

The Marxist

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Shaheed Bhagat Singh: An Immortal Revolutionary

Human history from the times of Charvaka and Spartacus is illuminated with a galaxy of shining martyrs who have died for noble and progressive causes dearer to them than their own lives. In the modern age, the greatest martyrs have been those who laid down their lives fighting the barbaric scourge of imperialism.

On a world scale, the life and work of Che Guevara, who along with Fidel Castro led the Cuban Revolution, and his death at the hands of American imperialism in the jungles of Bolivia on October 9, 1967 while he was spreading the call of revolution in Latin America, has become a powerful beacon in the anti-imperialist struggle.

On a sub-continental scale, the life and work of Bhagat Singh and his death by hanging at Lahore at the hands of British imperialism on March 23, 1931, has been a great saga of inspiration to all those who cherish sovereignty, secularism and socialism – ideals for which Bhagat Singh and his comrades fought valiantly to the end.

On March 23, 2006, the country observed the 75th anniversary of martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, and a little earlier on February 27, the 75th anniversary of martyrdom of their equally illustrious comrade-in-arms, Chandrashekhar Azad.

From September 28, 2006, we begin the celebration of the Birth Centenary Year of Bhagat Singh, a powerful symbol of the still ongoing struggle of the people of India against imperialism, capitalism, feudalism, communalism and casteism – a struggle that is infinitely more complex but no less urgent today than it was in Bhagat Singh's time.

MAIN CURRENTS IN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The freedom of India from nearly two centuries of oppressive and exploitative British colonial rule was the cumulative result of a complex mosaic of four different currents that coexisted, often confronted and sometimes coordinated with one another. These were:

1. The current of armed struggles and peasant revolts that began with the Sannyasi-Fakir rebellion of 1760, encompassed the First War of Indian Independence of 1857, included the several groups of valiant armed freedom fighters throughout the country and ended with the revolt of the Royal Indian Navy ratings in 1946. All these armed struggles and peasant revolts were

brutally crushed by the British, but some of them succeeded in shaking the British Raj to its roots.

2. The Indian National Congress, led by Mahatma Gandhi, which managed to establish its hegemony over the national movement after 1920. While the Congress succeeded in mobilizing millions of the Indian people in non-violent upsurges against British rule, its bourgeois-landlord class leadership saw to it that these upsurges never crossed the boundary line to a radical agrarian revolution. Class struggle was, of course, anathema to the Congress, but it did adopt a broadly secular approach.

3. The Communist Party of India, which was formed in 1920, was the first to advocate the goal of complete independence in the Ahmedabad Congress session in 1921. Braving ban orders and massive repression of the British, the Communists plunged into the freedom movement and also organized workers and peasants for heroic class struggles, the pinnacle of which was the Telangana armed peasant revolt. Staunchly secular, the Communists were also the first to put forth the goal of socialism.

4. The social reform movement against caste and gender oppression that was led in various parts of the country by stalwarts like Raja Rammohan Roy, Mahatma Jotirao Phule, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Narayan Guru, E V Ramaswamy Naicker (Periyar) and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. The social reformers fought for freedom with social justice as one of its cardinal planks, an end to centuries of inhuman social oppression and the annihilation of the caste system itself.

There was a fifth current as well, but it was ranged directly *against* the national movement. This was the current of communalism. Not only did it never oppose the colonial rulers, but on the contrary it consistently helped British imperialism to execute its 'Divide and Rule' policy. It was represented by the Muslim League on the one hand, and by the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha on the other. This current was socially reactionary, it led to constant communal clashes and it eventually resulted in the violent partition of India on the one hand, and in the dastardly assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on the other.

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF BHAGAT SINGH AND HIS COMRADES

Bhagat Singh and his comrades belonged to the first current of armed anti-imperialist fighters. Their glorious struggle against British imperialism assumed legendary proportions. But their truly distinctive feature was that, amongst the large galaxy of thousands of armed freedom fighters spread over two centuries of the freedom struggle, it was Bhagat Singh and his comrades alone who were inexorably moving ideologically towards the third current - of Marxian socialism and the Communist Party. It is therefore no accident that comrades of Bhagat Singh like Shiv Verma, Kishori Lal, Ajoy Ghosh, Bejoy Kumar Sinha and Jaidev Kapur became leaders of the Communist movement after their release from British jails.

Bhagat Singh and his colleagues were also conscious of the need for social justice and the overthrow of the caste system. They were bitter and uncompromising enemies of communalism in all its forms. And they were inveterate opponents of the bourgeois-landlord class strategy and tactics of

the Congress Party and its leadership that were exhibited in ample measure throughout the course of the national movement.

The distinctiveness of Bhagat Singh in the revolutionary firmament of the national movement has been well captured by B.T. Ranadive in his Foreword to the *Selected Writings of Shaheed Bhagat Singh* edited by Shiv Verma. He writes:

The name of Bhagat Singh and his comrades has secured a permanent place in the minds of the Indian people. No other revolutionary of those days struck such a deep feeling of sympathy, solidarity and oneness among the people. Bhagat Singh and his comrades became part of the people's consciousness, the symbol of their aspirations and prestige, the symbol of the fight to put an end to enslavement. . . .

Punjab, Bengal and to some extent Maharashtra had earlier seen a large number of revolutionaries with unparalleled courage and capacity for self-sacrifice. They walked to the gallows with their head erect; they braved the horrors of the Andamans for years with unbending spirit. Their memory is no doubt cherished.

But they were challenging the empire at a time when the Indian masses had yet to move into political action. Their sacrifices did not become part of the common consciousness of the vast multitude that faced British lathis and rifles during the national movement in the succeeding years. On the other hand, Bhagat Singh and his comrades were in action when the masses were on the move, when every anti-British action drew their approbation. Their ultimate sacrifice, therefore, put a permanent impress on the consciousness of the Indian people...

Bhagat Singh went on churning his thoughts and proceeded more and more towards a better understanding of the Marxist stand on the issues facing the country. It may be stated without contradiction that his opinion on many national issues, his estimation of the national leadership and its weaknesses, were more or less in conformity with the views and opinions of the leaders of the Communist movement who were building their strength among the workers. His writings on various topics and his letters to his colleagues reveal his growing reliance on the Marxist outlook. It is no surprise that he declared himself an atheist and poured ridicule on the concept of a world created by a Supreme Being. His writings show a remarkable ability to merge with the subject under discussion and grasp the essence of points of dispute. They are permeated with an unfathomable sense of dedication to the cause of independence and freedom, to the cause of socialism. His study of Communist literature, of Lenin, led him to understand that India's struggle for freedom was part of the international working class struggle for socialism.

Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the official historian of the Congress, wrote that "it is no exaggeration to say that at that moment Bhagat Singh's name was as widely known all over India and was as popular as Gandhi's." In the same vein, a confidential Intelligence Bureau report of the British government, *Terrorism in India (1917-1936)* declared about Bhagat Singh that "for a time, he bade fair to oust Mr. Gandhi as the foremost political figure of the day."

A.G. Noorani concludes his book *The Trial of Bhagat Singh - Politics of Justice* with the words: "What distinguished Bhagat Singh from all others, besides his courage, patriotism and commitment to moral values, was his

intellectual strength. A voracious reader, he was also willing to rethink. He had the capacity to brood and to torment his soul over the past. That led him to renounce terrorism, and to advise the young to follow suit; indeed, to counsel moderation and readiness to compromise. He was only 23 when he was hanged. On his death, Indian leaders vied with one another in lavishing praise on him. One wonders how many of them knew then that they had lost a man who, had he lived, might have had an incalculable impact on the course of India's politics."

EARLY INFLUENCES: GHADAR MARTYRS AND JALLIANWALA BAGH

Bhagat Singh was born to Vidyavati and Kishan Singh on September 28, 1907, in the village Banga in Lyallpur district, now in Pakistan. His original village Khatkar Kalan is in Jalandhar district. He hailed from a patriotic family. His uncle Ajit Singh, along with Lala Lajpat Rai, was exiled to Mandalay jail in Burma by the British for leading a powerful peasant agitation against the hike in land revenue and canal taxes. At the time of Bhagat Singh's birth, his father Kishan Singh and his other uncle Swarn Singh, were also in jail due to their nationalist activities, and were released soon after. In such an atmosphere, Bhagat Singh naturally imbibed patriotic sentiments. He especially adored his exiled uncle Ajit Singh.

While Bhagat Singh was in school, Punjab was rocked by the hanging of seven Ghadar martyrs by the British on November 16 and 17, 1915, in the First Lahore Conspiracy Case. Prominent among them were Kartar Singh Sarabha from Punjab and Vishnu Ganesh Pingle from Maharashtra. The young Bhagat Singh was deeply moved by the heroic saga and sacrifice of Kartar Singh Sarabha, who was just 20 years old when he was hanged. Sarabha's last words were, "My only ambition is to see my country free. All that I did had this objective. I have never done anything out of hatred for any person, nation, religion or race. I only desire one thing - independence. This is my only dream. If I had to live more lives than one, I would sacrifice each of them for my country's sake."

