with ancient Indian ideals. Communism believed in arousing class consciousness and in their mouthpiece Worker's Weekly, considered acts of individual terrorism as 'psychology of revenge and not revolution' as promoted by HSRA. The shift in their stance came only in 1953 when they started appropriating Bhagat Singh's legacy by linking his ideology with Marxism and Leninism to manage the internal crisis faced by their party. Ideological hijacking of Bhagat Singh, as explained by author in the last chapter, started with the publication of G.M. Telang's book Bhagat Singh: The Man and His Ideas whose premise was to project Singh's ideology as more important than his martyrdom and revolutionary activities. Another prominent Left Historian Bipan Chandra, in his article 'The Ideological Development of the Revolutionary Terrorists in North India in 1920's' revealed a series of contradictions between the socialist ideology and HSRA's work. However, in 1979, the same scholar called Bhagat Singh among India's great Marxist ideologues. He graced the martyrdom for the country but people trying to appropriate his legacy believe in breaking the country which is in complete contrast to what Bhagat Singh believed in. This appropriation by Left is a grave injustice to the man who selflessly dedicated his life for the cause of India's independence. Based on an intensive archival research of primary and secondary sources, this book is a timely intellectual attack on Marxist historiography on Bhagat Singh to understand the original ideas and principles of Bhagat Singh.

Bhagat Singh's Revolutionary Journey in 52 Episodes on 'Rashtra Vandana'

YouTube channel Rashtra Vandana is an important source of information for the general public about not only Bhagat Singh but also about other great men. 52 episodes related to Bhagat Singh are available on this channel. Here is an episode-wise description about the much-acclaimed series:

The greatest of the martyrs and visionary Bhagat Singh is very popular among the youth even 92 years after his martyrdom and still remains probably the biggest youth icon. His ardent patriotism, great ideals, unparalleled courage and supreme sacrifice inspire millions of youth even today. In this era of social media, thousands of videos related to Bhagat Singh are available on YouTube. When you look for videos related to a great man, you will definitely find many. But some of them would be eulogising him while some others might be critical of him. Rather a few of them would be unnecessarily condemnatory too. But this is not the case with Bhagat Singh. Almost all the videos are in praise of him only, but not sure of finding one critical of him. It authenticates the popularity of Bhagat Singh, but one can also mark the absence of authentic information from the historical and factual point of view. As a result, unverified and faulty information are served on a large scale. Some do it out of ignorance while some others do it with an ulterior motive. There are some people who are misusing the holy name of Bhagat Singh with the aim of condemning other great men. Some are even fulfilling their political interests by dubbing Bhagat Singh a 'communist'.

In view of all these, Pradeep Deswal decided to provide authentic information related to the visionary through his YouTube channel 'Rashtra Vandana', which is dedicated to the service of Mother India. Although Bhagat Singh's life span was

only 23 years when counted in years, but it is so huge in terms of events that it is very difficult to cover it in a few video clips. If we try to incorporate all the important events in his whole life, then the series would become too long. It is unfair to test the patience of the audience in this era of fast food. After considering all these factors, it was decided that the series would start with beginning of Bhagat Singh's revolutionary journey on 30 October 1928 in Lahore while protesting against the Simon Commission and end it with the day of the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdevon 23 March 1931. This resulted in a series of 52 episodes, most of which are 10 to 15 minutes long. However, in view of the importance of the subject, some episodes have exceeded this length.

It was resolved that historical facts would never be tampered with at all. All the files related to Bhagat Singh and his cases were dug out from the National Archives, the interviews of revolutionaries available in the Nehru Memorial Museum Library and the Centre of South Asian Studies in Cambridge University were thoroughly studied upon and many reliable books, most of which were written by Bhagat Singh's comrade revolutionaries only, were also researched upon. The facts were checked in an unbiased manner and wherever any kind of exaggeration was found, they were skipped. The list of relevant documents has been given in the description of the channel for the benefit of the viewers.

