

BHAGWATI CHARAN VOHRA

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Though I had never met Bhagwati Charan, his name had become quite familiar to me, even while I was at Kanpur, because whenever Sukh Dev or Bhagat Singh came there, Vohra was always referred to.

Later when in April 1928, the Manifesto of *Naujwan Bharat Sabha* was published, it was learnt that it had been drafted by Vohra in consultation with Bhagat Singh. Though I had been in contact with Bhagat Singh since 1926, and had also discussed the Manifesto with him, I had never been able to meet the ideologue of the *Sabha*.

I had been quite impressed by some of the formulations enunciated in the manifesto, which had evoked in me a deep regard for Bhagwati Charan, and the brain behind this remarkable document had made a niche in my psyche as a role model.

Meanwhile, as the police had learnt about my political activities, as also of Vijay, we both had to flee from Kanpur. I proceeded to Lahore as per the address provided to me by Sukh Dev; I stayed for about three months in Punjab, during which, I got a chance to meet Yashpal. Kishori Lal, Jai Gopal Master Agya Ram, Des Raj, Hans Raj Vohra and other besides Bhagat Singh and Sukh Dev. Those days were the golden days of *Naujwan Bharat Sabha* and thus Bhagwati Charan's name was on everyone's lips. Besides enjoying a high reputation as a revolutionary thinker, organizer, orator, propagandist and else, his deep commitment to the ideals, and his indefatigable fortitude to persist in treading the path he had chosen, not caring the least for the consequences to his ownself, and immense moral courage, evoked an unqualified praise and appreciation from everyone around him, and most of them were madly in love with his magnetic charm and transparency of his dealings with anyone who came into his contact.

Eminent Hindi Dramatist and critic Shri Udayshankar Bhatt who, besides having been his Hindi teacher at National College Lahore, also stayed in the first floor of his students house, recalls that Bhagwati was:-

"Tall, well-built stout physique, broad forehead, round face, wheatish complexion, ecstatic and stoic of temperament, jesting, laughing and arguing with friends, wandering studying were his favourites:

Foremost in helping out the needy, never saying 'No' to anyone in the matter of providing food, clothes and anything needed by anyone which he rather relished. He was ever accessible to his friends and to those in need: Didn't mind

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if friends even robbed him. Many took undue advantages by befooling him, which too he took in his stride — no complaints."

An apt instance of Bhagwati Charan's carefree temperament had been mentioned by Shri Bhatt: After his father's death his elder brother grabbed the best houses and the ordinary ones were left for Bhagwati. The valuables too were cornered by him. Bhatt was staying in the upper storey of their house in those days. He didn't like this sort of attitude of the elder brother. He asked Bhagwati, "Was this partition done by your father before he died?" Bhagwati, with a philosophical laugh said, "Not by my father, only my elder brother as he thought best; I have no complaint." Then gently tapping Bhat's hand added, "Truly speaking, this matter is of a kind, which is of little consequence; whether it is this share or that hardly matters." So casual his attitude towards his material assets.

None the less, Sukh Dev never gave me an opportunity to *meet* Bhagwati Charan: Upon enquiry, he would say, "Jai Chander Vidyalankar suspects Bhagwati Charan of being in league with C.I.D. So we have to be alert in the matter." Sukh Dev also told me that Jai Chander had nothing to support his contention, but till the matter is sorted out, we have to observe the party's code to be on guard. As Sukh Dev's stand looked somewhat plausible, I refrained from re-opening the issue: Secret organizations have their own constraints; Sukh Dev being the Punjab's organizer, could hardly deviate. However, I could not swallow Jai Chand's contention in view of the following:-

During December 1924, Shachinder Sanyal, had sent copies of manifesto of Hindustan Republican Association, captioned "The Revolutionary", which was to be distributed in all the big cities of Northern India on a particular day in January 1925. In Punjab this task was assigned to Jai Chand, who in turn, instead of doing it himself, delegated to Bhagwati Charan: Its distribution in Punjab was thus managed by Bhagwati. I had also been told that it was again Bhagwati, upon whom fell the task of providing housing and money to the party. So much so that the house in which the bomb factory at Lahore was set up, was too rented by Bhagwati in his own name.

