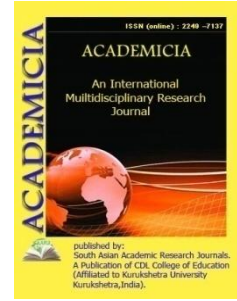




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FROM MILITANT NATIONALISM TO SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM: EVOLUTION OF BHAGAT SINGH

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ABSTRACT

Bhagat Singh was born in a family with revolutionary traditions. The objective conditions of a historical time are very important and play a significant role in the making of an individual's personality; Bhagat Singh's ancestors were Sandu Jats who had been converted to Sikhism. His grandfather Arjun Singh was an agriculturist. He was also interested in social work. His mother Vidyawati was also an inspiring force behind him. She could inculcate the sense of responsibility towards the nation and with the passage of time the environment at home helped Bhagat Singh to imbibe the spirit of patriotism and an unquestioning loyalty to the country. Thus, a family background developed nationalist feelings in Bhagat Singh's mind. Bhagat Singh came in contact with Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Sukhdev, Yashpal, Ram Krishan and Tirath Ram in the college. Bhagat Singh was much impressed by Jai Chander Vidyalkar, his history teacher. His lectures on history of revolution and socialism influenced Bhagat Singh the most. Thus, family background, schooling and higher education, the discussions and deliberation in the educational institutions prepared the ground to design his political ideology. The revolutionary life of Bhagat Singh is not only a source of inspiration for all of us but equally significant as a light house for the coming generations. The great martyr acquired unparalleled stature and glory in the brief span of his life. He was not just a brave revolutionary activist but also a profound thinker and an ideologue with a keen sense of analysis that had long term visionary investment for the future of India. Not only did he himself personify the rare qualities of courage and sacrifice, he could also through words and deeds, instill those qualities in others. Shaheed Bhagat Singh, a legendary figure, is undoubtedly one of the brightest stars in the galaxy of freedom fighters of India.

KEYWORDS: *Tribute, Galaxy, Legendary, Martyrdom, Symbolize, Revolutionary, Visionary, Analytical, Resistance, Momentum*

INTRODUCTION

Shaheed Bhagat Singh, a legendary figure, is undoubtedly one of the brightest stars in the galaxy of freedom fighters of India. Neta ji Subhash Chandra Bose, while paying his tribute to Bhagat Singh in a speech delivered at New Delhi shortly after the later's martyrdom said, "Bhagat Singh is not a person, but a symbol. He symbolizes the spirit of revolt that has taken place in the country".¹ The revolutionary life of Bhagat Singh is not only a source of inspiration for all of us but equally significant is that he stands as a light house for the generations to come. Thus the great martyr acquired unparalleled stature and glory in the brief span of his life. He was not just a brave revolutionary activist but also a profound thinker and an ideologue with a keen sense of analysis that had long term visionary investment for the future of India. He was an able organizer and a clear-headed thinker who could not only arouse the genuine patriotic emotions of the masses but also could orient them with his clear analytical thinking and the revolutionary ideology of those days. Not only did he himself personify the rare qualities of courage and sacrifice, he could also through words and deeds, instill those qualities in others.

The present paper attempts to analyze the role of early life and contemporary revolutionary activities which shaped Bhagat Singh's mind of growing age and could help him to evolve his own and independent revolutionary ideology. Though a compartmentalisation of a historical person is not possible but in order to fully understand Bhagat Singh as an ideologue and a political man it is essential to understand and analyze the initial phase of his life and the objective and subjective conditions of those days which shaped his life.

Bhagat Singh was born in a family with revolutionary traditions². His birth took place at a time when the political situation in the Punjab, was very tense due to the agitation against the colonisation act launched by Ajit Singh and Lala Lajput Rai, the well-known revolutionaries. Some of the leaders even looked to driving the Britishers out of the country either by force or through passive resistance by the people as a whole³. This is further corroborated by the proceedings of the meeting of the Bhagat Mata Sabha of which Kishore Singh, Ajit Singh and Mehta Aanand Kishore were founder members. Addressing the meeting at Lahore Ajit Singh said "I have come to the platform merely to give you the message of our mother country. Efforts are being made to frighten us by saying that we shall be arrested and sent to prison. We do not mind such treats. These are detectives here. May disgrace fall upon them! We must take the trade and management of our country in our hands. Do not think that we can do nothing. We would be free in two days. See the devotees of Guru Gobind Singh upset the whole country. The English are tyrants. The English are robbers. We should expel them."⁴

This was the age when political movements were gaining momentum not only at national level but also at international level. In India there was strong anger and reactions against the division of Bengal. Swaraj movement had taken deep roots in the minds of people cutting across sections of society. Several newspapers like Yuganter, Sandhya and Vandematram

were spreading nationalist sentiments at a wider level; political leaders had started deviating from the congress path and moderate ideologies. Many leaders had become vocal against the policies and strategies adopted by congress leadership. The youth of those days had least faith in the methods suggested by Mahatma Gandhi too. Lal Bal Pal⁵ were emerging in Indian politics. Shyam ji Krishan Verma and Madam Kama were struggling abroad for creating genuine patriotic feeling for Indian liberation. There were armed struggles in other states; in Punjab, the motherland of Bhagat Singh, political movement was at its peak and it was culminating in violent activities at times at various places. The political movement in Punjab was led by Sardar Arjun Singh (Bhagat Singh's grandfather), Kishan Singh, Ajit Singh, Lala Lajpat Roy and Sufi Amba Prasad. The situation was in ferment all over the country. ⁶

