

Year: 44, Issue: 4
Oct-Dec. 2023

Rs. 200/-
ISSN 2582-449X

Manthan

Journal of Social & Academic Activism



*Kuchh aarzoo nahin hai, hai aarzoo to ye hai
Rakh de koi zara si khak-e-vatan kafan mein*

Ashfaqulla Khan Special



प्रभात प्रकाशन

नवनूतन प्रकाशन की गौरवशाली परंपरा



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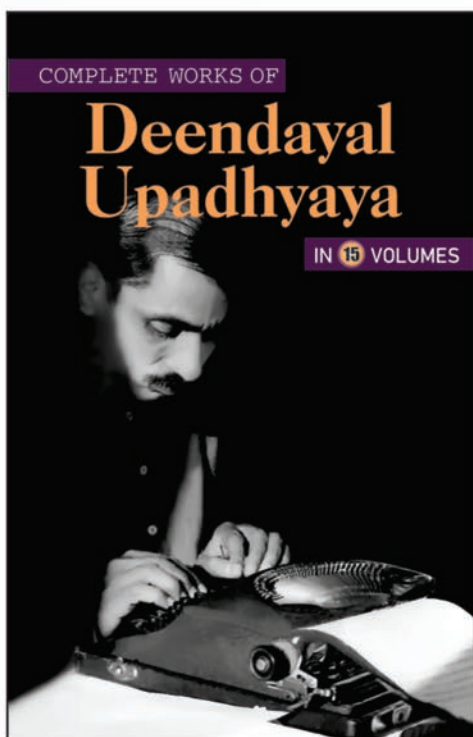
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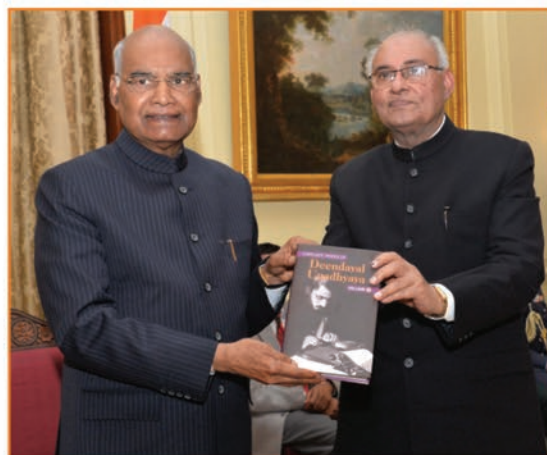
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ISO 9001:2015 प्रकाशक

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हेल्पलाइन नं. 7827007777 ☎ 011-23289777

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Year: 44, Issue: 4

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Ashfaqulla Khan Special

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Design

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Ocean Trading Co.
132, Patparganj Industrial Area,
Delhi-110092

Publisher

Research and Development Foundation For Integral Humanism

Ekatm Bhawan, 37, Deendayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi-110002

Phone: 011-23210074; E-mail: info@manthandigital.com

Website: www.manthandigital.com

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Contributors' Profile

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Ram Bahadur Rai is the Group Editor of *Hindustan Samachar* and president of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). He was awarded Padma Shri in 2015. In his early days, he was closely associated with Jaiprakash Narayan and actively participated in anti-Emergency movement. Contact: rbrai118@gmail.com

Dr. Faiyaz Ahmed Faizi is a writer, translator, social worker and Unani medical practitioner by profession. He is raising the voice of deprived Pasmanda Muslims of the country from various forums. He has termed the abrogation of Article 370 and the triple talaq bill beneficial for the Muslim society. He is also a supporter of Uniform Civil Code. He openly speaks and writes against Muslim communalism and the evils of Muslim society.

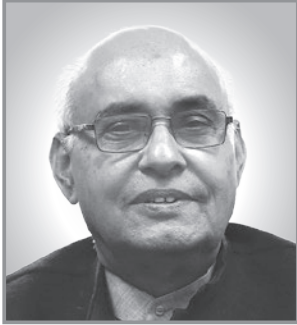
Madanlal Verma 'Krant' is basically a Hindi poet and writer. Apart from this, he has also written poems in Urdu, Sanskrit and English. *Sarfaroshi Ki Tamanna* published on the personality and work of revolutionary Ram Prasad 'Bismil' is his notable book. The Government of India awarded him 'Senior Fellowship' for Hindi Literature in the year 2004 for his significant research on the topic *National Consciousness in Revolutionary Hindi Literature*.

Dr. Chander Pal Singh teaches History at PGDAV College, University of Delhi. He has authored two books - *Bhagat Singh Revisited: Historiography, Biography and Ideology of the Great Martyr* (2011) and *National Education Movement: A Saga for Quest for Alternatives to Colonial Education* (2012). Besides revolutionary movement and history of education, his research interests include origins and making of Indian Constitution and census studies. Contact: 9891249977, Email: chanderpal.singh2@gmail.com

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Editorial



Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma

In the Bhagat Singh special issue of *Manthan*, we had read about the fascinating role played by the revolutionaries in the freedom movement. We have already studied the decisive efforts of armed resistance in the Subhash Chandra Bose special issue. A notable name of this armed struggle is Ashfaqulla Khan. He was the only Muslim revolutionary to kiss the noose through the revolutionary movement. His being a Muslim has been underlined again and again in the pages of history.

This special issue of *Manthan* looks into the sacrifice of the immortal martyr Ashfaqulla Khan as well as the role of Muslims in the freedom movement. The common man sees only the role of Muslim League in the Partition of India when it comes to viewing the role of Muslims in the country's freedom movement. *Manthan* combines this special issue with the aspiration to research the entirety of this context. Everyone knows the Muslim League, but people generally do not know Momin Conference. Everyone knows the revolutionaries who ascended the gallows, which is why Ashfaqulla Khan too became famous, but after the Chauri Chaura incident, Mahatma Gandhi had withdrawn the Non-Cooperation Movement, which had touched new heights in awakening the people. Because of that movement as well, many people were sentenced to death. That clarion call of sacrifice was drowned in the voices of Mahatma Gandhi and Chauri Chaura. In this issue, readers will be able to read the story of the hanging of a poor Muslim youth.

Although Ashfaq himself belonged to the Ashraf class of Muslim society, the context of the Pasmanda community is also very important in the struggle for freedom. The articles of Ram Bahadur Rai and Dr. Faiyaz Ahmed Faizi express its relevance. This perspective being very broad, this issue of *Manthan* touches upon it a little.

After its founding in 1885, the Congress demanded participation in power of the English-educated Indians who professed loyalty to the British Empire. The decisive consequence of this was the formation of the Indian Constituent Assembly in 1946, which is a long story. It is being mentioned here because there is a need to be acquainted with the history in which the Congress became a movement for national independence although it was in a collaboration with the imperial power. Important in this is the Swadeshi and Vande Mataram movements that fought against the partition of Bengal (Bang-Bhang) in 1905. As a result, in 1907, Congress was divided into the Surajyawadi (merely good

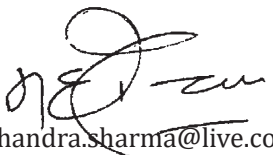
governance) and Swarajyawadi (self-rule) factions. In fact, after this partition the Congress before 1907 almost came to an end. Sri Aurobindo led the Swarajist camp in this partition. Later, he became a yogi and went to Pondicherry. Lokmanya Tilak was sent to Mandalay jail by the British government. When Tilak came out of jail, the Congress was almost dead. It was during this period that the British established the Muslim League. After this, Muslims were granted separate electoral rights in 1909. The arrival of an old and tired Tilak boosted the enthusiasm of the Swarajists. Lokmanya Tilak received a rare welcome in the Lucknow session of 1916, a session in which an agreement between Muslim League and Congress was reached. The first chapter of the political saga of the Partition of India was written. Lokmanya Tilak however, did not get much time and passed away soon after that.

The reins of Congress passed into the hands of Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress became an all-India mass movement. People participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement with amazing enthusiasm. After the Chauri Chaura incident, Gandhi forcibly withdrew the movement, greatly dampening the national fervour. Angered by this decision, the youth took up the torch of revolution. Under the leadership of Ramprasad Bismil, the youth of the country set out fired by the desire of sacrifice. The Kakori incident was an episode of this particular revolutionary activity. We will come to know through this issue what this incident was all about, who were jailed and hanged. Ashfaqulla Khan too, the protagonist of this special issue was hanged owing to his role in this incident. Ashfaq expressed his final wish this way:

*Kuchh aarzoo nahin hai, hai aarzoo to ye hai
Rakh de koi zara si khak-e-vatan kafan mein*
(No desire of mine remains; if there be one, it is this
In my coffin, may someone place the soil of my motherland)

We await readers' response on how they have liked this issue. The next issue, the "Legislative Special Issue", will be the first issue of the coming year, to which readers can look forward to.

With best wishes


mahesh.chandra.sharma@live.com



Pradeep Deswal

National Duty was Supreme for Immortal Martyr Ashfaq

Whenever there is a talk about our immortal martyrs and revolutionaries, the friendship between Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqulla Khan comes up as an example. But Bismil had not accepted the friendship so easily. Here is a narration of that tell-tale episode of our freedom struggle

“Let thousands of sorrows come... Let the deafening sea storm have fun in the middle of the city... Let the fiery mountains run over the towns... but O lions of freedom, keep moving forward sprinkling your hot blood on the motherland and sacrificing your lives on the mother's altar...”¹

“Now we have played our part on the stage of Bharat Mata. Whatever we did, whether right or wrong, we did it in the spirit of attaining freedom. Some may praise our work, some may condemn it. But even our enemies have had to praise our courage and bravery. Revolutionaries are very brave warriors and very good Vedantis. They always think about the welfare of their country.”²

“Indian brothers, no matter who you are, what religion or sect you follow, you should unite and contribute in the interest of the country. You people are fighting in vain. All religions are the same. The paths may be different but the goal of all is the same. Then why this quarrel?”³

“First liberate India, then think about other things. The path that God has marked for someone, he will continue on that path. You can't distract anyone. Get along with each

other and stay united. Realise that the burden of future of the whole India rests on your shoulders. Otherwise, you will end up becoming the burden of slavery.”⁴

“My brothers and friends will cry after me. But I am crying today seeing their indifference and disloyalty towards the motherland.”⁵

These heart-wrenching words were that of the immortal martyr Ashfaqulla Khan. While starting the non-cooperation movement in 1920, Gandhiji had promised of attaining ‘Swaraj’ (self-governance) within a year's time. Believing his words, even the revolutionaries started following Gandhiji and shunned bombs and pistols. But when Gandhiji suspended the non-cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incident on February 4, 1922, the youth across the country were plunged into the darkness of despair. Meanwhile, Congress decided to run for the Councils in 1923.

This forced the revolutionaries to regroup and go back on the path of revolution. Under the leadership of Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Yogeshchandra Chatterjee and Ram Prasad Bismil, an organisation was formed in North India by the name

'Hindustan Prajatantrik Sangh'. Ashfaqulla Khan, who was a resident of Shahjahanpur in the United Province like Ram Prasad Bismil, was a member of this group. The stories of their friendship are being narrated even today. In his verdict in the Kakori conspiracy case, Special Sessions judge J.R.W. Bennett had written about Ashfaqulla that "He was the right hand man of Ram Prasad Bismil and was the most important member of the outfit in Shahjahanpur after him (Bismil)."⁶ Ashfaqulla was the first Muslim revolutionary to be hanged for the independence

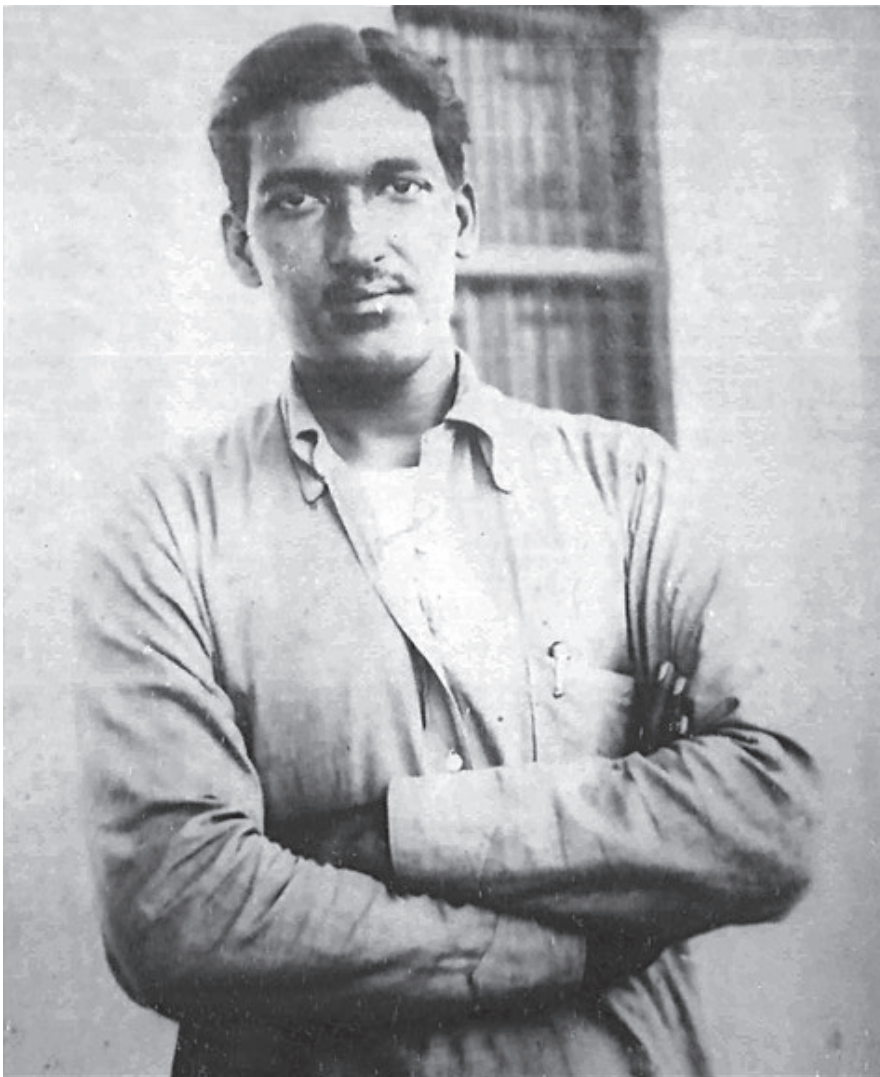
of India.

When Ashfaqulla was studying in Class VII in Mission School in Shahjahanpur, a Class X student Rajaram Bharatiya was arrested by the police in connection with the Mainpuri conspiracy case. When Ashfaqulla inquired about it, one of his schoolmates explained to him that Rajaram Bharatiya was a member of an underground organisation, and not a dacoit or a murderer. To this, Ashfaqulla laughed and said that "You also seem to be one of them. I will get you arrested too." After listening to Ashfaqulla's words, the schoolmate proudly

said that he was "ready to die for the country." Ashfaqulla writes, "He (the schoolmate) said it with such grace and style that I never forgot it."⁷

The following year, when Ashfaqulla entered Class VIII, the feeling of sacrificing everything for the country was strengthened within him, especially after listening to a patriotic poem read by his English teacher. After this, Ashfaqulla developed a passion for reading books. He regretted that he had wasted his time in sports. He writes, "For patriots, completing education is an essential duty. If the feelings of patriotism are inculcated in children from the beginning and the lives of great people of the world are taught to them, then they will always be fond of studying and won't be spoiled while growing up."⁸

Later, he developed friendship with Banarasi Lal, who was a member of the underground organisation, and came in contact with Ram Prasad Bismil. However, the same Banarasi Lal later turned out to be a weak-kneed person and became a government witness in the Kakori conspiracy case. Ram Prasad Bismil was absconding in the Mainpuri conspiracy case. When the prisoners of the Mainpuri case were released after the royal decree of 1920, the sword of arrest was also removed from above Ram Prasad Bismil's head. He returned to Shahjahanpur. Ram Prasad Bismil had been a classmate and friend of Ashfaqulla's elder brother Riyasat Ullah in Urdu school. Later, he



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entered the Mission School and after some time Ashfaqulla also entered the Mission School. But in those days, Ashfaqulla did not have relation with Ram Prasad.

When Ram Prasad Bismil came to Shahjahanpur after being acquitted in the Mainpuri conspiracy case, Ashfaqulla met him and expressed his desire to join his secret revolutionary group. But Ram Prasad Bismil did not show any interest. Apparently, there were two main reasons behind it. The first one was Ashfaqulla's family background – many members of his clan had been government officials. Secondly, he was a Muslim. Till that time, Muslims had stayed away from revolutionary organisations, hence Ram Prasad Bismil could not trust him. Ashfaqulla writes, "He met me with such coldness that I felt very sad, for which he often apologised."⁹ Ram Prasad Bismil writes about this incident in his autobiography that "When I came back to Shahjahanpur after the royal proclamation, I met you in school. You had a very heartfelt desire to meet me. You wanted to discuss about the Mainpuri conspiracy case with me. Suspecting that why a Muslim student of the school is talking to me like this, I had replied to you with utter disregard. You felt very sad at that time."¹⁰

Later, Ashfaqulla met Ram Prasad Bismil again through Banarasi Lal and a strong friendship developed between them, which will not be forgotten for centuries. Ashfaqulla writes that "I told Banarasi Lal to take

me to Ram Prasad and introduce me."¹¹ Ram Prasad Bismil writes about this, "You did not give up your determination just like that. You stuck to your decision. Whatever was the situation, you spoke to the Congress. You tried to convince your close friends that you were not an artificial person. You had a desire to serve the country in your heart. In the end, you won."¹² From the words of Ram Prasad Bismil, it becomes clear that Ashfaqulla was determined to join the revolutionary group, which was very unusual. It often happened that old experienced revolutionaries looked for youth to recruit into the group, but in Ashfaqulla's case, it was the opposite. Ashfaqulla himself was adamant on becoming a revolutionary so that he could sacrifice himself to free Mother India from the shackles of colonial subjugation.

