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## **Re-contextualizing Bhagat Singh's Freedom Struggle for Independence of India**

### **Abstract**

*This study intends to explore, investigate and analyze the thoughts and actions of Bhagat Singh for the independence of India. It is generally narrated by some writers that colonial Punjab was an easy going province of British India. Most probably these writers have focused on the history of elite classes of India and especially of the Punjab but they have not taken into account the resistance shown by individuals and parties against the colonial administration. This paper aims to fill an important gap in the historical writings of the colonial Punjab by utilizing relevant primary and secondary sources. This paper focuses on the ideas and struggle of Bhagat Singh for the liberation of India and this paper will demonstrate that if one looks through the prism of historical records one can have a clearer picture about the freedom fighters of India who offered considerable active and passive resistance against the British administration. The role of Bhagat Singh from the platform of Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, (hereafter HSRA) is the most significant one in the history of Indian nationalism. He was greatly influenced by Punjabi freedom fighters and Marxist ideas and gave a new and active life to the freedom movement. Bhagat Singh preached his philosophy of nationalism through his belief that Independence for India could only be achieved by a thorough cleansing of the exploitative nature of imperialism and such change could only be brought forward by means of an armed revolution in which he was successful as many Punjabis especially the youth tried to follow his foot prints. A remarkable feature of Bhagat Singh which makes him clearly different from other revolutionaries was that in perception of his acts of aggression, he understood the fact that armed struggle would be useless without a political ideology which propels the freedom fighters. So it is also significant to study not only the resistance offered by Bhagat Singh but also to analyze his political philosophy regarding revolution, resistance and socialism. This paper attempts to understand Bhagat Singh's philosophy about revolution, anarchy and class struggle, which have not comprehensively been analyzed by historians to date, the paper is produced, apart from using primary and secondary sources, by utilizing confidential documents released by Punjab Archives in Pakistan.*

**Key Words:** Resistance, Freedom Movement, Britain Government, Revolution, Conspiracy, Agitation, Strikes.

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## **Introduction**

In the postcolonial historiography, the discourse of resistance is the site where the colonizer and the native enter into civilizational dialogue. During and after the First World War, there was a renewed native consciousness to challenge the colonizer in the public sphere, creating a state of crisis in India and especially in the Punjab. Punjabis were starting to consider the British rule as slavery and exploitation of their rights. Therefore, in this regard the second half of the twentieth century enjoys a unique position as it witnessed the emergence of various forms of resistance movements in Punjab coupled with an earnest desire for decolonization.

Bhaghat Singh was greatly influenced by Punjabi freedom fighters and Marxist ideas and gave a new and active life to the freedom movement. Moreover, since childhood Bhaghat Singh was impressed by the activities of his revolutionary uncle Ajit Singh. As a result of this politically conscious environment young Bhagat grew up to follow the course of patriotism. Meanwhile in his early years he was deeply moved by such incidents like the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Ghadar resistance and the Non Cooperation Movement which all combined to shape his mind into joining the path of revolutionary movement. Bhagat Singh preached his philosophy of nationalism through his belief that Independence for India could only be achieved after a thorough cleansing of the exploitative nature of imperialism and such change could only be brought forward by means of an armed revolution. His ideas influenced many Punjabis especially the youth who tried to follow in his foot prints. For example, in 1930 Harikrishan tried to kill the Governor of Punjab during the convocation of the Punjab University at Lahore while Hans Raj Vohra established a student's union at Lahore. Other than his faith in armed resistance, Bhagat Singh was one of the prime socialist thinkers of the country who during his jail time argued with British Government on the issue of class struggle.

Thus, the role performed by the youthful revolutionaries of the 1920s is momentous and historic because their resistance during this time period illustrates the initial struggling phase of the freedom movement. These revolutionary forces originated from the radical ideas of different people whose political philosophy rapidly gained momentum and support from the acts and scripts of earlier freedom fighters. Their struggle challenged the grand narrative about the role of Punjabis as a native informer.

The freedom fighters of that age were impressed by the activities of nationalists like Rash Behari Bose<sup>1</sup> and Sachindranath Sanyal<sup>2</sup>. Many political events like Hardinge Bomb Case, Ghadar Movement, Lahore Conspiracy Case in 1915, Jallianwala Bagh incident and other such events in the political arena had a deep influence on these young revolutionaries. Another factor which impressed them was the first Non-Cooperation Movement, started by Mahatma Gandhi. Many young revolutionaries like Sukhdev, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Jatin Das etc. jumped on the bandwagon of this satyagarh.

They along with other *protestors* left their houses, educational institutions and jobs to present themselves for arrest at Gandhi's call but the sudden termination of the movement due to riots puzzled these men and shook their belief

in Gandhi's leadership. The increase in communal hatred and the profusion of Hindu Muslim riots further heightened their disillusionment. Their disappointment with annulment of Non Cooperation movement led them towards alternatives which were mostly a combination of socialism and revolutionary terrorism. Like the Russian Youth half a century earlier, they accepted both of these steps as necessary for their political struggle.

