

*Nehru Bal Pustakalaya*

# Hangged for their Patriotism

R K Tandon

*Illustrations*

Arup Kumar Gupta



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## Preface

On 10 May 1857 there was a spark of revolution in India against the British rule. It was crushed because it was not organised. Thirty years later, organisations were formed to fight against the British imperialism in India. India got independence in 1947, exactly ninety years later and after lot of sacrifices by Indians. While Mahatma Gandhi fought the British Empire with his noble method of *Ahimsa* or non-violence, there were revolutionaries who gave their lives for the cause of independence, fighting the British Empire. We should not forget the sacrifice of these revolutionaries who accepted death whole-heartedly without any grudge against anybody and set an example for others.

This book is about the famous young revolutionaries who went to the gallows laughing and singing. Nothing could deter them from their committed task; neither money nor the tearful affection of their family members. They proved their mettle and left no stone unturned in bringing freedom to India. I hope that the present generation will learn from the sacrifices of these handful youngsters.

My father, famous writer and freedom fighter, Late P. D. Tandon helped and guided me in writing this book. He was a journalist-cum-author of repute. His name appears on forty-nine books written in five Indian languages. Besides, all leading newspapers of the country have published his articles.

I take this opportunity to thank Anuradha Tandon and Rohit Tandon who made special efforts in helping collect and assimilate the material for preparation of this book. My gratitude to Shiv Verma, Vyathit Hriday, D.R. Toliwal, Harish Pankaj, Manmath Rai Gupta, Manmohan Kaur and many others for their invaluable help.

I have used references from the old issues of several newspapers like Amar Ujala, Bharat, Dainik Jagran, Amrit Prabhat, Dharamyug and Swatantra Bharat. I am obliged to these newspapers. To maintain authenticity and credibility of the book, references have been verified from various publications of the Government of India and the Uttar Pradesh State Government publications.

Although, swarmed with difficulties, I could wade through them for the noble cause of patriotism which the personalities happened to instill in me and kept it alive until the task was complete. If this book manages to rouse even a flicker of patriotism in one child, I shall feel that my purpose has been served.

March 2009

एकः सूते सकलम् R.K. Tandon  
Lucknow

Dedicated to  
my wife



**Bimla Tandon**

who always inspired and guided me  
till the last days of her life.



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## BHAGAT SINGH

Born to Become a Martyr

It was the evening of 23 March 1931. A peculiar silence had engulfed the Central Jail of Lahore. The Government and the police officials were all attention around the gallows. Three persons were to be hanged. In this grim atmosphere, entered three men in the prime of youth. They seemed eager to be hanged. These young men were Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev.

At exactly thirty minutes past seven in the evening, the jail bell struck and the three men moved towards the gallows singing patriotic songs. Bhagat Singh stopped in front of the British Deputy Commissioner and said, "Magistrate Sahib, you are very lucky. You are going to witness that the Indian revolutionaries are not afraid of death. *Inquilab, Zindabad.*" All three of them put the hanging noose around their necks and the hangman covered their faces. The jailor signalled by waving his handkerchief and the hangman pulled the lever. Within seconds everything was finished and what remained were the dead bodies of the three martyrs.

Bhagat Singh was born in a Sikh family to Sardar Kishan Singh Sandhu and Vidyavati in the village Banga in Lyallpur district of Punjab (now in Pakistan), on 28 September 1907. On the same day his father along with his two brothers, was released from the jail. Bhagat Singh's grandmother observed that the newly born was lucky because on his arrival in the world, her three sons had been released from the jail. She named him *Bhagon Wala* (with luck). But later his name was changed to Bhagat Singh as we know today.

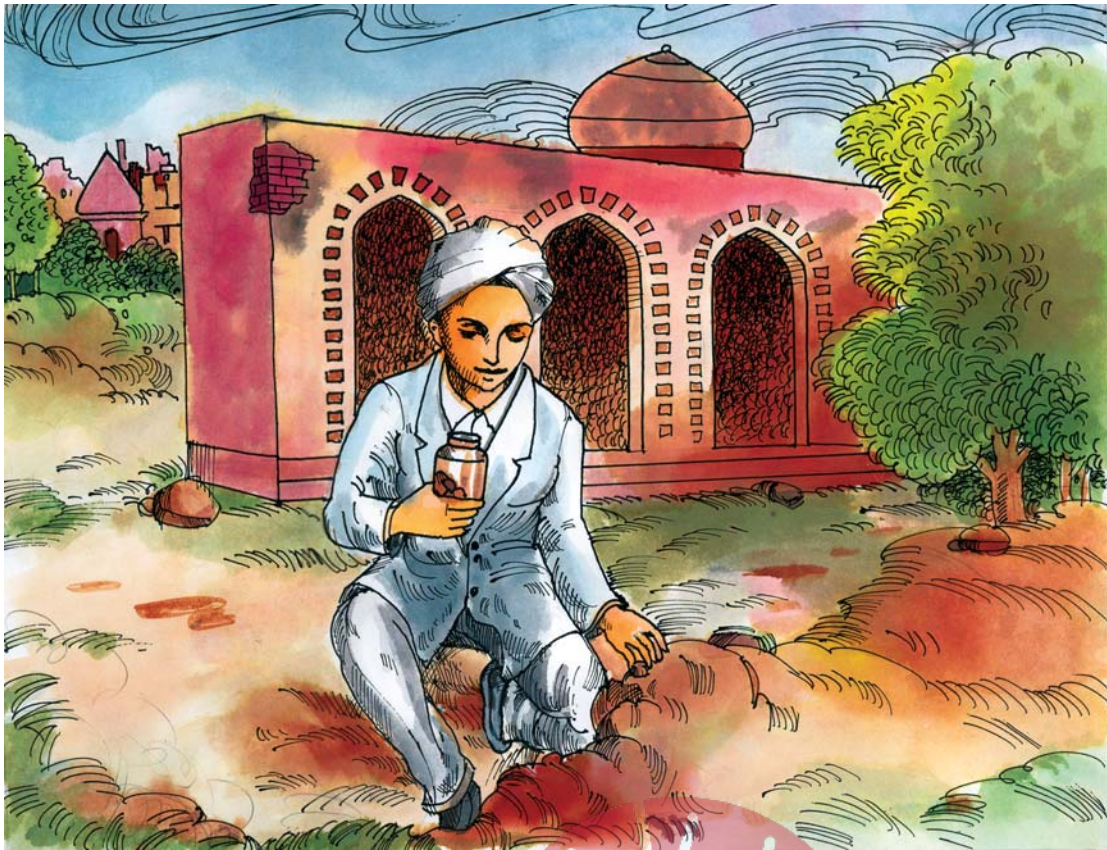
One of Bhagat Singh's uncles, Swaran Singh once had been sent to prison by the British. He fell ill while in jail and his health deteriorated. Later, he was released but there was no improvement in his health and ultimately he died. The other uncle, Ajit Singh left the country after coming out from jail. Bhagat Singh's aunts used to lament over the miseries of their husbands. Seeing this, the young Bhagat would bravely say, "Don't weep, aunt. When I grow up, I will drive out the British and bring back my uncles. I will fight with the British till the end who are responsible for my uncle's death and miseries." On hearing the heroic words of the little boy, the weeping women often forgot their sorrow.

When he was in fourth standard, Bhagat Singh asked his classmates, what they wished to become on growing up. Each boy gave a different answer. Someone said that he wanted to become a doctor, someone wanted to be a Government officer, while some wanted to become a merchant. Bhagat Singh said that he would drive the British out of India. Thus patriotism flowed in his veins from the early days of his childhood.

Bhagat Singh was only twelve years old when the Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place in Amritsar, where General Dyer had ordered killings of hundreds of people who had gathered for a revolutionary meeting. British soldiers opened fire and continued for quite some time. There was no way of escape for the people. Hundreds of persons—men, women and little children—died and thousands were injured! Bhagat Singh's young mind was deeply disturbed by this event. The next day he did not return home after the school hours. Instead of going to school, Bhagat Singh went straight to the place of the tragedy. He entered the ground and filled a bottle with mud, which was still wet with the blood of the innocent Indians. He returned home with the bottle in his hand and took oath to take revenge with the British!

Bhagat Singh finished his primary education at Banga. Thereafter, he went to Lahore to join a secondary school. His childhood witnessed the stories of exploits of his uncle and father. The Ghadar Movement left a deep impact on his mind. Martyr Kartar Singh Sarabha had become his idol. The desire to fight for the country's freedom grew strong in him.





In 1923, Bhagat Singh won an essay competition organised by the Punjab Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. This grabbed the attention of members of the Punjab Hindi Sahitya Sammelan including its General Secretary, Professor Bhim Sen Vidyalkar. At this young age, Bhagat Singh could quote from Punjabi literary works and discussed the problems of Punjab. While in his teens, he started studying at the National College in Lahore. He did not confine himself to the books. He started gaining knowledge about the revolutionaries and the freedom movement. The more he learnt about revolution, the greater grew his desire to participate in it. He established contact with the revolutionary party of Bengal, which was the epicentre of revolution. Its leader was Sachindra Nath Sanyal and every member of the party had to accept the condition that at the call of its leader, they would be ready to quit home for the cause of revolution.

Bhagat Singh's grandmother insisted that he should get married. So a girl was chosen. To escape an early marriage, he left home on the day when the formal decision was to be taken and left back a letter to his folks, "The aim of my life is to fight for India's freedom. I don't wish for worldly pleasures. At the time of my *Upanayanam* (the initiation ceremony among the Hindus), my uncle had taken a sacred promise from me; I promised him to sacrifice myself for the sake of the country. Accordingly, I am now going out to serve the country."

Bhagat Singh came to Kanpur. He started earning by selling newspapers. There he came to know about a famous revolutionary Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, whose newspaper *Pratap* was the voice of freedom struggles in India. Vidyarthi gave him a job at his press. Gradually, Bhagat Singh came into contact with Batukeshwar Dutt, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Ramprasad Bismil and Ashfaq Ullah. He joined Hindustan Republican Association. Later, Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad and others changed the organisation's name to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association to give it a socialistic and secular colour. Then in 1926, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and others formed the *Naujawan Bharat Sabha*, a militant youth organisation to propagate socialist ideas, preach the necessity of direct action against British rule and serve as a recruiting centre for the Party.

When Mahatma Gandhi started the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920, Bhagat Singh had become an active participant at the age of thirteen. He had great hopes that Gandhi would bring freedom to India. In 1922, the Congress organised a procession in Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur District. To express their anger towards the brutality of the police, the over-enthusiastic mob locked up twenty-two policemen together in the police station and set it on fire. All the policemen were killed. Before this, similar acts of violence had also occurred in Bombay and Madras. Mahatma Gandhi was agonised as he was a follower of non-violence and they were attaining freedom through violence. He immediately called off the nationwide movement. Bhagat Singh was very much disappointed at this. According to him, it was unjustified to give up a movement just because twenty-two persons had died. He said that none of these supporters of non-violence

raised any objection when the British Government hanged the nineteen-year-old revolutionary, Kartar Singh Sarabha. He failed to understand the logic of non-violence. Such thoughts weakened Bhagat Singh's faith in non-violence and Non-Cooperation Movement. He went on firmly believing that armed revolution was the only practical way of winning freedom.

Bhagat Singh read the teachings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Vladimir Lenin and believed that, such large and diverse population of India could only survive under a socialist regime. He deeply studied the lives of the revolutionaries of Ireland, Italy and Russia. The more he read, the deeper grew his belief that war alone could bring freedom to the country. He was convinced that the youth of the land should be inspired to turn to revolution and the very thought of fighting for freedom should thrill the young men.

The activities of Bhagat Singh had caught the eye of the police. Spies carefully monitored his movements. Once, as he was just leaving the train from Amritsar, the spies followed him. Trying to escape from the eagle's eyes he travelled to Lahore. When the train reached Lahore, he was caught by the police and sent to the Lahore Fort Jail. Bhagat Singh did not know why he was arrested. A few days earlier, someone had thrown a bomb on a procession during the *Dussehra* festival. It killed some people. The police suspected that Bhagat Singh was also involved with the revolutionaries in the 'Dussehra Bomb Blast' at Lahore. In the Lahore Jail, he was tortured and beaten severely. An official conducting the 'Kakori case' inquiry also reached there to extract some information from Bhagat Singh, but he had to return empty-handed. Ultimately, the Government could not prove him guilty, as he was actually not involved in the conspiracy and he was released. The photograph of 'chained' Bhagat Singh, with his long hair, sitting on a bare cot is representing the young man's sufferings.

The activities of the revolutionaries in the country were increasing day by day. Bhagat Singh went to Calcutta to learn to make bombs. There he bought as many bombs as he needed. He also learnt from a revolutionary, Jatindra Nath Das, the art of making bombs.

In 1928, the British Government created a commission under Sir John Simon to make report on the current political situation in India. It was referred to as the Simon Commission. The Indian political parties boycotted

the Commission because it did not include a single Indian as its member. On 30 October 1928, the Simon Commission reached Lahore. They were greeted with black flags and a huge demonstration was held against them, under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai. The police lathi-charged on the procession indiscriminately and a *lathi* hit Lalaji. He was seriously injured and died a few days later. As the Superintendent of Police, J A Scott had given the orders for the 'lathi-charge'. Bhagat Singh wanted to take revenge with him and a plan was made accordingly. The police station was surveyed for several days. Foolproof arrangements were made to execute the plan. On 17 December 1928, Bhagat Singh and Rajguru stood at some distance from the gate of the police station. Jaigopal stood near the gate with his cycle in such a position as to show that he was repairing its cycle's chain. Bhagat Singh and Rajguru had to act on the signal of Jaigopal. Chandra Shekhar Azad also stood at a distance near the boundary of D.A.V. College, with a pistol. It was decided that after completing their task, Bhagat Singh and Rajguru would move



towards the hostel side and Azad's job was to stop anyone obstructing the escape of these two young men.

The Deputy Superintendent of Police, J P Saunders came out from the office. Jaigopal gave the signal and Rajguru fired on the forehead of the officer. He fell down along with his motorcycle. Bhagat Singh also fired at Saunders thrice and then both of them rushed towards the hostel. A head constable, Chanan Singh, tried to follow them but was shot dead by Azad. In fact the revolutionaries had originally planned to kill the Police Superintendent, J A Scott. By mistake Jaigopal identified Saunders as Scott. However, it was later revealed that Lala Lajpat Rai was actually injured by the *lathi* blows of Saunders. After the murder of Saunders, there was a tight security in Lahore. Bhagat Singh shaved his beard and left Lahore by a train in the guise of an American, with Durga Bhabhi as his *mem sahib* and Rajguru as their servant.

In 1927-28, the Government wanted to introduce 'Labour Bill' to crush the labour movement in the country. Various political parties along with the public were opposing this Bill. Bhagat Singh decided to express his opposition by throwing a bomb and pamphlets in the Central Assembly. On 29 April 1929, during the proceedings of the House, he and Batukeshwar Dutt threw a bomb in the Assembly. Pandemonium prevailed and the members ran here and there. In a few minutes the House was almost empty and the speaker of the House ducked near his chair. Only three persons remained glued to their seats — Moti Lal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. They were standing on their seats like statues. And in the visitors' gallery two young men were raising the slogans of *Inquilab Zindabad* and throwing pamphlets. Had these young men tried to run away, they could have done it easily, but they preferred to stay there.

The bomb neither killed nor injured anyone; Singh and Dutt claimed that this was deliberate on their part, a claim substantiated both by British forensic investigators who found that the bomb was not powerful enough to cause injury, and by the fact that the bomb was thrown away from people. Singh and Dutt gave themselves up for arrest after the bomb. He and Dutt were sentenced to 'Transportation for Life' for the bombing on 12 June 1929.

Shortly after his arrest and trial for the Assembly bombing, the British

came to know of his involvement in the murder of J P Saunders. Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were charged with the murder. Bhagat Singh decided to use the court as a medium to publicise his views on the cause for the independence of India. He admitted his involvement in the murder and made many anti-British statements during the trial.

While in jail, Bhagat Singh and other prisoners launched a hunger strike advocating for the rights of prisoners and undertrials. The reasons for the strike were differentiation. The British murderers and thieves were treated better than Indian political prisoners. During this hunger strike that lasted for 115 days and ended with the British succumbing to his wishes, he gained much popularity among the Indian masses.

After the trial, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were awarded death sentence on 7 October 1930. Bhagat Singh's father sent a mercy petition for his son. Bhagat Singh did not like it and wrote a letter to his father, in which he said, "I know you have sacrificed your whole life for the independence of the country, but I cannot understand why you have shown this weakness at this crucial hour. My life is not as valuable as you think. For me life is not so important as to sacrifice values and principles. My other colleagues are also there who will also meet the same fate. We all stand together. I do not care as to what price I have to pay for our joint action."

On 3 March 1931, the family members of Bhagat Singh came to meet him in the jail. This was their last meeting and all were very depressed. But Bhagat Singh was meeting everyone with a smiling face. He told his mother, "Do not come to take my body because you will not be able to hold back your tears and people will say that Bhagat Singh's mother is weeping." He laughed so loudly that all the inmates and officials of the jail were equally astonished.

On 23 March 1931, Bhagat Singh was reading the biography of Lenin, when an officer of the jail came and said, "*Sardarji*, the time of your death sentence has come." He replied, "Wait. A revolutionary is meeting another revolutionary." And then after a while he said, "I am ready now."

He was hanged at 7.33 p.m. एकः सूतं सकलम्



## RAJGURU

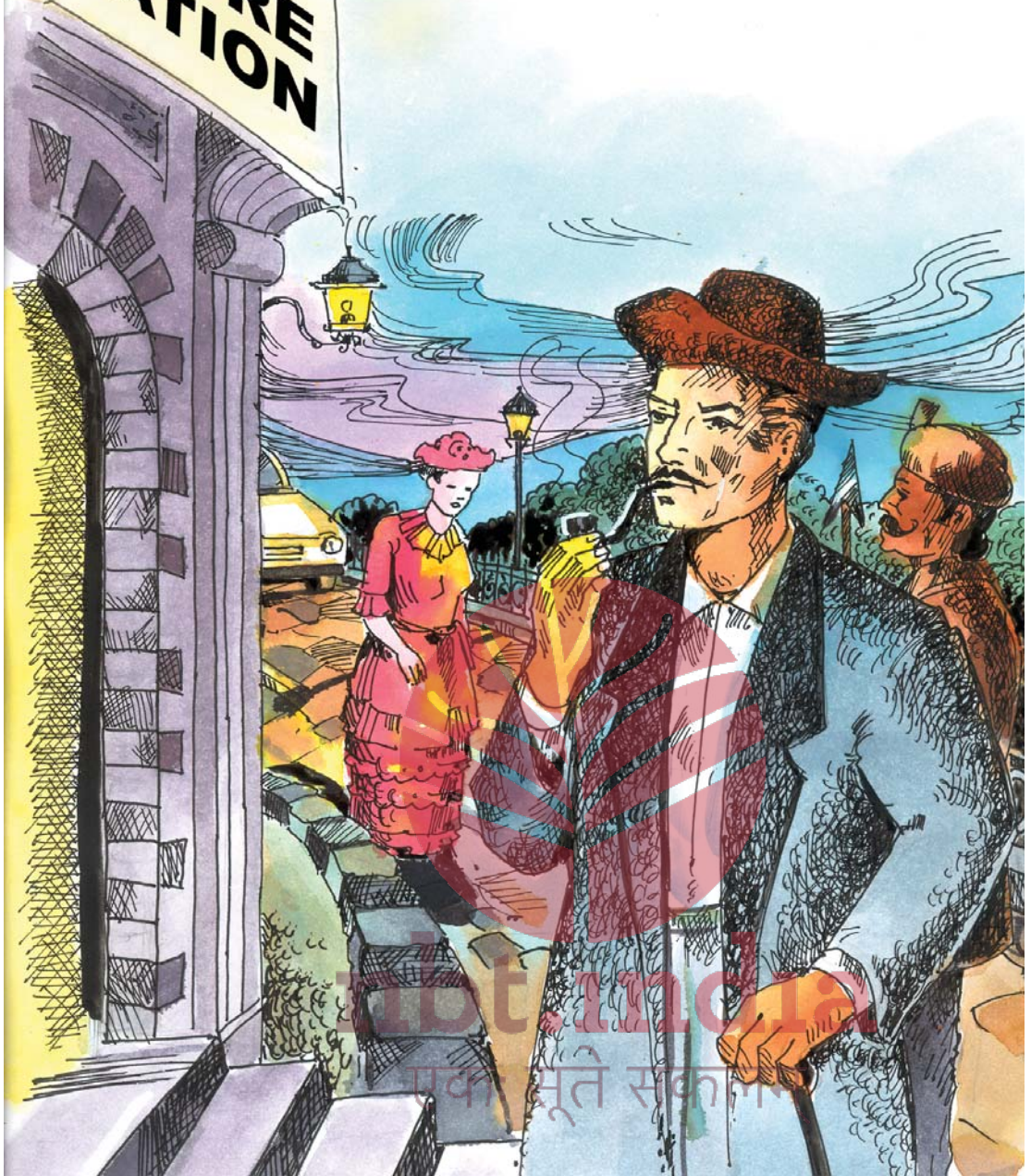
### A Fighter Who Killed Saunders

It was yet another busy day in Lahore, on 17 December 1928, when Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad and Rajguru came with loaded pistols and started moving towards the police station. Bhagat Singh and Azad were on cycles while Rajguru was on foot. Another accomplice, Jaigopal was ahead of them, with a cycle to keep a watch on the Superintendent who was to come out of the police station.

Bhagat Singh and Rajguru positioned themselves near the police station and Azad stood at the gate of the nearby D. A. V. College with a loaded pistol. Jaigopal stood in front of the police station gate pretending to mend his cycle. As soon as the British officer came out of the gate on his motorcycle, Jaigopal signalled and Rajguru fired. The officer fell down and Bhagat Singh fired a few more rounds of bullets at him. The three of them tried to move away from the scene, but a *Havaldar*, Chanan Singh chased them with his rifle. Azad was watching all this from behind a pillar. He realised that the pistols of both Bhagat Singh and Rajguru were empty. He shot at the Havaldar with his *mauzer* gun, and saved his companions. Chanan died immediately and all of them were able to escape from the scene.

Earlier, on 30 October 1928 Deputy Superintendent, J P Saunders 'lathi-charged' a peaceful demonstration against the Simon Commission, in which Lala Lajpat Rai was seriously injured. A few days later, on 17 November,

# LAHORE STATION



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he succumbed to his injuries. The entire country was stunned and aghast at this incident. During the funeral procession of Lala Lajpat Rai, the people raised slogans of revenge. Rajguru, Bhagat Singh and their friends vowed that they would kill Lalaji's killer. On 17 December, they took revenge and put to shame the world's biggest and mightiest empire by shooting Saunders.

The news of Saunders' assassination spread like a wild fire and the police as well as the CID sprang into action. All the hotels, *dharmshalas*, market places and railway stations were searched to nab the so-called 'culprits', but without any success. Rajguru, Bhagat, Azad and other revolutionaries remained in hiding in Lahore itself but soon it was decided that they should move to a safer place out of Lahore.

One evening, a big American car stopped in front of the Lahore railway station. The door of the car was opened by an Indian attendant and out came a well-dressed and handsome 'American', with a stick in his hand and a cigar between his lips. A pretty *mem sahib* followed him. They went onto the platform, which was quite crowded and full of policemen and the CID in plain clothes. A *sadhu* (ascetic) was also seen on the platform. The 'American' and his 'wife' moved towards the first class compartment of a Calcutta bound train and the attendant went towards the third class compartment. Soon the train left for Calcutta. The handsome 'American' was in fact Bhagat Singh, who had shaved off his beard and the beautiful lady was Durga Bhabhi. The attendant was none other than Rajguru. Chandra Shekhar Azad, in the garb of a *sadhu* had also boarded the train. Thus, these dedicated sons of Mother India were able to dodge the British authorities.

Shivram Hari 'Rajguru' was born in Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh on 24 August 1908. His father Hari Rajguru belonged to Poona. 'Rajguru' was the title of his family. His parents expired when he was only six years old. His elder brother, Dinkar Hari 'Rajguru' took care of him. Shivram Hari 'Rajguru' was admitted to a Marathi school for his primary education. Rajguru, however, was more interested in sports rather than studies. In 1924, he left his home without telling anybody. That time he had only nine paise in his pocket. He travelled 130 km on foot and reached Nasik. After some time, he continued his journey, often on foot, and sometimes by train.