Ram Prasad Bismil writes, "Your efforts created a place in my heart. Within a few days, you became like my younger brother. But you were not satisfied with the status of being only a younger brother. You wanted equal rights and you wanted to be counted in the category of my friends. That's what happened. You became a true friend. Everyone was surprised to see how a staunch Arya Samajist like me and a Muslim could get along. I used to purify the Muslims converting back to Hinduism. I used to reside in the Arya Samaj temple. But you were not bothered about these things even a bit."¹³

Ashfaqulla also participated in

the non-cooperation movement along with Ram Prasad Bismil. He also attended the Congress sessions held in Ahmedabad in December 1921 and in Gaya in December 1922. After the First World War, the Ottoman empire of Turkey was broken by the British, whose Sultan was considered by the Muslims all over the world as their supreme religious and political leader. There was an atmosphere of great anger over it among the Muslims in India also. In 1920, the Khilafat movement started in India under the leadership of Ali brothers in support of the Turkish Caliphate. Gandhiji not only supported this movement but also went to the extent of describing it as "an integral part of the non-cooperation movement of the Congress." Although this effort had brought Hindus and Muslims together, it would have been a matter of great pride for national unity if the cause and objectives of both the movements had also been the same. While the aim of the Congress was the establishment of Swaraj in India, the people involved in the Khilafat movement were agitating in support of the Caliphate in Turkey.

Resultantly, the Khilafat movement inspired Indian Muslims and made them stand against the British but with religious sentiments and not with national sentiments. Throwing light on the atmosphere of those days, Ashfaqulla himself writes, "I used to pray day and night that if the Turks conquer India and become the emperor here, then

we would become the Caliph of the times... Hatred arose against the British. My only thought was that they were the root of the conflict and their rule should be destroyed. It should happen in this way that let there be an Afghan or Turkish attack on India and we (people of India) will revolt at the same time. This way, their (British) kingdom will disintegrate and Muslims will become the rulers in the place of the Christians."¹⁴

Ashfaqulla's thoughts were communal in his childhood. He writes, "I had a lot of anti-Hindu sentiments at that time or even after, and it became more so later since our teacher was a Master Sahib (British man) when I was studying in a government school. He was always very friendly towards Hindus and Muslims, which I will now describe it as his wickedness as actually, these are the people who are the real enemies of the country."¹⁵ Ashfaqulla writes that "Today, my heart is as open for a Hindu as it is for a Muslim."

Ashfaqulla also writes in great details about how the education during his school days and the environment there used to influence a person's thoughts. If the communal views of a teacher strengthened the feeling of bitterness towards Hindus in the mind of a young Ashfaqulla, then in the school itself, he also met some teachers who taught him the first lesson of patriotism.

The seeds of patriotism in Ashfaqulla's heart started taking roots in the school itself. What a difference a great teacher

can make in any person's life becomes clear from the life of Ashfaqulla. He himself writes, "When I passed Class VIII, there were two lessons in the English book of my course – one lesson was on 'Love of Country', a poem written by Sir Walter Scott, and the other lesson was on the story of Horace, in which he had given a speech when his country was invaded by the enemy forces. He (Horace) said that 'if the bridge is broken, the enemy army cannot cross the Tiber river and there is no other way for them enter our country. I will go there and stand and fight with just three companions with me on the narrow path and will break the bridge and throw it into the river.' And it happened like that only and Rome was saved. My teacher taught this lesson in such a way that it set my body on fire. The foundation of my patriotism was laid from this lesson alone.

I have read hundreds of books and listened to thousands of lectures, but I don't know which school day it was when Master Sahib taught this lesson. It is true that this poem and this lesson was the first thing that brought me to the platform of patriotism and ignited the fire of love for the country."¹⁶

Ashfaqulla writes another incident from the same school days, "After this, one of my Master Sahibs (whose name I am not mentioning here because it is possible that he may feel some discomfort) gave me a book and said that 'I am giving it to you because you prove to be worthy of it.' Its name was 'Patriots of the

World'. I read it and developed this impression in my heart that the one who dies for his country attains immortality."¹⁷ It becomes clear from these two examples that those unknown teachers of the school taught Ashfaqulla the first lesson of patriotism. With time, this seed sprouted and the plant grew bigger in the coming days.

Ashfaqulla's senior family members were in government jobs. His father Muhammad Shafiqullah Khan was a sub-inspector of police. He was a self-respecting person but he had nothing to do with the Indian independence movement. His maternal family was supporting the British in the conflict of 1857, which Ashfaqulla was very sad about. His mother's grandfather and his brothers were all judges and deputy collectors. Ashfaqulla writes, "I consider it a matter of shame that at a time when the people of the country are getting aware of freedom and shedding their blood like water, sacrificing their children on the altar of the country, happily offering their house, wealth, honour and everything they can, for the sake of freedom their country and religion, it is a matter of shame that some other people are betraying them, conspiring against them and trying to destroy their plans. If helping the national enemies is not a matter of a thousand shame, then what else it is?"¹⁸

However, during a trial, in an attempt to prove Ashfaqulla's innocence, his lawyer had actually mentioned his family

background in his defence.¹⁹ Though there was a feeling of hatred towards the British among the ancestors of Ashfaqulla, but there is no indication that they faced any problem due to the subjugation of their motherland. Ashfaqulla writes about his paternal grandfather's family, "They hated knowledge, they had enmity towards any activity and considered studying English as a big blasphemy."²⁰ He further writes, "These people have so much faith in luck that they consider it a crime to try in worldly pursuits."²¹ They even consider touching an English book as making the hands impure."²² Mentioning about the hatred of his senior family members towards English, Ashfaqulla writes, "When one of our close friends accidentally left his English book at a close relative's house, they had their servant hold it with tongs and keep it aside. Had they been aware of science and that metal is a conductor, they would have definitely not asked to use the tongs made of metal, but would have asked for a wooden thing to be used."²³

Though he grew up in such an environment, Ashfaqulla proved to be a complete revolutionary. The selfish behaviour of a close friend during his school days also contributed in taking Ashfaqulla forward on the path of revolution. He was deeply hurt by the fact that the one whom he loved deeply always caused him trouble. He writes, "It is these disappointments that made me a revolutionary and as far as my experience is concerned, I have come to the conclusion that it is these disappointments that make a person fearless of his death. A person, who has the essence of love in his heart, can only do everything for the country, for his countrymen and for everyone without caring about the consequences."²⁴

Ram Prasad Bismil was a staunch Arya Samaji while Ashfaqulla was a staunch Muslim. Despite this, their friendship became an example not only for the revolutionaries but also for other people. Bismil started living in Arya Samaj temple and used to perform *Yajna* there while Ashfaqulla used to go to meet him there and offer Namaz

in the courtyard of the temple itself.²⁵ Ram Prasad Bismil used to perform purification of the Muslims who converted back to Hinduism but his friendship with Ashfaqulla was unbreakable.

Ram Prasad Bismil himself writes in his autobiography, "Some of my colleagues looked at you with hatred because you were a Muslim, but you were firm on your determination. I used to visit me at the Arya Samaj temple. When there was a Hindu-Muslim fight, everyone in your locality used to openly abuse you and call you a Kafir (infidel), but you never agreed with their views. You were always in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity. You were a true Muslim and a true patriot. You had had the only thought in life that God should have given wisdom to the Muslims to work along with the Hindus for the welfare of India. Whenever I write any article or book in Hindi, you would always request me to write it in Urdu too so that Muslims can also read it. You studied Hindi well to understand the sentiments of patriotism. Whenever you used to talk to your mother and sister-in-law at home, Hindi words would come out of your mouth, which used to surprise everyone. Seeing this kind of attitude of yours, many people used to suspect that you might get purified by renouncing the religion of Islam one day. But your heart was not impure in any way, then what would you have purified?"²⁶

Though there was a feeling of hatred towards the British among the ancestors of Ashfaqulla, but there is no indication that they faced any problem due to the subjugation of their motherland. Ashfaqulla writes about his paternal grandfather's family, "They hated knowledge, they had enmity towards any activity and considered studying English as a big blasphemy." He further writes, "These people have so much faith in luck that they consider it a crime to try in worldly pursuits. They even consider touching an English book as making the hands impure

The words of Ram Prasad Bismil show that Ashfaqulla was extremely liberal and free from

narrow-mindedness in religious matters. Ram Prasad Bismil also mentions about another incident, "Once when you had a palpitation of heart and were unconscious, words like 'Ram' and 'Hi Ram' were coming out of your mouth repeatedly. Your relatives standing nearby were surprised that you were uttering 'Ram Ram'. They would ask you to say rather 'Allah Allah', but you had a habit of saying 'Ram Ram'. A friend arrived there at that time who knew who this 'Ram' you were talking about. I was immediately called. When you calmed down after meeting me, everyone could understand the secret behind your muttering 'Ram Ram'."²⁷

With the end of the non-cooperation movement and the Khilafat movement in 1922, the unity of Hindus and Muslims was also eclipsed. Communal riots started happening at different places. Muslims took out swords in protest against the Ram Navami procession in Visnagar in Mehsana district of Gujarat. Concerned over the situation in Visnagar, Gandhiji wrote a long article in 'Navjivan' on May 4, 1924.²⁸

However, the Moplah rebellion in Malabar of Kerala in August 1921 also tore down the fabric of communal harmony when the Moplah rebels brutally murdered hundreds of Hindus. After that massacre, the Hindu women of Malabar had sent a petition to the wife of the then Viceroy of India, Lord Reading, praying for the protection of their life and honour.²⁹ But, in those days, that

A telegram sent by the Indian News Agency on September 24, 1924, shows that the riots were triggered by a fight between Hindus and Muslims over a branch of a Peepal tree in Jalalabad village in Shahjahanpur district. One person had died that day. Later, that fire spread to Shahjahanpur. According to the telegram sent by the then Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India in London on September 26, 1924, six people had died and 104 were injured in the riots by then

barbaric crime was covered up in the name of communal unity. In 1924, communal riots took place at many places in the country including Delhi, Gulbarga, Nagpur, Lucknow, Allahabad, Jabalpur, Bhagalpur, Kanod, Kohat, Lahore and Shahjahanpur. When riots took place in Shahjahanpur, Ashfaqulla and Ram Prasad Bismil together tried to extinguish the fire of hatred.

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Ashfaqulla was extremely sad and disappointed over these riots. He was completely free from religious fanaticism. In his opinion, there is no other religion greater than service to the nation. He was hanged in Faizabad jail on the morning of December

19, 1927. On the same day, he had written a precious article in the name of the people of India. That article is available printed in 6 pages. It is natural that such a big article cannot be written in a few minutes. It is possible that he would have sat down to write the previous evening and have written till morning. The title of the article is "Biradarane Watan Ke Naam Kabar Ke Kinare Se Paigam", i.e. the last message to his countrymen. His pain against communal disharmony comes to the fore again and again in this article. Hardly anyone would have attacked religious fanaticism in such clear words like he did. Here are some examples:³¹

1. Someone is a big fan of Tabligh (propagation of Islam) while someone considers Shuddhi (purification process for converting Muslims back to Hinduism) as the means of salvation. From time to time, I feel pity for these minds and intellects who are excellent minds and political experts.
2. I am dying, and I am dying for my country. It is my duty to convey every news – whether good and bad – to my brothers.

Manthan

It is up to them to believe it or not. Even eminent people of the country are not spared from this (communal divide). Therefore, the public should accept it with their eyes wide open. Brothers! This division among yourselves, this civil war will not prove beneficial to either of you. It is impossible that 7 crore Muslims could be purified and it is also meaningless that 22 crore Hindus could be converted into Muslims.

3. Oh Holy God! Will there not come a morning when your sun will shine on independent India? And the slogans of independence will reverberate in the air of India? Be it Congress men or Swarajists, Tablighi people or Shuddhi people, communists or revolutionaries, Akalis or Bengalis – may my message reach every citizen of this country. I swear by the self-respect and religion of every one of them. Even if someone is not a believer, I appeal to his conscience and whoever he believes in, that we should have mercy on the youth who died in the Kakori case and then make India the India of the 1920 and 1921.
4. People of Tabligh and Shuddhi, open your eyes to God. Think where were you and where have you reached. Put an end to your ego. Just think how leaving the single most important work incomplete, strong disagreement over religion and war of opinions have

driven you all away from it.

5. Worship your God in a peaceful manner. Meditate on God silently and together you drive away this white ghost from our system by hook or crook.
6. Live in harmony among yourselves and get united. Realise that the burden of future of the whole India rests on your shoulders. Otherwise, you will end up becoming the burden of slavery.

The pain and foreboding was clear in these words of Ashfaqulla which proved true 20 years after writing this article and it came in the form of Partition of India. The unfortunate thing is that the Muslim League under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah succeeded in misleading the Muslims by invoking the baseless two-nation theory and the divine message of Ashfaqulla remained drowned in the din of Partition. Controversy was also created on the Vande Mataram song and fanatic Muslims kept insisting on not singing the national song. The song is a part of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's novel 'Anandmath'. Ashfaqulla writes that at the time of moving towards revolutionary activities, Banarasi Lal had narrated that novel to him in Hindi. Ashfaqulla had no objection to Anandmath nor to Vande Mataram.

Fundamentalists say that Muslims cannot worship anyone other than Allah, not even one's own mother and not even the motherland. But, for Ashfaqulla,

worshiping the nation was the biggest religion. He was free from all kinds of narrow-mindedness. His letter written to the elder sister of fellow revolutionary Sachindra Nath Bakshi three days before his execution is a great example of this. The letter, which was written in English, is as follows:³²

Farewell

*Kaal Kothari
Faizabad Jail
16-12-1927*

Dear sister,

I am going to another world, where there are neither the troubles of worldly life nor there will be any struggle for a better life and where there will neither be death nor destruction. I am not going to die, but am going to live forever. After the release of Comrade Bakshi, please convey him my love and respect and tell him that I took my last breath with a strong mind and a happy heart. Monday is the last day. If you get a chance, you can make one last visit to me. If circumstances do not allow to do so, then I bid farewell to you all forever. Accept my last respect and let me embrace death. You will come to know later how I embraced death.

May God be with you with his blessings. Convey my respect to Baba and love to Savitri, Gaur, Kanu and other children and best wishes to Nepal. Convey my respect to all the elders and love to the younger ones. I wish to see you all one more time in my life, so if possible please come.

Remember God and don't be sad thinking about me. Tell Bakshi about me. I respect you like my own sister. Please do not forget me. Stay happy. I am dying like a hero.

My salutations to all.

*Yours
Ashfaqulla Khan Warsi*

Ashfaqulla gives his utmost respect to the father of fellow revolutionary Sachindra Nath Bakshi and all other elders. This is Indian culture. Looking at it through the lens of religion is nothing less than spreading communal hatred and dividing people again. The pages of Ashfaqulla's unpublished jail diary also reveal his dedication towards Mother India. Below are some examples:

1. Here (in India) arose the great Lord Buddha who opened the doors of Nirvana. Half the world bows to him and worships him with respectful love.
2. Oh my goddess! O my soul! Oh my heaven! O my motherland! When your 30 crore children come together and worship you, there will be no shame, no pain, no suffering, no sorrow.
3. My brothers and friends will cry after me, but I am crying now seeing their indifference and disloyalty towards the motherland.
4. Children don't cry, elders don't cry. I will not die. I am immortal, I am immortal.

Immortality is not a principle of Islam, but of Sanatan Dharma. When Ashfaqulla says 'I am immortal', he does not become an infidel. He was talking about the greatness of being sacrificed for the motherland. Ashfaqulla's thoughts and ideals are as relevant today as they were in his time.

Fellow revolutionary Sachindra Nath Bakshi writes, "Despite offering Namaz regularly, he was not a fanatic at all. He could never see religion becoming an obstacle in the way. Rather when it did, he considered it right to reject religion like any other obstacle. He considered the question of the country's freedom to be a higher matter than religious differences. First, he wanted to see the country independent. This shows Ashfaqulla's generosity towards religion and the strong patriotism in his heart."³³

Ashfaqulla was not only brave but also a very thoughtful and far-sighted revolutionary. When the revolutionaries under the leadership of Ram Prasad Bismil planned to stop the train and loot the government treasury, Ashfaqulla had opposed it. He said that "Right now, our organisation is not strong enough to openly challenge the British empire. Right now, we are not in a position to maintain the outfit by waging a direct fight with the government." But everyone was quivering with excitement and Ashfaqulla's words went unheard like a whisper in the theatre.

The train robbery was scheduled for August 9, 1925.