Bhagat Singh always carried a photo of Sarabha in his pocket and was carrying one when he was arrested in 1929. In March 1926, when Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Bhagwati Charan Vohra founded the Naujawan Bharat Sabha in Lahore, its inaugural session began with the unveiling of Sarabha's portrait, in open defiance of the British authorities. Bhagat Singh also wrote moving articles on Kartar Singh Sarabha and some other Ghadar heroes.

The Ghadar (meaning Revolt) Party was formed in 1913 in the USA by a group of Indian, mainly Punjabi Sikh, émigré freedom fighters under the leadership of Sohan Singh Bhakna and Lala Hardayal. The formation of the Ghadar Party was a big step forward. Unlike some of the earlier armed freedom fighters from Maharashtra and Bengal, who had a marked Hindu religious bias, the Ghadar Party was completely secular, declared religion to be a private affair and opposed the poison of communalism and also untouchability. Unlike the earlier armed freedom fighters, most of whom came from the lower middle class, most Ghadar members were peasants turned workers. Its main stress was not so much on armed individual actions; rather it called upon peasants and soldiers to rise in revolt against British

rule. Since most of its members were based in Canada and the USA before they came to India, it had an international outlook.

The Komagata Maru ship tragedy took place at Budge Budge on September 29, 1914, in which several Ghadarites were killed and many escaped. After that, the Ghadar Party led by Kartar Singh Sarabha and Vishnu Ganesh Pingle, the Anushilan Samiti led by Rash Behari Bose and Sachindranath Sanyal, and the Jugantar Group led by Jatindranath Mukherjee (Bagha Jatin) together planned an audacious uprising of the Indian Army against British rule on February 21, 1915, when the First World War was in progress.

The plan failed, partly due to treachery, and many of the above fighters were killed, hanged or transported for life. It is recorded by Bejoy Kumar Sinha, a colleague of Bhagat Singh, that out of the Ghadar revolutionaries, "about one hundred mounted the gallows, forty one faced the firing squad, and about a hundred went to the Andamans sentenced to life transportation." The Ghadar Party made tremendous sacrifices for Indian freedom.

Another event that was to leave a deep impression on the young Bhagat Singh was, of course, the horrific Jallianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar on April 13, 1919. The butcher of Amritsar, General Dyer fired 1600 rounds of ammunition on the unarmed crowd of around 10,000 that had gathered for a public meeting, killing 379 according to official figures; unofficially, it was put at over 1000; and leaving over 1200 wounded.

Bhagat Singh was then just 12 years old and was studying at the D A V School in Lahore. He was deeply enraged by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. It has been recorded that he immediately went to the Bagh, collected its soil in a bottle and kept it as a constant reminder of the hurt and humiliation that that the Indian people had suffered.

When the Non-Cooperation Movement started in 1920, Bhagat Singh left the D A V School and joined the National College started by Lala Lajpat Rai and Bhai Parmanand. His college friends included Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Sukhdev and Yashpal. He evinced great interest both in his studies and in politics and was a voracious reader. His area of special interest was the history of revolutions. He was fond of singing patriotic songs and also took part in the college dramatics club, which was soon banned by the government.

In 1924, Bhagat Singh had to give up his B.A. studies and leave Lahore because his father and grandmother were forcing him to get married. He wrote to his father, "This is not the time for marriage. The country is calling me. I have taken oath to serve the country physically, mentally and monetarily." When his father continued to insist, Bhagat Singh again wrote back, "I am astonished to read the contents of your letter...You are caring for Dadi, but in how much trouble is our Mother of 33 crores, the Bharat Mata. We still have to sacrifice everything for her sake." Finally, when leaving home, he wrote, "I dedicate my life to the lofty goal of service to the Motherland. Hence there is no attraction in me for home and fulfilment of worldly desires." He left Lahore for Kanpur.

In the backdrop of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919, the Non-Cooperation Movement announced by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920 and his declaration of "Swaraj in One Year" galvanized the entire country as never before. "This satanic government cannot be mended, it must be ended," was the battle cry of the people. Millions of people all over the country came out on the streets to oppose the British regime. For the first time since 1857, the peasantry joined the struggle in strength. It linked burning agrarian issues like taxes, rent, eviction by landlords etc to the struggle for independence. The support of the Congress to the Khilafat movement also drew the Muslim masses into the struggle in huge numbers and remarkable Hindu-Muslim unity was witnessed everywhere in the course of the movement.

Bipan Chandra has recorded that among the participants in the non-violent satyagraha were Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Surya Sen, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Sukhdev, Jatin Das, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Yashpal, Shiv Verma, Gaya Prasad and Jaidev Kapoor. Some of the armed freedom fighters in Bengal had, in fact, promised Mahatma Gandhi to suspend their activities to give a fair chance for the success of the non-violent movement.

Mahatma Gandhi's sudden and arbitrary withdrawal of the nationwide movement in February 1922 after the events in Chauri Chaura in UP came like a bolt from the blue. It left the country dumbfounded. The peasants of Chauri Chaura were fighting both imperialism and landlordism, when many were shot and killed by the British police. Enraged, they burnt down the thana where the police fled to take shelter. 22 policemen were killed.

But Mahatma Gandhi did not stop at only withdrawing the nationwide movement. An urgent meeting of the Congress Working Committee was convened at Bardoli in Gujarat on February 11-12, 1922, which not only endorsed the withdrawal but also passed the following resolution: "The Working Committee advises Congress workers and organizations to influence the ryots (peasants) that the withdrawing of rent payments to the zamindars is contrary to the Congress resolutions and injurious to the best interests of the country. The Working Committee assures the zamindars that the Congress movement is in no way intended to attack their legal rights, and that even where the ryots have grievances, the Committee desires that redress be sought by mutual consultation and arbitration."

This step aborted the onward march of the peasantry towards an agrarian revolution. It also laid the firm basis for the bourgeois-landlord class alliance led by the Congress, both before and after Independence.

In his work *A History of Indian Freedom Struggle*, E.M.S. Namboodiripad summed up Mahatma Gandhi's leadership of the freedom struggle: "Thus, it became clear that Gandhi was a leader who could mobilize people for struggle on such a scale that not a single political leader, including Tilak, could so far do, and at the same time, suspend the struggle in the name of 'violence on the part of people' which no other leader dared to do. These two aspects of the Gandhian form of struggle were evident at every subsequent stage of the freedom struggle. It is needless to state whom or which class these two aspects of the Gandhian form of struggle served."

The withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922 had two salient effects. The great demoralization in the ranks of the people was exploited to

the hilt by agents of the British rulers to whip up communal riots all over the country. The prospects of an agrarian revolution that would have cemented communal unity were dashed to pieces.

It is no accident that the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha were both revived in 1923 and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was formed in 1925. According to the Simon Commission Report, 112 major communal riots broke out in the country between 1922 and 1927. The old Hindu-Muslim animosities were raked up on both sides in a rabid fashion. The Muslim masses were never again to join the freedom struggle in such large numbers under the Congress banner. In fact, by 1937, the communal divide would widen even further, leading to the catastrophic partition of India.

The second effect was the deep frustration in the ranks of the young and radical freedom fighters and their inevitable return to their armed activities. We have seen that many of the young revolutionaries had sincerely taken part in the non-violent satyagraha, but they were greatly disillusioned by the sudden and unwarranted withdrawal of the struggle.

Bhagat Singh, in his last testament *To Young Political Workers* written in February 1931, crystallizes his conclusions from the events of the early 1920s, "*The real revolutionary armies are in the villages and in factories, the peasantry and the labourers. But our bourgeois leaders do not and cannot dare to tackle them. The sleeping lion once awakened from its slumber shall become irresistible even after the achievement of what our leaders aim at. After his first experience with the Ahmedabad labourers in 1920 Mahatma Gandhi declared: 'We must not tamper with the labourers. It is dangerous to make political use of the factory proletariat' (The Times, May 1921). Since then, they never dared to approach them. There remains the peasantry. The Bardoli resolution of 1922 clearly defines the horrors the leaders felt when they saw the gigantic peasant class rising to shake off not only the domination of an alien nation but also the yoke of the landlords. It is there that our leaders prefer surrender to the British than to the peasantry.*"

IMPACT OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

In sharp contrast to the compromising leadership of the national movement in India, the impact of the victorious socialist revolution in Russia under the leadership of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party was being felt in India at around the same time. The first volume of the *History of the Communist Movement in India* prepared by the History Commission of the CPI(M) Central Committee gives an account of how the Russian Revolution and the programme of the Bolsheviks was welcomed by all three 'extremist' leaders of the Congress, viz. Bipin Chandra Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, by outstanding literary figures like Premchand and Kazi Nazrul Islam, and also by leading nationalist newspapers throughout the country.

The victory of the Russian Revolution had an even bigger impact on young armed freedom fighters in India and abroad. Its three sterling contributions were: a) it infused confidence in Indian revolutionaries that imperialism and the exploiting classes could be overthrown, b) it brought on to the agenda the economic and social content of Indian independence, c) it provoked a serious study of Marxism and Communist principles.