In the mid-20th century there was strong activism among the young crop of revolutionary men which led them towards their struggle against British Raj in India. Among them Bhagat Singh was the most important figure whose revolutionary activism laid foundation of a new form of resistance in the struggle for decolonization of India. Bhagat Singh was born on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1907 in Banga,<sup>3</sup> into a family which had great revolutionary traditions. Bhagat Singh's grandfather Sardar Arjun Singh was attached with Arya Samaj and from the platform of this organization his grandfather received new ideas.<sup>4</sup> Bhagat's father was also a revolutionary and had a strong desire for freedom.. He was a social worker and along with his brother Ajit Singh,<sup>5</sup> he joined the company of extremist men of Congress. When Bhagat Singh's uncle Ajit was arrested on revolutionary charges, his father quietly left for Nepal. His trip to Nepal was also controversial as it is said that he was convincing the high ups of Nepal to bring revolution in India. This news was leaked so he was sent back.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it was only natural that his family became his first source of inspiration and consequently all these events provided a fertile ground for the growth of revolutionary thinking of Bhagat Singh.

Narratives of freedom and bravery of his family played a pivotal role in the formation of Bhagat Singh's subjectivity. Ghadar movement also impacted him deeply. He was too young when Kartar Singh Sarabha<sup>7</sup> was hanged due to his involvement in the First Lahore Conspiracy Case<sup>8</sup>. This incident which occurred in 1914-1915 was significant because it forced him to think about following the path of Sarabha. He was just twelve years old when, on the order of General Dyer about 400 innocent people were killed in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar<sup>9</sup>. This massacre left a permanent impression on his mind. The very next day he missed his school and travelled to Amritsar to personally witness the massacre site. This is the reason why since the early days of his youth, these revolutionary events left a deep impact on mind of Bhagat Singh.

In 1920 when Non-Cooperation movement was announced by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Bhagat Singh was his staunch follower but later he got disheartened<sup>10</sup> when M.K. Gandhi, due to the issue of Chaura Chauri,<sup>11</sup> called off the movement. In reaction to Gandhi's appeal to discard the British funded organizations, many new institutes were founded and National College<sup>12</sup> in Lahore was one of them. Bhagat Singh, previously studying in D.A.V. school also got admitted to National College where he met his future political colleagues<sup>13</sup> with common ideals. When he reached the age of sixteen, Bhagat Singh was ready and committed to the goal of national emancipation. Nothing could demonstrate this better than his approach towards marriage. In 1924 he was forced into marriage although he tried unsuccessfully to convince his parents. Thereafter he left his home with a note,

“Namaste, I dedicate my life to the lofty goal of service to the Motherland. Hence there is no attraction in me for home and fulfillment of worldly desires. I hope you remember that on the occasion of my sacred thread ceremony Bapuji had declared that I was being donated to the service of the country. I am just fulfilling that pledge. I hope you would forgive me”.<sup>14</sup>

In 1924 when he was in Kanpur city, he joined the Hindustan Republican Association which had been initiated by Sachindra Nath Sanyal a year earlier. The chief organizer of the Association was Chandra Shekhar Azad and in no time, Bhagat Singh became his close associate. After becoming an important associate of the Hindustan Republican Association, Bhagat Singh started to consider using bombs and weaponry. Active revolution was believed to be the sole action that could be taken to contest British colonialism.<sup>15</sup> Bhagat Singh toured various cities, towns and villages to recruit and motive folks in different provinces. His propaganda and hard work caught the attention of police but by now he had become such an experienced activist that it was an easy task for him to escape unobserved.<sup>16</sup> In 1925, Bhagat Singh was back in Lahore, where in collaboration with other activists he started a radical youth organization called the Naujawan Bharat Sabha.<sup>17</sup>

In April 1926 Bhagat Singh got in touch with Sohan Singh Josh who as a representative of the 'Workers and Peasants Party'<sup>18</sup> published a monthly paper in Punjabi language named as *Kirti*. Bhagat Singh published several articles in this paper.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the next year Bhagat Singh and Josh run the editorial board of magazine *Kirti* together. In 1927 he was imprisoned for the first time after being accused of being associated with the Kakori Case. He was also accused of writing a subversive article under the false name of *Vidrohi* (Rebel).<sup>20</sup> Moreover, he was also accused for being involved in the planning of a bomb blast in Lahore during the festival of Dussehra but he was got to go free due to good gestures.<sup>21</sup> In 1928, he and Chandra Shekhar Azad were the only escapees of Kakori Conspiracy as all the other members were imprisoned. Their free condition made them the chief organizers of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Party.<sup>22</sup>