Even when the 10 men reached Kakori station, Ashfaqulla kept saying that "Ram Prasad, please listen to me. Let us go back at least now." But his words remained a far cry in the woods. Sachindra Nath Bakshi writes, "*Ram Prasad Bismil called me and asked me to talk to Ashfaqulla and tell him what all people are saying about him because of his protest. I explained to Ashfaqulla that 'resisting the plan even at the eleventh hour will have a very bad impact on our comrades. In fact, they have even started calling you a coward.'* Actually, many of our comrades were saying that Ashfaqulla is scared. Pandit Ram Prasad Bismil also told Ashfaqulla that everyone is thinking that you are scared. But Ashfaqulla had only one thing to suggest – *Let us go back, this should not be done.*"³⁴

But when his advice was finally not heard, Ashfaqulla participated in that action and even took the lead. The result was that Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqulla Khan, Rajendra Lahiri and Roshan Singh were hanged in the case related to the robbery in which only Rs 4,553, 3 annas and 6 pies were obtained.³⁵ Apart from this, 16 more revolutionaries were given long term sentences. The organisation was devastated. Ashfaqulla's apprehensions were proved correct. Praising his wisdom, revolutionary Sachindra Nath Bakshi, who was sentenced to life imprisonment, writes, "*It has to*

Manthan

be admitted that he was thinking very far ahead."³⁶ Manmath Nath Gupta, who was sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment in that case, writes in his famous book 'History of the Indian Revolutionary Movement' that "History has proved that Ashfaqulla was right and we all were at fault. It is certain that if we had not executed this plan, our group would not have been uprooted so soon."³⁷

When the death sentence was awarded and when it came to filing mercy petition before the government, Ashfaqulla was not ready to file it at all. Ram Prasad Bismil writes, "Shri Ashfaqulla Khan was not at all ready to pray for mercy from the British government. His firm belief was that one should not pray for mercy from anyone other than God the Almighty. But on my special request, he had prayed for mercy from the government. I am the one responsible for this, because I used the sacred rights of my love to distract Shri Ashfaqulla Khan from his determination. Accepting my mistake and expressing my gratitude towards him, I had written a letter to Shri Ashfaq from Gorakhpur jail on the occasion of Bhratru-Dwitiya and sought forgiveness."³⁸

'Ashfaq' literally means 'compassion'. Ashfaqulla was a true revolutionary and his conduct was always in accordance with his name. He was sentenced to death though he had not killed anyone. Ashfaqulla was arrested in Delhi on September 8, 1926, and was

taken to Lucknow. There, Deputy Superintendent of CID Khan Bahadur Tasadduk Hussain tried to invoke Ashfaqulla's religious sentiments and said, "*Look Ashfaq, you are a Muslim. We are also Muslims, we are very angry over your arrest. Ram Prasad and others are Hindus. Their aim is to establish a Hindu Sultanate. You are an educated person belonging to a Muslim nobility. How did you fall into the trap of these infidels?*"³⁹ On hearing this, Ashfaqulla's eyes turned red and he said angrily, "*Beware, never say such a thing again. First of all, Pandit ji (Ram Prasad Bismil) etc are true Indians. They have a strong aversion towards establishing a Hindu Sultanate or a Sikh Sultanate or any theocratic state for that matter. And even if what you are saying is true, then I like Hindu State more than the British State.*"⁴⁰

This incident confirms that the British were accomplishing their mission by creating divisions among the Indians in the name of religion and caste, and a large number of Indians were falling into this trap too. After the first war of Independence in 1857, the British not only disarmed the Indians but also divided them on communal lines. Muslims were constantly being shown the fear that if the British left India, the next government would be formed not by sword but by votes, and Muslims would have to go under slavery in a Hindu majority country. The effect of this was that except for the

Khilafat movement of 1920, the Muslims never participated in any movement against the British in an organised manner. And as explained above, the Khilafat movement was not for the independence of India but was in support of the Caliph of Turkey.

Be it the revolutionary organisation Anushilan Samiti or Jugantar group in Bengal or the incidents in Chittagong under the leadership of Surya Sen in the year 1930, most of the people involved were Hindus. Similarly, whether there is talk of Abhinav Bharat in Maharashtra or echoes of Gadar in Punjab; or whether we talk about Mainpuri conspiracy or members of Hindustan Republican Association (HRA), which later became Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) or Naujawan Bharat Sabha, Muslims were hardly visible. This does not mean that they were pro-British but unfortunately, they had become a victim of the British propaganda that if the British would leave the country, 'Hindu rule' would come and they would be subjugated. Therefore, Muslims in general started moving away from the freedom movement. Ashfaqulla was very sad about this. He had said, "*Among the seven crore Muslim Indians, I am the first Muslim who is being hanged for the independence of India. I am feeling proud in my heart for this.*"⁴¹

It is also believed that during his absconding days, he had gone to Lahore where he met

Kedarnath Sehgal. Sehgal said, "I was imprisoned in the jail with a famous leader of Frontier and he told me that whenever any political worker needs to cross the border secretly, we can make arrangements for it. If you want, we can provide security and send you beyond the limits of the English kingdom." Ashfaqulla replied, "I do not want to run away from India. Brother! Let even a Muslim be hanged."⁴² It is another matter that in the case against Ashfaqulla, some of his so-called letters were presented as evidence, on the basis of

which it was concluded in the verdict of the case that he was trying to escape and go abroad.⁴³ Sachindra Nath Bakshi also confirms that Ashfaqulla had decided to escape and go abroad. During his absconding days, he worked under an executive engineer in Daltonganj for 8-10 months in the guise of being a Hindu. When he got bored with it, he went back to Delhi. There he began efforts to get a passport to go abroad on the pretext of studying engineering.⁴⁴

These were the few lines of the song Ashfaqulla had written

in the night before the verdict of the case was pronounced.⁴⁵

I will serve you O Motherland,
May I be hanged or may I be imprisoned for life,
I will sing your praises with great enthusiasm.

Ashfaqulla considered service to the motherland as the greatest religion. Today, there is a need to take his message to every home of the country. It is very important to show this mirror to those who oppose Vande Mataram. ●

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Interview

Ashfaq was a Staunch Opponent of Religious Fanaticism

Immortal martyr Ashfaqulla Khan was the youngest of the four brothers while Riyasat Ullah Khan was the second among them. Riyasat Ullah had to suffer unspeakable miseries during and after the trial of Ashfaqulla. The name of Riyasat Ullah's grandson is also Ashfaqulla Khan. Today's Ashfaqulla is carrying forward the legacy of his immortal martyr grandfather Ashfaqulla's love for the motherland. Pradeep Deswal had a conversation with the junior Ashfaqulla in his Shahjahanpur house in UP recently. Excerpts

Pradeep: Ashfaq ji, tell me something about your ancestors. How old is their connection with Shahjahanpur?

Ashfaq: Our ancestors were Pathans living near Peshawar (now in Pakistan). They came and settled down here during the time of Shahjahan. The family of Ashfaqulla's grandfather was known as Kadankhel and his maternal grandfather's family was known as Hafizkhel. After coming here, they bought land and property and settled down here.

Pradeep: Tell us something about Ashfaqulla's parents.

Ashfaq: The name of Ashfaqulla's father was Shafiq Ullah Khan. He was a Police Sub-Inspector but had already taken retirement from police service by the time Ashfaqulla was born. He was a very self-respecting person. Ashfaqulla had lost his father in his childhood. His mother's name was Mazharul Nisan Begum. She was educated, intelligent and a woman with very imposing personality. Books used to be kept on one side of her bed. She also used to read newspapers regularly. She was a woman of great heart, who generously helped in the marriage of the daughters of the poor. Ashfaqulla's maternal grandfather Muhammad Abul Hasan Khan was an Inspector of

Police in the court and his great grandfather was a Sub-Judge during the first battle of Independence in 1857.

Pradeep: How many brothers and sisters did Ashfaqulla have?

Ashfaq: Ashfaqulla had three brothers and one sister. The eldest brother was Shafi Ullah Khan, next to him was Riyasat Ullah Khan while the third brother was Shahenshah Khan and Ashfaqulla was the youngest one. They also had a sister whose name was Parvarish Bano. Shahenshah Khan was the Chief Reader of the Collector in the princely state of Bhopal.

Pradeep: Ashfaqulla was unmarried. So, who among his brothers was your grandfather?

Ashfaq: My grandfather was Riyasat Ullah Khan and my father's name was Ishtiaq Ullah Khan.

Pradeep: I have heard that Ashfaqulla loved his mother very much. What kind of impact did his mother's personality have on Ashfaqulla?

Ashfaq: Since Ashfaqulla was the youngest among the siblings, he was very dear to his mother. It is said that when he was young, he loved his mother so much that he would wake up at night and keep

looking at her face. The evidence of his immense love for his mother even after growing up is his many letters written to her from jail.

Pradeep: How was Ashfaqulla's childhood? How was he in studies? Was he mischievous or not?

Ashfaq: One thing is that because he was the youngest among his brothers and sister, he was loved by everyone. Like all children, he too used to do some mischief. See, he himself has written in great detail about his childhood. From the very beginning, he was taller and stronger than other boys of his age. When they fought among themselves, he would beat them up. Complaints against him were received repeatedly at home. Hence, it was decided to keep him engaged and let him have no spare time. When he was still a child, Ashfaqulla was handed over to a Maulvi Sahib, who used to teach his elder brothers too. We have a ritual in our community called 'Bismillah'. This ritual is conducted before a child formally begins his studies. But Ashfaqulla himself has written – “Even before going through Bismillah, I had already finished studying all the (religious) practices, etc.”



Pradeep: Did he also study in the Mission School of Shahjahanpur?

Ashfaq: Yes, Mission School used to be the most prestigious school of Shahjahanpur in those days. Ashfaqulla learned Urdu and Persian from Maulvi Sahib. After this, he took admission in the Mission School. Ram Prasad Bismil also studied in the Mission School, but he was elder to Ashfaqulla.

Pradeep: Since the family background was such that his paternal and maternal grandfathers were in government jobs, how did the family react when they came to know that Ashfaq had embarked on the path of revolution?

Ashfaq: It is natural that when the family members would have come to know about this, everyone would have been surprised because then they were still in government jobs only. Although Riyasat Ullah Khan, my grandfather and elder brother of Ashfaqulla Khan, was a classmate and friend of Ram Prasad Bismil, he had no connection with the revolutionary activities of Ram Prasad Bismil. But it is also true that the family did not leave Ashfaqulla alone, rather fought his case with full courage.

Pradeep: There is a lot of talk about the friendship between Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqulla Khan.

Ashfaq: It is absolutely true, the friendship between Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqulla Khan was unbreakable. Ram Prasad Bismil became famous after the Mainpuri case. Ashfaqulla contacted him and requested that he also wanted to join the revolutionary group for the independence of India. But initially, Ram Prasad Bismil avoided him. It was difficult for Ram Prasad Bismil to believe that a boy from a family in which most of the people were in government jobs, would be able to walk on the difficult path of revolting against the British. But once Ram Prasad Bismil trusted him, such a friendship developed that they remained together till their death. In the verdict of the case, the judge had written that Ashfaqulla was the right hand man of Ram Prasad Bismil. And, Ram Prasad Bismil has also written in his autobiography that

“You have brightened my face in the world.” Ram Prasad Bismil was a staunch Arya Samaji and used to purify the reconverting Muslims but religious differences never came in between their friendship. Ram Prasad Bismil used to live in Arya Samaj temple, Ashfaqulla used to go to meet him there and Ashfaqulla used to offer ‘namaz’ near the place where Ram Prasad Bismil used to perform ‘yagya’.

Pradeep: Ram Prasad Bismil also mentions another incident in his autobiography in which Ashfaqulla was muttering 'Ram Ram' at the time of fever. Tell us something about that incident.

Ashfaq: Yes, it happened that once Ashfaqulla got high fever. The fever had hit the brain. But even in that condition, he was remembering his dearest friend Ram Prasad Bismil and was murmuring 'Ram Ram'. He used to call Ram Prasad Bismil as Ram but his family members were not aware of it. Everyone thought this was the effect of joining Arya Samaj. Everyone was upset and worried. Then it occurred to someone that he might be looking for his friend Ram Prasad Bismil. This was conveyed to Ram Prasad Bismil. When he arrived, Ashfaqulla held his hand and said, “So you are here, Ram?” Everyone was very happy to see this.

Pradeep: There were many communal riots in Shahjahanpur in the year 1924. What was the role of Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqulla at that time?

Ashfaq: Look, Shahjahanpur has a very good history. Mutual harmony between Hindus and Muslims has been very strong. There was no fight in Shahjahanpur even at the time of Partition. Certainly, riots had broken out here in 1924. During that time, both Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqulla worked day and night to extinguish that communal fire. Once it happened that some rioting Muslims surrounded the Arya Samaj temple. Ashfaqulla stood straight at the door and told them that “You can go inside only over my dead body.” He had taken out his pistol and was ready to risk his life to protect the Arya Samaj temple.

See, the Kakori incident took place on August 9, 1925. Most of the revolutionaries, including Ram Prasad Bismil, were caught on 25-26 September. Prominent among those who had escaped were Ashfaqulla Khan, Sachindra Nath Bakshi and Chandra Shekhar Azad. The police had used all their strength to catch them. The same night at around 4 o'clock, the police came to our house too. My grandfather Riyasat Ulla ji opened the door. A large number of policemen started entering the house. Riyasat Ullah ji stopped them and asked them to show the search warrant first

Pradeep: When the police were not able to arrest Ashfaqulla after the Kakori incident, in what manner was his family tortured?

Ashfaq: See, the Kakori incident took place on August 9, 1925. Most of the revolutionaries, including Ram Prasad Bismil, were caught on 25-26 September. Prominent among those who had escaped were Ashfaqulla Khan, Sachindra Nath Bakshi and Chandra Shekhar Azad. The police had used all their strength to catch them. The same night at around 4 o'clock, the police came to our house too. My grandfather Riyasat Ulla ji opened the door. A large number of policemen started entering the house. Riyasat Ullah ji stopped them and asked them to show the search warrant first. They did have a search warrant. Then my grandfather said that “There are women in the house too. You cannot go inside the house like this. First I will go inside and get the veil done.” Actually, Ashfaqulla was at home at that time. Riyasat Ullah wanted to go inside and alert him. But the policemen stopped him from going inside alone. Riyasat Ulla raised his voice from there and said that “The police have come. Cover yourselves.” Ashfaqulla also understood the hint. He had in his possession several copies of 'Vanguard', the newspaper published from Moscow which was banned in India. He picked them up and immediately went up to the terrace. Many ancestral houses of our clan members were

situated adjacent to each other in a manner that one could pass from the roof of one house to the roof of another house. Ashfaqulla escaped through those rooftops. The policemen were very disappointed. However, there was a licensed gun in the house. They took it away.

On the night of 25-26 December, the police again raided our house. At that time, my father Ishtiaq Ullah Khan was about 5 years old and my aunt (Ishtiaq Ullah's sister) would have been around 4 years old. That winter night, the merciless policemen took away even the beds, beddings and bed sheets of those children. Everything -- even the clothes, tongs, blowpipe, wheat flour, jewelleryes, etc -- were confiscated. The house was also confiscated.

Pradeep: Due to fear of persecution by the British, the families of many revolutionaries had severed relationship with them. How was the behaviour of Ashfaqulla's brothers, sister and other relatives? In a letter written to his mother from jail on October 8, 1927, Ashfaqulla has mentioned in very clear words about the disloyalty of some of his relatives. What do you think about it?

Ashfaq: Yes, there were some people in the family who first suggested that Ashfaqulla should turn a government approver. But he was not ready for this at any cost. In such a situation, they had stopped talking as they were worried about their jobs, land

He considered crores of Hindus and Muslims of the country as his family, his clan. Let me tell you one more thing -- his lawyer was Kripa Shankar Hajela. Once Hajela Sahib advised him that if he gave a statement repenting for his actions, he could be saved from being hanged. Hearing this, Ashfaqulla was very disappointed and told him that "Hajela Saheb, I had appointed you as my lawyer after giving a lot of thoughts. I did not expect such advice from you." What I mean to say is that he was not ready to deviate even a bit from his principles

and property. But Ashfaqulla's own brothers always stood by him. In the letter you are referring to, he had written - "I have seen your family members and have also seen my own family members. My own brothers, nephews, sisters and brother-in-law are my real family. And the Hindus and Muslims of this country are my brothers and elders. I have no connection with any scoundrel whosoever they are." He considered crores of Hindus and Muslims of the country as his family, his clan. Let me tell you one more thing -- his lawyer was Kripa Shankar Hajela. Once Hajela Sahib advised him that if he gave a statement repenting for his actions, he could be saved from being hanged. Hearing this, Ashfaqulla was very disappointed and told him that "Hajela Saheb, I had appointed you as my lawyer after giving a lot of thoughts. I did not expect such advice from you." What I mean to say is that he was not ready to deviate even a bit from his principles. So, some people thought it better to stay away from his family.

Pradeep: Ashfaqulla's writings show that he was a staunch opponent of communal fanaticism. He repeatedly appealed to both the Hindus and Muslims to free their allegiance from religious prejudices and dedicate themselves to the cause of the nation. Would you like to shed some light on this?

Ashfaq: Yes, he was a staunch opponent of religious fundamentalism. The biggest religion for him was humanity and patriotism. He had a great scientific temperament. He writes that "Neither all 20 crore Hindus can be converted into Muslims nor all 7 crore Muslims can be converted into Hindus. Therefore, it would be better if both of them understand this truth and fight together against the British for India's freedom." He had written a couplet on this --

*Ye jhagde aur bakhede met kar aapas mein mil jao,
Abas tafreek hai tumamein ye Hindu-o-Musalman*

(Let's put an end to these fights and disturbances and join together,
Now there is this difference between you, Hindu and Muslim.)

