

# **Freedom Struggle against Imperialism**

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Dedicated to

Sukhdev, born on May 15, 1907,  
Bhagat Singh, born on September 28, 1907  
and  
Shiv Ram Rajguru, born on August 24, 1908

Hanged to death together  
on March 23, 1931 evening  
at Central Jail, Lahore  
for their determined struggle  
against imperialism

The food on which the tender plant of liberty  
thrives is the blood of the martyr. (HSRA)

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## Preface

The Government of India is celebrating the birth centenary of martyr Bhagat Singh on September 28, 2007. The first such year-long celebration relating to the pioneers and martyrs of freedom struggle started on October 2, 1969, when 100th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Father of Nation, was observed on a massive scale. Later January 23, 1996, which marked the birth centenary of Netaji Subhas Chander Bose, was declared a national holiday, *but for that year only*.

It has taken us about sixty years to acknowledge that the daring deeds of revolutionaries, patriotic uprisings in the Royal Indian Army and the noncooperation campaigns played complementary roles for achieving independence from British imperialist rule. Bhagat Singh, Subhas Chander Bose and M.K. Gandhi had been the respective architects of each of these three approaches adopted to liberate India from the subjugation extending over centuries.

Lachman Singh Gill, who had been the Chief Minister of Punjab for a brief spell, declared March 23, martyrdom day of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev as a state holiday in 1968. Thereafter the Governments of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh celebrated 50th anniversary of the martyrdom of Jatinder Nath Das on September 13, 1979. Jatin passed away in Borstal Jail, Lahore on that day in 1929 after a historic hunger strike of 63 days in an ordeal seeking better treatment for political prisoners. The Haryana Government published in this context the book *Profile of a Martyr*, authored by Kiron Chander Das, younger brother of Jatin.

The Punjab Government observed 50th martyrdom anniversary of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev on March 23, 1981 and that of Hari Kishan Talwar on June 9 that year. Informative souvenirs were brought out at each occasion.

My inclination towards freedom struggle started after a dramatic happening. My mother died in 1929. I was then a lad, just not seven even. Though I was not the eldest son, yet father took me

and our only sister with him to Hardwar for the ash-immersion rites. We returned on June 30, which I later ascertained was observed as Bhagat Singh – B.K. Dutt Day to express solidarity with them in the hunger strike referred to earlier. It was getting dark when we rode back to our village from Nankana Sahib, the nearest railway station. Slogans of ‘Inquilab zindabad’ and ‘Bhagat Singh–B.K. Dutt zindabad’ echoed in the atmosphere. Slogan raisers were found to have gathered in front of our house, which place was chosen by them to demonstrate their protest as my father was the headman of village. These hereditary rural dignitaries comprising nambardars, safaidposhes and zaildars were found to be more loyal to the Crown than the British themselves. Though I had been thrilled by the slogans yet my father shocked me a lot, when in his commanding voice he directed them to disperse. My mind already anguished at the untimely demise of mother felt further distressed despite the fact that I did not then understand that one’s country is called motherland. I resolved from that day to atone for the wrong which my father had done. The earliest opportunity for that came in 1942 while I had been a student of Khalsa College, Amritsar. I plunged into the Quit India Movement impulsively. There was no looking back thereafter despite the cautioning by well-wishers that I was spoiling my brilliant academic career. Still I earned a distinction. I happened to be the only student all over India whose scholarship was confiscated for participation in the Quit India Movement.

In due course, my association with the surviving family members of Bhagat Singh and Jatinder Nath Das continued to grow nearer and dearer which enriched my understanding of various landmarks in the freedom movement. The chapter ‘Gleanings and Musings’ in this text bears testimony to that.

There has been a persistent demand that episodes from freedom struggle be included in the textbooks to inspire the young. Each chapter in this text has been compiled in such a manner that it may appear to be a self-contained piece, if selected. Hence repetition of allied events could not be avoided, but has been minimized.

September 5, 2007

Hazara Singh

## I

### **Role of Revolutionaries in Freedom Struggle**

The struggle for the liberation of India from British rule had been three pronged, viz.

- i. armed resistance to foreign rule either by arousing the patriotic sentiments of Indian soldiers serving under the British or by raising an army;
- ii. revolutionary activities undertaken by militant nationalists to smash the steel frame of British bureaucracy, bulwark of the Raj; and
- iii. constructive programme including civil disobedience and noncooperation movements launched through nonviolent means.

Each approach of this trio has its own distinct contribution towards the achievement of independence and to attribute the liberation of India to any one of them exclusively does not amount to a fair evaluation of the struggle for freedom. It is intended herein to assess the role of militant nationalists in the crusade against imperialism.

### **National Resurgence**

The contribution of Bengal to national resurgence is distinct as well as inspiring. The English system of education was introduced in India to produce English-knowing cheap Indian clerks for serving foreign bureaucrats. The Bengali young men, who got a chance to go to England for higher education, were very much impressed by the liberal and democratic traditions of the British political system at home. They got eager to reform the native society by purging it of orthodoxy, but at the same time preserving the beneficial values of its old culture. On returning home these enthusiasts found

themselves isolated. Their families were still steeped in the old conservative way of thinking and did not relish the new awakening. The English posted in India were notorious for their snobbery. In order to display their imperialistic supremacy, they were reluctant to mix with this enlightened group in spite of its having been educated on the Western pattern. The bitter memory of misbehaviour of English sailors towards Indian women and the depredations of officials of East India Company made that pinch all the more unbearable. As the number of young men who were influenced by the Western concept of nationalism and democracy increased, they were no longer prepared to accept that the British should keep them denying stubbornly a deserving place in the Raj. They began to denounce the claim that the British rule over India was legally established and any protest against it amounted to sedition. The Anglo-Bengali (Inga-Banga) clubs organized earlier to assimilate the best in the oriental as well as occidental culture began to be converted into centres of revolutionary activities. The militant nationalists used both pen and the bombs to arouse the masses from slumber and to browbeat the bureaucrats. The Raj tried to weaken the movement through reorganisation of Bengal in 1905 but was forced to annul it in the face of insurmountable resistance. Ultimately the British found it safe to shift the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911.

### **England's Difficulty India's Opportunity**

The First World War broke out in 1914. Almost every political party and religious body in India pledged their support to the British Empire. But Kartar Singh Sarabha (1898-1915) who was then in the USA, firmly shared the view that England's difficulty was an opportunity for India. He organized a patriotic band, who on returning to India, aimed at exhorting the Indian army to stage an uprising reminiscent of 1857 army revolt against the foreign rule. Unfortunately, the movement failed. He was hanged to death at the tender age of 17 in the Central Jail Lahore on November 16, 1915. His last wish at the gallows was that he might continue to be born in India and be hanged to death every time in his prime till the

motherland got liberated. Bhagat Singh (1907-1931) used to adore Sarabha as his mentor.

### **The Post-War Developments**

The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre perpetrated at Amritsar by the British on April 13, 1919 to teach the Indians a lesson in loyalty and the other postwar happenings pushed India towards a political, economic and social turmoil. The high hopes of liberals in the sincerity of Raj were rudely shaken by the evasive Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms announced in 1919 and the repressive provisions of Rowlatt Act introduced thereafter. Tagore renounced his knighthood as a protest and Gandhi gave up his affection for the Raj.

The large scale retrenchment of Indian soldiers at the end of war added to confusion. The unrest among retrenched army personnel, who had caught the glimpses of free countries on the European front, was further eroding the myth that the British rule was a blessing for India. The tales of revolution in Russia thrilled the militants and the moderates alike. In the Punjab, the Akalis started a nonviolent agitation to liberate gurdwaras from hereditary mehants. The government did its worst to suppress the movement, but all in vain. It rather further alienated the public opinion. Mahatma Gandhi gave the call of *swaraj* and appealed to his countrymen to boycott the British rule and its institutions.

Bhagat Singh, at that time, was a student of D.A.V. High School, Lahore. In pursuance of the call given by Mahatma Gandhi, he, Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan, Yashpal and many other youngmen left their studies and joined instead National College, an institution started parallel to the affiliated colleges in pursuance of the concept of *swadesi*.

### **Formation of HSRA**

The freedom struggle which had entered a mass phase began to falter and waver around 1922 when Mahatma Gandhi called off the Civil Disobedience Movement. That caused a lot of resentment among the young men who had staked their careers by responding

to the call of *swaraj*. After a lot of spadework they resolved to organize themselves into Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. This name was suggestive of a similar revolutionary body in Ireland. The units of HSRA were raised in all the provinces and the government got panicky by their activities.

### **The Cult of Revolutionaries**

The revolutionaries, who smilingly kissed the gallows, disapproved the political mendicancy i.e. asking for minor concessions from foreign rulers which had been an annual ritual of Indian National Congress, till it got split into moderates and the extremists. In the eyes of revolutionaries, a political murder was an instrument for freedom rather than a crime. These young men had no hesitation to use assassination and sabotage in retaliation for avenging the humiliations inflicted by the die-hard bureaucrats.

Because the revolutionaries regarded imperialism as a heinous crime against humanity inflicted by the colonial powers and not a blessing as preached by toadies, they were determined to snatch every possible opportunity and to use all available forums to condemn and expose the evil designs of imperialists.

They also looked upon martyrdom as an essential part of their campaign against imperialism. Hence they had neither faith in any tribunal set up by the then government for their trial nor cared to save their lives by taking refuge of the legal technicalities. Their grouse against the lawyers had been that the latter, in their anxiety to save the life of a revolutionary, indulged into quibbles and thus not only deprived him of the reward of martyrdom but also unwittingly retarded the pace of revolution.

Punishing the informants of police to serve as deterrent for others, invading the police armouries to procure arms to wage their struggle and robbing the moneylenders, the zamindars and the temple priests to secure funds for party work were considered by them as justifiable means to attain the inherent right of a nation to be free.

### **Simon Commission Visits India**

The Government of India Act 1919 contained a provision that a commission would be appointed after ten years to advise the British Government as to what administrative reforms could be introduced in India. A commission of seven members headed by an English jurist, Sir John Simon, was sent to India in 1928. The composition of that commission infuriated the Indian public opinion because there was not a single Indian member on it. Black flag demonstrations with the slogan 'Go back Simon' were staged against the commission, wherever it went. Lala Lajpat Rai, while leading a protest demonstration at Lahore in the last week of October, 1928, got hit in the lathi-charge ordered by J.A. Scot, Superintendent of Police, Lahore.

Lala Lajpat Rai died on November 17, 1928. The death of Lalaji was attributed to the injuries sustained by him during the lathi-charge. The HSRA resolved to avenge it.

On December 17, 1928 J.P. Saunders, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Lahore, while he was leaving his office, was mistaken for Scot and was shot dead by Bhagat Singh and Shiv Ram Rajguru. In spite of a hot chase by police, they escaped. The next morning, handwritten posters announcing;

*'Saunders is dead, Lalaji is avenged'*

were found stuck in principal streets of Lahore. The administrative machinery got stuck with terror. The city was combed by police, but Bhagat Singh succeeded in escaping in the guise of a high-up dressed in Western style.

### **Public Safety Bill**

The Government of India felt the necessity of legislating an act to curb the activities of revolutionaries. On April 2, 1929 Henry Crerar, Home Member of Viceroy's Executive Council, introduced abruptly the Public Safety Bill in the Central Assembly, which aimed at empowering the government to exile any person and confiscate his property, if he was suspected of association with revolutionary activities. The government also sought retrospective application

of those extraordinary powers to deal with the accused of Meerut Conspiracy Case. The bill was vehemently opposed in the Central Assembly by Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, who branded it as 'Slavery of India Bill' and 'Public Danger bill' aimed at crushing popular movements.

The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association considered it the most opportune time to arouse public opinion. It was decided to explode blank bombs in the Central Assembly to protest against the tyrannical legislation. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were chosen to do it. On April 8, when Vithalbhai Patel, President of the Central Assembly, on failing to get an assurance from the government that the bill would not be enforced retrospectively, rose to give his ruling, a bomb exploded near the empty treasury benches. The hall got filled with smoke. Another explosion followed and panic prevailed all over. None got killed, because it was not so intended. As the smoke cleared Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were seen shouting 'Long live revolution, down with imperialism'. They also threw red leaflets on the floor which began with the slogan of a French revolutionary 'It needs a loud voice for a deaf to hear'. It conveyed in unambiguous terms as :

'Without narrating the humiliating history of the last ten years during which the Indian nation was insulted through this so-called Indian Parliament, we want to impress on the whole world that while some people are waiting for the reforms and are even quarrelling among themselves to share the crumbs, the government has started adopting suppressive measures. The Public Safety Bill has been introduced during the current session. The Press Seditious Bill waits for the next one. Under such circumstances Hindustan Socialist Republic has ordered its army to put an end to this humiliating state of affairs. While protesting against the Public Safety and the 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 none can kill ideas. Great empires crumbled, but the ideas survived'.

They offered themselves for arrest without any resistance and were tried mainly under Section 307 I.P.C., i.e. attempt to murder and section 3 of Explosive Substances Act, 1908. In a written statement before the Sessions Court, Bhagat Singh deposed :

'...We do not lag behind anybody in respecting human life. Our protest is not against individuals but is directed against imperialism. Though its worthlessness has been exposed yet it craves to continue to inflict its hold on our helpless masses through suppressive measures....'.

When the judge asked Bhagat Singh to elaborate as to what he meant by "Long live revolution", the latter continued:

'Revolution does not imply reckless bloodshed. It aims to replace the present system, based on tyranny and exploitation by the one in which the working classes will get a fair reward for their toil'.

The court sentenced them to imprisonment for life. During the investigation the police also established that the pistol, which was fired in air in the Assembly Hall, was the same with which J.P. Saunders had been killed at Lahore. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were transferred to jails in Punjab for further trial.

### **Hunger Strike in Jail**

The jails of those days were virtual torture asylums. Not only the food served was bad, but the living conditions were also insalubrious. The government perpetrated such a treatment to shatter the health and break the will of revolutionaries. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt, while they were being brought to Lahore after their trial at Delhi, decided to go on hunger strike to protest against the callous treatment meted to political prisoners. They were very clear about the purpose for which they intended to resort to that extreme step. The improvements demanded by them included better food, hygienic living conditions, library facilities, etc. But the government was adamant not to give any special treatment to the political prisoners, because that would, not only, amount to an indirect recognition of the right of Indians to agitate for their independence but would also contradict the claim of imperialism that the British



Raj over India being a lawfully established one, any move to challenge it amounted to treason. The revolutionaries on the other hand were determined not to budge from their stand and wanted to use the weapon of fast unto death to arouse public opinion against the Raj.

Jatinder Nath Das, a revolutionary from Bengal, passed away in Borstal Jail, Lahore on September 13, 1929 after 63 days of hunger strike. His younger brother, Kiron Chander Das finalized all arrangements to take the dead body of his elder brother to Calcutta by rail for cremation at his birth place. The government realised belatedly that the journey of dead body of the martyr from Lahore to Howrah would provide occasion for mass receptions at all stations on the way and thus popularize the cause of revolutionaries. The journey vindicated :

*'Shaheed ki jo maut hai, woh qoum ki hayat hai'*, i.e. martyrdom of a patriot rejuvenates the nation.

### **Special Tribunal Set Up**

The government realised much to its dismay that it had failed to crush the iron will of revolutionaries. The latter instead used every forum of the government like courts and jails to propound their cult. Hence a special tribunal was set up to conduct the Lahore Conspiracy Case. The tribunal, was even empowered to try the accused absentia. The revolutionaries disassociated themselves with the trial, because they held that arbitrary set-up of the tribunal rendered its proceedings a mere mockery. The tribunal sentenced Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev to death. But the bureaucracy feared that the Viceroy might commute the death sentence to life imprisonment. The Home Member of Viceroy's Executive Council, Henry Crerar, even threatened that most of the British officers serving in India would resign if the death sentence was not executed. He secretly advised the Government of Punjab to carry out the execution of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev on the evening of 23rd March and dispose of the dead bodies at their own level.

Bhagat Singh and his comrades earlier addressed a letter to the Punjab Government that as the tribunal had found them guilty of waging war against the government, so instead of being hanged, they should be ordered to be shot dead by the army. Their communication remained unattended. On the evening of March 23, 1931 they were hanged. Their dead bodies were handed over to English soldiers for disposal, who took them to the bank of river Sutlej, hacked them to pieces, poured kerosine oil on them, danced around the fire singing 'Come on devils, shoot now' and then threw the half-burnt pieces into the river. This diabolical act was staged at the place, where the present memorial to the martyrs has been erected.