### **Philosophy of Bhagat Singh**

Bhagat Singh was the follower of Karl Marx, Trotsky and Lenin and was influenced by communism.<sup>23</sup> From 1927 to 1928 Bhagat Singh spent most of his time analyzing the history of the radical groups in India like Ghadarites, *Kirti* and Akalis. A major part of Bhagat Singh's writings dealt with the above mentioned movements and the Kakori and Delhi Bomb Cases. He also focused his attention on revolutionary figures and encouraged them to come out for the cause of freedom. He was of the view that there was the need for the young blood to come out and participate in the revolutionary process. In a bid to avoid state surveillance, he started to write in various newspapers under the false name of *virodhi* or rebel and an earlier piece of his writing of Bhagat Singh was about the Babbar Akali movement. This article was published in the *Pratap* in the March, 1926<sup>24</sup> and this organization was an armed effort by the Sikhs to free India from colonial rule so that their Gurudwaras could also be free from the administration of

dishonest Mahants. It remained confined to the Bari Doab and it existed mainly in rural areas. The organizers of this faction were primarily those army men who had abandoned the military service to forge an alliance with the Non-Cooperation lobby. Bhagat Singh was very fascinated by the motivation, self-sacrifice and dedication of these men. In his article, he praised their commitment towards their ideals.<sup>25</sup>

Bhagat Singh also brought into light hitherto marginalized narratives of other freedom fighters based in Punjab. For example in May, 1927 he wrote in *Kirti* about the courage and bravery of plotters of Kakori case. On the 9th August of 1925 when a group of revolutionaries of the Hindustan Republican party held up and robbed the train at Kakori, near Lucknow. This train was transporting the government assets therefore the government was highly motivated to catch the perpetrators. After a series of hearings on 6th April, 1927, the chief revolutionaries accused were sentenced to death. In his work Bhagat Singh described this episode in detail and also highlighted the camaraderie between the accused and the tranquility with which they received their death penalties. He concludes his article with a note on those people who expressed no kindness for the guilty persons.<sup>26</sup>

“We heave a sigh and think we have performed our work. We do not have that courage and fire, we do not suffer for we have become dead bodies. Today they are sitting on a Hunger-Strike and suffering and we are silently observing the demonstration. May God grant them the strength and nerves they need in their last few days.”<sup>27</sup>

Bhagat Singh believed in the politics of violence and anarchy so when *Kirti* reprinted an article in its issue of May 1928 about the theme of violence, it is quite interesting to observe that being a participant of the editorial panel of *Kirti* how he got involved in the discussions about explaining the modern ideology of violence.<sup>28</sup> This editorial piece tried to support the phenomenon of violence by negating the existing explanation of terrorism as the disparaging, coercive and unfair usage of power. In the same year after explaining violence Bhagat Singh tried to describe what the actual meaning of anarchism was.<sup>29</sup> A series of articles on anarchism were published in *Kirti* in 1928. Bhagat Singh's was using his literary skills to motivate and clarifying the misunderstandings of Indians about political ideology of resistance because in his thinking the phenomenon of 'anarchism' had become so notorious due to British propaganda that Indian people were afraid of to adopt it for fulfillment of their rights.<sup>30</sup> At this point he was right because government twisted this term so much by declaring revolutionaries as anarchists to make them and their ideology unpopular.<sup>31</sup>

This research work clarifies why resistance and violence caught Bhagat's attention. In his views, the eventual outcome of anarchism was absolute autonomy in which no one is infatuated with any religion, neither were they obsessed with pursuit of wealth or other similar worldly pursuits. There must be no control by the state on anybody<sup>32</sup> that is why when he got arrested, he uttered in a daring and obvious way that “it takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear.”<sup>33</sup>

## **Revolutionary Activities of Bhagat Singh**

During the same year in 1928, Simon Commission<sup>34</sup> visited India to review the development or governance under Government of India Act 1919 and give suggestions for reforms. While protesting against the commission, Lala Lajpat Rai was badly injured which resulted in his death a month later.<sup>35</sup> To avenge the death of this great leader, Bhagat Singh and his associates Shivram Rajguru and Sukh Dev killed Assistant Superintendent of Police, Mr. Saunders. It was a case of mistaken identity as they had actually planned to slay the Superintendent of Police, J.A. Scott, who was believed to have struck Lala Lajpat Rai during a political protest.<sup>36</sup> After this incident Bhagat Singh fled from Lahore but this was a temporary step as he could not keep himself away from his chosen path. So on 8 April, 1929 Bhagat and Batu Keshwar Dutt (B. K. Dutt) went one step further and flung bombs in the Central Assembly Hall where the gathering was being held to accept the Defense of India Act, which would give additional authority to police to arrest any person and question him.<sup>37</sup> After throwing the bomb, which did not injure anybody, Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt got arrested.

There are two point of views regarding their arrest: according to some they presented themselves for arrest so that their ideology could be publicized through court proceedings<sup>38</sup> while A.G. Noorani has written in his book that Bhagat Singh might have avoided the police but the revolver which was involved in Saunder's killing, was found on his person and there was no escape<sup>39</sup>. Bhagat and Dutt in a joint statement to court on 6 June, 1929 denied that they were carrying any revolver.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, on 12 June, Bhagat Singh and B. K. Dutt were sentenced to lifetime detention in Assembly Bomb Case. In the meantime, the murderers of Saunders were also identified and therefore Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev and Shivram Rajguru were sentenced to death.<sup>41</sup>