Pradeep: What kind of India did Ashfaqulla dream of after Independence?

Ashfaq: You read his writings, his thinking was clear. He envisioned a society in which every human being would have equal opportunities. There will be no superior or inferior. He writes - "Let those days come soon when the labourers and farmers would be found sitting on a chair in front of Mr. Khaliquz Zama, Jagat Narayan Mulla and Raja Sahib Mahmudabad in Chattar Manzil, Lucknow. Writing for the farmers and labourers, he says that "If I would have my way, I would have handed over everything of the world to them."

Pradeep: What kind of difficulties did the family face after the arrest of Ashfaqulla?

Ashfaq: The British police left no stone unturned to harass the family. It was the night of 25th or 26th December, it was chilly winter. My father was 5 years old and my aunt was 4 years old at that time. After midnight, the police raided our house with confiscation orders in hand. Right in front of my grandfather Riyasat Ullah Khan ji, they took away beds, bedspreads and cots of his two children. Guess how they would have spent that winter night. They took away everything they could lay their hands on -- tongs, whisk, flour, clothes, et al -- from the house. The house too was confiscated. So, see, on one hand, there were these problems, on top of that, the huge expense of fighting the case. And also, those who used to be friends till the day before turned their eyes away due to the fear of police harassment. Despite all these sufferings, Ashfaqulla's brothers stood by him till his last breath.

Pradeep: How did the government of independent India take care of Ashfaqulla's family?

Ashfaq: See, our family was not alone, the families of most of the martyrs had to suffer neglect even after Independence. The curse of hunger and poverty that the mother of a brave man like Chandra Shekhar Azad had to face is indescribable. Ram Prasad Bismil's mother and sister also lived in extreme poverty. More or less, everyone's condition was bad.

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Pradeep: For the India for which revolutionaries like Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqulla kissed the noose with a smile, do you think the dreams of those martyrs have been fulfilled? Or, are there some shortcomings left?

Ashfaq: A lot of work has happened after Independence, it is not that nothing has happened. Yes, there are a lot left to be done. Not only should mutual brotherhood be maintained in the society but it should also become stronger. Everyone will have to work together for the progress of the country.

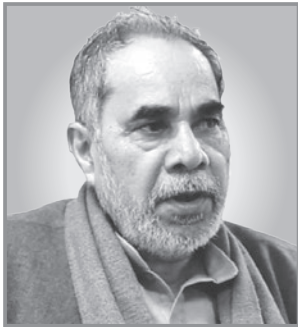
Pradeep: Ashfaqulla was also a very good poet, with which of his couplets would you like to end today's conversation?

Ashfaq: Many of Ashfaqulla's couplets inspire us even today. They are quite popular too. Let me recite two of them for you --

*Maut aur zindagi hai duniya ka ik tamasha
Farman Krishna ka tha Arjun ko beech ran mein*

(Death and life are a spectacle of the world,
The order was given by Krishna to Arjun in the middle of the battle field.)

*Kuchh aarzo nahin hai, hai aarzo to ye hai
Rakh de koi zara si khak-e-vatan kafan mein*
(I don't have any desires, the only desire I have is this, Someone put a little of the soil of this country in my shroud.) ●



Ram Bahadur Rai

Muslims in Freedom Movement

No doubt the history of our freedom movement is quite complex. However, the issue of contribution of Muslims to this movement is no less intricate. Here is an attempt to uncover the layers of a past full of contradictory facts

The history of our freedom movement is very long. But this article covers the period which is known as the time of British rule. However, this time period and its scope is large too. It has many stages. Three elements are common to all the three stages -- sacrifice, tenacity and Satyagraha. Revolutionaries chose the path of sacrifice. Tenacity is the path of those who said 'we will achieve it by perseverance'. There is an element of determination in it. The prominent persons of the society chose the path of tenacity to attain freedom. But how can it be possible that the mythical story of Menaka would not take place in the freedom movement wherein she descends from the sky, spreads her magic and the dedication of some people is broken? Its forms and colours may be different. That is a tragic chapter in the history of our freedom movement. The third element is that of Satyagraha. Had it not rested on the shoulders of the general public right from the beginning till the end, the country would not have been able to achieve the goal of independence.

There is a need to look at that movement from a fresh and befitting perspective. If this happens, then the logic behind retrospection will be

established in history. This is also the need of the hour. That is why the editor of 'Manthan' has taken up this issue in this edition. The question is: What is the importance of having the sense of history? Is this a philosophical ideology? If there is such a thing, it would be complicated to know which is meaningless for the common man. But it will be a great thing for the seekers of wisdom. As far as I understand, the argument that 'Manthan' wants to establish through this issue is related to adopting the proven beliefs of history. This is an attempt to establish the need to incorporate those beliefs into the understanding of our history.

What are those proven beliefs of logical behaviour? Well, India is a country. It is also a nation. But all countries are not nations. The freedom movement was to make India free and independent. It wanted freedom from the exploitation and oppression of the British empire. To achieve its goal, the independence movement had to go through a historical process. There came a phase in its ups and downs when the forces who wanted to wedge a divide in Hindu-Muslim relations succeeded in their vicious plot. This resulted in conflicting standards

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being adopted to understand and explain the freedom movement. Historians also became victims of this. It is clear that an imbalance has arisen. This is the right time to know that history and the role of Muslims in it in its entirety. Because India is rapidly moving towards realising its self-realisation.

History is not a narrative. Then, what is it? It demands analysis of cause and effect. There is a rhythm in history. The ascents and descents in the rhythm are very natural. But questions are raised when the destinations become different. Certainly, we have to look back at our history to know things like 'What mistakes were committed? Where did the rhythm break? Why did it break?' We also have to remember what our achievements have been in the past. By doing this, the present and future can be improved. This is necessary because the events of history played a very important role in the birth of an

independent India. The larger political-cultural tradition can be understood by adopting a rational approach towards history. For its proper study, it is necessary that there be a realistic study of the freedom movement. Such a study will clarify the differences between its merits and demerits.

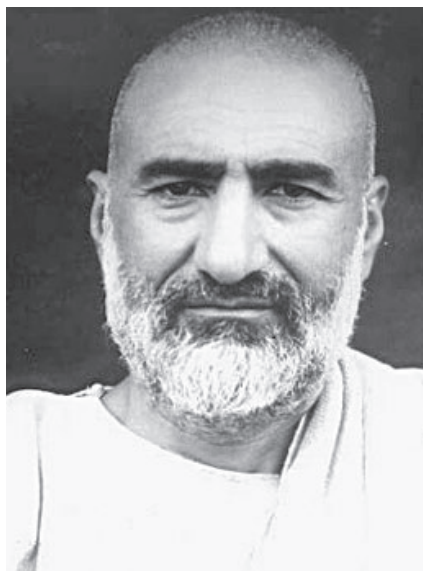
In the freedom movement, where there were high-octane noises, there were also a lot of show of grit and gumption. To understand this, it is necessary to have a look at the historical events all again in the light of the new facts. That's because on the 150th year of the first freedom struggle, many authentic things about the freedom movement have come to light. However, one question that has still remained unanswered is: When should the freedom struggle be considered to have started? Some historians have been linking it with the birth of Congress. But this view is a lopsided one. Now, historians have started considering the beginning of modern India with the battle

of Buxar. This is because it has already been established that the independence movement had started from 1765. The British had won in Buxar only a year earlier. With that victory, British rule (East India Company) was established in Bengal, Bihar and Odisha, which in turn started with the victory of the British in the Battle of Plassey in 1757. In this way, these victories opened the way for the British for ruthless plunder and brutal oppression. "The first flag of rebellion against that cruelty and plunder was raised by Majnu Shah, the leader of the Fakirs (Muslim saints), and Bhavani Pathak, the leader of the Sanyasis (Hindu ascetics). This sequence continued till 1800."¹ In this fight, Hindus and Muslims were together. Even a voluminous book would fall short in narrating this complete story.

The incidents of rebellion by the Sanyasis and Fakirs took place between 1765 and 1800. These are the examples of the shared efforts to end the British rule. Such incidents which are well known range from Shamsheer Ghazi of Tripura to Dilawar Khan of Chittagong to the organised rebellion of Wazir Ali of Awadh. These are not all but only a few examples. Similarly, these incidents have been mentioned in the history books only sporadically. But in reality, it was not so. There seems to be a 'cause and effect' relationship because in these, farmers and craftsmen fought together in an organised manner. On the other hand, the biggest example of the cruelty and injustice of the British came



Ashfaqulla Khan



Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan

to light when Maharaja Nand Kumar was hanged at a crossroad on August 5, 1775, in front of a crowd that had gathered there. These facts have come to light from the new researches. Hindus and Muslims were equally victims of the brutality of the British.

A great example of shared efforts for freedom from the British is found in Varanasi. There was a major fight with the British in which Wazir Ali got help from Jagat Narayan Singh. It is a different matter that the company's army emerged victorious. This incident is of 1797. Historian P.N. Chopra has also mentioned this in his book.² He had confirmed this from Lord Wellesley's statement that Muslims were actively involved in the revolt. In 1816, a rebellion broke out in Bareilly, which was led by Mufti Muhammad Aiwaz. He was a respected leader of Rohilkhand.

During the same period, incidents of Wahhabi and Faraji rebellions took place. This added a new dimension to the history of our freedom movement. The people who were leading the Muslims in those incidents showed the path of 'Jihad' (crusade). There was a feeling of regaining their lost dominance. The first example of this is Shah Waliullah. On one hand, the Mughal power was declining and this was causing uneasiness among the Muslims. At such a time, Waliullah came forward. In 1732, he reached Mecca-Medina. After staying there for two years, he returned to Delhi. He was well

aware of the declining condition of Islam. He cited two reasons for this: First, not studying the Quran and Hadith, and second, division among the Muslims. In 1743, he established a Madarsa (Islamic seminary) to propagate his principles.

Shah Waliullah launched a movement to save the Muslims from this 'decline'. He wanted to regain the lost supremacy of Muslims. Also, he wanted to make Muslims followers of the Quran. He considered following the Arab traditions as the target for Indian Muslims and, at the time of his death, he left a will behind for them that they should not adopt the customs and traditions of the Hindus. "Thus began the tradition which kept separating Hindus and Muslims from each other in the political and social fields."³ Eminent Pakistani historian Mubarak Ali also held a similar opinion. He has written that "Shah Waliullah believed that the Muslim community could survive in India by waging Jihad against the Hindus."⁴ "Shah Waliullah was the first religious leader to play this new role. He should be given the credit for politicising religion and determining a new role for the Indian Ulema (Muslim scholars)."⁵ He died in 1763. After Shah Waliullah, the responsibility of the rise and progress of Muslims fell on the shoulders of his son Abdul Aziz.

Eminent historian Prof. M.S. Jain is of the opinion that "during the time of Shah Waliullah, some life was still left in the Islamic state of Delhi, but by the time of

Abdul Aziz, it existed only for the namesake."⁶ The main objective of Shah Waliullah's movement was to re-establish the political power of the Muslims. He held that this was possible only by awakening the spirit of struggle and Jihad in the Muslims. For this, Abdul Aziz needed such disciples who could run this Jihad effectively. He formed a circle of his disciples, which included Syed Ahmed Barelvi, Shah Mohammad Ismail and Maulana Abdul Hai Shah Ishaq. This circle was headed by Shah Ishaq and the task of conducting Jihad was given to Syed Ahmed Barelvi.⁷ This circle even raised an army and conducted a campaign. The idea behind running such a propaganda was to liberate Muslims from the customs and traditions of Hindus. The disorientation and religious colour in the freedom movement is the product of this Wahhabi movement only. Today, it can be concluded that Wahhabis used their mind but remained limited to only one dimension while the demand of the freedom movement was for a multidimensional vision.

The fabric of British colonial rule expanded from North to South in the 19th century. At that time, public opinion was against the British rule. Waves of unrest were simmering in within. However, an organised resistance was launched by the Indian Wahhabis. This wrote a new chapter in the history of the freedom movement. "It was one of the earliest, most consistent and long-term resistance and

most notable anti-British movements that dominated 19th century Indian history.”⁸ That period marked the decline of the Mughal era, due to which there was a feeling of anarchy, despair and gloom among the Muslims. And that was the period when the Ulema came forward to don the task of applying the coating of politics on religion.

Some historians want Syed Ahmed Barlevi to be considered as the first hero who started the independence movement. But this was like flipping a counterfeit coin. Maulana Syed Ahmed Barelvi belonged to Rae Bareli. Journalist M.J. Akbar has written: “Syed Ahmed Barelvi started a Jihad in 1825. The Barelvi movement began in East India, but they established their war headquarters at a place called Balakot in the Malakand division of the North-West Frontier Province... The strength of the Barelvi movement lay in the mobilisation of the forces from the lower strata and oppressed classes of the community... This long drawn war corroborated in the minds of the British the view that when the Muslims are motivated by faith, they fight for the ideas that transcends beyond the region or sultanate, and convinced them that Islam is a religion which inspires incessant war.”⁹

In the eyes of the Jihadists, the fate of Islam was linked to gaining political power by Muslims. Now, this was a new role they were to play, whose religious leader was Shah Waliullah. Dr. Ahtar Abbas Rizvi has written:

“His only goal was to establish political power of Sunni Muslims in Delhi.”¹⁰ Though he did not get success then, he did sow the seeds of pan-Islamism from which many branches sprouted in the future. What was the purpose of this Jihad? Did these Jihadis come forward for the Indian independence movement? Questioning this, Prof. M.S. Jain has written that Taufiq Nizami wanted to make us believe that Syed Ahmed Barelvi was the first person to fight for Indian independence who wanted to oust the British and establish a national government in which there would be no conflict between the religion and the ideals of the ruler.¹¹ However, the truth was just its opposite.

That's why Prof. M.S. Jain has written, “It is not right to present facts without historical context to support wrong policies.”¹² He has elaborated on this in these words, “The main objective of Syed Ahmed Barelvi's movement is to liberate Muslims from Hindu customs and traditions. Most Muslims were Hindus a few generations ago. But they still used to visit Hindu pilgrim sites and follow their various customs and traditions. Syed Ahmed Barelvi wanted Muslims to give up these customs and traditions.”¹³ This fact makes many historians uneasy. But facts are facts. Those historians who have linked the Wahhabi movement and renaissance with the freedom movement, even though they seem opposite, are guilty of cheating history. There is only one criterion for

the freedom movement -- that it (freedom) is its destination.

If every path leads to the destination of freedom, then the question of who chooses which path does not arise. The question becomes realistic when a group finds itself suited to a particular path. No doubt that path will be their own. But whether that path is the right one or not will be determined by whether it is in the direction of the destination or not. On this criterion, the path chosen by Shah Waliullah and Syed Ahmed Barelvi seems to be to fight the Hindus, instead of fighting the British. Their goal was manifested in a false interpretation of freedom -- that is, of establishment of Islam. From this, it comes to light that the war was for supremacy, from which emanated the insistence to stop the chariot of freedom movement. Here the difference should be kept in mind that ordinary Hindus and Muslims were inspired by the same destination -- that was about freedom. It is another matter that from time to time, there was disorientation and confusion in the leadership right from the beginning.

Moreover, what some historians glorify as the Faraji movement also dates back to the first half of the 19th century. The leader of this movement was Haji Shariat Ullah. He went to Mecca at an early age and stayed there for 20 years. He returned to Bengal in 1802. The preachings that Shah Waliullah and his disciples spread among the Muslims in the areas of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and

Bihar, Haji Shariat Ullah did the same in Bengal. The meaning of 'faraj' in Urdu is 'performance of duties' in Hindi. That is why it was called Faraji movement. Shariat Ullah had declared Bengal as Darul Harab. As per the Islamic rules, Darul Harab is the area where Muslims are fighting a war. Prof M.S. Jain has written that the impact of the Wahhabi and Faraji movements was that "pilgrimage to Hindu holy places became increasingly unpopular among the Muslims... so that the Muslims could develop their separate identity... These principles became the very basis of thinking of most of the Muslim leaders."¹⁴ Imagine, what kind of impact this must have had on the minds of the Muslims!

Clarifying this point, Mubarak Ali has written, "The Jihad movement reveals the mentality of Indian Muslims that they were not ready to fight against the foreigners in an organised manner along with the Indian nationalists. Their war with the Sikhs helped the British, who were able to capture Punjab defeating the Sikhs. Ultimately, the Muslims did not get any benefit though. On the contrary, the community got divided into more pieces and it no longer had the capacity left to fight any battle to regain its lost dignity."¹⁵

There are many such turning points in the independence movement which only complicate the history more. Historians themselves have also played a big role in it. How to view and understand those many turning points in the freedom movement?

The new breed of historians has made this even more complicated. This species is being known as 'subaltern' historians. However, no more controversy is there like earlier over the period of freedom movement. That period is of British rule. If we review the role of Muslims in the freedom movement, we will find that the people who were leading them are seen in at least five shades. I mean they can be placed in five categories. They are found in various shades like revolutionaries, pan-Islamists, Congressmen, Muslim League supporters and nationalists. This classification will become meaningless and formless, if its meaning is not clarified here. Those who were in the category of revolutionaries and nationalists considered the liberation of India as the only goal of their lives. That's why Ashfaqulla Khan kissed the noose. The two petals that emerged from the seeds of patriotism, which germinated on the foundation of love for India, were revolution and nationalism. While the others were only the notions of grabbing power. In other words, they can also be called the 'dirty streams' of the freedom movement.