Yash Pal had observed in this regard, "Following the raid on the factory on 15 April 1929, myself and Bhagwati Charan both absconded. During our abscondence when we met near Victoria Memorial at Calcutta Bhagwati had overgrown beard, sharp moustaches with dirty *Kurta* and short *lungi* he appeared to be a typical Rajput *Durban*. My first question to him was, as to what prompted him to rent house in his own name."

A bit puzzled he said, "How on earth could I be knowing that they would start making bombs there; I had simply rented it."

Thereupon I said, "If it were so, you ought to have told them to hire some other house in someone else's name."

His reply was, "Perhaps it may have taken so many days for them to do so."

This is a typical illustration of his carefree nature.

“On the one hand a person be suspected of being a spy, while on the other hand relying only on him for all vital and sensitive tasks, was such a paradox which I could never resolve. At the end of the day, it became transparent that the entire propaganda by Jai Chand was a concoction.

“Some people are madly possessed by the craving for leadership: They evade jumping into the fray of struggles; they yearn for name and fame without any renunciation and sacrifice, simply by manouvering to get the credit at the expense of others. If such kind of persons do not take others for a ride to subserve their own selfish ends, and thereby putting brakes on the continuous progress of others by their crooked manipulation, where would they be?” says Durga Devi.

Such a kind of leader had surfaced in Punjab also: His name was Jai Chand Vidyalankar. He was heading the revolutionary party in those days. Yet he was not inclined to practise but only preach while keeping his follower youngmen only confined to studies, discussions, propaganda organization, mobilizing funds. He had been able to mesmerize the Lahore’s revolutionary youth by virtue of his learning and intellect. Besides, he was also a *guru* to most of them being their teacher in National College, Lahore.

During early twenties, Bhagwati Charan, having come under the revolutionary influences, had come into contact of a revolutionary circle at Lahore. The documents and the money which were sent from Europe to this group also were received by him at his address. Later he joined HRA. In those days these revolutionaries looted government cash chest after stopping a train at Kakori near Lucknow on 9.8.1925. Most of them were arrested and sentenced in Kakori Conspiracy Case.

It was decided to raid Lucknow jail to retrieve some of the jailed comrades. But leaders in Punjab and U.P. were not inclined to do anything in the matter except biding their time. Bhagwati Charan, unable to stand all this, said in desperation, “If this kind of attitude persists, we shall start functioning on our own after forming a new party.” The leaders at the helm of affairs in Punjab knew that Bhagwati Charan had the guts, talent and the means to do as he felt like doing. And lo, in no time, a revelation came from a “reliable source” that Bhagwati Charan was a C.I.D. man, and was on their payroll. He was given a bad name in Congress, *Naujwan Bharat Sabha* circles and elsewhere. This ‘reliable source’ was none else than the leader referred to above Bhagat Singh too had said much about that leader in anger while he was in jail says Yash Pal.

Now since money was needed to retrieve the Kakori comrades from jail, Jai Chand solicited some contribution from Sushila *Didi* also, who was then having some golden bangles on her wrist. She promptly removed the bangles and offered these to Jai Chand. Elated, Jai Chand said, “One of my girl relative is getting married, for which we have to get the bangles prepared. Now these bangles would serve the purpose while their market price equivalent amount shall go to the party account.”

Bhagwati Charan retorted saying, "If *Didi* can do without bangles why can't your relative girl?" This was too much for Jai Chand to swallow, and no wonder, soon after Bhagwati Charan got morphed into "CID" man.

Once at Sukh Dev's command, Yash Pal thoroughly searched Bhagwati's house in his absence but nothing suspicious was found.