## **Hunger Strike of Bhagat Singh**

In the prison, Bhagat Singh started hunger strike for the better treatment to political prisoners for more than 60 days. During the trial of Saunder's murder case Bhagat was transported to Mianwali jail from Delhi penitentiary, because he went on a long hunger strike against favoritism to European prisoners. They asked for fairness in quality of foodstuff, clothes, toiletries and other supplies as well as accessibility of daily newspaper and books for the opinionated prisoners.<sup>42</sup> It was also demanded by them that political captives must not be compelled to do intense labor or other humiliating jobs in jail.<sup>43</sup> Muhammad Ali Jinnah also defended the rights of the prisoners. Government made an effort to split the strikers by offering different facilities to different strikers. Water and milk were placed before them so that the prisoners would be tempted to end their protest but they continued their hunger strike. Food was forcefully fed to them using feeding tubes, but they resisted this treatment also.<sup>44</sup> The Viceroy of India Lord Irwin finished his holiday in Simla to talk about the circumstances with the prison authorities and to resolve the matter. At last, the British government accepted the fact that prisoners would not quit the hunger strikes at any cost and announced that it accepted the demands of the prisoners for equal and better treatment and asked them to quit the strike. Not even a single hunger striker was taken in by the promises of the government because they did not trust the British Government. Bhagat Singh too responded the

same manner because his understanding was that the same assurances were given by Government in 1927 to Kakori Railway prisoners for their better treatment, but the Government did practically nothing for them and now it would repeat the same behavior.

Since the actions of the protestors had attracted interest and attention of the people of India, the government decided to go forward with the Saunders murder case, which was hereafter known as the Lahore Conspiracy Case.<sup>45</sup> Singh was then moved to the prison of Lahore and the case started there on 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1929. Singh and 27 others were accused of the assassination of Saunders, planning to kill Scott and combat the British rule in India. Bhagat Singh, who was at that time on self-starvation, had to be transported to the courtroom handcuffed lying on a stretcher. He had lost 14 pounds during his phase of self-starvation.<sup>46</sup>

By this time the condition of a prisoner Jatindra Nath Das had become serious due to hunger strike for several days so jail committee recommended his release on bail but the government denied it. Meanwhile Das died after sixty three days of hunger strike and this sparked an outrage in the country especially Punjab.<sup>47</sup>

Since British Government did nothing to entertain or discuss the demands of strikers, these hunger strikers became too weak and were unable to attend their hearings in court. Therefore, the Government decided to amend the law which was popularly known as Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill.<sup>48</sup> This Bill stirred a vigorous debate in the Executive Council of Governor-General. During the session all nationalist leaders<sup>49</sup> paid tribute to these revolutionary men and condemned government for inhuman treatment of Indian prisoners.<sup>50</sup> In the session Mohammed Ali Jinnah defended Bhagat Singh and his comrades<sup>51</sup> though their political ideology varied greatly. He sympathized with their demands<sup>52</sup> though he did not support their actions.<sup>53</sup> Though the Hunger Strike Bill was passed a bit later<sup>54</sup> but the Government's attitude remained biased towards these political prisoners. Later, Bhagat Singh on his father's request broke his hunger strike but by this time Bhagat Singh's popularity and ideology had extended well beyond Punjab.

### **Lahore Conspiracy Case and Aftermath of the Struggle Movement**

A special tribunal was established to verify the charges and the case became famous in history as the Lahore Conspiracy Case. On October 7<sup>th</sup> 1930 the court made its final decision on the basis of verifications of data and confirmed the involvement of Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru in Saunders' murder and sentenced them to death by hanging.<sup>55</sup> The verdict was delivered by the court that Bhagat Singh was found guilty of preparing explosive substances, Shivram Guru was found guilty of murder while Sukhdev too was charged for explosive substances. There were some others who sentenced to life imprisonment. Bhagat Singh's father decided to put an appeal in Punjab Privy Council but it was rejected by Judge Viscount Dunedin.<sup>56</sup> Bhagat Singh along with Rajguru<sup>57</sup> and Sukhdev<sup>58</sup> were hanged on March, 23 1931. The decision of special tribunal had to face severe criticism because no opportunity of defense<sup>59</sup> was given to the accused and his companions<sup>60</sup> and people were also showing concern that the dead bodies of accused were not cremated properly.<sup>61</sup> The execution of these nationalists sparked

outrage throughout the country<sup>62</sup> and since it was the occasion of Congress's annual convention at Karachi, demonstrators greeted the politicians especially Gandhi<sup>63</sup> by waving black flags.<sup>64</sup> Though congress was reluctant but on 29 March, 1931, it passed a condolence resolution on Bhagat Singh saying that congress did not support any shape or form of the political violence but it admired the bravery and sacrifices of those who died.<sup>65</sup> There were strikes all over the country especially in Lahore, Karachi, Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras and Cawnpore. In Cawnpore mourning procession was organized by Hindus but Muslims did not close their shops and when Muslims did strike Hindus did not participate with them which made the situation more serious, resulting the Hindu Muslim riots in which 166 were killed while 480 were injured.<sup>66</sup>