The objective conditions of a historical time are very important and play a significant role in the making of an individual's personality. Bhagat Singh's ancestors were Sandu Jats who had been converted to Sikhism. His grandfather Arjun Singh was an agriculturist. He was interested in social work also. Sardar Arjun Singh was the first to tilt towards Arya Samaj though he was a Jat sikh Sardar Arjun Singh, being an Arya Samaji was also active in politics and trained all his three sons in politics and motivated them to love the nation. Kishan Singh, supported the extremist faction of Indian National Congress and also had close relations with contemporary Indian gadharities and revolutionaries such as Sachinder Nath Sanyal and Kartar Singh Sarabha. In 1907, he took part in the agitation against the Basi Doaba Canal Act and Colonization Act and was even arrested, Swaran Singh was also an ardent nationalist and a freedom fighter. He too joined and participated in the agitation against the colonization act. As a consequence, he was arrested and kept in central jail, Lahore. He developed tuberculosis and died in 1910 at the early age of 23

Vidyawati, the mother of Bhagat Singh was also an inspiring force behind Bhagat Singh. She could inculcate the sense of responsibility towards the nation and with the passage of time, the environment at home helped Bhagat Singh to imbibe the value of patriotism and an unquestioning loyalty to the country.

Thus, a patriotic family background developed nationalist feeling in Bhagat Singh's mindset at a very early stage of his life. At an early age of five, he would divide his playmates into two groups and would stage fights between them to promote the feeling of nationalism and to teach them that they have to expel the Britishers from India. The exile of his uncle, Ajit Singh in 1909, because of his nationalist views and his work in the struggle for freedom, made a deep impression on the mind of Bhagat Singh. How deep was that impression could be judged from the following talk : Ajit Singh's wife used to weep most of the time because of the exile of her husband, Bhagat Singh used to say, "Aunty, do not weep, when I grow up, I will drive the Britishers out of India and bring my uncle back."⁷

Bhagat Singh joined the district primary school in 1916-17. Having passed the 5th class from the village school, he joined the DAV school, Lahore. While at school he was good at studies.⁸ In those days the entire atmosphere was charged with the combustible fallout of the legends of Ghadar Party heroes and martyrs. The restlessness which he inherited from his family mixed in with the air in which he was breathing. He was sensitive towards the most genuine cause of the freedom of the nation. Of all, Bhagat Singh was greatly

influenced by Kartar Singh Sarabha. The impact of Shahid Kartar Singh Sarabha's heroism and sacrifice on Bhagat Singh could be judged from the fact that when the later was arrested, a photograph of Kartar Singh was recovered from him. He always carried Sarabh's picture in his pocket and derived great inspiration from the hero of his life. He always used to show that photograph to his mother and say "See mother, this is my hero, friend and companion"⁹

The Russian revolution of 1917 had a world-wide impact and was an epochal event which attracted the attention of the revolutionaries all over the world including Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries in India. He read about the success of Russian revolution and even began to consider the Soviet Union as the state which was nearest to their ideal ¹⁰. The sensitive and analytical mind of Bhagat Singh could sense the contradictions prevailing in the society. Needless to say, it helped Bhagat Singh to develop a vision and make his own worldview regarding future formation of India. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre left a deep imprint on the young impressionable mind of Bhagat Singh. He also drew inspirations from the revolutionaries of Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. At that time Bhagat Singh was only 12 years old. But when he heard the news, he reached Amritsar instead of going to school and picked up a little soil in a phial. He reached home very late after he escaped. His elder sister informed him that his share of mangoes was waiting for him. Ordinarily he would have jumped at them but that very piece of information appeared too mundane and remote to him. He took his sister aside, showed the phial stuffed with the holy soil and said, "The Britishers have massacred hundreds of our men"¹¹

While in college, Bhagat Singh came in contact with Bhagwati Charan Vohra, sSukhdev, Yashpal, Ram Krishan and Tirath Ram. Bhagat Singh was much impressed by Jai Chander Vidyalankar, his history teacher. His lectures on history of revolution and socialism influenced Bhagat Singh the most. Besides, special lectures were developed in the college by Lala Lajpat Rai and Bhai Parmanand¹² as a result of these lectures he became conscious and even sensitive towards the issues of social and political nature.

The above discussion leads us to the conclusion that the objective and subjective conditions of those days influenced Bhagat Singh's thinking the most. For the times to come, the tense and revolutionary situation had deep impact on his young and impressionable mind. The schooling, the higher education and the discussions and deliberations in the educational institutions prepared the ground to design own political ideology and to emerge as a serious ideologue, who could analyze the problems, with a scientific methodology, being confronted by the Indian society in those days. The situation at international level moulded his vision and helped him to evolve an ideology based upon the principle of liberty, equality and justice which will promote the basic principle of equalitarianism for future generation of India.

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