

CHAPTER - IV

BHAGAT SINGH ON NATIONAL REVOLUTION

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CHAPTER - IVBHAGAT SINGH ON NATIONAL REVOLUTION

Bhagat Singh developed progressive ideas on the important social and political issues because he realised the cruel and exploitative character of the colonial rule in India. He held the opinion that the Congress politics and the Gandhian methods would not be in a position to effect the true national revolution in the country. Therefore, Bhagat Singh's ideas on National Revolution occupy very important place in his writings. Bhagat Singh had studied all important political movements of modern period. In the beginning he had made critical evaluation of both the existing methods of National Revolution i.e., one followed by all previous terrorists (or revolutionaries) and other followed by Congress and Gandhi. He had shown shortcomings of both the methods and then he had developed his own theory of National Revolution in a colonial society.

LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT MOVEMENT :

In an " Introduction to Dreamland" Bhagat Singh had pointed out that all terrorists or revolutionary groups were lacking clear cut ideal for which they were fighting. In

this context he said " As a matter of fact all the political movements of our country that have hitherto played any important role in our modern history, had been lacking the ideal at the achievement of which they aimed. Revolutionary movement is no exception. In spite of all my efforts, I could not find any revolutionary party that had clear ideas as to what they were fighting for, with the exception of the Ghadar Party which, having been inspired by the U.S.A. form of Government clearly stated that they wanted to replace the existing government by a Republican form of government."¹ Further he had shown that except Ghadar Party members an other revolutionaries had only one idea of fighting against the alien rule. But they did not have any idea about the form of government or the nature of society that was to be replaced in future.

He held that the idea of fighting against the alien rulers was quite laudable but could not be termed as revolutionary idea. He explained " We must make it clear that revolution does not merely mean an upheaval or a sanguinary strife. Revolution necessarily implies the programme of systematic reconstruction of society on new and better adapted basis, after complete destruction of the existing state of affairs".²

Bhagat Singh had pointed out that liberals wanted some reforms under the present government. Even extremists demanded a bit more and were prepared to employ radical means for the same limited purpose. Therefore, all these movements could not rightly be designated as revolutionary movement".³

Bhagat Singh had also criticised the Gandhian method of non-violence. He had accepted that Gandhian method tried to rely on mass action. But it did not take definite stand the issues of independence. It had hesitated to define 'Complete Independence' in real sense of the term. Therefore, the methods followed by the Congress and Gandhi are completely useless for the people.⁴ He even held that "It was mainly the mania for non-violence and Gandhi's compromise mentality that came together at the call of Mass Action".⁵ In his view Satyagraha as preached by Gandhi was a form of protest which was sure to lead to a compromise. It could hardly be of any use to a nation striving for national independence because national independence could never come as the result of a compromise. He held that they should realise without fail that there could be no compromise between independence and slavery.

MEANING OF REVOLUTION :

Thus after criticising both the methods of struggle for national independence he proceeded to explain his ideas on National Revolution. In his last message sent to young political workers, referring to Round Table Conference, he had pointed out that " The present movement is bound to end in some sort of compromise. The compromise may be effected sooner or later".⁶ He even admitted that compromise was not always ignoble and deplorable thing. In fact it was an essential weapon which could be used in the development of struggle. But the thing which must be kept always before was the idea of the movement. He wrote " We must always maintain a clear notion as to the aim for the achievement of which we are fighting. That helps to verify the success and failure of our movements and we can easily formulate the future programme".⁷

Bhagat Singh held that Tilak's policy, quite apart from the ideal, was the best. He stressed that the revolutionaries must always keep in mind that they were striving for a complete revolution. Complete mastery of power in their hand. He cautioned that it was here that revolutionaries must be very careful at such junctures to avoid any sort of confusion of the real issues, especially the goal. It was here that it was necessary to save them movement from such pitfalls like

compromises of goal. Here he said that about the tactics and strategy one should study life work of Lenin.

He had repeatedly reminded the people that the present national movement was bound to end in some sort of compromise, because in his view, at that time the real revolutionary forces i.e. Peasants and Workers were not brought into the struggle. National struggle led by Congress was a struggle mainly dependend upon the middle classes and few capitalists. The bourgeois leaders could not dare to tackle the real revolutionary armies in the villages and factories. Because they know very well that the sleeping lion once awakened would become irresistible even after the achievement of what leaders aim at. And in fact Gandhi had experienced this danger among the factory proletariat of Ahmedabad and gigantic peasant rising at Chauri-Chaura. Labours and peasants were not to remain satisfied only with overthrow of an alien government, they were also bound to come forward to overthrow the yoke of the capitalists and Landlords. And it was here, he said, that our leaders prepared a surrender to the British than to the peasantry and labours. They remained mainly concerned with a few more concessions for the Indian capitalists. In such circumstances, he warned the sincere workers that they should not get confused or disappointed.