Though each episode of the series provides important information, it is worth mentioning that Episode No 2 depicts the Saunders murder incident in such a way that the viewers would feel as if they themselves were the eyewitnesses of the whole event. In Episode No 4, detailed information has been given about Bhagat Singh, Jatin Das and Kamal Nath Tiwari preparing 'gun cotton' for making bomb in the Arya Samaj temple situated on Cornwallis Road in Kolkata. Similar description has been given in Episode No 5 about preparing bombs in Agra and testing them in the jungles of Jhansi by Bhagat Singh. Episode No 7 talks about the debate between Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev about throwing bombs in the Assembly while Episode No 8 gives information about the letter written by Bhagat Singh to his dear friend Sukhdev, who had cried a lot after reading it. This letter was found in Sukhdev's pocket at the time of his arrest.

In Episode No 9, it has been shown how those highly motivated people, even while being hungry, were sacrificing their lives in the oblation of revolution. In February-March 1929, when most of the party members were in Agra, the credit accounts of the two shops, who used to supply

flour, pulses, rice, milk, oil, etc. to them on loan, were confiscated by the police. The entries of each day in those accounts showed that the expenditure of the whole group for the month of March was only 28 rupees and 25 paise. It proves that the financial condition of the revolutionaries was dirt poor. They used broken pots to boil 'daal' which did not have even turmeric and the amount of pulses in it were minimal; so it mostly contained water. His comrades were surprised to see how Bhagat Singh, who used to have more ghee than pulses in his house and was fond of good food, was happily eating a piece of dry bread after wetting it in

In Episode No 9, it has been shown how those highly motivated people, even while being hungry, were sacrificing their lives in the oblation of revolution. In February-March 1929, when most of the party members were in Agra, the credit accounts of the two shops, who used to supply flour, pulses, rice, milk, oil, etc. to them on loan, were confiscated by the police

pulse water, in the absence of funds. But his passion for raising money for buying bomb materials and setting up a library had not diminished.

The manner in which Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw bombs in the Central Assembly hall on 8 April 1929, shown in Episode No 11, is magnificent. Nitty-gritties of the historic incident like who was sitting where in the Assembly hall that day, who was standing where, what clothes were worn by Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt, at what time the bombs were thrown, near which seat they exploded, what was going on in the Assembly at that time and who all were injured – all the details have been depicted in a very exhilarating way.

Episode No 15 has detailed the arrest of Sukhdev in Lahore on 15 April 1929. He and his fellow revolutionary Kishorilal used to make bomb shells in the Kashmir Building in Lahore and, describing them as parts of gas machine, they used to get the screw threads done in the bomb shells at the lathe shop of a person named Jalaldeen located on Branderth Road. A constable named Noorshah, who was posted in CID, was a friend of Jalaldeen. The description of how Jalaldeen and Noorshah developed

suspicion about them, how the suspicion turned into belief and how Sukhdev was finally arrested has all been given in a very interesting manner.

In Episode No 17, a post-mortem of the statement of Sobha Singh, who testified against Bhagat Singh in the Assembly bomb case, has been done. Sobha Singh was the only witness who claimed to have seen Bhagat Singh throwing the bomb, but his statement in the court and his answers to the questions asked by Asaf Ali exposed his claims. On 8 April 1929, the visitors' gallery of the Assembly hall was jam-packed because that day Assembly Speaker Vithalbhai Patel was about to give his ruling on the controversial Public Safety Bill. Just as the Speaker stood up and began to speak, a bomb exploded in the hall. Everyone, except Sobha Singh, had their eyes set on Vithalbhai at that moment. But Sobha Singh claimed that some of his friends were sitting on the chairs in the audience gallery and he had a plan to go out with them for lunch. That's why he was not looking at the Speaker but at his friends. He said he could see Bhagat Singh standing in the crowd behind his friends 200 feet away from him. Sobha Singh further claimed that he saw Batukeshwar Dutt throwing the second bomb even when there was

a stampede after the first bomb was thrown. However, he later confessed that he did not see his face but only his clothes. Then the questions arise here that who were those friends whom Sobha Singh was talking about, whether they were even there or not, because their names were nowhere mentioned in the case file.