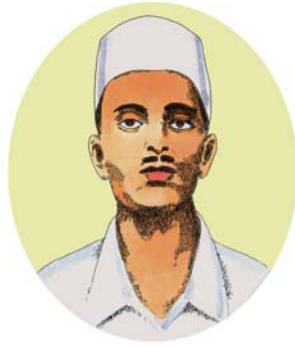
Finally, he reached Kashi (Varanasi) via Jhansi, Kanpur and Lucknow. In Kashi, he stayed at Ahilya Ghat, on the banks of River Ganga for some days and got admission in a Sanskrit school. After completing his education, he secured a job in a primary school. It was here that he came in contact with a sub-editor Muneshwar Awasthi and became a member of a revolutionary organisation.

Rajguru was a man of strong character and was quite decisive also. He performed his duties sincerely and to the best of his capacity. In his revolutionary party, he was considered a very reliable person and was a very good and capable organiser. He organised his units in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Punjab with great ability. He could go without food for many days but ensured that his comrades were never hungry and took proper care of them.

In order to make his organisation strong, Rajguru wanted to increase the membership of his unit. He used to motivate people, narrating the incident of the assassination of Saunders. Somehow, a CID agent, Sharat Keskar, established friendship with Rajguru. At this time, Rajguru had planned to assassinate the Governor of Bombay at the Governor's Cup competition, Poona Race Course. But he could not execute his plan, as he was unable to get close to the Governor. Keskar betrayed him. After the murder of Saunders, the police had spread their dragnet all over the country. On 30 September 1928, their information led them to Poona, where they arrested Shivram Rajguru, in a motor garage. In the court of law Rajguru was charged with murder of Saunders, along with Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev.

23 March 1931 was the fateful day when Rajguru was to be hanged along with Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev. As the jail authorities came to his cell in the evening, he stated, "Our time to die has come." As the sun set in the horizon, the three heroic comrades were hanged for the cause of their motherland, and became immortal.

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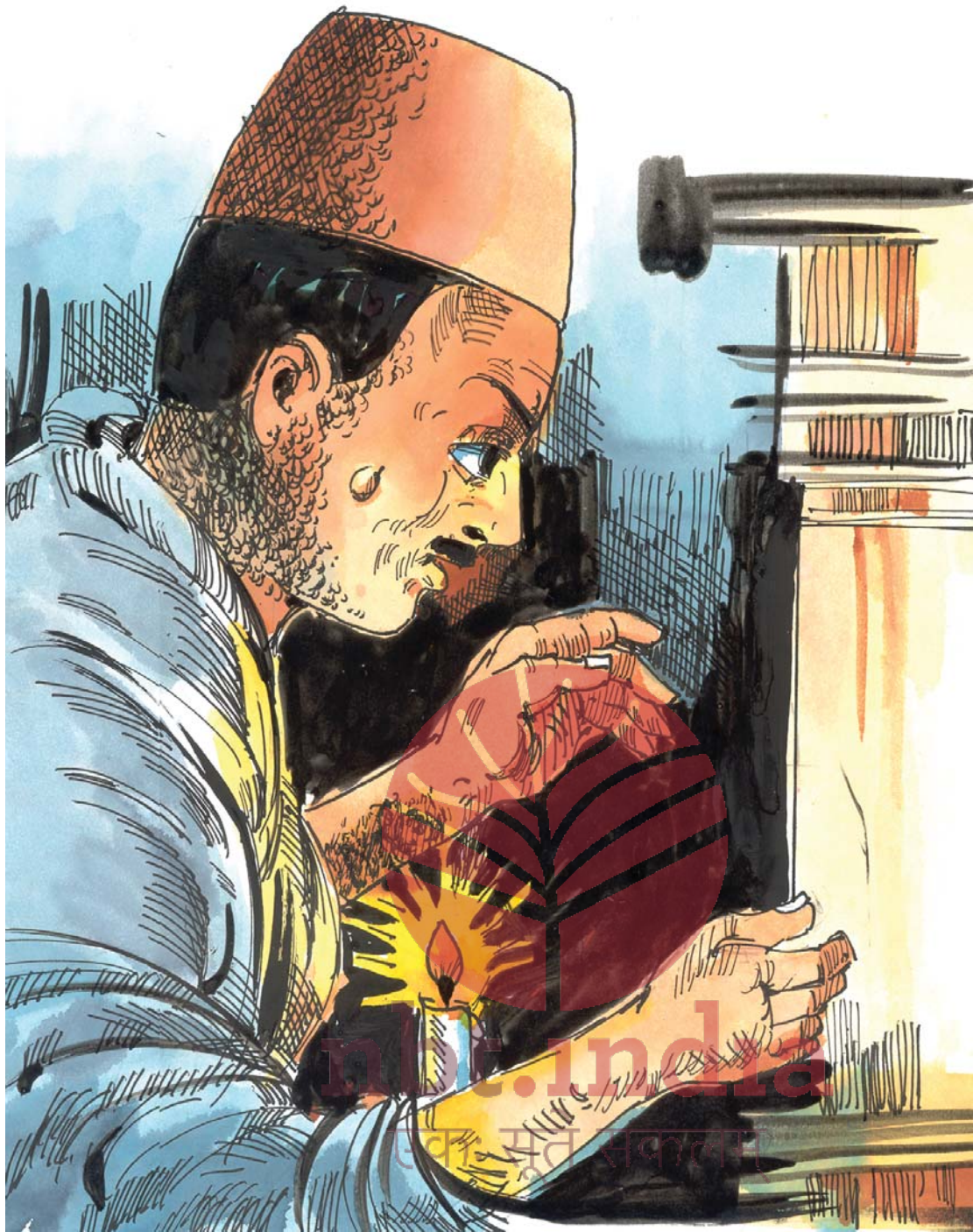
## SUKHDEV

### A Rustic Revolutionary

In the history of India's revolution, Sukhdev has a special place. In the Lahore Conspiracy case he was declared accused along with Bhagat Singh and Rajguru and was later hanged with them. He believed that through armed revolution, the British could be driven out of the country and the Indians could be independent. For this purpose he devoted his whole life.

This great revolutionary and colleague of Bhagat Singh was born on 15 May 1907 in Lyallpur, Punjab (now in Pakistan). His father Ram Lal Thapar died three months before his birth. His uncle Lala Achint Ram brought him up. Another uncle of his, Lala Anant Ram was a national leader and at the time of Sukhdev's birth he was facing conviction under the marshal law. Sukhdev's early education took place in Lyallpur. At the age of five he got admission in Arya High School. In 1922, he passed his High School exams. After that he went to Lahore for further studies. But his heart was somewhere else. He was a revolutionary and in Lahore he came into contact with another revolutionary, Bhagat Singh. Both were the students of D.A.V. College Lahore. They joined hands with several other young men and formed a group, which later became an organisation. Chandra Shekhar Azad, Jatindra Nath Das and Sachindra Nath Sanyal were the guiding forces behind the organisation. This organisation was very active in Punjab that made the British Government nervous and alert.

Both Sardar Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev formed *Naujawan Bharat Sabha* at Lahore. Its main objective was to give political education to young men



so that the message of revolution travelled fast. Initially Bhagat Singh was its leader and later this work was given to Sukhdev. Sukhdev worked very well. He brought raw material from different sources for a bomb factory. At this time, he was only twenty years old.

Sukhdev loved Hindi language though it was not his mother tongue. He tried to learn it and later became a campaigner of Hindi. He used to teach Hindi to his friends and tried to explain its importance to them. In the revolutionary group, Sukhdev was called 'Villager', because he was a very simple man. His behaviour, his lifestyle and dressing sense were just like village-folk. He was an ordinary man with an extraordinary outlook.

On one hand, he was a cheerful man and even small matters made him laugh heartily just like an innocent person. On the other hand, Sukhdev's silence was disturbing. It seemed that some severe pain inside his heart was hurting him emotionally and for hours together he used to ponder over something or the other. The smile on his face showed his contempt over social evils, conservatives and differences of political opinions. Sukhdev was one of the senior most leaders and an active member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. He started study circles at the National College (Lahore) in order to delve into India's past as well as to scrutinise the finer aspects of the Russian Revolution.

Sukhdev was a devoted man. If he wanted to do something then nothing could change his decision. When he was a student and had no connection with the revolutionary party he had got tattooed the word *Om* on his hand. But later, this symbol became a prominent identification and he wanted to remove it. In those days, in Agra, nitric acid was used for making bombs. Without telling anybody he put a lot of acid on the tattooed-word *Om*. By the evening he got plenty of burn marks at that place and he got fever but he did not disclose this to anybody and behaved normally as if nothing happened. Chandra Shekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh were very angry with him, when they came to know about this incident. Laughingly, Sukhdev said, "The symbol of identification will be destroyed and I would be able to realise the capacity of acid." After some time when the injury healed, some remains of the tattoo were still there on his hand. He decided to remove it

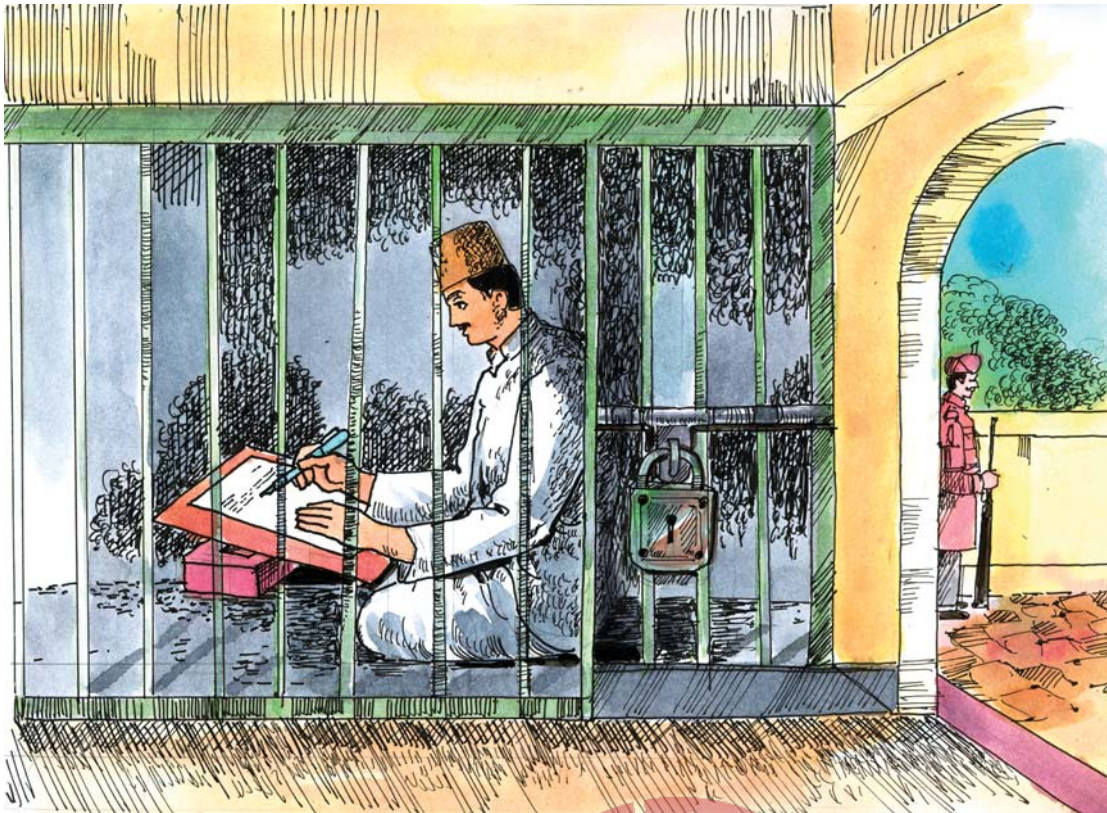
also and for this he put a lighted candle below his hand to burn the skin. This caused him severe pain and injury.

Sukhdev was not present in the meeting of the Central Committee in which it was decided to throw a bomb in the Delhi Assembly. Bhagat Singh pleaded that he should be sent for this mission but the members did not agree with him because the Punjab police was on his trail for the murder of Saunders. The Central Committee decided to send two other persons for this work. After two or three days when Sukhdev came to know about this he vehemently protested the decision. He believed that only Bhagat Singh could explain the political philosophy of bomb throwing, if he was arrested. He discussed the matter with Bhagat Singh and asked him to execute the plan but when the Central Committee refused to give permission to Bhagat Singh he again discussed the matter with him. Looking at his adamant attitude, the Committee had to change its decision. Sukhdev left the same evening for Lahore without meeting anybody. Personally he had a great affection for Bhagat Singh but for the sake of idealism he had to sacrifice his dearest friend and in a way he was instrumental for sending Bhagat Singh to the jaws of death.

After the Assembly Bomb episode, Sukhdev and other members continued to do the party work. He established a bomb factory with the help of Yashpal and other colleagues. After some time the police located this bomb factory and Sukhdev was arrested.

Sukhdev also participated in the 1929 Prison Hunger Strike to protest against the inhuman treatment meted out to the inmates. During the period of trial he was indifferent towards his case because he was not expecting justice from the enemy's court. On 23 March 1931, Sukhdev was hanged at Lahore jail along with his dear friends Bhagat Singh and Rajguru.

Sukhdev wrote a letter to Mahatma Gandhi just prior to his hanging, protesting against the latter's disapproval of revolutionary tactics. This letter throws light on the disparities between the two major schools of thought among the Indian freedom fighters. Gandhiji was negotiating with the Government for the release of political prisoners not convicted of violence. On the other side, he was also appealing to the revolutionaries



to stop their activities, as he believed that freedom could not be achieved through violence. The letter was published in 'Young India' on 23 April 1931, after the execution of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. The letter reads as:

Most Gracious Mahatma Ji,

Recent reports show that, since the successful termination of your peace negotiations, you have made several public appeals to the revolutionary workers to call off their movement at least for the present and give you a last chance to try your non-violent cult.... The Congress is bound by its Lahore resolution to carry on the struggle relentlessly till the Complete Independence is achieved. In face of the resolution, the peace and compromise is nothing but a temporary truce which only means a little rest to organise better forces on a larger scale for the next

struggle... as is evident from the very name — The Hindustan Socialist Republican Party — the revolutionaries stand for the establishment of the Socialist Republic which is not a half-way house. They are bound to carry on the struggle till their goal is achieved and their ideal is consummated. But they would be quite apt to change their tactics according to the changing circumstances and environment.

Revolutionary struggle assumes different shapes at different times. It becomes sometimes open, sometimes hidden, sometimes purely agitational and sometimes a fierce life-and-death struggle. In the circumstances, there must be special factors, the consideration of which may prepare the revolutionaries to call off their movement... Since your compromise you have called off your movement and consequently all of your prisoners have been released. But, what about the revolutionary prisoners. Dozens of Ghadar Party prisoners imprisoned since 1915, are still rotting in jails; inspite of having undergone the full terms of their imprisonments scores of martial law, prisoners are still buried in these living tombs, and so are dozens of Babbar Akali prisoners. Deogarh, Kakori, Machhua Bazar and Lahore Conspiracy Case prisoners are amongst those numerous who are still locked behind the bars. More than half a dozen conspiracy trials are going on at Lahore, Delhi, Chittagong, Bombay, Calcutta and elsewhere. Dozens of revolutionaries are absconding and amongst them are many females. More than half a dozen prisoners are actually waiting for their executions. What about all these people?

The three Lahore Conspiracy Case condemned prisoners, who have luckily come into prominence and who have acquired enormous public sympathy, do not form the bulk of the revolutionary party. Their fate is not the only consideration before the party. As a matter of fact their executions are expected to do greater good than the commutation of their sentences.... Therefore we request you either to talk to some revolutionary leaders, or to stop these appeals.... Hope you will kindly consider the above request and let your view be known publicly.

Yours,  
One of the Many





## RAMPRASAD BISMIL

### Mastermind Behind Kakori Conspiracy

Ramprasad Bismil was a great leader of the revolutionary movement in India. He had great love and dedication for independence. He enjoyed various activities of the freedom movement and was not afraid of anything. No one could actually match his bravery, devotion and sacrifice. He was excellent in inspiring youth to follow him on the path of revolution against British. He was a revolutionary in the mould of Mazzini and Garibaldi and was often compared to these revolutionaries of the Western countries.

Bismil was born on 11 June 1897 in the district of Shahjahanpur, in Uttar Pradesh. His ancestors belonged to the Thomarghar area of Gwalior State. His father Muralidhar used to work in a district court of the city and had come to Shahjahanpur for the purpose of employment. Despite shortage of money he had arranged for his son's studies. First, Bismil was admitted in a middle school and later in the Mission School to study English. Shahjahanpur was the centre of Bismil's activities. He was the darling of the family. When he was in the seventh standard, his father started teaching him Hindi. He was also sent to a *Moulvi* to learn Urdu. Then onwards he developed a habit of reading Urdu novels. He was also a religious-minded person.

A gentleman, Munshi Indrajeet was impressed by the style of young Ramprasad's worship of God. He taught Ramprasad *Sandhya-Vandana* (the traditional prayers). He told him relevant things about the Arya Samaj. Ramprasad read the 'Sathyartha Prakash' written by the great sage Swami

Dayanand. This book influenced him deeply. It showed him the way to a brave life. Realising the importance of *Brahmacharya* (not seeking pleasures of the body), Ramprasad practiced it in word, thought and deed. He gave up the evening meal and avoided savoury and sour dishes and the use of salt. The practice of Brahmacharya and regular exercises made his face radiant and his body as strong as steel.

Gradually, he came into contact with Swami Somadev, another great patriot and scholar, who was also proficient in Yoga. He gave Ramprasad advise on matters of religion and politics. He suggested some good books for Ramprasad to read. Under his guidance Ramprasad's views on religion and political subjects grew clearer.

In the year 1916, Bhai Parmanandji was sentenced to death in the Lahore Conspiracy case. He had written a book, which Ramprasad had read and appreciated immensely. He came to admire Parmanandji. When he heard about the death sentence of Bhai Parmanandji, he became very angry and took a vow that he would take revenge with the British Government for this great injustice. He told Swami Somadev about his vow. The Guru remarked, "It is easy to take a vow but hard to keep it." Then Ramprasad touched the feet of Swami Somadev and declared, "If I have the grace of these sacred feet my vow will surely be fulfilled; nothing can come in the way." This was the first step towards the revolutionary life of Ramprasad.

At that time the 'Swadeshi' movement was gearing up in the country. The speeches of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi were inspiring the people to rise up for the independence of the country. Bismil's mother was a very pious and religious-minded lady. She was also brave and patriotic. The teachings of his mother gave much inspiration to Bismil and made him a great revolutionary leader. It was because of his mother that Bismil became such a great man who sacrificed his life for the country.

Bismil was good at sports since childhood. He liked horse riding, exercises, swimming, shooting poetry and wrestling. At times he travelled several kilometres on foot. God had gifted him with patriotic feelings, courage and bravery. For him everything was possible as he never ever accepted defeat. When Bismil was a student of High School, he joined the

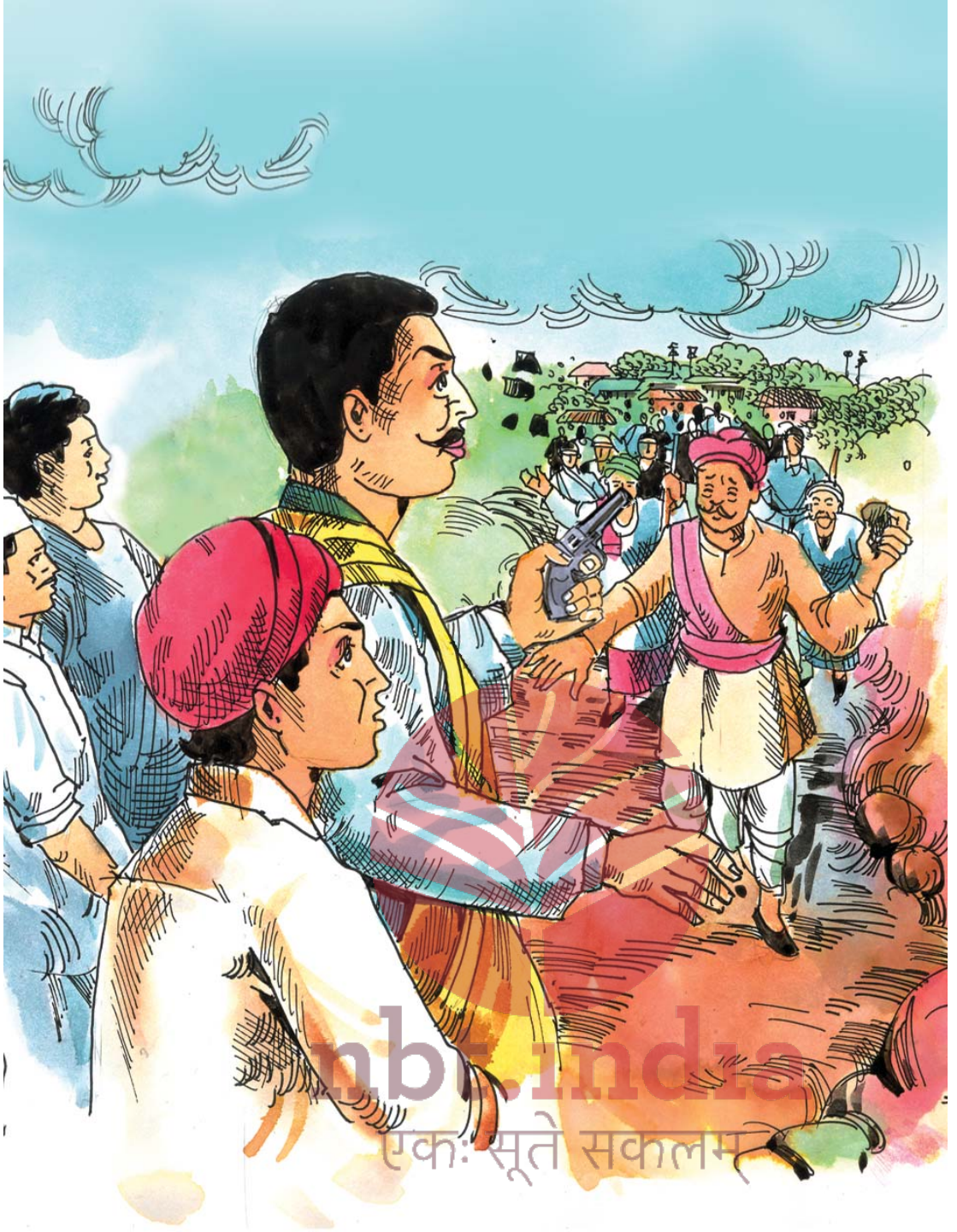
revolutionary group led by Pandit Genda Lal Dixit. Genda Lal's revolutionary activities invoked the wrath of the British and they kept Genda Lal in the Gwalior jail.

At the age of 19, Bismil formed a group of fifteen members and organised a dacoity to liberate Pandit Genda Lal from the prison. He was leading the team like a commander of an army. When the villagers came to know about his plan they tried to stop Bismil and also pelted stones at the group. Though Bismil was injured he continued to lead the group and asked the villagers to stop throwing stones or he will start firing. The villagers ran away and his mission was completed. Gradually, he became proactive in revolutionary activities. It was during his college days that Bismil was introduced to Ashfaq Ullah, who also lived in Shahjahanpur. Later he proved to be a very dependable colleague.

After Mahatma Gandhi withdrew the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922, the revolutionary movement strengthened. An all-India revolutionary party called 'The Hindustan Republican Association' was formed. Now, the revolutionary movement had the support of the people. There was no dearth of workers. But lack of funds haunted them. It became difficult even to provide food and clothing to the members who devoted their entire life and energy to the freedom movement. Collecting weapons was next to impossible. The young revolutionaries wanted to use revolvers, bombs and other weapons to fight the British. Their main objective was to win freedom for the country through armed revolution and hence Kashi (Varanasi) became the centre of their activities.

This Association published a manifesto called *Krantikari* in 1925, and presented its aims and objectives. It was brought out on the same day in all towns, from Calcutta to Lahore. The Government got scared. According to the manifesto, everybody was to be given equality. No person had the right to torture others. The Association wanted to put an end to such things, which were responsible for the discrimination between people of the same country. Ramprasad became the chief organiser of the Shahjahanpur wing of the Association. His experience proved him precious for the association.

One day Ramprasad was travelling by train from Shahjahanpur to Lucknow. At one station he noticed the stationmaster with a bag of money



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getting into the guard's van. He wanted to watch it more closely. So he took his seat in the compartment next to the guard's. At every station he noticed moneybags being taken into the Van. They were dropped into an iron trunk. At Lucknow station, he observed that there were no special security arrangements. He ran up and noted down the time and number of the train from the timetable. He calculated in his mind that the money would amount to at least ten thousand rupees. He decided not to miss this golden opportunity. Thus the idea of train dacoity cropped in Bismil's mind.

