
UNIT 10 BHAGAT SINGH : THE MARTYR AND HIS IDEOLOGY

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10.0 OBJECTIVES

Bhagat Singh symbolizes the essence of revolutionary cult and character. A Political thinker with clear-cut views on rationalism, revolution and the future society the revolutionaries wanted to build. This unit presents Bhagat Singh as a revolutionary ideologist.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Bhagat Singh represents the character of Indian Revolutionaries in the third decade of this century. His rejection of Gandhian philosophy of non-violence, his antipathy towards the reformist attitude of the Congress, his belief in Marxian Communism, his atheism, his belief in terrorism as a mode to uphold the dignity of a suppressed and humiliated people, his claim of revolution as a birth right, were all ideas typical of the Indian youth in the twenties and the thirties. The trial and execution of Bhagat Singh, under what was called the Lahore Conspiracy Case, not only made the Indians aware of the unjust and repressive character of the British rule but also popularised the ideas and activities of the revolutionaries.

10.2 THE MAKING OF A REVOLUTIONARY

We will now discuss the various influences that shaped Bhagat Singh's personality and his ideology. Bhagat Singh's family background has played an important role in shaping his ideas. The prevailing political turmoil in Punjab exerted a strong influence on Bhagat Singh's political thinking. We will see that his early political contacts and educational career moulded his political thinking to a very great extent. Besides these factors, some political events like the attack on Lala Lajpat Rai and some other instances motivated Bhagat Singh to espouse the cause and ideology which he finally adopted.

10.2.1 The Family Background

Bhagat Singh's ancestors had a distinguished military record in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. They had settled down in Khatkar Kalan in Jullunder

District. The region known as Doab was famous for revolutionary activities. His grandfather, Sardar Arjan Singh was a Unani Doctor and a social worker. He was an Arya Samajist. Arya Samaj in the Punjab represented nationalist aspirations and his father and uncle were political activists. They were instrumental in forming a revolutionary movement in the form of Bharat Mata Society in 1907. His father Kishan Singh was jailed for organising peasants to protest against the Colonization Act and the Bari Doab Canal Act. His uncle, Sardar Ajit Singh became famous for his long term exile and was an active member of the Ghadar Party.

The early socialisation in the politics must have had a decisive influence in shaping Bhagat Singh's ideas. He had his schooling in D.A.V. High School, Lahore. It was considered to be a pioneer institution in Punjab. Here he came in contact with the nationalist leaders of Punjab like Lala Lajpat Rai, Sufi Amba Prasad, Pindi Dass, Mehta Anand Kishore. His natural bent of mind was reflected in his choice of the ideal hero, Sardar Kartar Singh Sarabha, who was a Chadrite and died as a martyr

10.2.2 The Growing Unrest in the Punjab

In the last decade of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century, the agriculturist of Punjab became the greatest sufferer. Repeated famines and growing unemployment alongwith government's colonial policies had resulted in great unrest among the peasantry. There were frequent clashes with the authorities and the harsh treatment meted out to the demonstrators alienated the people from the British rulers. The suppression of revolutionary parties like the Ghadar Party and the Babbar Ali movement with a heavy hand by the British government added to this growing alienation. The passing of the Rowlatt Act, the Jalianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar and the Martial Law atrocities and humiliations were all contributing to the growing ill feeling among people. The Amritsar Congress of 1919 and Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement played their part in the agitation in Punjab. The youth were impressed by what was happening to Europe after the first world war. The Russian Revolution made a great impact on the younger generation.

