

A STUDY ON REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS IN INDIA

***Dr.Manjunatha Sakalesh,**

Associate Professor, Dept. of History, Sir.M.V. Govt. Arts and Commerce College, Bhadravathi.

Abstract:

This paper aim is to study the revolutionary leaders in India. India has been unified under many empires in its history like the Mauryan Empire and Mughal empire. A sense of oneness has been there for ages – even though most of the centralized administration in India didn't last long. With the end of Mughal rule, India broke into hundreds of princely states. The British – which were instrumental in the fall of the Mughal Empire – held control over the princely states and created the British Indian Empire. However, most Indians were extremely dissatisfied with the exploitative foreign rule. The educated Indians realised that the British always gave priority to their colonial interests and treated India only as a market. Mahatma Gandhi became the undisputed leader of the National Movement. His principles of nonviolence and Satyagraha were employed against the British government. Gandhi made the nationalist movement a mass movement. On returning to India in 1915, Gandhi toured the country for one year on Gokhale's insistence. He then established an ashram in Ahmedabad to settle his phoenix family. He first took up the cause of indentured labour in India thus continuing his fight in South Africa to abolish it. Gandhiji joined the Indian National Congress and was introduced to Indian issues and politics and Gokhale became his political Guru. There was a British law banning the hoisting of the Indian Flag. When Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned, it was Patel who led the Satyagraha movement in Nagpur in 1923 against British law. It was the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928 which earned Vallabhbhai Patel the title of 'Sardar' and made him popular throughout the country. So great was the impact that Pandit Motilal Nehru suggested Vallabhbhai's name to Gandhiji for the presidency of the Congress. In 1930, the British arrested Sardar Patel during the Salt Satyagraha and put him on trial without witnesses. Bhagat Singh was deeply affected by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre (1919) and the violence against unarmed Akali protestors at Nankana Sahib (1921). In 1924 in Kanpur, he became a member of the Hindustan Republican Association, started by Sachindranath Sanyal a year earlier. The main organizer of the Association was Chandra Shekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh became very close to him. In 1926, he founded the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, an organization that aimed to encourage revolution against British rule by rallying the peasants and workers

Keywords: *Revolution, Leaders, India, Gandhiji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh etc.*

INTRODUCTION:

India has been unified under many empires in its history like the Mauryan Empire and Mughal empire. A sense of oneness has been there for ages – even though most of the centralized administration in India didn't last long. With the end of Mughal rule, India broke into hundreds of princely states. The British – which were

instrumental in the fall of the Mughal Empire – held control over the princely states and created the British Indian Empire. However, most Indians were extremely dissatisfied with the exploitative foreign rule. The educated Indians realised that the British always gave priority to their colonial interests and treated India only as a market.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

This paper aim is to study the revolutionary leaders in India.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

India witnessed many revolutionary leaders to get freedom for India. But this study mainly focused on selected revolutionary leaders such as Gandhiji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose, and Bhagat Singh.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This paper is purely based on secondary sources of data such as websites, journals, articles, books and other sources.

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2nd October 1869, in Porbandar in the princely state of Kathiawar in Gujarat. His father was Karamchand Uttamchand Gandhi who served as a dewan of Porbandar state. His mother was Putlibai who came from Junagadh. Mohandas was the youngest of four children. He had two brothers and a sister. At age of 13, Mohandas was married to 14-year-old Kastubai Makhanji Kapadia as was the custom at that time. His father passed away in 1885, and the same year he and his wife lost their first child. The Gandhi couple later had four sons over the years. Gandhi Ji received his primary education in Rajkot where his father had relocated as dewan to the ruler Thakur Sahib. He went to Alfred high school in Rajkot at the age of 11. In 1887, at the age of 18, Gandhi Ji graduated from a high school in Ahmedabad. He later enrolled at a college in Bhavnagar but dropped out later. He had also joined and eventually dropped out of a college in Bombay. He then went to London in 1888 to pursue law at the university college. After completing his studies, he was invited to be enrolled at Inner temple to become a barrister. He returned to India in 1891 at the age of 22 after his mother passed away. He failed to establish a successful law career both in Rajkot and Bombay. In 1893, he moved to Durban, South Africa, on a one-year contract to sort out the legal problems of Abdullah, a Gujarati merchant. In 1915, on the request of Gokhale, conveyed by CF Andrews (Deenbandhu), Gandhi Ji returned to India to help with the Indian struggle for independence. The last phase of the Indian National movement is known as the Gandhian era. Mahatma Gandhi became the undisputed leader of the National Movement. His principles of nonviolence and Satyagraha were employed against the British government. Gandhi made the nationalist movement a mass movement. On returning to India in 1915, Gandhi toured the country for one year on Gokhale's insistence. He then established an ashram in Ahmedabad to settle his phoenix family. He first took up the cause of indentured labour in India thus continuing his fight in