Moreover the activities of HRSA and Bhagat Singh encouraged more people to adopt the way of violence against Government. The people sympathetic towards Bhagat Singh and his Comrades, started to hit the police through shootings or by throwing small bombs. These people called themselves Asthi Chakkar or Punjab Avenging Party who started to target the police in Punjab in Lahore, Sheikhpura, Lyallpur, Rawalpindi Amritsar and Gujranwala. On 19 June, 1930 they killed two police officers while four were wounded. They even tried to kill Aziz Ahmad, who was main canvasser of the Lahore Conspiracy Case on October 1930.<sup>67</sup> They tried to instigate the youth by distributing leaflets in Amritsar and Lahore.<sup>68</sup> In August 1931, according to an estimate more target killings of British Officer were recorded. It was the Government's belief that admiration and reporting of the Press was the major reason for spread of these violent acts.<sup>69</sup> So an Indian Press Emergency Powers Bill was passed in September, 1931 which declared it illegal for any Press to provoke any form of violence.<sup>70</sup>

These events also influenced the perspectives of other political parties especially Congress which gave up the claim of "Dominion Status" for India within the Empire and announced complete independence of India as its decisive objective in its session held at Lahore on January 26, 1929.<sup>71</sup> It also took up in due course the catchphrase 'Inqalab Zindabad' which Bhagat and his comrades had raised in Central Assembly. The slogans Banday Matrem, Inqalab Zindabad and Jai Hind which represented the various phases of freedom movement, clearly explain the impact of Bhagat Singh's and his companion's fight against imperialism.<sup>72</sup>



## **Conclusion**

In the historiography of Indian independence movement a lot of attention has paid to mainstream nationalist politics of Punjab but not much has been documented about the real struggle of revolutionaries apart from a few hagiographic stories of their aggressive resistance or sufferings in jail. This dearth of detailed and well-structured texts has had its consequences on the popular discourse about revolutionaries. In this nationalistic oratory of politicians, Bhagat Singh is often pictured as a violent freedom fighter who believed that aggression and resistance were more useful methods for getting sovereignty from British rule rather than Gandhi's non-violence ideology. Bhagat Singh's killing of an English officer to avenge Lala Lajpat Rai's death and his throwing of bombs in the Assembly has been narrated more rather than his philosophy and his actual contribution in the freedom movement in Punjab. Bhagat Singh was different from all other radicals who hailed from Punjab due to his intellectuality, nationalism and daring nature. His ideology of resistance changed the prevailing opinion that whole of Punjab was supportive of foreign rule. He lived at the time when India's struggle for freedom was starting to slow down and when Mahatma Gandhi's passive resistance of non-cooperation for biased liberty was testing the patience of the people. Bhagat wanted to show the young people of his time the course of another kind of political action and thereby inspire them towards a different kind of political action. He sacrificed his life willingly because he knew that through his thoughts and actions he could become a revolutionary figure which would add extra spark to the freedom movement against foreign rule. The youth of India were influenced by Bhagat Singh's call to armed resistance and were stirred to rebel. Bhagat's slogan of Long Live Revolution became the slogan of the fight against colonialism. Many youth inspired by him established similar organizations. In April 1927 a student Hans Raj Vohra established a Student's Union at Lahore. During Bhagat Singh's trial proceedings, another young man Harikishan tried to kill the Governor of Punjab during the convocation of the Punjab University at Lahore in December. It is ironic that after the execution of Bhagat Singh his party could not establish itself on any systematic basis. Political circumstances were troubled at the time as the Round Table Conferences ended in a disagreement between Congress and Muslim League.

After his death he was glorified by Indians as martyr for his sacrifice, his bravery and courage in the face of certain death. It was many years after independence that his writings during the jail time came to light which set him apart from many other revolutionaries who sacrificed their lives for the sake of freedom. These writings present him not only as a passionate freedom fighter who believed in the creed of arms but also as a widely read intellectual who was motivated by the writings of Marx, Lenin, Bertrand Russell and Victor Hugo. This aspect of Bhagat Singh clearly shows that his ideology did not end with the expulsion of British from India but pointed to an ideal of a secular and socialist India in the future.

## Notes & References

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<sup>1</sup>Rash Behari Bose was one of the main revolutionaries of India who offered active resistance to British Government and played a critical role in the Ghadar Movement, later he fled to Japan. *India Today*, May 25, 2016. <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/rash-behari-bose-325390-2016-05-25>

<sup>2</sup>Sachindra Nath Sanyal was an Indian revolutionary from Benaras, UP and a creator of the Hindustan Republican Association which was founded to carry out armed resistance against the British Empire in India. Bhagat Singh, Bhupendra Hooja (ed.), *The Jail Notebook and Other Writings*, (Left Word Books, 2007), 14.

<sup>3</sup> It is a small village in District Lyallpur which is located in Punjab Pakistan. Omesh Saigal, *Shaheed Bhagat Singh: Unique Martyr in Freedom Movement*, (New Delhi: Gayan Publishing House, 2002), 33.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 34.

<sup>5</sup>Ajit Singh was uncle of Bhagat Singh and a die-hard activist who resisted the British in Punjab. As a resistor he came into notice in 1907 and the same year he was expelled to Mandalay along with Lala Lajpat Rai. He was the active worker of Ghadar party who worked against the British in Punjab. Fauji Singh, *Who is Who?: Punjab Freedom Fighters*, Vol 1, (Patiala: 2000), 55-57.