Bhagat Singh was asked in the Lower Court what he meant by word ' Revolution '. In his answer to that question he said that Revolution did not necessarily involve Sanguinary Strife, nor was there any place in it for individual vendetta. It was not the cult of bomb and pistol. By ' Revolution ' he meant that the present order of things, which was based on manifest injustice, must change.⁸ He pointed out that producers or labourers, in spite of being the most necessary element of society, were robbed by their exploiters of their labour and deprived by their elementary rights. These terrible inequalities and forced disparity of chances were bound to lead to Chaos.

He felt, therefore, that a radical change was necessary and he considered that it was the duty of those who realised it to reorganise society on the socialistic basis. Unless this was done and the exploitation of man by man and of nations by nations is brought to an end the threatened humanity and the whole **edifice** of civilization standing on the brink of a Volcano, could not be saved.⁹

Further, he said " By 'Revolution', we mean the ultimate establishment of an order of society which may be threatened by such breakdown, and in which the sovereignty

of the proletariat should be recognised".¹⁰ Here he stood for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat to pave the way for the consummation of the ideal of revolution".¹¹ He said that revolution was an inalienable right of mankind.

Thus to Bhagat Singh revolution meant " The complete overthrow of the existing social order and its replacement with socialist order". For that purpose his immediate aim was the achievement of power. He explained " As a matter of fact, the state the government machinery is just a weapon in the hands of the ruling class to further and safeguard its interests. We want to snatch and handle it to utilise it for the consummation of our ideal, i.e., the social reconstruction on new, i.e., Marxist, basis".¹² Along with this he had realised the need to educate the masses and to create a favourable atmosphere for their social programme. He held that in the course of struggle it self they could best train and educate the masses.¹³

REVOLUTION AND POLITICAL POWER :

Bhagat Singh had stressed that revolutionaries should have clear understanding of their immediate and ultimate object. After having discussed the present situation, he had proceeded to discuss the future programme and line of action to be adopted. Without definite programme, he held, there

could not be any revolution. For him revolution meant a change brought about deliberately by an organised and systematic work, as opposed to sudden and unorganised or spontaneous change or breakdown.¹⁴

He said that for the formulation of programme, one must necessarily study :

- 1) The goal
- 2) The premises from where we are to start i.e., the existing conditions.
- 3) The course of action, i.e., means and methods¹³

He stood for a socialist revolution and for political revolution as the indispensable first step to socialist revolution. He stated that the political revolution did not mean the transfer of state (or power) from the hands of the British to the Indian, but to those Indians who were at one with them as to the final goal.¹⁶ To be more precise, he said, the power was to be transferred to the revolutionary party through popular support.

He wrote that, in this century revolution had only one meaning - Capturing the political power by the proletariat and for the proletariat. He said, " In India we want nothing

less than the government by the Indian proletariat".¹⁷
For that purpose he wanted to put to an end to the imperialist exploitation and its Indian allies too.

Further he made it clear that for overthrowing the imperialists from the power revolutionaries had only one force or weapon upon which they could rely was the peasantry and the labour. Nothing else could be useful in this work. Peasants and labourers constituted 90% of the Indian population. It was the responsibility of the revolutionaries to assure and make them understand that the revolution was meant to unslave them from the boundage of imperialism and capitalism and it was their revolutionaries, should not expect any other revolution except proletarian revolution. And no other revolution was even likely to be successful.¹⁸

Thus after stressing the need to have formulated this clear cut idea about goals, he wrote, revolutionaries should then proceed to organise real forces for revolution. Now there were two different phases through which they had to pass. First, the preparation, second the action.

In his view revolution was a very difficult task. It was beyond the power of any man to make a revolution. It could not be brought about on any appointed date. It is brought

about by special environment, social and economic. It was the function of an organised party to utilise any such opportunity offered by the circumstances.¹⁹ The work of preparing the masses and organising the forces for the revolution, being very difficult task, it required a very great sacrifice on the part of the revolutionary workers. He said, therefore, the ' professional revolutionaries ' or the whole-time workers having no other ambitions or work except the revolution were required.

Now he proceeded to explain the nature, organisation and programme of the revolutionary party.