10.2.3 Political Contacts

Bhagat Singh, as a young man, had joined the National College at Lahore. The college had a reputation of attracting young men who later on were in the forefront of various movements. Here he was under the influence of Jayachand Vidyalankar who taught history. As a student Bhagat Singh was active, intelligent and well disciplined. He learnt his lessons in revolutionary movements outside India—from Italy, Ireland, Russia and China. He had made up his mind to join the revolutionaries and rejected a proposal of his marriage. With a letter of introduction from Professor Vidyalankar, he met Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi at Kanpur. Vidyarthi's house was a centre of political activities and it was here that Bhagat Singh came in contact with the revolutionaries of North India. They had formed an organisation called Hindustan Republican Association. As a political worker, Bhagat Singh toured many places in U.P. Later on, he was assigned the job of running a National School near Aligarh. For some time, he went to Delhi and worked in a daily newspaper "Vir Arjun", a journal of socialist learnings run by Sardar Sohan Singh Josh.

The political forum created for the initiation of young man into the revolutionary activity was called Navjawan Bharat Sabha. Created in 1926, it had a specific programme of educating the young in social matters, popularizing Swadeshi and developing in them a sense of brotherhood and physical fitness to bear hardships. Added to this was a programme of cultivating a secular attitude bordering on atheism and hatred for the alien rule. It was a sort of open forum meant to train and recruit personnel for revolutionary activity. The Navjawan Sabha was considered to be a stepping stone for those young people who later wanted to join the Hindustan Republican Association. The Hindustan Republican Association aimed at overthrowing the British Rule by insurrection and armed revolution. The Association had an elaborate organisation to carry on its clandestine activities, both within the country and without. It was no surprise that the Sabha became suspect in the eyes of the bureaucracy and its meetings were dispersed and its office bearers arrested. The Sabha was a forum from which speeches were made exhorting people to write against the unjust and arbitrary rule by the British. It also published the Independent

India tract Series. The Sabha propagated the idea of equality, removal of poverty and equitable distribution of wealth. The Hindustan Republican Association changed its name to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. The new title was adopted after deliberations held on 9-10 September, 1928 at Feroze Shah Kotla grounds in Delhi. Bhagat Singh became an active member of the H.S.R.A.

10.2.4 Avenging the Death of Lala Lajpat Rai

These were the days when all-white members Simon Commission toured the whole country to make recommendations about future constitutional reforms. Its compositions and purpose was very much resented and the Commission was greeted everywhere with black flags and slogans asking the commission to go back. It was to visit Lahore on October 30, 1928. Despite the ban, a procession was organized by all parties and Lala Lajpat Rai was requested to lead it. The processionists were brutally assaulted by the police led by the superintendent of Police of Lahore. The assault and its shock resulted in Lalaji's death. The death was deeply mourned by all Indians. Bhagat Singh and his colleagues decided to kill the Superintendent of Police of Lahore, to avenge the death. However, they were guided by mistaken signal and instead of the superintendent killed his subordinate, Saunders and a policeman Chanan Singh who chased them. Bhagat Singh escaped the police net and reached Calcutta. Here further plans were laid to set up bomb factories at Agra, Lahore, and Saharanpur.

The British Government wanted to suppress the Workers' movement. With this view it implicated the labour leaders in a conspiracy case. The Government had also introduced two bills restricting freedom of workers—the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Dispute Bill.

The H.S.R.A. decided to protect against the high handed policy of the Government. Plans were made to create panic in the Legislative Assembly at the time the Bills would be taken up. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were selected for this purpose. From the gallery, they threw two bombs at a place where few members were sitting and made no attempt to escape. They also threw leaflets explaining the purpose of the H.S.R.A. in undertaking the act.

10.2.5 The Defence of Terrorism

The leaflet eloquently and succinctly explained the stand taken by the Revolutionaries. The futility of reforms, the mockery of parliamentary system, the need to prepare for a revolution and a justification of violence all of these found their place in the leaflet. The leaflet declared.

“It takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear, with these immortal words uttered on similar occasion by Valliant, a French anarchist martyr, do we strongly justify this action of ours.