For more details about Ajit Singh see *The Ghadar Directory containing the names of persons who have taken part in the Ghadr Movement in America, Europe, Africa and Afghanistan as well as in India*, Compiled by The Director, Institute Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, (Patiala: Punjabi University, Patiala, 1997), 5-7.

<sup>6</sup>Omesh Saigal, *Shaheed Bhagat Singh*, 37.

<sup>7</sup>Kartar Singh Sarabha was only 19 years old when he received death penalty in first Lahore Conspiracy Case in 1915. He took part in Ghadar Movement not only physically but also wrote a lot of intellectual works to spread Party's message. This was the reason, he was considered as the "most dangerous of all rebels" by British. He became the ideal of Bhagat Singh due to his devotion and sacrifice for the country. Harosh K. Puri, *Ghadr Movement to Bhagt Singh*, 122. See more details on Kartar Singh Sarabha in Chaman Lal, *Gadhr Party Hero Krtar Singh Sarabha*, New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2009.

<sup>8</sup>The First Lahore Conspiracy Case was a trail in the aftermath of the Ghadar rebellion in 1915 and their acts were considered by Britain Government as conspiracy to wage a war against them. When the Ghadar plot collapsed, the government accused the guilty in a case which became famous as Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1915. For more see Malwinder Jit Singh Warraich, Harinder Singh (eds.), *Ghadar Movement Original Documents, Vol. A. Lahore Conspiracy Case I & II*, (Ludhiana: Bhai Sahb Randhir Singh Trust, 2014), 177-179.

<sup>9</sup> The *Jallianwala Bagh massacre* took place on 13 April 1919 when British officer General Dyer ordered his troops to open fire on the armless crowd who were gathered for celebration of cultural fair. At the time, the political conditions in Punjab were very fragile and thus the British Government perceived every gathering as suspicious. Therefore, they ordered a ban on meetings which could not be propagated successfully by General Dyer so most of the people were unaware of it. This incident took lives of 379 innocent people. Ikram Ali Malik, *A Book of Readings on The History of the Punjab, 1799-1947*, (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, Punjab University, 1970), 406-410. For more details on this incident see Prof. Dr. Ghulam Husaain Zulfikar, *Jalianwala Bagh Ka Qatal-e-Aam or Muzalim-e-Punjab*, (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publishers, 1996), 115-249.

<sup>10</sup> In Bhagat Singh's understanding no revolutionary would have done that which Gandhi did as such incidents were the essence of the uprisings. He criticized Gandhi for annulling the movement at once without condemning the actions of police. Kuldip Nayar, *The Martyr: Bhagat Singh Experiments in Revolution*, (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2000), 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> On 12 February, 1921 a group of villagers took out a procession and passed from a local police station to protest against the British rule. The procession was jeered at by police who asked the protestors to disperse but they refused to do so. As a result angry policemen opened fire on them which infuriated the crowd so they burnt the police station where 21 policemen were either burnt alive or cut into pieces. Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> In 1920 Non Cooperation Movement was started by Gandhi in which he motivated all Indians to leave Government jobs and educational institutes. In reaction to this call a lot of national colleges were established in various parts of India. The National College where Bhagat Singh studied was established by Lala Lajpat Rai in 1921 in Lahore. Shahid Siddiqui, "National College and the British Raj", *The News*, March 06,2017. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/190427-National-College-and-the-British-Raj>

<sup>13</sup>It was here that Bhagat met Jay Chandra Vidyalankar who acted as his mentor. Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan, etc. Omaisah Saigal, Shaheed Bhagat Singh: Unique Martyr in Freedom Movement,45.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> At that time the Indian youth was much inspired by the revolution in Russia in 1917 and communist ideas. "Bolshevik Danger in India," telegram from viceroy to secretary of state, 21 December 1922, 103 – 4, box 117, Records of the Public and Judicial Department (hereafter L/PJ), India Office Records, British Library, London (hereafter IOR).

<sup>16</sup> Because it was difficult for the government to arrest a person just on the basis of communist ideology. "Bolshevik Danger in India," telegram from viceroy to secretary of state, February 1923, *ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> Rakesh Kumar, "Role of Naujawan Bharat Sabha in National Movement", *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 3(2), 37-39, February (2014), 37-38. <http://www.isca.in/IJSS/Archive/v3/i2/8.ISCA-IRJSS-2013-193.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> In 1925 two parties Mazdoor and Kishan Sangh and Kishan and Mazdoor Sabha both combined themselves to form Workers and Peasants Party in U.P. with branches in several cities of India. Gradually they started to publish their monthly magazines in different local languages. Kiran Maitra, *Marxism in India*, (New Delhi: Lotus Collection,2012).

<sup>19</sup> Swarn Singh, *Path of Revolution: A Biography of Bhagat Singh*, (Delhi: Delhi University Press,1998), 84-87.

<sup>20</sup> *NirajaRao, Bhagat Singh and the Revolutionary Movement*<http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv3n1/bsingh.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Kulwant Singh Kooner, Gurpreet Singh Sindhra, *Martyrdom Of Shaheed Bhagat Singh*, (Unistar Books,2013), 28-29.