The notion of pan-Islamism creates an illusion that Muslims are a single entity. This is not true in any way. If we look at it from the perspective of the freedom struggle, the response of Muslims to the challenges of the British rule had been different. This has been very accurately narrated by Mubarak Ali: "There were various reactions among Muslims

regarding the British rule and the challenges it threw up. Muslims in South India were mostly traders. Being businessmen, they were flexible and willing to compromise with changing circumstances. They accepted the superiority of the British and started learning their language and culture. The reaction in North India was different."¹⁶ The truth is that there have always been social diversities and heterogeneities among the Indian Muslims and those have persisted over time, whose description is also recorded in the pages of history. "In every state, the Muslim community is divided into three broad categories: one - Ashraf, two - Ajlaf and three - Arjal. 'Ashraf' means noble. This category included pure descendants of foreign Muslims and the Muslims converted from Hindu upper castes. All other lower class converted Muslims were known by the contemptuous terms of 'Ajlaf', 'wretched people', or 'Arjal', 'lowly people'.¹⁷ Historians have studied their effects and side effects extensively. That process is still going on and has maintained its continuity.

In the freedom movement, there were both types of examples -- that of correct leadership, in which the spirit of nationalism was predominant, and also of exploitation of the sentiments of Muslims. In the first group, there were those leaders who were imbued with nationalism. The second group was of those leaders who kept changing their tactics on the axis of pan-

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Islamism, which also became the source of communalism. Rezaul Karim has written in his book 'Muslims and the Congress' that taking the advantage of lack of education among them, some leaders exploited the fundamentalist element in the Muslims. However, it is not that Muslims were not aware of the changes that were taking place at that time.

The first freedom struggle creates a mile stone in Hindu-Muslim unity. It was fought under the leadership of the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, due to which the British were quite annoyed with the Muslims. It is also a fact of history that this war established that Indian society had entered a new era. In such a changed situation, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan appeared on the screen. He remains an enigma even today. "The ancestors of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who was no doubt a multifaceted personality, had come from Herat in Afghanistan during the reign of Shahjahan. His family had since been connected with the Mughal court in some form

or the other."¹⁸ After his father's death, he received training in court work from his uncle. He came in contact with the English judge Hamilton in Delhi itself who made him Naib Munshi. After passing the examination for Munsfi, he was appointed Munsif for the first time in Mainpuri on December 24, 1841. In this way, he got a post in the East India Company. "Syed Ahmed Khan was not only involved in the events of 1857 as a government employee, but he was the first Indian to write about them and carry out an analysis of those events."¹⁹

Why is it so important to know? Because "this was the most critical period in the life of Syed (Ahmed Khan). The devastation of Delhi and the death of his kith and kin had shaken his heart and mind."²⁰ This was bound to have consequences. "He was besieged by a deep tension between the British rule and his own community."²¹ During the same time, he wrote 'Risala-e-Asababe Bagawate Hind'. This contains his discussion and analysis on 1857. Was he

expressing the sentiments of the Muslims of India? To understand this in its entirety, it is important to know that "Syed Ahmed did not like Ajlaf or Pasmanda (marginalised) Muslims in his life. Of course, he was an Ashraf Muslim and was a well-wisher of the elite class. This was present in his thinking and practices."²² Apart from this, it should also be known that "actually, Syed Ahmed himself was once greatly influenced by the ideology of Shah Waliullah and the leaders of Wahhabi (Jihad) movement inspired by him."²³

About the aspects of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's personality, which have not been given much attention to, Veer Bharat Talwar writes in his book 'Rebellion and Loyalty, Around the Renaissance' in these words, "Under this influence, he (Syed Ahmed Khan) had written the book 'Sunnat-Dar-Raddh Bidaat' in 1850."²⁴ To explain the changes that had occurred in Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Veer Bharat Talwar has mentioned K.M. Ashraf's statement in this manner, "Before 1846, Syed himself had great respect for the leaders who declared Jihad."²⁵ Jamia Millia Islamia professor Rahul Ramgundam has described Syed Ahmed Khan's book on 1857 as a 'pamphlet'. When he delved deeper into it, he found that this pamphlet contains the 'language of (taking back) power'.

From the beginning, there were two streams among the Muslims during the freedom movement. In the first one, there was that language of power, in which there

The first freedom struggle creates a mile stone in Hindu-Muslim unity. It was fought under the leadership of the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, due to which the British were quite annoyed with the Muslims. It is also a fact of history that this war established that Indian society had entered a new era. In such a changed situation, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan appeared on the screen. He remains an enigma even today. "The ancestors of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who was no doubt a multifaceted personality, had come from Herat in Afghanistan during the reign of Shahjahan. His family had since been connected with the Mughal court in some form or the other

is concern over religion. The second stream aimed at freedom and the happiness that results from it. The first stream belonged to the Ashraf group, while the second one included those whose ancestors were Hindus, who were considered in the category of Ajlaf in the Muslim society. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan has written another book, 'The Loyal Mohammedans of India', in which he has tried to prove that in the war of 1857, Muslims had fulfilled their duty by being at the forefront in saving the lives of the British. In this way, his role changed -- it was a double role. On one hand, he started working with the aim of making the Muslims loyal towards the British, and on the other hand, he began efforts to remove some of the (negative) notions from the minds of the Muslims about the British.

The basis of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's thinking should be understood here. One thing that is important to know is that till the end of the 19th century, the idea of ending the British rule in India was not prominent. In such a situation, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan also believed that the British rule was of course permanent. Hence, he focused his attention on providing protection to Muslims under British rule. It also has another meaning, that is, whatever he was doing was limited to the political interests of the elite class of Muslims only. He has written, "Muslims are not the original inhabitants of this country. They have come from outside and are completely

dependent on government jobs for their survival."²⁶

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan had realised that the British had doubts about the loyalty of the Indian Muslims. He believed that elite Muslims were dependent on government jobs and hence, the patronage of the British was necessary for their progress. Therefore, he changed himself and shed his egoistic nature. He started offering fresh arguments to generate loyalty towards the British. While delivering a speech in Lahore in 1873, "he had likened Muslims having enmity towards the British with one having enmity with the crocodiles while living in a river. Therefore, it is necessary for them to maintain friendship with them."²⁷ The arguments developed by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan in the interest of the Muslims came to be known as the 'Aligarh school of thought'. With this logic, it was inculcated in the minds of the Muslims that democracy was not beneficial for them. The reason given for this was that Parliament would be formed in a democracy. There would be two parties in it and they would belong to Hindus and Muslims. Hindus were in majority and Muslims were in minority. Hence, Hindus would rule over the Muslims. "This type of argument was presented for the first time in Indian politics by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan only."²⁸

Apart from Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the names of Abdul Latif and Aamir Ali were also prominent among the pro-British Muslim leaders during

this period. But the place that Sir Syed Ahmed Khan holds in history has not been given to any other Muslim leader. "All of them were terrified by the immense frustration of the Muslims, especially the collapsing aristocracy and their families and the priestly class known as the Ulema."²⁹ Dr. Tarachand has "divided the Muslim mind into modern and traditional, instead of pro-British and anti-British."³⁰ Historian Shantimoy Ray has written the gist of his analysis in these words, "Muslim renaissance remained limited only to English education. They generally did not have the experience of any ideological conflict that would have enabled them to transcend the limitations of Islam."³¹

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's thinking was also seen in opposition to Congress. For this, he formed 'Indian Patriotic Association'. Had he followed the path of Hindu-Muslim unity, he would have been considered the father of nationalism. But he missed it. Badruddin Tayyabji, who was younger to him but was more distinguished, filled that gap. He became the third president of Congress in 1887. This is an example which shows that parallel to the Aligarh movement, a different thought stream was running among the Muslims -- while it was political, it was religious too. The political leadership was being led by Badruddin Tayyabji while the religious stream was being led by Qasim Nanowati, Rashid Ahmed Gangohi, Maulana Mahmood-

ul-Hassan Shaikhul Hind and Ahmed Hussain Madani.

They were 'traditionalist Ulemas' who had a major contribution. Overcoming the obstacles that existed among the Muslims at that time, they became a part of the freedom movement. There were two schools of Ulemas in the history. The first is of Deoband and the second is of Shamli. Dr. Tarachand has written, "Actually, Shamli and Deoband are two sides of the same image. The only difference is in their weapons. Now, the sword and spear were replaced by pen and tongue. In Shamli school, violence was made the medium for political freedom and freedom of religion and culture, while in Deoband school, a beginning was made with the help of peaceful methods to achieve these goals. Although the paths appear to be different from each other, they lead to the same destination. This was undoubtedly a great achievement and was remarkable for the vivacity and enthusiasm of those Muslims who, within a short time of the fateful days of 1857 and under extremely discouraging circumstances, were able to continue their efforts to preserve their religion and their values, which were endangered by the official British educational system. They were making renewed efforts to find new avenues for the education of their culture."³²

During that phase of the freedom struggle, a strange ideological change took place among the Muslims. Those who were against British imperialism

The biggest contribution of Darul Uloom is that the seminary adopted the policy of cooperation with Hindus to end the British rule. This had a deep impact on all nationalist Muslims. Shibli Nomani, Abul Kalam Azad, etc emerged from this stream. It should also be remembered that "when the first independent Indian government was established in Afghanistan in 1914, its President was Raja Mahendra Pratap and the Foreign Minister was Ubaidullah Sindhi." The same government made a secret plan, which the British called the 'Reshmi Roomal' movement. A new and political phase of the freedom movement began with the birth of Congress

in the early 19th century became their allies while those who were British allies turned into their opponents. Such groups were led by traditional Muslims. It is also called Deobandi movement. Darul Uloom (house of knowledge) was established in Deoband, a small town in Saharanpur of Uttar Pradesh. Its founder was Maulana Qasim Nanowati. He was from Nanowati village of the same district. Along with his friend Rasid Ahmed Gangohi, he had prepared a military squad, which also fought battles with British forces in Shamli and Kairana areas and even killed many of them. In response, the British created havoc in these areas and hanged as many as 44 people. In fact, Shamli and Deoband are two sides of the same picture, the only difference is in the weapons they chose. Deoband picked up the pen instead of the sword while the tongue took the place of the spear. Darul Uloom attempted to sensitise Muslims about their Islamic identity. The teachings of Darul Uloom were rooted in the Quran and Hadith. It became the centre of

Islamisation. As its fame grew, it spread to Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Two students of Darul Uloom -- Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani and Ubaidullah Sindhi -- became great heroes of the freedom movement. Their goal was to oppose British imperialism.

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Rahmatullah Siani. They joined Congress and gave leadership at a time when the Aligarh movement was determined to ensure that Muslims must not veer towards Congress. The third name is that of Maulana Shibli Nomani, who stood firmly with the Congress.

These leaders gave the message that fundamentalist and pro-British Muslims are only harming their own community. But the British did not desist from their dirty tricks. They first partitioned Bengal, then helped form Muslim League. It would be pertinent to mention here that many Muslim leaders of Bengal enthusiastically participated in the anti-partition movement. This has been described in detail by Shantimay Ray in his book 'Freedom Movement and Indian Muslims'.³⁴ It is known to everyone that the partition of Bengal gave rise to a nationwide wave of nationalism. But this information is little known that "Maulvi Hasibuddin approved the main resolution in the huge meeting held in the Town Hall of Calcutta on August 7, 1905, against the partition."³⁵

That was the period of nationalist upsurge when the brutal repression of British rule gave rise to armed rebellion. Both had participated in this struggle. A large section of the middle class Muslims had joined that struggle in Bengal, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. "With his fiery speeches, Maulvi Ismail Siraji incited the people against the British Raj."³⁶ "Horrified by such widespread resistance, the British government brought

the Constitutional Reform Act of 1909 to weaken the basis of Hindu-Muslim unity."³⁷ This is that period when the formation of secret revolutionary committees began. At the same time, Aga Khan was demonstrating his devotion towards the British Raj, while on the other hand, Khudiram Bose chose the path of martyrdom. Before his arrest, he was given shelter by an unnamed Muslim woman. She was the sister of Maulvi Waheed.

It is a little known fact that "in the second Mandalay conspiracy case, three rebel soldiers were given death sentence in 1917. They were Mustafa Hussain of Jaipur, Amar Singh of Ludhiana and Ali Ahmed of Faizabad."³⁸ Such examples are abound and they can be found in the pages of history. There would hardly be anyone who is unfamiliar with Maulana Muhammad Ali! But how many people are there who are familiar with Begum Abdi Bano? Who was she? If we ask ourselves and try to know, it will be difficult to find, but not impossible. First know that woman freedom fighter and then realise that Muslims too had participated in the freedom movement. She was the mother of the Ali brothers. She was a resident of Amroha. At the time of the first freedom struggle, she would have been just five years old. She became a widow in her youth. At that time, she was advised to settle down again. She did settle down and created a family, but it was not personal, it was pan-Indian. She used to consider the entire freedom

movement as her home and family. She was famous all over the country by the name of B. Amma.

Ali brothers were imprisoned in Chhindwara. She went and started living there. At that time, the Home Rule movement had started. Annie Besant was put under house arrest. Public meetings were being held in the country in protest. "A letter addressed to Subramaniam Iyer, who was presiding over one such public meeting, was read out in that meeting."³⁹ After all, what was there in that letter that it got public importance? That letter was special. B. Amma had written it for Annie Besant: "This honour is available only to those people whom God chooses to endure suffering for the sake of the country and religion."⁴⁰ This letter is dated August 4, 1917. In this letter, she had written that she was not only a Muslim woman, but she had also been brought up in the good old traditions in which it is not considered appropriate for a woman to correspond with a stranger.

Despite this, B. Amma had written in her letter, "The times are changing so fast and its pace is so strange that if an old-minded woman like me forgets this old custom and writes a letter to an eminent and respected person whom everyone admires and if the subject of the letter is something which is stirring everyone's heart today, then it would not be surprising. Although I am old, I welcome the changes that are unfolding around us today."⁴¹ It should be

remembered that the Ali brothers' mother was protesting against the house arrest of Annie Besant through her letter. This kind of inspiration is extraordinary for two things. The first thing is that she held the freedom movement above religion. Secondly, it is very clear from her letter as to which were the traditions that should be abandoned. She had that much of wisdom.

There are many such letters of her wherein she had expressed her feelings. In one letter, she has praised the youth who sacrificed their lives for 'Vande Mataram'. She also had the honour of presiding over the 'All India Women's Conference' held in Ahmedabad on December 30, 1921. Eminent personalities like Kasturba Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu were also present on that stage. Speaking on that occasion, she said, "Until there is complete unity and unanimity among Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsis, neither can we liberate the country nor can we live a life of complete peace and dignity."⁴² She did not live for long. That was the era of Hindu-Muslim unity. She died in 1924. On her death, Mahatma Gandhi had written, "She always used to say that 'I

want to see self-governance and Hindu-Muslim unity in India.' Unless Hindus and Muslims live together as brothers, freedom is impossible. We should remain united while sticking to our respective religions. Until this happens, we will remain slaves."⁴³

Here, a pertinent question that still persists in history is that whether Ali brothers kept in mind the wishes of their mother? This should be looked at in two ways. The entire Muslim leadership of that time, which was linking the Khilafat movement with the protection of Islam, was in such a deep abyss that it was not able to see the events happening even in the broad day light. Banwari has described it in this way, "Hindus and Muslims had come together in the non-cooperation movement, but the basis of this unity was not strong. The British had understood this very well. So, they were waiting for a rift to crop up between Gandhiji and Mohammad Ali (Jinnah)."⁴⁴ The Chauri Chaura incident in 1922 provided that opportunity. Gandhiji withdrew the non-cooperation movement. No one could have imagined the kind of reaction it evoked among the

Muslims. Riots broke out. The Kohat riots forced a great leader like Lala Lajpat Rai to think afresh. The study he carried out into Hindu-Muslim relations has become a documentation of history.⁴⁵

This is that turning point where questions lead to more questions. The independence movement against the British empire started weakening. Why? The name of the leader who raised this question was Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari. This is an extraordinary name, whose contribution was also immense. Ansari had written, "The complete Hindu-Muslim unity, which was supposed to be fully established by now, does not exist today. Even years of hard work in different fields could not make this unity an important part of our social life. It has also failed to stop the communal tension of today. This tension is such a disease that people have not paid attention to and today, it has become a threat to the very existence of Indian nationalism."⁴⁶

But at the same turn, there was a pole star too. The shared sacrifice of Pandit Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqulla Khan was a star upheld high in the sky of the freedom movement. Even when Muslim League was in sway, leaders like Abdul Qayyum Ansari were also in the freedom movement who adopted the path of nationalism and turned the pathway into a highway. He belonged to the weaver community. However, the elite class of Muslims -- landlords, government officials and Nawabs

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-- followed the path shown by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. It is equally true that there was a stream of nationalism and democratic values among the Muslims during the independence movement. It had a shining tradition. Its torch bearers were leaders and heroes like Badruddin Tayyabji, R.M. Sayani, Hasrat Mohani, the king of Mahmudabad, Mazharul Haq, Amar Subhani, Saifuddin Kitchul, Abul Kalam Azad, Hakeem Ajmal Khan, Ali Imam, Prof. Abdul Bari, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Abdul Majid Khwaja, Mujibur Rehman, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Syed Mahmood, Asif Ali and Tassaduq Ahmed Khan Sherwani.

