

Yatra

This is a recount of my *yatra* which began with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of *Ghadr Party* in March-April 1964 and which may conclude at its forthcoming Centenary. The credit for the initial impetus goes to my student, Jagmohan Singh son of Late Bibi Amar Kaur, sister of Bhagat Singh, who had got admission to Guru Nanak Engineering College, Ludhiana in 1963, which I had recently joined as Lecturer in Humanities.

We got attracted towards each other very soon, since as per my routine, I always desired to know the antecedents of each and every student before starting formal teaching: It was he who took the initiative to attend the said celebrations at Desh Bhagat Yadgar, Jalandhar, without my being aware of it.

While narrating his impressions thereof, he was most enthusiastic about the speech of Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, the founder president of *Ghadr Party*, who had called upon youngmen to meet him to take over their legacy/heritage and till this was done, he would manage to survive. Having heard it first hand, Jagmohan recalled, that he was set to ponder that this 94 year old who was so stormy at this age, what a tornado would have been he half a century ago?

By then, I had met also Jagmohan's grandmother, *Mata Vidya Wati* and heard from *Mata's* sundry accounts of her son and his comrades. But what struck me most were her repeated, fond recollections of Bhagat Singh's admiration for youthful *Ghadrite* hero, Kartar Singh Sarabha, whose photo he always carried with him: This, then made me very eager to meet Baba Bhakna.

Only, then, I am to be blamed for the delay of two years in doing so, till 6th June 1966, when me, Jagmohan and my nephew Rajinder met the *Baba* at his village Bhakna Kalan, District Amritsar.

In passing, I may confess that I was held back by sheer inertia, both physical and mental: I verily revolted against both, and swore to regular robust physical regimen, like two mile race plus exercises, and to a prompt response to the worthwhile opportunities. Paradoxical as it may appear to be, till date, I persevere in both and for me in any case, this signifies, the complementarily of brain and brawn.

That my meeting of 6 June 1966 with Baba ji was a turning point would be much more than an understatement. We found him unassuming, affectionate, down to earth, hospitable and much more. In sum it emboldened me to meet all the living *Ghadrites* who were yet more than a dozen in numbers, besides other surviving revolutionaries: Whatever else I did, or failed to do this became my 'religion' and foremost priority: I kept on meeting, staying with, inviting them to come and stay with me, in order to maximize my duration of being with them for its own charm. Here my newly acquired fitness enabled me to travel independently on my bicycle, doing 100 Kms a day very often, but without ever missing my teaching assignment, as per the strict advice of Baba Bhakna.

A few days after our meeting the Baba, I got a hint that I should meet him, whereupon I learnt that he had penned a writing ‘*Dukh*’ (Anguish) in Urdu which he desired me to translate into Punjabi for publication, since by then there were very little Urdu readership left.

Significantly, while assigning me this task, he made me promise, most earnestly that while doing so, I shall handle this assignment as it was written by a young pupil of mine: He emphasised that he wanted all his publications to be vetted by at least one independent reader.

This obligated me to imbibe a lifelong caution while preparing scripts for publication, and not to tread on anyone’s toes while being truthful.

We, had now, to venture into the realm of publication. To that end, we, a few young activists floated an outfit named Youth Centre/*Yuvak Kendar* with *Mata Vidya Wati* as our patron, and located in the ancestral house of the Martyr at Khatkar Kalan, Distt. Jalandhar. It aimed at disseminating the rich legacy of our martyrs and national heroes, particularly relating to those who had perished unknown, unheard, unsung.

Our first publication appeared on 1st November 1966, the day when the first issue of *Ghadr* paper was published way back on 1st November 1913: This was a message to the youth by *Mata Vidaya Wati*:

“Message to Indian Youth

On Bhagat Singh’s arrest a photograph of *Shaheed* (Martyr) Kartar Singh Sarabha was recovered from him. He always carried this photograph, in his pocket. Very often Bhagat Singh would show me that photograph and say, “Dear Mother, this is my hero, friend and companion.” *Shaheed* Kartar Singh was the youngest Martyr of 1914-15 *Ghadr* Movement.

While at home Bhagat Singh used to hum this Punjabi couplet,

*Sewa desh di jindriye bari aukhi
Galan karnian dher sukhalian ne,
Jinhan desh sewa wich per paya
Unhan lakh musibtan Jhalian ne.*

*(Hard is the path of patriotism, easy enough uttering of
speeches, those who follow the path of service to
motherland, have to bear countless torments.)*

Then he would tell that these were the favourite lines of Kartar Singh Sarabha.