<sup>22</sup> In 1928 both Bhagat and Azad who were inspired from Marxist approach changed the name of Hindustan Republican Association into Hindustan Socialist Republican Association and also formed HRSA army. M. Abel, *Glimpses of Indian National Movement*, (New Delhi: ICFAI Books, 2005), 206-207.

<sup>23</sup> S. Irfan Habib, *To Make the Deaf Hear: Ideology and Programme of Bhagat Singh and his Comrades*, Three Essays Collective,2007,127.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Azad, "Kakori Ke Viron Se Parichay", *Campusghanta*, <http://campusghanta.com/kakori-ke-veeron-se-parichay/>

<sup>28</sup> *NirajaRao, Bhagat Singh and the Revolutionary Movement*  
<http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv3n1/bsingh.htm>

<sup>29</sup> The first person who clearly circulated the idea of Anarchism was Proudhon and that is why he is considered as the initiator of this philosophy. After him a Russian man named Bakunin worked hard to progress the canon. He was followed by Prince Kropotkin etc. Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle*, (Oakland: AK Press and the Institute for Anarchist Studies,2011), 149

<sup>30</sup> Y. Ramachandra Reddy & Surya Prakash, "Imprints of Bhagat Singh in Indian Independence Movement: a historical overview", *Impact: International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature*, Vol. 2, Issue 6, Jun 2014, 38. [www.impactjournals.us](http://www.impactjournals.us)

<sup>31</sup>Noam Chomsky, Jean Drèze, *Democracy and Power: The Delhi Lectures*, (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2014),14.

<sup>32</sup>MaiaRammath, *Decolonizing Anarchism*,149.

<sup>33</sup>Ralph Armbruster-Sandoval, *Starving for Justice: Hunger Strikes, Spectacular Speech, and the Struggle*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press ,2017), 9.

<sup>34</sup>**Simon group** was appointed in November 1927 by Conservative government of Britain under Stanley Baldwin to inform about the working of the Government of India Act of 1919. The commission was comprised of seven members among whom four were from Conservatives, two were from Labour Party and one was from Liberal Party. This commission came under chairmanship of Sir John Simon, and Clement Attlee. This formation had to face severe criticism in India because Indians were totally out of it. It was boycotted by the Indian National Congress and most other Indian political parties. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Simon-Commission>

<sup>35</sup> The British Government did not appoint on the Commission a single member who belonged to the nation whose future constitution was being discussed so whole India was protesting against it. During the procession in Lahore on October 30, 1928, LalaLajpatRai was struck severely. A .G. Noorani, *The Trail of Bhagat Singh*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996),2.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid,1.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid,4.

<sup>38</sup> ChamanLal, “Rare Documents on Bhagat Singh”, *The Hindu*, August 15,2011. <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/rare-documents-on-bhagat-singhs-trial-and-life-in-jail/article2356959.ece>

<sup>39</sup> A .G.Noorani, *The Trail of Bhagat Singh*,4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 33-34.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Letter by Bhagat Singh to Inspector General Lahore jail dated on 17th June 1929. PGB/1 459. See more details in A .G.Noorani, *The Trail of Bhagat Singh*,49.

<sup>43</sup>Y. Ramachandra Reddy & Surya Prakash, “Imprints of Bhagat Singh in Indian Independence Movement: a Historical Overview”, 38. [www.impactjournals.us](http://www.impactjournals.us)

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> *The Tribune* (Lahore) 15 September,1929.

<sup>48</sup> This Bill if passed could make it possible to hold trials and convict accused persons without presenting them into the courts. Neeti Nair, *Changing Homelands: Hindu Politics and the Partition of India*, (Harvard University Press, 2011),121.

<sup>49</sup>Motilal Nehru and M.R. Jayakar, B. Das and Chaman Lal all criticized Government for being biased towards the guilty of Lahore Conspiracy case. A .G.Noorani, *The Trail of Bhagat Singh*,90-94

<sup>50</sup> They were declined of better diet, the toilet necessities were not proper and they had to do undignified labour as well. Ibid,80

<sup>51</sup> “As far as the Punjab Government is concerned, the Government does not merely wish to bring these men to trial and get them convicted by a judicial tribunal, but Government goes to war against these men”.Ibid,82.

<sup>52</sup> Quaid-i-Azam in his speech in Legislative Assembly during a debate over The Code of Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill at 12 September,1929 supported the demand of Bhagat Singh and his comrades for fair treatment in jails. M. Rafique Afzal (ed)., *Quaid-i-Azam M. A. Jinnah: Speeches in the Legislative Assembly of India 1924-1930*, (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan ,1980),314.

<sup>53</sup> Jinnah said, "Mind you, Sir, I do not approve of the action of Bhagat Singh, and I say this on the floor of this House. I regret that, rightly or wrongly, youth today in India is stirred up, and you cannot, when you have three hundred and odd millions of people, you cannot prevent such crimes being committed, however much you deplore them and however much you may say that they are misguided”.