Then Simon Commission came to Lahore: As elsewhere throughout India, at Lahore too there was a protest demonstration – procession at Lahore railway station, shouting "Simon go back", which was *lathi* charged resulting in injuries to Lala Lajpat Rai; his death on 17 Nov. 1928, murder of Saunders a month later, and indiscriminate arrests in the wake of the murder, followed in quick succession.

Those were the days of hectic political activities and Bhagwati Charan was in imminent danger of being arrested in connection with Meerut Conspiracy Case. He quietly left Punjab and began spending his time outside Punjab. At the time of Saunders' murder he was at Calcutta. Now the big challenge at Lahore was the safe exit of Bhagat Singh from Lahore. This hazardous task was accomplished by Durgawati Vohra.

Saunders had been killed: All the exit routes from Lahore were heavily guarded. Railway Station in particular was swarming with hordes of police and C.I.D. personnel, while the continued stay of the revolutionaries at Lahore was also risky. Bhagwati Charan before leaving for Calcutta, had left Rs. 500 with his wife with the instructions that in case Bhagat Singh or Sukh Dev come asking for money, give it to them. In the given situation this gesture of Bhagwati was not just incidental but the outcome of his intuitive, almost prophetic foresight and analytical mind. For all intents and purposes, but for this handsome amount, Sukh Dev could not have been able to manage the safe exit of his comrades from Lahore.

A couple of days later Sukh Dev came to Durga *Bhabi* and asked

"Can you go outside?"

"What for? Where?"

A person has to be escorted out of Lahore; have to accompany him as 'Madam'.... Danger is there.... May be firing too."

Bhabi consented; she had to accompany Bhagat Singh to Calcutta.

Lahore-Howrah mail used to leave at 6 A.M. Bhagat Singh in the guise of a *Sahib*, little Shachi her three-year old son in his lap, *Bhabi* posed as his spouse and Raj Guru their servant: Thus hoodwinking the police, they boarded the train – Bhagat Singh and *Bhabi* in Ist Class and Raj Guru in *Servant* class. While Raj Guru dropped at Lucknow, they telegraphed from there to Bhagwati at Calcutta address; "Coming with brother". Durgawati.

"Who is this *Durga Wati*, *Bhatwati* found no clue. But when he accompanied by Sushila *Didi*, who too was in Calcutta those days, saw *Bhabi* and Bhagat Singh, with little Shachi coming out of the train, his happiness knew no bounds and same was the case with *Didi* also.

Bhagwati instantly patted *Bhabi* on the back saying, "Today only I have understood you".

Bhagwati Charan was born in 1903 at Agra. Long before his birth his grandfather had shifted from Gujrat and settled at Agra. Later his father Pandit Shiv Charan Vohra came to Lahore from Agra. He held a high profile post in Railways and the Government had made him *Rai Sahib* in lieu of his outstanding performance. Financially, the family was well off Bhagwati's marriage had been solemnised at a very early age.

Following Gandhiji's exhortation in 1921, he left studies and jumped into Non-Cooperation Movement; while the movement was suspended, he along with his companions joined National College Lahore from where he did his B.A. "Instead of adorning the front entrance gate of a building, he preferred to be one of the odd stones in the foundation while leaving high profile tasks for his comrades. He had his links with international political outfits. International communist literature used to come at his address for quite sometime. He had a firm grip over organisational matters, and talent and mastery over the written word. He was far ahead of his age-mates in the matter of knowledge and insight regarding wide spectrum of problems and issues.

His house was not just searched but ransacked in connection with the world famous Meerut Conspiracy Case; even the wall and floor plaster was dug up to discover some secret papers or articles. As he was not at home, he could not be arrested. Much later, when Lahore bomb factory was raided on 15.4.1929, it was found that the particular house had been rented in his name, and thus he was proclaimed as an offender — Azad, Yash Pal besides him, had also been declared absconders in Lahore Conspiracy Case.