“Without repeating the humiliating history of the past ten years of the working of the reforms (Montague-Chelmsford reforms) and without mentioning the insults hurled at the Indian nation through this house—the so called Indian Parliament—we want to point out that, while the people expecting some more crumbs of reforms from the Simon Commission, and are ever quarrelling over the distribution of the expected nones, the Government is thrusting upon us new repressive measures like the public safety and the trade Dispute Bill, while reserving the Press Sediton Bill for the next session. The indiscriminate arrests of labour leaders working in the open fields clearly indicate whither the wind blows.

“In these provocative circumstances, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, in all seriousness, realizing their full responsibility, had decided and ordered its army to do this particular action, so that a stop be put to this humiliating force and to let the alien bureaucratic exploiters do what they wish, but they must be made to come before the public eye in their naked form.

“Let the representatives of the people return to their constituencies and prepare the masses for the coming revolution, and let the government know that while protesting against the public safety and Trade Dispute Bill and the callous murder of Lala Lajpat Rai, on behalf of the helpless Indian masses, we want to emphasize the lesson

often repeated by history, that it is easy to kill individuals but you can not kill the ideas. Great empires crumbled while the ideas survived. Bourbons and Czars fell.

“Long live the Revolution.”

The message was clear and was understood well by the British. The Revolutionaries were the greatest threat to the British Raj and hence should be crushed mercilessly. Once Bhagat Singh was arrested he was never let off. Even though public opinion and the leaders in Congress strongly favoured commutation of his death sentence, the Governor-General considered himself duty bound to see that no mercy was to be shown against the determined enemies of the British Raj.

“Solemn resolutions passed by the House have been contemptuously trampled underfoot on the floor of the so-called Indian Parliament. Resolutions regarding the repeal of the repressive and arbitrary measures have been treated with sublime contempt, and the government measures and proposals, rejected as unacceptable by the elected members of the legislatures, have been restored by a mere stroke of the pen. In short, we have utterly failed to find any justification for the existence of an institution which, despite all its pomp and splendour, organized with the hard earned money of the sweating millions of India, is only a hollow show and a mischievous make-believe. Alike, have we failed to comprehend the mentality of the public leaders who help the government to squander public time and money on such a manifestly stage-managed exhibition of India's helpless subjection.”

The legislature, for the revolutionaries, lacked any democratic character. It was a facade to hide the autocratic rule by an alien government. Those Indians who collaborated with the government were fooling others in believing that the government was introducing responsible rule by instalments.

The statement drew attention to the real nature of Bills introduced in the legislature. The labouring people were denied the right to speak against their own exploitation and were to be treated as dumb animals. These bills were insults hurled at the entire country. The revolutionaries wanted to register their protest so as to warn the authorities before the storm would break.

About the political methods of Mahatma Gandhi and his followers in Congress, the statement expressed open contempt.

“Force when aggressively applied is ‘Violence’ and is, therefore, morally unjustifiable, but when it is used in the furtherance of a legitimate cause, it has its moral justification. The elimination of force at all costs is utopian, and the new movement which has arisen in the country, and of that dawn we have given a warning, is inspired by the ideals which guided Guru Gobind Singh and Shivaji, Kamal Pasha and Riza Khan, Washington and Garibaldi, Lafayette and Lenin.”

In the process of trial Bhagat Singh made it clear that he did not believe in violence as an integral part of revolution. By revolution he understood a change in the social order based on justice. The producers, whether labourers or peasants should get their rights restored. Inequalities and disparities must come to an end. Without reorganising the social structure any talk of ending war seemed to him absurd. Universal peace under exploiting society was unimaginable and hypocritical. Such a society would necessarily be socialistic. He also considered revolution, like freedom, the birth right of people.

Though in their statement Bhagat Singh and Dutt had rejected any intention of killing any one in the Assembly and stated that nobody was hurt seriously because the bombs were of low intensity and meant as a warning, the judge found them guilty and sentenced them to life imprisonment.