A .G. Noorani, *The Trail of Bhagat Singh*,84, M. Rafique Afzal (ed.), *Quaid-i-Azam M. A. Jinnah: Speeches in the Legislative Assembly of India 1924-1930*, 318.

<sup>54</sup> Y. Ramachandra Reddy & Surya Prakash, "Imprints of Bhagat Singh in Indian Independence Movement: a Historical Overview", 40

<sup>55</sup> On this announcement Bhagat Singh said that there was more pleasure in being hanged than linger in jail because though the British Government could kill him but they could not his ideas as he knew that dead Bhagat Singh could be more dangerous than an enslaved one. Shiv Verma (ed.), *Selected Writings of Bhagat Singh*. (New Delhi: 1986, )40-41.

<sup>56</sup> File No. 4/20, 1931. Judgment of the Privy Council or the appeal preferred by Bhagat Singh and others against the sentences passed on them by the Special Tribunal in the Lahore Conspiracy Case.

<sup>57</sup> His execution report also certifies that he was hanged by neck till death at Central Jail, Lahore on Monday 23 March, 1931. Report of Execution of death sentence of Sukh Dev by Superintendent of Central Jail, Lahore. Courtesy Punjab Archives.

<sup>58</sup> It was certified by the Superintendent of Jail at Lahore that the death sentence passed on Sukh Dev, was duly executed and he was remained suspended for a full hour and was not taken down until the life was ascertained by a medical officer to be extinct. Report of Execution of death sentence of Sukh Dev by Superintendent of Central Jail, Lahore. Courtesy Punjab Archives.

<sup>59</sup> The accused were missing during the entire proceedings and they kept outside and unrepresented by counsel. Advocates engaged to defend them were insulted by the court. Chaman Lal, "Rare Documents on Bhagat Singh's Trail and life in Jail", *The Hindu*, August 15,2011 <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/rare-documents-on-bhagat-singhs-trial-and-life-in-jail/article2356959.ece>

<sup>60</sup> Sunaina Kumar, "In Defense of a Revolutionary", *The Indian Express*, 13 March,2016. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/freedom-fighter-bhagat-singh-in-qaadab-supreme-court-nafis-siddiqui-george-stinney-hasrat-mohani-in-defence-of-a-revolutionary/>

<sup>61</sup> British Government denied all these allegations and gave assurance that Singh and his co-accused were cremated according to Sikh and Hindu rituals and their ashes were thrown in the Satluj River. For more details about British point of view see H.N. Mitra, *The Indian Annual Register*, vol 1, 1931,(New Delhi: Gian Publishing House,1990),215.

<sup>62</sup> Indian youth were so inspired by Bhagat Singh that an FIR was filed in the police station of Anarkali, Lahore that some students were gathering in Lala Lajpat Rai Hall and hailing the slogans of "Inqalab Zinda Bad". They also distributed pamphlets about Bhagat Singh. FIR no. 71 under section 115, Police Station Old Anar Kali, April 4,1931

<sup>63</sup> There is different point of views of different historians regarding the matter. Allan Campbell Johnson , Andrew Roberts , Ashok Celley, A. G. Noorani and D. P. Das supports the narrative strongly that Gandhi did not try sincerely to save the lives of these revolutionaries while K K Khullar, Prem Bhasin, Kuldip Nayar and Anil Nauriya counter the argument by supporting the fact that Gandhi did his best for the cause of these men. Even the dialogues between Gandhi and lord Irwin on the matter given in autobiography of later, supports the viewpoint of Noorani and others . Review : "*Gandhi and Bhagat Singh*", V.N Datta, New Delhi: Rupa& Co., 2008, pages 126, Price- Rupees 295/ Chaman Lal November 19,2017. <https://bhagatsinghthe-socialist-revolutionary.wordpress.com/2017/11/19/gandhi-and-bhagat-singh-historians-perplexity-thorn-in-the-neck-of-national-movement-epw/>

<sup>64</sup> Y. Ramachandra Reddy & Surya Prakash, "Imprints Of Bhagat Singh In Indian Independence Movement: A Historical Overview", 40

<sup>65</sup> B.Pattabhi Sitaramaya, *The History of the Indian National Congress, vol I (1885-1935)*, (Bombay: Padma Publications,1946),456-459.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid,458-459.

<sup>67</sup> Harald Fischer-Tiné (ed.), *Anxieties, Fear and Panic in Colonial Settings: Empires on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, (Springer, 2017),143.

<sup>68</sup> Intelligence Report, March 12, 1931, IOR: L/PJ/12/390, p. 34.

<sup>69</sup> NAI, Home Political, 4/36 Part 1, 29 August 1931.

<sup>70</sup> Legislative Assembly Sebatas, Vol. V, No.I, September 7,1931.

<sup>71</sup> Dr. Bakhshish Singh Nijar, *Punjab Under the British Rule(1849-1947)* ,(Lahore: Book Readers,N.D.),170-171.

<sup>72</sup>Verinder Grover (ed.), *The Story of Punjab Yesterday and Today*, vol 1, Hazara Singh, “Role of Revolutionaries in India’s Struggle for Freedom” ,(New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publishers,1995), 501.