South Africa to abolish it. Gandhiji joined the Indian National Congress and was introduced to Indian issues and politics and Gokhale became his political Guru.

Champaran Satyagraha (1917): Champaran Satyagraha of 1917 was the first civil disobedience movement organized by Gandhiji. Rajkumar Shukla asked Gandhi to look into the problems of the Indigo planters. The European planters had been forcing peasants to grow Indigo on a 3/20 of the total land called the tinkatiya system. Gandhi organized passive resistance or civil disobedience against the tinkatiya system. Finally, the authorities relented and permitted Gandhi to make inquiries among the peasants. The government appointed a committee to look into the matter and nominated Gandhi as a member.

Kheda satyagraha (1918): The Kheda Satyagraha was the first noncooperation movement organized by Gandhi. Because of the drought in 1918 crops failed in the Kheda district of Gujarat. According to the revenue code if the yield was less than one-fourth of the normal produced the farmers were entitled to remission. Gujarat sabha sent a petition requesting revenue assessment for the year 1919 but the authorities refused to grant permission.

Ahmedabad mill strike (1918): This was Gandhi's first hunger strike. He intervened in a dispute between Mill owners of Ahmedabad and the workers over the issue of discontinuation of the plague bonus. The workers were demanding a rise of 50% in their wages while the employees were willing to concede only a 20% bonus. The striking workers turned to Anusuiya Sarabai in quest of justice and she contacted Gandhi for help. He asked the workers to go on a strike and to remain non-violent and undertook a fast unto death to strengthen the workers' resolve.

Gandhiji's active involvement in the Indian National Movement:

Gandhi's active involvement in the Indian Freedom Struggle was marked by many mass movements like the Khilafat Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, and Quit India Movement.

- **Khilafat movement (1919):** During World War I Gandhi sought cooperation from the Muslims in his fight against the British by supporting the Ottoman Empire that had been defeated in the world war. The British passed the Rowlatt act to block the movement. Gandhi called for a nationwide Satyagraha against the act. It was Rowlatt Satyagraha that elevated Gandhi into a national leader. Rowlatt Satyagraha was against the unjust Rowlatt Act passed by the British. On April 13th, 1919 the Jallianwala Bagh incident took place. Seeing the violence spread Mahatma Gandhi called off the civil disobedience movement on the 18th of April.
- **Non-Cooperation Movement (1920):** Gandhi convinced the congress leaders to start a Non-Cooperation Movement in support of Khilafat as well as Swaraj. At the congress session of Nagpur in

1920, the non-cooperation program was adopted. In 1922, Chauri chaura incident took place, which caused Gandhi to withdraw from the non-cooperation movement. After the non-cooperation movement ended, Gandhi withdrew from the political platform and focused on his social reform work.