By midnight the government announced that Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev had been hanged and their dead bodies had been cremated as per rites of religions they professed. The bureaucracy feared that the cremation of Bhagat Singh and his comrades by their relatives would become an occasion of propaganda against the government. But unwittingly they created a greater resentment against the Raj by that overdoing because the claim of 'Rule of law' got falsified.

### **Impact of Martyrdom**

The activities of HSRA influenced the stand of Indian National Congress greatly. It gave up its demand of Dominion Status for India within the Empire and declared complete independence of India as its ultimate goal in its session held at Lahore in December 1929. It also adopted in due course the slogan *Inquilab Zindabad*, which Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt raised in the Central Assembly. The slogans *Bande Mataram*, *Inquilab Zindabad* and *Jai Hind*, which symbolize the various phases of our struggle for freedom, illustrate by themselves the role of militant nationalists and the army uprisings in the crusade against imperialism.

## II

### Dramatic Escape

The escape of Bhagat Singh and Shiv Ram Rajguru from Lahore subsequent to their assassinating John Poynte Saunders, Assistant Superintendent of Police, on December 17, 1928 evening was dramatically carried out. The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, a militant youth organization, planned to kill Scot, Senior Superintendent of Police, Lahore who was alleged to have hit Lala Lajpat Rai on his chest with a baton, while the latter was leading a protest demonstration outside the Lahore Railway Station on October 30, 1928 afternoon. The demise of Lalaji on November 17, 1928 was believed to have been hastened by the physical injury and mental shock suffered by him during that police outrage. The HSRA accepted the challenge thrown by Mrs Basanti Devi, widow of celebrated Congress leader, C.R. Das, to the youth of India while addressing a condolence meeting of Lala Lajpat Rai:

‘If an ordinary police official could beat a leader of the eminence of Lalaji to death in broad day light, I, a woman of India, seek to know the reaction of youth to this national humiliation before the ashes of Lalaji get cooled’.

It is a distressing fact that the rift between Lalaji and HSRA had been widening. The latter disapproved Lalaji’s growing affinity with communal politics. They addressed an accusing communication to him in September 1927, which was published in *Kirti*, a Punjabi magazine. Lalaji got annoyed and prohibited the entry of members of HSRA in general and that of its founder figure, Bhagat Singh in particular to Dwarka Das Library. The attributing

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\* The text is based on the discussion which the author had with Mrs Durga Devi, when she came to Ludhiana in May 1984 for condoling the death of Bibi Amar Kaur, sister of Bhagat Singh.

of Lalaji’s death to ruthless lathi-charge by police had created such an intense panic that common people felt helpless. HSRA was bent upon to remove that gripping fear by attacking the tiger in its own den.

Accordingly it decided to kill Scot for avenging the death of Lalaji. J.P. Saunders in his early twenties, still a probationer, while leaving the District Police Headquarters at about 4:15 p.m. on December 17, 28 was mistaken as Scot and pierced with bullets by Rajguru and Bhagat Singh.

After ascertaining that the victim was dead, they escaped through D.A.V. College entrance which was on the other side of the road. Head Constable Chanan Singh who chased them got fatally injured in the covering fire provided by Chander Shekhar Azad. The bicycles on which they had come stood parked there. They fled on them to the prearranged places of safety.

They kept themselves underground for the next two days. Sukhdev called at Mrs Durga Devi Vohra after 10 p.m. on December 19. She lived in a spacious house near Amrit Dhara Building in Milkhi Ram Street. Her husband, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, had left for Calcutta a few days earlier as per plan, leaving five hundred rupees with her with specific instructions to pass on the amount to Sukhdev, when asked for.

### The Vohras

A few details about Vohras are pertinent for highlighting their selfless spirit of sacrifice. Bhagwati Charan was the only son of Rai Sahib Shiv Charan, an officer of North Western Railway, posted at Lahore. He passed away in 1920 leaving behind vast residential property and thirty thousand rupees in cash, an astronomical figure according to the currency value of those days. Bhagwati Charan then studied in a college and in spite of the comfortable living assured by the inherited property, he chose to respond to the call of noncooperation given by Mahatma Gandhi. He had been married to Durga Devi at an early age. She taught Hindi, Hygiene and First Aid at Mahila Mahavidyalaya near Gumti.

Durgi Devi, often, recalled fondly that their Headmistress, Miss Prem Vati Thapar, admired her and Miss Das Gupta as the most smartly dressed staff members. She had taken up that job for preaching national consciousness among the younger generation. This provided her relief not only from loneliness at home, because her husband used to be mostly away in connection with the HSRA activities, but also, from the surveillance of CID which kept watch on the visitors to their place from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Sukhdev visited her again soon thereafter to ascertain if she could travel with a member of HSRA, not known to her. When she agreed readily, Sukhdev elaborated his query in a hesitating tone 'posing to be his wife'. He was under a reasonable doubt that a Hindu lady brought up under orthodox tradition of looking upon her husband as her god on earth might reject the suggestion, considering it sinful. When she stated that she was prepared to disregard all traditional beliefs for the sake of party and the motherland, Sukhdev felt relieved with that categorical assurance.

Thereafter, Sukhdev came with two other visitors, one a tall youngmen dressed in Western style and the other his servant in humble clothing. Both were strangers for Durga Devi. She kept talking with Sukhdev while preparing meals for the guests. After some time Sukhdev, unable to control himself any further burst out that the wheat complexioned sahib was the rustic jat, Bhagat Singh. Both being chums, Sukhdev often took such liberties in conversation. The identity of the other visitor was neither disclosed nor enquired. All felt assured that if Durga Bhabi could not recognize Bhagat Singh, he could travel out of Lahore without being detected by police.

### **Incognito Movements**

Gaya Prasad, a member of HSRA from U.P. confirmed that the decision that Bhagat Singh should get his hair cut and the beard shaved off was taken in the meeting of militants at Feroze Shah Kotla, Delhi on September 9, 1928, so that his detection by police could be avoided through various guises. Gaya Prasad thereafter

shifted to Ferozepur Cantonment and started practising there under the assumed name of Dr B.S. Nigam. His shop provided not only a cover for storing material to make bombs, but also, a camp office for the party workers coming to Lahore from other parts of India. Their halt at Ferozepur enabled them to be properly briefed about the political activities at Lahore.

Gaya Prasad stated that it was he who cut the hair of Bhagat Singh at his shop for keeping the change in his facial appearance a guarded secret, as it was not considered advisable to engage a barber. After that Bhagat Singh, dressed as a middle class Gujrati youngman in achkin and dhoti, visited his close associate, Jai Dev in U.P. When the latter could not recognize him, he felt convinced that his incognito movements assured safety.

Durga Bhabi regretted that, she was not told that the person dressed as servant was Rajguru. He was casually served meals in brass utensils and treated unequally throughout.

### **Departure from Lahore**

It was settled that they would catch the train leaving Lahore for Howrah en route Bathinda the next morning at 6:10. That train was chosen because they could leave in the early hours before the arrival of CID picket.

Two minor problems cropped up: where to keep Durga Bhabi's infant son, Sachi, during those days and how to cover her absence from Lahore. Sachi had been greatly attached to Bhagat Singh and would on his appearance toddle to clasp him with a joyous cry 'Lamba Chacha', (tall uncle). To their great relief Sachi could not recognize Bhagat Singh in his new guise. There was no longer any fear that he would betray their identity at any stage through any childlike expression. Durga Bhabi considered it desirable to carry Sachi with them because entrusting his care to someone else would reveal her absence from Lahore.

Sukhdev undertook to have her application seeking sick leave delivered to the driver of school bus for onward transmission. It was suspected that CID used to get clue from him about the

movements of Durga Bhabi. The arrangement would make them believe that she was confined to bed at home.

Tongas used to be available around the clock for local transport. Keeping the light of bedroom on, Bhagat Singh in Western dress carrying the sleeping infant, Durga Bhabi in her most impressive attire and Rajguru shuffling under luggage, they left the house at about 5 a.m. long before the CID arrived. On reaching the station, Bhagat Singh keeping his facial profile reasonably covered on one side with a slightly raised collar of the overcoat and on the other by the sleeping infant, purchased two tickets, a joint second class Christmas return ticket and a third class one for the servant, for Cawnpur. They walked side by side into the railway station with Rajguru carrying the luggage behind in a servile manner. Both men carried concealed loaded revolvers with them for facing any untoward incident, because police parties in uniform as well as in civil clothes were watching carefully all departures from Lahore. An impressively respectable young couple carrying a child, Western style dress and to crown all, joint second class Christmas return ticket cast a spell over the police and they boarded the train without causing any suspicion.

### Reminiscences

Durga Bhabi reminisced that it was the same train which she later boarded on September 14, 1929. Then she travelled as Mrs Durga Devi Vohra with Kiron Chander Das, who carried the dead body of his elder brother, Jatinder Nath Das, to Calcutta. Jatin passed away in Borstal Jail, Lahore on September 13, 1929 after a historic hunger strike of 63 days. A posse of fifty constables besides half a dozen police officers accompanied them in the adjoining bogie. On December 20, 1928 they travelled incognito, whereas on September 14, 1929 with solemn massive receptions at all the important stoppages. Each time she escorted a hero; on the first trip a living one and on the other a martyr greeted at Calcutta with the newspaper bannerlines:

*'Home They Brought the Warrior Dead'.*

### The Changed Guise

Breaking journey at Cawnpur they went to Lucknow. That was considered advisable because CID at Howrah kept a close watch on passengers coming direct from Lahore. Both the cities had been active nerve centres of militant nationalists and of the freedom struggle as a whole.

From Lucknow telegramme was sent to Shushila Didi, another active worker of HSRA staying those days as a tutor for the children of Seth Chhaju Ram at Calcutta. The telegraphic text conveyed:

*'Reaching Calcutta with brother'.*

It had a coded message for Bhagwati Charan and was silent about the train and date. At Lucknow Rajguru parted company and left for Varanasi. They were received at Howrah by Bhagwati Charan dressed as a durban (watchman) on December 22. All moved to Shushila Didi's place from there. Durga Devi went back to Lahore a few days later.

The Congress session was scheduled to be held from December 29. Bhagat Singh was keen to acquaint himself with the way of thinking of each prominent leader. That was perhaps the only occasion when he saw Gandhiji, though from a distance. He proceeded to Delhi thereafter to chalk out the next move of HSRA with the conviction that the Mahatma was a utopian visionary expecting that the Raj would acquiesce to the moral pressure of nonviolence.

### III

## Martyrdom through Hunger Strike

*The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, captioned the news of passing away of Jatinder Nath Das after a hunger strike of 63 days as :

*'Lived a Hero, Died a Martyr'.*

When Dr Gopi Chand Bhargava, a celebrated Congress leader of Lahore, advised Jatin to take medicine and water, it is recorded in the confidential files (Home-Political) Government of India, that he declared on August 2, 1929

'I am determined to die for the sake of my country and to uphold the status of political prisoners'.

Kiron Chander Das, younger brother of Jatin, who carried out an extensive research in the archives at New Delhi, discovered that the then Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, who was an Irish, despite the displeasure of Central Government, awarded better class treatment to Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt during their trial for their having exploded bombs on the floor of Central Assembly on April 8, 1929. The leaflets thrown by them thereafter from the gallery, the elucidation of his concept of revolution given by Bhagat Singh to the court and the better class facilities extended to them in the jail, raised the status of revolutionaries from alleged anarchists, waging war against the Crown, to acclaimed heroes of freedom struggle.

### Hunger Strike in Jail

Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt, while they were being brought to Lahore after their trial at Delhi, decided to go on hunger strike from June 15, 1929, to protest against the callous treatment meted to political prisoners in Punjab. The members of HSRA had been rounded up and lodged in the Borstal Jail, Lahore as the accused of Lahore Conspiracy Case. Jatin Das was among them. The

improvements demanded by the hunger strikers included better food, hygienic living conditions, library facilities, etc. But the government was adamant not to give any better treatment to the political prisoners, because it would amount, not only, to an indirect recognition of the right of Indians to agitate for their independence, but would also contradict the claim of Crown that the British Raj in India was a lawfully established one. Jatin joined the hunger strike on July 12, 1929 with the resolve not to give it up till the government accepted their demands. All efforts towards forcible feeding were resisted. The press gave wide publicity to the hunger strike, a novel form of martyrdom; painful and prolonged. Appeals were made to public to observe mass fasts to support the cause of revolutionaries.

### Killing Them Slowly

An interview given by Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Editor, *Hindi Partap*, Cawnpur, was widely published under the above caption as:

I saw all the Lahore Conspiracy Case accused both in Central and Borstal Jails who were on hunger strike. I had a long talk with Bhagat Singh. He told me that he stood for better treatment of political prisoners as a matter of right. He held that the government had confiscated their liberty of action and movements, confined them with worst type of hardened criminals, hastened their intellectual death by not allowing them to read even scientific and literary books and was killing them slowly by giving very poor diet to which they were not accustomed. One and the only one duty of political prisoners, who knew how to die, was to give a fight to this inexorable system to the bitterest end. He added that he did not care about himself, as he was ready to die in that very cell but he could not under any circumstances brook the intolerable condition in which the political prisoners were rotting. The hollowness of government advocate's assertion regarding liberal scale of diet and better arrangement got exposed when three accused, who were not on hunger strike, attaching credence to government declaration, demanded better food but were taunted with the remark that they were not in Nedous Hotel but in jail. Bhagat Singh strongly resented the arrogant and abusive behaviour

of police and also the barbarous method of jail authorities of forcing down diet through nostrils with the aid of tube. With a grim determination he said **‘We do not mind if we die and when we have the courage to die, why should we not give our lives for the sacred cause by giving a determined fight to the stupid and highly arrogant system which has got a soft corner in its heart even for the worst type of European criminals, but none for us’.**

### **Jatin Passes Away**

Kiron, who had also been secretary of defence committee, had been allowed to visit and nurse his fasting brother. It had been a trap to play with his feelings in view of Jatin’s deteriorating condition. But he spurned the offer of government to get Jatin released on bond, because it would have meant not only an indirect retreat from the policy adopted by revolutionaries, but also robbed his brother of the reward of martyrdom.

Jatin passed away at 1 p.m. on September 13, 1929, while Kiron and Bejoy Kumar Sinha, another accused revolutionary, had been singing Jatin’s favourite song ‘Ekaila cholohe’.

Kiron finalised arrangements to take the dead body of his brother to Calcutta by rail. The government realized that the journey of mortal remains of martyr from Lahore to Howrah would provide occasions for mass reception at all stoppages on the way and thus popularize the cause of revolutionaries. The head priest of Kali Goddess Temple at Lahore was persuaded by police to advise Kiron that votaries of the goddess were enjoined to cremate the dead where death occurred. Kiron paid no heed to that sermon.

He records in his book *Profile of a Martyr* (1981) that when the dead body of Jatin was being taken in a procession through the streets of Lahore that evening, even the well-to-do were seen picking the coins being showered over the bedecked bier for tying them around necks of their children, so that they too imbibed the spirit of departed hero.

In a gigantic public meeting held in the evening at Municipal Maidan, Lahore under the chairmanship of Dr Mohammed Alam, while paying tribute to the indomitable will of Jatin, both he and

Dr Gopi Chand announced their resignation from the membership of Punjab Legislative Council as protest against the callous attitude of government towards political prisoners. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, one of the finest orators in Urdu, said there that the young patriot was neither a poet like Rabindra Nath Tagore, nor a saint like Mahatma Gandhi, nor a national leader like Tilak or Lala Lajpat Rai, but he was a man with a heart and in that heart there was burning patriotism. (4:74)

At Simla, the summer capital, where the Central Assembly had been in session, the Swarajists in a body refused to attend the at-home given by G. Schuster, Member of Viceroy’s Executive Council, that evening. Pt Moti Lal Nehru directed the Congress members not to attend that function as a mark of respect for the martyr. He even gave a notice of motion for adjournment for the next day, when along with him, Pt Madan Mohan Malaviya took the government to task for showing an utter lack of human touch in dealing with an extraordinary situation.

Mohammed Ali Jinaah declaimed on September 12, 1929 :

‘The man who goes on hunger strike has a soul. He is moved by that soul and he believes in the justice of his cause’. (4:76)

He also indicted the government that it was not prosecuting but persecuting the hunger strikers. But the most moving description of the passing away of Jatin came from M.R. Jaykar :

‘He died slowly, inch by inch, one hand gone, paralysed for want of substance; another hand gone atrophied for want of nourishment; one foot gone, another foot gone, and the last of nature’s precious gifts, eyesight gone; the fire of those orbs slowly quenched, inch by inch, not by the sudden and merciful death of the guillotine, but with the slowness with which nature builds or destroys. Oh, the anguish of this slow torture’. (4:95)

### **Journey of Mortal Remains**

The journey of mortal remains of Jatin started from Lahore on September 14 morning. Mrs Durga Devi Vohra accompanied Kiron Chander Das. Large crowds of people came for paying their tribute at all the stoppages; chanting slogans, but solemnly reverent.

