

BHAGAT SINGH: AN EVERGREEN ICON OF INDIAN YOUTH

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The name Bhagat Singh has become a synonym of revolution. He was one of the great revolutionaries who made supreme sacrifice for the nation. Thousands of young people sacrificed their lives in the altar of India's liberation struggle but the name Bhagat Singh has a special place in the history of our independence. No other young revolutionary of India got much empathy in the minds of the people of India like Bhagat Singh. Still he is an inspiration source for the patriotic people of our motherland. It is important today to study the contributions of Bhagat Singh and his comrades when our country is again falling under the grip of imperialism and its designs.

Unfortunately Bhagat Singh did not have much place in the history textbooks. There was a concerted effort to underestimate the contributions of revolutionaries who sacrificed everything for the liberation of our motherland.

Bhagat Singh came from a family of patriots and freedom fighters. His uncle, Ajit Singh was a pioneer in opposing the Colonization Act 1905 and had to remain in exile till the country gained independence. His father also was an active participant in the struggle for the liberation of the country from the colonial rule. While as a student Bhagat Singh came under the influence of the revolutionaries. The October revolution led by Lenin attracted Bhagat Singh and he started to collect and read the literatures about socialism and socialist revolution.

The years of the twenties in general and those of 1928-30 in particular were of great significant in the history of India's freedom struggle. Due to the failure of first non-cooperation movement, the revolutionaries of that period were frustrated and started to think about some alternative action plan. The formation of the Hindustan Republican Association, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army and the Naujawan Bharat sabha (All India Youth League) all happened during this period. Bhagat Singh and his comrades were imbued with the ideas of revolution and socialism. The manifesto of HRA says "The immediate object of the revolutionary party in the domain of politics is to establish a federal republic of the United States of India by an organized and armed revolution. The basic principle of this republic shall be universal suffrage and the abolition of all system, which makes the exploitation of man by man possible. In this republic the electors shall have the right to recall their representatives if so desired, otherwise the democracy shall be a mockery". India could not think about such ideas even after sixty years of independence!

The protest against the visit of Simon Commission turned into violence. Lala Lajpath rai died due to police lathicharge. The country witnessed unprecedented protest rallies. Bhagat Singh and his associates threw bombs in Central Assembly. A few days' later bombs exploded in the Central Assembly they were arrested. The trial began in 1929 July. The farcical trial ended in October 1930 awarded death sentence to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. The charge was conspiracy to overthrow the British rule and murder of a British official. They accepted the verdict with raising slogans. A few days before the execution Bhagat Singh wrote a letter to the British authorities demanding that as he and his two condemned comrades were prisoners of war, they should not be hanged but that the sentence should be executed by a firing squad of the British army. This was the unconquerable spirit and stuff of which Bhagat Singh was made.

The conduct of Bhagat Singh and his comrades during their historic trial at Lahore created new precedents of revolutionary behaviour. They were making use of the British courts as a forum to address the people, broadcast their revolutionary views and ideology. This was something different from the nationalist tradition set by Mahatma Gandhi. They appeared everyday in the nationalist press and every activity of theirs was watched by lakhs of people. Their revolutionary declarations were also denied publicly but this did not restrain them. Intent upon every aspect of British Court, justice and jail administration, they fought against every humiliating restriction, every

discriminatory rule and demanded proper status for freedom fighters in jail. They refused to be treated as common criminals and demanded treatment in consonance with dignity and prestige of the freedom struggle. During the trial days Bhagat Singh and his comrades were asked to refrain from raising revolutionary slogans in the court. But they continued to shout 'Inqilab Zindabad'. They were beaten and handcuffed in the court, they were assaulted with lathis till they bled profusely and fell unconscious. Bhagat Singh and his comrades succeeded in completely exposing the anti-Indian and arbitrary character of British justice in India and the barbarities of the British Indian jails. This was the aim of their fight for which they prepared to undergo all the tortures. They turned their trial into a public trial of the British government.

In a joint statement before the trial court, Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutt explained why they threw the bombs in the Central Assembly. They said their purpose was not to harm anyone but to expose the dependent character of the Legislative assembly which was being paraded by the British as a Parliament create the belief that India was being democratically governed. The statement further says ' A radical change, therefore, is necessary and it is the duty of those who realize this to reorganize society on a socialistic basis. Unless this thing is done and exploitation of man by man and nation by nations is brought to an end, sufferings and carnage with which humanity is threatened cannot be prevented. All talk of ending war and ushering in an era of universal peace is undisguised hypocrisy". In the statement they explained about their concept about revolution. They said that" By revolution, we mean the ultimate establishment of an order of the 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 the misery of imperial wars"

Bhagat Singh symbolized his struggle in the slogan he raised after he threw a bomb in the Legislative Assembly of Delhi- "Long Live revolution" (Inqilab Zindabad), a slogan totally unfamiliar at that time to the Indian people. Bhagat Singh was not content with slogans. He embodied the indomitable courage, the death-defying spirit, the capacity to sacrifice everything and unflinching courage in the face of torture.

In 1930 July Bhagat Singh told some of his fellow comrades in jail said, " This is the highest award for patriotism and I am proud that I am going to get it. They think that by destroying my terrestrial body they will be safe in this country. They are wrong. They may kill me, but they cannot kill my ideas. They can crush my body, but they will not be able to crush my spirit. My ideas will haunt the British like a curse till they are forced to run away from here. But this is one side of the picture. The other side is equally bright. Bhagat Singh dead will be more dangerous to the British enslavers than Bhagat Singh alive. After I am hanged, the fragrances of my revolutionary ideas will permeate the atmosphere of this beautiful land of ours. It will intoxicate the youth and make him mad for freedom and revolution and that will bring the doom of the British imperialist nearer. This is my firm conviction. I am anxiously waiting for the day when I will receive the highest award for my services to the country and my love for my people". Now this is the duty of the present day youth to fulfill the dreams and aspirations of Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh by organizing revolutionary movement against neo imperialism and neo colonialism. In this context the three slogans rose by Bhagat Singh and his comrades Long live revolution, Long live proletariat and Down with imperialism -are still relevant.