It was as a sequel to the Russian Revolution that the Communist Party of India (CPI) was formed at Tashkent on October 17, 1920. This was gradually followed by the emergence of small and scattered communist groups, mainly in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Lahore and Kanpur. The Communists began to rally the people against British rule and simultaneously started organizing workers and peasants. In the Ahmedabad session of the Congress in 1921, Maulana Hasrat Mohani and Swami Kumaranand moved a resolution to define Swaraj as complete freedom from foreign rule. Gandhi opposed the demand and the resolution was defeated. Right from its inception, the CPI raised the slogan of complete independence before any other political party or group in India.

In the same Ahmedabad session, the newly-formed Communist Party distributed its Manifesto in the form of an appeal to all Congress delegates. It called for the complete severance of all connections with the British empire and full support to the struggles of the working class and the peasantry. The Manifesto said, "If the Congress would lead the revolution, which is shaking India to its very foundation, let it not put its faith in mere demonstrations and temporary wild enthusiasm. Let it make the immediate demands of the trade unions its own demands; let it make the programme of the Kisan Sabhas its own programme; and the time will soon come when the Congress will not be stopped by any obstacle; it will be backed by the irresistible strength of the entire population, consciously fighting for their material interests."

Two weeks after the Tashkent meeting where the CPI was formed, but having no direct connection with that event, the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed on October 31, 1920, at its first conference in Bombay.

H.R.A. AND THE KAKORI CONSPIRACY CASE

It was in the background of all these historic events that Bhagat Singh reached Kanpur in 1924. There he went to his father's friend Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, a prominent Congress leader and the editor of *Pratap*. Though Vidyarthi was himself a Gandhian, his house was a common meeting place for socialists, communists and other revolutionaries. It was here that Bhagat Singh met Chandrashekhar Azad, Batukeshwar Dutt, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Shiv Verma, Bejoy Kumar Sinha and others. In Kanpur, he continued to read voraciously and completed his study of Karl Marx's *Capital*. He wrote and distributed nationalist and revolutionary leaflets amongst the masses. It was in his six months stay at Kanpur that he joined the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA).

The HRA had been formed in 1923 - within a year of Chauri Chaura and its aftermath - by Sachindranath Sanyal, who was transported for life in the Banaras Conspiracy Case and later released. He was a close associate of Rash Behari Bose. Sanyal's book written in jail, *Bandi Jeevan*, was highly acclaimed by all armed freedom fighters of that era. Sanyal had written the Manifesto of the HRA, which was distributed in all major cities of North India on the night between December 31, 1924 and January 1, 1925. He had also prepared the HRA Constitution, which came to be known as the Yellow Paper.

The HRA Manifesto, which was titled *The Revolutionary*, was a powerful piece that began thus, "Chaos is necessary to the birth of a new star. And the birth of life is accompanied by agony and pain. India is also taking a new birth, and is passing through that inevitable chaos and agony. Indians shall play their destined role, when all calculations shall prove futile, when the wise and the mighty shall be bewildered by the simple and the weak, when great empires shall crumble down and new nations shall arise and surprise humanity with the splendour and glory which shall be all its own."

It then set out its aim: "The immediate object of the revolutionary party in the domain of politics is to establish a federal Republic of United States of India by an organized and armed revolution. The final constitution of this Republic shall be framed and declared at a time when the representatives of India shall have the power to carry out their decision. But the basic principles of this Republic will be universal suffrage and abolition of all systems which make the exploitation of man by man possible, e.g. the railways and other means of transportation and communication, the mines and other kinds of very great industries such as the manufacture of steel and ships, all these shall be nationalized."

Further, "The revolutionary party is not national but international in the sense that its ultimate object is to bring harmony in the world by respecting and guaranteeing the diverse interests of the different nations. It aims not at competition but at cooperation between the different nations and states and in this respect it follows the footsteps of the great Indian rishis of the glorious past and of Bolshevik Russia in the modern age."

The HRA Manifesto and Constitution had their strengths and their weaknesses, which were neatly summarized by Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar in his book *In Search of A Revolutionary Ideology and A Revolutionary Programme* as follows, "The above two documents may be described as typical of the thinking of those revolutionaries who were then being attracted towards communism, yet could not completely overcome the influence of romantic revolutionism." While showing a positive but confused inclination towards socialism, the Manifesto also had marked elements of mysticism.

Funds for procuring arms and ammunition were raised by the HRA, among other methods, by committing dacoities. Some minor dacoities went unnoticed. But on August 9, 1925, the HRA revolutionaries stopped a train at Kakori near Lucknow and broke a government safe carrying a modest amount of Rs 4679. Despite warning the train passengers not to come out so that no harm would come to them, one person came out and was accidentally killed. The British government cracked down brutally, instituted the Kakori Conspiracy Case and managed to arrest most of the participants in the dacoity.

Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan and Thakur Roshan Singh were hanged on December 19, 1927 and Rajendra Lahiri two days earlier on December 17, 1927. Sachindranath Sanyal and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee got life imprisonment, while 11 others got various terms in jail. Only Chandrashekhar Azad and Kundan Lal Gupta escaped arrest. This was a big blow to the HRA, but it recovered due to the great efforts of Chandrashekhar Azad and the second line of leadership comprising Shiv Verma and others.

The Kakori martyrs became a legend throughout India. On the day of his execution, Ram Prasad Bismil declared, "We shall be born again, shall meet again and shall jointly fight once again for the cause of the motherland as comrades-in-arms." Ashfaqullah Khan told his nephew the day before his execution, "You must remember that the Hindu community has dedicated and great souls like Khudiram and Kanailal. To me, this is my good fortune that, belonging to the Muslim community, I have acquired the privilege of following in the footsteps of those great martyrs." The death-defying song they sang to the gallows became part of the lexicon of the freedom struggle. This song was:

*Sarfarooshi ki tamanna ab hamare dil mein hai,
Dekhna hai zor kitna baju-e katil mein hai.*

(We have now a longing in our hearts to put our heads on to the bidding,
It is to be seen how much strength the executioner has in his arms.)

NAUJAWAN BHARAT SABHA: TOWARDS A MASS MOVEMENT

Before the Kakori dacoity, in early 1925, Bhagat Singh had gone back to Lahore when his father assured him that he would not be married off against his wishes. He started political work and set up the Lahore branch of the HRA, but had to shift to Delhi for six months in 1925 to evade arrest. In Delhi, he worked with the daily *Veer Arjun*. In late 1925, he went to Kanpur to take part in abortive attempts to free the Kakori prisoners from jail and soon returned to Lahore.

Here, Bhagat Singh along with Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Sukhdev and Ram Krishan took the lead in forming a militant youth organization called the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (NBS) in March 1926. Ram Krishan was elected its president and Bhagat Singh its secretary. Its members also included eminent personalities like Saifuddin Kitchlew, Satyapal, Mir Abdul Majid, Sardul Singh Caveeshar and the poet Lal Chand *Falak*.

The founding of the NBS as an open wing of the revolutionaries to carry out political work among the youth, peasants and workers was a very significant step in the political and ideological journey of Bhagat Singh. It showed his growing Marxist conviction that popular broad-based mass movements alone could lead to a successful revolution. This mass approach is reflected in the Aims and Manifesto of the NBS, partly quoted below.

The NBS soon opened branches at Lahore, Amritsar and other cities and towns in Punjab and, later, at Karachi and Peshawar as well. Bhagat Singh and his colleagues delivered inspiring lectures on the lives of revolutionary martyrs in NBS meetings, the aim being to rouse the youth against British imperialism. In June 1928, Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev also organized the Lahore Students' Union, as an auxiliary of the NBS. Both organizations served as a recruiting ground for the HSRA which was to be formed later. In August 1928, the NBS, along with radical Congressmen, celebrated "Friends of Russia Week" and also organized a meeting to eulogize the Russian Revolution. From 1928-30, HSRA revolutionaries and Communist groups worked together in the NBS. The NBS was banned by the British government in May 1930, a year after Bhagat Singh's arrest.

The political aims of the NBS were: a) To establish a completely independent republic of the labourers and peasants of the whole of India, b) To infuse a spirit of patriotism in the hearts of the youth of the country in order to establish a united Indian nation, c) To express sympathy with and to assist economic, industrial and social movements, which, being free from communal sentiments, were intended to take the movement nearer its ideal, d) To organize labourers and peasants.

The Manifesto of the NBS, written by Bhagwati Charan Vohra on April 6, 1928, declared: "The future programme of preparing the country will begin with the motto: 'Revolution by the masses and for the masses.' In other words, Swaraj for the 90%; Swaraj not only attained by the masses but also for the masses...Without going into details, we can safely assert that to achieve our object, thousands of our most brilliant young men, like Russian youth, will have to pass their precious lives in villages and make the people understand what the Indian revolution would really mean. They must be made to realize that the revolution which is to come will mean more than a change of masters. It will, above all, mean the birth of a new order of things, a new state. This is not the work of a day or a year. Decades of matchless self-sacrifice will prepare the masses for the accomplishment of that great work and only the revolutionary young men will be able to do that. A revolutionary does not necessarily mean a man of bombs and revolvers."