After a few days the revolutionaries from Kashi, Kanpur, Lucknow and Agra attended a meeting where Ramprasad disclosed his plan to execute the train dacoity in order to raise funds for armed struggle against the British. He said, "If we loot the money of the Government, we will get enough for our activities. Moreover we will not have to harm our own people for funds. The task is difficult, yet profitable. It needs to be done with great care. But our efforts will bring excellent rewards. The Government will also know that the revolutionaries do not merely talk but act."

As planned, on the evening of 9 August 1925, Ramprasad and his revolutionary friends stopped the number eight down train near Kakori. They looted the money giving a vital blow to the image of British.

After the Kakori episode, the police became alert but were unable to trace out the persons involved in the dacoity. The detectives came from Delhi and Calcutta to Shahjahanpur to find some clues. People suggested Bismil to leave the place but he was confident that nobody would give any information against him to the police. If he were arrested and sent to jail he would be set free in the absence of any proof because nobody would cheat him. But he was proved wrong. Bismil did not know that his two associates had betrayed him. In his own words, "When I had thought to be a necklace to adorn the neck they only became snakes to bite me."

When the police arrested Bismil and brought him to the *kotwali* they felt that they had done a great job. At that time Tika Ram was the *kotwal* who brought Bismil to the police station without handcuffs. He was offered a chair and there was a time when he was alone in the *kotwali* as all were busy in connection with sending Bismil to jail. He had chance to run away from the custody. Bismil mentioned this incident in his book, *Kakori Ke*

*Shaheed*. He writes, "I could have easily run away from the *kotwali* but on second thought, I wondered what would happen to the poor constable who was on duty to guard me. The constable would lose his job and his wife and children would suffer due to this act of mine and moreover, what would the world think of me that I ran away like a coward. I want to form a party of revolutionaries and not of cowards."

The police after completing all the formalities sent him to the jail. The Superintendent of Police met Bismil in prison and wanted to know the names of the revolutionaries of Bengal. He offered allurements in the form of visit to England and a reward of fifteen thousand. When Bismil did not agree he was also given threat of gallows. But Bismil refused and stuck to his ideals.

After preliminary investigations, he was sent to the sessions court for 'Kakori Train Dacoity Case'. The judge awarded death sentence to Ramprasad Bismil, Rajendranath Lahiri, Roshan Singh and Ashfaq Ullah and the rest ten accomplices were given imprisonment for twelve years each. In his judgement, the judge declared that Bismil was the greatest organiser of the movement.

On 18 December 1927, just one day before his execution, Bismil's mother went to Gorakhpur jail to meet him. The freedom fighter was brought in chains. But for Bismil they were like ornaments. This was the last time that he could see his mother, the last time he could address her as 'mother'. At this thought grief welled up in him. He stood speechless and tears rolled down his cheeks. In a firm voice the mother said, "I thought you had got victory on yourself but here I am seeing something else. Throughout the life you have wept for your country and now you are weeping for me. I was thinking that the British Government would shiver at the very mention of your name. I never thought that my son would be afraid of death. If you can die only in this way, weeping, why did you take up such activities? What would you gain from this cowardly act? I will feel great if you go to gallows like a brave man. I feel honoured that my son is giving his life for the cause of India's independence. My duty was to nurse you and nurture you. After that you had become the property of the country. You have given your life to the country and I have no regrets."

Bismil stopped his mother and said, "You are my mother and still you

cannot understand my tears. I am not weeping due to fear of death. As the butter melts when taken near the fire, in the same way my eyes have become moist after seeing you. Rest assured, I am satisfied with the death sentence. These tears in my eyes are a tribute to you. Tomorrow early morning you will hear that your son went to the gallows with high dignity and high sense of bravery. Mother, give me your blessings.”

Ramprasad Bismil was hanged in the Gorakhpur jail on 19 December 1927. On that morning he got up earlier than usual, bathed and offered his morning prayers. He wrote his last letter to his mother. Then he sat down calmly awaiting his death. When the jail staff came to take him to the gallows he immediately stood up and said *Vande Mataram* and *Bharat Mata ki Jai* and straight away proceeded for his last journey. He was not at all nervous and walked like a hero. The officials were amazed. As he moved to the gallows he kept on chanting *Vande Mataram* and *Bharat Mata ki Jai*. After reaching the gallows, he said, “I want the destruction of British Empire.” He stood before the gallows, offered prayers and embraced death.

At the time of hanging there was a strong security around the jail. The people of Gorakhpur took his body and went around the city. On the way, people showered money and flowers on his body.

Ramprasad Bismil joined the select group of martyrs who dreamt of a free India and made the supreme sacrifices, so that the dream might come true. ‘Bismil’ was the pen name of Ramprasad. As ‘Bismil’ he was quite popular as a great revolutionary poet in Hindi. While awaiting execution, Ramprasad wrote his autobiography. It is considered as a work of rare excellence in Hindi literature. At the end of his autobiography, he has reproduced some selected poems. Every line of his poems was full of patriotic fervour. In one of the poems he prays: “Even if I have to face death a thousand times for the sake of my Motherland, I shall not be sorry. Oh Lord! Grant me a hundred births in Bharat. But grant me this too, that each time I may give up my life in the service of the Motherland.”

In his autobiography he has given a moving account of his friendship with Ashfaq. He writes a monologue for Ashfaq, “You became my brother in a few days of friendship. But you were not content to remain in the position of a brother. You wanted equality; you wanted to be one of my friends. You

succeeded in your efforts. You became my honoured and loving friend. Every one was surprised. I was a devout member of 'Arya Samaj' and you were a devout Muslim. They wondered how we could be friends. I lived in the hostels belonging to Arya Samaj. You never troubled yourself about it. Though my friends suspected you, you always walked the straight path firmly. Many a times you visited the Arya Samaj Hostel. When there was a clash between the Hindus and the Muslims some of your people scolded you and called you a *Kaafir* (non-believer). But you never listened to them. You always supported Hindu-Muslim unity. You were a true Muslim and a great patriot. If you worried about any thing it was Hindu-Muslim unity. You wanted them to work for the betterment of the country and not the individual's identity. When I wrote an article or a book in Hindi, you asked me why I did not write in Urdu. You wanted Muslims should also read it. You learnt Hindi and became a scholar. You also used Hindi words in conversation with your family. This surprised all."

Ramprasad was always under strict watch by the British Police and yet he wrote the book and it was successfully smuggled out of the prison. This itself was a feat of great courage. The final pages of the book were written on 17 December, two days before his execution; and they were sent out through Shiv Varma, a friend who interviewed him on the next day. The book was published in 1929 and was immediately banned by the British Government.







## ASHFAQ ULLAH

An Immortal Patriot

It was the dawn of 19 December 1927. At Faizabad jail in Uttar Pradesh Ashfaq Ullah Khan had just taken bath and offered *Namaz*. After a while he started reading *Quran*. Soon a few jail officials entered his cell. It was time for him to proceed to the gallows. He shook hands with the officers and started walking towards the platform, where he was to be hanged. On one shoulder was hung a bag, with a copy of the holy *Quran* in it, and he himself was reciting verses from the holy book. He was unshaven but was looking more handsome than ever. The surprised jail staff and even the British Police felt a tinge of sadness in their eyes. Ashfaq stood at the hanging platform and recited the following couplet:

*Shahidon ki mazaron par lagenge har baras mele  
Watan par marne walon ka yahi baqi nishan hoga  
Bahut hi jald tootegi ghulami ki yeh zanzeeren  
Kisi din dekhna azad yeh hindoostan hoga.*

(Every year fairs would be held on the graves of the martyrs. This will be the only sign left of those who died for the country. But soon the shackles of slavery would be broken. And one day our country will be free.)

He himself put the noose of the rope around his neck, looked at

everybody present there and shouted *Khuda Hafiz* (adieu). The hangman pulled the rope and this was the end of a great martyr. Today in the Faizabad jail, the same hanging platform still exists. A life size statue of Ashfaq Ullah has been erected there.

Ashfaq Ullah was born on 22 October 1900 in the city of Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh. He belonged to a respectable *Pathan* family. His father Shafiq Ullah was a *Zamindar* and had five children. Ashfaq was the youngest. Thus he got much love from everyone and his parents used to fulfil all his demands. He was hefty, healthy and handsome since childhood and, therefore, everyone in the neighbourhood longed for his company. His parents wanted him to become a Government officer after his studies, but destiny had stored something else for him, a patriotic role. Ashfaq could live only for twenty-seven years but in this short period his deeds had immortalised him for time immemorial. He had acquired the status of *Shaheed-e-Azam* (king of martyrs).

Ashfaq Ullah got primary education at his home itself. After that he was admitted to Abbie Rich Mission High School in Shahjahanpur. There he started participating in the Non-Cooperation Movement of Mahatma Gandhi and for this reason he was expelled from the school by the head master. His parents were annoyed and admonished him but he continued to take part in the activities of the Congress. The call of Gandhi had kindled the fire of freedom in the hearts of all Indians. But at a place called Chauri Chaura, near Gorakhpur, people forgot non-violence and became violent against British. In their anger, they burnt down some policemen, by setting the police station on fire. Gandhi became sad on hearing this news. It hurt him much. So he called off the Non-Cooperation Movement in February 1922. The youth of the country were greatly disappointed and dejected on account of this. Ashfaq Ullah was one such dejected youth. His view was that the country should become free as early as possible.

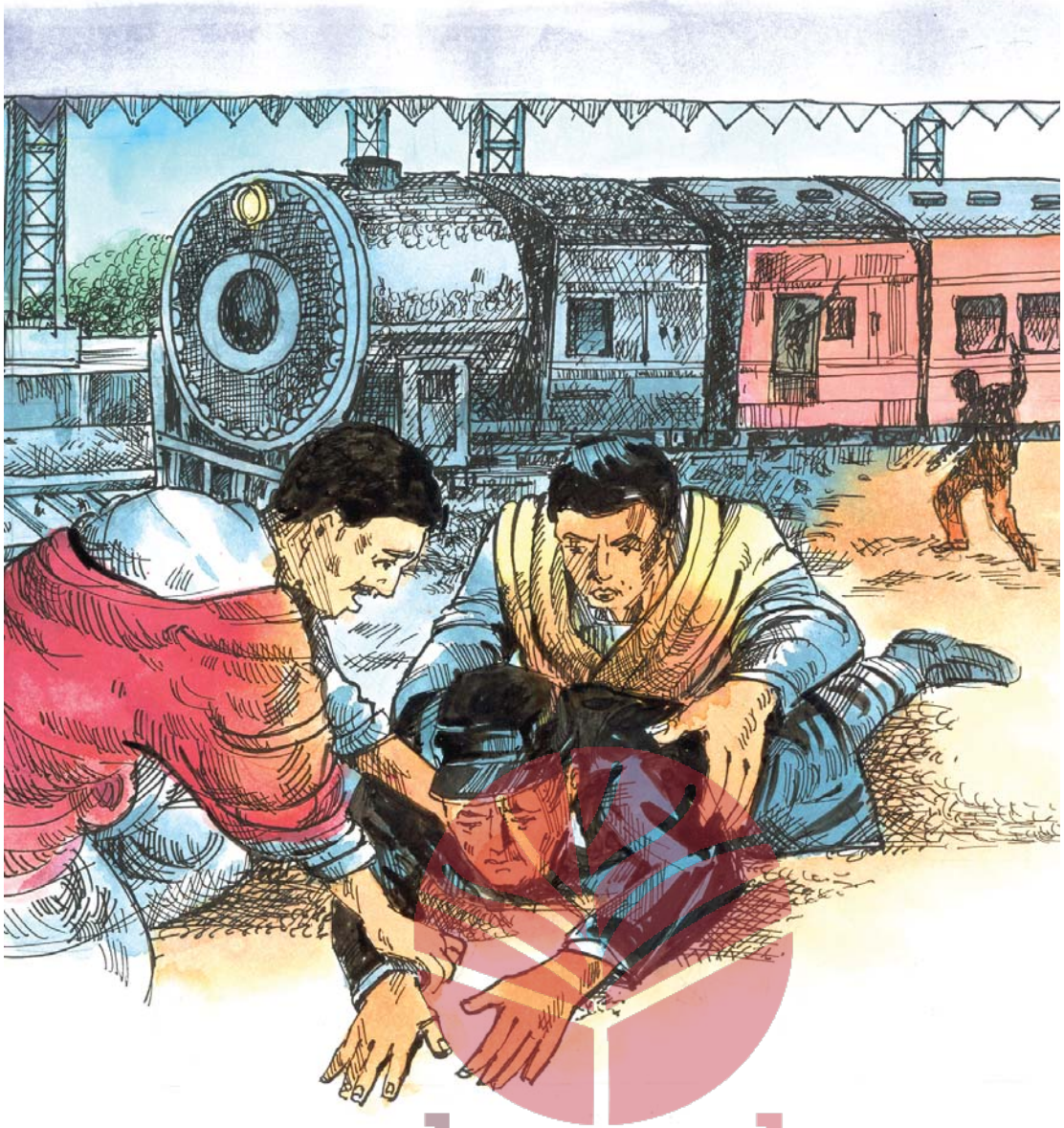
When he was studying in eighth standard, he met the famous revolutionary Ramprasad Bismil, who was then studying in ninth class in the same school. Bismil had joined the Revolutionary Party and wanted brave and enthusiastic young men for the organisation. He found such qualities in Ashfaq. At the same time, Ashfaq himself was in search of a

true patriotic guide for himself. Both Ashfaq and Bismil were full of patriotic urges and this feeling drew them closer to each other. Soon they became very good friends. Their friendship continued till the end of their lives. Both of them were hanged for the love of their country.

Pandit Ramprasad Bismil was a committed follower of Arya Samaj while Ashfaq was a staunch Muslim, but they had their meals in the same utensil. That was rare secularism at the time. Ashfaq used to address Bismil as 'Ram'. The people of Shahjahanpur were amazed at the strong friendship of these patriots. Despite resentment from his family, Ashfaq often used to accompany Bismil for the meetings of Arya Samaj. There was no pettiness in him and he was much above communalism. Once, while sitting with Bismil at an Arya Samaj temple, the news of Hindu-Muslim riots broke. Some Muslims tried to enter the temple. Ashfaq took out his revolver and roared, "I am a staunch Muslim, but I have great affection with every brick of this temple. If you want to fight in the name of religion, go to the market place. If anyone dares to enter this place, he will be shot dead." All the trouble-mongers disappeared from the scene.

Ashfaq and Bismil had different religions but their political means and end were the same and their aim was to liberate 'Mother India' from the clutches of the British rulers. During the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920-21 they went to several villages, rousing people against the British Raj. When the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Khilafat Movement were weakened, they were not demoralised and kept working for the cause of the country.

Ashfaq Ullah played a major role in planning the famous Kakori Train Dacoity. To fund the activities of the Indian revolutionaries, it was decided to loot the Government Treasury Box, which was to come to Lucknow by train. On 9 August 1925, the number eight down train from Shahjahanpur to Lucknow was approaching Kakori, a small station before Lucknow. The train stopped abruptly by pulling the emergency chain. Ashfaq Ullah got off a second-class compartment with his friends Sachindranath Bakshi and Rajendra Lahiri. The guard had got down from his van. He was trying to find out in which compartment the chain had been pulled, when two revolutionaries grabbed him and made him lie down on his face. Two others



pushed the driver from the engine to the ground and stood guard over him. One revolutionary stood at each end of the train and both fired shots with their pistols. In the meantime they shouted, "Travellers! Do not be afraid. We are revolutionaries fighting for the freedom. Your lives, money and honour are safe. But take care not to peep out of the train." Four young men

entered the guard's van. Ashfaq, Bismil and others broke the strong metal box with a hammer and within minutes they took the cash. This incident gave boost to the Revolutionary Movement in India and a great blow to the prestige of the British Empire. A countrywide search was ordered for the arrest of the so-called 'dacoits'. The police swung into action and several places were raided in Shahjahanpur and elsewhere.

Before the police could arrest Ashfaq, he had escaped from his home and concealed himself in a sugarcane field half a mile away from his home. Because of the tight security of the police, his friends used to send him food only at night. Frustrated by not finding Ashfaq, the police withdrew his brother's gun license and took away his rifle. All except Ashfaq had been taken into custody. He decided to move away from Shahjahanpur and go to Kashi. He wanted to consult a few revolutionaries there, who had escaped earlier, and then decide the next course of action. After a difficult journey he managed to reach Kashi. He met a few friends in the Benares University, who advised him to live quietly at least for some time. With the help of these friends he went to Bihar. He got a job as a clerk in an engineering firm at Daltonganj in Palamau District. He pretended to be hailing from a farmer's family in Mathura and worked in the firm for about ten months.

Ashfaq was a poet and wrote *sher* (couplet form of verses in Urdu language). Composing and singing these couplets is popularly known as *Mushaira*. The proprietor of the firm in which Ashfaq worked was very fond of *shers*. At a *Mushaira* organised there, Ashfaq recited a few *shers* of his own composition. The people who heard him were delighted. When the proprietor came to know that Ashfaq composed and recited *shers*, he became fond of Ashfaq and was so impressed that he raised his salary.

In such a literary atmosphere, Ashfaq improved his Hindi and also learnt Bengali. Besides singing Hindi and Urdu songs, he began to sing Bengali songs. Ashfaq had composed poems mostly in Urdu and a few in Hindi. His pen names were *Varsi* and *Hazrat*. In one of his poems, he complains, "Alas! We are suppressing ourselves. Those who are suppressing us are neither the English, the Germans, the Russians nor the Turks but Indians themselves." In another poem he declares, "Oh my Motherland, I live only to serve you. Whether I am sentenced for life or given a death

sentence, I shall sing thy glories even with my chained hands." In a poem Ashfaq mentions, "...did not Lord Krishna say to Arjun in the battlefield that life and death are unreal? Alas! Where is that wisdom? A man is bound to die; so why should anyone be afraid of death? Let our motherland become free and shine through the ages. What matters whether we are alive or dead...." His poems clearly depict his pure love for the country and its freedom. He felt sorry that his countrymen lacked the spirit of patriotism.

After sometime, this long and forced exile became tiresome for him. So he went to Delhi and met a *Pathan* friend from Shahjahanpur. Having been classmates at school, he was happy to meet Ashfaq after a long time. He took Ashfaq to his room and ordered a nice meal for him. They went on talking about old times till late in the night. The very next morning when Ashfaq was sound asleep, there was a loud knock at the door. The sleepy-eyed Ashfaq opened the door and there was police to arrest him. Friendship, duty and even the feeling of belonging to the same place—none of these could check the Pathan's greed for money. The Pathan fed him, talked to him in a very friendly way and then betrayed Ashfaq to the police.

Both, at the police station and during his trial in the jail, he was subjected to a lot of pressure for becoming a Government approver. One Indian Superintendent of Police, Tasadruk Khan met Ashfaq in prison and tried to reason with him. He had earlier rendered service as a British agent in Arabia during the First World War. His main aim was to make Ashfaq agree to give evidence against his former friends. He told Ashfaq, "Being a Muslim, why are you supporting the Hindus in the freedom struggle? They want to establish their rule in the country." He further said, "The Hindus are fighting to win back their kingdoms. Why should the Muslims become involved in this affair? Why should we face danger when there is no benefit to us? The Muslims should not take part in it. Even now I can find a way to help you if you can understand what pays you and what does not."

Ashfaq retorted, "A Hindu state will be far better than the British rule in the country." He later observed, "I am the only Muslim in this case and if I am hanged, this honour will go to a *Musalmaan*. It will be a great honour for me. The whole Muslim community will be discredited if I become a traitor. In death, I want to prove that I was a *Sachcha Musalmaan* (a true

Muslim). I do not fear death but I have a fear of getting a bad name, if I betray the country." Despite various pressures and influences in the jail by the British, Ashfaq was unmoved. He was firm in his resolve to free India from the British bondage. He used to tell his colleagues, "Brothers, in this movement, I am the only Muslim. Please permit me to sacrifice for a noble cause."

The much publicised Kakori Conspiracy case came to an end and the British Court gave its judgement. Ramprasad Bismil, Ashfaq Ullah Khan, Rajendra Lahiri and Roshan Singh were to be hanged till death; the others were given life sentences. The whole country was aghast at the verdict and protested against the death sentences. Members of the Central Legislature appealed to the Viceroy that the death sentences should be reduced to life sentences. Appeals were also made to the Privy Council, the highest court in those days. But nothing could move the British imperialism as it wanted to take revenge from the Indian revolutionaries.

When his lawyer met him for the last time in the jail, he enquired from him about his last wish. Ashfaq replied, "My last wish is that you please come tomorrow and see how I am hanged." Tears rolled down the cheeks of the lawyer. He said with a heavy heart, "I don't have so much courage as to see you to be hanged... but I will visit your grave again and again." A day before his hanging, Ashfaq wore clean clothes and told his friends, "Tomorrow I am going to marry. Please tell if there is any imperfection in the bridegroom." Such a joke brought smiles on the saddened faces all around. It was difficult to believe whether this was the same person who was going to be hanged tomorrow!

Ashfaq Ullah was hanged on 19 December 1929 in the Faizabad jail. At the same time his closest friend and comrade, Ramprasad Bismil was hanged a few hundred kilometres away in the Gorakhpur jail. They were not only together on the path of freedom struggle, but were also together at the time of death. In their last moments, they were far away physically, but must have been spiritually together, a sign of true friendship.

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## RAJENDRANATH LAHIRI

The Selfless Revolutionary

Martyr Rajendranath Lahiri was born in 1892 in Mohanpur, a village in District Pabna of Bengal, (now in Bangladesh). In 1909, he came to Varanasi and graduated from the Central Hindu College. His father was Kshitish Mohan Lahiri, who owned a big estate in Varanasi. At that time, Varanasi was the centre of revolutionary activities and he was an important member of the organisation.

Rajendranath participated in various revolutionary activities of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association aimed at ousting the British from India. He was involved in the Dakshineswar bomb case and was sent to jail. He also took part in dacoities at Bamrauli, Shivpuri and Dwarikapuri.

9 August is a memorable day in India's revolutionary movements. On this day in 1897, Damodar Chapekar was arrested, subsequently to become India's first martyr. On this day in 1925, the revolutionaries looted the treasury of the British Empire, from a train at Kakori in Uttar Pradesh. Kakori Conspiracy was an important episode in the struggle for independence and Lahiri was an integral part of this conspiracy. This loot was not an ordinary one as with this act, the revolutionaries wanted to cast away the British Government. And 9 August 1942, saw the beginning of the Quit India Movement.



After the train dacoity at Kakori, revolutionaries all over the country were arrested, produced before the court of law and cases filed against them. The hearing began on 4 January 1926 at the Ring Theatre, which is now the General Post Office of Lucknow, in the special court of Hamilton, I.C.S. The judgement was delivered on 6 April 1927. Hamilton in his judgement said, "Rajendranath Lahiri is one of the leaders of this conspiracy. He learned the bomb-making technique at Calcutta. He was a partner in dacoity with Ramprasad. He was leading the movement and so his responsibility was greater in the matter. Therefore, under section 121 (A), he is being awarded *kala pani* (life imprisonment). He was one of the two main leaders in this conspiracy and so he is also responsible for the death of Ahmed Ali. Thus, he is being awarded the death sentence. If he wants to appeal, he can do it within a week. Both the penalties will go on simultaneously."

After the trial, the four revolutionaries were sent to the gallows in different jails. On 19 December 1927, Ramprasad Bismil was hanged in Gorakhpur, Roshan Singh in Allahabad and Ashfaq Ullah in Faizabad. As per the schedule, Lahiri was also to be hanged on 19 December but later it was feared that the revolutionaries might abduct him from the jail. So he was hanged two days earlier i.e. on 17 December, in Gonda.