At Mathura, Chander Shekhar Azad and Bhagwati Charan, two absconding revolutionaries, entered the compartment incognito. Their affectionate embrace imparted a lot of solace to bereaved Kiron. They got down at Agra. Azad felt distressed that Mahatma Gandhi was not at the platform even though he was camping at Agra.

Gandhiji explained in *Young India* of October 17, 29 his absence as :

‘I believe that it often becomes the duty of every publicman to be silent at the risk of incurring unpopularity and even much worse penalty, as it undoubtedly becomes his duty to speak out his mind, when occasion requires, though it may be at the cost of his life’.

At Cawnpur not only Pt Jawahar Lal Nehru wept bitterly but the mothers of Bejoy Kumar Sinha and Ajay Kumar Ghose, both accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, created a heart-rending scene crying loudly while kissing the coffin.

At Calcutta, on September 16, the press banner headlines screamed :

‘Home They Brought the Warrior Dead’.

An unprecedented gathering including Smt. Basanti Devi (widow of C.R. Das), Mrs Kamla Nehru, Subhas Chander Bose, Dr B.C. Roy, Shayama Prasad Mukerji and Maulvi Shamasuddin received the mortal remains of the Fiery Emblem of Young India. Everyone was bare-footed.

### **Tributes**

*The Tribune*, Lahore in its editorial of September 14, 29 wrote :

‘If ever a man died as a hero and martyr to a noble cause, he is Jatinder Nath Das. The blood of a martyr in all ages and countries has been the seed of higher and nobler life. The death of Mcswiny was, as every one knows, the forerunner of Irish freedom. Who knows that the death of Das will similarly be the forerunner of Indian freedom’.

*Bombay Chronicle* featured the news with black borders as :

‘The sacrifice will inspire hope in every patriotic Indian, longing to see the country free. A country which can produce a gallant young man like Jatin has reason to feel sure that the day of freedom is not far off’.

J.M. Sengupta, Mayor of Calcutta, received the following telegram from Mrs Mary Mcswiny Cork\*, Ireland:

‘Family of Mcswiny unites with India in grief and pride on death of Jatinder Das. Freedom will come’.

When the trial court resumed its proceedings on September 24, 1929 after an adjournment for a fortnight, the prosecution advocate, Carden Noad said :

‘.....I desire on behalf of us all to express sincere regret and genuine sorrow which we feel on account of the untimely death of Jatinder Nath Das. There are qualities which compel admiration of all men alike and the prominent among them are qualities of courage and constancy in pursuit of an ideal. Although we do not share the ideals which he followed, we can not but admire the unwavering fortitude and firmness of the purpose he displayed’. (4:74)

### **Subsequent to Martyrdom**

The journey of the mortal remains of Jatin from Lahore to Howrah provided an expeditive occasion to create political awakening among the masses and to expose the callousness of foreign rule. Thereafter the dead bodies of martyrs were not handed over to their relatives. After hanging them hastily on March 23, 1931 evening in the Central Jail Lahore, the Punjab Government disposed of the dead bodies of Bhagat Singh, Shiv Ram Rajguru and Sukhdev by burning them on the bank of Sutlej and the remnants were thrown into the river. Likewise the dead body of Hari Kishan Talwar after his execution at Mianwali Jail in June that year was burnt on the bank of Sindh and disposed of similarly.

The resolve which Jatinder Nath Das often reiterated :

‘A soldier’s life is life for me

A soldier’s death so that India be free’

was practised by him in letter and spirit.

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\* Mcswiny Cork was an Irish patriot who fasted to death in jail protesting against the British domination in N. Ireland.

## IV

### **Bhagwati Charan Vohra : An Embodiment of Sacrifice**

Bhagwati Charan, popularly known as *Bhai* among his associates, was an embodiment of rare patriotism. He offered readily all that the mortals hold dear and near — life at its prime, wealth in abundance and a happily settled family life — at the altar of motherland to get the fetters of slavery shattered.

#### **Early life**

Bhagwati Charan belonged to a Gujarati Brahmin family and was born at Agra in 1904. He was the only son of Rai Sahib Shiv Charan Vohra who had been in the service of North Western Railway at Lahore. Rai Sahib passed away in 1920 leaving behind in addition to valuable immovable property, a bank balance of rupees thirty thousand.

Bhagwati Charan was married to Durga Devi, while he was still in teens. Wealth did not spoil him. Comforts of a well-secured family life could not make him insensitive towards the misery and aspirations of the downtrodden masses. When Mahatma Gandhi launched the noncooperation movement in 1921 and appealed to fellow-countrymen to boycott all British institutions, Bhagwati Charan responded to that call spontaneously. He gave up his college studies and joined National College, started at Lajpat Rai Bhawan, Lahore, where an epoch-making comradeship got developed with Bhagat Singh. When Mahatma Gandhi withdrew the noncooperation movement, it caused a lot of resentment among those young men who had accepted the former's call of 'Swaraj within a year' as a piece of gospel.

The militant nationalists did not contribute to the myth that the British rule was a blessing for India. They regarded imperialism as a horrible crime against humanity. They had

suspended their revolutionary activities to assess the effectiveness of noncooperation movement launched by Gandhiji as a political weapon and had joined it without any mental reservation. But arbitrary withdrawal of the movement by him, following the Chauri Chaura event in February 1922 (where a mob was reported to have attacked a police post) disappointed all of them. This led to the revival of revolutionary activities in 1923.

The use of phrases like 'responsive co-operation', 'provincial autonomy', 'responsible government', 'dominion status', etc. in the various political resolutions of Indian National Congress appeared to the militant nationalists a mere desire of the elite for Indianization of the bureaucracy. A new party called 'Hindustan Republican Association' repudiating the demand of dominion status was formed. This party preached and propagated the views quite akin to those of Karl Marx and Lenin.

The Kakori Case in which Rajinder Nath Lahri, Ashfaquallah, Ram Parsad Bismal and Roshan Singh were hanged to death in December 1927 revealed to the militant nationalists a major shortcoming in their political activities. Because they worked underground and held no public meetings, the police always succeeded in presenting them as mere terrorists. The public at large joined the police without any hesitation in hounding the revolutionaries and in identifying them before courts. Thus the continual martyrdoms were failing in their desired impact.

In Kakori Case as per confession made by Banwari Lal, both Bhagat Singh and Jatinder Nath Das had been implicated by their respective party names, Balwant Singh and Kali Babu. The police could not trace them and they, thus escaped conviction. To lend a mass base to their activities, Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries formed Naujawan Bharat Sabha at Lahore in 1928 with Bhagwati Charan as its propaganda secretary. An intensive tour of the Punjab was undertaken to deliver lectures on the lives of Indian revolutionaries with the help of lantern slides. But they were soon prohibited to carry on such activities by the Punjab Government, because they openly preached that poverty and destitution from India could only be removed through a complete overhauling of the prevailing social order.



On September 9, 1928 a meeting of the revolutionaries was held at Ferozeshah Kotla, Delhi. It was attended by Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Kundan Lal, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Jai Dev, Brahm Dutt, Surinder Pandey and Jatinder Nath Ghose. Chander Shekhar Azad could not participate. The name of Hindustan Republican Association was changed to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association to reiterate their resolve that the Government of free India would eradicate every form of exploitation of man by man.

A central office was set up at Jhansi with Kundan Lal as its incharge, Chander Shekhar Azad as commander of its army wing and Bhagat Singh as its ideological head with Bhagwati Charan as his advisor.

The new party resolved to use bombs as well as bulletins to propagate their activities and to harass the government through performance at a larger scale instead of merely punishing tyrant officials and police informants. As a first step of their programme it was decided to sabotage the train carrying the members of Simon Commission. This project was abandoned later as the making of an explosion on the floor of Central Assembly was considered more expedient.

### **Heroic Act of HSRA**

The death of Lala Lajpat Rai on November 17, 1928, attributed to the lathi-charge ordered by Scot, Senior Superintendent of Police, Lahore on the demonstrators, protesting against the Simon Commission outside the Lahore Railway Station on October 30, 1928, was decided to be avenged by the HSRA. Exactly a month later, on December 17, 1928, Saunders, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Lahore was killed in broad-day light by Rajguru and Bhagat Singh. Bhagat Singh succeeded in escaping from Lahore dressed in Western style. Mrs Bhagwati Charan (Durga Devi, popularly called Durga Bhabhi), a lady brought up under tradition and orthodoxy travelled with him posing as his wife, along with her only infant son. What a daring step for a lady for whom to think of another man as her husband was both a sacrilege and sin. No mother would dare to risk the life of her only son like that, while the encounter with police was imminent at every step.

Bhagwati Charan used to grumble often that he had been married to a delicate doll who could not contribute effectively to his aspirations. Bhagat Singh, so often, would cut jokes with Bhagwati Bhai, by making a parody of one of Mirza Ghalib's couplets :

*'Tum ko shadi nain nakama kar dia  
Varna tum bhi admi thai kam ke'*

(Marriage has rendered you useless, otherwise, you were a man of worth).

Bhagwati Charan, in the guise of a watchman was present at the Howrah Railway Station, when Bhagat Singh, Durga Bhabhi and her infant son, Sachi, reached there. Thereafter Bhagwati Charan complemented her that she had risen to his expectations.

### **Loud Noise to Make the Deaf Hear**

The leaflet thrown by B.K. Dutt and Bhagat Singh at the floor of Central Assembly, New Delhi on April 8, 1929 which made a historic news, was vetted by Bhagwati Charan and it gave a new slogan to the freedom struggle in the form of 'Inquilab zindabad, samraj murdabad'.

After the arrest of Bhagat Singh, Bhagwati Charan took over the charge of ideological wing of HSRA. Every document produced by him thereafter lent new horizons to the struggle for freedom. The statement made by Bhagat Singh before the Session Court Delhi, which also bore the stamp of Bhagwati Charan, identified the masses with HSRA, thus, removing the shortcoming observed in the revolutionary activities after the Kakori Case.

### **Attempt to Explode the Viceroy's Railway Coach**

After the detection of bomb factory at Lahore and the consequent arrest of Sukhdev and Kishori Lal from there on April 15, 1929, Bhagwati Charan went underground. He shifted to Delhi and rented a room under the name of Harish in Naya Bazar. Later Yash Pal also joined him and was called Jagdish. They decided to explode the railway train carrying the Viceroy in his various official engagements. Inder Pal was also called for this purpose from Lahore. In the guise of a sadhu, Inder Pal camped at a distance

of nine miles from Delhi near the railway track passing by Nizam-u-Din Aulia. The explosion was planned for October 27, 1929 but had to be postponed as the Viceroy was scheduled to make an important announcement soon thereafter. It had to be given up on November 15 as well, because Yash Pal got injured in a motor cycle accident. December 23 was fixed then as the firm date. The Viceroy, Irwin, was to return to Delhi on that morning from Kolhapur. On the night of December 22-23, a powerful bomb was planted under the railway track and it was connected through an underground wire with a switch kept in the hut of Inder Pal, occupied by him in the guise of a sadhu. As the train passed over the bomb, its explosion was manipulated, but the operation got delayed by a fraction of second due to the poor visibility caused by fog. The fourth coach got extensively damaged, but the Viceroy had a narrow escape. The event made a big news, because the claim of government that consequent to the large scale arrest of revolutionaries, the activities of militant nationalists had been curbed, proved to be wrong.

### **Philosophy of Bomb**

While congratulating the Viceroy on his miraculous escape, Mahatma Gandhi gave a big snub to the revolutionaries through his article 'Cult of the Bomb' published in *Young India*. He denounced them as cowards, condemned their activities as harmful to the country and cautioned people not to be misled by them. Bhawati Charan gave a suitable rejoinder to Gandhiji through his bulletin *Philosophy of the Bomb*. The police, in spite of its vigilance and network of spies, could not detect as to where it was published and how it got distributed in thousands. Both the texts advocated diametrically opposite views, but their goal was the same. Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, with an ardent desire to narrow down the difference between the two viewpoints arranged a meeting of the militant nationalists with Gandhiji at Anand Bhawan, Allahabad. The latter emphatically declared that he would not even listen to any argument advocating violent methods. Though the talks failed, yet Pandit Moti Lal was convinced that the revolutionary activities could

complement the non-violent campaigns. He sought the help of HSRA to save the salt satyagraha launched by Gandhi ji in 1930 from ending in a flop.

### **Lahore Conspiracy Case Ordinance**

The government realized much to its dismay that it had failed to crush the iron will of revolutionaries. The latter, instead used every forum of the government machinery like courts and jails to propound their cult. Hence through the Lahore Conspiracy Case Ordinance, issued on May 1, 1930, a special tribunal was set up to conduct the Lahore Conspiracy Case. The tribunal was empowered to try the accused absentia even.

The HSRA resolved to give a bigger surprise to the government than it had staged earlier at the floor of Central Assembly, New Delhi on April 8, 1929. It was planned to rescue Bhagat Singh and his undertrial colleagues outside the gate of Central Jail Lahore, while they were to be taken to the court. June 1, 1930 was fixed as 'D' Day for this operation. Bhagwati Charan was to execute this plan. On May 28, Bhagwati Charan, Sukhdev Raj and Vaishampayan went to a forest on the bank of river Ravi to test a bomb, when it suddenly exploded in the hands of Bhagwati Charan, injuring him seriously. Leaving Bhai under the supervision of Vaishampayan, Sukhdev Raj (Sukhdev and Sukhdev Raj were two different persons) rushed to the city to procure medical help, which did not reach in time. Bhagwati Charan's last words were that had his death come three days later he would have kept a tryst with destiny. His dead body was consigned to the river.

Bhagwati Charan stated in the manifesto of Naujawan Bharat Sabha in 1928:

'We want people who may be prepared to fight without hope, without fear and without hesitation and who may be willing to die unhonoured, unwept and unsung'.

He fully lived up to the ordeal laid down by him.

## V

### **Bhagat Singh : Revolution not Resolutions**

As per his horoscope, kept at the museum in his ancestral village, Khatkar Kalan, Bhagat Singh was born at Chak (village) No : 105 G.B. in Lyallpur District on *Assu* 13, Samvat 1964 Vikrami (Saturday) which corresponds with September 28, 1907 A.D. After primary education there, he joined D.A.V. School, Mohan Lal Road, Lahore in 1917. When Mahatma Gandhi appealed to his countrymen to boycott government-run and aided institutions, he left his school and sought admission to National College, set up at Lajpat Rai Bhawan, Lahore. As he was not a matriculate, it was not possible to admit him without assessing his capability. Principal Chhabil Das arranged matric-level tests for him in all the subjects and was impressed by his brilliant performance. This was the first recognition of the merit of that gifted young man.

His main source of knowledge had been the prevailing domestic influence and the valiant deeds of his elders, his lullabies. His youngest uncle, Swaran Singh, was prosecuted and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment under section 124 IPC in 1909 for publishing and distributing allegedly seditious books viz. *Bander Bant* and *Divide and Rule*. He was released on parole due to deteriorating health caused by unhygienic living conditions, poor diet and the rigours like yoking to *kolhu* (oil crusher). He passed away in the prime of his life in 1910.

His other uncle, Ajit Singh, led the kisan agitation (1906-07) with the trumpet call 'Pagri Sambhal Jatta, Pagri Sambhal Oai'. The British after having wrecked the cottage industries in India strove systematically to tamper with the native agriculture for making it subservient to their industrial inputs. Indians were even forbidden to prepare salt indigenously from sea water, the right of preparation and sale of which had been usurped by the so-called benign British. For ensuring that the mercantile ships sailing to

UK, packed with raw material, would not return insufficiently loaded because the processed products, when exported, required far less space, even many elementary needs of daily life were imported through ships returning to India. In pursuance of that policy a few oppressive regulations and legislations were enforced. Water rates were enhanced in the canal irrigated areas to discourage the cultivation of sugar-cane. Inheritance by male primogeniture made it imperative that only the eldest son would inherit under the pretext of checking fragmentation of land, but the real intention being to find in plenty recruits for army and indentured labour abroad among the young men going to be, thus, disinherited. In the absence of a male child, the proprietary rights would lapse. All such measures created a lot of resentment among the serving personnel and unrest among the cultivators. It impelled even peace-loving citizens to disapprove the oppressive moves of government. The changing political scene, termed as *nai hawa* (new awakening) in official confidential reports, reflected growing restlessness against the colonial loot.