Whenever Bhagat Singh came home, he always had his pockets full of books: Often I would mildly pull him up for spoiling his pockets with these books. “What is all this?” I used to ask him. He used to explain with a smile that the books were about martyrs and patriots. Some of them were Indian and others hailed from Ireland, Italy and Russia.

My dear children! You, too, should make a deep study of the life and experiences of patriots. Only then you can find out the correct path of life according to the present circumstances.

My blessings ‘Be Patriots’

Vidya Wati

YOUTH CENTRE

c/o Smt Vidyawati, Mother of *Shaheed* Bhagat Singh
V.P.O Khatkar Kalan, Distt. Jalandhar. (Punjab)”

For us then there was no looking back — we followed Bhagat Singh's style of publicity, through exhibition of photographs during functions in schools, colleges, villages and even in fairs, where portraits of around 50 national heroes used to be exhibited having got pasted on charts and affixed to a string tied to a tree, etc. Our pamphlets, priced at 10, 25, 50 paise and Rs. 1.25 at the most were also put on sale. Their contents used to be writings of Martyrs, other revolutionaries besides those written by Baba Bhakna and Shri Shiv Verma, a close associate of Bhagat Singh and his fellow Central Committee Member of H.S.R.A.

We often organised functions on Martyrs' days in schools, colleges, Universities and other public fora to be addressed by surviving Ghadrites and other revolutionaries like Pandit Kishori Lal — a Bhagat Singh associate.

As for the exhibition of photographs, Bhagat Singh is on record to have made it a routine to start every function by projection of photographs on magic lantern.

Baba Bhakna had come in close personal contact with Bhagat Singh while they were together in Lahore Central Jail and the Baba joined the youngsters' hunger strike despite Bhagat Singh's dogged attempts to dissuade him.

Ajoy Ghosh, who himself was among those hunger strikers, has narrated this episode in his memoirs: "One particular incident of this hunger strike had a deep impact on all of us: It was, that one of the veterans of 1915 *Ghadr* movement, Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, then a prisoner in Lahore Central Jail too joined us in our hunger strike. He had already undergone 14 years of imprisonment and was due for release: We were told by the jail superintendent that if he persists in his hunger strike, he shall not get the remission being allowed. Apart from this, we were told, his health was not good. Fourteen years of imprisonment had ruined his physique and truly this strike could even endanger his life.

"Accordingly, Bhagat Singh met Baba ji and argued with him to give up the hunger strike but all in vain. *Tears* rolled down the eyes of Bhagat Singh, when on return, he recounted his conversation with Baba ji. As long as our hunger strike continued, Baba ji too remained on strike. Consequently, the remission that had fallen due to him was withdrawn because of which he had to remain in jail for an extra year." (*Shahid Bhagat Singh wa unke sathi* cited in *Bhagat Singh — The Eternal Rebel*, page 118).

An anecdote depicting the mutual reverence between the Baba and Mata Vidya Wati may not be out of place. The duo were to meet after a long gap at my residence in Ludhiana; the Baba having arrived earlier got up to receive the Mata, or the *Bebe* of Bhagat Singh on her arrival and getting close to each other *both* tried to touch each others' feet... a 'touching' scene indeed!" (*Bhagat Singh — The Eternal Rebel*, page 118)

The Baba always saw Sarabha's visage in Bhagat Singh, and once in a lighter vein he asked Bhagat Singh "You are so young, educated and from a rich family and your age is of fun and frolic; then how come you got entangled in all this?" To which Bhagat Singh replied with a mischievous smile, "In fact the blame lies on you and your comrades." "How" said the Baba, to which the reply was, "Had the ones like Kartar Singh and his comrades not faced the gallows with a smile and others like you had not

been confined in the veritable hell, the Cellular Jail, may be I would not have been here.”

“Whenever I met him, I always saw in him the same traits as Sarabha had in him. Just another Sarabha” concludes the veteran. (From *Jeewan Sangram: Baba’s autobiography*, cited in *Bhagat Singh — The Eternal Rebel*, page 117)

Shri Shiv Verma had written-published *Sansmritiyan* (Reminiscences) in which he had depicted the day-to-day lifestyle of his comrades particularly the martyr heroes, primarily through anecdotes. It was got translated into Punjabi and split into pamphlets subject-wise, and put on sale, which were, then literally devoured by youth. Even to this day, quite a few of its readers of yester years, who are now middle aged, vividly recall one or other of these episodes, a lesson I imbibed since then to intersperse my class teaching as well as my writings with anecdotes.