- **The Salt March and The Civil Disobedience Movement (1930):** Gandhi declared that he would lead a march to break the salt law as the law gave the state the Monopoly on the manufacturer and the sale of salt. Gandhi along with his followers marched from his ashram in Sabarmati to the coastal town of Dandi in Gujarat where they broke the government law by gathering natural salt and boiling seawater to produce salt. This also marked the beginning of the civil disobedience movement.
- **The Gandhi Irwin pact (1931):** Gandhi accepted the truce offered by Irwin and called off the civil disobedience movement and agreed to attend the second round table conference in London as the representative of the Indian National Congress. But when he returned from London he relaunched the civil disobedience movement but by 1934 it had lost its momentum.
- **Poona pact (1932):** This was a pact reached between B.R Ambedkar and Gandhi concerning the communal awards but in the end, strived to achieve a common goal for the upliftment of the marginalized communities of the Indian society. In 1934, Gandhi resigned from the Congress party membership as he did not agree with the party's position on varied issues. Gandhi returned to active politics in 1936 with the Lucknow session of Congress where Jawaharlal Nehru was the president. In 1938, Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Bose's principles clashed during the Tripuri session which led to the Tripuri crisis in the Indian National Congress.
- **Quit India movement (1942):** The outbreak of World war II and the last and crucial phase of national struggle in India came together. The failure of the Cripps mission in 1942 gave rise to the Quit India movement. Gandhi was arrested and held at Aga Khan Palace in Pune. During this time his wife Kasturba died after 18 months of imprisonment and in 1944 Gandhi suffered a severe malaria attack. He was released before the end of the war on 6th May 1944. World war II was nearing an end and the British gave clear indications that power would be transferred to Indians hence Gandhi called off the struggle and all the political prisoners were released including the leaders of Congress.

PARTITION AND INDEPENDENCE:

Gandhiji opposed the partition of India along religious lines. While he and Congress demanded the British quit India the Muslim league demanded to divide and quit India. All of Gandhi's efforts to help Congress and the Muslim league reach an agreement to incorporate and attain independence failed. Gandhiji did not celebrate the independence and end of British rule but appealed for peace among his countrymen. He was never in agreement for the country to be partitioned. His demeanour played a key role in pacifying the people and avoiding a Hindu-Muslim riot during the partition of the rest of India.

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL:

Vallabhbhai Patel was born in Nadiad, Gujarat, on October 31, 1875 (His birth anniversary is now observed as National Unity Day or Rashtriya Ekta Diwas). He hailed from a farmer's family. In his early years, Patel was considered by many as an unambitious man destined for a commonplace job. However, Patel proved them wrong. He passed law examination, often studying himself, with borrowed books. Patel practised law at Godhra, Borsad, and Anand in Gujarat, after passing the bar examination. He earned the reputation of being a fierce and skilled lawyer. In the initial stages of the freedom movement, Patel was neither keen on active politics nor the principles of Mahatma Gandhi. However, the meeting with Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in Godhra (1917) fundamentally changed Patel's life. Patel joined the Congress and became the secretary of the Gujarat Sabha that became a Congress stronghold later. On Gandhi's call, Patel quit his hard-earned job and joined the movement to fight for exemption of taxes in Kheda at the time of plague and famine (1918). Patel joined Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement (1920) and travelled around West India to recruit 3,00,000 members. He also collected more than Rs 1.5 million for the party fund. There was a British law banning the hoisting of the Indian Flag. When Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned, it was Patel who led the Satyagraha movement in Nagpur in 1923 against British law. It was the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928 which earned Vallabhbhai Patel the title of 'Sardar' and made him popular throughout the country. So great was the impact that Pandit Motilal Nehru suggested Vallabhbhai's name to Gandhiji for the presidency of the Congress. In 1930, the British arrested Sardar Patel during the Salt Satyagraha and put him on trial without witnesses. On the outbreak of World War II (1939), Patel supported Nehru's decision to withdraw Congress from central and provincial legislatures. Patel was at his persuasive best when he spoke at the Gwalia Tank ground (now called August Kranti Maidan) in Mumbai to launch the nationwide civil disobedience movement in 1942 at the behest of Mahatma Gandhi. During Quit India Movement (1942), the British arrested Patel. He was imprisoned with the entire Congress Working Committee from 1942 to 1945 at the fort in Ahmednagar.