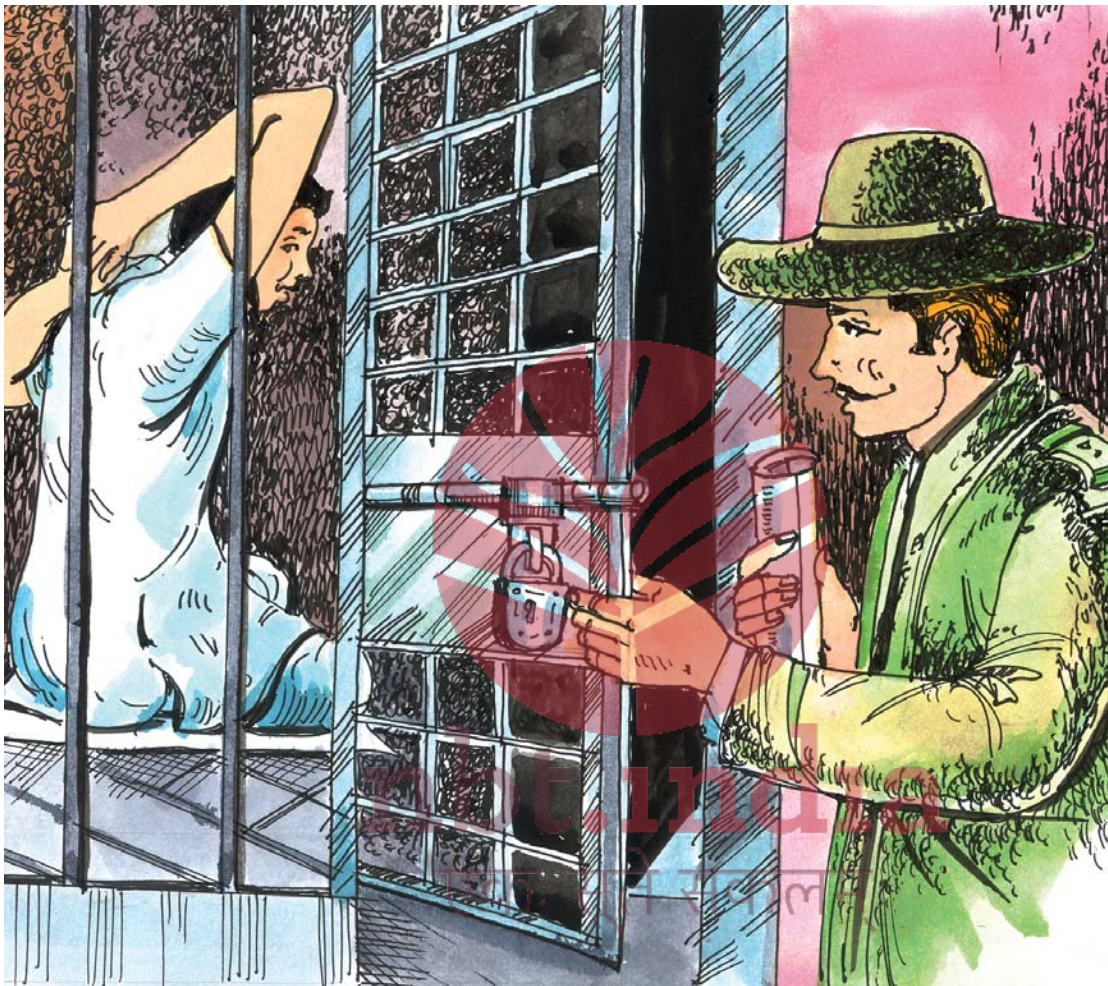
This was not merely a fear, as in reality the revolutionaries had already planned to rescue Lahiri from the jail. To give this plan a shape, Chandra Shekhar Azad and Manmath Nath Gupta had come to Gonda. A meeting was held at the residence of Lal Behari Tandon but a traitor had leaked the plan and thus, Lahiri was hanged two days before the scheduled date.

Martyr Rajendranath Lahiri wrote a letter on 6 October to his father, "After staying in Barabanki Gonda jail, I got the information that I will be hanged within a week. Now I feel that it is my duty to express my gratitude to all my relatives and well-wishers who have pleaded my case. All of you should accept my *Namaskar*. For me, death is only a change of body. It is like changing of old clothes and putting on new clothes. Death is coming and I will embrace it happily. I can't write more from jail."

An appeal was made in the Privy Council but it was rejected and the date of his hanging was fixed. On 14 December, he again wrote a letter to his friends, "Yesterday I got the news that my appeal in the Privy Council

was rejected. You have done everything to save my life but it seems that the country needs my life. What is death? It is only a new life. Therefore, why should one fear death? It is quite natural like the morning sun. I think and hope that my death will not go waste.”

Lahiri’s brother met him one day before his death. Lahiri told him about his last wish, “My last rites should be performed by Vedic custom and when I am going to be hanged I will say *Vande Mataram*, the echoes of which I should hear from outside the walls of the jail. Then only I will be able to die in peace.”



It was the night of 16 December 1927. Lahiri was in the Gonda jail reading the *Bhagwad Gita*. Suddenly he saw the jailor coming in.

“At this hour, jailor sahib?” asked Lahiri.

The jailor informed him with a heavy heart, “You will be hanged tomorrow.”

“Why? Tomorrow is 17 December. My date of hanging is 19 December. Why two days before?” Lahiri smiled and said, “I think the British Government fears some danger from me? You go, I will be ready tomorrow. I will not run away from the jail.”

In the morning, he finished his routine work by reading the *Gita*. In the meantime, the magistrate and the jail authorities had reached there. After finishing the *puja*, he asked the Magistrate, “I hope I am not late. I will take some more time.” The magistrate told him, “Oh yes take your time. There is no hurry, I will wait.” He was quite puzzled at his request. Lahiri did his routine exercises and put on his clothes and informed the magistrate that he was ready to go. One warden came forward to put handcuffs but the magistrate asked him not to do this.

The magistrate said, “If you don’t mind may I ask you a question?”

Lahiri replied, “No. Please ask.”

“I could not understand one thing. You took a bath, read the holy book, and worshipped God. That was all fine. But why did you do the exercise? What was the need of that?”

Lahiri replied to the curious officer, “That was most necessary. We Indians believe in rebirth. If I am reborn, I want to be strong and healthy so that I can sacrifice my life again and again for the country until it is liberated from the foreign rule. I hope you will convey this last message to your countrymen.” The magistrate was stunned and dumb founded.

Rajendranath Lahiri’s last words before the hanging were “*Bharat Mata Ki Jai, Long Live Hindustan Republican Army, Vande Mataram*”.

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## ROSHAN SINGH

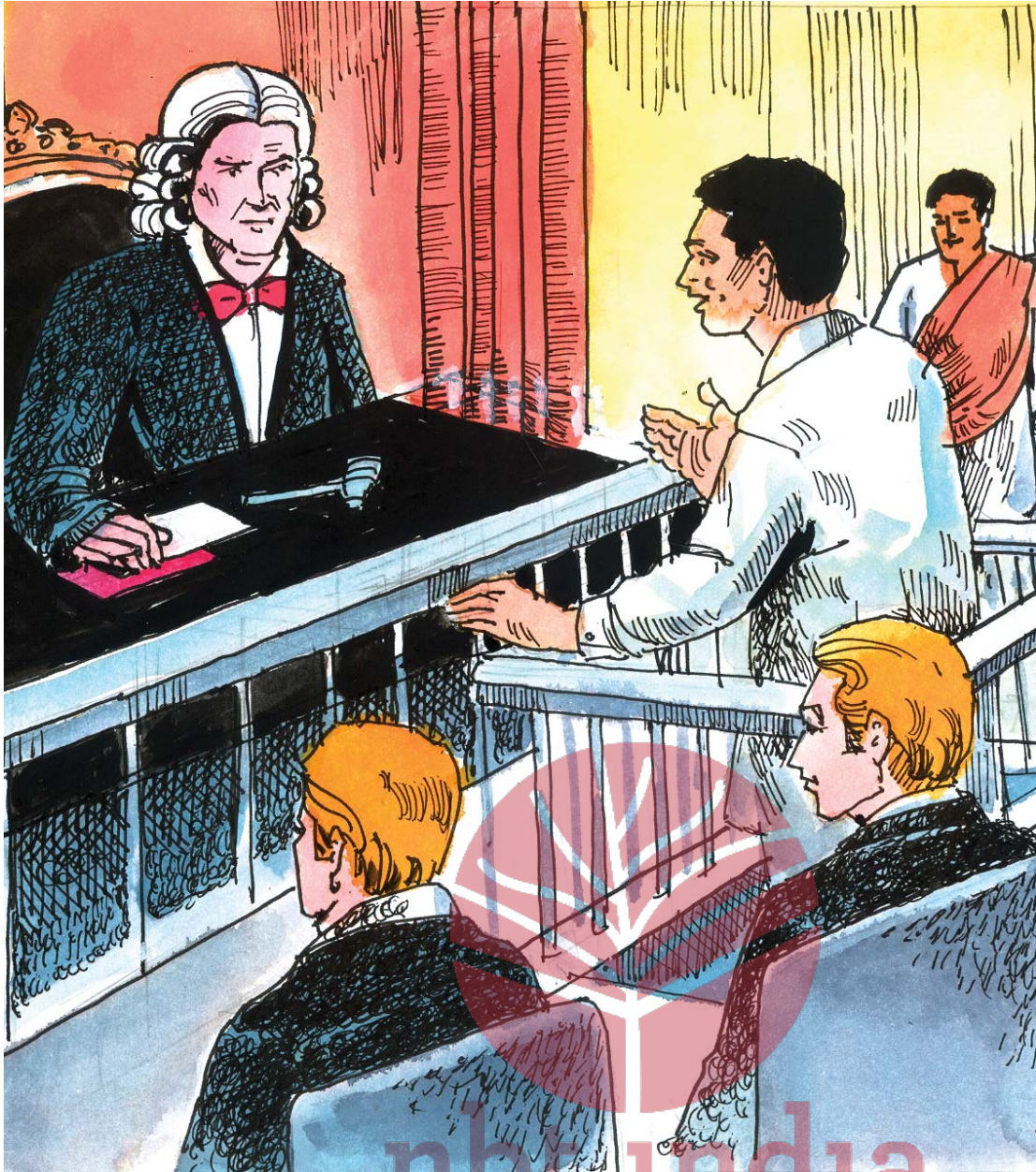
One Who Smiled at Death

Roshan Singh was the fourth martyr in the Kakori Conspiracy. He was born in 1894 in the district of Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh. Though he studied middle class he managed to become a primary school teacher and also joined a revolutionary organisation. He took active part in dacoities for the cause of independence in Sherganj, Bicahpuri, Mainur and participated in several other freedom movements.

When the Non-Cooperation Movement started, he worked for its success in the district of Shahjahanpur and Bareilly. During this, there was some firing in Bareilly, Roshan Singh was arrested and sentenced to two years imprisonment. After release, this revolutionary joined the Kakori train conspiracy. He was physically strongest amongst the other people who were arrested for this conspiracy.

Referring to Roshan Singh, Judge Hamilton had mentioned, "Roshan is awarded punishment for five years under Section 121 (A). In Bamrauli dacoity he was the leader, as he knew everything about that village. Also, two persons have revealed that he was carrying a pistol that day. Thus, under Section 396 he is awarded death sentence. Both the sentences will be implemented simultaneously. He can appeal within a week."

Everyone was shocked to hear the death sentence of Roshan Singh. They felt that a great injustice was done to him. He was the eldest amongst the conspirators and his crime was the least. He was not even present at the



main scene of the 'crime' and yet he was sent to the gallows. When Roshan Singh saw everyone surprised, he was puzzled as he did not understand English. He asked Vishnu Sharan Dublish, who was standing near him, "Dublish, the Judge has said something more besides five years, what was

that?" Dublith told him, "Along with Ramprasadji and Lahiri you have also got the death sentence." Roshan Singh jumped with joy on hearing this. His beaming face had unruffled calmness. He looked at Bismil, Ashfaq and Lahiri and said, "You wanted to go alone." He then moved towards the judge and said, "Thank you for giving me a new life, Sir. You have kept the honour of my seniority in front of these youngsters."

In the jail, he learnt the Bengali language. One day Bismil asked him, "Thakur, what is the use of learning Bengali, when you will be hanged soon." Thakur Roshan Singh replied, "Panditji, if not in this life it will help me in the next life."

While in jail he spoke less. He used to read Marathi newspaper and enjoyed it. One day his lawyer came and informed him that his appeal for mercy has been filed. Roshan Singh calmly replied, "It is O.K." Later when the jail superintendent told him that the appeal has been rejected, he again said, "It is O.K." A day prior to his death, he told the visitors. "You need not worry about me. God takes care of everybody."

Thakur Roshan Singh was hanged on 19 December 1927 in Allahabad. He wrote a letter to his friend on 13 December. "I will be hanged during this week. It is my prayer to God that he should reward you for the affection shown towards me. You need not feel sorry for me. My death is a symbol of happiness. One who is born has to die. This is a fact of life. A person should not have ill-feeling towards the mankind and also remember the Almighty. I have had enough, time to thank God. Now no desire is left unfulfilled."

Taking the *Bhagwad Gita* in his hand and a smile on his face, he went to the gallows reciting *Vande Mataram* and *Om*. Like this, another son of soil laid down his life for the motherland.



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## SURYA SEN

### A Dedicated Revolutionary

Surya Kumar Sen was born on 21 March 1894 in the Noapara village, Rauzan, Chittagong. An orphan, Surya was brought up by his uncle. He was initiated into the revolutionary ideas in 1916 by one of his teachers, while he was pursuing graduation at Behrampore College.

One day, the police raided the college hostel and a few of his fellow resident students were searched. These 'suspect' students attracted his keen attention and gradually he was drawn into radical politics, the aim of which was to liberate the motherland by all possible means. By then he was determined to dedicate his whole life for the cause of freedom.

On his return to Chittagong in 1918, he became the President of the Chittagong branch of the Indian National Congress. He revived terrorist activities and became a teacher in a local national school. A different revolutionary since his school life, Surya was determined not to take any employment under the British imperialism. As such, he chose to teach at a private school after his bachelor's degree.

His participation in the first Non-Cooperation Movement left its impact on the people of Chittagong. He effectively led the movement to boycott the official schools, colleges and courts, and initiated the spirit of *Swadeshi* (national) in the schools. He became the most popular 'master' (teacher) and was known as *masterda*. His involvement in the Non-Cooperation Movement was extended and transformed into a mass movement. He and

his lieutenants successfully led the Seamen's strike against the Bullock Brothers Co., as a result of which their steamships were brought to a standstill at the port of Chittagong. He also left his mark in successfully organising the Assam Bengal Railway Strike in support of the national movement.

In due course, the inevitable difference cropped up between him and the leadership of the official Congress party for whom 'non-violence' was unthinkable. Surya Sen and his radical colleagues insisted that any colonial movement for liberation to be successful must not be fettered by any inhibiting conditions. His next task was the formation of a radical wing inside the Congress with the help of the like-minded patriots, which would be a highly disciplined and dedicated group of youths.

Masterda Surya Sen was introduced to Pritilata Waddedar, a young girl from Chittagong, who had a lot of revolutionary zeal. Although there was no provision for women to join the revolutionary parties, he accepted Pritilata as the first woman member of his revolutionary group. Soon she was involved in operations for destruction of the telephone and telegraph office and the capture of the reserve police line. She took part in the Jalalabad battle, in which her job was to supply explosives. Later, Pritilata again joined her school. By that time, her name was in the list of the 'most-wanted suspects'. Masterda instructed her to leave the school and go underground, just like the male revolutionaries of that time. Pritilata and Kalpana Dutta, another famous woman revolutionary, went underground. In one assignment in 1930, Pritilata was sent to Alipur Central Jail, Calcutta, to meet Ram Krishna Biswas, who was a political prisoner sentenced to death. Although he was behind the bars under strict observation in complete seclusion, Pritilata was such a brave woman that she could achieve her objectives, despite all odds.

By 1923, Surya Sen had established a number of branches of the terrorist organisation *Jugantar* in different parts of the Chittagong district. Aware of the limited resources of the terrorists, he was convinced of the need for secret guerilla warfare against the colonial Government. One of his early successful achievements was a broad daylight robbery at the treasury office of the Assam-Bengal Railway at Chittagong. He was arrested and detained as a State Prisoner (without trial) in 1926 and was later released in 1928.



Surya Sen prepared the strategy for capturing the two main armouries in Chittagong and then to destroy the telephone and telegraph office, to kill the members of the 'European Club', to capture gun shops and to disrupt railway lines. To fulfil these plans, it was decided to launch simultaneous attacks on 18 April 1930. The Auxiliary Force Armoury was to be attacked by a group under the leadership of Nirmal Sen and Loknath Baul, the Police Armoury by Ganesh Ghosh and Anant Singh's group, the European Club under Naresh Chandra Ray's leadership. The telephone and telegraph offices were to be destroyed by a band of young men under Ambika Chakraborty. A day earlier, eight young men were sent to different places near Dhoom and Langal Ghat stations to damage the railway track so that Chittagong would be cut off from the rest of the country and no reinforcement could easily reach there. The wireless systems in the ship at the port were subsequently put out of order.

As per the plan, on 18 April 1930, the telephone office was attacked. The operator was threatened at the point of pistol and the switchboard was damaged to pieces. The whole building was gutted, all in less than three minutes. Similarly the telegraph office was immobilised. Next came the two most important targets, the two armouries. Ganesh Ghosh and Anant Singh led the attack on the Police Lines Armoury guarded by a single sentry, silently pacing up and down on patrol duty. The army uniform of the revolutionaries created confusion in his mind. Before he could react, the revolutionaries started firing. They captured the guardroom in a few seconds. Its two hundred sepoy ran helter-skelter for fear of life. The sudden attack made the task easier. Within minutes, the armoury came under the control of the revolutionaries, who collected arms and ammunition to their hearts content. Under order of the president of the revolutionary Government, Surya Sen, clad in white *khadi*, the Union hack was burnt and the flag of Indian independence was unfurled to the refrain of the bugle and amidst the thundering cries of *Vande Mataram* and *Inquilab Zindabad*, which rent the sky. Surya Sen then declared to form a provisional revolutionary democratic Government. His guerillas beat the British troops in various fights around Chittagong and kicked them out of the town.



On the fourth day, i.e. 22 April 1930, a train loaded with armed men arrived and surrounded Jalalabad Hills, where the revolutionaries had taken shelter. There ensued one of the most unequal battles but it was historic in its heroism. The young boys of the Army of Revolution fought desperately with only Police Musketry in their hands while the well-trained battalion of the British Army was equipped with superior weapons. Realising that it would be difficult to fight the British imperial power in a regular war, Surya Sen decided to wage guerilla warfare against the British.

As a fugitive, Surya Sen was hiding in the house of Sabitri Devi, a widow, in Jalalabad Hills, on the outskirts of Chittagong town. On 13 June 1932, Pritilata went to meet Masterda at his hideout. Incidentally, police came to know the place where he was hiding. A police and military force under Captain Cameron surrounded the house. There was a confrontation in which Cameron was shot dead and some revolutionaries lost their lives but Surya Sen along with Pritilata and Kalpana Dutta escaped to safety.

Surya Sen then planned an attack on the Pahartali European Club, which bore the notorious sign 'Dogs and Indian are not allowed'. He assigned Pritilata to lead a team that would attack the Club on 23 September 1932. Members of the team were instructed to carry potassium cyanide with them so that, in case the police caught them, they could swallow it before the arrest. The attack was successful but Pritilata, dressed as a man was trapped on that fateful night. She preferred death by swallowing the cyanide pill, rather than being caught by the colonial occupiers of the land, thus immortalising herself as one of the greatest freedom fighters of all times and that too at twenty-one years of age. Her martyrdom created a huge stir and was an inspiration for the revolutionaries of India, especially Bengal.

The British rulers put prize money of Rs. 10,000 on Surya Sen. They did not have to wait long. A traitor, Netra Sen betrayed Surya Sen and revealed his hiding place at village Gairala in Chittagong and in the early hours of 17 February 1933, a *Gurkha* contingent surrounded the hideout and Surya Sen was captured while he was trying to break the cordon.

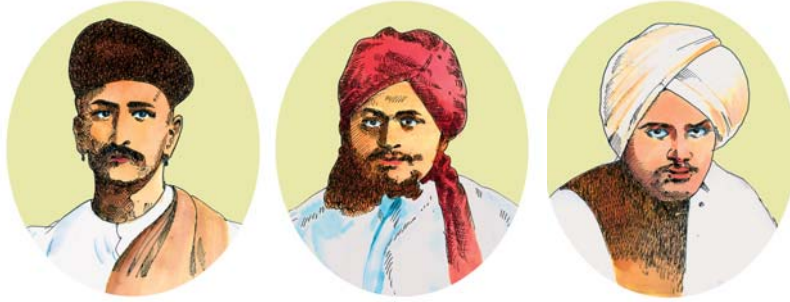
Tarakeswar Dastidar, the new President of the Chittagong Branch of the Jugantar Party, had planned to rescue Surya Sen from the Chittagong Jail. But the plot was unearthed and consequently Tarakeswar and Kalpana were arrested. Special tribunals tried Surya Sen, Tarakeswar Dastidar, and Kalpana Dutta in 1933.

The hero Surya Sen was sentenced to death in August 1933. He was hanged in the Chittagong Jail on 12 January 1934. At the time of his execution, the detainees in the jail sang revolutionary songs. The villager, who had revealed the hiding place of Surya Sen to the police, was murdered in broad-daylight, on the day of Surya Sen's execution.

Large-scale participation of young women in the freedom struggle under Surya Sen's leadership characterised this phase of revolutionary movement. These women provided shelters, acted as messengers and fought with guns in hand. He had enlightened a strong devotion towards motherland in the hearts of Indian women, as a result of which, they actively participated in the freedom movements to become immortal.

Pritilata Waddedar died while conducting a raid, while Kalpana Dutta was arrested and was under trial along with Surya Sen and later given a life sentence. In December 1931, two school girls of Kummilla in Bengal, Shanti Ghosh and Suneeti Chaudhary, shot dead the district magistrate. In December 1932, Bina Das fired at the Governor while receiving her degree at the convocation. In Nagaland, Rani Gaidilita, a 13-year old girl raised a flag against the British and was put into life imprisonment in 1932. Owing to the determination and organisational skill of Surya Sen and his lieutenants, Chittagong witnessed the emergence of what could be truly described as an iron brigade of dedicated women patriots whose motto was 'one for all and all for one'. It was indeed, a unique organisation which almost emerged as a parallel local authority.





Damodar Chapekar    Bal Krishna Chapekar    Vasudev Chapekar

## THE CHAPEKAR BROTHERS

### Family of Martyrs

In the annals of history of the Indian independence, the deeds and sacrifices of Chapekar brothers are mentioned in golden letters. They were great patriots and at the end of nineteenth century, their sacrifices had inspired the young men of that era to raise their voice against the British. *Chapekar Bandhu* (brothers) as they were popularly known, were three brothers and all of them were hanged to death by the British rulers in the years 1898 and 1899, when they were barely in their twenties. Damodar, the eldest son of Hari Chapekar, was born on 24 June 1869, at Chinchwad in district Poona (now Pune). The second son, Bal Krishna and the youngest son, Vasudev were born in 1873 and 1880 respectively. All three had received good education in Marathi.

Damodar Chapekar was very keen to join the army but could not succeed as his community of *Chittpawan Brahmins* was considered staunch patriots and the British were opposed to them and hence did not encourage them to join the forces. When he came to know of this fact, he tried to assure the Government that if he were enrolled in the army he would bring along with him thousands of young men of his community in the army. As expected, his offer was not accepted. Even Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak tried to get him enlisted in the army of Udaipur state but was not successful.