Not unexpectedly, his house was searched, time after time: His property was confiscated. House was locked and sealed by police. His family had to take refuge in the neighbour's houses. Despite all this, police could not lay his hands on Bhagwati. True, after his martyrdom, police was able to lay hands on the ashes-remains of his mortal self, and patted itself on the back for their 'achievement' while exhibiting these in the Court during the trial of Second Lahore Conspiracy Case.

Events followed in rapid succession after the Assembly Bomb Case: At Lahore Bomb factory were arrested of Sukh Dev Kishori Lal and Jai Gopal; arrests of three comrades Jai Dev, Dr Gya Prasad and myself, were followed by arrests of other comrades. Left outside were Azad, Bhagwati Charan, Yash Pal, Vaishampayan and a few others: In this scenario Bhagwati while joining with Azad, knit the scattered comrades into a viable organisation once again. His detractors left no stone unturned in vilifying him but he never sought to rebut their contentions saying, "My job is to keep on doing what is worth doing; to offer explanations to save my reputation are not my cup of tea."

As stated above, police had been unable to nab four/six comrades, of whom Azad and Bhagwati were the foremost. For sometime, in the wake of persistent

police raids, the mutual links among comrades remained disrupted. Bhagwati could be the last person just to sit idly even in such a desperate situation. He became active at Delhi with Yash Pal by his side. They rented a house in Shradha Nand Bazar Street, to start preparing bomb's material. To further this end, contacted one of his friends at Rohtak, namely Vaid Lekh Ram who had been an activist of *Naujwan Bharat Sabha* while he was a student at Lahore and enjoyed Bhagwati's confidence. He agreed to house the bomb factory in his clinic at Rohtak.

While Bhagwati was keen to undertake the job of bomb making himself Yash Pal persuaded him to allow him to do so instead. His stand was that Bhagwati had a wide network of contacts; he was also in a better position to muster finances. Besides he enjoyed a close rapport with Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi at Kanpur, through whom contact with Azad could be restored.

Upon these tasks rested the fate of the party: In such a predicament, if Bhagwati got engrossed in bomb manufacture, those vital tasks would remain undone. Yash Pal strived to keep Bhagwati safe for all these responsibilities. There was a practical dimension too; the comrade who were to be with Vaid Lekh Ram had to be there in the guise of a helping hand or a servant, and Bhagwati with his majestic personality could not fit in that role. Had he tried to do so, the secret would have been out in a no time. Hence he had no option except agreeing to Yash Pal's suggestion.

Yash Pal, staying at Rohtak, was about to prepare the requisite chemicals for the bombs within three-four weeks. Now the next problem was the shells: In view of the Lahore experience where the moulders provided a clue to the police leading to the raid of 15.4.1929, getting shells made from a moulder was out of question. The solution was found in using brass *lotas*, which were fitted with steel top-covers of the tight fitting size, which were tightened with iron rings; holes were made in the top lids for wires to be inserted inside to trigger the explosion.

Both decided to plant these explosive devices beneath the railway line, to be exploded when the Viceroy's train traversed that portion of the railway track. The spot chosen was on the Delhi-Mathura line near Delhi. It was in close proximity to an old *Serai* and a well. From that secluded place, explosion could be caused by pressing a switch. It was decided that to facilitate this task, a person should be planted there much prior to the action.

Once again Bhagwati staked his claim to perform this vital task, but here too the same hurdles stood in his way as in the matter of bomb making at Rohtak. they needed a motorcycle also, which was a must for escaping from the spot after the explosion. It was not difficult to escape from there in military uniform on a motorcycle, but neither Bhagwati nor Yash Pal could assume the guise of *Sadhu* to occupy the spot the *Serai* which had to be managed in order to effect spade work. This role was assigned to Inder Pal.

