

Thoughts of Bhagat Singh: An Overview

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Bhagat Singh name has become synonymous with the highest ideals of patriotism and martyrdom. He still remains a symbol of courage, valor and supreme sacrifice for the nation. He is one of the most popular figures of the struggle for Indian independence, an object of pride for countless millions, and above all, a national icon.

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

Bhagat Singh had evidently become the most beloved son of the soil, because besides being an uncompromising fighter against imperialism, he questioned and opposed other oppressions and had also a clear vision about the contents of the liberation struggle and the aftermath of its success. Surprisingly, he struggled against the exploitation of man by man and of nation by nation between the age of just 17 and 23 years. He was the enemy of the exploiters and the savior of the sufferer.

As an intellectual, Bhagat Singh was far superior to any of us. He had hardly touched the twenty fourth spring of his life when the hangman deprived him of his right to life. However by that time he had written on various subjects and written with confidence. He expressed himself on politics, God, religion, art, literature, culture, love, beauty, suicide, current affairs and several other themes. He had studied the history of revolutionary movement, its ideological struggle and development, pondering over it and drawing proper conclusions. It is quite unfortunate that manuscripts of the four books written by Bhagat Singh in jail have been destroyed. They were:

- *The Ideal of Socialism, Autobiography*
- *History of Revolutionary Movement in India,*
- *At the Door of Death.*

No other revolutionary struck such deep rapport with the awakening people, no other became so endeared to the common people and youth as Bhagat Singh did. He symbolized his struggle in the slogan he raised after he threw a bomb in the legislative assembly of Delhi. "Long Live Revolution", a slogan unfamiliar at that time to the Indian people.

The general public does not know what Bhagat Singh really was. They only know that he was a brave man who avenged Lalaji's murder by killing John Saunders and threw a bomb in the

assembly. Bhagat Singh as an intellectual of high caliber is not known to them. He was an intrepid thinker. He had powerful ideas and he knew the strategies to transform them into working realities to bring about change for not only India but for whole humanity. He was a revolutionary activist.

He was one of the first leaders to openly disassociate himself from religion. This means he was the first and probably the only influential leader in the Indian freedom struggle to have espoused secularism in a manner that was subsequently defined by the Constitution of Independent India.

Bhagat Singh and his colleagues were also conscious of the need for social justice and the overthrow of the caste system. They were better and uncompromising enemies of it in all its forms.

Bhagat Singh called untouchability a doom on India and observed, "In India we have very shameful situation. A dog can sit in our lap. A rat can visit our kitchen freely. But if a human being does that or touches us then our religion is defiled... Those who provide us with the means that make our life happy at very minimum cost, we treat them shabbily. We worship animals but do not allow human beings to sit with us."

Communalism and casteism, as Bhagat Singh has noted, provide handy weapons for the ruling classes to divide the working people and there by prevent the emergence of any cogent class challenge to their rule. Being a true socialist, Bhagat Singh was deadly against the social evil of untouchability. In his view, freedom did not merely mean banishing the British rule. It also meant changing the centuries old caste system which had branded a large number of our population as 'untouchables'.

Though Bhagat Singh lived a life of intensity and was strong in his revolutionary views, still he had love for literature. He was a student of human psychology along with history and scientific temper of enquiry. Any question which would come into his sensitive mind about the existing conditions of his people and any doubts about establishing it, the only way adopted by him was to search answers to these questions by study in depth and strengthening his views.

In his article *The Problem of Punjab's Language and Script*, he quotes the Punjabi literature and discuss the problems of Punjab. According to him, "An acquaintance of the literature of a society of a country is of prime importance for the understanding of that society or country, because the consciousness of the soul of a society gets reflected in its literature also."

The most important question before him at that time was to make India a unified nation. It is necessary to have one language for a unified nation, but this cannot be done all at once. For this, according to him, we have to move step by step.

Bhagat Singh and his comrades stood for a classless society free from exploitation of man by man and of nation by nation, they declared that their battle was not only against British imperialism but against the imperialism as a whole.

As far as the question of crime in the socialistic society is concerned, crime according to him is really the most advanced school of thought. As Bhagat Singh himself has been in jail for the better part of his life. He has got practical experiences. He suggested that instead of retribution, i.e. retaliation, the reformatory theory should form the basis of punishment. Not to punish but to reclaim, should be the guiding principle of the administration of justice. Jails should be reformatories and not veritable hells.

As a socialist, Bhagat Singh had a true international outlook. That there was no tinge of provincialism in him is a fact that is common to all revolutionaries. But he had gone beyond that and left nationalism also behind in his stand as a man; free from the shackles of geography and language. For the Indian revolutionaries, the appeal of nationalism and patriotism have a super charm, and it was no small matter for Bhagat Singh to have come out of the confines of nationalism to take his stand as an internationalist.

As far as the question of student politics is concerned Bhagat Singh was of the opinion that the young men in whose hands the reins of this country are going to be given are being educated in an unsatisfactory manner. What could be the result of such endeavors is not difficult to guess. It is true that the main concern of a student is to pursue his studies and he should devote all his time and energy to it. But it is necessary that he should also develop the ability to understand the conditions of his country and the ways and means to improve its conditions.

Today, when youth are at the cross roads of history. Martyr Bhagat Singh's convictions and way of living is like a light house which can lead the way to future.

Relevance of Bhagat Singh is more today than ever before. He died fighting against imperialism, class exploitation and other oppressions like those of caste and creed and was convinced that socialism alone represents the future of human kind. Serious challenges confront us even today on all these issues like caste, colour and creed. Imperialism stands immensely strengthened today.

Political parties are using caste, communalism, regionalism, religion to further their political interest. Violence against dalits remained widespread. Communalism and casteism as Bhagat Singh noted is providing for the ruling classes to divide the working people and thereby prevent the emergence of any cogent class challenge to their rule. Imperialism in today's time accompanies by neo colonialism and with all kinds of communal, casteist and terrorist forces which is threatening the unity and integrity of the country.

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The ultimate aim of Bhagat Singh was to establish a Federal Republic of the different states of India. The final form of the Constitution was to frame and declare by representatives of the people at a time when they would be in a position to enforce their decisions. The election to the Federal Republic was to be held on the universal adult Franchise. The aim of the government would be abolishment of all types of exploitation and injustice. We can see even the constitution of India also enshrined the elements like secularism, socialism, equality, liberty and justice and therefore protected these rights of the people for which Bhagat Singh fought throughout his life.

Even in international arena if Mahatma Gandhi has become a symbol of Indian struggle of freedom Bhagat Singh name comes to great revolutionaries like the CheGuvera and Nelson Mandela. This freedom fighter of India has an international figure and is a symbol of unity for the people of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Because of his liberation of humanity from all types of exploitation irrespective of caste, colour, creed and even nation he is respected all over world.

On sub-continental scale his life and work is a great saga of inspiration to all those who cherish the ideals of sovereignty, secularism, justice and socialism

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