Be as it may, through this venture of ours, a few youngsters, purely on our own, were able to revive the memories of those stormy days, first time since independence, may be like an oasis in a vast desert.

All this while I made it a point to gather writings in the form of memoirs from veterans, collect photographs and other memorabilia, which I also began sharing with our National Archives since 1973, starting with the photocopy of a Bhagat Singh’s letter in Urdu to one of his friends Amar Nath who was then in USA, which was written during the days when he was on bail in Lahore Dussehra Bomb Case in 1927. This became a two-way exchange from 2001 onwards for which I feel indebted.

The Youth Centre/*Yuvak Kendra* remained hyper-active during late sixties and early seventies, and then by and by, it became non-functional, for causes, both intrinsic and extrinsic.

As for myself, the latter half of my stint as a Lecturer was devoted almost exclusively to my students’ all-round development through physical, cultural activities with my direct participation. Upon my retirement I joined Kurukshetra University for L.L.B., more for the sake of anything better to do than on design.

In law’s arena

I joined as a junior to a high profile criminal lawyer with Punjab and Haryana High Court, Chandigarh, since I had settled here after my retirement; I was assigned the task of crafting grounds of appeal against conviction in murder cases: It entailed mustering of random minutiae from a rigmarole of post-mortem reports, eyewitness accounts and cross-examination to be read between the lines, the recovery memos et al, and to blend all this disparate stuff into a coherent, cogent presentation to dent the prosecution fabric. One long term side-gain was the strategy to avoid *crossing the stream* at a right angle and negotiates it tangentially instead.

The threshold:

In 1996, I read Mr. A.G. Noorani’s path breaking book ‘Trial of Bhagat Singh’, which impelled me to follow his lead in my own style though. Otherwise put, I felt an itch to explore the chinks in the armour of prosecution in historic trials as I was doing in mundane criminal cases. Naturally, my first target was the *judgement* in Bhagat

Singh's case since this genre encompasses every relevant facts and rationale, constituting a self-contained coherent exposition of the entire spectrum of the trial process.

Prima facie, it appeared inconceivable that the judgement of such a high profile trial would not have been published so far: Since Mr. Noorani had profusely cited excerpts from the judgement, I requested him to intimate his source of accessing the judgement; he was kind enough to inform me that he had sourced it from National Archives.

Since due to my limitations it was not possible for me to avail of this facility in near future, I decided to make a start with the *older* Lahore Conspiracy Case judgement. To my good luck the manuscript of that judgement which I was able to access, originally belonged to Bhagat Singh, who had profusely underlined it and also appended his remarks on its text at numerous places. Besides its photocopy, I got the photocopy of the Supplementary case too. Hence, I, along with my co-author Prof. Harinder Singh decided to intersperse the latter in the former at appropriate places; this dovetailing was facilitated by the identical format of both these judgements:—

I. WAR AGAINST KING EMPEROR — Ghadr of 1914-15: A verdict by Special Tribunal

Bhagat Singh's Comments:

Bhagat Singh seems to be endorsing the veracity of the narrative, which covers almost all the dimensions of the *Ghadr* movement. I, too, am also inclined to the same view in the light of the versions of some surviving *Ghadr*ites whom I had met, as also the recount of the events in their autobiographies, which all is all consistent with the essentials detailed in these narratives. The judgement spread over 400 pages, must have been thoroughly read, and pondered over by Bhagat Singh, as indicated by his markings and musings. There are numerous pages on which paras and sentences have been underlined, and of these at least one deserves a mention:

"...Kartar Singh whose ubiquity is remarkable..." (Page 55 of the original), whereas the Special Tribunal's judgement re Bhagat Singh himself reads: "The important feature of the evidence regarding Bhagat Singh is his ubiquity."

Above all, this trait is attributed uniquely to *Kartar* and his *Bhagat* in their respective trials and no one else.

No prize then for guessing as to why "Kartar Singh" figures as 'President' of H.S.R.A. both in the 'Manifesto' and 'Philosophy of the Bomb' both written by Bhagwati Charan Vohra in December 1929 and January 1930 respectively.