Bhagat Singh was brought up under such stirring environments. Their home was often visited by prominent political figures and he listened to them intently. Thus, that promising lad entered his teens.

Kartar Singh Sarabha, hanged to death at Central Jail, Lahore on November 16, 1915 was his model hero, whose picture, he kept always in his pocket. He fetched a fistful of bloodstained soil from Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar and preserved it as a sacred relic.

Along with being a keen listener, he was a voracious reader too. He exhibited his proficiency in writing as well by contributing to *Hindi Partap*, Cawnpur under the pen-name 'Balwant'. A similar impressive skill of communication in Punjabi was reflected by his article on Kakori martyrs in monthly *Kirti*, Amritsar, written under the assumed name 'Vidrohi'. The letter to his younger brother, Kultar Singh, written in Urdu, from Central Jail, Lahore a few days prior to his execution, with touching couplets therein, displayed his matching proficiency in Urdu. His statements in trial and session courts at Delhi in 1929 bore testimony to his mastery in English. He was an impressive wielder of pen, before he chose to trigger a gun or explode a bomb.

## Civil Disobedience Movement

M. K. Gandhi returned to India from South Africa after a stay of more than two decades there when the First World War was about to end. He organised there a passive resistance movement for securing legal rights for Indians, denied by the segregation policies of the minority regime of the privileged Whites. He contemplated launching a similar campaign in India against the British racist imperialist rule. Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1914), an icon of many political aspirants, had advised him earlier to acquaint himself with grassroots situation in India before entering the political arena (1:56). The Jallianwala Massacre and its fallout brought him face to face with atrocities of foreign rule.

The non-violent campaign resorted to by Akalis for the liberation of gurdwaras from hereditary mehants strengthened his belief in the effectiveness of passive resistance as a political tool. He lauded that achievement as :

*'First decisive battle of freedom won'.*

Thereafter he toured at random the countryside in U.P. and Bihar. He was distressed to watch the misery of peasants there. In selected parts of that region the farmers were enjoined to cultivate indigo and not any cereal crop for meeting requirements of the textile industry in UK. Consequently, the farmers starved as successive indigo cropping led to infertility of soil, while textile magnates rolled in riches. **One of his observations that whereas an average worker earned merely seven pice daily, the Viceroy got Rs 700 per day exposed the organised loot of the so-called benevolent British rule.** He resolved to launch a civil disobedience movement with the slogan 'Swaraj within a year', exhorting the masses to boycott government forums and switch on to *swadesi*. The government started feeling the jolt of momentum of the campaign. Prominent leaders and active Congress workers were arrested en masse which created a sort of vacuum of leadership at local level. Much to the dismay of Gandhi, violence erupted at Chauri Chaura where the mob burnt a police post. Apprehending that it would provide pretext to government to retaliate rabidly, he withdrew the movement of his own. No colleague could be consulted as all were behind the bars. It was a timely as well as

wise step because retreat was better than giving free hand to government to create reign of terror. Many of his associates disapproved his move. The revolutionaries denounced him. Though the freedom struggle received a setback, yet Gandhi remained adamant.

The most arrogant denunciation of the launching of Civil Disobedience Movement came from Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State, London :

'... if demands were made in the very mistaken belief that we contemplate retreat from India — then India would not challenge with success the most determined people in the world, who would once again answer the challenge with all the vigour and determination at its command.

Speaking for the Tories, Lord Birkenhead reminded India of Britain's hard fibre.' (1:100-101)

In an equally firm tone Mahatma Gandhi wrote in *Young India* :

'...India cannot and will not answer this insolence with insolence, but if she remains true to the pledge, her prayer to God to be delivered from such a scourge will certainly not go in vain. No empire intoxicated with the red wine of power and plunder of weaker races has yet lived longer in this world, and this British Empire, which is based upon organised exploitation of physically weaker races of the earth and upon a continuous exhibition of brute force cannot live if there is a just God ruling the universe. Little do these so-called representatives of the British nation realise that India has already given many of her best sons to be dealt with by the British hard fibre. Had Chauri Chaura not interrupted the even course of the national sacrifice, there still would have been greater and more delectable offerings placed before the lion, but God has willed otherwise. There is nothing to prevent all these representatives in Downing Street and Whithall from doing their worst'. (1:101)

A fortnight after he penned these lines, Mahatma Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. The freedom struggle no doubt suffered a sudden setback, but the esteem of Mahatma Gandhi both as a leader led by principles and as a humanist rose higher than before.

## Frustration among Revolutionaries

The militant nationalists who had staked their careers by responding spontaneously to Gandhiji's call of 'Swaraj within a year' felt let down by the abrupt withdrawal of Civil Disobedience Movement by him. They had to work assiduously to reorganise themselves for a meaningful role in the struggle against imperialism.

The diagnosis of ills, inflicted by British rule, both by the revolutionaries and Gandhiji, was identical. They regarded the foreign regime as racist, depredator, divisive and evasive. The means pursued by each to achieve the cherished end were different. Gandhi believed in non-violent approach and the militants had no hesitation to use bomb if the bulletins failed to impress the arrogant rulers.

A slight elaboration of the aforesaid characteristics of the Raj would help to understand its wicked intentions and the regressive actions of those determined to get rid of the colonial loot. When the First World War broke out, the colonies, where the Whites were in majority or held sway viz. Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, were granted dominion status, In South Africa a microscopic minority of Europeans enjoyed political rights which were denied contemptuously to the natives as well as the coloured migrants. All other colonies in Asia and Africa were simply assured of favourable consideration of their aspirations on the basis of their loyalty during war. It was a discriminating approach based on the colour of skin exclusively.

For curbing the postwar unrest in India, the ruthless Rowlatt Act, branded by enlightened Indians as 'No vakil, no daleel and no appeal' measures was threatened to be enforced. It amounted to the negation of rule of law which had been projected as the most striking feature of British rule. Jallianwals Bagh Massacre was perpetrated soon after, which according to the admission of Brigadier-general Dyer himself was intended not to merely restore order, but to terrorise the inhabitants of Punjab. (1:65). The coloured races were treated as inferior breeds meant for war fodder or to be harnessed as indentured labour.

The measures enforced to destroy cottage industries bore testimony to the plunder of Raj. The rule of British democracy under the insignia of Crown was more ruthless than the depredations of East India Company.

The communal passions were cunningly fanned whenever the patriotic fervour posed any challenge to the British.

Each announcement of the Crown would be evasive i.e. to be operative after a decade, provided it got assessed that the Indians had acquired matching experience to shoulder responsibility and the communal harmony was not likely to be disturbed.

Both Gandhiji and the militants understood the British psyche:

'...you can never get anything done by an Englishman unless you knock him down'. (5:152)

Gandhiji endeavoured to achieve his goal through active non-violence by launching passive resistance movements and giving call to boycott the foreign goods to make the British economic interests feel its pinch. Switching on to *swadesi* implied to prefer homespun *khadi* to imported cloth. It sought to impart a distinct national entity to Indians instead of their mimicking the Western way of living.

The militants contributed to the desperate observation of a former Law Member of Governor General's Executive Council, S.R. Dass; 'Bomb was necessary to awake England from her dreams'. (4:36)

## Weakness and Strength of HSRA

The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) under which the militant nationalists reorganised themselves had its failures as well as achievements. It needed money to carry out its activities against the steel frame of bureaucracy. Its programme of invading police armouries and looting rich persons for procuring arms and funds provided an easy ploy to police to brand them as anarchists before people. Four valuable lives, Rajinder Nath Lahri, Ashfaqulla, Ram Parsad Bismal and Roshan Singh got pushed to gallows in December 1927 for their having ventured to loot

government cash in a train near Kakori on August 9, 1925. The painful lesson and the gratifying gains thereof were as follows :

- i. Such acts did not convey the real message of revolutionaries to the masses rather helped the police to project them as terrorists.
- ii. A stirring song :  
*Sarfaroshi ki tamanna abb hamare dil mein hai  
Dekna hai zor kitna bazoo-e-qatil mein hai*  
salvaged the image of hanged patriots from anarchists to martyrs.
- iii. The message sent by Ram Parsad Bismal three days prior to their execution highlighted that the supreme sacrifice by Ashfaqulla was a slap on the face of those who made fuss that Muslims were not patriots.

### **Symbol of Revolution**

The leaflets thrown at the floor of Central Assembly, New Delhi by Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt on April 8, 1929 after exploding bombs and the statements of former in the trial and sessions courts while elaborating his concept of revolution elevated him from an alleged anarchist to a torchbearer against imperialism. (4:48) Within a few weeks thereafter each town and village resounded with his name. Innumerable songs grew up about him and the popularity which that young patriot received was amazing. His name became a symbol of revolution.

### **Irwin's Desperation**

Governor General Irwin's desperation became evident, when addressing the Central Assembly on April 11, 1929 (3 days after the explosion of bombs and the throwing of leaflets by Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt) he observed that the attack was not against any individual but against the institution. While Bhagat Singh felt gratified that the message of revolutionaries had been conveyed effectively to the callous rulers, (4:34) Irwin seemed to have made up his mind not only to get the accused convicted in a deterrent manner but to have them exterminated also.

He regarded them as political foes but was not prepared to have them given corresponding treatment as undertrials. The systematic manner in which Bhagat Singh exposed the depredations of Raj during the trial at Delhi damaged irreparably the claim of Raj to be providing a just and benign governance. Irwin did not wish all that to be re-enacted during the Lahore Conspiracy Case. The Punjab Government getting a clue from Irwin's statements resorted to ruthless departure from the established procedures and practices.

The arrests in connection with the Lahore Conspiracy Case started as early as mid April 1929 but the complaint by police was filed about 3 months later under sections 121, 121-A, 122 and 123 IPC, which accused the arrested

- i. to conspire to wage war against the Crown and to deprive it of the sovereignty of British India; and
- ii. to overawe the government established by law, etc.

It is worth noting that the murder of Saunders formed a part of that conspiracy.

In spite of political nature of the case, none of the accused was given better class facilities as extended to European criminals even in ordinary cases, branding their racial superiority to native offenders. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt had resolved to protest against that discrimination by going on hunger strike from June 15, 1929 after their transfer from Delhi to jails in Punjab. By the time, the proceedings of Lahore Conspiracy Case started in July, their hunger strike had received a lot of publicity and the consequent mass sympathy.

One weakness of HSRA which the government was able to exploit to their advantage was that five of its arrested members, not able to withstand police torture, became approvers.

The Assembly Bomb Case at Delhi took about eight weeks to be pursued both in the trial and sessions court and the accused by and far complimented it as a fair trial, because better class facilities in jail, tantamount to their recognition as political prisoners, enabled them to present their case in the manner they liked i.e. they were

keen to project their views and not to save their lives. The Lahore Conspiracy Case could have gone smoothly if better class facilities had not been withdrawn. It is worth mentioning that the Punjab rules applied then to Delhi; granted there, but ironically, grudged by the parent state. The government in its stubbornness helped unwittingly the accused to demonstrate their political agenda.

Though the case against the accused had been the waging of war against Crown and holding its authority in contempt, yet it was the government which appeared to be determined to eliminate the accused by ignoring its own laid down procedures.

- i. The approvers were not sent to judicial custody as enjoined by law, but kept in police lockup till they had deposed in the court to the satisfaction of police. This scandalous situation was revealed by one of the approvers, Ram Saran Das. (4:156). He and Brahm Dutt another approver making a similar complaint against the prosecution were dropped from the list of witnesses (4:176).
- ii. The torturing of hunger strikers through forcible feeding led to terrible happenings. The police inserted fingers into the rectum of accused and kicked at their testicles if they resisted to be handcuffed. (4:109, 114). As due to the hunger strike some of the accused got incapacitated to appear in the court, the prosecution approached the High Court twice to permit it to try the accused even in their absence. The High Court firmly declined the request both the times. (4:72)
- iii. The Governor General manoeuvred to have the Indian Evidence Act amended from the Central Assembly, but finding the response not to be favourable, used his emergency powers to promulgate an ordinance to get the accused tried by a Special Tribunal bypassing the established procedure of :

ascertaining the validity of charges by a trial court; providing an opportunity to the accused to examine the recriminating evidence and offering defence in a sessions court and

the confirmation of sentence by High Court.

No emergency existed, but the urgency of Irwin to have his foes eliminated, dominated.

The accused made a vibrant demonstration of their views by shouting ‘Inquilab zindabad, samraj murdabad’ while entering the court room. Middleton, Sessions Judge, Delhi, mentioned in his judgement :

“These persons (Dutt and Bhagat Singh) used to enter the court with the cries of ‘Long live revolution’, ‘Long live proletariat’ etc. which shows clearly what sort of political views, they cherish. In order to put check on propagating their ideas, I transport them for life”. (4:50)

The members of Special Tribunal did not relish this sort of slogan-shouting by the accused and desired the police to stop it by use of force in the court room itself. Justice Agha Haidar, one of the three members of the Tribunal disassociated himself with this order of its Chairman, Justice Coldstream. The accused boycotted the proceedings seeking regrets by the presiding judge. The government sought a way out by reconstituting the tribunal; sending Justice Coldstream on leave and dropping the inconvenient member, Justice Haidar because it was feared that he might not attach a dissenting note with the judgement. The boycott by the accused continued. The reconstituted tribunal carried on ex parte proceedings basing its evaluation on the evidence of tutored approvers.

Though the government had a strong case against the accused because :

- i. it had tutored approvers,
  - ii. circumstantial evidence which the accused had not bothered to dilute and above all,
  - iii. the accused were determined not to defend themselves but to admit their actions by justifying them in the court,
- yet the government appeared to be jittery all through, losing its credibility by each move. There was no need for the vindictive

bureaucracy to push them towards hangman's noose, for the accused themselves were bent upon to kiss the gallows.

The revolutionaries were at their best when they used the persuasive and not violent means to present their views, viz. leaflets, deposition in a court and the demonstration of moral force through hunger strike.

**The conduct of approvers exposed that violence collapsed before counter violence, a lesson which HSRA learnt at suicidal cost.**

The period which Bhagat Singh spent in jail reveals his transformation from a zealous revolutionary to a seasoned statesman, as evident from his writings and observations, during that travelling phase.

**He was not a terrorist but believed in using corrective force to protest against any unjustifiable wrong.**

A controversy, not consistent with the political stand of Bhagat Singh as well as of Gandhiji, so often gets kicked that the latter did not seek amnesty for the former during his parleys with Irwin.

Was Bhagat Singh prepared to be pardoned ? He indicted his father severely for his having sent a petition to Viceroy Irwin in the form of an alibi.

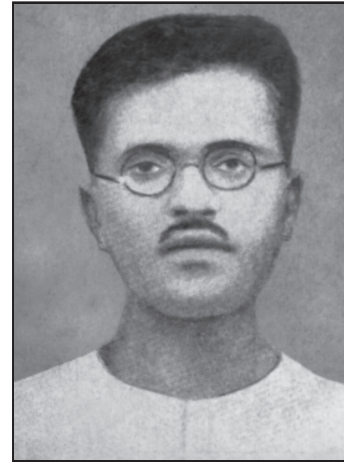
He did not care to dilute the corroborative evidence which was used to incriminate him; could have got the posters 'Saunders is dead, Lalaji is avenged' written from some other person; and

should not have used the pistol with which he killed Saunders, for firing shots in air in the Central Assembly.

**Bhagat Singh, Shiv Ram Rajguru and Sukhdev as martyrs became symbols of national aspirations.**

The memory of public is uncharitable. Who does not know about the fading from glory to oblivion of the condoned INA heroes 'Sehgal, Dhillon Shahnawaz'!