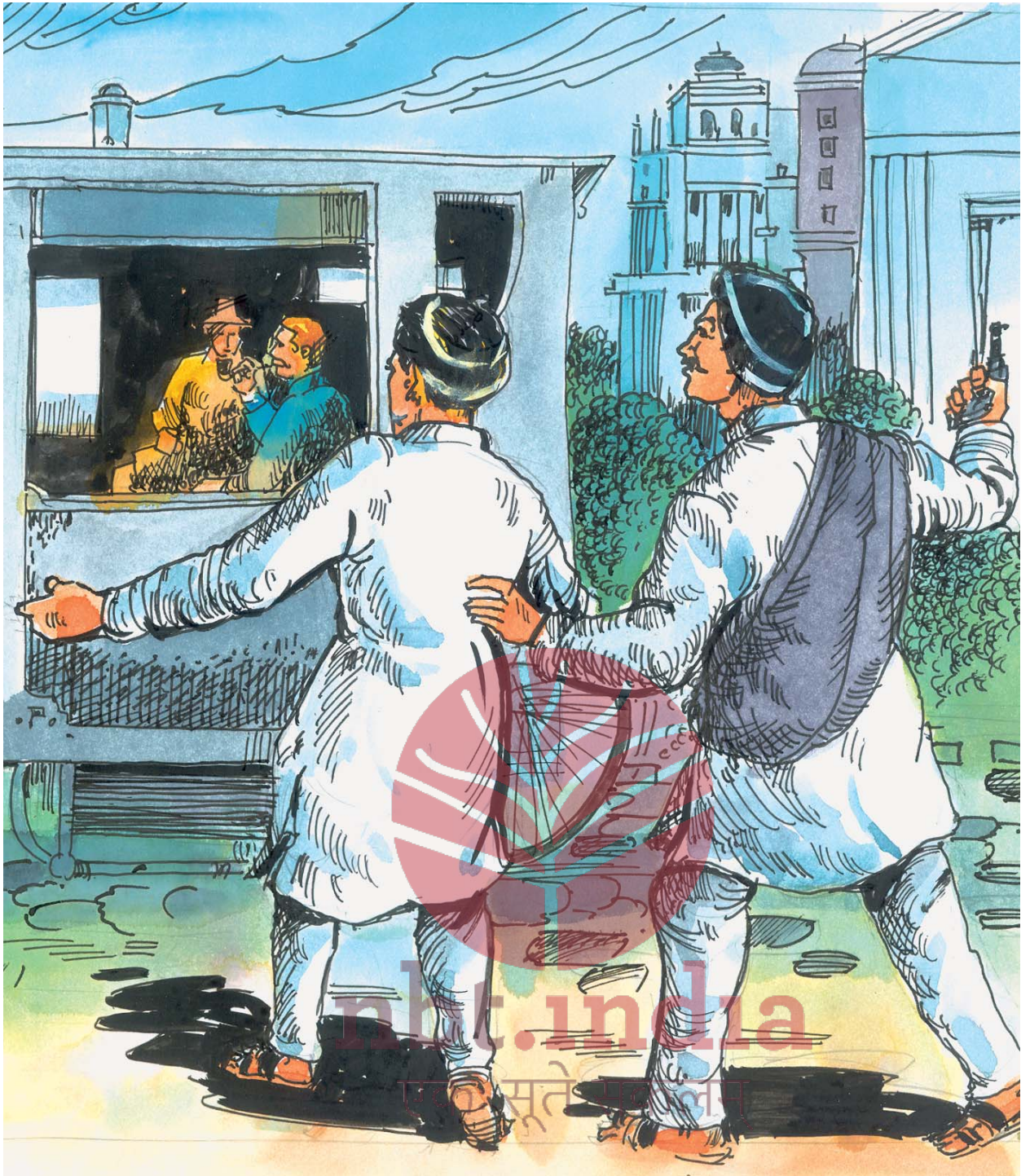
Damodar was very much disappointed on his inability to join any of the armed forces. Thus, he himself formed a private group of young people,

who were trained in arms and ammunition and were true patriots. Damodar organised them well and kindled anti-British feelings among them in order to destroy the British Empire. Gradually, the group turned into a society for promoting physical culture and imparting military training to patriotic young men with the purpose of overthrowing the British from India. They were against those unpatriotic Indians, who acted as informers to the British, regarding the activities of the revolutionaries and the young patriots. Damodar assaulted several British people and destroyed tents in a university, where a meeting was organised in praise of the British Crown. He also garlanded the statue of Queen Victoria with shoes in Bombay.

The British Government panicked at these unexpected incidents. Police and secret agents of the Government were unable to trace the miscreants, despite large-scale investigations. Damodar and his friends were quite discreet and precise in their operations. They were inspired by the deeds of Chhatrapati Shivaji. They used to distribute pamphlets to instigate the people. The British Government, with the help of the local intelligence and informers, could not even trace the origin of those pamphlets.

During the plague epidemic in 1897, a British officer, Rand became the enemy of the people in Poona, due to his inhuman and ruthless activities. He was the British Plague Commissioner, who took very harsh measures in forcibly evacuating the people from Poona, during the epidemic. People were fed up of him and despite their protests, which were many times led by Tilak, Rand was not removed by the Government. Damodar and his friends were very annoyed with Rand, and decided to eliminate the brutal officer. On the night of 22 June 1897, Rand and another officer, Lieutenant Ayerst were returning from the Government House, after participating in the 60 anniversary celebrations of the coronation of Queen Victoria. At a lonely spot, Damodar and his brother Bal Krishna, suddenly came out from the dark and shot the two officers. Lt. Ayerst died on the spot and Rand was seriously injured and succumbed a few days later. These killings created a flutter in the British Empire. Strict vigilance was maintained in and around Poona.

The name of Damodar was revealed to the Government by one of his own colleagues, Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, who was quite close to the former and knew all the secrets about him. Subsequently, Damodar was



arrested, but the police could not locate Bal Krishna even after great effort. Damodar was tried in the British court, where he accepted that, he had killed Rand for the benefit of the people, which was not a crime according to him. He justified his action as it ended the sufferings of the people, done by the officer. He also revealed his intentions to create dissatisfaction among the people against the British Empire.

As expected, Damodar was convicted and was awarded death sentence. Damodar made a request to Tilak from the jail, that a copy of Bhagwad Gita be made available to him. Tilak sent a self-signed copy of Gita to him. On 18 April 1898, Damodar was hanged in the Yervada jail, Poona. At that time, he was reciting the *shlokas* (verses) from the Gita and the sacred book was in his hand. The *shloka*, which he recited last, meant that the body is dispensable and so it should not be loved.

Meanwhile, Bal Krishna was hiding in the jungle of the Nizam state and when he tried to come to Maharashtra, he was arrested and sent to jail. Later, the youngest brother Vasudev was also arrested on some pretext. Vasudev played a double game with the British by assuring them that he would give evidence against his brother, if he were released on bail. The British fell into his trap. Actually, he wanted to take the revenge of Damodar's hanging by punishing the traitor, Ganesh Shankar. On 9 February 1899, Vasudev and his friends, Mahadeo Ranade and Sathe, went to Ganesh's place and shot him dead along with his brother. Subsequently, he and his friends were arrested and tried at the British court. Bal Krishna, Vasudev and his friend Ranade were awarded death sentence. Vasudev Chapekar was hanged on 8 May 1899, while Bal Krishna Chapekar on 12 May 1899 in Poona.

A wave of shock swept the country, as three men from the same family had laid their lives for the nation. The sacrifices of these young men, almost a century ago, are still fresh in the mind of people of India and we all salute these young patriots, who were idols for the Indian revolutionaries.

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## UDHAM SINGH

An Unparalleled Patriot

Amongst the thousands of people present during the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, on 13 April 1919, was a young lad Udham Singh, along with his friend. He was a witness to the brutality that was inflicted by General Dyer with his 150-armed men, accompanied by machine guns. Without giving any warning, the General ordered to start firing at the people who were attending a meeting at Jallianwala Bagh. About two thousand people were killed on the spot. Udham's friend was also one of them. Udham, somehow escaped the bullets as he had laid on the ground. Later in the evening, he helped in saving the lives of the injured people. The Jallianwala Bagh tragedy made a deep impression on the mind of this young lad and he was so much hurt that he made a resolve there itself, that, he would avenge the carnage and injustice one day.

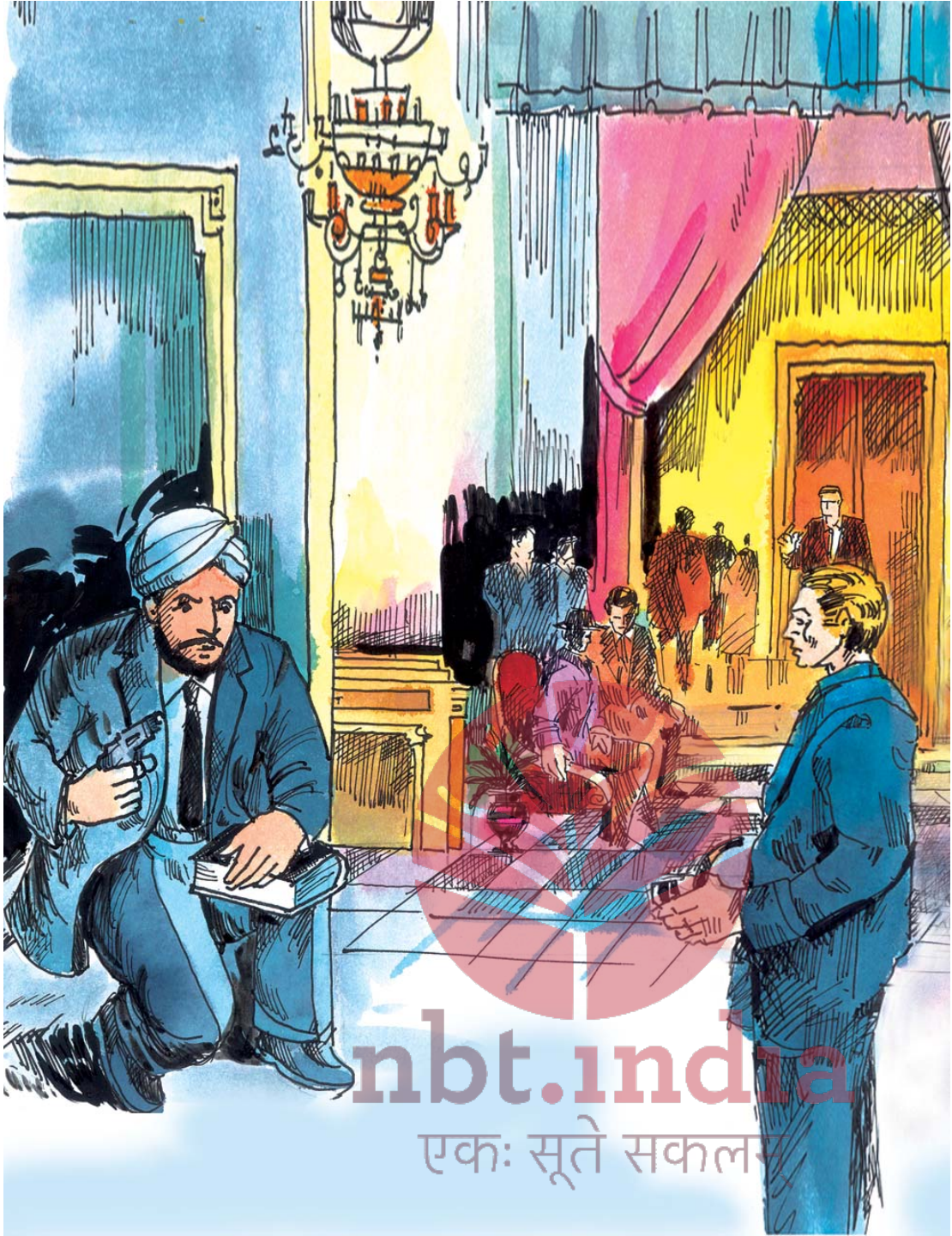
Udham Singh was born on 26 December 1899 in Sunam town of Sangrur district in a poor family. His real name was Sher Singh. His father, Tahal Singh, was at that time working as a watchman on a railway crossing in the neighbouring village of Upall. He had a brother Mukta Singh. His mother died when he was a young boy. Thereafter, his father shifted to Amritsar along with his sons. Later his father also died. Udham Singh and his brother became orphans at a young age and were admitted to the Central Khalsa Orphanage at Amritsar on 24 October 1907. As both the brothers were administered the Sikh initiatory rites at the Orphanage, they received new

names. Sher Singh was baptised as Udham Singh and Mukta Singh became Sadhu Singh. In 1917, Udham Singh's brother also died, leaving him alone in the world.

Udham Singh left the Orphanage after passing the matriculation examination in 1918. When he was in his teens, Udham Singh defied the curfew and was wounded in the course of retrieving the body of the husband of one Rattan Devi in the aftermath of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Later, he came into contact with *Swaraj Ashram* established by Dr Saifuddin Kitchlu. He was a true patriot and gradually got acquainted with revolutionaries. Over the years, he met Lala Lajpat Rai, Kishen Singh and Bhagat Singh. Udham Singh was deeply influenced by the activities of Bhagat Singh and his revolutionary group. He invariably referred to him as his *guru*. He loved to sing revolutionary songs, and was very fond of Ramprasad Bismil, who was the leading poet of the revolutionaries at that time.

After some time, he started working with a contractor and went with him to Africa for work. After earning some money in Africa he went to America. In the free atmosphere of United States, Udham's resolve to take revenge of the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy became more intense. There he saw that the Indians who were settled in the USA had formed a Ghadar Party to liberate their motherland. He came into contact with them and was inspired by their ideas and activities. Sardar Bhagat Singh and other revolutionary leaders from India suggested that he should return to his country and work for independence. With the help of an American woman he returned to India with some weapons and started living in Lahore to help other revolutionaries in their mission.

On 30 August 1927 he was arrested in Amritsar under the Arms Act, as it was suspected that he was in possession of unlicensed arms. Two revolvers, one pistol, some ammunition and copies of the prohibited paper, *Gadar-I-Goonj* (voice of revolt), were recovered from him. He was prosecuted under section 20 of the Arms Act and was sentenced to five years rigorous imprisonment. He stated that he had intended to murder the Europeans who were ruling over Indians and his objective was to liberate India from the foreign control, just as the Bolsheviks were planning to do for their



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country. He was released from the jail on 23 October 1931. After his release it was impossible for him to remain in the country because everywhere he went, CID followed him. He decided to leave the country. After great efforts, he succeeded in 1933 in getting a passport for England on a false name. After visiting his village for a short time he proceeded for London via Paris and Switzerland. To hoodwink the British, he kept changing his name as 'Ude Singh', 'Frank Brazil', and 'Muhammad Singh Azad'. The last name shows his zeal towards national integration.

Even after so many years Jallianwala Bagh tragedy was still torturing his mind. He used to contemplate on how to take revenge against the persons responsible for the heinous act. He chalked out various strategies and plans to materialise his wish. In London, he followed the activities of Sir Michael O' Dwyer, who was the Governor of Punjab, at the time of the tragedy and was mainly responsible for the brutal massacre. On 13 March 1940, the East India Association and Royal Central Asian Society organised a function at the Caxton Hall of London. In this function, Dwyer was to speak on his activities in India. Udham Singh was also present in the meeting. He reached near the dais with a revolver hidden inside a big book. Dwyer started addressing the people when suddenly Udham Singh shot at him. Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State for India, who was presiding over the meeting, was also injured in the shootout. Tension prevailed in the meeting and people began to run here and there. Udham Singh did not shoot any other person. His vow was fulfilled and he was very happy now. Soon the police overpowered him but he did not attempt to escape and continued to claim that he had done his duty for the country.

A case of murder was filed against Udham Singh and on 1 April 1940, he was formally charged with the murder of Michael O'Dwyer. On 4 June 1940, he was presented before the Central Criminal Court, Old Bailey. In the court, he gave this statement before the magistrate, "I was justified in murdering O'Dwyer. He deserved this. I have done a right thing and I am glad that I have fulfilled my long desired vow. I have no fear of death. It is better to die at a young age rather than when one is old."

Prior to passing the sentence, Justice Atkinson asked Udham Singh whether he had anything to say. Replying in the affirmative, he began to

read from the prepared notes. The judge repeatedly interrupted Udham Singh and ordered the press not to report the statement. Both in Britain and India, the Government made strenuous efforts to ensure that the minimum publicity was given to the trial. In a letter from Brixton Prison on 30 March 1940, Udham Singh refers to Bhagat Singh in the following terms: "I am never afraid of dying so soon. I will be getting married with execution. I am not sorry, as I am a soldier of my country. It is almost ten years when my friend (Bhagat Singh) had left me behind and I am sure that after my death I will see him as he is waiting for me. It was 23 March when he (Bhagat Singh) was hanged and I hope they will hang me on the same auspicious date."

The British courts kept secret for long, the last words of Udham Singh. At last his speech had to be released from the British Public Records Office. If it was the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, which proved to be the turning point of his life and led him to avenge the dead, it was Bhagat Singh who provided him with the inspiration to pursue the path of the revolutionary struggle. Echoes of Kartar Singh Sarabha and Bhagat Singh may be found in the words of Udham Singh in the wake of the assassination of O'Dwyer – "I don't care, I don't mind dying. What is the use of waiting till you get old? You want to die when you are young. That is good, that is what I am doing."

On 10 June 1940 the British gave a judgement and Udham Singh was hanged to death exactly after two days, i.e. on 12 June 1940 in the Pentonville Prison in London and became a martyr at a very young age. His countrymen are proud of him. He avenged the national insult and his name will continue to be heard in the corridors of history.

During the trial, Udham Singh made a request that his ashes be sent back to his country, but this was not allowed. In 1975, however, the Government of India, forced by the Punjab Government, finally succeeded in bringing the ashes of Udham Singh to India.

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## KHUDIRAM BOSE

### The Teenage Martyr

Muzaffarpur, 30 April 1908. In the night, one 'fitten' (a family carriage drawn by horses) was coming towards the British officers' club. In the silence of the darkness, echoed by horse trotting, suddenly two young men appeared from behind the trees and threw a bomb on the 'fitten'. The 'fitten' was destroyed. What was left was smouldering smoke and cries of the injured inhabitants of the carriage. These two young men were Prafulla Kumar Chaki and nineteen-year old Khudiram Bose.

Khudiram Bose was born on 3 December 1889 in the village Sopani in the Midnapur district of Bengal. His father's name was T N Bose and mother's Lakshmi Priya Devi. Khudiram was just seven year old when he lost both his parents. He used to live with his sister Anurupa Devi and studied in a nearby school. He was not much interested in studies and liked reading detective novels and loved to play flute. It was during his school days that he was inspired by the activists, Satyendra Nath Bose and Gyanendra Nath Bosu who headed a secret society to campaign and fight against the British imperialism. During his school days he came into contact with a few revolutionaries and got associated with them.

Khudiram left his education when he was in class nine and started participating in the national movement. As a child he had seen the atrocities of an English officer Tomson. Thus, since childhood his heart was burning with the revolutionary spirit. A patriot, at the age of seven

or eight years, Khudiram's mind was filled with thoughts of his country's rich heritage. His elders told him that India was the home of knowledge for thousands of years. He wondered why the people were not able to live as they wished, under the British rule. Whole day long the boy was engaged in these thoughts.

Once Khudiram got some inkling that his friend Mangal Sen's father was an informer of the Britishers. He, with his two friends went to the residence of the British officer and over-heard the talks, in which Mangal Sen's father was revealing the address of a revolutionary hideout to the British officer. Khudiram immediately alerted the revolutionaries and they all escaped to safer places.

One day, Khudiram heard the slogans of *Vande Mataram* and *Bharat Mata Ki Jai* (victory to mother India). He was thrilled by these words, his eyes glowed and he felt happy. Gradually, he learnt the use of weapons, like the pistol, dagger and *lathi*, and quickly became an expert. Though lean, he was very active in his revolutionary works. At the same time he took up the task of spreading the gospel of *Vande Mataram*. As the message of *Vande Mataram* spread, the British became crueler than before. They proclaimed that it was treason to shout *Vande Mataram*.

Meetings and processions started with cries of *Vande Mataram*, which shocked the British. If two patriots met, instead of merely saying *Namaskar* (salutation) they bowed to each other with the greeting *Vande Mataram*, which shocked British. Whenever the police heard the slogan, they mercilessly beat the patriots and tortured them. Yet they could not prevent the Indians from shouting the sacred slogan. The greater the tyranny of the British, the greater grew the pride of the Indians. People started boycotting foreign clothes. They left foreign schools and colleges. Now *Swadeshi* (made in our country) became the mantra of salutation to patriots.

Wherever the revolutionaries became active, the Government appointed stern and harsh officers to torture the patriots. They would ill-treat women, children and old men, inflict harsh punishments even for small crimes.

*Vande Mataram* was a very popular newspaper in Bengal, which was started by the great patriot Bipin Chandra Pal. Its editor was Maharishi Aurobindo Ghosh. The paper not only published article inculcating radical patriotism, but also fearlessly condemned the acts of injustice done by the British. In 1907, the British prosecuted *Vande Mataram* on a charge of treason. The trial was held at the Police Court of Lal Bazaar in Calcutta. Everyday thousands of young men used to gather outside the Court and shout *Vande Mataram* with one voice, thus displaying their pride in the paper.

Once, the Government organised an exhibition in Midnapur where the leaders of the group of revolutionaries recognised Khudiram's devotion and interest in *Vande Mataram*. They saw Khudiram distributing copies of *Vande Mataram*, which was full of anti-government articles. When the police noticed this act they tried to arrest him but, somehow, he managed to escape from the scene.

Satyendra Nath Bose was the teacher of Khudiram who used to encourage Khudiram's revolutionary activities. He introduced Khudiram to the famous revolutionaries of Calcutta, Varindranath Ghosh who admitted him to his group. Later, he lost his job while trying to defend the acts of Khudiram Bose. On December 1907, Khudiram with his team threw a bomb on Bengal Governor's train near Naraingarh railway station. Unfortunately, the attempt was not successful.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the misrule and atrocities of the British were at the peak and the people were given harsh punishments on very minor faults. One such official was Judge Kingsford, who was amongst the most wanted by the revolutionaries because he used to give severe punishments to the Indian patriots. Things got worse when Kingsford ordered to cane a youth called Sushil Sen held in contempt of court. Sushil was left almost dead and this incident caused furor throughout Bengal. Kingsford was transferred from Calcutta to Muzaffarpur. But the revolutionaries were not ready to sit idle. As a result, the *Jugantar* group held a meeting at a house in Calcutta. The agenda was how to punish Kingsford who had treated Sushil so unjustly and harshly. It was decided that Kingsford should be shot dead. Khudiram Bose and





Prafulla Kumar Chaki were given the charge to eliminate Judge Kingsford. The leader of the group gave two revolvers, a bomb and a little money to both of them, and sent them with his blessings. Both of them came to Muzaffarpur in the guise of young men looking for a job, and started living near the residence of Kingsford.

For days, both of them observed the movement of Kingsford. There was a British club near the residence of Kingsford, which Kingsford visited regularly and where only white people were allowed to enter. On 30 April 1908, Khudiram and Chaki decided to throw a bomb at Kingsford when he went to the club. Incidentally, a British lawyer, P. Kennedy, had also a 'fitten', which was identical to that of Kingsford. Unfortunately, Khudiram was unaware of the fact. When Khudiram and Chaki threw the bomb at the 'fitten', presuming that Kingsford was inside, it turned out to be the 'fitten' of Kennedy. His wife and daughter were inside the vehicle at the time of the explosion. Both the ladies were seriously injured and later died at the hospital.

After throwing the bomb, both Khudiram and Chaki ran away and were separated from each other. In the morning, Khudiram came to know that Kingsford was alive and two innocent ladies had died. He felt very sad at this, but before he could do anything he was arrested on 1 May 1908. He accepted that he had thrown the bomb. Later, Prafulla Kumar Chaki was also arrested. He shot himself with his revolver. Khudiram was brought to Muzaffarpur by train under tight security. Thousands of people had assembled to see the boy who had thrown a bomb for the first time in India against the British. As soon as Khudiram got into the carriage to go to the police station, he shouted, with a smile, *Vande Mataram*.

Khudiram Bose was sad that he could not kill Kingsford. He was tried for several months in the court of Kingsford himself. During the course of trial he once said to the Judge, "You cannot give any sentence worse than death to me. It is a misfortune that I could not serve much to my country. If I could get time I would have taught unlimited young men to make bombs so that they could be thrown on people like you."

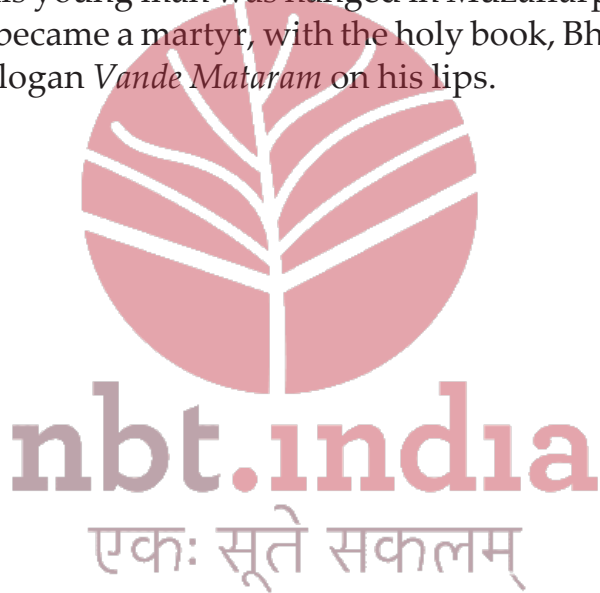
The pretence of a trial took two months. In the end, the magistrate read his judgement, sentencing Khudiram to death. Even when the

judgement was being read, Khudiram did not show fear on his face. The judge was surprised that a boy of nineteen years accepted death so calmly. "Do you know what this judgement means?" he asked. Khudiram replied with a smile, "I know its meaning better than you." When asked if wanted to say something, Khudiram roared, "I wish to die for the freedom of my country. The thought of the gallows does not make me unhappy. My only regret is that Kingsford could not be punished for his crimes."