10.2.6 The Lahore Conspiracy Case

In the Lahore Conspiracy Case all the charges including the killings of Saunders and Chanan Singh, the Assembly Bomb Case and the setting up of bomb factories were put together and Bhagat Singh and his colleagues were to be tried by a Special Court to expediate the proceedings. The court's decision was to be final. The accused made it known that they did not want any counsel for their defence, that they had no belief in the justice meted out by the court, and that they would not appear before the court unless they were forced to do so. Under the leadership of Bhagat

Singh the prisoners resorted to hunger strike demanding the treatment of revolutionaries as political prisoners and improving the facilities in the prison. During this strike which lasted over three months, one of the revolutionaries Jatin Das died and his body was taken to Calcutta where a record crowd participated in the procession leading to cremation. Bhagat Singh and his colleagues were forcibly caught and were beaten in the presence of the magistrate. These happenings were reported in the newspaper and leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose were anxious about their condition. Mahatma Gandhi for a long time did not express any opinion and when it was asked, he disapproved of their methods and called them misguided patriots. He, however, considered Bhagat Singh and his colleagues as brave. Round Table Conference was not prepared to oblige and Gandhi did not make it a condition to observe the pact.

The Special Tribunal found Bhagat Singh and Rajguru guilty of committing the murder of Saunders and Sukhdev as the brain behind the conspiracy. A last attempt was made by Bhagat Singh's father making a petition to the Tribunal pleading that Bhagat Singh was not in Lahore when Saunders was murdered. Bhagat Singh strongly disapproved of the move and described it as the "weakness of the worst type." He rejected any move to offer defence and asked his father to publish his letter. The Tribunal gave its verdict on the 7th October, 1930 and sentenced Bhagat Singh, Rajgura and Sukhdev to death and others to transportation for life. Attempts made by various Indian leaders to save the lives of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev could not bear fruit and they were hanged on 23rd March, 1931. Thus, when the Karachi Congress met six days after the hanging, it was in a gloomy atmosphere. Mahatma Gandhi had to defend his position which he did by paying tributes to the young martyrs for their bravery without surrendering his stand on non-violence and the path followed by Congress after Gandhi-Irwin Agreement.

Check Your Progress I

- Note:** i) Use space provided below each question to give your answer.
- ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What were the major reasons for the growing & unrest among the peasantry in Punjab?

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2) Mention the ideals propagated by the Navjawan Sabha.

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10.3 BHAGAT SINGH'S IDEOLOGY

A careful analysis of Bhagat Singh's ideology is very important in order to understand his political activities and convictions. Socialist thought had definitely influenced his thinking. The writings of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and many other socialist writers impressed his ideological convictions greatly.

10.3.1 The Defence of Atheism

Bhagat Singh's political thought finds its expression in three of his writings as well as numerous statements he made during trial. In an interesting article captioned "Why I am an Atheist" he tried to explain away his differences with other revolutionaries who became devout and God-fearing in their prison life. Tracing his own evolution

from theism to atheism, Bhagat Singh tells us how he started questioning the existence of God in his college days. As he started to study arguments to refute the notions of the believers he lost much of his romantic ideas about terrorism and became a realist.

"No more mysticism, no more blind faith. Realism became our cult. Use of force justifiable when resorted to as a matter of terrible necessity; non-violence as policy indispensable for all mass movements. So much about methods."

Bhagat Singh pointed out that the transition that took place in him was due to the study of Bakunin, Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. A book, 'Common sense' by Nirlamba Swami in which a sort of mystic atheism was preached also influenced his ideas. When he was first arrested in 1927, the police wanted to get information from him about the Kakori Case. They threatened to hang him and asked him to say his last prayers. He found after much thought that he had no inclination to pray and thus survived the first test in atheism.

Bhagat Singh in this article did not deny that God is a strong anchor to give courage and consolation to the condemned prisoner. But he thought that it required greater courage to make greatest sacrifice without a desire for reward in this life or the life after death. He refuted the charge made by some of his colleagues that it was vanity on his part to deny the existence of God. He writes:

"The day we find a great number of men and women with this psychology who can not devote themselves to anything else than the service of mankind and emancipation of the suffering humanity; that day shall inaugurate the era of liberty... Is the pride in their noble cause to be misinterpreted as vanity?... Let us forgive him for he can not realize the depth, the emotion the sentiment and the noble feelings that surge in that heart...self reliance is always liable to be interpreted as vanity. It is sad and miserable but there is no help."