Outlining the close links between the NBS and the Communists, A.G. Noorani writes in *The Trial of Bhagat Singh: Politics of Justice*: "The Sabha's progress was impressive by any standards. Similar bodies were formed in other provinces. Branches proliferated in the Punjab. An All-India Naujawan Bharat Sabha was established in Delhi. Soon links were forged with the Hindustan Republican Association and the Kirti Kisan Party, founded by Sohan Singh Josh. Already, on his return to Lahore, Bhagat Singh had established contacts with the Kirti Kisan Party. The Party owed its existence to the united efforts of the emissaries of the Ghadar Party (Bhag Singh 'Canadian') and of the Communist Party of Great Britain (Philip Spratt) and of Sohan Singh Josh, Mir Abdul Majid and Kedar Nath Sehgal. (The last four, all Communists, were to be among the 31 accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case in 1929 - AD.) Intended to be a Workers and Peasants Party, it was named the Punjab Kirti-Kisan Party. Its organ *Kirti* was published in Punjabi and Urdu so that it could be read by the masses...Bhagat Singh worked for some time, assisting Sohan Singh Josh."

SECULARISM: AN ARTICLE OF FAITH

Two of the six rules of the NBS drafted by Bhagat Singh were: "To have nothing to do with communal bodies or other parties which disseminate communal ideas" and "to create the spirit of general toleration among the public considering religion as a matter of personal belief of man and to act upon the same fully."

Secularism was, indeed, an article of faith with Bhagat Singh all his life. Bipan Chandra described it thus: "More than any other contemporary leader, with the exception of Gandhiji, he understood the danger that communalism posed to Indian society and Indian nationalism. He often warned his

comrades and followers that communalism was as big an enemy as colonialism...Religion, said Bhagat Singh, was the private concern of a person, but it had to be fought as an enemy when it intruded into politics and took the form of communalism. Bhagat Singh also believed that people must free themselves from the mental bondage of religion and superstition."

His classic article *Why I am an Atheist* is, of course, the most remarkable exposition of his approach to God and religion, which goes far beyond secularism and towards Marxism. The Hindi edition of *The Complete Works of Bhagat Singh* edited by Chaman Lal, comprises three very significant articles that were published in the Punjabi and Urdu monthly *Kirti* in May and June 1928. The titles of these three articles are: *Religion and Our Freedom Struggle*; *Communal Riots and their Solution*; and *The Problem of Untouchability*. For reasons of space, it is not possible to quote from them here; suffice it to say that they are an extremely mature and forthright exposition of secularism and social justice. Remarkably, they were written when Bhagat Singh was just 21 years old.

Bipan Chandra, in *India's Struggle for Independence*, has cited the following revealing anecdote that throws light on Bhagat Singh's deep commitment to secularism: "Bhagat Singh revered Lajpat Rai as a leader. But he would not spare even Lajpat Rai, when, during the last years of his life, Lajpat Rai turned to communal politics. He then launched a political-ideological campaign against him. Because Lajpat Rai was a respected leader, he would not publicly use harsh words of criticism against him. And so he printed as a pamphlet Robert Browning's famous poem, 'The Lost Leader,' in which Browning criticizes Wordsworth for turning against liberty. The poem begins with the line 'Just for a handful of silver he left us.' A few more of the poem's lines were: 'We shall march prospering, - not thro' his presence; Songs may inspirit us, - not from his lyre' and 'Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more.' There was not one word of criticism of Lajpat Rai. Only, on the front cover, he printed Lajpat Rai's photograph!"

H.S.R.A.: DECISIVE TURN TOWARDS SOCIALISM

After the British attempts to smash the HRA in the Kakori Conspiracy Case, the regrouping of the Kanpur group began under the leadership of Chandrashekhar Azad. He was assisted by Kundan Lal Gupta, Shiv Verma, Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Jaidev Kapur, Gaya Prasad and others. The Lahore group was led by Bhagat Singh and comprised Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Sukhdev, Kishori Lal, Yashpal and others.

The ideological churning within the HRA leadership continued unabated during this period. Shiv Verma has written that the credit for bringing Bhagat Singh and the Lahore group from anarchism to socialism goes to prominent Communist leader Sohan Singh Josh and to Lala Chhabil Das, who was the principal of the National College. The Dwarkadas Library of Lala Lajpat Rai, which had such books on Marxism and Soviet Russia that were not banned by the British, and other illegal sources of Marxist literature, also played a crucial role in getting Bhagat Singh and Bhagwati Charan over to Marxism. The Kanpur group was similarly influenced by Radha Mohan Gokulji, Maulana Hasrat Mohani and Satyabhakta, who had declared themselves as

Communists. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi also helped the young revolutionaries in many ways. As in Lahore, so also in Kanpur, legal and illegal Marxist literature also played a key role.

Added to this process of self-cultivation were also the political developments taking place in the country during this period. Some of these were: the five Peshawar Conspiracy Cases from 1922-27 that were instituted by the British against several *muhajirs* who came back from Soviet Russia and either were, or were suspected to be, Communists; the Kanpur Conspiracy Case of 1923-24 against Communist leaders; the first All-India conference of the CPI at Kanpur in December 1925; the formation of Workers' and Peasants' Parties in various provinces in 1926-28; the world economic crisis that began in the colonies from 1926; the historic general strike of the British working class in 1926; and the unprecedented strike struggles of the Indian working class led by the Communists in various parts of the country from 1926-28. All these developments could not have failed to make their impact on the young revolutionaries of the HRA.

It was against this background that a key meeting of leading revolutionaries was held at the Ferozshah Kotla Grounds in Delhi on September 8-9, 1928. A total of eight representatives attended the meeting. There were two from Punjab, three from Uttar Pradesh, two from Bihar and one from Rajasthan. The Bengal group did not attend, but it later sent Jatin Das to Agra to train the others in manufacturing bombs.

Bhagat Singh placed the following main proposals before the meeting: a) that the time had come to boldly declare Socialism as our ultimate goal, b) that the name of the Party be changed accordingly to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) so that the people would know our ultimate aim, c) that we should undertake only such actions which have direct relationship with the demands and sentiments of the people, and not fritter away our time and energy in killing petty police officials and informers, d) that for funds we should lay our hands on government money and avoid actions on private houses, and e) that the principle of collective leadership should be strictly observed.

After a detailed two-day discussion on these proposals, they were adopted by a majority of six to two. The six who voted in favour were Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Shiv Verma, Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Jaidev Kapur and Surendra Pandey. Phanindranath Ghosh and Manmohan Banerjee, both from Bihar, and both of whom were later to turn approvers in the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case against Bhagat Singh and others, opposed the idea of socialism as well as the change in the name of the Party. Chandrashekhar Azad did not attend the meeting for security reasons, but he had been fully consulted by Bhagat Singh, and had given his assent to the above proposals. The meeting elected a seven-member central committee. Bhagat Singh was given the charge of ideological work and Chandrashekhar Azad was elected commander-in-chief.

The HSRA Manifesto, written by Bhagwati Charan Vohra and widely distributed in the Lahore Session of the Congress in December 1929, is a remarkable document. Beginning with the sentence "The food on which the tender plant of liberty thrives is the blood of the martyr," the Manifesto lyrically explains the meaning of Revolution thus: "Revolution is a phenomenon which nature loves and without which there can be no progress

either in nature or in human affairs. Revolution is certainly not unthinking, brutal campaign of murder and incendiarism; it is not a few bombs thrown here and a few shots fired there; neither is it a movement to destroy all remnants of civilization and blow to pieces time honoured principles of justice and equity. Revolution is not a philosophy of despair or a creed of desperadoes. Revolution may be anti-God but is certainly not anti-Man. It is a vital, living force which is indicative of eternal conflict between the old and the new, between life and living death, between light and darkness. There is no concord, no symphony, no rhythm without revolution. 'The music of the spheres' of which poets have sung, would remain an unreality if a ceaseless revolution were to be eliminated from the space. Revolution is Law, Revolution is Order and Revolution is the Truth."

Analyzing the current situation, the Manifesto says, "India is writhing under the yoke of imperialism. Her teeming millions are today a helpless prey to poverty and ignorance. Foreign domination and economic exploitation have unmanned the vast majority of the people who constitute the workers and peasants of India. The position of the Indian proletariat is, today, extremely critical. It has a double danger to face. It has to bear the onslaught of foreign capitalism on one hand and the treacherous attack of Indian capital on the other. The latter is showing a progressive tendency to join hands with the former. The leaning of certain politicians in favour of dominion status shows clearly which way the wind blows. Indian capital is preparing to betray the masses into the hands of foreign capitalism and receive as a price of this betrayal, a little share in the government of the country. The hope of the proletariat is now centred on socialism which alone can lead to the establishment of complete independence and the removal of all social distinctions and privileges."