Still, the country got divided. This tarnished the shine of these leaders. It was presumed that they could not effectively stop the two-nation theory. Not only that, they could not even present any practical alternative to the Muslim League. Jawaharlal Nehru also accepted this and wrote that "the weakening and then extinction of the nationalist Muslims as a class is a sad story."⁴⁷ Mushirul Hasan has also admitted that "the scope of political interest of the Congress Muslims was very narrow."⁴⁸ Among the Ali brothers, Shaikat Ali had taken a different path. All the prominent leaders of that time had realised that the Hindu-Muslim dispute had emerged as the biggest problem. But the solution that could be found actually proved to be the one which only aggravated the problem.

The Muslim leaders of Congress have a history of

The Muslim leaders of Congress have a history of failure. On the other hand, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and his Azad Hind Fauj raised the voice of armed struggle in which Hindus and Muslims were together. It is worth knowing that Janab Abid Hussain Safrani Saheb, who was appointed to the Indian Foreign Service on the recommendation of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and had joined the Azad Hind Fauj, was the one who gave the slogan of *Jai Hind*

failure. On the other hand, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and his Azad Hind Fauj raised the voice of armed struggle in which Hindus and Muslims were together. It is worth knowing that Janab Abid Hussain Safrani Saheb, who was appointed to the Indian Foreign Service on the recommendation of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and had joined the Azad Hind Fauj, was the one who gave the slogan of *Jai Hind*.⁴⁹ The list of martyrdom of Muslims in Netaji's army is long.

Some incidents of that time are worth remembering at this point. For example, the historic strike of the tramway workers of Calcutta (now Kolkata), which took place in 1946. That was not an isolated incident. That was the beginning of a series. In the same sequence, naval revolt took place in Mumbai and Karachi dockyards on February 18, 1946. It proved that the British could not have postponed independence any further. And that's what happened. But the larger thing was that in that rebellion, the distinction between Hindu and Muslim was erased. The feeling of Indianness was on the rise. That is why "Colonel Khan, one of the main leaders of the

Mumbai rebellion, had appealed to the Indian people to rise above their religious beliefs and join the heroic struggle. Anwar Hussain, a young student leader from Lahore, sacrificed his life during the Karachi naval mutiny on the ship 'Bahadur', holding the tricolour in his hand."⁵⁰ The Azad Hind Fauj rebellion was followed by a massive popular uprising across the country, which culminated in the form of an all India strike of postal employees on July 29, 1946. At that time, the atmosphere was surcharged with the sense of revolution.

The sentiment of independence was stirring throughout the country. Then a conspiracy was hatched. The pogrom was called 'Direct Action'. That date was August 16, 1946. The country was then united. Isn't it awfully amazing that what was supposed to be a peaceful and orderly protest turned into a diabolic massacre? There was an outcry in the entire country. At that time, every leader looked helpless. Not only that, the conspiracy to partition India succeeded. Will the truth behind it come out one day? If it happens, a trend will then begin to look at the positive contribution of Muslims in the freedom movement. ●

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Dr. Faiyaz Ahmed Faizi

The Two-Nation Theory and the Indigenous Resistance to It

Many Muslim organisations stood against the Muslim League, which claimed to be the biggest advocate of Muslims. The Momin Conference was one of these...

After the advent of the British in India, power gradually started moving out of the hands of the Muslim ruling class (Ashraf) and into the hands of the British. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the British had comprehensively consolidated their power. In these changed circumstances, the Muslim ruling class, i.e., the Ashraf class changed its earlier policies to save its power and hold (over the community). At the same time, the concept of minorities and majorities was on the rise in Europe. The Ashraf class, under the cloak of this minorityism, which had gained acceptance in Europe, began fanning the politics of Muslim communalism on the basis of Muslim identity. For this, the Ashrafs in the name of Islam, Muslim civilisation and protecting Muslims began propagating their own options on fronts like education, health and social reforms. In this respect, madrasa education was presented as an alternative to modern education; whereas, it was limited only to purely religious activities like namaz (prayer), roza (Islamic fast) and woozoo (ceremonial washing of hands and feet) and recitation of Quran by rote, which was given

the name of Deeni Talim (religious education). On this basis, modern education, literature and science were strongly opposed by terming them anti-Islamic. On the other hand, the Ashraf class introduced its own new generation to modern education by sending its progeny abroad. The same policy was implemented on the health and social reform front as well.

The people most affected by this policy were those who, for various reasons, had over a period of time converted to Islam. They had never been close to power and governance nor were they ever allowed to be. This segment is known by the name of the indigenous Pasmada Muslims, in whose lives no particular benefit of religious conversion is visible. Even after changing their religion, they remained connected to their original civilisation, culture, language and social structure. For this reason, the strongest opposition to the Ashraf-imposed obscurantism also arose from this very society.

On the basis of this religious communal identity, various kinds of demands began being made on the British government. This Muslim communalism started acquiring strength through madrasa education

Manthan

and various Islamic movements. It was in this scenario that the Two-Nation Theory was born. Under this, it was laid down that Muslims are a separate nation in themselves, and that their civilisation and culture are totally different. The prominent individuals who strengthened this idea were Sir Syed, Allama Iqbal, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi and Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Usmani (head of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema), etc. It was this mentality that later became the basis for the birth of the Muslim League. From the outset, the Muslim League was in favour of the vivisection of Indian society on a communal basis. The result of this later was borne out in the form of the partition of the country. In the present times, the Muslim discourse is nothing but an altered form of the Two-Nation Theory. However, the Muslim League, led by the Ashraf Muslims, also faced resistance from the Muslims. Although some Ashrafs and Ashrafi organisations were also opposed to the Two-Nation

Theory of the Muslim League, the strongest opposition to the League organisationally came from the Jamiat-ul-Momineen (the Momin Conference) led by Asim Bihari. Keeping its working class (professional) native identity at the forefront, it set up resistance to the Muslim League on almost every front. The first Hindi translation of the Quran was done by Maulana Imamuddin Ramnagari (Varanasi), an active activist of the Momin Conference and editor of the organisation's magazine Momin Ansar, with this outlook in mind that the native Pasmanda ought to be able to read and understand the Quran themselves and should not fall victim to the deceptions of the Muslim League.¹

The anti-national character of the Muslim League was being exposed by the Momin Conference not only at the organisational level but also through the letters and magazines published by it. In the weekly magazine Momin Gazette published by the organisation, Maulana Abu Omar Bhagalpuri,

the magazine's editor, in his editorial (1937), while defining the character of the Muslim League, wrote: "The League is that sacrificial altar where the poor are sacrificed on the basis of ravenousness and selfishness. The League is that set of weighing scales which will lean towards only a particular side at the time of striking a deal. The League is a political lexicon containing all kinds of weak words and phrases. The League is a spinner of verses who can sing beautiful eulogies in praise of its masters. The League is a stage of the capitalists and upper class where selfishness and unabashed self-interest are discussed. The League is the carrier of the affluent class and the ruling establishment whose unity leads to further progress of only the country's slavery. The League is a seductress who can entice the hearts of inexperienced spectators. The League is a strange concoction of freedom and slavery which can strengthen the hearts of only the capitalists and in turn create even more hunger for avarice and selfishness".²

The Momin Conference strongly opposed the appeal of the Muslim League to write only 'Muslim' in the caste column in the census conducted on a communal basis.³ In the conference of the women's division, the district Momin Conference held on January 19, 1941 at Kheergaon, Hazaribagh, Begum Moina Ghaus, in her welcome speech, pointed out that the Muslim League workers were misleading the Pasmanda



A rare group photograph, taken during the session of the Momin Conference in Gorakhpur in 1939

Courtesy: https://twocircles.net/2013jun05/forgotten_saga_momin_conference.html

Muslims so that the latter ought not mention their caste in the census. For this, they were falsely propagating a fake circular of the Bengal government and a canard that Rs.689 had been deposited by the Census Department of Bihar. She also said that in the newspapers of December 1940, the names of the nominated members of the Working Committee of the Bihar Muslim League were published along with the names of their castes, but outrage was vented only when the Momins (Pasmanda Muslims) disclosed their caste.⁴

When the Muslim League passed the Pakistan Resolution in its session held in Lahore on March 23, 1940, the most organised, logical, systematic and thunderous voice against this was raised by the Momin Naujawan Conference (the youth wing of the Momin Conference) in its convention held in Patna on April 19, 1940.⁵ In the subsequent weeks and months too, in various conferences, the Momin Conference declared that the entire Pasmanda society would oppose the Pakistan movement wholeheartedly.⁶

The Momin Conference organised a massive demonstration in Delhi in May 1940 in which about 40 thousand Pasmanda Muslims participated and raised a strong voice in opposition to the partition of the country.⁷ The Momin Conference argued that the Muslim League's statement that Islam is in danger was just a ploy to mislead the community. As Nazimuddin Allahabadi aptly said in a meeting in Patna, it was

the leadership of Muslim League that was in danger, not Islam.⁸

According to Abdul Qayyum Ansari, the Pakistan plan was contrary to the true concept of Islam. The logic of cultural inequality, which the Muslim League based on the Two-Nation Theory, did not reflect the regional framework of inter-community co-existence. He asked what Indian Muslims had in common with Arab and Turkish Muslims. The Muslims of Bengal have more in common with the Hindus of their region than with their co-religionists in the North West Frontier Province. According to Asim Bihari, Pasmanda Muslims do not have any kind of religious, linguistic or cultural fear. The place where they live is sacred for them and is Pakistan (Pak = holy, stan = place). Speaking at the All India Momin Youth Conference in Patna city, Muhammad Noor described the Pakistan plan as "un-Islamic, unnatural, unpatriotic and completely impractical". Since the communities living in the country live in co-existence with each other, he was of the opinion that the very idea of partition of India was absurd.⁹

At the seventh annual session of the All India Momin Conference at Gorakhpur [27 to 29 December 1939], Muhammad Noor moved a resolution that the future constitution of the country should be made by a Constituent Assembly based on adult franchise only, with provision for a separate constituency the Momins (Pasamanda Muslims). The demand for a separate Pasmanda constituency was made

on the grounds that the voter list prepared on the basis of then franchise was based on property, payment of tax and educational qualifications, thereby protecting the interests of only the Muslim Leaguer Ashraf Muslims. In other words, the existing system of suffrage worked against the principle of democracy by "converting a minority (Ashrafs) among Muslims into a majority".¹⁰

The Momin Conference was opposed to the Muslim League on the basis of the fact of the split between Razils (lower castes among Muslims) and Ashrafs (upper castes) but it was commonplace for the Muslim League to deny that anything like a category called Razil even existed. Thus, on one occasion, during the debate on the Municipal Amendment Bill in the Legislative Assembly, the Congress party's Pasmanda leader Hafiz Zafar Hussain supported joint constituencies in local body elections, saying that only rich Muslims could win elections in separate constituencies, who are those persecute their co-religionists, i.e., the poor Muslims. Upon this, Muhammad Yunus of the Muslim Independent Party, who was supported by Imarat-e-Sharia and Jamiat-ul-Ulema, intervened and said that there is no such thing as upper class and lower class in Muslim society, and all Muslims are equal. It was the Congress provincial government that was systematically promoting casteism in the Muslim society by exaggerating an imaginary

division.

A few months later, a proposal was brought by Pasmada leader Muhammad Noor requesting the Congress government to prepare a plan for the upliftment of the backward classes of Muslims, upon which Shah Muhammad Omair of the Congress firmly said that there is no backward class among the Muslims. He was willing to admit that the economic condition of some weavers and Mansooris was very deplorable, but claimed that they did not suffer from any social backwardness and did not require assistance on that basis.¹¹

The Momin Conference began to mobilise other backward Muslim organisations to overthrow the uniformitarian leadership of the Muslim League on the grounds that the Momins and other professional (working class) Muslims had been completely ignored by the Muslim League. That is why no one had any confidence in the Muslim League. Further, the objective of the Momin movement was to uplift not only the Momins but also the Raeen (vegetable sellers and growers), Mansoori (cotton spinners), Idrisi (tailors) and Qureshi (butchers) communities and others. Zaheeruddin, president of the All India Momin Conference, underscored the fact that the organisation would obtain some facilities for the deprived Muslim classes (indigenous Pasmandas) like those for the Hindu Scheduled Castes.¹²

A meeting of the Working Committee of the Momin Conference was held on April 26,

A meeting of the Working Committee of the Momin Conference was held on April 26, 1943 in Delhi. In this meeting, Muhammad Zaheeruddin Advocate, president of the organisation called the Momin Conference a reflection of the immense spirit of patriotism of the poor, oppressed and Pasmada segment. The Conference was also described as a symbol of the organisational effort and proof of the glorious political revolution of Indian Muslims. While making a sharp attack on the Muslim League, he also exposed their deceitful politics of treating Pasmada Muslims like political orphans in the name of fake and false religious unity and keeping them as playthings in the framework of power politics

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Raza Ali, vice-president of the Muslim League, while criticising the Congress policy for the recruitment of the backward classes, said in derision, "How great and powerful would that government be whose field marshals, generals and colonels would be Nats, Kunjdas, Halkhors and Doms". In protest against

this, Abdus-Samad of the Jamiat-ul-Raeen (the Raeen Conference, an organisation of the Pasmada Kunjda caste) wrote in reply to the editor of the Asar-e-Jadid (modern times), in which this report was published, that this slur was a reflection of the mentality of the Muslim League. This was an indication of the outlook under which the League wants to deprive the Pasmada class of the very privileges which the League itself was enjoying.¹⁴

In that period, most of the indigenous Pasmandas of the weaver (Julaha) caste were vocal in their opposition to the Muslim League. That is the reason the Ashraf segment, who were one with the mentality of the Muslim League, began making various allegations against Momin Conference and its leaders and defaming them by issuing religious fatwas and writing articles in newspapers and magazines. So much so that derogatory literature like the Julaha Nama (authored by Qazi Talammuz Hussain Gorakhpuri) and Fitna-e-Julaha (written by Hamid Hussain Siddiqui

Allahabadi) which are dipped in the character-assassination of the weaver caste were also published.¹⁵ The Momin Conference also demanded of the Congress party that whenever any decision related to Muslims was to be made, the representatives of Momin Conference should be included in it. Abdul Qayyum Ansari, Vice President of the All India Momin Conference, sent a telegram from Arrah (Bihar) to the national president of the Congress Dr. Rajendra Prasad, on October 9, 1939 saying, "The Momin Conference warns against the developments published in the newspapers regarding a Congress-League agreement. The Momin Conference does not recognize the Muslim League as its leadership". Dr. Rajendra Prasad, while replying to the above telegram from Wardha on October 13, 1939, wrote: "There is no proposal for any agreement. Therefore, the question of it does not arise". Despite this, Gandhi considered the Muslim League as the most influential organisation of Muslims and met Jinnah, considering him to be the representative of all Muslims.¹⁶

The representatives of the Momin Conference were not even invited to the historic

Congress-League negotiations that took place later. The neglect of the demands of the Momin Conference allowed the Muslim League to emerge as a communal organisation on the political horizon, which proved fatal for the unity of the country.¹⁷ Amidst these struggles came the elections of 1946, which were held on the basis of separate electorates. This election was seen as a referendum for Pakistan. The Momin Conference unanimously decided to contest the polls along with the Congress in this election.¹⁸

It ought to be made clear here that at that time there was no adult franchise in these elections unlike today, but educated persons (8th pass in some province, high school pass in some others), those paying annual tax (50 rupees in some provinces and 60 rupees in some others and Rs.150 in yet some other provinces) and the chowkidari tax of Rs 1.25 were given the right to vote. Thus, only 13 percent of the total population of the country were voters. In the state of Bihar, this number was around 7.8 percent.¹⁹ Thus, the indigenous Pasmanda community had very few numbers of people contesting and voting in the 1946 elections as compared to its rival Ashraf class of voters.