There are sundry remarks relating to specifics, and of these the two, which are being reproduced, one relates to Baba Bhakna and the other to Lala Hardial, the founder President and General Secretary of *Ghadr* party respectively.

Re: Baba Bhakna, Part II, Law Points 15: 'Confessions' under the caption: 'Jailor's notes of conversation with Sohan Singh', elaborate disclosures regarding the *Ghadr* movement are cited.

Of these two paragraphs, which have been underscored by Bhagat Singh are reproduced below:

- (i) "On the 2nd November 1914 accused stated that he has great sympathy with Balraj and other accused in Delhi Case and their appeals would not be accepted..."

Significantly, this *Balraj* was a lifer in Delhi – Hardinge Bomb Case, who too was Bhagat Singh's hero and it is this 'Balraj' who figures as 'Army Chief' in H.S.R.A. posters issued after Saunders' murder and Delhi Bomb explosion.

- (ii) "On the 15th November, the jailor intimated to him his willingness to leave Government Service. He advised him that he could do better whilst in service. He advised the Jailor to send boys to America and Germany to learn how to make arms; to understand machinery and to be able to make dynamite..."

It concludes as under:

- (iii) "The general trend of the talk is the same as is disclosed in the evidence regarding the aims and objects of the conspiracy." (Bhagat Singh's comment: Ridiculous)

Re. Lala Hardial, Chapter III:A THE REVOLUTIONISTS IN AMERICA.

- (1) The beginning of the Conspiracy and War:

Hardial in San Francisco. About the same time one Hardial arrived in San Francisco. *about time he had*

This person is a well-known seditionist, a man of moderate position in life, who was awarded a scholarship by the Punjab Government in Oxford, which after enjoying until practically its close he made a show of resigning. *next to the*

He appears while in England to have become imbued with an extraordinarily passionate and unreasoning race-hatred and to have developed into a monomaniac; dangerous because he appears to have possessed a certain power of speech and because he thereafter devoted himself to inoculating others with the same views of intense race-hatred. *quite true.*

He has apparently created an impression that he is a man of intelligence, but our mature opinion is that though he possesses cleverness of a kind, he is either a person of unbalanced mind devoid of intelligence, or an unscrupulous scoundrel, who has no thought for the tools he employs in his campaign of race-hatred. *quite true.*

An aside:

In A.G. Noorani's book, I found one misconception in its introductory note: "It is doubtful if there was any political trial in which the regime's grim determination to 'evict' its political foe from the scene was accompanied by such egregious violations of the norms of justice and was matched by such willing compliance by the judges in that aim as in Bhagat Singh's trial...."

It was not difficult for me to guess that the esteemed author was oblivious of the earlier Lahore Conspiracy Case trial which tried a few hundred *Ghadrites* in an identical dispensation if not worse.

Hence I sent this book to him: Hats off to Mr. Noorani, who, when he re-wrote the introduction to second, (otherwise identical) edition, took note of these crucial trials: Writes he:-

"Bhagat Singh's life and thinking holds lessons for the terrorist and state alike. He grew up in an atmosphere in which, disillusioned with moderates' politics, many a patriot took to revolutionary politics. We owe it to Professors Malwinder Jit Singh and

Harinder Singh a full account of 1914-15 based on the judgement delivered by the Special Tribunal in what were truly the first Lahore Conspiracy Case (*War Against King Emperor...*)

“Bhagat Singh was seven then....”

As for my personal share in this book I endeavoured to make use of my modest legal acumen to write a 20 pages’ note on the scope of Section 121 “Waging of War” in the context of the observations of the Tribunal in both cases, a critique of sorts!

II. FROM LIBERATION OF GURDWARAS TO NATIONAL LIBERATION:

The Babbar Akali Case Judgement: Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich, Dr Gurdev Singh Sidhu.

Another such judgement scanned and profusely marked by Bhagat Singh pertained to Babbar Akali Conspiracy Case 1923-25.

The genesis of this movement was the Gurdwara Reform Movement, or the Akali Movement, when a section amongst them felt constrained to resort to revolutionary means in view of the apparent failure of the moderates in attaining the desired goal, or in any case not soon enough.

Unlike in case the prior judgement, there are no comments by Bhagat Singh on this document but this too is as profusely underlined like the former.