In Episode No 19, the truth is exposed when it is proved in the court that the bombs were intentionally made weaker so that no one could die. The report of the Government Chemical Investigator and the statement of Chief Inspector of Explosives Dr. Robson amply proved that the bombs did not contain any solid shrapnel which were generally used in those days to make bombs lethal. On the contrary, calcium carbonate was found on most of the bomb pieces which reduces the firepower of the bomb. Episode No 20 depicts the historical statement made by Bhagat Singh in the court on 6 June 1929 wherein he had told the British that "you can crush individuals but you cannot kill ideas. The nation cannot be crushed by crushing two insignificant units." That historical statement is a very important document of the revolutionary movement.

In Episode Nos 24 and 25, the description of the torture they went through

during the historic hunger strike in Lahore Jail is very poignant. Revolutionary Jatin Das took martyrdom on the 63rd day of hunger strike, all for his ideals. Glimpses of the speeches given by leaders like Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malviya, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, N.C. Kelkar, M.R. Jayakar etc. in the Central Assembly in support of Bhagat Singh and his fellow hunger strikers, have been presented in Episode Nos 26 and 27.

Episode No 28 is a witness to the historic incident when Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose went to meet Bhagat Singh in the court. Episode No 34 mentions an old interesting incident. It so happened that one night Bhagat Singh stayed with Jatin Das in Kolkata. Next morning at dawn, Bhagat Singh saw a cowherd milking his buffalo in the township situated on the other side of the road. Bhagat Singh was very fond of milk. So, he went running to the cowherd, took a bucket full of milk from him and drank all the milk in one go. The cowherd was surprised to see how anyone could drink a full bucket of milk in one go. Bhagat Singh gave him one rupee and came back. A few months later, Bhagat Singh's photo appeared in the newspapers after throwing bombs in the Assembly hall. Seeing his photo, the

cowherd recognised him that it was the same young man who drank the bucket full of milk in one go. The cowherd immediately went to Jatin Das and assured that he won't tell anyone that Bhagat Singh, who threw bombs in the Assembly hall, used to visit him. He gave the one rupee back to Jatin Das and requested him to return it to Bhagat Singh. "He is my most valuable customer. I am blessed to have served such a great patriot," he told Jatin Das.

Episode No 37 details the incident in which 'Krantiveer' Bhagwaticharan Vohra was martyred while testing a bomb which was being prepared to get Bhagat Singh freed from jail. Episode No43 details the incident when Bhagat Singh's father filed a petition before the Special Tribunal to save him from the gallows. In his petition, he had submitted that innocents were going to be hanged by propping up false government witnesses. He had sought permission to argue with those witnesses. He had also claimed in it that Bhagat Singh was not present in Lahore but in Kolkata on the day Saunders was killed. When Bhagat Singh came to know about this, he was very annoyed with his father. Clarifying the whole situation in a letter, he wrote to his father that his life was

not so precious that it should be saved by sacrificing ideals. The depiction of that incident is really very inspiring.

Episode No44 deals with the judgment in the Lahore Conspiracy Case while Episode No48 details Bhagat Singh's last meeting with his family. Episode No 49 analyses Gandhiji's efforts to save Bhagat Singh from the gallows. Episode No51 discusses the entire situation on the day of hanging while Episode No52 deliberates on the events that took place after the hanging. Overall, all the important events of the last two and a half years of Bhagat Singh's life have been depicted in this series. Another series on the letters, articles and statements of Bhagat Singh is going to be produced soon.