While this certainly marked a significant advance over earlier declarations of all armed freedom fighters so far, hangovers of the past legacy were not obliterated altogether. A certain amount of confusion still prevailed in the Manifesto about the role of terrorism. For instance, "We have been taken to task for our terroristic policy. Our answer is that terrorism is never the object of revolutionaries, nor do they believe that terrorism alone can bring independence. No doubt the revolutionaries think, and rightly, that it is only by resorting to terrorism alone that they can find a most effective means of retaliation. The British government exists, because the Britishers have been successful in terrorizing the whole of India. How are we to meet this official terrorism? Only counter-terrorism on the part of revolutionaries can checkmate effectively this bureaucratic bullying."

The other major document of the HSRA was called *The Philosophy of the Bomb*. It had an interesting background. On December 23, 1929, a bomb exploded under Viceroy Irwin's special train, from which he escaped death or serious injury. Gandhiji thanked God for the Viceroy's narrow escape and in the Lahore session of the Congress that was held the very next week, Gandhiji wanted a resolution passed unanimously 'condemning the cowardly deed of the misguided youth.' But the Congress was in no mood to oblige, and the resolution was passed by a bare majority of 81 in a house of 1713.

After this, Gandhiji wrote a piece called *The Cult of the Bomb* in his journal *Young India*. To this, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, in full consultation with

Chandrashekar Azad, wrote a reply called *The Philosophy of the Bomb*. That was also published in *Young India*. It was an outstanding document, the most mature that the HSRA produced. It polemically countered Gandhiji's attack on the armed revolutionaries, criticized his creed of non-violent satyagraha, reiterated the aim of a socialist revolution and ended with the stirring battle-cry:

"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...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 the cowards fall back and cringe for compromise and peace. We ask for no mercy and we give no quarter. Ours is a war to the end - to Victory or Death. Long Live Revolution!"

THE ASSASSINATION OF SAUNDERS:

AVENGING A NATIONAL INSULT

In 1928, the all-white Simon Commission came to India to probe the question of further constitutional reforms. The Congress decided to boycott the Commission and to hold protest demonstrations against it. The HSRA decided to actively participate in these actions. The Commission came to Lahore on October 30, 1928, less than two months after the formation of the HSRA. A huge demonstration, led by Lala Lajpat Rai, was held. Bhagat Singh and his comrades were part of it. The police ordered a lathi charge and the Superintendent of Police named Scott rained lathi blows on Lajpat Rai's head. He died on November 17. The nation was stunned and infuriated.

The HSRA decided to avenge the death of Lajpat Rai and the insult to the nation by killing Scott. On December 17, 1928, exactly a month after Lajpat Rai's death, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekar Azad, Rajguru and Sukhdev shot dead J P Saunders, another police officer who was also involved in the lathi charge, mistaking him for Scott.

The same night, handwritten posters in pink were pasted on the walls of Lahore. Issued by the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, which claimed responsibility for the killing, the powerful poster said: "With the death of J P Saunders, the assassination of Lala Lajpat Rai has been avenged...This national insult was a challenge to young men. Today the world has seen that the people of India are not lifeless; their blood has not become cold. They can lay down their lives for the country's honour. The proof of this has been given by the youth who are ridiculed and insulted by the leaders of their own country."

The poster continued: "We are sorry to have killed a man. But this man was a part of a cruel, despicable and unjust system and killing him was a necessity. This man has been killed as an employee of the British government. This government is the most oppressive government in the world. We are sorry for shedding human blood but it becomes necessary to

bathe the altar of revolution with blood. Our aim is to bring about a revolution which would end all exploitation of man by man. Long Live Revolution!"

After the assassination of Saunders, Bhagat Singh immediately escaped to Calcutta along with Rajguru and Bhagwati Charan's wife Durga Bhabhi, who was a dedicated revolutionary in her own right. All three were in disguise. In Calcutta, Bhagat Singh met the Bengal revolutionaries Trailokya Chakravarty and Pratul Ganguly who had by that time come out of jail. He reported to them about the HSRA decisions taken in the September meeting in Delhi and obtained their assent on all the points. They agreed to send Jatin Das to train the HSRA revolutionaries in manufacturing bombs.

Bhagat Singh attended in secret the first All India Conference of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties which was held at Calcutta from December 21-24, 1928. Sohan Singh Josh and others from Punjab attended the conference as delegates. Bhagat Singh was also present during the Calcutta session of the Congress which was held from December 29, 1928 to January 1, 1929. Here, on the first day, the Communist Party made a historic intervention when it led a huge demonstration of over 50,000 workers which occupied the Congress pandal and demanded that the Congress accept the goal of complete independence instead of dominion status at this session itself. That did not happen. This long-standing demand of the Indian people, which was first raised by the Communist Party, was finally accepted one year later, at the Lahore session of the Congress on December 31, 1929.

Shiv Verma has recalled an interesting and significant anecdote of that time. He writes: "While talking to Comrade Sohan Singh Josh at Calcutta in December 1928, at the time of the Calcutta session of the Congress, Bhagat Singh had said, 'We entirely agree with the programme and activities of your Party, but there are times when the blow of the enemy has to be immediately counteracted by armed actions to inspire confidence among the masses.' That is how our minds were working then."

For four months, from December 1928 to April 1929, the British regime, in spite of desperate efforts, could not trace those responsible for the assassination of Saunders. It was the next episode in the struggle that was to provide them with the clues.

BOMBS IN THE CENTRAL ASSEMBLY: TO MAKE THE DEAF HEAR

To crack down on the rising working class movement and the increasing influence of the Communists, the British government brought the repressive Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill in the Central Legislative Assembly at Delhi. Already, on March 20, 1929, the British regime had arrested 31 prominent Communist and labour leaders from different parts of the country in the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case.

The HSRA leadership decided to throw bombs in the Central Assembly to protest against the passage of the above two draconian Bills and also against the arrests of the Communist and labour leaders. The bombs were not meant to kill anybody; they were to serve as a warning. Those throwing the bombs would not escape, but would deliberately get arrested and then use the trial in court for propaganda so that the programme and ideology of the HSRA would become widely known throughout the country.

After considerable discussion, it was decided that Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt should carry out this task. Bhagat Singh would put forth the views of the revolutionaries before the court and the country most effectively, and the presence of Batukeshwar Dutt would stress the All-India character of the HSRA. This decision was taken although it was fraught with grave risk, since Bhagat Singh was also involved in the Saunders case. On April 8, 1929, as planned, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw two bombs in the Assembly, immediately after the passage of the Trade Disputes Bill. No one was seriously injured. They also threw leaflets in the Assembly proclaiming why they had thrown the bombs. They did not try to run away and calmly courted arrest.

The leaflet thrown in the Assembly, in the name of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, began thus: "It takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear. With these immortal words uttered on a similar occasion by Valliant, a French anarchist martyr, do we strongly justify this action of ours...The Government is thrusting upon us new repressive measures like the Public Safety and the Trade Disputes Bill, while reserving the Press Sedition Bill for the next session. The indiscriminate arrests of labour leaders working in the open field clearly indicate whither the wind blows..."

"Let the representatives of the people return to their constituencies and prepare the masses for the coming revolution, and let the Government know that while protesting against the Public Safety and Trade Disputes Bills and the callous murder of Lala Lajpat Rai, on behalf of the helpless Indian masses, we want to emphasize the lesson often repeated by history, that it is easy to kill individuals but you cannot kill the ideas. Great empires crumbled while the ideas survived. Bourbons and Czars fell.

"We are sorry to admit that we who attach so great a sanctity to human life, we who dream of a glorious future, when man will be enjoying perfect peace and full liberty, have been forced to shed human blood. But the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of the 'Great Revolution' that will bring freedom to all, rendering the exploitation of man by man impossible, is inevitable. Long Live Revolution! "

Both the above actions - the assassination of Saunders and the hurling of bombs in the Central Assembly - made Bhagat Singh and his comrades legendary heroes. The whole country acclaimed them with admiration and adulation. The acclamation was to increase even more after seeing their fearless defiance in British jails and before British courts.

'WHAT IS REVOLUTION?'

The hearing of the Assembly Bomb Case began on May 7, 1929. Entering the court, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt raised slogans of 'Long Live Revolution', 'Long Live the Proletariat' and 'Down With Imperialism'. These three slogans were to be repeatedly raised by the HSRA revolutionaries in British courts and jails over the next two years. They were to be repeated by millions across the land and were to become an integral part of the heritage of the freedom movement. Through these three slogans, Bhagat Singh and his comrades succinctly summed up their entire programme.

In their historic statement before the court on June 6, 1929, Bhagat Singh and B K Dutt, while defending their action of throwing bombs in the Central Assembly, also gave a lucid and inspiring account of what they meant by the word 'Revolution'. It clearly revealed the growing influence of Marxism and is quoted here in full:

Revolution does not necessarily involve sanguinary strife, nor is there any place in it for individual vendetta. It is not the cult of the bomb and the pistol. By 'Revolution' we mean that the present order of things, which is based on manifest injustice must change. Producers or labourers, in spite of being the most necessary element of society, are robbed by their exploiters of their labour and deprived of their elementary rights. The peasant who grows corn for all, starves with his family; the weaver who supplies the world market with textile fabrics, has not enough to cover his and his children's bodies; masons, smiths and carpenters who raise magnificent places, live like pariahs in the slums. The capitalists and exploiters, the parasites of society, squander millions on their whims. These terrible inequalities and forced disparity of chances are bound to lead to chaos. This state of affairs cannot last long, and it is obvious that the present order of society in merry-making is on the brink of a volcano.