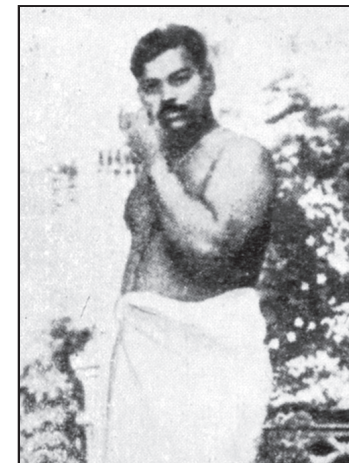
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**Bhagwati Charan Vohra**



**Durga Devi**

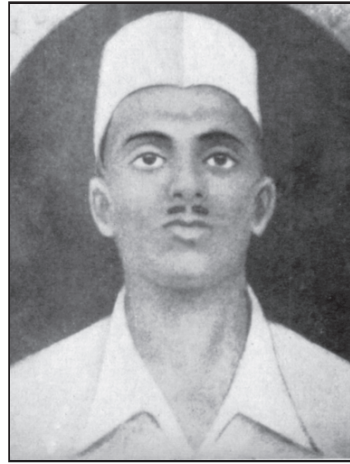


**Chander Shaker Azad**

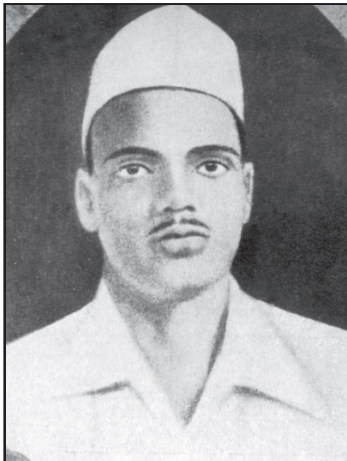




**Jatinder Nath Das**



**Sukhdev**



**Shiv Ram Rajguru**

## VI

### Historic Martyrdom : An Appraisal

Bhagat Singh, Shiv Ram Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged to death on the evening of March 23, 1931 in Central Jail, Lahore. Their dead bodies, instead of being handed over to their relatives, were disposed of secretly.

It is sought to discuss herein the following intertwined issues:

Why were they hanged to death on the evening of March 23, 1931 when the executions were, as a rule, carried out in the morning?

Why were their dead bodies disposed of secretly?

Why was Sukhdev, who had not been directly involved in the murder of Assistant Superintendent of Police, Saunders, sentenced to death along with Bhagat Singh and Rajguru?

Why were Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt not kept in Borstal Jail, Lahore along with other accused?

Why did the British claim that their rule over India had been legally established?

Why did the revolutionaries resort to hunger strike during their trial?

How did this historic martyrdom expose the chasm between proclamations and the actions of British rule?

The annual session of Indian National Congress was scheduled to be held at Karachi in the last week of March 1931, where Gandhi-Irwin pact, an agreement between Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Irwin, Governor General of India, was to be ratified. The former had launched civil disobedience movement, called Salt Satyagraha, for reiterating the right of Indians to prepare salt from sea water instead of its preparation and sale being the monopoly of government. The British opposed it tooth and nail and arrested

Gandhiji, but the activities of militant nationalists impelled them to release him unconditionally and start negotiations with him. Gandhiji had an unscheduled meeting with Irwin prior to his departure for Karachi, which led to speculation that he might have persuaded Irwin to commute the death sentence awarded to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev into term imprisonment. The English bureaucracy was very much upset. Henry Crerar, Home Member of Viceroy's Executive Council, even threatened to resign, if the decision of Special Tribunal which had been vested with extraordinary powers was modified. He advised the Punjab Government to execute the convicts post-haste so that their death be a fait accompli, even if the Viceroy felt moved to exercise his prerogative. Accordingly the state administration advanced the execution from March 24 morning to March 23 evening. The Home Secretary, Punjab reached the Central Jail Lahore at noon to ensure strict compliance with the advice of Home Member, Crerar. All the prisoners were ordered to be locked in their barracks by 2 p.m. As a sequel to the conviction of the accused of Lahore Conspiracy Case on October 7, 1930, a wave of sympathy and adoration for them had started to develop among the prisoners as well as the jail officials. The convict nambardars who had been used for forcible feeding or handcuffing the revolutionaries seemed to be full of remorse. The administration was apprehensive that the native officials could be inwardly resentful. Hence platoons of English soldiers were positioned around the jail. The situation was similar to the one which Rear Admiral Mounbatten, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces would encounter in the Far East subsequent to the landing of Japanese in Burma in 1943. The 3rd Indian Division positioned by him around Imphal to face INA was Indian in name only and contained not a single Indian soldier in any of its 24 battalions. He dreaded the charisma of Netaji in the same manner as both the Central and Punjab Governments were allergic to the popularity of Bhagat Singh.

Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt, during their trial at Delhi for the Central Assembly Bomb Case had been allowed by the Deputy

Commissioner, Delhi, an Irish I.C.S. officer, better class treatment, admissible to European prisoners in Indian jails on racial consideration. The government felt upset because it amounted to the recognition of revolutionaries as political prisoners, which contravened the claim that the British rule over India had been legally established. East India Company had annexed India gradually in about a century by entering into treaties of convenience with various native rulers. Hence the British held that their rule over India had been legally established and the activities striving for self-rule amounted to treason. The militant nationalists had been accordingly treated all through as anarchists. The decision of Delhi administration in allowing better class treatment to revolutionaries had set a precedent, which the Punjab Government was finding hard to accept.

Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt after their conviction in the Central Assembly Bomb Case were transferred to Punjab jails. They were also to be tried along with the other accused of Lahore Conspiracy Case. They resolved to go on hunger strike, wherever they might be lodged, from June 15, 1929 to reiterate their right to be treated as better class prisoners. The other undertrials of Lahore Conspiracy Case mainly Sukhdev, Rajguru, Jai Dev, Shiv Verma, Kishori Lal and Jatinder Nath Das were lodged in Borstal Jail, Lahore, meant for juvenile offenders. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt, being already convicts, were kept in Central Jail, Lahore. Jatin Das joined hunger strike on July 12 and did not give it up while other hunger strikers agreed to suspend it on an assurance that a jail reforms committee would examine their demands. Jatin passed away on September 13, 1929. His dead body was handed over to his younger brother, Kiron Chander Das. He finalized arrangements to take the dead body to Calcutta by rail for cremation at his birth place. The journey of martyr's mortal remains from Lahore to Howrah jolted the Raj severely.

The Punjab Government accordingly decided not to hand over the dead bodies of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev to their relatives fearing that there would be protest demonstrations even

on a larger scale than the ones witnessed in September 1929. Their bodies were entrusted instead to a platoon of English soldiers for disposal. After sunset they drove to the old Hussainiwala Bridge over river Sutlej, hacked the bodies to pieces, poured kerosine oil thereon and put them to fire. The half-burnt pieces were thrown into the river.

The movie, *Shaheed*, produced and released by actor Manoj in late 1965, created a lot of misunderstanding about Sukhdev, by presenting wrongly that during the course of trial, Sukhdev was outwitted by police to become an approver by making him believe that Bhagat Singh too had sought a similar prosecution protection. Sukhdev came to know about the ruse, on being brought to the court, where he found Bhagat Singh seated handcuffed with the other undertrials. The distortion of facts into fiction is a crime against national heroes who ought to be adored and not misrepresented.

It is a misnomer to call the Lahore Conspiracy Case as mere Saunders Murder Trial, as is often done. The leading charge against all these accused was framed under section 121 IPC; waging war against the Crown. The Special Tribunal while sentencing Sukhdev observed :

‘Sukhdev is convicted under section 121 and section 302 read with sections 109 and 120-B of IPC and also under section 4 (6) of the Explosive Substances Act read with section 6 of the Act and section 120-b of the IPC.

The accused was the leader of Punjab branch of the party and it was within the Punjab that many of the violent activities of the party took place. He was privy to the plea to murder’.

The depression which struck Sukhdev so often in the jail was due to the fact that he had taken it to heart that two of the five approvers, namely Jai Gopal and Hans Raj Vohra had been his confidants.

## Government in the Dock

Though the accused of Lahore Conspiracy Case were charged to have conspired to wage war against the Crown, yet the successive moves of administration gave the unfortunate impression as if the government itself was at war against the former. Viceroy Irwin was eager that the infection of political ideas, propounded by Bhagat Singh in the Assembly Bomb Case, be checked but the Punjab Government unwittingly allowed it to spread.

Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were arrested in the aforesaid case on April 8, 1929; the proceedings in the trial court started on May 7 and the sessions court sentenced both of them for life on June 12, 1929. (4:39) The police investigation took about a month and the court proceedings were over in just 37 days; the accused complimenting the trial to be fair by and large. (4:34) The process went on smoothly because the Delhi administration permitted both the accused better class facilities in jail. It was not a concession because the style in which they were found to be dressed at the time of their arrest conformed to the European way of living and the Punjab Government Jail Rules, applicable to Delhi also at that time, for it was not a separate state or a union territory, entitled them to better treatment in jail.

The Punjab Government withdrew better class facilities to Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt after they had been removed to jails in Punjab. They had already given a notice that they would go on hunger strike from June 15, 1929, if the said facilities were not restored. The other undertrials of Lahore Conspiracy Case also started joining them. June 30, 1929 was observed as Bhagat Singh – B.K. Dutt Day for arousing mass sympathy for the fasting revolutionaries.

The police report against the accused of Lahore Conspiracy Case was filed in the trial court on July 10, 29. By that time most of the accused felt incapacitated due to fasting to attend the court. Had the state machinery used tact and not resorted to revengeful approach, the trial could have started smoothly. There were only 15 accused in that case. The extension of better class facilities to

them should not have been made an issue of prestige by the administration.

The case could not progress as per schedule; but the sympathy wave for the fasting accused kept mounting. The Punjab Government in its desperation approached the High Court to allow it to proceed with the ex parte prosecution of the accused. The petition was dismissed. **(4:70)**

The joining of hunger strike by Jatinder Nath Das on July 12, 29 with the resolve to 'achieve or perish' imparted a further momentum to the resentment against the callous moves of administration. While Viceroy Irwin was seeking amendment of the Indian Evidence Act and the Criminal Procedure Code from the Central Assembly for the ex parte prosecution of the accused, Jatin was gasping for life in the Borstal Jail, Lahore. He passed away on September 13, 1929. The severe indictment which the Central Government received from the assembly on the next day, despite its majority, put the Viceroy in the dock.

The trial court resumed the proceedings after two weeks on September 24, 1929. The accused so often protested that the police and not the magistrate controlled the court and the latter instead of taking decisions even in routine matters at his own level sought directions from the district authorities. All the approvers were kept in police lock-up and not in judicial custody as enjoined by law. For conveying his disapproval to the approvers, one of the accused, Des Raj, threw a slipper at Jai Gopal. The police thereafter insisted that the accused be kept handcuffed in the court despite the regrets expressed by Bhagat Singh for the unbecoming action of Des Raj. When the court chose to accept the plea of the police, the accused resolved to boycott the proceedings. Thus the trial process which commenced on July 10, 1929 could not make any substantial progress upto the end of April 1930.

Viceroy Irwin exercised his emergency powers to promulgate an ordinance to constitute a Special Tribunal for bypassing the mandatory legal process of trial proceeding, examination of evidence in sessions court and the right to appeal to state high court

The three-member tribunal consisting of Justice Coldstream, Justice Hilton and Justice Agha Haidar had a time-bound duration of six months from May 1, 1930 to October 31, 1930. The tribunal was authorised to carry on its proceedings in the absence of the accused. Both the English judges were from the hard fibre of I.C.S. cadre. The accused started attending the court. One of the approvers, Ram Saran Das, deposed on May 30, 1930 :

‘I wish to put in a document which shows how approvers are tutored, I hand in the document. I do not wish to remain in the custody of the police. This document was given to me by a police officer who told me to learn it by heart. This was shown to me off and on by the officer who was with me. It passed on from officer to officer as they changed. I hand in the document.’ **(4:154)**

He was allowed by the Tribunal Chairman, Justice Coldstream, to be sent to judicial custody. No such order was passed concerning the other approvers. Even though the deposition of Ram Saran Das had exposed the vicious approach of prosecution, yet the tribunal took no judicial notice of that. Justice Agha Haidar, a barrister before his elevation to bench, asked penetrating questions from the approvers for sifting the facts from the tutored evidence. Both other members did not relish it.

The accused were given to shouting ‘Inquilab zindabad, samraj murdabad’ and the singing of patriotic songs while entering the court. This had become an accepted practice despite its not being liked by the English judges. They would enter the court after the accused had given bent to their patriotic fervour. One day the tribunal members entered the court while the accused were still shouting slogans. Justice Coldstream was extremely annoyed and ordered that the accused be handcuffed and sent back to jail. The police getting a clue from that observation pounced upon the accused, beat them mercilessly before taking them back to jail. Justice Agha Haidar disassociated himself with that arbitrary order. The accused demanded apology from the Chairman for his highhandedness or his removal as a precondition to resuming the court attendance. The rift between the accused and Chairman and that

among the judges themselves became public, discrediting the trial proceedings further. The Viceroy reconstituted the tribunal by sending Justice Coldstream on leave and substituting the inconvenient member, Justice Agha Haidar by Sir Abdul Qadir, esteemed more as a man of letters than as a judge. The accused declined to resume attendance.

The reconstituted tribunal kept examining the tutored approvers ex parte and announced their verdict on October 7, 1930 :

awarding death sentence to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev ;

sentencing to transportation for life Kishori Lal, Mahabir Singh, Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Shiv Verma, Gaya Prashad, Jai Dev and Kamal Nath Tiwari;

convicting Kundal Lal to 7 years' rigorous imprisonment and acquitting Ajay Kumar Ghose, Jatinder Nath Sanyal and Des Raj. (4:174-175)

The whole process has been summed up by subsequent researchers as a derivative political trial where the government was not keen to impart justice but to have its foes exterminated.

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## VII

### **Hari Kishan Talwar : A Meteor**

Hari Kishan Talwar was hanged to death on June 9, 1931, seventy eight days after the execution of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. When his family members had their last interview with him at Mianwali Jail and ascertained his wish about the place of cremation, he desired ardently that in case his dead body was handed over to them, he should be cremated at Hussaniwala where the mortal remains of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev had been consigned to flames. His admiration for Bhagat Singh was so great, that according to his father, Gurudasmal, the major consideration for his having accepted the assignment of shooting Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, the then Governor of Punjab, on behalf of Naujawan Bharat Sabha (a constituent unit of HSRA) was that this might give him a chance to meet Bhagat Singh in Central Jail Lahore. His wish was fulfilled with the help of a sympathetic jail official, before he was transferred to Mianwali Jail after his having been sentenced to death on January 26, 1931.

#### **The Talwars of Ghalla Dhar**

Hari Kishan, the second among nine sons and a daughter of Gurudasmal Talwar, was born in January 1908 at Ghalla Dhar, a small village near the district town of Mardan in N.W.F.P. The ancestor of the family was Jassa Singh, who migrated to Pathan land from Bhera-Miani (Gujrat) in the Punjab after its annexation by the British. His noble progeny reflected the blend of rejuvenated Punjabi culture and the traditional code of honour of Pashtuns.

Gurudasmal had been subscribing to Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak's *Kesari* and reading with interest the books and pamphlets propagating national awakening. When Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan organized the famous *Khudai Khidmatgars* or the Red Shirts Movement, Gurudasmal encouraged his sons to become its

volunteers. In 1930, Hari Kishan and his younger brother Bhagat Ram (who later assisted Subash Chander Bose in his historic escape from India) were arrested and sent to Central Jail Peshawar. As the jails started overcrowding with political prisoners, the government played a trick with most of them, who did not know English. They were asked to sign a form in English, which they were told was their release order, but in fact amounted to an undertaking that the signatory would not repeat that offence, Hari Kishan fell in that trap. When he reached home after his release, his father admonished him for his having lowered the family honour. Hari Kishan felt deeply hurt and resolved to atone for his inadvertent lapse through whatever sacrifice he would be called upon to offer.

### **Advice of Moti Lal Nehru to HSRA**

Mahatma Gandhi launched the salt satyagraha in 1930 expecting that the British Government would yield to his passive resistance. His call evoked an enthusiastic response from people to begin with. Thousands courted arrest, but as the movement lingered, its momentum began to wane. The British were aware that the movement would end in a flop and as such showed little inclination for settlement.

Mahatma Gandhi, apprehending an unceremonious failure of his movement, sought the intervention of liberal leaders like Dr Sapru and Jayakar. They approached the Viceroy Irwin who insisted that as a precondition to any political talks with him, Mahatma Gandhi must withdraw the salt satyagraha. Moti Lal Nehru, who had also been arrested, was released on grounds of ill health. He was not a blind believer in non-violent means but regarded the revolutionary activities as complementary to passive resistance. He was convinced that the fizzling out of salt satyagraha would not only mean the humiliation of a national leader of the standing of Gandhi, but also, inflict a serious setback to the struggle for freedom. He sent a personal message to Chander Shekhar Azad, commander of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, through Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Editor, *Hindi Partap*, Cawnpur urging

that the militant nationalists should not be silent spectators to the debacle, but mount pressure through their activities on the Viceroy, to invite Gandhi for settlement. It was accordingly decided by HSRA to create panic among the high-ranking British officers.