Apart from Bhagat Singh, YouTube channel Rashtra Vandana is also making available authentic information about many other martyrs. These days, a series on the illustrious life of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose is being shown. Many videos have also been prepared giving authentic information on martyrs like Chandrashekhar Azad, Ramprasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan, Kartar Singh Sarabha, Uddham Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev, Batukeshwar Dutt, Bagha

Jatin, Baji Raut, Chapekar brothers, Mahavir Singh, Baikunth Shukla, Suryasen, Jatin Das, etc. Also, very important information has been given on the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the inhuman atrocities committed at other places in Punjab during those days. Atrocities like how the Khalsa School in Gujranwala was bombed by aeroplanes, innocents were machine-gunned in the villages, all the students were put in jail on the false news of cracking of a government leaflet pasted on the college wall in Lahore and how women, old people and children were forced to crawl on the streets of Amritsar –all such information is available on Rashtra Vandana channel. Apart from these, poems filled with patriotism are also there. Content is available for everyone according to their own interest. In the coming days, stories of other known and little known martyrs will also be shown on Rashtra Vandana channel. A series will start soon on the merger of 565 Princely States in India and the horrors of Partition of the country in the name of religion. Along with these, video series on national heroes like Maharana Pratap and Chhatrapati Shivaji are also going to be shown on this channel.

Link to RastraVandanachannel: <https://www.youtube.com/@RASTRAVANDANAbyPRADEEPDESWAL>

पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्याय कर्तृत्व एवं विचार



डॉ. महेशचंद्र शर्मा

पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्याय कर्तृत्व एवं विचार

डॉ. महेशचंद्र शर्मा



“पंडित दीनदयाल उपाध्याय के विषय में जानकारियाँ बहुत ही सीमित हैं। डॉ. महेशचंद्र शर्मा ने इस विषय पर गवेषणात्मक अध्ययन किया है। इस शोध-ग्रंथ का प्रकाशन न केवल जनसंघ की राजनीति व विचारधारा के प्रति लोगों को लाभदायक जानकारियाँ देगा वरन् राजनीति शास्त्र की वैचारिक बहस को भी आगे बढ़ाएगा। दीनदयाल उपाध्याय व भारतीय जनसंघ को समझने के लिए यह शोध-ग्रंथ प्रामाणिक आधारभूमि प्रदान करता है।”

—डॉ. इकबाल नारायण

पूर्व कुलपति-राजस्थान विश्वविद्यालय,

काशी हिंदू विश्वविद्यालय तथा नॉर्थ-ईस्ट हिल्ज यूनिवर्सिटी,

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—डॉ. श्यामा प्रसाद मुखर्जी

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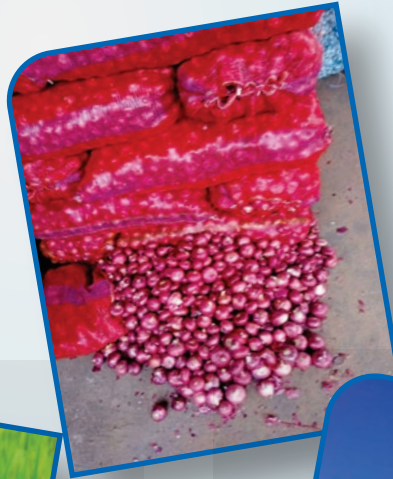
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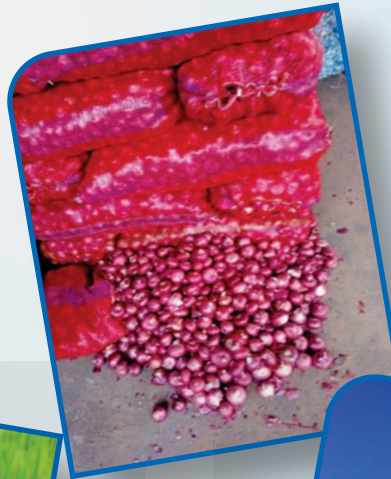
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