The finesse with which Inder Pal performed had been nicely depicted in Sri Raginder Kaswan's book *Bhagwati Bhai*. He writes, "Inderpal was sitting on *dhuni* (smoke-in-fire) in the guise of a *Sadhu*. He had been summoned from Lahore. He was discipline personified: He did not even ask the purpose behind his being planted as a *Sadhu*, and promptly agreed. He was shown the spot, where he was to survive by begging food from the neighbouring villagers. He consented to put up on that desolate-deserted locale. The two and half months that he spent there, could very well be called a rare instance of renunciation *par excellence*. He won over the hearts and reverence of the people of the surrounding villages to the extent that a number of villagers continued to visit him even in jail for his *darshan*. There too they could not refrain from touching his feet, while also *complaining* that the police had beat and harassed them after his arrest, to ascertain whether he was a real *Sadhu* or a fake. Despite all the torture, no villager called him fake.

In the meanwhile Bhagwati was keen to get in touch with Azad and obtain the green signal from him; he was also able to ascertain that the Viceroy was scheduled to visit Kolhapur in the third week of December to return on 23rd Dec, whereupon he had an appointment with Gandhi ji. Bhagwati Charan while dubbing the proposed meeting as the "negotiation of capitalists" observed that could not expect anything worthwhile from this meeting. As far as Congress and Gandhiji was concerned, Bhagwati had lost his faith in them. He did not relish the idea of deciding the line of action as per Gandhiji's convenience or inconvenience. He abhorred the very idea of being a tail bearer of Gandhiji or as mere collaborators of Congress party. He detested the spectacle of Gandhi ji cringing before the Viceroy. Hence he wanted to finish off the Viceroy before the scheduled meeting. Thus he and Yash Pal were inclined to go ahead on their own. However, to ensure that the party work proceeded purposefully, it was imperative to co-ordinate with Azad whose guidance was a must. Bhagwati reached Kanpur on his search. From there, obtaining the address of Azad's contact, Sada Shiv Rao's brother Shankar Rao, he went to Jhansi for this purpose. From there it was learnt that Azad was at Gwalior. Bhagwati left a message for Azad that he should come and stay at Delhi; the conditions there are suitable, and money too can be conveniently arranged. Leaving his Kanpur address there, he departed.

A few days later, he learnt from Ganesh Shankar ji that Azad does not have a clean heart for him. Hence neither he likes to have contact with, or nor any help from him. He felt perturbed over this response: "One day all these suspicious would wither away", was all what he said then.

Later, one day Kashi Ram came to meet Jai Dev Kapoor in the Court. Besides Jai Dev, he asked Bhagat Singh and the rest of comrades about Bhagwati Charan. With one voice, they strongly rebutted all the allegations against him as baseless. They vouchsafed for his integrity, iron will and renunciation. Kashi Ram was staying at Lahore with Durga *Bhabi* and had been deeply impressed by her.

Upon his return to Delhi, he narrated this all to Kailashpati who was Azad's representative organiser at Delhi. Kailashpati, in turn, conveyed all this to Azad and he got in touch with Bhagwati Charan too.

On the other hand, Azad was also planning to rescue of Bhagat Singh from jail. He sent Vaishampayan to Lahore for assessing the situation, and sent a message to Bhagat Singh to arrange for his stay at Lahore. Bhagat Singh delegated this task to *Bhabi* and made all the arrangements through Inder Pal. Vaishampayan stayed there for three weeks and told Inder Pal that, "Now I want to go back; arrange some money for me". However, on the next day, Inder Pal met Vaishampayan with an answer which took him by total surprise, "You need not to go back; everything has been arranged here itself; you have been instructed to stay here at Lahore."

Vaishampayan was unable to make head or a tail out of this message; how come that in Lahore where he was a total stranger, who could be the person to send him *this* direction?

"May I see the person who has sent me the message?" said Vaishampayan after some thought. Inder Pal replied after a pause, "Your arrangement is being made by Shrimati Bhagwati Charan Vohra."

Hearing this name, Vaishampayan was taken aback, since while leaving Kanpur for Lahore, he had been cautioned to keep off Durga *Bhabi* and to be on guard regarding Bhagwati Charan. He started thinking, that the one who hosted him for 15/20 days at Lahore that too like an honoured guest, could have got me arrested had she so intended."