### **Decision to Kill the Punjab Governor**

As a part of the country-wide programme the leaders of Naujawan Bharat Sabha, namely Ranbir of *Daily Milap* and Durga Dass Khanna planned to kill Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, Governor of the Punjab. It was decided to arrange the entry of a crack shot into the Senate Hall of Punjab University Lahore at the time of its annual convocation on December 23, 1930 to shoot from close range at the Governor, who as Chancellor was to preside over the function.

Ranbir sought from Chaman Lal Kapoor of Mardan, who as a student of D.A.V. College, Hoshiarpur had been an active member of Naujawan Bharat Sabha if he could arrange for a crack shot. Chaman Lal Kapoor knew about the resolve of Hari Kishan to offer himself for the greatest sacrifice to atone for his unintended lapse, referred to earlier. Hari Kishan gladly accepted the assignment and his father wholeheartedly endorsed it. Rather he started training Hari Kishan thereafter in close range shooting. Chaman Lal Azad of *Daily Partap*, Lahore himself a revolutionary, wrote later in his tribute to both, father and the son :

‘This, perhaps, is the only instance in history where a father is known to have himself trained and sent his young son to the gallows for the independence of his country’.

Chaman Lal Kapoor and Hari Kishan reached Lahore on the morning of December 20, 1930. They went direct to the office of *Milap*, where Ranbir explained the assignment to Hari Kishan. He accepted it with the firm stipulation that no covering plan would be executed to rescue him after he had shot at the Governor, as it would entail unnecessary loss of lives of innocent audience as well as that of the workers of Naujawan Bharat Sabha.

Hari Kishan was lodged at the house of Wasanda Ram\* in Rajgarh Mohalla of Ramnagar at the back of S.D. College, Lahore. On the early morning of December 22 he was taken around the Senate Hall by Ranbir to acquaint him with the procedure of entry to the hall and the plan of action inside. Durga Das Khanna arranged for him a suit of clothes and an entry pass bearing the name 'Mohammed Yusuf'. Attired in a Western style suit and carrying a loaded revolver in the cavity, carved in a book, Hari Kishan entered the Senate Hall at 11.00 a.m. on December 23, 1931. Initially he intended to shoot at the Governor before the proceedings started, but on examining the situation from within, he chose to carry out his action at the close of ceremony. The Governor gave away the degrees and Dr Sarvapalli Radha Krishnan delivered the convocation address. Not being conversant with English, Hari Kishan was taken unawares when the proceedings ended abruptly and the persons on dais began moving down. Hari Kishan got up on his chair quickly and started firing at the Governor, taking full precaution that Dr Radha Krishnan did not get hurt. The Governor received injuries but was not killed. Thereafter, he fired another shot in self-defence to keep off Chanan Singh, a subinspector of police advancing towards him threateningly with a revolver in hand. Chanan Singh succumbed to the injuries. Budh Singh Wadhwan, CID Inspector and Miss Dermitt of Lady Harding Women College of Lahore also received injuries. In the meantime Hari Kishan was overpowered and the Governor was whisked off.

### **The Investigation and Trial**

Hari Kishan was removed to Anarkali Police Station where he was tortured to disclose the names of his comrades who had masterminded his entry into the hall. When they failed to extort any information except his identity and address, he was shifted to

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\* Wasanda Ram later became an approver and on the basis of his evidence Ranbir, Durga Das Khanna and Chaman Lal Kapoor were sentenced to death in a conspiracy case instituted separately. The High Court did not confirm the death sentence for want of evidence against them.

the notorious Lahore Fort. He was made to stand naked for hours without food and sleep. In the severe cold of December he was laid on slabs of ice, his nails were pulled out and he was forced to sit in a chair with spikes on its seat. Hari Kishan withstood all this heroically. His only answer was that he had come alone from his home with a resolve to shoot the Governor to death, without any body to help or guide him.

Originally the police proposed to send Gurudasmal also for trial along with Hari Kishan on charge of conspiracy but fearing that such a trial would give unnecessary publicity to the activities of revolutionaries, proceedings against Hari Kishan alone were rushed through.

A magistrate, brought by police to Lahore Fort, recorded the statement of Hari Kishan under Section 167 of Criminal Procedure Code that he had come with the sole purpose of killing the Governor, who symbolized the British Raj, responsible for countless atrocities perpetrated on the people of India. He added thereto that he had to fire at Chanan Singh in self-defence.

Thereafter, he was shifted to Borstal Jail Lahore. The case was put up on January 5, 1931 and the trial magistrate framed charges against Hari Kishan under Section 302 for the murder of Chanan Singh and under section 307 for attempting to murder the Governor. After a brief hearing, he committed Hari Kishan to sessions.

Asaf Ali, the famous Congress leader, appeared as a defence council for Hari Kishan and pointed out serious irregularities in the medical report, the method of recording confessional statement under section 167 Cr. P.C. etc. He also pleaded for a trial outside the Punjab because Governor of the province, its chief executive, was involved personally in the case and as such fair proceedings could not be expected from a court under his jurisdiction. Asaf Ali, even once walked out of the court to protest against the glaring violation of elementary rules of conduct, forecasting the resolve of prosecution to send Hari Kishan to gallows as early as possible. It was evident from the fact that the proceedings at the court of A.H.B. Anderson, District and Session Judge, Lahore commenced on



January 14, and were followed by hearing on January 15,16,21,22 and 25, 1931.

Hari Kishan was asked to make statement after the prosecution had rushed through its version.Repeating mainly what he had deposed before the trial magistrate. Hari Krishan read out a written statement in Urdu exposing the British atrocities, when their armed forces fired at an unarmed gathering of Pathans in Qissa Khwani Bazar at Peshawar on 23 April, 1930 killing many innocent men, women and children.

He further said :

'I know what is in store for me. I have no misgivings on that score whatsoever. If sacrifice of my life helps to bring the independence of India any nearer, I am prepared to lay down my life not only once but after every rebirth thousand times over, for I am certain that after my death thousands of Hari Kishans will be born here to carry on the battle till our independence is achieved. I want the British to realize that the time has come for them to make due amends for the crimes against our people and to quit the country'.

Hari Kishan ended his statement with the slogan, 'Inquilab zindabad' adopted by his hero, Bhagat Singh. (6:27)

He declined to produce any witness in his defence. The court disregarding the unanimous recommendation of jury that in consideration of his tender age, Hari Kishan be sentenced to imprisonment for life, inflicted on him the penalty of death for willful murder of Subinspector Chanan Singh and the life sentence on each separate charge of murderous assault on the Governor, CID Inspector Budh Singh Wadhwan and Miss Dermitt.

Hari Kishan thanking the judge for enabling him to fulfil his heart's desire is said to have humorously enquired whether he would be hanged after undergoing 28 years of rigorous imprisonment or he would be kept hanging for 28 years inside the jail compound.

The High Court confirmed the sentence awarded by the Session Court on March 10, 1931. The Privy Council rejected the appeal in post-haste.

### **Gandhi Irwin Meeting**

Mahatma Gandhi was unconditionally released in January 1931 and invited by Viceroy Irwin for talks with him. Little did he know that these were the activities of Naujawan Bharat Sabha which had compelled the otherwise reluctant and arrogant Irwin to negotiate a settlement with him. .

### **Martyrdom of Hari Kishan**

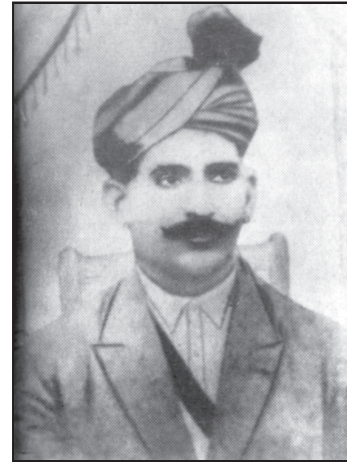
Hari Kishan was shifted to Mianwali Jail after confirmation of his death sentence by the High Court. The journey of dead body of martyr Jatinder Nath Das from Lahore to Howrah September 14 to 16, 1929 had convinced the government that it was not safe to hand over the dead bodies of revolutionaries after their being hanged to their guardians, because the funeral processions that followed amounted to massive demonstrations of protest against the Raj. That is why Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were secretly hanged on March 23, 1931 evening and their dead bodies hastily disposed of at Hussaniwala. Likewise, the dead body of Hari Kishan after his being hanged to death on June 9, 1931 at Mianwali, was not given to his relatives, but was cremated at a desolate place and within hours thereafter his ashes were thrown into river Indus. Tilok Chand Mahroom the well known Urdu poet happened to be at Mianwali on that day. He expressed his anguish and paid his tribute in a poem in Urdu, rendered into English by

M.S. Batra as follows:

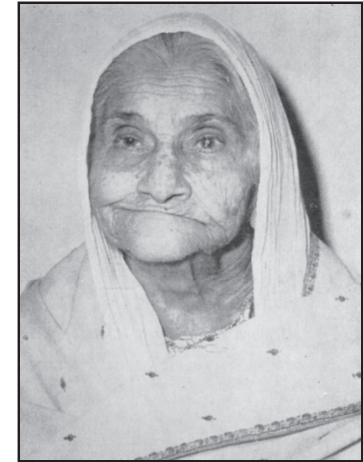
'In the heart of the desert again  
The flames leapt from a funeral pyre.  
No kind heart could reach there,  
The path was ridden with quagmire.  
There was no cry of agony,  
Nor pain, nor even a sign;  
No kindred near,  
No grieving friend could pass by.

*Oh, in the heart of sand  
 A lone pyre burning in the morning red,  
 No one said 'Goodbye',  
 Or looked wistfully at the dead,  
 There was no mourning song,  
 No tearful eyes to behold.  
 But laden with sorrow,  
 The breath of wind was cold.  
 Look, the flames are smouldering.  
 Seems satisfied the fire.  
 How soon is burnt a youth  
 With all his desire,  
 This is the prize for love  
 For the dear motherland  
 Many more will follow  
 To hold it in their hands  
 Don't scatter them, breeze  
 These are Hari Kishan's ashes and  
 He is gone for ever  
 Redeeming the honour of his land'. (6:33-34)*

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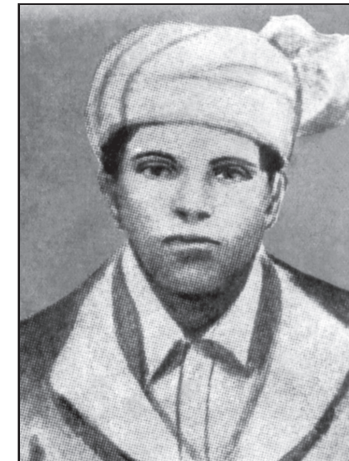


**Gurudasmal**

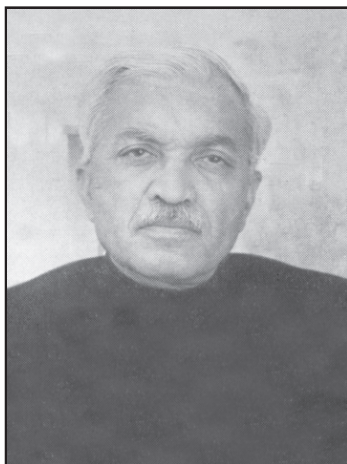


**Mathura Devi**

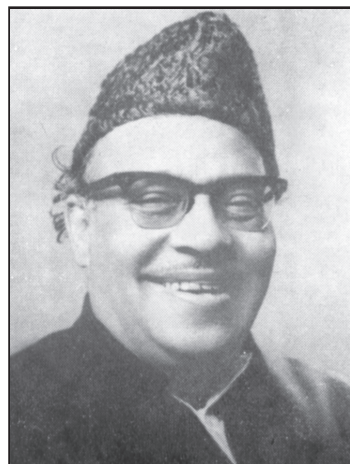
**(Parents of Hari Kishan Talwar)**



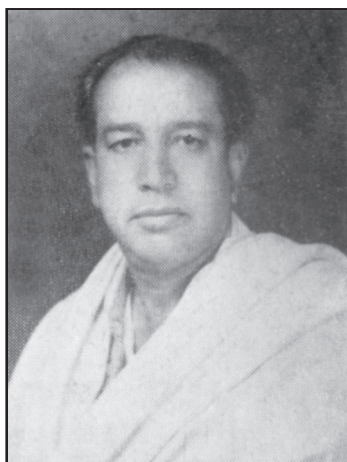
**Hari Kishan Talwar**



**Durga Dass Khanna**



**Ranbir Singh**



**Chaman Lal Kapoor**

## VIII

### Gleanings and Musings

Gleanings herein imply the extracts taken from the writings of freedom fighters associated with this saga as well as the information gathered through discussion with them. Musings consist of my assessment of various happenings.

#### What a Fall

Durga Das Khanna (1909-1984), an activist of Naujawan Bharat Sabha, educated from F. C. College Lahore and joined Law College thereafter. He states:

‘Some time later I was desired by Bhagat Singh to leave the college and join Hans Raj Vohra at Rawalpindi as soon as possible. In the mean time pressure was being exerted on my parents that I should get married to the girl to whom I had been engaged several years ago. In January 1928, however, when I was supposed to leave for Rawalpindi, Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev felt the necessity of securing considerable funds for carrying on their programme. The only method they could immediately think of was to raid the house of some rich person and seize as much cash, gold and other valuables as was possible. On my pointing out that if we engaged in that operation, our main object might be frustrated, Bhagat Singh suggested that I should go through the milni ceremony in connection with my marriage because that would mean quite a reasonable amount becoming available to me. So the milni ceremony was held on 14th or 15th January 1928 and a sum of about Rs 1400 or so which came into my hands was passed on to Bhagat Singh by me for party work. That evening I left my house for going to Rawalpindi as planned earlier. It so happened that Bhagat Singh thought that my sudden departure at that time could cause a severe shock to my mother. He, therefore, decided to drop my going to Rawalpindi and said that I should go through the remaining ceremony in connection with my

marriage. *What a fall*, was the comment made by both Sukhdev and myself. But the will of Bhagat Singh prevailed and I returned to my house at dead of night’.

This is an extract from his contribution ‘Intimate Reminiscences’ published in the souvenir *They Died So That India May Live* brought out by the PUNJAB Government in March 1981, while celebrating 50th anniversary of martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. *The irony of awkward situation, into which Durga Das got pushed, touches deeply when it is recalled that Bhagat Singh himself desisted firmly all moves of his elders to get him married.*

Durga Das arranged the entry pass for Hari Kishan Talwar into the Senate Hall of Punjab University, Lahore on December 23, 1930. He was arrested for conspiring to murder Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, Governor of Punjab and sentenced to death. The High Court commuted that punishment into imprisonment for life. The other convicts in this case were Ranbir of *Daily Milap* and Chaman Lal Kapoor.

### **A Father with Indomitable Will**

Jamuna Das was the eldest son of Gurudasmal. When the latter met him at Sheikhpura on January 3, 1931, while on his way to Lahore, Jamuna Das observed:

‘Pitaji, you always consult me even on trivial issues . But why did you not tell me anything about such a dangerous course which you planned for Hari Kishan?’

Gurudasmal replied :

‘Our country needs the sacrifice and blood of young patriots. I have nine sons. I wanted one of them to make the supreme sacrifice for the country’. (6:24)

In the mean time Ranbir was also arrested on the basis of confession made by Wasanda Ram. Gurudsamal sought interview with him about which Ranbir writes:

‘... His father came to see me in the Borstal Jail where we were kept as undertrial prisoners. I wanted to congratulate him for the brave and courageous act of his valiant son but I found him

a little sad. I thought he was unhappy on account of the arrest of his young son, Hari Kishan. After all he was a father, even though the father of a revolutionary young man. Parents of such patriots also have a heart and feelings for their sons and daughters. His young son was heading towards death. It was, therefore, but natural that he should be sad. But I was amazed when he said

‘I am pained because you trusted my son but he could not come to your expectations’.

I was bewildered and looked at him but before I could say anything, he continued in the same quiet but determined tone :

‘Hari Kishan could not kill the Governor of Punjab but you need not bother. I shall send every one of my sons to you one by one. They will lay down their lives for the nation and the country. If they fail, I will myself fight as a soldier of freedom fighters. I assure you that my aim never misses’.