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. All talk of ending war and ushering in an era of universal peace is undisguised hypocrisy.

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.

If, however, it goes unheeded and the present system of government continues to be an impediment in the way of the natural forces that are swelling up, a grim struggle will ensue involving the overthrow of all obstacles and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat to pave the way for the consummation of the ideal of revolution. Revolution is an inalienable right of mankind. Freedom is an imperishable birthright of all. Labour is the real sustainer of society. The sovereignty of the people is the ultimate destiny of the workers.

For these ideals, and for this faith, we shall welcome any suffering to which we may be condemned. At the altar of this revolution we have brought our youth as an incense, for no sacrifice is too great for so magnificent a cause. We are content, we await the advent of Revolution. Long Live Revolution!

REVOLUTIONARY BATTLES IN COURT AND JAIL

On June 12, 1929, the court sentenced Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt in the Assembly Bomb Case to transportation for life in the Andamans. But in

the meanwhile the police had uncovered the details of Saunders' assassination. Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev and several others were tried in the historic second Lahore Conspiracy Case. The trial started on July 10, 1929 and continued for over a year up to October 7, 1930.

Bhagat Singh and his comrades turned the court into a forum for revolutionary propaganda, just as the Communist undertrials were doing in the Meerut Conspiracy Case, which, significantly, was proceeding simultaneously with the Lahore Conspiracy Case. Both cases drew nationwide attention, but the Lahore Case was more in the limelight.

The revolutionaries began a prolonged hunger strike in jail to protest against the terrible jail conditions, to demand that they be treated not as ordinary criminals but as political prisoners, for necessities like proper diet, supply of books and newspapers and against forced labour.

The jail authorities did not relent and on September 13, 1929, on the 64th day of the hunger strike, Jatin Das died a martyr. A huge procession with his body was taken through the main roads of Lahore, culminating in a massive public meeting. His body was taken by train by Durga Bhabhi from Lahore to Calcutta and all along the route, thousands gathered at every station to pay him homage. In Calcutta itself, an unprecedented procession of more than six lakhs carried Jatin Das' coffin to the cremation ground.

Later, on May 17, 1933, Mahavir Singh, another comrade of Bhagat Singh who was transported for life in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, was martyred in the indefinite hunger strike in the Andaman Cellular Jail.

On October 19, 1929, the second Punjab Students' Conference was held at Lahore under the presidentship of Subhash Chandra Bose. From jail, Bhagat Singh sent a short message to the Conference which was read out and received thunderous response. In this message Bhagat Singh said, "Comrades, Today, we cannot ask the youth to take to pistols and bombs. Today, students are confronted with a far more important assignment. In the coming Lahore Session the Congress is to give a call for a fierce fight for the independence of the country. The youth will have to bear a great burden in this difficult time in the history of the nation...The youth will have to spread this revolutionary message to the far corners of the country. They have to awaken the crores of slum-dwellers of the industrial areas and villagers living in worn-out cottages, so that we can become independent and the exploitation of man by man will become an impossibility." *Students and Politics* and *Youth* were two other articles written by Bhagat Singh, who always set great store by the youth.

The HSRA revolutionaries observed memorable days in the court itself. On December 19, 1929, they observed 'Kakori Day' and paid homage to their hanged comrades. On January 21, 1930, they appeared in the court wearing red scarves to celebrate Lenin Day. Bhagat Singh read out a telegram and asked the magistrate to send it to the Third International. The text was: "On Lenin Day we send hearty greetings to all who are doing something for carrying forward the ideas of the great Lenin. We wish success to the great experiment Russia is carrying out. We join our voice to that of the international working class movement. The proletariat will win. Capitalism will be defeated. Death to Imperialism." On May 1, 1930, they celebrated May

Day and on November 7, 1930, they sent greetings to the Soviet Union on the anniversary of the Revolution.

The year 1930 saw several historic events in the freedom struggle. At the call of the Lahore Congress in December 1929, that for the first time belatedly adopted the goal of complete independence, January 26, 1930 was celebrated throughout the country as Independence Day by raising the national flag. The mass civil disobedience movement began with the Dandi March and Salt Satyagraha of Mahatma Gandhi from March 12 to April 6, 1930. Millions participated in spontaneous demonstrations all over the country. This time, again, the movement did not always follow the Gandhian guideline of non-violence. More than 50 cases of 'terrorist' activities were registered in 1930. Some were extremely prominent.

On April 18, 1930, Surya Sen alias Masterda and his comrades Tarakeshwar Dastidar, Nirmal Sen, Ganesh Ghosh, Ananta Singh, Ambika Chakravarty, Loknath Bal, Kalpana Dutt, Pritilata Waddedar and the tiny Subodh Roy, of the Indian Republican Army (IRA) conducted the historic Chittagong Armoury Raid in Bengal and fought a pitched armed battle against the British. On April 23, 1930, Chandra Singh Garhwali and his Garhwali regiment, comprising Hindu soldiers, refused to fire on their Muslim Pathan brethren at Peshawar in the North-West Frontier Province. On May 7, 1930, the textile workers of Solapur in Maharashtra launched a general strike, drove out the British, took over the city and ran a parallel government for ten days up to May 16, when the British imposed Martial Law.

These acts met with fierce British repression. Surya Sen and Tarakeshwar Dastidar were hanged on January 12, 1934. Chandra Singh Garhwali was court-martialled and sentenced to death. His sentence was then commuted and he was sent to transportation for life along with many others. Four leaders of the Solapur revolt - Jagannath Shinde, Qurban Hussein, Malappa Dhanshetty and Srikisan Sarada were hanged on January 12, 1931.

May 28, 1930 was a tragic day for the HSRA. One of its tallest leaders and ideologues, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, was killed in an accident while testing a highly powerful bomb on the banks of the Ravi river. He was manufacturing these bombs to rescue Bhagat Singh and his comrades from jail. Before he died his last words to those accompanying him were, "Do not grieve over this accident. Remember, the task of rescuing Bhagat Singh and others still remains incomplete."

The death of Bhagwati Charan had a shattering effect on his wife, who was called Durga Bhabhi. Along with other HSRA comrades, she had herself earlier taken part in the daring Lamington Road police station shooting episode in Bombay. She continued her revolutionary activities for many more decades. Shiv Verma wrote in 1986, "Much of the work on this volume (*Selected Writings of Shaheed Bhagat Singh*) was done at Lucknow at Durga Bhabhi's place. The care, love and affection I received from her was another source of courage and inspiration."

When the case was in its final stage, on September 20, 1930, Bhagat Singh's father Kishan Singh made a written request to the Tribunal, saying that there were many facts to prove his son was innocent of Saunder's murder and that his son be given an opportunity to prove his innocence. Bhagat Singh was infuriated and wrote an open letter to his father on October

4, 1930, which was printed in the *Tribune*. The letter is historic and throws light on Bhagat Singh's revolutionary character:

My life is not so precious, at least to me, as you may probably think it to be. It is not at all worth buying at the cost of my principles. There are other comrades of mine whose case is as serious as that of mine. We had adopted a common policy and we shall stand to the last, no matter how dearly we have to pay individually for it. Father, I am quite perplexed. I fear I might overlook the ordinary principles of etiquette and my language may become a little bit harsh while criticizing or censuring this move on your part. Let me be candid. I feel as though I have been stabbed in the back. Had any other person done it, I would have considered it to be nothing short of treachery. But in your case, let me say that it has been a weakness - a weakness of the worst type. This was the time when everybody's mettle was being tested. Let me say, father, that you have failed. I know you are as sincere a patriot as one can be. I know you have devoted your life to the cause of Indian independence, but why, at this moment, have you displayed such a weakness? I cannot understand. In the end, I would like to inform you and my other friends and all the people interested in my case, that I have not approved of your move. I want that the public should know all the details about this complication, and therefore, I request you to publish this letter. Your loving son, Bhagat Singh.

On October 7, 1930, the Special Tribunal in the Lahore Conspiracy Case delivered judgement convicting all the accused except three who were acquitted - Ajoy Kumar Ghosh, Jatindra Nath Sanyal and Des Raj. Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were sentenced to death. Kishori Lal, Mahavir Singh, Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Shiv Verma, Gaya Prasad, Jaidev Kapur and Kamalnath Tewari were sentenced to transportation for life. Kundan Lal Gupta was sentenced to seven years; Prem Dutt, to five. Almost all these revolutionaries were in their twenties. The nation was stunned. It reverberated with the demand for the commutation of the death sentences on the heroic youth.