In this election, other Pasmanda caste organisations decided to contest the elections solely under the leadership of Momin Conference.²⁰

This election was held after the communal riots of 1946, which directly benefited the Muslim League. During the elections, the Muslim League had brought out a 12-page booklet to mislead the Pasmanda community in its favour, in which the main points were as follows... "Separation from the Muslim League will destroy both the religion and the world of the Momin agitationists. The Hindu Congress, and Congress-affiliated groups are working for Hindu Ramrajya in which first of all the Pasmanda Muslims of the rural areas will be reconverted. Your professions will be ruined. The Muslim League alone is the panchayat of ten crore Muslims and supporting the League is your religious duty. The question is not one of the caste of Shaikh, Momin, Raeen, etc., but of the life and death of Islam. Brothers, get up, support the Muslim League, and keep alive the Sunnah of your ancestors' Ansar-e-Medina (the first adherents of Islam in Medina). They established the first Pakistan in the world and you must bring about the next Pakistan".²¹

The representatives of the Momin Conference were not even invited to the historic Congress-League negotiations that took place later. The neglect of the demands of the Momin Conference allowed the Muslim League to emerge as a communal organisation on the political horizon, which proved fatal for the unity of the country. Amidst these struggles came the elections of 1946, which were held on the basis of separate electorates

In response to this, Abdul Qayyum Ansari used to warn people about the dangers of the two-nation theory by narrating the story of Bagula Bhagat (a preying heron posing as a saviour) in his speeches. The story goes that there once lived a heron. He frightened

the fishes of a pond located in the forest saying that the water of that pond was going to dry up soon and hence all the fishes living in it were sure to perish. He assured the worried fishes that he would transport them one by one to a pond situated on the mountain. This process was set in motion, with the consent of the fishes. Meanwhile, a crab living in the same pond became suspicious and told the heron that this time it was his turn, and so the heron should take him to the mountain pond. The crab rode on the back of the heron. The heron was about to descend to the mountain with the crab when from some height the crab noticed that there was no pond at all there. Instead, he saw the skeletons of some fish strewn on the rocks of the mountain. It didn't take long for him to understand that the heron was actually deceiving the fishes and devouring them under the pretext of taking them to a safer place. The crab therefore immediately dug his claws into the treacherous heron's neck, because to which the heron writhed in agony and fell to his death. While narrating this incident, Abdul Qayyum Ansari would term the Muslim League as the Bagula Bhagat and compare the Momin Conference to the crab.²² The president of the Bihar unit of the Hindu Mahasabha too had praised Abdul Qayyum Ansari, Abdul Jalil and Noor Muhammad for their vocal opposition to the Muslim League. All three of them were activists of the Momin Conference.²³

Although Momin Conference challenged the Muslim League in

Hafiz Manzoor of Momin Conference was initially declared defeated, but later on his complaint a recounting was conducted in which he emerged victorious. Due to fear of the Muslim League, no one was ready to even become the polling agent of Hafiz Manzoor. In such a situation, a Hindu youth Inder Kumar (after independence, he was a member of Bihar Legislative Council till 1986 and Bihar State Backward Classes Commission from 1997 to 2008) came forward and became a strong polling agent of Hafiz

the entire country, its performance was the best in the province of Bihar. There were a total of 40 seats under separate elections in which Momin Conference fielded its candidates in 20 seats and Congress in 10 seats. In this election, other Ashraf parties opposed to the Muslim League were wiped out; that is, almost the entire Ashraf class voted in favour of the Muslim League and Pakistan. The Momin Conference won six seats and Congress could win only one seat, while the Muslim League bagged 33 seats.²⁴

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a candidate's polling agent in a Muslim seat under a separate electorate. The complaint was dismissed. At this, the Muslim League sneered that they were not even able to appoint a Muslim polling agent.²⁵

It is noteworthy that the Ashraf class, which voted in support of Pakistan, was given more participation in its government by the Congress than was proportionate to its numbers and the Pasmada community, which completely rejected the Two-Nation Theory and won the elections, was ignored by the nationalist leaders of the Congress. It is to the credit of Sardar Patel, due to whose efforts Abdul Qayyum Ansari was made a cabinet minister and Muhammad Noor became a parliamentary secretary in the state of Bihar.²⁶ Although this was inadequate representation in proportion to the population of the Pasmadas, it was still a worthwhile initiative.

Asim Bihari's movement fought with all its might till the last moment against the Muslim League, which was an organisation of Muslim landlords, for the sake of national awakening. But the future generations will judge

the historical conceit displayed by the national movement, whose capitalist leaders were traditionally given to making

compromises with the foreign imperialists and their vassals, instead of siding with the common people.

No honest historian can dare ignore the positive role of Asim Bihari's Momin movement in India's independence.²⁷ ●

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Madanlal Verma 'Krant'

Bismil: A Revolutionary Thinker and Creative Author

The name of Pandit Ram Prasad 'Bismil' is taken with great respect among the pioneers of the revolutionary stream of Indian freedom struggle. Bismil, who embodied the idea of revolution, was also a serious thinker, an accomplished writer and a sentimental poet in one go. He was both a friend and a guru to Ashfaqulla Khan. Here is an account of the illustrious life of immortal martyr Ram Prasad Bismil

Pandit Ram Prasad 'Bismil', the great revolutionary of the twentieth century, was born in the family of Muralidhar, a resident of the Khirnibagh locality of Shahjahanpur in today's Uttar Pradesh, on 11th June 1897, the day of 'Jyeshtha Sudi Nirjala Ekadashi' of Samvat 1954. His grandfather Narayanlal lived in Barbai village of Morena district in today's Madhya Pradesh. Due to family discord, Narayanlal had left his birthplace and settled down in Shahjahanpur along with his family. While his grandfather Narayanlal was in the business of tailoring, Bismil's father Muralidhar had taken up selling stamps as his profession. Bismil's mother Moolmati had a total of 10 children, of whom Ram Prasad was the second one. After calculating the position of the constellations at the time of his birth and considering the marks of 10 'chakras' (discuses) on both his hands, an astrologer had predicted that Bismil would grow up to become an emperor.

At the age of seven, Ram Prasad was sent to study in Maktab. But he fell in the bad company of his fellow Muslim students and became a victim of bad habits. For this

reason, he failed in Urdu twice while studying in the middle school. In July 1911, his father enrolled him in the fifth class of English in the Mission School. There, he got rid of the habit of smoking by following the good company of a Bengali youth named Sushil Chandra Sen. There was a temple in the neighbourhood of his house. Ram Prasad went there and started spending time in worship. There, he met Munshi Indrajit who took him to Arya Samaj temple. He taught him to perform 'Sandhya' (evening prayer) and gave him the book '*Satyarth Prakash*' to read. Bismil's life changed after reading *Satyarth Prakash*. Considering Swami Dayanand as his ideal, he took a vow of unbroken celibacy. He even stopped adding salt to his food. As a result of regularly doing yoga and exercise, his face acquired a supernatural glow. Everyone started looking at him with surprise. Now, he had turned an expert in studies too.

In 1913, at the age of 16, he happened to listen to a powerful lecture by Arya Samaj scholar Swami Somdev who gave him the literature of Swami Ramtirtha, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Kabirdas as well as some revolutionary books

to read. Ram Prasad used to write poetry in Urdu under the pen name 'Bismil'. Swami Somdev was well versed in Urdu-Persian. He asked him to write poetry full of patriotism. Bismil showed him some of his compositions. Bismil had an uncanny trait of memorising a poem if he liked it and then writing another poem on the same lines. Swami Somdev sent his writings to 'Gadar' magazine published from America. When his works were published in 'Gadar', his enthusiasm increased further. Then, he started reciting excellent 'ghazals' which turned out to be even better than that of good poets.

In the same year, Ram Prasad organised the youth of the city and formed an organisation 'Arya Kumar Sabha'. After listening to his lectures and poems, the attendance of young men in his meetings started increasing. This frightened the old leaders of Arya Samaj. They banned such activities in Arya Samaj. However, Ram Prasad started organising the meetings of Arya Kumar Sabha in the open ground. Pandit Shriram Vajpayee of Shahjahanpur inducted him into his organisation 'Seva Samiti'. Similarly, by showing his efficiency in many other institutions, Ram Prasad gained fame in many nearby districts.



His father Muralidhar was a staunch opponent of Arya Samaj. One day, he asked Ram Prasad to "either stop going to Arya Samaj or leave home." Ram Prasad left the house. Not even food was cooked at home that day. Well, Muralidhar somehow convinced Ram Prasad and brought him back home.

Ram Prasad's English was very good. He was sent to study in the Government High School. He got the best marks in school, due to which the school principal liked him a lot. Although he was a Christian, he explained to Ram Prasad's father on his behalf that he should not stop Ram Prasad from joining Arya Samaj. By staying there, Ram Prasad would

learn some good things and at least he would not be spoilt, argued the principal.

At the age of 19 and a half, he attended the Lucknow session of the Congress. He had gone there with a group of young friends of Kumar Sabha. The unprecedented welcome given by the youth of Shahjahanpur to Lokmanya Tilak at the station drew everyone's attention towards Ram Prasad. There, he was introduced to Gendalal Dixit, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, Mukundlal and Somdev Sharma etc. He became good friends with Somdev Sharma. Ram Prasad

also bought some books from his Nagari Literature Library. In 1915, after reading the news of Bhai Parmanand's death sentence, Ram Prasad wrote a poem -- *Mera Janm* (My birth). Gendalalji read this poem somewhere. When he came to know that this young man (Bismil) had written the poem, he invited him to join his group. In those days, Gendalalji used to run an organisation by the name of 'Shivaji Committee'. He had inducted many notorious bandits from the ravines of Bhind-Morena in his group. When he came to know from Ram Prasad during their conversation that his ancestors were also residents of the same Bhind-Morena area,

his happiness knew no bounds. Now, he was sure that this young man would prove useful for his organisation in every aspect.

Ram Prasad formed a new institution under the patronage of Gendalalji -- 'Matrivedi'. He also wrote the pledge of his organisation in poetry. Now, whoever becomes a new member would have to recite the same pledge. A new member would have to recite the pledge by placing a sword on his head. Then, he would be given pure ghee to eat and milk mixed with sugar to drink, only after which he would be included in the team. Ram Prasad published an advertisement in Hindi on 28th January 1918 on behalf of 'Matrivedi'. Its original text was as follows -- "Message to the countrymen! Kill the British and liberate the country! Vande Mataram (Hail the Motherland)!... Patriots! To protect the country, unsheath your swords like Shivaji and Rana Pratap. Kill the '*firangis*' (the British) and put their dead bodies in sacks and tell the countrymen in one voice that India is free. Let our bodies be used to kill the British. Cut off the heads of the British and tell them that this is the result of the injustice they had inflicted on us." Ram

Prasad had entrusted the work of putting up the advertisements with Rajaram Vajpayee and Mukundilal. Similarly, he had published '*Mainpuri Ki Pratigya*' (The Promise of Mainpuri) written in poetry. This too had the same sentiments expressed in the advertisement. Apart from the advertisement, 242 printed copies of '*Mainpuri Ki Pratigya*' (Indigenous Pledge) were found from Rajaram Vajpayee's house.

In March 1918, Ram Prasad borrowed Rs 200 from his mother Moolmati and published a book -- '*How did America get independence?*' He had written this book borrowing material from '*History of America's Independence*' published in 1916 by Nagari Literature Library, Kanpur. This is what Dr. N.C. Mehrotra believes. With the aim of collecting money for the party, Ram Prasad Bismil even carried out two robberies -- one in June 1918 and another in September the same year, but nothing substantial could be achieved. Ram Prasad attended the Delhi session of the Congress from 26th to 31st December in 1918 along with his entire team. There, he met Madan Mohan Malviya, who was the president of the Congress at that time, and extended his full cooperation in the arrangement

of the convention. Malviya was highly impressed by Ram Prasad's management skills. Bismil's aim was to propagate his ideas by joining Congress. While the session was going on inside, some young men were selling books shouting slogans outside. Someone informed the police about it. The convention was raided but Bismil hid the unsold books in his overcoat and slipped out of the venue. After escaping from Delhi, he reached Shahjahanpur. He had come to know in Delhi itself that police had launched a crackdown in Mainpuri and it would be difficult for him to escape now. One Dalpat Singh was the informer while Somdev Sharma had turned a government witness. They had revealed the entire story to the police regarding the authorship and publication of the book. A non-bailable warrant was issued in Bismil's name. From Shahjahanpur, he reached Allahabad along with Rajaram, Dev Narayan and Ganga Singh. Dev Narayan had suggested to go to Calcutta (now Kolkata) and eliminate the Viceroy. When Bismil protested against this, all three of them conspired to kill him.

One day Bismil was performing evening meditation with his eyes closed on the banks of Yamuna at Sangam in Prayag when Dev Narayan fired at him from a revolver. The bullet passed by very close to his ear. Bismil opened his eyes, immediately took out his revolver from its sheath and challenged Dev Narayan. All three got scared and ran away. Bismil was deeply hurt by this betrayal of his own comrades

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and ran away. Bismil was deeply hurt by this betrayal of his own comrades. After coming home, he told the entire incident to his mother and expressed his idea of taking revenge. His mother tried a lot to persuade him to not to do so. When he remained adamant, she asked him to take a vow not to kill anyone, in lieu of his maternal debt. Finally, he agreed. When the police came to his house after arresting Rajaram, he dodged them and escaped and left Shahjahanpur city itself. He stayed in his father's native village Barbai in Madhya Pradesh for some days and took up farming there. Later, he went to his sister's place in Kosma (Mainpuri). But she could not recognise him at all. He stayed at her house as a servant for a few days. All day long, his would graze her milch animals and would do translation work sitting in the shade of a tree. When the book was ready, he moved to Pinhat in Agra. His friend Roop Singh was a doctor there. He would send Roop Singh home on vacation and work in the hospital in his place for several days. He then got the book printed under the title '*Bolshevikon Ki Kartut*' (The Handiworks of the Bolsheviks). People appreciated the book very much. Then, another book was published -- '*Mann Ki Lahar*' (Mind Waves). In this way, two of his books came to light even when he remained underground. One was a novel while the other was a collection of poems. He later sold '*Mann Ki Lahar*' in the Ahmedabad session of the Congress in the same way as he sold '*How America*

Six youths from Shahjahanpur were involved in the Mainpuri incident. Bismil had also planned to go to Agra and free Gendalal Dixit, who was under house arrest in the fort there, but Dixitji had already escaped before that. Finally, on 1st November 1919, Mainpuri Magistrate B.S. Chris announced his verdict in the Mainpuri case. All those who were convicted were released in February 1920 except Mukundilal who alone was released after serving his entire sentence. After the amnesty was granted, Bismil returned to Shahjahanpur

Got Independence' during the Delhi session of the party. Due to this, Bismil's name came into discussion at the national level.

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to some publishers of Calcutta. Bismil got great help from him in getting his books published. Otherwise, till then, he used to publish as well as sell his books himself. He never earned any money from the publishing business.

Ram Prasad Bismil participated in the provincial convention of the Congress in Moradabad held on 9, 10 and 11th October 1920. He happened to meet Gandhiji there. Bismil introduced Gandhiji to the group of volunteers of Shahjahanpur. Gandhiji appointed him as the head of the group. When Gandhiji did not agree to the demand for complete independence in the Ahmedabad session of the Congress in 1921, Bismil along with Maulana Hasrat Mohani revolted. Thus, Ram Prasad earned open enmity with Gandhiji. He also reproached Gandhiji a lot in a fit of rage. However, Ram Prasad Bismil attended the Gaya session of the Congress in December 1922. Prior to that, Gandhiji had withdrawn his movement following the Chauri Chaura incident in February that year. For that, he was widely reprimanded in the Gaya

session. There was a split in the Congress. The affluent people in the party declared the formation of their own separate party. 'Swaraj Party' was established on January 1, 1923.

The youths also announced the formation of their own 'revolutionary party' and Ram Prasad Bismil was chosen as its leader. On the occasion of its special convention held in Delhi in September 1923, it was decided that the name and objectives of the revolutionary party would be finalised soon. Sachindra Nath Sanyal lived in Allahabad (now Prayagraj) those days. Lala Hardayal sent a message to Ram Prasad Bismil that he should go to Allahabad and meet Yadugopal Mukherjee there. Lala Hardayal had already talked to Yadugopal that he would help them in drafting the constitution for their new outfit. Bismil reached Sanyal's house in Allahabad. It was there that the rules of the constitution and the name of the outfit were decided. A meeting of the executive committee of the new party 'Hindustan Prajatantra Sangh' was held in Kanpur on 3rd October 1924 which was attended by prominent members like Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Ram Prasad Bismil, Yogesh Chandra Chatterjee, etc. In this meeting, Sanyal and Chatterjee handed over the leadership of the party to Ram Prasad Bismil and left for Bengal. The first political dacoity by the party was carried out in Bamrauli on 20th December 1924, which was efficiently led by Bismil.

Well-versed both in weaponry and holy scriptures as well as an expert in both oratory and operating guns, Pandit Ram Prasad Bismil expanded the work of Hindustan Prajatantra Sangh from United Province to Delhi, Punjab, Rajputana, Vidarbha, Bihar and Bengal with his dynamic personality and effective leadership skills. Bismil's fiery poems, vigorous lectures and sharp writings showed their miraculous effect. Making it possible to deliver the 'revolutionary advertisement' to 56 districts in a single night is a wonderful example of his efficiency. He released the manifesto of his revolutionary party in January 1925. As soon as it reached the British empire, they were shaken to their roots. At a time when the Bengal government was searching for the author of this revolutionary advertisement, Bismil meanwhile carried out two political dacoities -- in Bichpuri and Dwarakapur in March and May 1925 respectively. However, he could not muster any sizeable amount from it.

Bismil called the meeting of the executive committee in Shahjahanpur this time. In that meeting, it was decided that instead of carrying out robbery at any particular person's place, they would rob only the government treasury. Meanwhile, Sachindra Nath Sanyal and Yogesh Chandra Chatterjee had already been arrested under the Bengal Ordinance. Sachindra Nath Sanyal was caught while distributing the revolutionary

leaflets in Bankura. He was sentenced to two years of imprisonment and sent to jail. On the other hand, as soon as Yogesh Chandra Chatterjee reached Calcutta after attending the meeting in Kanpur, he was intercepted at Howrah station. He was arrested under the Bengal Ordinance and put in Hazaribagh jail. Thus, the entire responsibility of maintaining the expenses of the workers of Bengal fell on the shoulders of Bismil. The workers were worried as they needed money for their livelihood while doing the party work. In the meantime, information was received from Germany that a consignment of Mauser pistols would be arriving at the Budge Budge port of Calcutta. It was to be received by paying cash. Bismil had called the meeting to plan for it only.