Bhagat Singh considered criticism and independent thinking as the "two indispensable qualities of the revolutionary." For him no man is so great as to be above criticism. He considered it as a mark of servile mentality. He was prepared to concede the use of faith and belief as a way of explaining away the environment. In the absence of direct proof, the philosophers of religion have found various ways to explain away things, contributing diversity of religious ideas and corresponding beliefs and practices.

"Where direct proofs are lacking, philosophy occupies the important place. As I have already stated, a certain revolutionary friend used to say that philosophy is the outcome of human weakness when our ancestors had leisure enough to try to solve out the mystery of this world, its past, present and the future, its whys and wherefores, they having been terribly short of direct proofs, everybody tried to solve the problem in his own way. Hence, we find the wide differences in the fundamentals of various religious creeds, which sometimes assume very antagonistic and conflicting shapes."

Bhagat Singh's argument against all faiths is that they have lost the probing and experimental attitudes which had been the hallmark of those original thinkers. Those who followed them accepted every word they uttered as revealed truth and stopped thinking for themselves. As a result of this every religion and every sect has suffered stagnation and decay. Thus religion has come in the way of human progress.

"Any man who stands for progress has to criticise, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith."

It is reason and reason alone which should be made a test to find out what is worth while to be preserved in religion. He found out that the faith in God as Almighty, Omnipresent, Omniscient, and Omnipotent is essentially an irrational belief. Christianity and Islam have no answers to the arguments as to why God created the world of woes and miseries. If it is to derive pleasure out of human misery, then God must be compared with such abominable figures as Nero or Changez Khan. The Hindus have attributed the sufferings in the present life as punishment of sins committed in the past life. But they have no answer as to why the Omnipotent God has not made man so perfect as to keep away from sins. Bhagat Singh's reasoning told him that there is no supreme being to control the destiny of human beings. Man

has made progress by mastering nature and there is no reason to be found which "would justify the world as it exist." He wanted to recommend the study of Darwin to those who were curious to know the origin of mankind. It is only accidental and all the later progress of man can be answered by his constant conflict with nature and his efforts to override it.

To Bhagat Singh, the belief in God was not necessarily the invention of those who wanted to keep the people under their subjection by preaching the existence of a supreme being and then claiming an authority and sanction from him for their privileged positions. 'However, he accepted the argument that religion has essentially a reactionary role to play as it has always sided with tyrannical and exploiting institutions, men and classes. Originally, the idea of God was invented to give courage to man to face all adversities and also subdue his arrogance and pride. The idea of God is helpful to man in distress.'

As a realist Bhagat Singh wanted to get rid of such notions.

'I do not know whether in my case belief in God and offering of daily prayers which I consider to be most selfish and degraded act on the part of man, can prove to be helpful or they shall make my case worse still. I have read of atheists facing all troubles quite boldly, so I am trying to stand like a man with an erect head to the last; even on the gallows.'

10.3.2 Thoughts on Social Revolution

Bhagat Singh's ideas on Socialism and the type of society he envisaged for India were influenced by Marxism and Russian Communism. Explaining what he considered the revolution he had made it clear before the court that he understood by it reorganizing society "On the Socialistic basis...in which the Sovereignty of the proletariat should be recognized and a world federation should redeem humanity from the bondage of Capitalism and misery of imperial wars."

