

Impression of Bhagat Singh in Indian freedom Movement: A Historical Overview

Shyam Sundar Bhatia
Department of Journalism & Mass Communication
Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT: *Born into a Sikh family that had previously participated in revolutionary activities against the British Raj, Bhagat Singh studied revolutionary European movements as a teenager and was drawn to anarchist and Marxist philosophies. He became active in various revolutionary organizations and soon rose to become one of its key figures through the ranks of the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA), eventually changing its name in 1928 to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). Singh was involved in the murder of British police officer John Saunders, taking vengeance for the death of LalaLajpatRai at the hands of the police. He evaded police attempts to apprehend him. Soon after, he made a successful attempt along with BatukeshwarDutt to throw two bombs and leaflets inside the Central Legislative Assembly while shouting the revolutionary slogan.*

KEYWORDS: *European Revolutionary Movements, Parliament of India, Indian National Congress.*

INTRODUCTION

Bhagat Singh, a SandhuJat, was born in Chak No. 105, GB, Banga village, Jaranwala Tehsil in the Lyallpur district of the Punjab Province of British India, on 28 September 1907, to KishanSingh and Vidyavati. His birth coincided with his father and two uncles, Ajit Singh and Swaran Singh, being released from prisonHis family were Sikhs, some of whom were involved in the independence movements of India, and others served in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. KhatkarKalan, near the town of Banga in the Nawanshahr district (now renamed ShaheedBhagat Singh Nagar) of Punjab, was his ancestral village. Arjun Singh, his grandfather, was a follower of the Hindu reformist movement of Swami DayanandaSaraswati, AryaSamaj, which had a considerable influence on the young Bhagat.

His father and uncles, led by Kartar Singh Sarabha and HarDayal, were members of the Ghadar Party. Because of pending court cases against him, Ajit Singh was forced to flee to Persia, while Swaran Singh died at home in 1910 following his release from Borstal Jail in Lahore[1]. Singh did not attend the Khalsa High School in Lahore, unlike many Sikhs of his generation. The allegiance of the school officials to the British authorities was not accepted by his grandfather. Instead, he was enrolled in an AryaSamaji college, the Dayanand Anglo Vedic High School.

In 1919, at the age of 12, Singh visited the site of the JallianwalaBagh massacre hours after thousands of unarmed people gathered at a public meeting had been killed. At the age of 14, he was among those in his village who welcomed protestors against the killing of a large number of unarmed people at GurudwaraNankana Sahib on 20 February 1921[2]. Singh became disillusioned with Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence after Gandhi called off the non-cooperation movement. Gandhi's decision followed the violent murders of policemen by villagers who were reacting to the police killing three villagers in the 1922

ChauriChauraincident. Singh joined the Young Revolutionary Movement and began to advocate for the violent overthrow of the British in India.

In 1923, Singh joined the National College in Lahore, where he was also involved in extra-curricular activities such as the dramatics society. In 1923, Singh won an essay competition set by the Punjab Hindi SahityaSammelan, writing on the problems in the Punjab. He founded the Indian nationalist youth organisation Naujawan Bharat Sabha (Youth Society of India) in March 1926. He also joined the Hindustan Republican Association, which had prominent leaders, such as Ram Prasad Bismil, Chandrashekh Azad and Ashfaqulla Khan[3]. The name of the organisation was changed to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association at Singh's insistence. A year later, to avoid getting married by his family, Singh ran away from his house to Cawnpore.

Police became concerned with Singh's influence on youths and in May 1927 they arrested him on the pretext of having been involved in a bombing that had taken place at Lahore in October of the previous year. He was released on a surety of Rs. 60,000 five weeks after his arrest. He wrote for and edited Urdu and Punjabi newspapers, published from Amritsar, as well as contributing to low-priced pamphlets published by the Naujawan Bharat Sabha that excoriated the British. He also wrote briefly for the Veer Arjun newspaper, published in Delhi, and for Kirti, the journal of the KirtiKisan Party. He often used pseudonyms, including names such as Balwant, Ranjit and Vidhrohi.

REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES

LalaLajpatRai's Death and Murder of Saunders:

The British government set up the Simon Commission in 1928 to report on India's political situation. The Commission was boycotted by the Indian political parties because it did not have a single Indian in its membership and it met with country-wide protests. LalaLajpatRai led a silent march in protest against the Commission when the Commission visited Lahore on 30 October 1928. Violence emerged from police efforts to disperse the big crowd[4]. Police superintendent James A. Scott directed the police to assault the demonstrators with lathi charges and personally targeted Rai, who was wounded. On 17 November 1928, Rai died of a heart attack, possibly as a consequence of shock.

Doctors thought that the injuries he had suffered may have hastened his death. The British Government denied any involvement in Rai's death when the matter was discussed in the British Parliament. While Singh did not witness the incident, he vowed to take revenge, and in a conspiracy to kill Scott, he joined other revolutionaries, ShivaramRajguru, SukhdevThapar and Chandrashekh Azad[5]. However, Singh got a signal to fire at the appearance of John P. Saunders, an Assistant Superintendent of Police, in a case of mistaken identity. While leaving the District Police Headquarters in Lahore on 17 December 1928, Rajguru and Singh shot him.

While the killing of Saunders was condemned by Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress leader, as a retrograde step, others were more conscious of the motive. The group escaped through the entrance of D.A.V. College, across the road, after killing Saunders. Chanan Singh, a Head Constable pursuing them, was fatally wounded by the covering fire of Chandrashekh Azad. They then fled to pre-arranged security locations on bicycles[6]. The police launched a massive search operation to catch them, blocking all exits and entrances from the city; the CID kept a

watch on all young men leaving Lahore. They hid for the next two days. On 19 December 1928, Sukhdev called on Durgawati Devi, sometimes known as DurgaBhabhi, wife of another HSRA member BhagwatiCharanVohra, for help, which she agreed to do.