Impact of their perusal on Bhagat Singh

Bhagat Singh having delved deep into these two judgements, got deeply imbued with their ethos, which he articulated in his pen portraits of *Ghadrite* and *Babbar* martyrs, the stuff of his earliest writings; his maiden write-up was about six Babbar Martyrs who were hanged on 27 February 1926 in Lahore Central jail, the day of *Holi*, captioned *Holi ke din khoon ki Chhente* published in Hindi paper *Partap* on 15th March 1926 under the pen name, *Ek Punjabi Yuvak*. The series finally culminated in the publication of the *Phansi Ank* of Hindi journal *Chand* published from Allahabad in which about 40 articles on Martyrs of freedom movement are believed to have been written by Bhagat Singh under sundry pen names, wherein all the available photographs too are exhibited.

Bhagat was truly their *Bhakt*!

Characteristically, Bhagat Singh eulogises and dotes on all of them with equal gusto, be it his associates of HRA, like Bismil, Ashfaq, his role model Sarabha, *Guru* Ram Singh Kuka-Namdhari, a dyed-in-the wool ‘Hindu’, Madan Lal Dhingra, Gurdwara inspired Babbars, early anti British crusaders like Master Amir Chand of Delhi Bomb Case fame.

To cap it all, all through his short life, Bhagat remained *desi* at heart.

To cite an instance, while in his death cell his family members told him that his younger sister (Bibi) Amar Kaur, fondly called *Amro* had been blessed with her first issue, a son; pat came Bhagat Singh suggestion, call him ‘Partap Singh’, the legendary Rajput chief, whose role he had relished playing on the stage during his college days. (Narrated by Jagmohan who himself was born in mid-forties)

III. Tryst with Martyrdom: Trial of Madan Lal Dhingra: Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich, Dr Kuldeep Puri.

Of the three Chapters of this short book, the first “The Context”, is premised on Bhagat Singh’s write-up on the Martyr, published in Punjabi journal *Kirti* in March 1928. He reproduced therein a few stanzas of a Bengali poem by Qazi Nazrul Islam, captioned ‘The Rebel’ translated by Bhagat Singh himself into Punjabi, whose English version reads:–

Me the rebel feels war weary
I too shall rest, when
no cry of the suffering being
would rend the sky.
None shall whine in agony
and the blood thirsty dagger of
the cruel oppressors
shall cease to pierce the innocent;
Nay, would vanish.
Then and only then I would rest in peace.

IV. KOMAGATA MARU — A Challenge to Colonialism: Key Documents: Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich, Dr Gurdev Singh Sidhu

“Constitutional agitations may easily drift into intemperate agitation, intemperate agitation into sedition and sedition into revolutionary methods.” (p. 16)

V. HANGING OF BHAGAT SINGH (Vol. I) — Complete judgement and other documents: Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich, Dr. Gurdev Singh Sidhu

- (A) (F.I.R.) I “That the above mentioned accused along with others have, at Lahore and other places in British India, at various times and occasions commencing from the year 1924...” (Not 1928) (p. 72)
- (B) In the new outfit H.S.R.A., it was the Central Committee comprising seven members, which was entrusted the power to take all-important decisions, with the notable exception of Azad who was designated Army chief. (pp. 100-101)
- (C) “Sukhdev may be said to have been the brains to the Conspiracy while Bhagat Singh its right hand. Sukhdev was an organizer and zealous in recruiting new members and in finding work for them suitable to the capacity of each. He was backward in taking part himself in acts of violence but he must be held nonetheless responsible for those acts to the execution of which his brains and organizing power made important contribution.” (p. 132)
- (D) Bhagat Singh was the active member of the Punjab branch of (HRA) of which Sukhdev was the organizing member...” (p. 158)
- (E) Assembly Bomb Case trial judgement:–
“Sardar Sobha Singh (F/o Writer Khushwant Singh) states that he was looking towards the accused when most people were looking towards the President (Speaker). (Defence) Counsel suggests that it is most unlikely that he should be doing so. There is evidence that over 400 people were there in the public gallery alone, there must be many more in the house. However, tense the

moment have been, it does not appear to me to be a legitimate argument that not one out of those hundreds could be looking elsewhere than at the President. One man out of all these had come forward (volunteered) to say that he was looking at another spot and he has given sound reason for his inattention. He was looking at friends whom he was going to lunch. That witness is a man of very respectable position, an honorary Magistrate; I can see no reason whatever for doubting his word when he says he was looking in a particular direction.” (pp. 39-40)

(F) Lahore High Court: On appeal:

“That Bhagat Singh is a sincere revolutionary I have no doubt, that is to say, he is sincere in the illusion that the world can be improved by destroying the social structure as it now stands and substituting for the rule of law the unrestrained will of the individual”. (P. 55).