Some of these ideas he further explained in his 'Introduction to the Dreamland.' Dreamland was a poetical work by Ram Saran Das who underwent transportation for life. Bhagat Singh pointed out in the introduction that the political parties had lacked any conception of the society they wanted to create after independence. They only had put freedom from foreign rule as their goal and the only exception was the Ghadar Party which wanted India to be a Republic. These parties according to him were not revolutionary. To him Revolution implied 'the programme of systematic reconstruction of society on new and adapted basis, after complete destruction of the existing state of affairs.' He rejected the contention made by the Gandhians that destruction is not the way to construction. To him 'Destruction is not only essential but indispensable for construction.' From violent revolution he would propose to construct a society where violence is no more the character of social relationships. He also dismissed the idea of reconciling the ideas of various religions to avoid strife. Instead, he advocated a secular life.

Bhagat Singh also expressed himself against charity and charitable institutions which have no place in a socialist society. The social organization would be built around the principle that 'there shall be no needy and poor, and no alms giving and alms taking.' Work would be obligatory for everyone. There is to be no superiority or inferiority attached to mental and manual labour and the payment would be equal. He, however, rejected the idea that manual labour alone is to be considered as productive labour. Compulsory manual labour for all seemed to him 'utopian and impracticable.'

Bhagat Singh also dealt with the problems like crime and punishment. Punishment should be with the view of rehabilitating the criminal. "Jails should be reformatories and not veritable hells." He considered war as an institution characteristic of a society based on exploitation. A socialist society can not rule out war since it will have to protect itself against the capitalist society. He also seems to suggest that a revolutionary war would be necessary for the creation of the world socialist order. A peaceful revolution, through education and evolution seemed to him as utopian.

After capturing power, peaceful methods shall be employed for constructive work, force shall be employed to crush the obstacles.'

Note: i) Use space provided below each question to give your answer.
ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of the unit.

1) Which two qualities were considered by Bhagat Singh to be the most important ones for revolutionary?

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2) Did Bhagat Singh believe that religion was a reactionary force? If so what were his reasons?

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10.4 THE REJECTION OF CONGRESS LEADERSHIP

Bhagat Singh's 'last message' explains the differences the revolutionaries had with the Congress leadership. The withdrawal of non-cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incident, where a police station with policemen inside was burnt by an angry mob, was greatly resented as a betrayal. Similarly, the postponement of Civil Disobedience Movement and the so called Gandhi-Irwin Pact was also considered a great mistake. Even the declaration by the Congress of its goal as Purna Swaraj was considered a half hearted attempt to wrest some concessions from the British.

Bhagat Singh's charge against the Congress was that it did not represent any revolutionary force. It represented the interests of the bourgeoisie which did not want to lose its property in any struggle. The real revolutionary elements were to be found in the peasantry and the workers. The Congress however did not mobilize these forces. The Congress was afraid of the participation of workers and poor peasants in the struggle because it found it difficult to contain them against the interests of the Capitalists or the Landlords. Bhagat Singh held the view that the Congress really represented the middle classes and the petty bourgeoisie and was not really interested in social revolution.

According to Bhagat Singh, there was nothing wrong in making compromises and adjustments, provided the goal was clear and where tactical arrangements required such compromises. He considered the strategy of Tilak as correct when he said that he would take half the loaf when it is offered but would continue to fight for the rest. The real danger is when the forces of stability gain the upper hand and block the change.

As far as the constitutional reforms were concerned, Bhagat Singh found them wanting in all the tests of responsible government. The executive used its Veto against the resolution passed by the Assembly. Was it going to be changed by making the executive elected and responsible to the legislature? He also wanted to apply the test of participation of people in elections. Whether all were allowed the right to vote or only the property holders? He would also apply the test of provincial autonomy and found that the centralized unitary system would negate it

He advised the revolutionaries to be clear about their ultimate goal, their present position and the ways and means of functioning. The goal should be socialist Revolution to be preceded by political revolution. It was not only the overthrow of the British Rule that was necessary. It would not make any difference to the workers and peasants if Lord Reading's place were to be held by Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas or Lord Irwin's by Sir Tejbahadur Sapru. The Revolution must be for

their good and they should be made to feel it. It must be a proletarian Revolution for the proletariat and by the proletariat.