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE:

Subhas Chandra Bose was an Indian Nationalist, great leader, thinker, and fighter, who defied British authority. His political activities and ideologies are marred by controversies but the legacy he left behind motivates each Indian to date. Subhas Chandra Bose was born into a Bengali family in Orissa (1897). In 1920 he passed the civil service examination. But he resigned his candidacy and hurried back to India after hearing of the nationalist turmoils in India. Subhas' devotion and zeal to make the country free from the colonial rule were comparable to none and he lived and died working towards the goal of independent India. Subhas Chandra Bose is popularly known by the name 'Netaji'. In 1938, He was elected President of the Haripura Congress Session (Gujarat), during this term as Congress President; he talked of planning and setting up a National planning Committee in October that year. In 1939, He also won the presidential election to the Tripuri Congress session, defeating Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya who had been backed by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee. This led to the Tripuri Crisis in Congress due to ideological differences between Bose, who had strong leftist thinking and older leaders who were more right-wing thinkers. As a result, Bose resigned and

formed the 'Forward Bloc', the left-wing party within the Congress at Unnao in U.P. In 1940, When INC organized Individual Satyagraha, Subash Chandra Bose organized an 'Anti-Compromise Conference' at Ramgarh, Bihar. He was arrested by the British shortly afterwards for organizing a protest for the removal of the Holwell Monument (Memorium for Blackhole tragedy of Calcutta). He was later released and placed under House arrest in Calcutta. In 1941, Bose escaped house arrest in disguise and travelled out of India. He started garnering support from Nazi Germany and even met Adolf Hitler. He founded the Free India Center in Berlin and created the Indian Legion (consisting of some 4500 soldiers) out of Indian prisoners of war who had previously fought for the British in North Africa before their capture by Axis forces. Bose was given the honorific title of Netaji in Germany in 1942 by the Indian soldiers of the Indian Legion and officials of the Special Bureau for India in Berlin. World War II was underway, Nazi Germany was losing footing in the west. In the east Japanese were advancing rapidly. In India, Bengal Famine and Quit India movement were raging. In 1943, Bose went to Japan after disappointment from Germany.

Indian National Army (INA)

INA was the brainchild of Japanese Major (and post-war Lieutenant-General) Iwaichi Fujiwara, head of the Japanese intelligence unit. His mission was "to raise an army which would fight alongside the Japanese army. He first met Pritam Singh Dhillon, the president of the Bangkok chapter of the Indian Independence League, and through Pritam Singh's network recruited a captured British Indian army captain, Mohan Singh, on the western Malayan peninsula in December 1941. The First Indian National Army was formed as a result of a discussion between Fujiwara and Mohan Singh. Rash Behari Bose, another expatriate nationalist leader was also associated with the INA. In 1943, Rash Behari Bose handed over control of the INA to Subhas Chandra Bose. Bose was able to reorganize the fledgling army and organize massive support among the expatriate Indian population in southeast Asia, who lent their support by both enlisting in the Indian National Army, as well as financially in response to Bose's calls for sacrifice for the independence cause. INA had a separate women's unit, the Rani of Jhansi Regiment (named after Rani Lakshmi Bai) headed by Capt. Lakshmi Swaminathan is seen as a first of its kind in Asia. Bose was able to maintain support for the Azad Hind movement throughout. Bose's most famous quote was "Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom!" was spoken as a part of a motivational speech for the Indian National Army at a rally of Indians in Burma on 4 July 1944, In this, he urged the people of India to join him in his fight against the British Raj. In 1944, An Indian tricolour was raised for the first time in the town of Moirang, Manipur by the INA troops during their support of the Japanese to thrust towards Eastern Indian frontiers. In 1945, The United States allied aerial bombing resulted in losses for the Japanese. The Japanese retreat left cut-off INA. Many INA troops were captured in the Battle of Imphal and Kohima.