'OUR UNDISPUTED IDEOLOGICAL LEADER'

Before and after the judgement, Bhagat Singh's reading and writing in jail continued unabated. As he declared before the Lahore Court, "The sword of revolution is sharpened on the whetstone of ideas." Shiv Verma, in an interview given to the present writer in Mumbai on March 5, 1991, replied to a question as to what set Bhagat Singh apart from the others, as follows, "I can tell you that in just one sentence: Bhagat Singh was our undisputed ideological leader. I do not remember a single moment when Bhagat Singh did not have a book in his pocket. The other virtues of Bhagat Singh like tremendous courage and so on were there in the other revolutionaries amongst us also. But his uniqueness lay in his great studiousness. The degree of clarity and integrity that he had about the aims of our movement, was not there in any one of us at that time." Bipan Chandra wrote that, "Bhagat Singh was already at a young age a giant of an intellectual and thinker." Chaman Lal wrote that, "Bhagat Singh had command of four languages, without much formal training or education. He wrote in Punjabi,

Hindi, Urdu and English. His jail notebooks collect excerpts from 108 authors and 43 books including prominently Marx, Engels and Lenin, but also many others.”

There are various volumes of the writings of Bhagat Singh compiled by Shiv Verma, Chaman Lal and Bhagat Singh’s nephew Jagmohan Singh and his niece Virender Sindhu. They are a treasure house. There are also several meaningful letters written by him. For instance, he wrote a letter reprimanding Sukhdev who had said that if he did not get the death sentence, he would rather commit suicide than face life imprisonment. A month after he was given the death sentence, in November 1930 he wrote a letter to Batukeshwar Dutt in which he gave an idea of what he expected from comrades who had escaped capital punishment. *‘Why I Am An Atheist’* and *‘Introduction to Dreamland’* were two seminal tracts written by him in jail. It is the greatest of misfortunes that four other books written by Bhagat Singh in jail, viz. *The Ideal of Socialism*, *Autobiography*, *History of Revolutionary Movement in India* and *At the Door of Death*, although they were smuggled out of jail, were later destroyed.

The *Statement of the Undefended Accused*, drafted by Bhagat Singh, launched this scathing attack on imperialism, which can well apply even to the present situation in the world: “We believe that imperialism is nothing but a vast conspiracy organized with predatory motives. Imperialism is the last stage of development of insidious exploitation of man by man and of nation by nation. The imperialists, with a view to further their piratical designs, not only commit judicial murders through their law courts but also organize general massacres, devastations and other horrible crimes like war. They feel no hesitation in shooting down innocent and unarmed people who refuse to yield to their depredatory demands or to acquiesce in their ruinous and abominable designs. Under the garb of custodians of ‘law and order’, they break peace, create disorder, kill people and commit all conceivable crimes.”

Summing up his political thought, Bhagat Singh said in a message sent from prison in October 1930: “We mean by revolution the uprooting of the present social order. For this capture of state power is necessary. The state apparatus is now in the hands of the privileged class. The protection of the interests of the masses, the translation of our ideal into reality, that is, laying the foundation of society in accordance with the principles of Karl Marx, demand our seizure of this apparatus.”

On February 2, 1931, less than two months before his martyrdom, Bhagat Singh wrote the remarkable appeal To Young Political Workers, which is his last testament. After analyzing the prevailing conditions and the tactics of the Congress, he advised youth to adopt Marxism as their ideology, work among the people, organize workers and peasants and join the Communist Party. He wrote: “We require – to use the term so dear to Lenin – the ‘professional revolutionaries’. The whole time workers who have no other ambition or life-work except the revolution. The greater the number of such workers organized into the Party, the greater the chances of your success... The name of the Party should be the Communist Party. This Party of political workers, bound by strict discipline, should handle all other movements. It shall have to organize the peasants’ and workers’ parties, labour unions, and may even venture to capture the Congress and kindred political bodies. And

in order to create political consciousness, not only of national politics but class politics as well, the Party should organize a big publishing campaign."

In the same appeal, renouncing terrorism, he wrote, "Apparently I have acted like a terrorist. But I am not a terrorist. I am a revolutionary who has got such definite ideas of a lengthy programme as is being discussed here... 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 those methods."

REVOLUTIONARY IMMORTALITY

On February 27, 1931, Chandrashekhar Azad, the Commander-in-chief of the HSRA, who was still at large, went to the Alfred Park at Allahabad. Along with Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad was the most respected figure in the ranks of the revolutionaries. His courage and daring were legendary, and so also were his organizational skills. His classic marksmanship made him a terror for the British police. Despite the fact that he was not too well-educated, his political sharpness was amazing. With uncommon skill, he had eluded arrest by the police for years. But now he was betrayed by a traitor from within his own ranks and was surrounded. A fierce gun-fight with the police ensued in which Chandrashekhar Azad was killed. The life of another great revolutionary was snuffed out.

One of the negative features of the HSRA, which was common in most such underground revolutionary bodies, was the presence of traitors and approvers, who caused untold damage to the cause. In his pamphlet *Bhagat Singh and his Comrades* written in 1945, Ajoy Ghosh, one of the colleagues of Bhagat Singh who later became the General Secretary of the CPI from 1951-62, wrote of the time when several of them were arrested in the Lahore Conspiracy Case: "It all seemed over, our dreams and our hopes. More depressing than anything else was the shocking fact that, unable to stand police torture, no less than seven, two of them members of our central committee, had turned approvers."

One of these approvers and a former central committee member of HSRA was Phanindranath Ghosh. Since he had the most knowledge, his testimony proved to be the most damaging to Bhagat Singh and his comrades. As revenge, Phanindranath Ghosh was killed by Vaikuntha Shukla and Chandrama Singh on November 9, 1932. Shukla was hanged and Singh was consigned to long years of imprisonment.

A few days before his execution, in a letter written in March 1931 to the Punjab Governor, Bhagat Singh wrote, "Let us declare that the state of war does exist and shall exist so long as the Indian toiling masses and their natural resources are being exploited by a handful of parasites. They may be purely British capitalists, or mixed British and Indian, or even purely Indian. They may be carrying on their insidious exploitation through mixed or even purely Indian bureaucratic apparatus. All these things make no difference... This war shall continue...It shall be waged with new vigour, greater audacity and unflinching determination till the socialist republic is established."

Referring to the unparalleled sacrifices of Jatin Das, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Chandrashekhar Azad, he ended his letter pointing out to the Punjab Governor that since the verdict of the court was that they had waged war against the British empire, they were war prisoners; therefore “we claim to be shot dead instead of being hanged.”

On March 22, the day before Bhagat Singh’s execution, his comrades in jail sent him a slip asking if he would like to live. He wrote back: “The desire to live is natural. It is in me also. I do not want to conceal it. But it is conditional. I don’t want to live as a prisoner or under restrictions. My name has become a symbol of the Indian revolution. The ideals and the sacrifices of the revolutionary party have elevated me to a height beyond which I will never to be able to rise if I live...Yes, one thing pricks me even today. My heart nurtured some ambitions for doing something for humanity and for my country. I have not been able to fulfil even one thousandth part of those ambitions. If I live I might perhaps get a chance to fulfil them. If ever it came to my mind that I should not die, it came from this end only. I am proud of myself these days and I am anxiously waiting for the final test. I wish the day may come nearer soon. Your comrade, Bhagat Singh.”

Manmathnath Gupta, who was sentenced in the Kakori case, has reconstructed the events of March 23, 1931, the last day in the life of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. The Chief Warder of the jail, one Chatar Singh, got the order in the afternoon that the hanging was to take place the same evening. The God-fearing man approached Bhagat Singh and pleaded with him to pray and read a holy book that he had brought along. Bhagat Singh politely refused, saying that he had been an atheist all his life and would remain so even on this last day. The whole day, Bhagat Singh was reading a biography of Lenin that had been sent to him at his express wish. When, at around seven in the evening, a jail official came to take him to the gallows, Bhagat Singh, still engrossed in reading Lenin’s biography, said, “Wait a minute, one revolutionary is busy meeting another.” After reading for a while, he got up and embarked on his final journey. Amidst slogans of ‘Down With Imperialism’ and ‘Long Live Revolution’, the three martyrs – Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev - attained revolutionary immortality. The final song on their lips was:

Dil se niklegi na markar bhi watan ki ulfat,

Meri mitti se bhi khushbue watan aaegi.

(Love for the motherland will not leave my heart even after death,

Its fragrance will still be there in my dusty remains.)

Drawing lessons from the massive crowds that had gathered for Jatin Das’ funeral earlier, and apprehending an immeasurably greater uproar this time, the British authorities secretly took away all three bodies. Without handing them over to the relatives of the martyrs, the jail authorities hurriedly cremated them near Ferozepur on the banks of the Sutlej.

Bipan Chandra recounts: “The entire country went into mourning on hearing the news of their martyrdom. Angry condolence meetings and demonstrations were held in cities and towns, in which many who had earlier stood aside participated. In many places, demonstrators clashed with the

police and faced firing and lathi charges in which over a hundred people died. Hundreds of schools and colleges observed hartals; lakhs fasted on that day.”

Soon after the martyrdom of these three heroes, in the last week of March 1931 a serious communal riot broke out in Kanpur. The senior Congress leader Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, who was one of the mentors of Bhagat Singh and his comrades, was killed by fanatics while he was boldly trying to save the lives of innocents from communal wrath. This tragedy underlined Bhagat Singh’s constant warnings against the grave danger of communalism.