Khudiram's sacrifice did not go waste. Of course, the bomb thrown by him hit others, but not Kingsford. But the fear of bomb had already entered the mind of Kingsford. Right from the day when Khudiram became a martyr, Kingsford was disturbed and had no peace of mind. Each moment seemed to bring him death. At last, he was so terrified that he resigned from his post and settled at Mussorie. Kingsford, who frightened and tortured the innocents, himself died of terror.

Even in prison, Khudiram was not at all worried. As death approached, his face grew brighter than ever. He thought that the sooner he sacrificed his life, sooner he could be born again to fight for the freedom of his Motherland.

On 11 August 1908, this young man was hanged in Muzaffarpur jail. At the age of nineteen, he became a martyr, with the holy book, Bhagwad Gita in his hand and the slogan *Vande Mataram* on his lips.





## HEMU KALANI

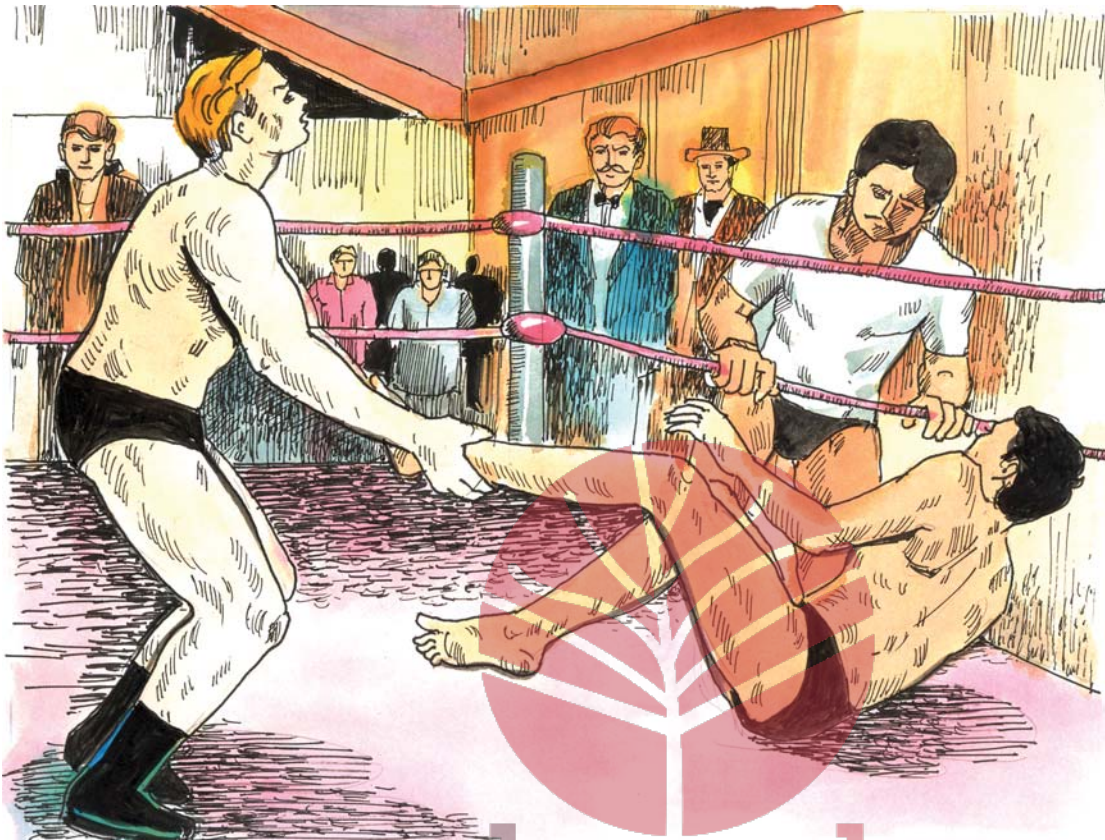
Staunch Supporter of Nationalistic Spirit

We cannot forget the name of the young martyr, Hemu Kalani who laid down his life for the independence of the country. Popularly known among his friends as Hemu, he was born on 11 March 1924, in the city of Sukkur in Sindh, now in Pakistan. Since childhood his ideal was Bhagat Singh and often, when alone, he tried to put a rope around his neck to feel the pain, which Bhagat Singh had gone through when he died at the gallows. Once his headmaster, Dr Manga Ram Kalani in Tilak Municipal High School saw him in the garden doing this dangerous act. When asked, he replied that he wanted to be hanged like Bhagat Singh and Rajguru for the sake of India's independence. Dr Manga Ram was very happy to see a young boy with so much courage and love for the country. The headmaster had formed an organisation known as *Swarajya Sena*. Its objective was to inculcate discipline and create awareness amongst the youth regarding patriotism and love for the motherland.

Once Hemu's father, Pesumal Kalani, was going for some work and there he saw that two British policemen were beating an innocent person mercilessly. When he tried to intervene, he was sent to jail. Hemu was so furious with this incident that he started towards the police station with a pistol in his pocket. Fortunately, on the way he met Dr Manga Ram, who pacified Hemu and brought him back.

Hemu had a very good physique. He believed that a healthy body

nourished a healthy soul. In old Sukkur, the British used to organise wrestling competitions regularly, where only the Englishmen used to win. Once Hemu also went to watch the competition. He saw that one strong British wrestler was pouncing on a thin Indian wrestler. Hemu could not bear this and challenged the Englishman, and ultimately defeated him. This incident sparked jubilation in the city and students took out a victory procession. To disperse the crowd the police resorted to lathi-charge and arrested several persons.



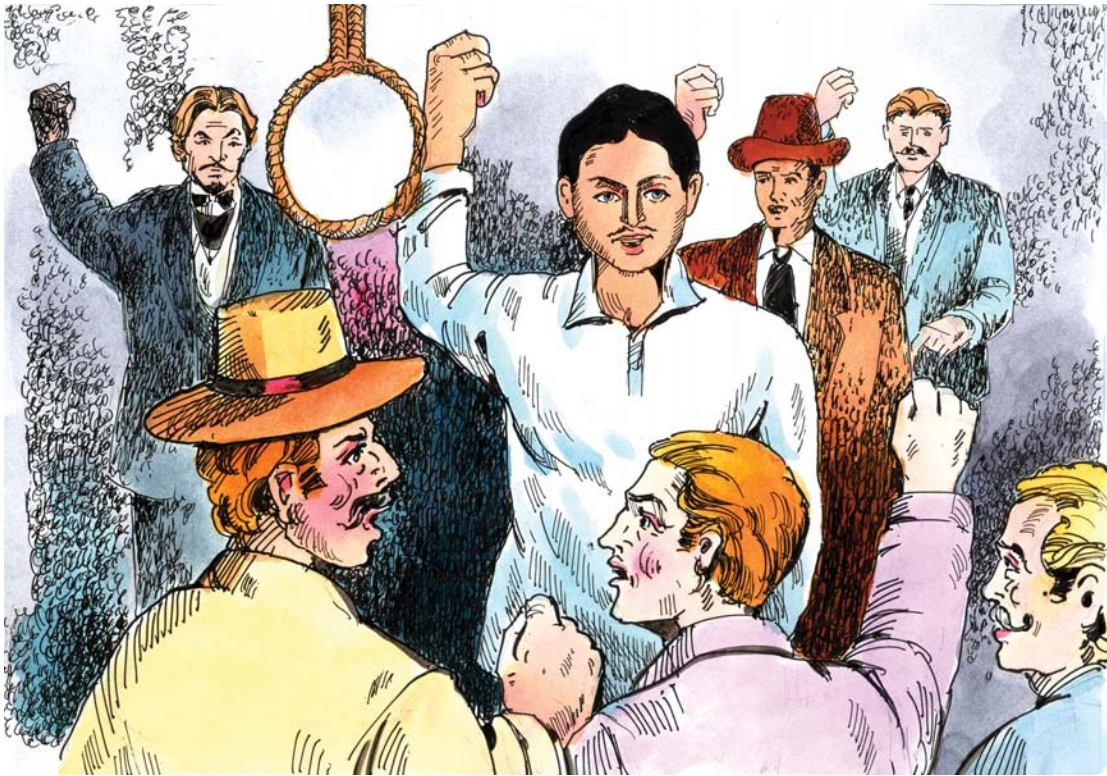
The British Government had banned meetings to avoid riots. But Hemu managed to collect about three hundred students and other citizens in the thick of the night, despite the ban order. An organisation with the name of 'Independent Army' was formed then and there. Dr Manga Ram and other leaders addressed the gathering. Next day, under the leadership of Hemu,

a procession was taken out demanding the lifting of the ban and release of the innocent citizens. The procession was lathi-charged by the police. In return, the members of the Independent Army pelted stones and bricks at the policemen. Policemen then resorted to firing to disperse the mob. Dr Manga Ram was arrested, several people were injured and Hemu and his friend Hira laid on the road in protest. The police thought them to be dead and left the scene. The two friends then got up and went to their hideout. On the same night, the British burnt a nearby village and tortured the village *Pradhan*. Hemu, along with his friends, reached the spot and killed about two dozen policemen after snatching their rifles.

In 1942, Mahatma Gandhi gave a call for Quit India Movement and introduced the slogan 'Do or Die' at a rally in Bombay on 8 August the same year. Nath Hari, a revolutionary, inspired by the call, brought some hand-grenades from Bombay and gave them to Hemu. With the help of ammunition, Hemu tried to liberate Dr Manga Ram and his friends from the Sindh Jail. Hemu, Nath Hari, Hira and others entered the jail, but the policemen outnumbered them. In the struggle, Hira was killed. Hemu and Nath Hari fled from the scene. This attack alerted the Sindh police and the surveillance on the revolutionaries was increased. Hemu and his friends went into their hideouts.

Meanwhile, Nath Hari came to know that a train, loaded with arms and ammunition and carrying troops to be used for crushing the nationalist agitation was to come to the city. It was obvious that with the help of these arms the police would resort to terrorising the people. So the revolutionary group decided that the rails of the track be taken out in order to stop the train, and destroy the ammunition. Thus, in order to derail the train, the fishplates of the railway track were removed on the night of 23 October 1942 near Sukkur. The workers of the Independent Army, led by Hemu, accomplished this work. Unfortunately, the British came to know about the plan and they surrounded them. Found themselves trapped there, Hemu asked his colleagues to leave and he himself surrendered to the police.

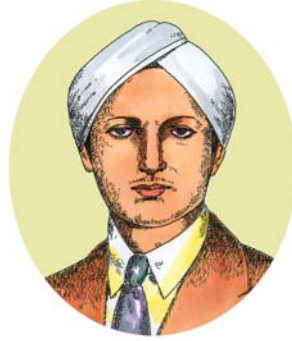
Hemu was tried in the military court and got life imprisonment. But later a higher military court changed it into death penalty. Hemu was very happy to hear about his death sentence. His dream to be hanged like Bhagat



Singh was fulfilled. He was ready to make the supreme sacrifice for his country. He gained body weight during the last days, which was most unusual for a prisoner condemned to death. Before being hanged, he consoled his distressed mother by reminding her of her earlier teachings of Gita, wherein she mentioned about the indestructibility of soul. His patriotic zeal was so strong that he pledged his next life also to the cause of India's freedom.

In jail, Hemu was kept in very tight security. The British were afraid to go near him. On 21 January 1943, he was hanged in Sukkur Central Jail. At that time his age was only eighteen. For his last wish he asked the district magistrate and other jail officials to recite the slogans, *Inquilab Zindabad* and '*Union Jack Murdabad*' loudly, to which everyone present there complied with.

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## KARTAR SINGH SARABHA

Passionate Young Rebel

A martyr who was only twenty years old when he sacrificed himself on the altar of freedom. He was Kartar Singh Sarabha who ignited the spirit of revolution in the minds of the people of India and tried to wake them up for the uprising at the start of the last century. It was time when Bhagat Singh and Chandra Shekhar Azad had not yet come to the scene of freedom struggle and Gandhi was a little known name. Patriotism was imbibed in the veins of Kartar Singh. There was only one aim in his life, only one desire, only one hope and that was revolution.

Kartar Singh Sarabha was born on 24 May 1896 in village Sarabha in the Ludhiana district of Punjab. Kartar was still very young when his father, Mangal Singh died. His grandfather brought him up with good care. He went to a primary school for his early education and later studied in the Khalsa High School at Ludhiana. After passing the ninth grade, he went to Orissa to live with his uncle. There he completed his high school and joined college. Besides the text books, he got the opportunity to read a lot of books on the nationalist movement. It was this political environment that aroused the feeling of patriotism in him. It was then he decided that he must travel to America.

In 1911, he went to America along with some relatives and other people. He reached San Francisco in 1912 and took admission in a factory where planes were made and learnt how to make them. In this new place his tender



heart was subjected to blows and humiliation at every step. He would be very upset when he heard himself being called a 'damn Hindu' or a 'black man' by the whites. Everyday he felt that his country's dignity and respect were in jeopardy. His soft heart began to harden gradually and his determination to sacrifice his life for the freedom of country grew firm.

When Sarabha was learning to make planes he came into contact of some people who were fighting for independence and were unhappy to see the torture inflicted on the Indians. He decided to sacrifice his life for the cause of India's independence. He started organising meetings of the Indian labourers and gradually ignited in them the passion for freedom. He would sit with a worker for hours and explain how death was thousand times preferable to humiliation as slaves. Many joined him in this venture. A special meeting of these people took place in May 1912, which was also attended by select Indian leaders. Everyone present there took a vow to dedicate his mind, body and wealth for the freedom of the country.

Incidentally, Kartar happened to meet Lala Har Dayal. Lala lived in San Francisco but he used to visit several places and sermoned people for the cause of India's independence. On 25 March 1913, there was a big meeting of Indians in Oregon province. The main speaker was Lala Har Dayal. At the end of the speech he said, "I need such young men who can give their lives for the independence of India." On his call, the first man who rose and presented himself was Kartar Singh Sarabha. Everybody applauded while Lala Har Dayal embraced him. At that time it was decided that for the publicity of Indian independence, one newspaper would be brought out with the name *Ghadar* in several languages and would be dispatched to those countries where Indians lived. In 1913, *Ghadar* was first published and Sardar Kartar Singh edited its Punjabi version. His pen was very powerful. Members of the editorial board printed the paper on a hand press.

Kartar Singh was a young man who loved revolution. The dedication with which Kartar Singh worked gave courage to others. From *Yugantar Ashram*, San Francisco, copies of *Ghadar*, *Ghadar ki Goonj* and many other publications were printed and distributed regularly. Propaganda and

enthusiasm was increasing day-by-day. In a public meeting held in an American city in February 1914, the Indian freedom flag was unfurled. Oaths for freedom and equality were taken. Kartar Singh was one of the main speakers in this meeting. Everyone present declared that they would donate their hard earned money for the country's freedom. Suddenly the news of the First World War came from Europe.

In the First World War in 1914, the position of England was very weak. The followers of the Ghadar party were of the opinion that this was the time to burn the light of opposition in India in order to achieve independence. Several Indians living in America were ready for the purpose. They sold their belongings, purchased arms and ammunitions and proceeded to India along with Kartar Singh Sarabha. Unfortunately, their plan got leaked and several people were arrested along with arms and ammunitions on reaching the sea shore of India. But Sarabha along with some of his followers managed to escape from the scene. He then reached Punjab secretly and tried to identify people who were torturing Indians. In December 1914, Vishnu Ganesh Pingle of Maharashtra also reached India from America. Sachindra Nath Sanyal and Raas Behari Bose also reached Punjab. Bose planned that a rebellion should be started in the whole of India on one particular day. Kartar Singh Sarabha played a major role in spreading rebellion in the military barracks.

It seemed that Kartar Singh was everywhere—if there was a secret meeting at one place, he was present. If a message was to be spread among the students at another place, he was the first to be there. Whether it was a meeting with the soldiers at Ferozepur or need to travel to Calcutta for acquiring the arms, he would go everywhere. But for all these jobs there were shortage of funds. For generating funds, Kartar Singh suggested the idea of robbery to his colleagues. His argument was that the revolution could not be delayed due to lack of funds.

One day Kartar Singh led some people to a village to carry out robbery. In one of the houses, there was a beautiful young woman. Suddenly, one of his comrades forcefully grabbed her hand. The woman shrieked out of fear. Kartar Singh immediately took out his pistol and placed it on his forehead and roared, "You wretched man, your crime is very serious, you should be



punished to die for that. But the circumstances force us to forgive you. You have to touch the feet of this woman and ask her to forgive you. If she forgives you, we will let you remain alive, otherwise you shall be shot dead.” The comrade did as he was told and repented. This episode proves that although Kartar was carrying out a robbery, his heart remained pure and full of pious thoughts and emotions.

Preparations were made for the revolt to take place in February 1915. In the first week, Kartar along with Pingle and some other friends went to Agra, Kanpur, Allahabad, Lucknow, Meerut and some other places to meet people and apprise them about the revolt. 21 February 1915 was the day fixed for launching the revolt all over India. All preparations were being made accordingly. But one Kirpal Singh leaked all plans to the Government. When Kartar came to know about this, he asked Raas Behari Bose to pre-poned the date of the revolt to 19 February. Unfortunately, Kirpal Singh came to know about this also. The presence of one traitor within the revolutionary

group was dangerous and grave. Raas Behari Bose and Kartar Singh had no way to keep their plans secret.

According to the plan, Kartar Singh reached Ferozepur with his fifty or sixty colleagues. He met with his friend, a *havaladar* and talked to him about the revolt. But Kirpal Singh had already spoiled everything. Indian soldiers were disarmed and arrests were made on a large scale. But Kartar and Raas Behari Bose escaped. Kartar Singh went to Lahore disappointed. Raas Behari Bose reached Japan via Lahore, Varanasi and Calcutta. Bose advised Kartar to go to Kabul. When Kartar reached Wazirabad he thought that running away from the country was not good. So he went to the military barracks and tried to influence the cadets for a rebellion but was betrayed by a *risaldar* and was arrested. He was very happy at the time of his arrest. He used to say that if he died a death of a valiant he should be given the title of *Baghi* (revolutionary). If anybody is to remember him, he should be remembered as *Baghi Kartar*. He was not calm even in jail. He planned to break the jail and liberate prisoners so that they could participate in the mutiny. One of the prisoners got the clue and informed the authorities. As a result all the prisoners were put in the cells and were chained. Later an iron-cutting instrument was found in the possession of Kartar Singh.

A case was filed against Kartar, which became famous as First Lahore Conspiracy Case. There were sixty-three other people who were also tried in this case. And they were convicted with the charges of murder, dacoity and rebellion. Out of these, the court sentenced twenty-four people to death. Later, on appeal, the sentences of seventeen people were reduced but the death sentences of seven were confirmed. The names of these seven persons were Kartar Singh Sarabha, Vishnu Pingle, Kanshi Ram, Jagat Singh, Harnam Singh, Sajjan Singh and Bakshish Singh. During the trial, Kartar Singh said in the court, "Either I will get *Kala Pani* (life imprisonment) or death sentence. I will like to be hanged so that I am quickly reborn and be ready to fight for the independence of India and lay my life again." He also remarked, "My wish is that till India is free I should be hanged again and again for this purpose. My only wish is that I should see my country as independent. I have not taken any decision against any man, caste or society. I have no grudge against them. Independence is my only aim and wish."

At the time of the trial, Kartar was only eighteen and a half years of age. He was the youngest defendant. But the judge wrote about him, "He is one of the most dangerous among the defendants. During his stay in America and then in India there is not a single part of this conspiracy in which he has not played an important role." When his turn came to testify his crime, Kartar admitted everything and delivered his revolutionary testimony. He told the judge in a carefree tone. "You can only hang me, what more can you do? We are not afraid of that."

The judge wrote in his judgement, "...this young man has tried to destabilise the British Government. Whenever he got any opportunity, he tried to harm the Government. His age is very less but he is very dangerous...." Finally he was awarded the death sentence. When the judge delivered his judgement, Kartar Singh smilingly said, "Thank You."

When Kartar Singh was locked in his death cell, his grandfather came to see him. He said, "Kartar, the people for whom you are giving your life do not seem to be concerned whether you are alive or dead. It does not also seem that the country will benefit anything from your death. So what is the use of giving up your life?" Kartar Singh replied very softly, "Grandfather, two of our relatives died on the bed suffering from diseases. Everyone has to die one day. Do you wish that Kartar Singh should also be lying on his bed for months suffering with some sickness and die! Is this death not thousand times better than that type of life?" On hearing his answer his grandfather was speechless.

Sarabha was kept in jail in tight security. Police and the jail staff were afraid of him. Whenever he was taken out he was surrounded by a big police force. He always used to laugh, knowing well that he had to die soon. On 16 November 1915 the nineteen-year-old Kartar was hanged in the Lahore Central Prison. While going to the gallows he was laughing and singing. He embraced the hanging rope with the words, 'Victory to Mother India.' It was a historic day in the Indian independence movement.

Sarabha was an important organiser of the Ghadar Party. He was full of life and was fond of doing risky jobs and never feared for his death. Friends and foes were equally impressed with his mesmerising personality. Kartar Singh will be remembered for his sacrifice, courage and bravery.



## MADAN LAL DHINGRA

First Revolutionary Hanged in London

Madan Lal Dhingra was another revolutionary of the Indian freedom struggle who held high the torch of revolution while staying in England. It was said that to kill an enemy on his own land itself was a very heroic deed. For this difficult work, one needed a very strong character and a great deal of patience. While living in England, Madan Lal fought against the British and killed a very notorious Englishman and showed his bravery.

Madan Lal Dhingra was born in the Amritsar district of Punjab in the year 1887 in a respectable and prosperous family. His father, Sahib Ditta Mal, was a Surgeon in a Civil Hospital at Gurdaspur and Hissar. The family had a long tradition of service and loyalty to the British Raj in India. Since childhood, Madan was good at sports as well as studies. His early education took place in Lahore and he did his B.A. from the Punjab University. For some time he worked in a Government department in Kashmir and also worked at Shimla.

After earning sufficient money, he resigned and sailed for England in June 1906 to pursue a course in engineering. He joined the University College of Engineering at London. While living in England he came into contact with the revolutionaries, Shyamji Krishna Varma and Veer Savarkar. Varma was a great patriot. He had established India House, a centre of the Indian revolutionary movement, in England. Veer Savarkar used to live in the India House. Dhingra came to know of the India House. One day he went there

when Savarkar was addressing a gathering of enthusiastic young men. Savarkar was a very good orator. He was describing the pitiable condition of India. His speech made a remarkable impact on Dhingra's mind and strong patriotic feelings were aroused in him. From that day, Savarkar became Dhingra's hero. He began to worship him and attended his lectures with great interest.

India House was campaigning in favour of the revolutionary movement and as the news of hanging of the great revolutionaries Kanailal Datta and Satyendra Nath Bose reached there, it created sensation and havoc amongst the people. Madan Lal Dhingra also became a member of the India House. One day Veer Savarkar tested his courage. He asked Dhingra to keep both his hands out. As he pulled his hands out, Savarkar pierced a big needle



through his palm and blood oozed out, but Dhingra remained unmoved. After seeing all this, Savarkar became very much elated. His eyes were full of tears and he hugged Dhingra. In those days a person was admitted in the revolutionary party only after such difficult tests and trials. Madan Lal Dhingra succeeded in this test and started taking part in the meetings held in the India House.

On 10 May 1908, India House celebrated the golden jubilee of the First Indian Revolution of 1857. The Indian flag was unfurled and inspiring speeches were given on the occasion. Dhingra too participated in the function. On this occasion, '1857 Commemoration' badges were made in the memory of the great revolutionaries and everyone in the function wore them. The very next day Dhingra went to his college wearing the badge but was opposed by the English students. He also had a scuffle with them when they tried to snatch the badge.

Dhingra was very much influenced by the thinking and philosophy of Veer Savarkar due to which he established contacts with the Indian revolutionaries as well as with the revolutionaries of Ireland. The name of Dhingra had been included in the diaries of the British Intelligence. When he started his activities against the Englishmen, the British Government wrote to his father that he should ask his son to stop working in favour of the revolutionaries. Dhingra's father wrote several letters to his son asking him to stop his revolutionary activities but they had no effect on Madan Lal.