I promptly touched his feet not only because he was father of a brave and undaunted man but also because he was a great man himself. It was this great man who inspired passion for freedom and sense of sacrifice for people and nation in his son, Hari Kishan. This great man who was the embodiment of sacrifice for the nation and the country, the man who completely detached himself from world and sacrificed himself for the great cause of nation. Now I could understand the great strength of determination and will power in Hari Kishan. Now I could understand why Hari Kishan told me ‘Do not try to save my life by risking lives of others’. Many years after this incident when Dr Radha Krishnan became President of the Republic of India, Hari Kishan’s words came to my mind ‘Let me die alone. No other life should be risked for my sake’. (6:249-50)

### **Jai Dev**

Jai Dev alias Harish Chander, accused No: 6 in Lahore Conspiracy Case (1929-30) was sentenced to life imprisonment and deported to Cellular Jail, Port Blair, dreaded as *Kale Pani*. His visits to Punjab became frequent after September 1979 when 50th

anniversary of the martyrdom of Jatinder Nath Das was celebrated at state level in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. He was gifted with encyclopaedic memory, bewitching oratory and endearing simplicity. My acquaintance with him developed into intellectual comradeship. He would narrate for hours together the account of various activities of HSRA. How I wish that I had tape-recording facilities then or he had been given to wield the pen as effectively as his discourses impressed.

He recalled that to begin with he and B. K. Dutt had been deputed to throw bombs and leaflets at the floor of Central Assembly. He was also required to manage the entry thereto. Jai Dev dressed in shirt and shorts started visiting occasionally the entrance to Assembly Hall. This mode of dress did not create any suspicion, rather reflected respectability. Through his polite inquisitive manners he impressed much a security staff member of the rank of D.S.P. The liking grew into acceptance when Jai Dev with his changed name suffixed the surname which fell in the gotra (sub-caste) category of that officer. One day Jai Dev casually mentioned that he and a few of his classmates yearned to watch the proceedings of Central Assembly for improving their skill in debates, but were finding it hard to get entry passes. The D.S.P., treating it as a genuine youthful desire, agreed to let them enter the gallery without passes. Even though Jai Dev got replaced by Bhagat Singh later, yet the arrangement worked. B.K.Dutt and Bhagat Singh were dressed in khaki shirts and shorts with light bluish coats. They carried with them the bombs, pistol and leaflets deftly concealed under those outfits. **If the entry into gallery without passes had not been managed, that epoch-making blast would not have taken place.**

No researcher seems to have touched this aspect i.e. how did Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt manage entry into Assembly Hall on April 8, 1929?

Jai Dev narrated another incident which took place at Benares Hindu University in 1976. Kultar Singh, younger brother of Bhagat Singh, then a minister in U.P. visited the campus escorted by Jai Dev. His tall stature and herculean built-up caused irresistible attraction. A student enquired curiously as to who that person with

extraordinarily impressive appearance was. Jai Dev replied that it was not so important to be told that he was a minister as to learn that he was a younger brother of Bhagat Singh. The student enquired further as to who Bhagat Singh had been. Jai Dev feeling distressed at his ignorance burst out:

‘Pity the nation whose youth do not remember the martyrs of freedom struggle’.

After this narration Jai Dev observed pensively that the historical account of freedom struggle had been presented after 1947 in an incomplete manner by stressing that India achieved independence through non-violent campaigns which amounted to disowning the corresponding contribution of revolutionaries and the Indian National Army to the freedom movement. Jai Dev lamented that when the young were told day and night that independence had been achieved without shedding a drop of blood or handed over as a gift by the British, history lulls them to complacency and ceases to inspire them for performing valorous deeds. It had been a tragedy of post-independence India that ideals of freedom struggle did not inspire the generations to come, rather allured them to squander its gains.

### **Kiron Chander Das**

Kiron Chander Das (1909-1986) regarded Punjab as his second home. He frequently chose to pass four to five weeks here around March 23. He regarded his trips as a sort of pilgrimage which enabled him to visit Jallianwala Bagh as well if his sojourn got extended beyond Baisakhi. He preferred to stay with me at the PAU campus. He had been a sort of living chapter of the freedom struggle who maintained a lively contact among surviving freedom fighters till his demise. It was at his exhortation that Giani Zail Singh, the then Chief Minister of Punjab, felicitated Mrs Vidyavati, mother of Bhagat Singh, with the adoring mode of address of ‘Punjab Mata’.

Mango had been a favourite fruit of Jatinder Nath Das. During the delirium preceding his death caused by hunger strike stretching over 63 days, he talked about this fruit. Kiron Chander Das was permitted to nurse his brother in Borstal Jail. He listened to that

delirious mumbling. He resolved not to eat mango thereafter in sympathy with his brother who could not have it due to his vow of hunger strike.

Dr Raymond Griffith, an academician from USA, associated with PAU, happened to meet Kiron at my residence and listened to that episode with interest and appreciation. He composed the poem 'A Mango for Me' given herein after.

The poem is symbolic of the noble sentiment that good people all over respect the martyrs of other nations as ardently as they adore their own.

### *A Mango for Me*

Cool is the shade beneath the mango branches  
That the weary and hungry traveller seeks  
As he crosses the pitiless plains of the summer,  
Dazed by the sunlight, pursued by the heat.  
Jatinder Nath Das, faint and delirious,  
Dreamed of the fruit and dreamed of the tree,  
And asked as he fasted in Lahore's fortress prison  
A mango, a mango, a mango for me.

Dark with grief was the grove of mangoes,  
And pierced with the shrieks of the parakeets,  
When Jatinder Nath Das, weakened from fasting,  
Died as he lived to serve his ideals.  
His brother has never since tasted a mango,  
For Kiron still hears that fevered appeal  
Of the martyr who fought for the Hindustan Army\*,  
No mango, no mango, no mango for me.

Gold is the flesh, and gold are the juices  
That seep from the mangoes, ripened and sweet,  
Piled high in flat baskets through out the long harvest,  
Gold pyramids set on rings of green leaves.  
Accepting and eating can have the same meaning  
For us as rejecting the fruit of the tree  
If we act in the name of Jatinder Nath Das  
A mango, a mango, a mango for thee.

---

\*Hindustan Socialist Republican Army

In the spring the tender young leaves of the mango  
Were yellow and pale with a soft rosy sheen.  
Now under the glossy stiff leaves of September  
The village elders assemble to meet.  
Jatinder Nath Das and his comrades are present.  
Inseparably one with the people they freed.  
We honour all heroes each time we remember,  
A mango, a mango, a mango for thee.

### **Kishen Singh**

I came in contact with all the family members of Kishen Singh who participated in the freedom struggle with the exception of Swaran Singh, his youngest brother and the legendary martyr Bhagat Singh. The surviving offspring of Kishen Singh and Vidyavati in lineal order comprised Amar Kaur, Kulbir Singh, Kultar Singh, Sumitra, Shakuntala, Ranbir Singh and Rajinder Singh. Sumitra, Shakuntla and Rajinder Singh showed no inclination towards political activities.

The ban on Indian National Congress imposed in 1942 was lifted subsequent to the Simla Conference held in mid 1945 by Viceroy Wavell with the political leaders of all shades. The Punjab Provincial Congress Committee started functioning from its office in Bradlaugh Hall, Lahore. It was a massive building and the Punjab Students Congress was given a room there for its office. Kishen Singh, invalidated by paralysis, Mata Vidyavati, Bibi Amar Kaur and Kultar Singh's wife Satinder Kaur with their daughter, Varinder, often visited that place. This is how our acquaintance began, which developed into life-long association.

Earlier Ranbir Singh met me at Khalsa College, Matunga, Bombay in June 1945 where the All India Students Congress held a citizenship camp for educating its workers. Ranbir Singh was a sharp wit, equipped with lot of common sense but lacking higher education. Hence emotions often dominated his utterances, which were otherwise thought-provoking. I recollect his observation that to call the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 as India's First War of Independence was a misnomer because such evaluation of events

would imply that sepoy Mangal Pandey and not Mahatma Gandhi be called Father of Nation.

I met Kulbir Singh and Kultar Singh in the Central Jails Lahore and Rawalpind respectively during 1945-46, where I too had been lodged. As President, Punjab Students Congress I led the Save INA Campaign and was arrested for my alleged anti-government speeches.

Kulbir Singh had a computer-like memory of political happenings. I once discussed with him a research thesis. The scholar had inferred that the Muslim elite of India preferred to go to Germany instead of UK for higher education because they had a grouse that the English had snatched the Delhi Throne from them. Kulbir Singh jeered at the quality of research and asserted that the alliance of Caliph of Turkey, Temporal Head of Islam, with Germany, the main Axis Power, was the alluring reason for the Indian Muslim scholars, interested in theology only, to go to Germany but those having inclination towards liberal education chose British universities. He listed the scholars of each category to substantiate his observation.

Lack of higher education impeded his ambitions.

### **Ajit Singh**

I met Ajit Singh, illustrious hero of the campaign 'Pagri Sambhal Jatta, Pagri Sambhal Oai' in March 1947. The Students Congress had been pressing for his repatriation. We felicitated him on his arrival at Lahore. During his speech he referred to the text which he was preparing as his autobiography. The situation in Punjab started deteriorating. We did not meet thereafter. He passed away at Dalhousie on August 15, 1947. Nothing was heard about that manuscript for long. But it is gratifying that it was published in 1984 by Pardaman Singh and Joginder Singh Dhanki, after an arduous quest in Indian Archives, under the title *Buried Alive*.

Ajit Singh was born on February 3, 1881 at Khatkar Kalan, a village near Banga in Jalandhar District. He narrates in *Buried Alive* a romantic account due to which that hamlet began to be called by its present name. The ancestors of Ajit Singh belonged to village Narli near Lahore. One of them, some where during the Mogul

rule, while on his way to Hardwar for the ash-immersion rites of a departed elder, sought stay for night from the chief of hamlet, which consisted of a cluster of small and big forts. Fort in Punjabi is called *garh*. Accordingly these mansions were known as *garh kalan* (big fort) and *garh khurd* (small fort). The chief who lived in Garh Kalan was impressed by the handsome face and pleasant manner of expression of the young traveller. He was ascertained to be still a bachelor and the host resolved to marry his only daughter with him. The young guest was desired to halt at Ghar Kalan while returning from Hardwar. The only favour sought from the prospective son-in-law was that he should stay with them and not go back to Narli. In Punjabi dowry is called *khat*. The mansion began to be called Khatgarh Kalan, which in due course started to be pronounced 'Khatkar Kalan'.

Arjan Singh, father of Ajit Singh was an active Arya Samajist. Their family in the village was popularly referred to as Aryan de tabbar. Fateh Singh, grandfather of Arjan Singh had scornfully declined the offer of Surat Singh Majithia to join him for seeking favours from East India Company by helping them to crush the 1857-Sepoy Mutiny. Thus was inherited the seed of anti-British patriotic sentiments by the progeny of Arjan Singh.

### **Kultar Singh**

Kultar Singh had been an exception among his siblings. He too missed the opportunity for higher education. But he had learnt to think twice before he spoke, imbibed steadfastness of conduct and, above all, knew how to restrain unbounded ambition. That is why he left his mark over the assignments entrusted to him.

An incident relating to Kultar Singh's physical appearance though comical, yet reflects his composed and fascinating personality. He was on way to his native village, Khatkar Kalan, in 1978. At Phagwara a youngman, feeling excited at the overwhelmingly impressive body of Kultar Singh, shouted 'Hathi, hathi' (Elephant, elephant). Har Sukh Lal Hathi was the Governor of Punjab then. Kultar Singh smiled graciously at the astonished young man who asked sheepishly 'Sir, are you the Governor of Punjab?'. The distress



of Jai Dev referred to earlier, got re-echoed. How deplorable that the youth get fascinated by political figures and film stars, but are ignorant about the real heroes.

As stated earlier I met Satinder and Varinder at Bradlaugh Hall in September 1945. In contrast to Kultar Singh, Satinder bore a lean appearance. Varinder in spite of her brilliance displayed the effect of long paternal absence. Kultar Singh had been behind bars since the Second World War broke out. While engaged in childlike games with her, I asked 'How much two and two make?' She cried 'Four'. When asked to explain 'How', she caught both the ears of Satinder, her mother, shouting 'Two', then her own and replied gleefully 'Those two and mine two get counted as four'. All burst into a hearty laughter.

I have mentioned this incident in the context that the families of political workers suffered more than the latter. Whereas they were exclaimed as patriots and felicitated as freedom fighters, their families had been the de facto political sufferers; braved separation, economic hardship, surveillance by CID and pinching indifference by neighbours. Varinder who later compiled a comprehensive biography of her eldest uncle, Bhagat Singh, would have become a brilliant scholar, had she not missed the paternal guidance in her formative years.

### **Punjab Mata**

I once read out an article in Punjabi to Punjab Mata for verification of details about family members. She confirmed that her eldest son, Jagat Singh, died of pneumonia at the age of 10. It also got endorsed that her father-in-law Arjan Singh, declared at the name-selection ceremony of Jagat Singh and Bhagat Singh, that he was offering both his grandsons to the freedom struggle and they would not marry. Though it was an arbitrary announcement, yet she stood by it. She asserted that it was the grandmother who later insisted that Bhagat Singh be married, which the latter firmly resisted, invoking the declaration of his grandfather.

When I read out:

'Many welcome events took place around the birth of Bhagat Singh, namely:

his father, Kishen Singh, returned home from Nepal after a long absence;

his youngest uncle, Swaran Singh, was released on parole; and it appeared in the papers that his other uncle, Ajit Singh, had been released from detention at Mandalay in Burma,

the ladies considering the newborn as lucky (bhaganwala) chose to propose his name as Bhagat Singh'.

Punjab Mata before nodding her assent, observed that the phrase 'long absence' be precisely defined as in such cases continuous absence of husband from home exceeding nine months leads to uncharitable comments. It was a befitting advice that reflected grassroots commonsense of Punjab Mata. Vague adjectives rob a writing of objectivity.

### **Fateful March 23**

During the years 1931-47 three scattered historical events, each of which took place on March 23, altered the geographical map of Indian subcontinent as well as dismantled the colonialism.

- i. On March 23, 1931 evening, Bhagat Singh, Shiv Ram Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged to death furtively in the Central Jail, Lahore by advancing the execution by twelve hours; the dead bodies were not handed over to their guardians for cremation rather entrusted to a troop of English soldiers who drove with them to a place near Hussainiwala bridge on river Sutlej, hacked the corpses to pieces, poured kerosine on them, consigned them to flames, staged a merry dance around the funeral fire and threw the half-burnt piece into the river.
- ii. On March 23, 1940, the All India Muslim League passed at Lahore the resolution for creation of Pakistan on the basis of two-nation theory which became a reality in about seven years thereafter in spite of the demand having been rebuffed as a geographical absurdity by Viceroy Wavell.

iii. Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy designate of India, arrived at Delhi on March 23, 1947 and within less than five months partitioned the subcontinent into three parts but two dominions thus ringing the knell of empire which had started annexing India after the Battle of Plassey in 1757.