BHAGAT SINGH:

Bhagat Singh was born on September 27, 1907, in Lyallpur, western Punjab, India (now in Pakistan). Bhagat Singh attended Dayanand Anglo Vedic High School, which was operated by Arya Samaj (a reform sect

of modern Hinduism), and then National College, both located in Lahore. His family members were involved in the freedom struggle and he was drawn to the Indian independence movement from a very young age. His father and his uncle Ajit Singh were active in progressive politics, taking part in the agitation around the Canal Colonization Bill in 1907, and later the Ghadar Movement of 1914–1915. His family's relation with the freedom struggle propelled Bhagat Singh into the activities from a young age. Initially, he supported Mahatma Gandhi and the Non-Cooperation Movement. However, when Gandhi withdrew the movement in the wake of the Chauri Chaura incident, Bhagat Singh turned to revolutionary nationalism. Bhagat Singh was deeply affected by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre (1919) and the violence against unarmed Akali protestors at Nankana Sahib (1921). In 1924 in Kanpur, he became a member of the Hindustan Republican Association, started by Sachindranath Sanyal a year earlier. The main organizer of the Association was Chandra Shekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh became very close to him. In 1926, he founded the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, an organization that aimed to encourage revolution against British rule by rallying the peasants and workers. He made contact with the 'Workers and Peasants Party' which brought out the monthly magazine Kirti in Punjabi. For the next year, Bhagat Singh worked on the editorial board of Kirti. In 1928, he established the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) along with Sukhdev, Chandrashekhar Azad, and others. HSRA collapsed after Chandrashekar Azad was shot dead in 1930.

BHAGAT SINGH'S REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES:

His association with revolutionaries began with HSRA. He was introduced to the philosophy of bombs and the importance of the armed revolution. In 1927, he was first arrested on charges of association with the Kakori Case accused of an article written under the pseudonym Vidrohi (Rebel). He was also accused of being responsible for a bomb explosion at Lahore during the Dussehra fair. On 8th April 1929, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw a bomb in the Central Assembly at Delhi, from the Visitors' Gallery. They also threw pamphlets and raised pro-revolutionary slogans. Both the revolutionaries did not resist arrest since they wanted to spread their message of revolution and anti-imperialism and wanted to use the trial as a platform for it. They shouted slogans of "Inquilab Zindabad" during the whole arrest. The slogan became quite popular among the youth and many freedom fighters. There were no casualties in the incident as it was never their intention to cause physical harm to anyone. Their aim was 'to make the deaf hear'. Bhagat Singh was the mastermind behind the incident and was inspired by Auguste Vaillant, a French anarchist, who was executed by France for a similar incident in Paris. In the trial for the incident, both Singh and Dutt were sentenced to imprisonment for life. By this time Bhagat Singh was also linked to the JP Saunderson's murder incident. He, along with Rajguru and Sukhdev was charged with the murder of Saunders. The trial started in July 1929 and was published in daily newspapers. The young revolutionaries started a hunger strike in Lahore prison demanding better conditions for political prisoners who were also treated as criminals. They were met by many leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru while they fasted for 116 days which only ended after repeated requests from family and congress leaders. But the trial was a one-sided affair and Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru were sentenced to death. The verdict was met with large criticism and many national leaders requested to reduce the sentence but in vain.

The three were ordered to be hanged on 24 March 1931 but the sentence was carried out a day earlier at the Lahore Jail. After the hanging, their mortal remains were cremated in secret.

REFERENCES:

- Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885–1947* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1983), 268–69.
- Much of the West European working class had by then come over to social-democratic reformism.
- Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
- Chaman Lal, ed., *The Bhagat Singh Reader* (Noida, India: HarperCollins, 2019), 549, 551.
- Lal, ed., *The Bhagat Singh Reader*, 115, 175–76, 183–84, 200.
- Kobad Ghandy, *Fractured Freedom: A Prison Memoir* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2021), 12.
- Chris Moffat, *India's Revolutionary Inheritance: Politics and Promise of Bhagat Singh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 94.