VI. The Hanging of Bhagat Singh, Vol. II, Complete Tribunal Proceedings — With Sukhdev’s Remarks: Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich, Rajwanti Mann

It covers a vast spectrum. It was not practicable to cite from the testimony of as many as 457 witnesses.

The authors had, however, made efforts to make it reader friendly by :

- (a) compiling a category wise index of witnesses, into 17 such segments (2 pages)
- (b) compiling an index “who identified whom” (3 pages)
- (c) Appending a note on Sukhdev’s remarks (9 pages)

and besides (d) “an off the record” “Vital Dates”, the dates of birth and death of these revolutionaries.

VII. The Hanging of Bhagat Singh, Vol. III: Confessions, Statements and Other Documents: Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich, Harish Jain (the publisher)

This incorporates the ‘EXHIBITS’, the collateral evidence; the relevant record not having been known to be available in India, was gifted to Punjab Haryana High Court, Chandigarh, in connection with its Golden Jubilee Celebrations by Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan’s Supreme Court, Hon’ble Mr. Rana Bhagwan Das personally.

Earlier, another such file, not available in India till then, was the vernacular (Urdu) version of the 457 PWs’ which too was brought personally by Hon’ble Justice Mr. S.N. Aggarwal — the author of an outstanding book on Andemans “Heroes of Cellular Jail”.

Myself, being the only advocate conversant, both with the case, and Urdu, was designated to improvise the High Court Museum, and by courtesy, was allowed a photocopy of both the documents.

Among the vast plethora of “exhibits”, I am inclined to single out two, namely,

- (i) “The Recovery Memo” — Books etc. recovered from Saharanpur house, which apparently had recently been shifted from Agra centre of the H.S.R.A. On pages 106-110, it lists 125 items out of which about 50 are books on social,

economic, political subjects, including the Rowlatt Committee Report, 1918, books of literature, English version of the prayer “Sukhmani”, from Sikh scripture, a writing of the fifth Sikh Guru Arjan Dev ji, to mention a few.

- (ii) Recovery (2 May 1929) from the house of Sardar Kishan Singh, father of Bhagat Singh at Lahore:

Some of the recovered items: (1) A paper containing two coloured printed photos on which was written *Mewar Gaurawa*, one photo is that of *Virangana* and other of Maharana Pratap. (2) A leaf torn from the *Kirti* magazine, Amritsar which has two photos of Kartar Singh Sarabha, (3) An envelope containing a typed letter in English (Rio de Janero, October 26, 1928) addressed to Bhagat Singh. In the end, it bears the signatures of H.K. and A.S. (probably from his uncle S. Ajit Singh). (4) A bound book in English named, “The Oppression of Poor” by C.F. Andrews.

VIII. History of the Naujwan Bharat Sabha: Comrade Ram Chandra, Editor: Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich.

An outfit, which continues to be equally relevant today with its campaigns against castism, communalism besides involvement of youth in community services.

From organizational point of view, it offers an excellent illustration of the way in which the *Sabha* maintained its distinct identity, despite its being avowedly a public platform of H.S.R.A.

In fact, the President Comrade Ram Chandra himself was not associated with H.S.R.A. at all.

IX: Revolutionaries in Dialogue: Lala Ram Saran Das and Bhagat Singh, Editor: Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich

It relates to ‘Dreamland’ written by the older revolutionary whose Introduction was written by Bhagat Singh in January 1931 while he was in his death cell.

The ‘dialogue’ offers a study in discourse between an avowed atheist, Bhagat Singh and a dyed-in-the wool mystic Ram Saran Das Talwar, a veteran of *Ghadr* movement.

Says Bhagat Singh: “...But this mysticism of the author is by no means ignoble or deplorable. It has its own beauty and charm. The ideas are encouraging. Just look:

“Be a foundation stone obscure,
And on thy breast cheerfully bear.
The architecture vast and huge
In suffering find true refuge.
Envy not the plastered top stone
on which all the worldly praise is thrown”, etc. etc. (p. 3)

Interestingly, the same argument had been employed by Bhagat Singh to console his comrade Shiv Verma in DAV College hostel, Kanpur, who felt dejected because of having been left out of the team selected to effect the forcible release of a Kakori case prisoner, because of Verma’s feeble physique (cited in *Bhagat Singh : The Eternal Rebel*, p. 35).