Next day when upon meeting Durga *Bhabi* he disclosed that he had been sent by Azad, she told him that Bhagwati Charan had a keen desire to see Azad: Vaishampayan promised that he would try to arrange their meeting.

On his return to Kanpur, he told all this to Azad. By now, Kailashpati too had given his on his report on the subject to Azad. Thus a meeting between Azad and Bhagwati Charan took place in Kadusia Garden, Delhi through Kailashpati.

"*Bhaiyya* came and both met as two brothers were meeting after an epoch. Without mincing words *Bhaiyya* told Bhagwati *Bhai* 'Yes, I refused to meet you; this is true, but there ought to nothing to feel bad about on your part. It is beyond my purview to find out each and everything personally; whatever is then conveyed to me, I have to believe."

It was a historic meeting. Prior to the Lahore Conspiracy arrests, Azad and Bhagat Singh complemented each others; if one was the Commander-in-Chief, the other was the ideologue, the torch bearer. After Bhagat Singh's arrest there was a vacuum for Azad; he had no one left with Bhagat Singh's calibre and acumen, who could fill the void. This handicap had baffled Azad on each and every step.

After meeting Bhagwati Charan, this void was filled; now Azad and Bhagwati complemented each other — each being incomplete with the other: Once again the party was on its fast track.

On 22 December evening, cold was at its peak compounded by a light drizzle. Bhagwati; Yash Pal, taking along Bhag Ram and Inder Pal set off on foot carrying the battery, electric wire and digging tools. The spot chosen was near Pandva's fort, also known as Old Fort on Mathura road. Reaching there they set off to do the needful; completing the task by midnight they returned at 2 A.M. to their Delhi house.

The task of operating the electric switch was assigned to Yash Pal. To escape from the site after the explosion, a motorcycle had been procured. Taking along Bhag Ram with him, he halted at some distance. Inder Pal had been already sent back to Lahore while Bhagwati Charan was to wait for Yash Pal and Bhag Ram at Ghaziabad railway station.

At about 6 A.M. on 23 Dec. 1929, Viceroy's train was galloping at 60 m.p.h. speed towards New Delhi railway station. Suddenly there was a blast; one compartment of the train was blown off, one person got killed, but Viceroy escaped unhurt. But as there was a thick cloud of fog all around, and since visibility was extremely low, Yash Pal had pressed the switch just by guess work: Since the noise of the explosion got drowned in the train noise and the train seemed to have passed safely, he assumed that the desired explosion had failed to occur. All this while Bhagwati was waiting breathlessly for his two comrades; who were supposed to reach Ghaziabad by 7 A.M. After a long wait, Yash Pal arrived. Bhagwati gave him a questioning look to which Yash Pal indicated "nothing" by a wave of his hand. With a smile Bhagwati replied, "Don't worry' we'll try again." Bhag Ram left for Lahore and they both boarded the passenger train for Moradabad.

However, when the train was just about to leave Ghaziabad, they both were taken aback on hearing the newspaper hawker shouting, "Bomb exploded under the train of *Lat Sahib*. Rail track damaged. One compartment of the train blown off. One person killed." They quickly went through the newspaper and were overjoyed.

As mentioned above, Bhagwati *Bhai* was the star thinker and spokesman of the party. Addressing youngmen, he had authored many small pamphlets, which are presently not available. In those days a small booklet "Masses of India" written by him was very popular.

Presently three of his writings, Manifesto of *Naujwan Bharat Sabha*, Manifesto of H.S.R.A. and "Philosophy of the Bomb" are available: The first one proclaims.

Sabha Manifesto: glimpses:

Revolution *by* the masses *for* the masses. In other words *Swaraj* for the 90%; *Swaraj* not only *attained* by the masses but also *for* the masses.

Decades of matchless self-sacrifice will prepare the masses for the accomplishment of that great work and only the revolutionary youngmen will be able to do that. A revolutionary does not necessarily mean a man of bombs and revolvers....

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*....

Our real battle is against our own disabilities, which are exploited by the enemy and by some of our own people for their selfish motive....