To this end, Bhagat Singh asked the revolutionaries to follow Lenin's views on 'Professional Revolutionaries' and on organised party to prepare for the revolution. To this end, he wanted the young men to join such a party to organize study groups, arrange speeches and publish books and periodicals and recruit and train political workers. He however, wanted a disciplined party not necessarily secretive. He also did not believe in violence as indispensable. What he expected of the political workers was that they should work among the masses and obtain active sympathy of peasants and workers. He also called such a party the Communist Party.

Bhagat Singh considered economic independence the ultimate goal. But he considered political freedom as the first step. He did not mind workers themselves organizing themselves for small gains. But these were not to be considered as the end.

In the end, Bhagat Singh asked the revolutionaries to be extremely cautious and balanced in their expectations. He warned them against utopian thinking. Revolution could not be made by emotional and reckless men. What was required was patience, sacrifice and absence of individualism. Courage, strong will and sustained hard work were to be indispensable qualities for the revolutionaries.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use space provided below each question to give your answer.
ii) Check your answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What was the nature of the change levelled against the Congress by Bhagat Singh?

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2) The ultimate goal for Bhagat Singh was.....

10.5 LET US SUM UP

Bhagat Singh's importance lies in the fact that he represented the character and temper of the revolutionaries of his times. He was both an activist and a thinker. His ideas are no less important than his death as a martyr.

Bhagat Singh's family background, his schooling, his contacts with the revolutionaries in India and his study of the writings of the European revolutionaries, all had their share in the making of Bhagat Singh as a revolutionary. He was not a terrorist by belief. He considered terrorism useful under extreme circumstances and was neutral in his choice of means to achieve a noble purpose.

Bhagat Singh considered the British Rule in India as immoral, unjustifiable and wicked. He wanted an uncompromising struggle for freedom. But freedom of the country was only the first step to wider freedom for the majority of people—workers and peasants. Their exploitation he wanted to see ended. This was to be his ultimate goal.

He considered the national movement Congress as confused in its goal and desirous of protecting the interests of the bourgeoisie. He openly criticized the Gandhian methods and policies. He was critical of the promotion of a personality cult. Criticism and independent thinking were essential pre-requisites of a revolutionary.

He wanted a party comprising the discipline, hard working, dedicated and uncompromising young men. He was much influenced by the Russian revolutionary experiment and considered it a model for India's future development.

10.6 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

- Bakshi S.R. *Bhagat Singh and his ideology*, Capital Publishers, New Delhi 1981.
- Deol G.S. *Shaheed Bhagat Singh—A Biography*, Patiala 1969.
- Thakur Gopal. *Bhagat Singh : The Man and His Times*, New Delhi 1962.
- Gupta M.N. *They Lived Dangerously*, Peoples' Publishing House, New Delhi 1969.
- Sandhu V. *Bhagat Singh : Patra Aur Dastavej* (Hindi). Rajpal and Sons, Delhi 1983.
- Joshi V.S. *Mritunjayacha Atmayajna*, Raja Prakashan, Pune 1981 (Marathi).
- Bhagat Singh. *Amhi Kashasathi Ladhat Ahot* (Marathi), Magowa Prakashan, Pune 1987.

10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Repeated famines, growing unemployment alongwith the governments' policy regarding colonization resulted in the growing unrest among the peasantry in Punjab.
- 2) The ideals propogated by the Nav Jawan Sabha were equality, removal of poverty and equitable distribution of wealth.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Criticism and independent thinking were considered by Bhagat Singh to the most important qualities for a revolutionary.
- 2) Bhagat Singh accepted the argument that religion was basically a reactionary force because it always sided with the tyrannical and exploiting classes and institutions.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Bhagat Singh's charge against the Congress was that it did not represent the revolutionary force. He believed that the Congress was the party of the bourgeoisie and excluded the poor peasantry.
- 2) Economic independence.

NOTES