X. Bhagat Singh: The Eternal Rebel: Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich

A biography assigned to the author by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, in commemoration of Martyr's birth centenary.

- (1) Had not Sukhdev confronted Bhagat Singh in the wake of Central Committee decision (taken in Sukhdev's absence) omitting him from Bomb explosion team, and forcing Bhagat Singh to request for another meeting to reverse the earlier decision. Bhagat Singh would have been deprived of occupying the centre stage, which he did in course of time. (pp. 101-02)
- (2) Bhagat Singh's escape from Lahore (along with Raj Guru) after Saunders' murder, could be effected by Sukhdev with the cooperation of Vohra couple only, whom he was barred from contacting, because of Bhagwati Charan having been under suspicion of being a C.I.D. man.

Bhagwati Charan's intuitive insight, dedication, despite his ownself having been stigmatised by the party, can rarely be paralleled. Similarly Durga Bhabhi's instant willingness to risk her own life and of her dear Shachi to facilitate Bhagat Singh's escape is equally remarkable, to say the least. (vide p. 86).

- (3) "For us a few comrades, armed with crude pistols and ill-devised bombs, the idea of challenging the mighty Empire would have been nothing less than a grand delusion. To be sure none of us had ever entertained such a grotesque notion and we were acutely conscious of the limitations under which we are operating and hence aimed at accomplishing what was expedient and attainable". (p. 149, original source *Yash ki Darohar* by Mahore, pp. 182-85)
- (4) 8th April, 1929 was a watershed for H.S.R.A., when, while not foregoing the pistol and the bomb, became de facto *Satyagrahis* thereafter. (p. 108)
- (5) A day prior to his execution Bhagat Singh desired to have his last meal cooked by the jail sweeper/*Bhangi*, Bogha, whom he used to address as *Bebe* (Mother), since according to Bhagat Singh it was he who had cleaned his toilet after his mother had done it in his infancy.
- (6) According to a C.I.D. report Bhagat Singh is said to have distributed the copies of a pamphlet, 'The Revolutionary' during February 1925 at Lahore, while there were warrants of arrest against him.

So also he is stated to have acted in a *drama* in a political conference held at Gujranwala (ancestral place of the author) in October 1925 also when he was wanted by the police. (p. 58)

- (7) His mail was being censored in 1926. (p. 58)

XI. Chander Shekhar Azad: A Biography (under publication): Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich, Sangram Singh

- (1) "Out of us all" observes Bhagwan Das Mahore, who were led by Azad, none perhaps lacked formal education more than he did; besides, none else among us was nurtured in such abject poverty as he has been and none of his kith or kin had anything to do with values like patriotism, self-denial or sacrifice. But then Martyr Bhagat Singh and the rest of our associates had entrusted him

with leadership of the party to usher in the era of *Inqulab Zindabad*, not by virtue of his armchair book-learning but because of his profound worldly wisdom, intuitive insight, formidable courage and above all his heart felt concern for well being and safety of his comrades. (pp. 14-15)

- (2) Had Azad failed to fire at Chanan Singh, Head Constable, who was chasing Bhagat Singh after Saunders' murder and was just going to grab Bhagat Singh, history would have been vastly different.

This said, according to Vishavnath Vaishampayan, Azad also used to bemoan his killing, saying, "*Bachan* just look at the sharp contrast between the loyalty of an Indian and an Englishman: Fearn (the English Police Inspector) did not pursue the killers, but Chanan Singh defied danger to his life and was killed. (p. 105)

- (3) Azad never fired at himself; he died of a police shot instead. (The last chapter 11, *The Last Fight: No Self Shot*, pp. 187-91)

XII. Bhagwati Bhai Durga Bhabi — A Biography (under publication): Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich

- (1) "The day the story of the extent to which (Bhagwati *Bhai*) was misused and exploited becomes public, no head would fail to bow to the sublime legacy of this low profile backstage hero." — Vishavnath Vaishampayan (Title page) (Close aide and biographer of Azad)
- (2) Sukhdev managed to arrange a meeting of Bhagwati Charan, Durga *Bhabi* along with Sushila *Didi* with Bhagat Singh on 8.4.1929 early morning in Qudisia Garden, Delhi. (p. 60)
- (3) *Bhairvi Geet*: pen name *Bhairav*.