MAHATMA GANDHI AND THE REVOLUTIONARIES

It has often been argued that the only chance of commutation of the death sentences on Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev lay in the negotiations between Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Irwin in February-March 1931, before the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed on March 5, 1931. As such, there has also been considerable debate about the extent and intensity of the efforts made by Mahatma Gandhi to save the life of these martyrs. Without going into all the details of the controversy, we shall reproduce here the conclusions of two eminent scholars.

Amit Kumar Gupta, after analyzing the issue in depth in his article ‘*The Executions of 1931, Gandhi and Irwin*’ (in the book *Defying Death - Struggles Against Imperialism and Feudalism*), concluded in another article ‘*Defying Death: Nationalist Revolutionism in India, 1897-1938*’ (in the book *Indian People in the Struggle for Freedom*) as follows: “The popular expectation of a commutation of the death sentence rose very high at the time of a truce between the Congress supremo, Gandhiji, and the British Viceroy, Lord Irwin, after the Civil Disobedience movement. It also did not come true, mainly because Gandhiji had not insisted in his discussions with Irwin upon a reprieve, but asked only for postponement of the executions till the Karachi session of the Congress ratified the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in peace. Irwin refused to oblige on the ground that such a postponement would lead to the public impression of a reprieve forthcoming, which he conscientiously was not willing to create.”

A.G. Noorani, in a special chapter called *Gandhi’s Truth* in his book *The Trial of Bhagat Singh - Politics of Justice*, comes to the same conclusion which he expresses more strongly as follows: “The last regret is about Gandhi’s role between February 18 and March 22. As late as on March 20 he was counseling Emerson, a bureaucrat who had exhibited his racism to the Central Assembly on September 14, 1929, on damage control. It was bad enough that Gandhi spoke to the Viceroy as he did on February 18 and March 19. It was far worse that he counseled the Home Secretary thereafter on ways to contain expressions of indignation by his own people on the execution of a patriot, whose patriotism Gandhi himself admired, by the British rulers of the country.”

Noorani concludes the chapter with: “Gandhi alone could have intervened effectively to save Bhagat Singh’s life. He did not, till the very last. Later claims such as that ‘I brought all the persuasion at my command to bear on him’ (the Viceroy) are belied by the record that came to light four decades later. In this tragic episode, Gandhi was not candid either to the nation or

even to his closest colleagues about his talks with the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, on saving Bhagat Singh's life."

A week after the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh and his comrades, the Congress session was held at Karachi. For the first and only time during the freedom struggle, Mahatma Gandhi was greeted by black flag demonstrations at all railway stations from Lahore to Karachi when he came to attend the session. The Congress session itself was enveloped by gloom. It ratified the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. After much tension over the wording, it also passed the following resolution: "This Congress, while dissociating from and disapproving of political violence in any shape or form, places on record its admiration of the bravery and sacrifice of the late Bhagat Singh and his comrades, Sukhdev and Rajguru; and mourns with the bereaved families the loss of their lives." A very large minority of the delegates voted against the phrase "while dissociating from and disapproving of political violence in any shape or form".

While appreciating the positive features of Mahatma Gandhi's leadership of the national movement - his success in bringing the masses in unprecedented numbers in the struggle against colonialism, his constant battle against communalism that was to lead to his own martyrdom, his strong opposition to untouchability - Marxists were critical of his style of leadership of the national movement and his deliberate class strategy that was aimed to ensure that the freedom struggle never went onto a revolutionary path. This Marxist criticism has nothing whatever in common with the communal RSS critique of Gandhiji.

The four major events in the freedom struggle (along with many others) that clearly revealed the above strategy of Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress were: the withdrawal of the nationwide Non-Cooperation Movement after the Chauri Chaura episode in 1922; the refusal to exert pressure on the British Viceroy to save the lives of Bhagat Singh and his comrades in 1931; the refusal of the Congress (as well as the Muslim League) to support the revolt of the Royal Indian Navy ratings in 1946; and the hostile Congress attitude towards the great post-War working class struggles and militant peasant revolts like Telangana and Tebhaga.

The roots of this strategy lay in the basic class approach of Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Party and in the ultimate aim that they had in mind - the replacement of British rule by a bourgeois-landlord class alliance - exactly what Bhagat Singh had predicted.

CRITICAL APPRAISAL

A frank self-critical appraisal of the HSRA revolutionaries has been made by Shiv Verma in his thought-provoking article *Ideological Development of the Revolutionary Movement (From Chapekars to Bhagat Singh)*, published in the *Selected Writings of Shaheed Bhagat Singh*, which was edited by him. Shiv Verma was himself one of the top leaders of the HSRA and spent over a decade and a half in the Andamans, being convicted in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. He wrote in 1986:

Though socialism was accepted as the ideology and establishment of a socialist society as the ultimate aim of the party, in practice we stuck to our old individual style of actions. We talked of organizing the workers, peasants, youth and middle

class intelligentsia, yet, except for the formation of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha in Punjab, no serious effort was made in that direction anywhere else. In this regard, our understanding of scientific socialism, i.e. Marxism, was faulty. We failed to understand that Marxism does not permit the separation of theory from practice and that there is no place for individual actions in it.

We hoped to combine violent activities, which included murder of tyrannical government officials and sporadic insurrections, with the building up of mass organizations of workers, peasants, youth and students. But, in practice, our main emphasis remained on preparations for violent activities and armed actions. This, we thought, was necessary for rousing the people from their slumber and also for retaliation against mass repression resorted to by the government...The inherent contradiction in our approach had its own logic. Our decision to organize the workers and peasants remained a pious wish. The major part of our resources went in organizing retaliatory actions.

Bipan Chandra, in a comprehensive article *The Ideological Development of the Revolutionary Terrorists in Northern India in the 1920s*, that is published in his book *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, gives a balanced account of the great achievements as well as the major weaknesses of the HSRA. Some of the weaknesses pointed out by him were:

Basically, their failure can be expressed in a series of contradictions between their ideology and their work. While in theory they were committed to socialism, in practice they could not go beyond nationalism. While in theory they desired mass action and mass struggle, in practice they could not rise above terrorist or individual action. While in theory they wanted to base their movement on the masses - the peasants and workers - in practice they could only appeal to the urban lower middle class or petty bourgeois youth. While in theory they wanted to create and lead a mass movement, in practice they remained a small band of heroic youth.

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF BHAGAT SINGH

The sterling contributions of Bhagat Singh and his comrades to the freedom struggle and to the cause of sovereignty, secularism and socialism, however, far outweigh these weaknesses.

Bhagat Singh has a special relevance to contemporary India, with the increasing aggressiveness of American imperialism bearing down on the country and the world; with millions of workers, peasants, agricultural labourers and even sections of the middle classes becoming prime targets of the rapacious strategy of imperialist globalization; with the economic and political sovereignty of the country itself being threatened by the worst form of neo-colonialism; and with all kinds of communal, casteist and terrorist forces out to dynamite the country's unity and integrity.

In a sense, Bhagat Singh had himself forewarned that such developments were bound to occur if one form of exploitative rule was merely replaced by another. Referring to the workers and peasants, he had asked in his last testament, "What difference does it make to them whether Lord Reading is the head of the Indian government or Sir Purshotamdas Thakordas? What

difference for a peasant if Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru replaces Lord Irwin!" That is precisely what happened at the time of the transfer of power.

Bhagat Singh is an extremely powerful symbol of the freedom struggle and of revolutionary change. The four remarkable strands in the life, work and thought of Bhagat Singh and his comrades are: a) uncompromising struggle against imperialism, b) unflinching resistance to communalism and caste oppression; c) unbending opposition to bourgeois-landlord rule, and d) unshakable faith in Marxism and socialism as the only alternative before society.

These are precisely the strands being championed by all patriotic and progressive forces in India today. In the Bhagat Singh Birth Centenary Year, it is these strands that must be consciously taken to the people of India through a massive and well-organized yearlong campaign by the Left, democratic and secular forces. Bhagat Singh is a special source of inspiration to the students and youth of India, who are facing serious problems of education and employment. They must be rallied in this campaign in the maximum possible numbers.

There is also much to learn from the magnificent qualities of character that Bhagat Singh displayed through his short life of 23 years. His courage, sacrifice, integrity, determination, studiousness, humility and comradeship have been described in the memoirs written by his comrades and by other contemporaries. These are traits that all true revolutionaries must constantly try to imbibe and develop, first within themselves and then among others.

We shall end with the inspiring words with which Bhagat Singh concluded his last testament:

If you start the work on these lines, you shall have to be very sober. . . . It requires neither the emotion nor the death, but the life of constant struggle, suffering and sacrifice. Crush your individuality first. Shake off the dreams of personal comfort. Then start to work. Inch by inch you shall have to proceed. It needs courage, perseverance and very strong determination. No difficulties and no hardships shall discourage you. No failure and betrayals shall dishearten you. No travails imposed upon you shall snuff out the revolutionary will in you. Through the ordeals of sufferings and sacrifice you shall come out victorious. And these individual victories shall be the valuable assets of the Revolution.

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