They decided to catch the train leaving for Howrah from Lahore to Bathinda early the next morning. The following morning, Singh and Rajguru left the house early, with both men carrying loaded revolvers. Singh and Devi passed off as a young couple, dressed in western attire and carrying Devi's sleeping boy, while Rajguru carried their luggage as their servant[7]. At the station, while purchasing tickets, Singh managed to conceal his identity and the three boarded the train going to Cawnpore. There, because the CID at Howrah railway station normally scrutinised passengers on the direct train from Lahore, they boarded a train for Lucknow. At Lucknow, Rajguru left for Benares separately, while Singh, Devi, and the baby went to Howrah a few days later, with all but Singh returning to Lahore.

1929 ASSEMBLY BOMB THROWING INCIDENT

For some time, Singh had used the power of drama as a way of encouraging rebellion against the British, buying a magic lantern to display slides that enlivened his talks about revolutionaries, such as Ram Prasad Bismil, who had died as a result of the Kakori Plot. He suggested a dramatic act to the HSRA in 1929 with the intention of obtaining significant attention for their objectives. Singh's plan was to blow a bomb inside the Central Legislative Assembly, under the influence of AugusteVaillant, a French anarchist who had bombed the Chamber of Deputies in Paris.

The nominal aim was to protest the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Dispute Act, which had been defeated by the Assembly but were enforced by the Viceroy using his special powers; the true intention was to prosecute the offenders so that they could use court appearances as a stage to publicise their cause. Initially, the HSRA leadership opposed Singh's participation in the bombing because they were certain that his previous involvement in the Saunders shooting would mean that his arrest would eventually result in his execution on this occasion[8]. They finally decided, however, that he was their most fitting choice.

Singh, accompanied by BatukeshwarDutt, threw two bombs from her public gallery into the Assembly chamber on 8 April 1929 while it was in session. No one was killed by the explosions, in accordance with the plan, although some members were injured, including George Ernest Schuster, the financial member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy. The smoke from the bomb filled the Assembly and they could probably have escaped confusion if they had chosen, shouting slogans of InquilabZindabad and showering leaflets. The two men were arrested and moved through a series of jails in the Delhi area afterwards. Once again, Gandhi gave powerful words of condemnation for their conduct.

With the success of the bombing, Singh was delighted and referred to it and the upcoming legal proceedings as a 'drama.' In the first week of June, after a preliminary hearing in May, the trial took place. "Both men were sentenced to life imprisonment on 12 June for "causing explosions of a nature that are unlawfully and maliciously likely to endanger life. Asaf Ali defended Dutt, while Singh defended himself. Questions were raised about the authenticity of the evidence given at the trial. One main inconsistency related to the automatic weapon Singh was carrying at the time of his arrest. Some witnesses said he had fired two or three shots, and the police sergeant who arrested him testified that when he took it from him, the gun was pointing

downward and that Singh "was playing with it." However, these reports were wrong, according to the India Law Journal, since Singh himself had handed over the weapon. According to Kooner, on that day "committed one great blunder" Singh "when it was clear not to harm anybody and offer for police arrest without any protest." by taking his gun.

CONCLUSION

The death of Singh had the impact he wanted and he inspired thousands of young people to assist the rest of the Indian independence movement. Youths in regions across northern India rioted after his hanging in protest against the British Raj and Gandhi. After his death, Singh was criticised by both his peers and people, both for his aggressive and revolutionary stance against the British and his clear opposition to the pacifist position taken by Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. The methods he used to convey his message, such as shooting Saunders and throwing non-lethal bombs, stood in stark contrast to Gandhi's non-violent methodology.

REFERENCES

- [1] R. Parruck Chanda and A. Ghosh, "Indian School Education System An Overview," *Indian Sch. Educ. Syst. An Overv.*, 2014.
- [2] Y. Chauhan, D. K. Dey, and R. R. Jha, "Board structure, controlling ownership, and business groups: Evidence from India," *Emerg. Mark. Rev.*, 2016, doi: 10.1016/j.ememar.2016.03.003.
- [3] R. S. Raju, P. S. Sarma, and J. D. Pandian, "Psychosocial problems, quality of life, and functional independence among Indian stroke survivors," *Stroke*, 2010, doi: 10.1161/STROKEAHA.110.596817.
- [4] P. Choudhury and T. Khanna, "Toward resource independence – Why state-owned entities become multinationals: An empirical study of India's public R&D laboratories," *J. Int. Bus. Stud.*, 2014, doi: 10.1057/jibs.2014.20.
- [5] M. Gadgil and R. Guha, *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*. 2013.
- [6] G. Palaniappan, "Determinants of corporate financial performance relating to board characteristics of corporate governance in Indian manufacturing industry: An empirical study," *Eur. J. Manag. Bus. Econ.*, 2017, doi: 10.1108/EJMBE-07-2017-005.
- [7] M. B. Muttakin and N. Subramaniam, "Firm ownership and board characteristics: Do they matter for corporate social responsibility disclosure of Indian Companies?," *Sustain. Accounting, Manag. Policy J.*, 2015, doi: 10.1108/SAMPJ-10-2013-0042.
- [8] P. Gopal, *Literary radicalism in India: Gender, nation and the transition to independence*. 2012.