PROGRAMME :

Bhagat Singh considered it very necessary to have a clear and sincere programme of revolution. He equally felt even the need determined strong implementation of that programme. In this context he reminds the three necessary pre-conditions for successful revolution told by Lenin before October Revolution of 1917. These were ²⁰

- 1) Political economic situation.
- 2) Feeling of revolt in the minds of the people.
- 3) The well trained Revolutionary Party capable of leading the people in critical times.

Here he thought that in India the first condition is fulfilled and the second and third are on the way waiting to be fulfilled. So it was the duty of all the revolutionaries to work for that and prepare the programme in accordance with that work.

He stressed that revolution would be for the people. As a indication of it he had given the following programme for the party.²¹

- 1) The feudalism would be brought to an end.
- 2) All the peasants would be freed from debts.
- 3) The new state would nationalise all the land in the country.
- 4) Everybody would be guaranteed housing facility.
- 5) Instead of private cultivation there would be collective cultivation
- 6) All the industries would be nationalised and new industries would be started by the state.
- 7) Free education would be given to all.
- 8) Working hours would be reduced as per requirements.

He realised that due to the imposed ignorance and apathy of the intellectuals the artificial wall had been erected between the half educated toiling masses and revolutionaries. He considered it to be their duty to remove that separating wall and therefore, he had given the following work to be done by revolutionaries.²²

- 1) They should try to utilise the congress platform for their work.
- 2) They should try to control the existing trade unions and also try to establish new militant trade unions and organizations.
- 3) They should organise unions on state level.
- 4) They should try to enter in every social and voluntary organisation in a secret way - where they would get an opportunity to approach the people - and see that those organizations are run in accordance with real issues and objects which will ultimately help in the furtherance of their revolutionary object.
- 5) They should try to establish unions of artisans, workers and even educated employees at all places.

These were some of the ways suggested by him with the help of which revolutionaries could approach the people and prepare them for the revolution.

He further said that without basic work, militant people ready to revolt, and revolutionary party there would not be successful revolution inspite of situation being favourable for revolution.²³ He even realised that if they could not face such a danger where they would not be able to stand before the coming situation.

With regard to the nature and organization of the party he said that what they needed most was a party with whole time workers with clear cut ideas and keen perception and ability of initiative and quick decisions. The party should have iron discipline and it need not necessarily be an underground party, rather the contrary.²⁴ But, he thought, still there would be number of workers who would be forced to lead an underground life. And it was that group which would produce worthy leaders for the real opportunity.

He felt that the required workers for party would be recruited only through the youth movement. Hence he considered the youth movement as the starting point of programme. The

youth movement should organise study circles, class lectures and publication of leaflets, pamphlets, books and periodicals". In his view that was the best recruiting and training ground for political workers.

Further, he said that the party should start with work of mass propogand it being very essential work. One of the fundamental causes of the failure of the efforts of the Ghadar party was the ignorance, apathy and sometimes active opposition of the masses".²⁵ Apart from that, he considered it to be essential for gaining the active sympathy of and organising the peasants and workers.

He said that the name of revolutionary party should be a communist party. " This party of political workers, bound by strict discipline, should handel all other movements. And in order to create political consciousness, not only of national politics but class politics as well the party should organise a big publishing campaign (and) enlighton the masses of the socialist theory."²⁶ He had also pointed out that the writings should be simple and clear.

Bhagat Singh had firm conviction that there could not be economic liberly of the peasant and workers without political freedom. He stood for the economic liberty of the

the masses and for that very purpose he was striving to win the political power. He made it very clear that in the beginning " They had to fight for little economic demands and privileges of these classes. But these struggles were the best means for educating them for a final struggle to conquer political power".²⁷

OUTLINE OF THE ORGANISATION :

He had given even the outline of the organisation of the party as below.²⁸

A) General committee : It would work for recruitment of party workers and to propoganda in army. It would also decide about the general policies of the party and try to establish contacts among the different organisation of the people.

B) Finance Committee : Its main responsibility would be to raise funds for the party. The priority of sources would be as - volutary funds, forced funds(or funds from government), foreign capitalist or banks, capturing the individual property of alien Indians and such other unlawful means like dacoity. Here he had noted that the last two means were against their policies and would cause harm to party. Therefore, he expected to not encourage those means.

C) Action Committee: It was meant for collection of arms and giving the training of revolt secretly. It was to be composed of two groups. (i) Youth group and (ii) Expert or Specialised group. This action committee was to work as 'military department' of the party. It should back the political work of the party. It should not work independently.

D) Women Committee : Its primary responsibility would be to establish contacts among women and prepare them for the struggle and recruit them in the party.