Religious superstitions and bigotry are a great hindrance to our progress. They have proved an obstacle in our way and we must do away with them.... The doctrine of universal brotherhood demands that the exploitation of man by man and nation by nation must be rendered impossible. Equal opportunity to all without any sort of distinction....

Along with the advent of the twentieth century the British ruling class has adopted quite a new policy towards India. They are drawing our bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie into their fold by adopting the policy of concessions. Their cause is being made common. The progressive investment of British capital in India will inevitably lead to that end. In the very *near future* we will find that class and their great leaders having thrown in their lot with the foreign rulers. Some round-table conference or any such forum will end in a compromise between the two....

It ends by giving a clarion call to country's youth stating:

'Let then young men think independently, calmly, serenely and patiently. Let them adopt the cause of Indian independence as the sole aim of their lives. Let them stand on their own feet. They must organize themselves free from any influence and refuse to be exploited any more by the hypocrites and insincere people who have nothing in common with them and who always desert the cause at the critical juncture. In all seriousness and sincerity, let them make the triple motto of "*service, suffering, sacrifice*" their sole guide. Let them remember that "the making of a nation requires self-sacrifice of thousands of obscure men and women who care more for the idea of their country than for their own comfort and interest, than own lives and the lives of those who they love.'

6.4.1928

A) Manifesto : publication and its distribution

Since no 'Manifesto' had been enunciated on behalf of H.S.R.A. since its birth in Sept. 1928 it was written by none else than Bhagwati, who had been kept out of Sept. 1928 Delhi meeting.

I (Vaishampayan) came to Kanpur in December 1929. By then, Bhagwati Charan had rented a house at Lucknow in Aminabad and had got displayed a board 'Sanitary Suppliers' on the building. This was to camouflage our activities going on inside. The main purpose of renting a house and staying in Lucknow was to retain a link with Azad. I had been to this house a number of times.

Manifesto of H.S.R.A. was prepared here by Bhagwati Charan. It clearly stated that the revolutionaries did not stand for terrorism as an end in itself but just as a means to a noble end — making of revolution which meant overthrow of British imperialism and creation of a new social order. The manifesto had the approval of the Central Committee. It was distributed at the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress in December 1929.

It was I (Vaishampayan) who carried the printed copies of the Manifesto to Lahore where I arrived on 24th December, that is, four-five days before the session, to distribute it among the delegates of the Congress session. Joginder Shukla of Bihar too was there to help me in this task. I also used to meet revolutionaries from various parts of India in the *Congress Nagar* during the daytime and slept at the house of Durga Bhabhi. I also met Sushila Didi and Sardar Bhagat Singh's sister Bibi Amar Kaur at their house; Leela ji, though not a party worker too extended maximum help to the revolutionaries.

Glimpses:

"The food on which the tender plant of liberty thrives is the blood of the martyr."

This association stands for revolution in India in order to liberate her from foreign domination by means of organized armed rebellion. Open rebellion by a subject people must always in the nature of things be preceded by secret propaganda and secret preparations. Once a country enters that phase the task of an alien government becomes impossible.... Upheavals have always been a terror to holders of power and privilege. Revolution is a phenomenon which nature loves and without which there can be no progress either in nature or in human affairs. Revolution is certainly not unthinking, brutal campaign of murder and incendiarism.... There is no concord, no symphony, no rhythm without revolution. The music of the spheres of which poets have sung, would remain an unreality if a ceaseless revolution were to be eliminated from the space. Revolution is Law, revolution is Order and Revolution is the Truth....

The future of India rests with the youths. They are the salt of the earth. Their promptness to suffer, their daring, courage and their radiant sacrifice prove that India's future in their hands is perfectly safe....