Savarkar's elder brother, Ganesh Damodar Savarkar, affectionately called Babarao Savarkar, was also a revolutionary. He was arrested by the British Government and was awarded transportation sentence to the solitary confinement of the Andaman Jail. Usually, convicts who were a danger to the society, such as murderers and dacoits, were sent to the Andamans jail. The Britishers used to give similar punishments to the Indian freedom fighters. Dhingra was very much perturbed at the arrest of Babarao Savarkar. Angered at the injustice of the British rule, he bought a revolver and practiced shooting.

In those days some pamphlets came from Paris and were circulated in



London. These pamphlets mentioned that for effective revolution one had to sacrifice one's life. There was also a list of people who had sacrificed their lives for their country's independence. The British Government had formed a committee to poison the minds of the Indian youth about their own nation. Sir Colonel William Curzon Wylie, an advisor in the office of the Secretary of State for India, was one of the three important members of this committee. He had put the C.I.D. and the police against the students who were working for the independence of the country. Dhingra used to hate Sir Curzon for his cruelty against the students and decided to kill him. To achieve this aim he used to go out of the colony to practice shooting. He also became a member of the National Indian Association at the Imperial Institute, after befriending its secretary, Emma Josephine Beck. Sir Curzon used to take part in the deliberations of the association. Dhingra used to dress up like an Englishman and make contacts with big and influential Englishmen visiting the Institute. The British Police was keeping an eye on the activities of India House. And some time later, the British Government ordered the closure of the India House and Dhingra was forced to quit. A few days later Dhingra came to know that on 1 July 1909, the National Indian Association was to celebrate its annual day at the Imperial Institute in London, and Sir Curzon had been invited there.

On 1 July 1909, Sir Curzon and Adikong, an Indian minister were talking to two people in the Jehangir Hall of the Institute. Dhingra approached Sir Curzon, took out the revolver from his pocket and fired at him point-blank. Sir Curzon screamed and fell on the ground. Dhingra fired two more shots at him. People got scared. A Parsi doctor called Cowasjee Lalkaka rushed to the aid of Sir Curzon and tried to catch hold of Dhingra. Dhingra fired a shot at him too in self-defence and Cowasjee too fell on the ground. Sir Curzon lay dead on the floor. Cowasjee died in the hospital a few days later. Everybody was stunned but Dhingra was calm and contented. He surrendered to the police without any resistance. He was taken to the jail in Bristol.

After the incident Dhingra became a household name in England and India. He had generated patriotic feelings among Indians and was a hero. But some Indians disapproved Dhingra's act and openly condemned it. His

father and brother disowned him and declared that they had nothing to do with Dhingra any more. A group of Indian community wanted to hold a meeting to condemn Dhingra's conduct. When Savarkar and Dhingra's friends learnt about this they became furious. A brave Indian youth had performed a heroic feat, practically sacrificed his life for his motherland, and these Indians were out to condemn him. This was utterly shameful. It was then decided to ensure that the resolution condemning Dhingra's deed should not be passed without opposition.

On 4 July 1909 a meeting was held at the Caxton Hall to condemn the act of Dhingra. The meeting was presided over by Sir Agha Khan. Bipin Chandra Pal and Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee were also present in the meeting but



kept mum over the matter. When all the speakers had presented their views, Sir Agha Khan said, "Shall I presume that this resolution be passed unanimously?" Suddenly Veer Savarkar stood up from a corner and in a serious tone said, "I strongly oppose the resolution." On this, an Englishman stood up and said, "Look, how straight the English fist goes," and punched Savarkar. Immediately another Indian who was standing nearby retorted, "Look, how straight the Indian clubs go," and hit him with a hockey stick on his head. Soon there was a commotion at the meeting and the gathering was dispersed without the resolution getting passed.

Dhingra was tried in the court for murdering Sir Curzon. He believed that he had killed one of the representatives of an oppressive regime, and thus contributed his share towards the struggle for freedom. On 10 July he gave a statement in the court, "Just as the Germans have no right to occupy England, so the Britons have no right to occupy India... The Englishmen have no right to rule over our country. They are committing atrocities in our country and making it unholy. I had fired on Curzon Wyllie in order to liberate our country. I have committed no sin or crime by firing at him. I have only done my duty." He further said, "I know I have killed a British but it was a revenge against Englishmen who have hanged so many people and sent many others to the *Kala Pani* (life imprisonment). I have only listened to my soul, and nobody else, to commit this act. Being a Hindu it is my firm belief that doing injustice to my country is to dishonour God. Worship of the country is equivalent to the worship of Lord Ram and service to the country is equal to the service to Lord Krishna."

Dhingra was sent to the sessions court and was sentenced to be hanged to death. On 17 August 1909 he was hanged in the Pentonville jail in London. He was the first revolutionary to be hanged in London, far away from his country, far away from his motherland.

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## MANGAL PANDEY

First Warrior of Freedom Struggle

The history of Indian struggle for freedom starts with the Revolution of 1857, termed by the British as 'Mutiny of 1857'. It was exactly ninety years before we got independence in 1947. Although the kings, queens and famous warriors are associated with the First War of Indian Independence, but it is Mangal Pandey who flashes in the mind, with the mention of 1857. He is widely considered to be the first warrior in India's long struggle for independence.

Mangal Pandey was born in 1827 in the village of Nagwa in the Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh. There is still some dispute over his exact place of birth. One account claims that Mangal Pandey was born in a *Bhumihar Brahmin* family to Divakar Pandey of Surhupur village in the Akbarpur Tehsil of Faizabad district.

The British had come to India as traders, under East India Company. But gradually, the Company started recruiting armies and annexing small states. The East India Company employed soldiers, also called sepoys from among the people of the Awadh region. They were supposed to wear red coloured tight jackets, tunics and pants in the European style. The rustic Indians were soon a part of semi-European regiments. The Britishers wanted more and more Brahmins to join the army, like in Goa, where high caste Hindus had converted to Christianity, creating an effective base for the Portuguese administration. Mangal Pandey entered the East India Company's Bengal

Army in 1849 at the age of twenty-two. He was tall, lean and well built. The peasants recruited by the Company as Sepoys were mostly unusually tall. Pandey was a part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Company of the 34<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Bengal Native Infantry (BNI) of the British East Indian Company.

In 1857, a new type of bullet cartridge was introduced by the Britishers in the Enfield Postal-53 rifle, also introduced in the Bengal Army in the same year. It was believed that the cartridge was greased with animal fat, primarily pigeons and cow fat. Since Hindus consider cows as holy and Muslims regard pigs as dirty, the native sepoy had reservations in its usage. The cartridges had to be bitten to remove the cover, and that was objectionable to the sepoy. The general feeling was that this was intentional on the part of the British, to defile their religions.

The British contemplated reducing the discontent by allowing the sepoy to use their own grease made of *ghee* (clarified butter). Lord Canning sanctioned a proposal of Major General Hearsey to this effect. However, the Meerut based Adjutant General of the Army, Colonel C. Chester, who felt it would tantamount to an admission of guilt and could therefore worsen the matters, shot down the proposal. He falsely claimed that the sepoy had been using cartridges greased with mutton fat for years, and therefore, there was no reason to give in now. This claim was, however, not correct as the native sepoy had till then only used unsmeared paper cartridges. The Government even while having every reason to know the truth, let itself be convinced and reversed the earlier orders allowing the usage of *ghee*.

On 24 February 1857, a detachment from the 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry reached the military camp at Behrampore, roughly a hundred miles from Barrackpore. That night when ordered by Colonel Mitchell, cartridges were handed out for a blank ammunition drill, but in the morning, the sepoy refused to take the cartridges. Colonel Mitchell tried to convince them but became nervous as he had only 200 men against 800 sepoy. The news of this incident reached Barrackpore and also to the Governor-General at Calcutta.

On 29 March 1857, Mangal Pandey put on his red army coat and hat, but wore his traditional *dhoti* instead of the standard pants and went out to the

regiment parade ground, with his musket (rifle) and started shouting and inciting the sepoy against the British. Immediately, the Sergeant Major James Thoraton Hewson was told that a sepoy had come out of the lines with his musket loaded, which was against standing orders. Hewson conveyed this to the Adjutant Lieutenant B.H. Baugh. Hewson and Baugh found Mangal Pandey outside the quarter guard, calling on his comrades to help him strike a blow for their religion. When Mangal Pandey saw Hewson, he shot at him and then ran for shelter. As Baugh rushed on his horse towards the errant soldier, Mangal Pandey shot the horse. Baugh jumped off the horse and rushed towards Pandey with a sword in his hand. Dropping his musket, Pandey also drew out a sword. Both of them fought ferociously until Pandey injured Baugh seriously who retreated when Pandey tried to overpower him. Mangal was, however, attacked by a native soldier called Shaikh Paltu, who prevented him from killing the Adjutant and the Sergeant Major.



The men of Barrackpore stood and watched as the first struggle of the mutiny played out before them. Mangal Pandey walked back and forth in front of the guard with a loaded musket asking men to assemble and take arms. Lieutenant Colonel Wheeler, the commanding officer of the 34<sup>th</sup> Regiment, came to the scene. He ordered the sepoy to shoot Mangal Pandey. The native officers did not budge. Wheeler then informed Major General Harsey about the incident. Upon reaching the assembled sepoy, Harsey placed himself in front of the guard and ordered the *Jemadar* of the troops, Ishwari Pandey, to arrest him. The *Jemadar* refused, as did the rest of the company except Shaikh Paltu. Mangal then turned the gun against him and used his foot to try to pull the trigger to shoot himself. He only managed to wound himself and afterwards was taken into custody. *Jemadar* Ishwari Pandey was also arrested for defiance.

The court martial of Mangal Pandey was held on 6 April 1857 and he was found guilty on two charges. Firstly, for the mutiny having gone to the parade ground armed with sword and musket and inciting the men of his regiment to join him against the lawful authority. Secondly, for having used violence against his superior officers Sergeant Major Hewson and Lieutenant and Adjutant Baugh and striking and wounding the two. As was expected he was awarded death sentence.

Mangal Pandey was hanged on 8 April. His execution was scheduled for 18 April, but he was summarily executed 10 days prior to the date, fearing the possibility of a revolt on a larger scale. The *Jemadar* Ishwari Pandey was executed on 22 April. The whole regiment was dismissed 'with disgrace' on 6 May as a collective punishment, because it was felt that they harboured ill-feelings against their superiors. Other sepoy of the Bengal Army thought this was a harsh punishment. Shaikh Paltu was promoted on the spot to the post of a *Havaldar* (native sergeant) by General Harsey.

The Mangal Pandey incident was an initial spark of the wider uprising that took place in May 1857 and shook the foundations of the greatest Empire of the day. 150 years ago the revolt of 1857 witnessed the ouster of East India Company and the British Government took the direct control of India, only to free it 90 years later in 1947.



## BHAI BALMUKUND

A Proud Patriot

Balmukund was born in 1889 in Jhelum District of the undivided Punjab, now in Pakistan. His ancestors had a respectable status in the society and were courageous and brave. Bhai Mati Ram, his ancestor had laid down his life for the freedom of the country. Due to his sacrifice, his family members used the word *Bhai* as their first name. Balmukund's father, Bhai Mathura Das was an Arts graduate and a teacher by profession.

Balmukund completed his primary education in the village Chakbal and later went to Lahore and did his B.A. from the D. A. V. College. Since childhood, patriotic feelings started developing in Balmukund. Near his village there was one revolutionary, living in the guise of 'Sufi Mahatma'. Balmukund used to visit him along with his uncle Bhai Parmanand, who had also contributed to the nation. After obtaining B.A. degree he came into contact with Lala Lajpat Rai. On his advice he started working for the under-developed people for which, he was widely appreciated. Later he started teaching.

In 1910, famous revolutionary Raas Behari Bose was appointed to establish a revolutionary organisation in northern India. After forming Revolutionary Party in Punjab, preparations were made in Lahore to organise a rebellion. Bhai Balmukund joined this revolutionary organisation. He was made in-charge of affairs in Lahore. From time to time he used to distribute



literature and leaflets titled 'liberty' among the public, calling for the revolt against the British rulers. When the police became active in Punjab, Balmukund left Lahore and came to Delhi and worked with Amir Chand, who was a teacher in the Cambridge Mission High School. After that he continued to shuttle between Delhi and Lahore. He also got trained in the use of arms and bombs.

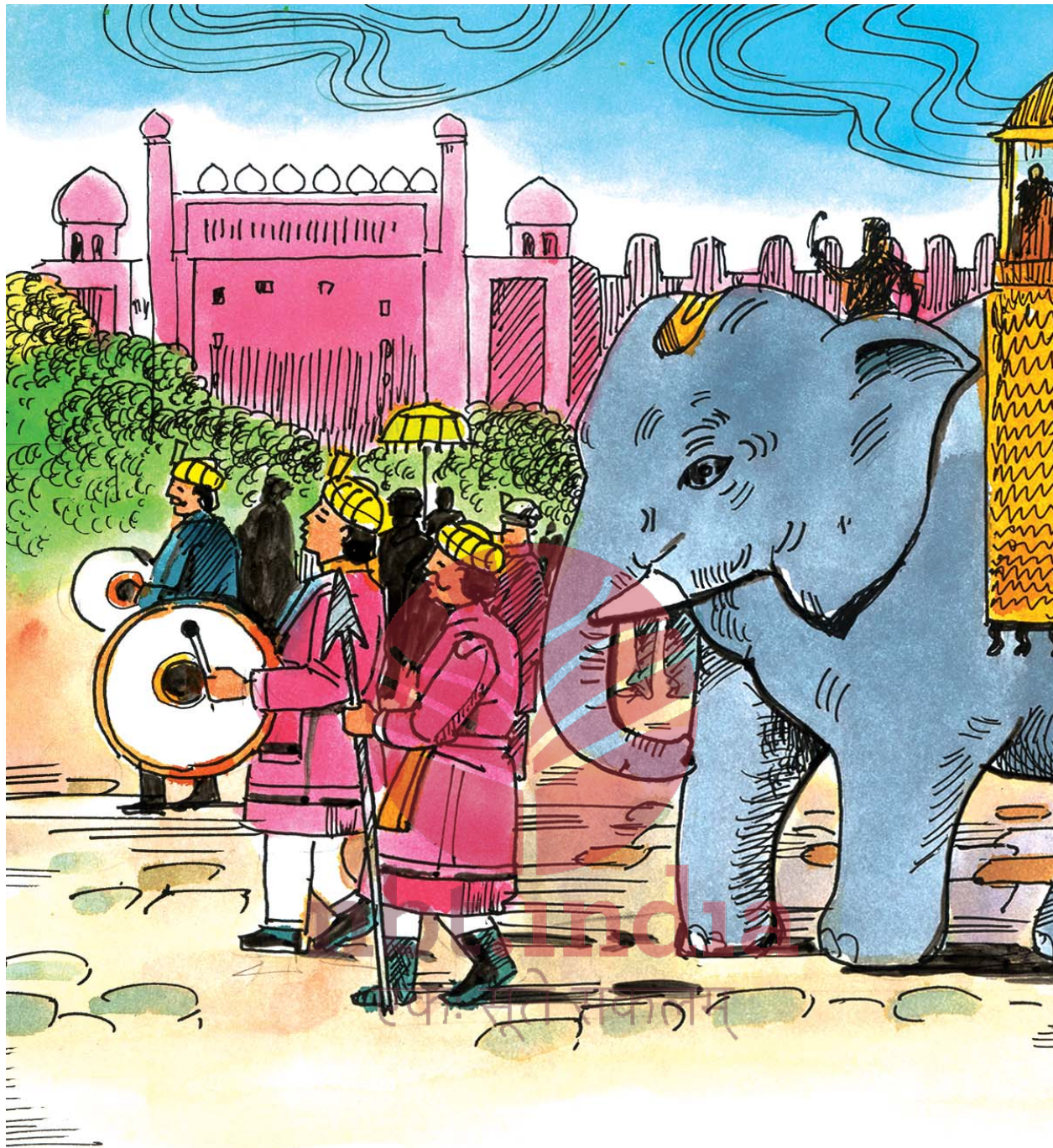
In 1912, the capital of India shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. To celebrate this occasion it was decided that on 23 December 1912 a procession would be taken out in Delhi, where the Viceroy Lord Charles Hardinge would ride on an elephant, to mark the inauguration of Delhi as the Capital of India. Raas Behari Bose, Bhai Balmukund and Amir Chand made a plan to express the resentment of the public and the plan was kept very secret. On the proposed date, the procession started towards Chandni Chowk. In the procession, Lord Hardinge along with his wife was on elephant. There were several Rajas, Maharajas and other dignitaries. When the procession reached Chandni Chowk there was a bomb-blast and it created panic all over. The Viceroy and his wife were unhurt but their security men were killed. After this, the Government started a massive manhunt to nab the culprits.

Several months later, a meeting was organised on 17 May 1913 at Lawrence Garden, Lahore, where several English officers were present. There also a bomb blast took place. The police got panicky and there was a widespread hunt for the criminals. The police got a clue and Dina Nath was arrested but subsequently released in the absence of any evidence against him. When the real Dina Nath was arrested and tortured, he broke down and disclosed the names of Master Amir Chand and Bhai Balmukund. After some time, Balmukund was arrested in Jodhpur, in February 1914, where he had taken up a job to teach a prince.

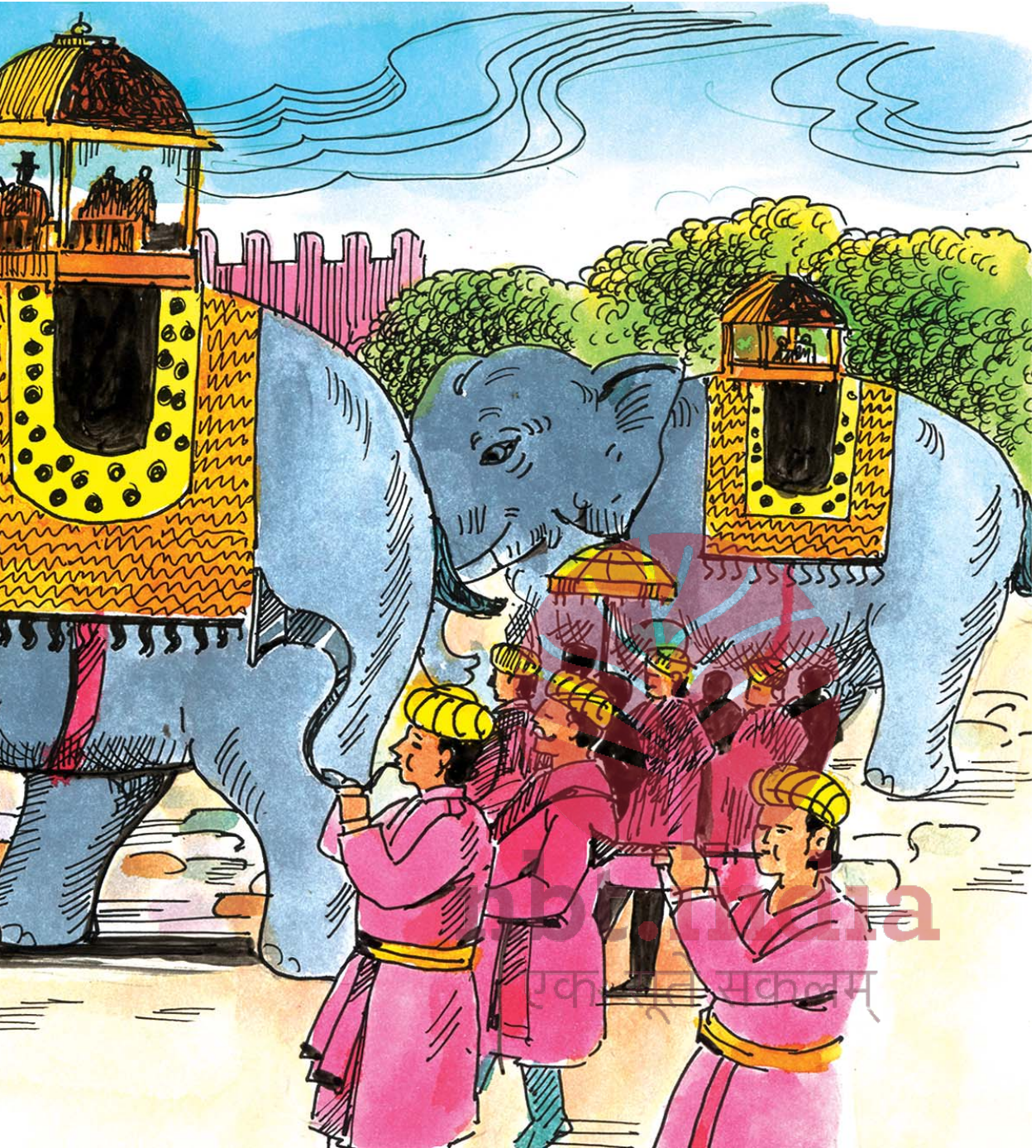
The case was filed against Lala Hanumant Sahai, Bhai Balmukund, Amir Chand, Awadh Behari and Basant Kumar Biswas and it came to be known as Delhi Conspiracy Case. On 5 October 1914, Lala Hanumant Sahai was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Andamans and the other four were sentenced to death. On hearing the judgement Balmukund said laughingly, "My ancestor Mati Ram laid his life for the cause of country's freedom. I

am proud that I am following his steps.”

At last on 11 May 1915 Bhai Balmukund was hanged in the Ambala Central Jail. He was married only a year before, to a very beautiful lady,



Ram Devi. She used to sleep on the floor, when Balmukund was in the jail and lived a very simple life. When her husband was hanged, she went into meditation and later died.





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## Glossary

- **Adikong** was a Minister for Indian Affairs. On 1 July 1909, he was with Sir Curzon Wyllie, at the Imperial Institute in London, when Madanlal Dhingra shot dead Sir Wyllie.
- **Adjutant Lieutenant B.H. Baugh**: see B.H. Baugh.
- **Agha Khan III** (Sultan Mahommed Shah) (1877-1957) was the 48th Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims. He was one of the founders and the first president of the All-India Muslim League, and served as President of the League of Nations in 1937-38. Agha Khan is the hereditary title of the Imam of the Nizârî Muslims, the largest branch of the Ismâ'îlî followers of the Shî'a faith.
- **Ambika Chakraborty** was a colleague of Surya Sen. He participated in the Chittagong Armoury Raid in 1930 and had led the attack on the telephone and telegraph offices. He was arrested and sent to Cellular Jail in the Andaman Islands.
- **Anant Singh** was the most efficient and beloved disciple of Surya Sen. He was arrested in Calcutta for the Chittagong Armoury Raid and was deported to the Cellular Jail in Andamans.
- **Arjun** was one of the *pandav* brothers and key character of epic *Mahabharata*.
- **Awadh Behari** (1889-1915) was a teacher and member of the revolutionary party. He participated in the Delhi Conspiracy Case and was also an accused in the bomb explosion in the Lawrence Garden, Lahore. He was hanged in the Ambala Central Jail on 11 May 1915.
- **B.H. Baugh** was the Adjutant Lieutenant of the 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry in 1857 at the time of revolt by Mangal Pandey. He fought with Mangal Pandey with a sword and was seriously injured before Pandey was overpowered.
- **Babarao Savarkar** (or Ganesh Damodar Savarkar) (1879-1945) was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's elder brother. He had organised an armed revolt against the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 for which he was arrested and sentenced to transportation for life, at the Cellular Jail in the Andamans. He was released after thirteen years in jail.
- **Bakshish Singh** of Amritsar was a member of the revolutionary party and took part in the *Ghadar* Conspiracy. He was sentenced to death and hanged on 16 November 1915 in the Lahore Jail.
- **Bal Gangadhar Tilak** (1856-1920) was the Bal of the famous Lal Bal Pal triumvirate. Conferred with the title of *Lokmanya*, Tilak was one of the first

and strongest advocates of *Swaraj*. His famous quote, “Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it!” is well remembered. In 1881, he established two newspapers, the *Marathi Kesari* (Lion), and *The Mahratta*, in English.