The martyrdom belied the myth that the colonial rule practised meticulously the spirit of law;

the demand of Pakistan on the basis of two-nation theory turned out to be a hoax, when its architect, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, while leaving triumphantly for Karachi, shocked the Muslims left in India by advising them to remain loyal to their country and declared that after the inception of Pakistan, the new country would be secular and not theocratic; and

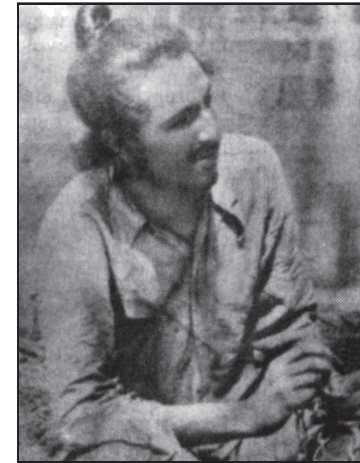
the inordinate haste to which Lord Mountbatten resorted by advancing the departure of British from June 1948 to August 15, 1947 was his subjective decision, as he wanted to flaunt himself as the absolute controller of situation while giving tacit heed to the observation of his predecessor, Lord Wavell, who while handing the confidential file 'Operation Madhouse' had suggested that the evacuation of British with bag and baggage be latter's priority and exclusive consideration, as none could save India from the engulfing chaos. (2:70)

August 15, 1947 was chosen as date of independence of subcontinent through partition, resembling scissoring of a map, because it coincided with the second anniversary of unconditional surrender of Japan before the Allies. (2:165) **The fads of victors wade through the marsh of misery of the vanquished.**

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**Ajit Singh (1906)**



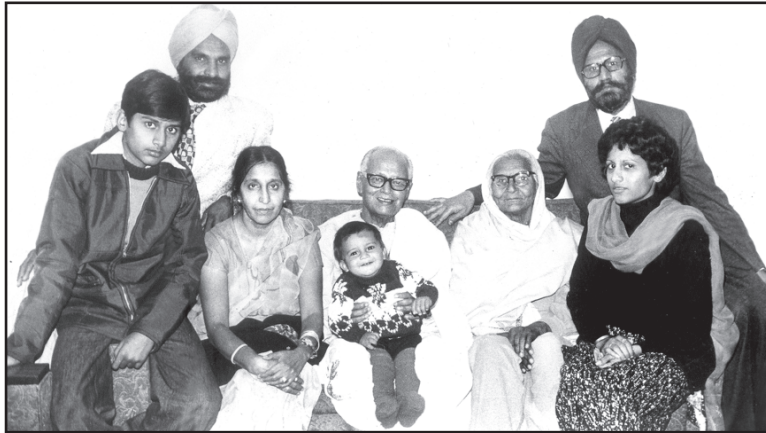
**Bhagat Singh  
(In Lahore Fort, May 1927)**



**Bibi Amar Kaur, Mata Vidya Vati and Kiron Chander Das  
with the family members of author (1969)**

## IX

### Imperialism Collapses



Standing : Prof. Jagmohan Singh; Prof. Hazara Singh (author)  
Sitting : Mandeep Singh, Phool Kaur (author's younger son and wife); Kiron Chander Das (with author's grandson, Abhijit Duggal in lap); Bibi Amar Kaur (younger sister of Bhagat Singh); Miss Paramjit K. Saini (author's younger daughter) (November 1978)



Kiron Chander Das, Jai Dev and Author 1979

Linlithgow, Viceroy of India, (1939-43) as per his own assessment of the inclinations of Indian business community and the intrigues of anti-Congress forces, had inferred that the British rule over India could be manipulated for another ten years even after the war. He had the backing of Prime Minister Winston Churchill in his manoeuvres because the continuous colonial loot of natural resources of India was essential for the post-war reconstruction of exhausted and ravaged UK. But the dramatic arrival of Subhas Chander Bose from Germany in the Far East changed the situation radically.

#### Events in the Far East

The stormy advance of Japanese forces in the Far East and the falling of Singapore, considered to be invincible naval fortress of the Empire, made the British so panicky that they formulated a scorched earth policy regarding India which included blowing up of important bridges and destroying industrial installations in order to deny them to the Japanese in the event of their invading India. The Japanese landed in Burma in early 1942.

'Many British and Australian soldiers as could be evacuated by sea were shipped off. Those who could not be sent by sea were escorted under air protection by the Burma Road, a route reserved for Europeans only, even local Anglo-Burmese men and women were assured this safe route of escape to India.

Indian soldiers were left behind to surrender or fend their way through thick jungles and rugged mountains, without food or water. More than a million Indian citizens were made to evacuate and to seek a journey to home with their children and babies in arms, through thick unexplored jungle country. It is estimated that 900,000 of these Indian refugees perished in the jungles and mountains.' (3:41)

This callous action of the British manifested that in spite of their claim of being champions of democracy, they practised racialism even against their co-defenders.

### Impact of Bose

The assumption of Supreme Command of reorganised Indian National Army, named thereafter as *Azad Hind Fauj*, on August 25, 1943 and the establishment of Provisional Government, *Arzi Hakumat-e-Azad Hind*, by Subhas Chander Bose on October 21, 1943 rendered the British quite jittery. As many as 88 confidential orders were issued in pursuance of *Denial Policies* regarding removal of transport means and large scale lifting of paddy from the denial areas for creating famine-like conditions so that adult male population might feel compelled either to seek recruitment to army or move away to other places in search of livelihood.

‘... This nefarious strategy of desired scarcity of food, causing devastation in Bengal, had the sole design behind it i.e. to offer nothing in the form of human resources in case Netaji successfully appeared with his victorious army. The main bulk of the revolutionary forces would draw from the soil of Bengal, they apprehended’. (3:62)

More than four million human lives perished in that famine. The responsibility for that inhuman action lay squarely on Winston Churchill, the then Prime Minister-cum-War Minister of Britain. While accusing the Nazis for having perpetrated a state-sponsored genocide against the Jews, the world opinion should have also taken notice of the fact that the British Government too was guilty of an equally gruesome war crime against humanity in Bengal.

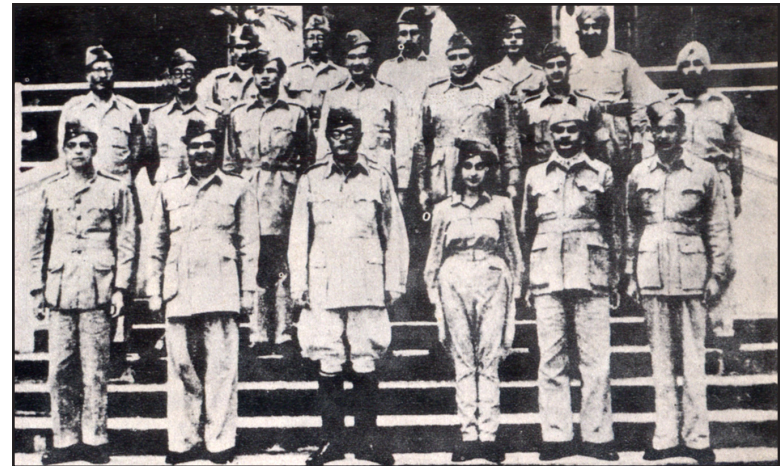
Rear Admiral Mountbatten, Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Far East, dreaded Netaji’s charisma so much that the 3rd Indian Division positioned by him around Imphal to face the INA was Indian in name only. Its twenty four battalions in the forward areas consisted of English, Nigerian, American and Burmese soldiers, but no Indian, as it was apprehended that they would leave the British side and join the INA. (3:103)

### Victory in Defeat

After the surrender by Japan on August 15, 1945, INA had to stop its operations. The British Indian Army was sent in September 1945 to reoccupy the British positions in Singapore and Malaya.

‘On learning the truth about INA, the British Indian Army also started itching for India’s independence. The effect of INA was so deep that at the time of arranging victory parade, the Allies were forced to hoist the Indian National Flag also along with the national flags of the victorious big five powers — USA, USSR, UK, France and China.’ (3:122-23)

For meeting the exigency, the Indian National Flag was sent for from the INA Headquarters at Ipoh (Malaya). It is unprecedented in the history of wars that the victors felt compelled to hoist the flag of the vanquished as well in their victory parade.



Netaji with the Council of Ministers of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and Advisers. October 21, 1943, Singapore.

The mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy at Karachi and Bombay during February 1946 was the repercussion of patriotic sentiments stirred by the heroic deeds of INA.

Clement Attlee, post-war Prime Minister of Britain, stated on March 15, 1946 that imperialism was dead as dodo. Commander-in-Chief Auchinleck got convinced that the British Indian Army, Navy and Air Force could no longer be kept as tamed to the Crown and counselled the Raj to pack up and quit.

Clement Attlee during his visit to India in 1956 admitted :

‘It was Netaji Subhas Chander Bose and the INA, the immediate cause of independence but for which, the transfer of power might not have been as quick and unequivocal as it was.’ (3:144)

The departure of British from India was bound to create an administrative vacuum. But the Indian National Congress had acquired sufficient experience for filling that gap and saving India from the engulfing chaos, forewarned by Wavell vide his confidential file ‘Operation Madhouse’.

Many high-ranking outgoing British officers held a poor opinion about the capability of Indian officers to lead their troops at the battle field. (1;286). But their forecast proved to be sheer racial prejudice. Indian armed forces rose to the national expectations at all fronts, within as well as abroad, whether on peace or combatant missions.

Consequently India with the march of time has developed into the largest democracy of world, whereas its neighbours who got independence along with are still playing a musical chair race between controlled democracy and army coups.

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## X

### Tribute to Matyrs

Rupert Brooke, Poet Laureate of UK composed a few sonnets after the First World War for expressing pride of his nation in the young who laid down their lives to save their country from the onslaught of Axis Powers. Eversince I read them in the college text-books, I had been feeling an urge to describe the valorous acts of martyrs of our freedom struggle in a similar vein. I was arrested in October 1945 for leading the Save INA campaign and lodged in Central Jail, Lahore. I was allowed to move freely in its precincts with the courtesy of R.B. Beni Chand Katoch, Jail Superintendent. Just as Byron was moved on visiting the dungeons of Chillon, I got stirred likewise on learning about the torturous cell where Kartar Singh Sarabha had been incarcerated. I uttered spontaneously :

*‘Sarabha! you came as a meteor to show us light’.*

On observing the scaffold where Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru had been executed, I exclaimed :

*‘Bhagat Singh! you kissed the gallows in your prime’.*

Such expressions kept buzzing in my mind. I considered it an obligation to share the thrills and aspiration of freedom struggle with the post-independence generations so that they continued to relish those lofty ideals for deriving inspiration from them. I wrote in prose as well as verse on men and events that had become legends through their crusade against imperialism, racialism and fanaticism.

These few sonnets offer my tribute to the pioneers and martyrs of freedom struggle.

## Kartar Singh Sarabha

Sarabha! you came as a meteor to show us light  
When darkness of slavery hovered on all sides.  
Your conscience felt hurt by taunts and chides,  
Hurled here and there by a few arrogant White  
It was hard to bear national insult and slight.  
In the World War First you saw favourable tides  
With Indian patriots abroad made homeward rides  
For ending foreign rule through a determined fight. 8

It was an ill luck that your campaign derailed  
But the spark you kindled, proved to be a flame.  
Bhagat Singh took the torch after you had left  
Your last wish at the gallows, by him, was hailed  
'Sarabha, my guiding star' he would firmly claim  
In the struggle for revolution, he thus got deft. 14

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Kartar Singh Sarabha (1896-1915) was in the U S when the First World War broke out. He firmly held the view that England's difficulty was India's opportunity. He organised a patriotic band, who on return to India, aimed at exhorting the armed forces to stage an uprising, reminiscent of 1857 army revolt against the foreign rule. The campaign derailed unfortunately.

A conspiracy case against eighty accused started on April 17, 1915 in the Central Jail, Lahore. Seven of them were sentenced to death. Kartar Singh Sarabha was the youngest among them. When suggested to appeal, he retorted "Why should I? If I had more lives than one, it would have been a great honour to me to sacrifice each of them for my country". He was executed on November 16, 1915.

Bhagat Singh (1907-1931) who was hardly eight then used to adore Sarabha as his mentor.

## Bhagat Singh

Bhagat Singh! you kissed the gallows in your prime  
To break the chains which enslaved the motherland  
Left at an age when the young do well understand  
How nice the world is with its pleasures sublime.  
You decried that imperialism was a horrible crime  
Against man, whatever be his colour, creed or land  
For wiping it out, you raised a revolutionary band  
Sulking India got upsurged by their heroic rhyme<sup>i</sup>. 8

The Great War for freedom denied us the same  
Though we shared its price at a far off shore<sup>ii</sup>,  
Jallianwala carnage as reward instead was paid.  
You denounced the petitions as a cringing game  
Sarabha was your mentor in that awakening lore  
Even the deaf did hear the bang, so deftly made<sup>iii</sup>. 14

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- i. The slogan 'Long live revolution, down down with imperialism' (Inquilab zindabad; samraj murdabad) raised by HSRA created an unprecedented political awakening all over India.
  - ii Refers to the participation of India in the First World War fought in Western Europe by the Allies against the Axis Powers to save democracy from the onslaught by dictatorship.
  - iii Alludes to the opening line of leaflet thrown by Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt on the floor of Central Assembly.

Bhagat Singh and a band of militant nationalists founded Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). They believed in using every available forum for exposing the hollowness of imperialism. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt exploded blank bombs and threw printed leaflets on the floor of Central Assembly, New Delhi, on April 8, 1929 for staging protest against repressive legislative measures. The leaflet began as 'It requires a loud noise to make the deaf hear'. After a historic trial Shiv Ram Rajguru, Sukhdev and Bhagat Singh were hanged to death on March 23, 1931 evening in the Central Jail, Lahore.

## Ram Mohammed Singh Azad

Tagore felt shocked and Gandhi was plunged into grief  
One returned the knighthood conferred for Nobel Prize  
The other found that trusting the Empire was not wise  
In her march for freedom India, thus, turned a new leaf  
When slaughter by Dyer shattered that illusive belief,  
Who arrogantly led his troops determined to chastise  
A public meeting held to denounce the Rowlatt Device  
The carnage was praised by O'Dwyer, his die-hard chief. 8

Udham Singh felt stung and pledged himself to avenge  
The massacre to, thus, assert India's right to be free.  
Patiently planned and pursued for about twenty years  
Killed O'Dwyer in his den to seek the avowed revenge.  
Ram Mohammed Singh Azad, secular India symbolises thee  
Welcomes home your sacred remains with grateful tears. 14

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i Rowlatt Act contained suppressive measures for perpetuating the imperialist rule. They were jeeringly termed as 'No appeal, no vakil and no dalil' device.

When the British, forgetting their war time promises, perpetrated the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre at Amritsar on April 13, 1919, for teaching the Indians a lesson in loyalty, India felt let down. Tagore returned his knighthood and Gandhi lost faith in the belief that India could get self-rule by co-operating with the British.

Udham Singh (1899-1940) vowed to avenge that national humiliation. He succeeded in redeeming his pledge on March 13, 1940 at Caxton Hall, London, by killing O'Dwyer, who as the then Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, had defended the carnage by the army.

During the trial Udham Singh gave his name as Ram Mohammed Singh Azad for symbolising his aspirations of free secular India. He was hanged to death on July 31, 1940. His remains were brought to India by his grateful countrymen in August 1974.

## Subhas Chander Bose : Liberator of East

Subhas! you retrieved honour by reviving our valour  
When stupor of slavery made us a worthless number  
Your clarion call awakened us from age-old slumber  
Our heads rose high and faces shedded their pallor  
You spurned the I. C. S. despite its pomp and glamour  
Deeming it not a laurel, but dead weight and lumber  
As the march to freedom it did intriguingly cumber.  
You believed in action, not in protests and clamour. 8

'To Delhi' was the war cry of INA you raised  
When you sought funds, people gave blood as well.  
The Empire claiming that on it the sun never set  
Crumbled thereafter for it was shaken and dazed.  
'Liberator of the East'<sup>i</sup> you rang Empire's knell  
Your glorious deeds, we Indians will never forget. 14

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i Netaji Subhas Chander Bose (1896-1945), by leading INA (Indian National Army) for liberating India, weakened imperialism in the Far East.

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### Mahatma Gandhi

We had been a motley crowd, proud of caste or clan  
Devoid of feelings or notions that make a nation  
Your precepts and practices made you an apt mason  
Clans evolved as a nation under an innovated plan.  
All fears vanished, our faces no longer looked wan  
Your plain words and firm deeds served to awaken  
A process of integration they did inwardly hasten  
In the march for freedom, you remained in the van. 8

You treated the untouchables as children of God  
You raised women high in various walks of life  
You gave us the Tricolour to symbolise our aims  
Your spinning wheel shook off the Crown and Rod  
You laid down your life to curb communal strife  
Bapu<sup>i</sup> the father of nation, every Indian exclaims. 14

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i Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi (1869-1948) adored as Bapu, reverential mode of addressing one's father in India.



## About the Author



**Author with his grand daughter Shrein Saini  
(August 15, 2007)**

**Name :** Hazara Singh

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**Qualifications:** M. A. , LL. B.

**Teaching Career :** Started as Lecturer in English at Khalsa College, Amritsar on October 3, 1950.

Retired as Head, Department of Journalism & Languages, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana in November, 1982.

**Educational Achievements :** Was awarded Rattigan Gold Medal by Khalsa College, Amritsar for standing first in B. A. (1945).

The scholarship won on the result of Intermediate Examination (1943) was confiscated by the then Punjab Government for his having taken part in the Quit India Movement.

**Participation in Freedom Struggle:** Was sent behind the bars thrice during 1942-45 for active participation in the freedom struggle.

President, Punjab Students Congress (1945)

**Membership of Educational Bodies:**

Fellow, Panjab University, Chandigarh, (1956-62).

**Published Work :** Writes in English , Urdu and Punjabi.

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- 1 Guru Nanak Dev (S.G.P.C., 1969; G.N.D.U., Amritsar, 1987)
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**(d) Wall Charts**

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- 2 New Man in New World, 2004
- 3 Significant Events of Freedom Struggle and Thereafter, 2004, 2006

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