Youths, ye soldiers of the Indians Republic, fall in: do not stand easy, do not let your knees tremble. Shake off the paralyzing effects of long lethargy. Yours is a noble mission. Go out into every nook and corner of the country and prepare the ground for future revolution which is sure to come. Respond to the clarion call of duty.... Then a grim and terrible earthquake having a universally

destructive potentiality, shall inevitably come along with portentous rumblings, and this edifice of imperialism will crash and crumble to dust, and great shall be the fall thereof. And then, and not till then, a new Indian nation shall arise and surprise humanity with the splendour and glory, all its own. The wise and the mighty shall be bewildered by the simple and the weak.

Individual liberty shall be safe. The sovereignty of the proletariat shall be recognized. We court the advent of such revolution. Long Live Revolution!

Kartar Singh
President

(B) 'Philosophy of the Bomb'

Soon after the Manifesto, Bhagwati Bhai drafted the *Philosophy of the Bomb*. Azad had arranged for its publication. Gandhiji had written an article 'Cult of the Bomb' in the weekly 'Young India' to condemn the Viceregal Train Explosion. The party decided to reciprocate his 'Cult of the Bomb' with a forceful counter attack called *Philosophy of the Bomb*. Bhagwati was given the charge of this task. It was decided that this reply would be distributed throughout the country on 26th January 1930 to coincide with the day the Congress was to declare complete independence as their goal.

Bijoy Kumar Sinha a close associate of Bhagwati Charan recounts:

Bhagwati Charan Vohra was an important member of our H.S.R.A. After the arrest of many of us in early 1929, he shouldered greater responsibilities along with Chander Shekhar Azad to fill up the gap that had been created by arrest of workers like Bhagat Singh. He played a very effective role in propagating the idea of our revolutionary movement among the countrymen. It was he who wrote the leaflet "*The Philosophy of Bomb*" that was distributed all over the country in January 1930, explaining the positive aspect of the programme and its different phases.

Among us, continues Sinha, Bhagwati Charan was known for the ideological clarity acquired by him from his deep study of the history of revolutionary movements of different countries. He fully availed this opportunity of using the standard volumes on the subject that were stocked in the Lala Lajpat Rai's Memorial College Library and been considered as the best in Punjab in this respect.

But the unique story of his dedicated life was the combination of his theoretical knowledge and grasp, with his spirit of silent sacrifice and daring.

Glimpses:

In the leaflet it was stated that 'the revolutionaries believe that the deliverance of their country will come through revolution. The revolution, they are constantly working and hoping for, will not only express itself in the form of an armed conflict between the foreign government and its supporters and the people; but will also usher in a new social order. The revolution will ring the death knell of capitalism and class distinctions and privileges. It will bring joy and prosperity to the starving millions who are seething today under the terrible yoke of both foreign and Indian exploitation. It will bring the nation into its own. It will give birth to a new state. Above all it will vanish the social parasites from the seat of political power.

We take this opportunity to appeal to our countrymen — to the youth, to the workers and peasants, to the revolutionary intelligentsia — to come forward and join us in carrying aloft the banner of freedom. Let us establish a new order of society in which political and economic exploitation will be an impossibility. In the name of those gallant men and women who willingly accepted death so that we, their descendants, may lead a happier life, who toiled ceaselessly and perished for the poor, the famished, and exploited millions of India; we call upon every patriot to take up the fight in all seriousness. Let nobody toy with nation's freedom which is her very life, by making psychological experiments in non-violence and such other novelties. Our slavery is our shame. When shall we have courage and wisdom enough to be able to shake ourselves free of it? What is our great heritage of civilisation and culture worth if we have not enough self-respect left in us to prevent us from bowing surveillance to the commands of foreigners and paying homage to their flag and king?

Victory or Death

There is no crime that Britain has not committed in India. Deliberate misrule has reduced us to paupers, has 'bled us white'. As a race and a people we stand dishonoured and outraged. Do people still expect us to forget and to forgive? We shall have our revenge — a people's righteous revenge on the tyrant. Let cowards fall back and cringe for compromise and peace. We ask not for mercy and we give no quarter. Ours is a war to the end — to Victory or Death.

Long Live the Revolution!