- **Basant Kumar Biswas** was a member of the revolutionary party and follower of Raas Behari Bose. Besides participating in the plot to throw a bomb at Lord Hardinge, known as Delhi Conspiracy Case, he was also accused of throwing a bomb in the Lawrence Garden, Lahore. He died on the gallows in the Ambala Central Jail on 11 May 1915.
- **Batukeshwar Dutt** threw bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly along with Bhagat Singh. Later, both were arrested and initiated a hunger strike protesting against the rights and condition of Indian political prisoners. He outlived all his comrades and died in July 1965 in Delhi.
- **Bhagwati Charan Vohra** was a close aide of Chandra Shekhar Azad. He was involved in the conspiracy to blow up the Viceroy’s train in December 1929. One of the compartments was blown up but the Viceroy was saved. In 1930, Bhagwati accidentally died while testing a bomb on the banks of River Ravi.
- **Bhai Parmanand** (1876-1947) was a founder member of the *Ghadar* Party. He was arrested in connection with the First Lahore Conspiracy Case and was sentenced to death in 1915. The sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment in the Andaman Islands until 1920, when he was released as the result of a general amnesty order.
- **Bina Das** (1911-1986) was a member of *Chatri Sangha*, a semi-revolutionary outfit for women in Kolkata. In 1932, she attempted to assassinate the Bengal Governor Stanley Jackson, a former England cricket captain. She fired five shots but failed and was given nine years of rigorous imprisonment. After her early release, Das joined the Congress party and later became a member of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly.
- **Bipin Chandra Pal** was famous as one of the triumvirates of three militant patriots of the Congress – the Pal of Lal Bal Pal. The trio was responsible for initiating the first popular upsurge against British colonial policy in the 1905 partition of Bengal, before the advent of Gandhi into Indian politics. Pal was also the founder of the nationalistic journal *Vande Mataram*.
- **Brigadier-General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer** (1864-1927) was born and had early education in India. After the Amritsar incident he was sent for the Third Anglo-Afghan War. Dyer was later censured by an investigating committee headed by Lord William Hunter for his indiscriminate firing at Jallianwala Bagh.
- **Captain Cameron** led the police team which had surrounded the hideout of

Surya Sen on 13 June 1932. After a skirmish with the revolutionaries, Cameron was shot dead while ascending the staircase and Surya Sen along with Pritilata and Kalpana Dutta escaped to safety.

- **Chanan Singh** was the Head Constable at Lahore police station. After Saunders' assassination, in December 1928, outside the police station, he followed Bhagat Singh and Rajguru with his gun. Chandra Shekhar Azad who was keeping vigil at a distance warned Chanan Singh first, but shot him dead when he didn't stop. Azad was very sad after this killing as he had to shoot an Indian.
- **Chandra Shekhar Azad** (1906-1931) was a close colleague of Bhagat Singh and was present both in the Kakori Conspiracy and at the time of Saunders' assassination. Surrounded by the police at Alfred Park in Allahabad on 27 February 1931, he fought with them single-handedly and when the last bullet was left in his pistol, he shot himself dead.
- **Chhatrapati Shivaji** (1627-1680) was the founder of the Maratha Empire. His original name was Shivaji Bhosle and his subjects lovingly gave him the title of *Chhatrapati* (Chief of the Kshatriyas) for his undaunted ability to protect them. He had the utmost courage and valour to challenge the mighty Mughal Empire, under Aurangzeb single-handedly.
- **Colonel C. Chester** was Adjutant-General of the British Army posted at Meerut in 1857. He protested against the proposal of replacement of animal fat-greased cartridges of the sepoy.
- **Colonel Mitchell** was a British officer at Behrampore who handed out the animal fat-greased cartridges for a blank ammunition drill to the sepoy of a detachment from the 34th Native Infantry, on 24 February 1857.
- **Cowasjee Lalkaka** was a Parsi doctor, who tried to catch hold of Dhingra after the assassination of Sir Curzon Wylie. Dhingra fired a shot at him in self-defence and Cowasjee was injured and died in the hospital a few days later.
- **Dina Nath** was a revolutionary involved in the bomb blast at Lawrence Gardens, Lahore in 1913. When he was arrested he broke down and gave away the names of Balmukund and Amir Chand to the police.
- **Dr Manga Ram Kalani** was the teacher of Hemu Kalani who also initiated him in the freedom activities. He had formed an organisation known as *Swaraj Mandal*. He was jailed later and Hemu unsuccessfully tried to liberate him from the Sindh jail.
- **Dr Saifuddin Kitchlu** was a noted leader of Amritsar and a member of Congress Party. For protesting against Rowlatt Act and participating in a strike on 6 April 1919 he was arrested along with Dr Satyapal.

- **Durga Bhabhi** was the wife of Bhagwati Charan Vohra and was equally involved in the revolutionary activities. To avenge the hanging of Bhagat Singh, she along with certain revolutionaries took part in the shooting of Sergeant Taylor and his wife and some other police officers on 1 October 1931.
- **Emma Josephine Beck** was the secretary of the National Indian Association at the Imperial Institute, London, whom Madanlal Dhingra had befriended to become its member.
- **Friedrich Engels** (1820-1895) was a German social scientist and philosopher, who developed communist theory alongside his better-known collaborator, Karl Marx, co-authoring *The Communist Manifesto* (1848).
- **Ganesh Damodar Savarkar**: see Babarao Savarkar.
- **Ganesh Ghosh** (1900-1994) was a member of the Chittagong *Jugantar* party. He was arrested for the Chittagong Armoury Raid and was deported to the Cellular Jail in Port Blair in 1932. After his release in 1946, he joined the communist politics and was elected a number of times as representative to Lok Sabha and the West Bengal Vidhan Sabha.
- **Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi** (1890-1931) was the editor of a weekly newspaper *Pratap* which expressed revolutionary ideals. During the Kanpur riots of 1931, he was killed while pacifying the mob.
- **Garibaldi**: see Giuseppe Garibaldi.
- **Genda Lal Dixit** (1889-1920) started the organisation known as *Matruvedi* and initiated Ramprasad Bismil into the revolutionary movement. He was captured and brought to Gwalior Fort in connection with Manipuri Conspiracy Case, but somehow managed to escape, not to be caught again and later died due to prolonged illness.
- **General Dyer**: see Brigadier-General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer.
- **George VI, Albert Frederick Arthur George** (1895-1952) was the King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions from 11 December 1936 until his death. He was the last Emperor of India (until 1947) and the last King of Ireland (until 1949).
- **Giuseppe Garibaldi** (1807-1882) was an Italian military and political figure. He joined the Carbonari Italian patriot revolutionaries and had to flee Italy after a failed insurrection. Considered an Italian national hero, he also contributed to the independence of Uruguay.
- **Giuseppe Mazzini** (1805-1872) was an Italian philosopher and politician whose efforts helped bring about the modern Italian states, in place of the several separate states, many of which were dominated by foreign powers that existed until the 19th century.



- **Gopal Krishna Gokhale** (1866-1915) was a political leader, social reformer and a senior leader of the Indian National Congress. In 1905 he founded the Servants of India Society. Gokhale was famously a mentor to Mahatma Gandhi in his formative years.
- **Gyanendra Nath Bosu** headed a secret society to campaign and fight against the British imperialism. His activities had impressed young Khudiram Bose.
- **Hamilton, I.C.S.** was a Special Sessions Judge at Lucknow in whose court the Kakori robbery trials were held at the Ring Theatre (present day G.P.O. Lucknow).
- **Hanumant Sahai** belonged to a well-known family of Delhi and was drawn into the freedom struggle, along with his teacher, Master Amir Chand. He actively took part in the Delhi Conspiracy, where a bomb was thrown at the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, in 1912. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Andamans.
- **Harnam Singh** of Sialkot (now in Pakistan) of Lahore was arrested as an accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. He was sentenced to death and confiscation of property and was hanged on 16 November 1915.
- **Hira** was a friend and colleague of Hemu Kalani. He was killed by the British bullet while trying to rescue Dr Manga Ram from the Sindh jail.
- **Ishwari Pandey** was the Jemadar of the 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry in 1857 at the time of revolt by Mangal Pandey. He was ordered by Hearsey to arrest Mangal Pandey but he refused. Later he was arrested for defiance and later executed on 22 April 1857.
- **J.A. Scott** (1895-1952) joined the Indian Police in 1915 and was given the Combined Cadre of Punjab, the NWFP, Delhi and Baluchistan. The Superintendent of Police of Lahore was lucky to survive the assassination because of a telephone call from his wife Dorothy that made him leave the office in the afternoon of 17 December 1928.
- **J.P. Saunders** was the Deputy Superintendant of Police of Lahore. He had hit Lala Lajpat Rai during the protests against Simon Commission. He was shot dead by Bhagat Singh and Rajguru, in 1928.
- **Jagat Singh** (or Ganga Singh) of Lahore was arrested and tried in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. He was sentenced to death and confiscation of property and was sent to gallows on 16 November 1915.
- **Jaigopal** was an associate of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. He participated in the Saunders' murder case but later turned approver for the British. The prosecution of Bhagat Singh was mainly based on his testimony.
- **James Thoraton Hewson** was the Sergeant Major of the 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry in 1857 at the time of revolt by Mangal Pandey. He was shot at by Mangal Pandey when he tried to stop him and was wounded.

- **Jatindra Nath Das** (also known as Jatin Das) (1904 – 1929) was a freedom fighter and revolutionary. He died in Lahore jail after sixty-three days of hunger strike.
- **Judge Hamilton:** see Hamilton.
- **Judge Kingsford** was the Calcutta Presidency Magistrate, and later, Magistrate of Muzaffarpur, Bihar. He was very unpopular because he used to give severe punishments, especially to the patriots. An attempt was made to eliminate him by Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki in 1908.
- **Justice Atkinson** was the judge in the trial of Udham Singh in the murder of Michael O'Dwyer at London's Central Criminal Court, Old Bailey. He sentenced Udham Singh to be hanged till death.
- **Kalpana Dutta** (1913-1995) was a member of *Chhatri Sangh* and joined the revolutionary circle of Surya Sen in 1931. She and Pritilata Waddedar were entrusted the task to attack a European Club at Chittagong but she was arrested a week earlier while in male attire. She was later sentenced to life imprisonment but was released in 1939.
- **Kanailal Datta** (1887-1908) was a member of secret revolutionary society. He was arrested in Calcutta as an accused in Alipore Bomb Case. In the jail he shot dead an inmate who had turned approver. He was hanged in Alipore Central Jail on 10 November 1908.
- **Kanshi Ram** was one of the three key members who founded the *Ghadar* Party. In 1914 he returned to India as a part of the Ghadar Conspiracy. He was arrested in the aftermath of the failed February plot and later tried in the Lahore Conspiracy trial. He was executed in November 1916.
- **Karl Marx** (Full name: Karl Heinrich Marx) (1818-1883) was a German philosopher and the founder of communism. He wrote *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital*, an extensive treatise on political economy.
- **Kirpal Singh** was a soldier of the British Indian Army who used to inform the Punjab CID about the activities and dates of the *Ghadar* Conspiracy in February 1915. He was able to infiltrate the leadership, through his cousin who was a supporter of *Ghadar* Party.
- **Kishen Singh** was the father of Bhagat Singh. He and his brother were also involved in freedom struggle and had been to jail.
- **Lal Behari Tandon** was the person at whose residence, Gonda (U.P.), the revolutionaries, including Chandra Shekhar Azad, had conspired to free Rajendranath Lahiri from the Gonda jail.
- **Lala Hanumant Sahai:** see Hanumant Sahai.
- **Lala Har Dayal** (1884-1939) was an Indian revolutionary and founder of the *Ghadar* Party. He moved to Paris in 1909 and became editor of the *Vande*

*Mataram*. In April 1914, he was arrested by the United States Government for spreading anarchist literature and fled to Germany. He also lived in Sweden for some time and died in Philadelphia in 1939.

- **Lala Lajpat Rai** (1865-1928) was a famous freedom fighter, popularly known as *Punjab Kesari* (The Lion of Punjab). He was Lal of one of the triumvirates of three militant patriots of the Congress, popularly known as Lal Bal Pal. He was the President of Indian National Congress in 1920.
- **Lieutenant Charles Egerton Ayerst** had nothing to do with the Plague Committee. The Chapekars killed him along with Rand.
- **Lieutenant Colonel Wheeler** was the commanding officer of the Native Infantry in 1857 at the time of revolt by Mangal Pandey. When his orders to the sepoy to shoot Mangal Pandey were defied, he informed Major General Hearsey about the incident.
- **Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak**: see Bal Gangadhar Tilak.
- **Loknath Baul** was a colleague of Surya Sen. He had participated in the Chittagong Armoury Raid in 1930 and had led the attack on the Auxiliary Force Armoury. He was arrested and sent to Cellular Jail in the Andaman Islands.
- **Lord Charles Hardinge** (1858-1944) was the Viceroy of India from 1910 to 1916. His tenure was significant for the visit of King George V and the Delhi *Durbar* of 1911, as well as the shifting of the capital from Calcutta to New Delhi in 1912.
- **Lord Charles John Canning** (1812-1862) was appointed Governor General under East India Company in 1856 but after the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the British Government took over the control of India. The post of Governor General was abolished and the head of the British administration in India was now designated as Viceroy. Thus Lord Canning became the first Viceroy of India from 1858 to 1862.
- **Lord Zetland** (1876-1961) was also known as Lord Dundas and the Earl of Ronaldshay. He became Governor of Bengal during First World War, and subsequently Secretary of State for India from 1935 to 1940.
- **Madan Mohan Malaviya** (1861-1946) was the president of the Indian National Congress on four occasions. Conferred with the title of *Mahamana*, he later established Banaras Hindu University, at Varanasi.
- **Mahadeo Ranade** (1880-1899) was associated with Chapekar brothers in imparting physical training to Indian youth. He helped in shooting Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst and also assisted Vasudeo Chapekar in the killings of Ganesh and Ramchand. He was hanged in the Yervada Jail, Poona on 10 May 1899.
- **Maharishi Aurobindo Ghosh**: see Sri Aurobindo Ghosh.

- **Mahatma Gandhi:** see Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.
- **Major General Hearsey** had sent a proposal to Lord Canning in 1857, for replacing the animal fat-greased cartridges of the sepoys by those greased with clarified butter. He was also present at the time of revolt by Mangal Pandey.
- **Mangal Sen** was a friend of Khudiram Bose. Mangal's father was an approver to the British.
- **Manmath Nath Gupta** (1908-2000) was an active member of the Hindustan Republican Association. He was arrested in 1925 and sentenced to fourteen years of imprisonment for the Kakori Conspiracy Case in the Andaman Cellular Jail.
- **Master Amir Chand** (1869-1915) was a school teacher who later became a leader of the *Ghadar* Party. He was arrested for the Delhi Conspiracy Case and Lahore Bomb Case and sentenced to death. He was hanged in the Delhi Central Jail on 8 May 1915.
- **Mazzini:** see Giuseppe Mazzini.
- **Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi** (1869-1948) was the architect of Indian independence through non-violent means. Commonly known around the world as Mahatma Gandhi and *Bapu*, he is officially honoured in India as the Father of the Nation. He was the President of Congress in 1924. On 30 January 1948, Gandhi was shot dead by Nathuram Godse, a Hindu radical.
- **Moti Lal Nehru** (1861-1931) was an eminent lawyer and the President of Indian National Congress in 1919 and 1928. His two homes at Allahabad, known as *Swaraj Bhawan* and *Anand Bhawan* were the hub of political activities in the pre-independence period. He was the father of Jawahar Lal Nehru.
- **Muhammad Ali Jinnah** (1876-1948) is regarded as the Father of the State of Pakistan. He served as leader of the Muslim League and served as Pakistan's first Governor General. He is officially known in Pakistan as *Quaid-e-Azam*.
- **Muneshwar Awasthi** was a sub-editor in Varanasi, whom Rajguru met while in the city.
- **Munshi Indrajeet** taught Ramprasad Bismil *Sandhya-Vandana* (the traditional prayers) and also told him relevant things about Arya Samaj.
- **Naresh Chandra Ray** took part in the Chittagong Armoury Raid. While fighting the British soldiers at Jalalabad Hills, he received bullet injuries and died on 22 April 1930.
- **Nath Hari** was a revolutionary who came to meet Hemu and had brought bombs from Bombay. With the help of Hemu Kalani he tried to liberate Dr Manga Ram from the Sindhjail.
- **Netra Sen** was a colleague of Surya Sen, but he became a traitor and got him arrested. But before Netra Sen was able to get his 10,000-rupee reward he was

killed by the revolutionaries. Netra Sen's wife, who was an admirer of Surya Sen, was so disgusted by the deeds of her husband that she did not reveal the name of her husband's killer to the police, even though he was murdered in front of her.

- **Nirmal Sen** of Chittagong went to Burma in 1920 to secure arms and ammunition. Arrested for three years in 1924. He took part in the Chittagong Armoury Raid. He was shot dead by Captain Cameron in an encounter in 1932.
- **Pandit Genda Lal Dixit**: see Genda Lal Dixit.
- **Prafulla Kumar Chaki** (1888-1908) was a Bengali revolutionary associated with the Jugantar group of revolutionaries. After throwing bomb at Kingsford, Prafulla boarded the train to Kolkata. He was soon cornered and took his own life by shooting at the head.
- **Pringle Kennedy** was a British lawyer at Muzaffarpur. The bombs thrown by Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki to assassinate Judge Kingsford, accidentally killed his wife and daughter.
- **Pritilata Waddedar** (1911-1932) was a member of student organisations *Dipali Sangh* and *Chhattri Sangh* at Calcutta. In early 1930s, she joined Surya Sen's armed resistance movement. In order to avoid arrest she ended her life by swallowing poison cyanide.
- **Professor Bhim Sen Vidyalankar** was the General Secretary of the Punjab Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.
- **Queen Alexandrina Victoria** (1819-1901) was the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from 20 June 1837 and the first Empress of India of the British Raj from 1877 till her death. Her reign as the Queen lasted sixty-three years and seven months, longer than that of any other British monarch till date. The period of her reign is also known as the Victorian Era.
- **Raas Behari Bose** (1886-1945) was a revolutionary leader and one of the key organisers of the *Ghadar* Conspiracy and later, the Indian National Army.
- **Ram Rakhi Devi** was the wife of Balmukund. When he was jailed she started sleeping on the floor. When Balmukund was hanged she went into meditation and passed away.
- **Ram Krishna Biswas** was a member of the revolutionary party, who shot and killed an Indian police officer mistaking him for Inspector General of Police Mr Creg at the Chandpur railway station in 1930. He was hanged in the Alipore Central Jail on 2 March 1932.
- **Rand**: see Walter Charles Rand.
- **Rani Gaidilita** was a thirteen year old girl from Nagaland who raised a flag against the British and was put into prison for life in 1932.

- **Sabitri Devi** was a widow who lived in the Jalalabad hills, on the outskirts of Chittagong town in whose house Surya Sen had taken refuge. On 13 June 1932, a confrontation took place in which some revolutionaries and police officials were killed but Surya Sen escaped.
- **Sachindra Nath Sanyal** (1893-1942) was a founder member of Hindustan Republican Association. He was sentenced in Kakori train robbery and was tried and sentenced for life.
- **Sachindranath Bakshi** was involved in the Kakori Conspiracy. He remained elusive for about fifteen months before being captured in Bhagalpur. He was awarded life imprisonment. After independence he became an MLA from Uttar Pradesh.
- **Sajjan Singh** of Ferozepur, Punjab was a member of *Ghadar* Party. He went to USA on a Japanese ship but had to return and got arrested. He was sentenced to death in 1915 for conspiring to overthrow the British.
- **Satyendra Nath Bose** was a teacher in a Government School and one of the founders of *Anand Math*, a revolutionary secret society. He was dismissed from the Government service in 1906 and arrested in 1908 on the charges of involvement in Muzaffarpur Bomb case and Alipore Bomb Case and hanged in the Alipore Central Jail on 21 November 1908.
- **Sergeant Major James Thoraton Hewson**: see James Thoraton Hewson.
- **Shaikh Paltu** was a native soldier who attacked Mangal Pandey and prevented him from killing the Adjutant and the Sergeant-Major. He was promoted on the spot to the post of a *Havaldar* (native sergeant) by General Hearsey.
- **Shanti Ghosh** (1916-1989) was an office bearer of *Nari Satyagrah Samiti* formed in 1929. In 1931, she together with her friend Suneeti Chaudhary shot dead Stevens, the notorious District Magistrate of Comilla, in Bengal. On account of her tender age she received life sentence.
- **Sharat Keskar** was a CID agent who had befriended Rajguru, only to betray him later,
- **Shyamji Krishna Varma** (1857-1930) was a lawyer, nationalist and a journalist who founded the Indian Home Rule Society, India House and The Indian Sociologist in London. He pursued a brief legal career in India and served as the *Divan* of a number of princely states in India.
- **Sir Agha Khan**: see Agha Khan III.
- **Sir Colonel William Curzon** (Full name: Sir William Hutt Curzon Wyllie) (1848-1909) was a Lieutenant Colonel in the British Indian Army and later an official of the British Indian Government. He became the British resident to the princely states of Rajputana, Nepal, and later, the political ADC to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Hamilton.

- **Sir John Simon** (1873-1954) was a British politician who entered the Government as Solicitor-General in 1910 and became Attorney General in 1913. From 1927 to 1931 he was the chairman of Simon Commission, which was formed to review the impact of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms in India.
- **Sir Michael Francis O'Dwyer** (1864-1940) was Lieutenant Governor of Punjab from 1912 to 1919. He joined the Indian Civil Services in 1884. In the wake of the Punjab disturbances, O'Dwyer was relieved of his office. Subsequently the secretary of state for India, Edwin Montagu, condemned O'Dwyer's severity.
- **Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee** (1848-1925) founded the Indian National Association in 1876, one of the earliest Indian political organisations, and later became a senior leader of the Indian National Congress. He became the Congress President in 1898 and 1904.
- **Sri Aurobindo Ghosh** (1872-1950) was a revolutionary who later turned into a spiritual *Guru*. He was one of the founders of the *Jugantar* party. In 1910, he left politics and went to Pondicherry to devote himself entirely to spiritual life and work. In 1926, with the help of his spiritual collaborator, the Mother, he founded the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- **Suneeti Chaudhary** (1917-1988) was a member of *Jugantar* Party and on 14 December 1931, at the age of fourteen, she together with her friend Shanti Ghosh shot dead Stevens, the notorious District Magistrate of Comilla, in Bengal. On account of their tender age they received life sentences. Suneeti was released after seven years and she resumed her studies and later became a doctor.
- **Sushil Sen** was a young courageous boy who was held in Contempt of Court. Judge Kingsford ordered to cane him. He was left almost dead by this severe punishment.
- **Swami Dayanand Saraswati** (1824-1883) was an important Hindu religious scholar and a *sanyasi* (renouncer) who believed in the infallible authority of the Vedas. In 1875, he founded Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform movement. His book Satyarth Prakash contains exposition and clarifications of Vedic principles.
- **Swami Somadev** was the leader of Arya Samaj and a great patriot and scholar, who was also proficient in yoga.
- **Tarkeshwar Dastidar** was deputy of Surya Sen and became the leader of Indian Republic Army after Sen's arrest. He was arrested in 1933 during an armed encounter with police and hanged at Chittagong Jail on 12 January 1934.
- **Tomson** was a British officer who was infamous for his atrocities.
- **Varindranath Ghosh** (1880-1959) was born in England and was popularly known as Barin Ghosh. He was the younger brother of Aurobindo Ghosh and

one of the founding members of *Jugantar*. He attempted killing of Kingsford and was arrested and sentenced to death. However, the sentence was reduced to life imprisonment, and Barin was deported to the Cellular Jail in Andaman in 1909.

- **Veer Savarkar**: see Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.
- **Viceroy Lord Charles Hardinge**: see Lord Charles Hardinge.
- **Vinayak Damodar Savarkar** (1883-1966) was an Indian revolutionary, who studied in India and England, where he was associated with the India House and founded student societies including *Abhinav Bharat* Society and the Free India Society. Also known as Veer Savarkar, he was sentenced to fifty years imprisonment at the Cellular Jail in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- **Vishnu Ganesh Pingle** (1888-1915) went to America in 1912 to study mechanical engineering and there he became an active member of *Ghadar* Party. He was one of the main coordinators of the attempted mutiny in February 1915. He was tried at the Lahore Conspiracy trial and was hanged at the Lahore Central Jail on 17 November 1915.
- **Vishnu Sharan Dublsh** was an active participant in the Kakori Conspiracy Case. He was awarded seven years imprisonment, which was later enhanced to ten years imprisonment.
- **Vladimir Lenin** (Full name: Vladimir Ilyich Lenin) (1870-1924) was a Russian revolutionary, a communist and a principal leader of the October Revolution. In 1917 he became the first head of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic.
- **Walter Charles Rand, I.C.S.** was the Special Plague Officer in Poona.
- **Yashpal** (1903-1976) was a member of Hindustan Socialist Republican Army. He served as an editor of *Viplav* for many years. He was arrested and sentenced to fourteen years of hard labour.