Finally, he had dealt with the problem of relationship between terrorism and revolution. He had claimed that he was not and had never been terrorist except in the beginning of his revolutionary career. He was convinced that they could not gain anything through terrorist methods. But at the same time he did not mean that bombs and pistols were useless rather the contrary. What he meant to say was that mere bomb-throwing was not only useless but sometimes harmful.²⁹

THE REVOLUTIONARY METHODS :

He argued that terrorism in our country was the result and manifestation of lack of the strong scientific

revolutionary thinking. It was a sort of repentance. In a way it was the acceptance of their failure. In the beginning it proved to be useful to some extent. It helped to change the political life in the Country. It made the youths and intellectuals to think seriously about the situation and created a sense of sacrifice among them. It also provided an opportunity to revolutionaries to place before the enemies and the world the realities and the forces of our movement. But till terrorism was not complete, alternative in itself. In all countries - France, Russia, Balkan countries of Germany, Spain the history of terrorism is the history of failures.³⁰

Further, Bhagat Singh explained that even though they could adopt the terrorist measures to the greatest extent, still they could at the most force the imperialists for come to compromise. And nay such type of compromise was bound to remain far away from their goal. He held that then it would bring nothing more than what the Gandhian and the Congress method intended.³¹

Here he emphatically reminds that Indian had to learn much from the Irish experience. In spite of all arms and terrorist activities and even general feelings of revolt on national level among the people, Ireland had to remain

contented with in complete revolution and their object. No doubt the slavery of Irish people was lessened but the independence of the country could not make free the Irish proletariat from the slavery and bondage of the capitalist class. It could well be regarded as the warning showing that how the nationalistic idealism devoid of revolutionary social base was bound to be lost in sand of compromise with the imperialists.³² Here he categorically stated that we should seriously learn from Irish experience and avoid the imitation of Irish path.

To sum up thus Bhagat Singh held that the revolutionary movement would not stop at the achievement of freedom. It would continue till the system of exploitation was abolished and a basic change in the socio-economic structure of the society was brought about. He also declared that the proletariat was the driving force of the revolution and the revolution was meant "by the masses and for the masses". He also indicated that a slave nation could not establish a classless society, abolish exploitation and bring about equality amongst men. For such a nation, the first and foremost task is to break the chains of imperialist domination that bind it. To be clear, the revolution in a slave country had to be anti-imperialist and anti-colonial. The revolution was to be brought under the leadership of Communist party with a the object of establishing the dictatorship of proletariat".

After considering his ideas on national revolution we can say that Bhagat Singh discarded the outlook of the earlier generation of revolutionary leaders, broke away from the moorings of religion and traditional social outlook and looked forward to modern ideas in the struggle for the liberation of the country. As correctly pointed out by B.T. Randive

" Bhagat Singh represented a new modern generation of national revolutionaries whose outlook was different from his predecessors. The earlier generations... did not have clear ideas about the real content of the national struggle and how to shape a new, liberated India. They looked to the past to draw inspiration for the present and future. In their ideology and outlook the masses, their problems and their status had very little space. Bhagat Singh's entry into open public life announced that here was a young revolutionary intent on thinking in terms of masses, intent on revolution and on learning from the most advanced science of revolution".³³

In spite of above mentioned strong points he seemed to have confusion in his minds regarding the revolution and revolutionary party. He relied only on the youth, not understanding the class character of such party and its class basis. " Recruiting ground is not the class movement of the

workers or the movement of the peasants, but the movement of the youth".³⁴

With regard to the organisation of party also he seemed to be confused. He committed mistake in identifying all underground activities with activities of conspiratorial group for individual action. In fact it was not possible to work openly with legal existence under the British rule for a party of professional revolutionaries. He had confusion regarding the utilisation of opportunities for open and legal work with the formation of an open legal party.

Not with standing this confusion, as Randive points out " Bhagat Singh made the transition from individual action to mass revolutionary movement, from individual revolution to class revolution and class struggle. And he succeeded in linking it with the immediate needs of the national revolutionary struggle against the British".³⁵

Bhagat Singh's ideas on national revolution in a colonial society are important because he developed them independently and on the basis of his studies. He did not come in contact with the international Communist movement. But most of the mature ideas of Bhagat Singh on this problem were

were developed in the jail and because of his execution at a very tender age. he could not implement his ideas on revolution. It is true that some of the ideas of Bhagat Singh were incomplete as he had no historical experience to go by, but one can not miss the strong points of his ideas. He was one of the first revolutionaries to realise the bourgeois character of national struggle and had clear ideas about the true meaning of revolution.

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