XIII. MUSINGS FROM THE GALLOWS: Autobiography of Ram Prasad Bismil: Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich, Dr. Rajinder Singh.

"But I still appeal humbly to the youth that until most of the countrymen become educated, until they become aware of their duties and the things they should not do, they should not take part, even by mistake, in the revolutionary or conspirational activity. If they have a keen desire to serve the country they should agitate openly otherwise their sacrifice would be of no avail." (p. 97)

XIV. HANGING OF RAM PRASAD BISMIL: JUDGEMENT

A document (exhibit p. 198) recovered from Yogesh Chander Chatterji upon his arrest at Calcutta, on 18 October 1924, which seems to contain minutes of proceedings of a recent meeting of the U.P. Provincial Committee of HRA, in which one of the items of propaganda was to be (D) to preach social revolutionary ideas and communistic principles.

XV: GHADR MOVEMENT: ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS, Vol. II.

(Under publication): Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich, Harish Jain

Judgements of Lahore Conspiracy Cases (Supplementary, II, III and IV), Benares Conspiracy Cases I and II, Burma — Mandley Conspiracy Cases — I and II, and San Francisco Conspiracy Case.

XIV. SOLDIERS IN REVOLT: 1910-1946 (under publication) : Malwinderjit Singh Waraich, Harish Jain

A vast spectrum of such revolts including Singapore Mutiny of February 1915 which was followed by a Court Martial of about 300 soldiers of whom 41 were shot dead in the open (photograph available) and the revolt in 1920 by an Irish Regiment posted at Jalandhar.

XVII. National Gallery of Portraits, Chandigarh: Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich

I have devised 41 digitised panels depicting the panorama of our freedom struggle from 1857-1947, with primary focus on revolutionaries, all over India, through the medium of numerous photos and rare documents, all from my personal collection. They are displayed in National Gallery of Portraits in Sector 17, Chandigarh in the basement on the backside of the Central State Library.

The C.D. of the entire set of panels is available in the P.A. section of National Archives, which can also be procured from me on demand.

A few formulations:—

- a) Bhagat Singh's preeminence as a revolutionary is premised on the collective insights of HSRA: These insights were nurtured by and large, in its Agra phase, during first three months of 1929, when almost all its members remained together, with little of overt activities except bomb making and having access to a rich collection of books and plenty of opportunities for one to one as well as for collective discussions or brain storming sessions.

They drew upon the experiences of the earlier movements and from the books as well and appear to have minutely analysed their earlier action namely Saunders' murder.

- b) That the role, which Bhagat Singh was able to play was largely due to his unique personal traits, yet subject to fortuitous happenings like Azad's shooting Chanan Singh and Sukhdev's last moment intervention before Assembly action.
- c) That according to Bhagat Singh himself, this fight neither started with them nor was going to end with them, as mentioned in the letter to Punjab Governor written on 20 March 1931.
- d) That while studying Bhagat Singh, adequate attention has not been paid to his lifestyle such as his habits, daily routine, personal equations, which do have their own relevance.
- e) That scant attention has been paid to the study of judicial records, which are by and large truthful and their perusal could shatter many of the myths, which has come to be woven around these heroes.

A vital gap which yet remains to be filled in this regard are the proceedings before the Special Magistrate, which started on 10th July 1929 and concluded on 3rd May 1930. What makes it much more important is the fact that the revolutionaries actively participated in this phase of trial and had been asking leading questions from the important approvers like Jai Gopal during cross-examination.

This was, however, not the case regarding their trial before the Special Tribunal in which they practically remained absent.

My efforts to obtain a copy of the former, have failed.

Significantly, all of them had studied the Rowlett Report very thoroughly though it was official version of the earlier movements. In fact, Kakori veteran Ram Krishan

Khatri, who was enrolled in H.R.A. by Azad, had been made to read this Report to motivate him to join the party (*Azad's Biography*, 50-51)

- f) That his qualities of head have been over-emphasized at the cost of qualities of heart which in case of every revolutionary have an equally fundamental significance.
- g) That Bhagat Singh can be fully understood only by having some insights into the ethos of earlier revolutionary movements. I still wonder if for Bhagat Singh the study of *Ghadr* Movement and the Babbar Akali Movement was so important, how the same can be ignored by those who seek to understand and interpret him.

Finally, I confess that my heart continues to beat more for the unknown heroes like the *Ghadrites* and I am now going back to my pet pursuit.

Amen

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