With the help of nine comrades, Bismil intercepted 8 Down Saharanpur Lucknow Passenger train near Kakori on 9th August 1925 and looted the government treasury. All the members successfully went into hiding. After its success, their courage increased further. They also made a plan to rob the main post office in Meerut. This 'operation' was to be carried out on 13th October 1925. However, unfortunately, some currency notes looted during the train robbery were seized in Shahjahanpur. This exposed the whole episode and on the night of 26th September 1925, 40 people were arrested, not only in Shahjahanpur but in the entire country, in this regard. This

dacoity was carried out with such secrecy that no one had even a clue. Special intelligence police were sent from England and the responsibility of carrying out the arrests was given to mostly Muslim officers under the leadership of Harton. The government feared that Hindu police officers might be in cahoots with Bismil. As soon as the police arrested some people, they coerced them into turning government witnesses, though some influential people were spared. Pandit Jagat Narayan Mulla, the chairman of the reception committee of the Lucknow session of the Congress in 1916, who had been appointed government pleader in the Mainpuri case, was specifically appointed to plead on behalf of the government in the Kakori case too. Along with him, his son Anand Narayan Mulla was also paid fees. The case appeared in Ainuddin Magistrate's court.

Khan Bahadur Tassaduq Hussain, chief of the intelligence team, was assigned the task of collecting evidence against the accused. The District Collector and the police chief together tried hard in the jail and also to lure Bismil to somehow reveal his connection with the Bolshevik Party of Russia. But Bismil clearly said that no foreign hand had any role in this and it was the product of his brain alone. Later, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Yogesh Chandra Chatterjee and Rajendra Lahiri, who were caught from Bengal, were also shifted to Lucknow

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jail. Now, everyone started calling himself the leader of the party. They also started throwing allegations against each other. The intelligence police took full advantage of this. Bismil had written some articles from jail and smuggled them out. There was an article in it -- 'Nefarious tactics of the police'. Bhagat Singh published it in the June 1927 issue of 'Kirati' (Kirti), a magazine published from Amritsar. This article added fuel to the fire as soon as it was published. According to the article, whatever the police did in the Kakori incident was the result of their prejudiced mentality. Bismil used to collect the news of the whole country even while in jail and used to give the police, administration and government a dressing down through his articles.

The case was heard under the title 'The Emperor vs. Ram Prasad Bismil and others'. Bismil, Ashfaqulla, Rajendra Lahiri and Roshan Singh were sentenced to death while 16 others were handed out prison terms. On 28th July 1927, an appeal was made in the Awadh Chief Court to reduce the sentences. The

Chief Court, in its decision, declared Ram Prasad Bismil as a 'great conspirator' and stamped its approval on the previous decision. Chief Justice Sir Louis Shirt wrote in his judgment -- "This robbery is not like other robberies in India, but is a terrible conspiracy to overthrow the government. Its leader Ram Prasad Bismil is a very dangerous criminal. If let off the hook, he may commit an even worse crime in the future." After this, on the advice of defence lawyer Mohanlal Saxena, an apology petition was sent by the convict to the government, but no hearing was held on that either. Bismil's father Muralidhar had got the appeal written by 250 Honorary Magistrates. Provincial Legislative Council member Thakur Manjit Singh wrote a proposal with collective signatures and sent it to the government. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya also sent a collective application containing the signatures of 78 elected public representatives to the Governor and the Viceroy. Some members also prayed to Home Member Nawab Chhatari but all the appeals fell on the deaf

Manthan

ears of the British government. Ultimately, an appeal was sent to the Privy Council in London. But there too, the same decision was taken -- 'noose'.

These appeals and prayers had such an impact that the date of execution was postponed twice. Earlier, the date was 16th September 1927 but later it was decided to carry out the execution on 11th October 1927. Since the mercy petition had been sent to the Privy Council in London, the date of hanging was again postponed. Ultimately, at 6:30 O'clock in the morning of 19th December 1927, the day of Paush Krishna Suphala Ekadashi, Samvat 1984, the most dreaded enemy of the British government was hanged to death in Gorakhpur jail. The people of Gorakhpur went crazy after hearing the news of their leader's hanging. People from all over the country had already reached Gorakhpur. One and a half lakh people took out a procession and performed the last rites of Bismil in Arya Samaji style on the banks of Rapti river and named it *Rajghat*. Bismil, while completing his autobiography on 16th September 1927, three days before his execution, had said --

Mar le Bismil, Lahiri, Ashfaq atyachar se

Honge paida saikadon, isake rudhir ki dhar se

(Let Bismil, Roshan, Lahiri and Ashfaq die due to atrocities
Hundreds will be born from the stream of their blood)

In reality too, Bismil proved to be Raktabeej (a demon whose

blood, if shed even a droplet unto the ground, used to instantly give birth to another similar demon, thereby creating umpteen number of his doppelgangers) for the British empire. The tsunami wave of revolution that followed his death finally overthrew the oppressive British government. Ram Prasad Bismil was not an ordinary human being, he was a part-incarnation of God in human body. He might not be getting that much respect today that he deserves, but a day will definitely come when he will be worshiped in every home like a deity.

Compositions of Ram Prasad Bismil:

A total of 11 books of Bismil's works are known and available. Their details are as follows:

1. *Mainpuri Shadyantra* (Mainpuri Conspiracy):

On 22nd January 1919, an incident happened with Ram Prasad Bismil in Prayag which alerted him about the betrayal of his comrades. As a result, while staying underground, he wrote this first book at Kosma in Mainpuri district of Uttar Pradesh. Some people say that he got it published from Arya Bhaskar Press in Agra while staying in Pinhat area of the city.

2. *America Ki Swatantrata ka Itihas* (History of American Independence):

Some people say that the book titled 'How America Became Independent' was also written by Bismil.

3. *Bolshevikon ki Kartoot* (The Actions of the Bolsheviks):

He had published this revolutionary novel, based on the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, under the pseudonym of Prof. Ram.

4. *Man ki Lehar* (Mind Waves):

A collection of poems published by Praveen Prakashan, Delhi.

5. *Catherine ya Swadhinata ki Devi* (Catherine or Goddess of Independence):

It was published by Uma Dutt Sharma in 1922 from Rashtriya Granth Ratnakar office in Calcutta. The same book was revised and published in 'Sarfarooshi Ki Tamanna', Part - III, in 1997 by Praveen Prakashan, Delhi.

6. *Swadeshi Rang* (Colours of the Indigenous):

It was once available in Arya Samaj Bhawan, Shahjahanpur, and Arya Library, Khehra. But it is not available any more.

7. *Krantikari Jeevan* (Revolutionary Life):

Some parts of it can be seen in 'Sarfarooshi Ki Tamanna', Part - IV. The complete book is still unavailable.

8. *Yogic Sadhana* (Yogic meditation):

This translation of Aurobindo Ghosh's Bengali book is compiled in 'Sarfarooshi Ki Tamanna', Part - III, published by Praveen Prakashan of Delhi in 1997.

9. *Chini Shadyantra* (Chinese Conspiracy):

On China's imperial revolution.

10. *Nij Jivan Ki ek Chhata* (A Glimpse of My Life):

His autobiography.

11. *Kranti Gitanjali* (Kranti Geetanjali):

A collection of revolutionary songs. ●



Dr. Chander Pal Singh

Sachindra Nath Sanyal: An Incredible Organiser & Thinker

Sachindra Nath Sanyal was as skilled an organiser as he was a matured thinker. Endowed with the insight of the Indian traditional wisdom, Sachindra was also familiar with the global ideological trends of his time. Here is a humble attempt for a holistic assessment

In the editorial of the 1963 edition of Sachindra Nath Sanyal's immortal work 'Bandi Jeevan' (Prison Life), it is written that "The history of the lives and works of those great souls and brave patriots of India, who freed the country from foreign slavery with the help of armed rebellion, still remains almost unrevealed."¹ Sachindra Nath Sanyal himself was apprehensive that the history of the revolutionaries would not be written properly after Independence. In the preface to the book he penned in 1922, he writes, "I am writing this book today so that some chapters of the history of India can be written accurately in the future."² It has been more than a hundred years since he wrote this. Even today, after 77 years of Independence, the sacrifices of the revolutionaries are confined to the margins of the historiography of Indian freedom movement. A few martyrs like Bhagat Singh could somehow find their place in the public mind, but many great heroes like Sachindra Nath Sanyal, who raised an armed rebellion in their fight for Independence challenging the world's biggest superpower of that time, are still gathering dust in oblivion.

Sachindra Nath Sanyal was not an ordinary revolutionary but the biggest organiser of the revolutionary movement in North India. He can be credited with bringing the centre of revolutionary activities from Bengal to North India after 1915. He, along with Rash Behari Bose and Indians based abroad, conceptualised the second rebellion of 1857, i.e. 'Gadar' in 1915, and put great efforts to materialise it with the help of the Indian soldiers in British army. He recognised the abilities of many young men like Bhagat Singh, inspired them and made them members of the revolutionary party. Sachindra Nath Sanyal founded the Hindustan Republican Association, drafted its constitution, developed the ideology and functioning of the party, wrote pamphlets that shook the country, travelled to almost every city from Bengal to Punjab and established local units of the party. He also served as the communicator with senior Congress leaders including Gandhiji and discussed issues with them. Even Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose had a long discussion and consulted with Sachindra before finally leaving India.

Alongside the revolutionary

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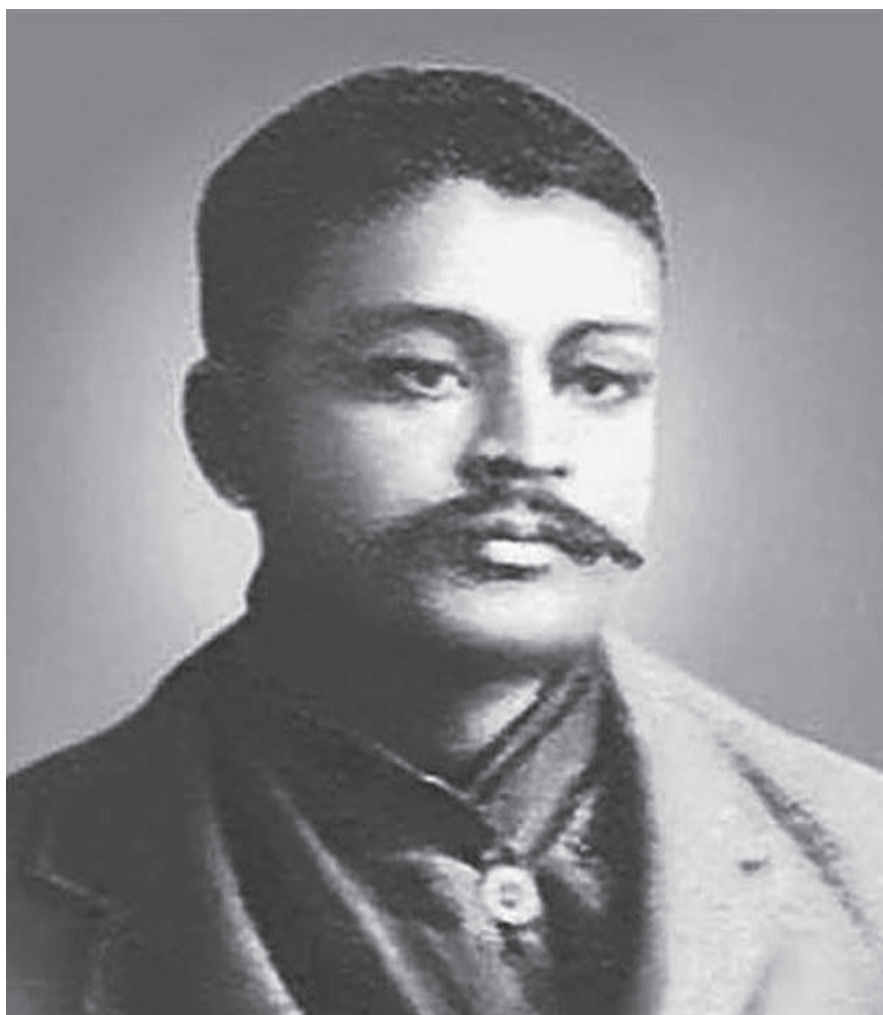
activities, Sachindra Nath Sanyal also studied the traditional wisdom paradigms of India and the world in great details and presented an excellent critique of Marxism and socialism. He wrote books like 'Bandi Jeevan', 'Vichar Vinimay' (Exchange of Thoughts), 'Sahitya, Samaj Aur Sanskriti' (Literature, Society and Culture) and 'Dharm, Samaj Aur Vigyan' (Religion, Society and Science) explaining the significance of armed struggle and what should be the form of independence as well as write-ups on other contemporary social, national and international issues. He also wrote many articles in

many newspapers and magazines like 'Sangharsh', 'Pratap', 'Aragami' and 'Narayan'. He did all this while spending almost half of his total life span of 50 years enduring the tortures in prison, which included two curtailed lifetime imprisonments in 'Kala Pani' (cellular jail). From this very brief description, it can be understood well that Sachindra Nath Sanyal has no small place in the freedom struggle.

Sachindra Nath Sanyal was born on 3rd June 1893 in Kolkata. Even in his childhood, he had resolved that "India has to be liberated and for that, I have to live a soldier's life."³ At the

age of about 13-14, he joined the revolutionary movement through Anushilan Samiti, the revolutionary organisation of undivided Bengal. After the death of his father in 1908, Sachindra moved to Banaras with his family. He passed out the matriculation examination from Bengali Tola High School there. A memorial board installed in that school, which is hanging there even today, says that during the freedom struggle, teacher Sushil Kumar Lahiri and student Rajendra Nath Lahiri of the school were awarded capital punishment while another student Sachindra Nath Sanyal was condemned to lifelong exile and many other teachers and students were sentenced to various jail terms.⁴

While studying there, a young Sachindra had taken the initiative to establish a branch of Anushilan Samiti in Banaras. Sachindra has also mentioned in his writings that in those days, he used to consider Shivaji as his idol.⁵ When Anushilan Samiti was declared illegal, he changed the name of the branch to 'Young Men's Association'. A member of this association had later revealed that the outfit had a core committee. The youth used to become its members by signing their name with their blood in front of the idol of Mahakali. At the time of Kali Puja, the members of the association used to cut a white pumpkin, which was considered a symbol of cruelty of the White rulers (British). These youths also ran an Adarsh School in Madanpura.⁶



In the Banaras (Supplementary) Case, it is written in the judgement of the Special Tribunal that: “Young Men's Association, which was started in 1908, included students from various local schools. This appears to be the foundation for the spread of revolutionary ideas among the boys. It also had a core group consisting of select members, among whom classes were held to impart moral lessons. In these classes, cases of treason were discussed and the distorted version of the morals mentioned in Gita were taught by the lecturers to create a feeling of treason in the minds of the youth. (But) this... alone was not the objectives of the founder of the association -- Sachindra Nath Sanyal... His aim was to work in these (North Indian) provinces similar to the anarchists of Bengal... The aim of this new organisation is to incite rebellion in India... This new outfit wanted to join hands with the anarchists of Bengal and procure explosives and weapons with their help. The strategies adopted to incite rebellion are distribution of seditious literature, luring the troops and collection of arms and ammunition. Government witnesses have described in detail how seditious pamphlets were distributed and pasted on the walls in various local schools and institutions, what efforts were made to lure soldiers in Banaras, Ramnagar and Dinapur, and how the Dhanush bombs, pistols and ammunitions were brought by the conspirators from Bengal and Central India.”⁷

When Rash Behari Bose started the organisation of the revolutionary movement in North India, Sachindra became his main associate. Along with Rash Behari Bose, he started roaming in the cantonments of Punjab and propagating revolution among the Indian soldiers. In fact, their efforts, along with that of the Ghadar Party, was to take advantage of the First World War and create a great rebellion in India on the lines of 1857, in which soldiers and revolutionaries would revolt together. The rebels of Punjab wanted the guidance of Rash Behari Bose in this work but in his place, Sachindra was sent to Punjab to take stock of the situation there. The date to launch the revolt was also fixed at 21st February 1915. But, unfortunately, the British authorities got the wind of it and the rebellion could not be launched. As a result, the revolutionaries were arrested and many of them, including Kartar Singh Sarabha, were hanged while others were imprisoned for life. Sachindra has given a detailed description of the preparations for this rebellion and his efforts in this direction in 'Bandi Jeevan'.

At a time when the police of the entire country were already in search of Rash Behari Bose in connection with the case of throwing bomb on the Viceroy in Delhi and everyone was considering him as the leader as a rebel in connection with the mutiny, it was Sachindra's skill that he was able to convince

Rash Behari Bose to leave the country and go to Japan. Rash Behari Bose was sent safely in a ship bound for Japan on 4th May 1915. However, just after a few days, on 26th June 1915, Sachindra was arrested. He was prosecuted in connection with the Banaras Conspiracy Case. The judges underlined in their verdict that the revolutionary activities led by Sachindra in Banaras were part of a larger conspiracy which included the activities being carried out in Bengal and Punjab.⁸ Sachindra was sentenced to life imprisonment and was sent to Kala Pani in Andaman.

After the end of the First World War, Sachindra was released from Kala Pani due to the 'royal amnesty' granted under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. In 1921, he got married and settled down in Allahabad. 'Bandi Jeevan', his first book, was published in Hindi in August 1922. Earlier, excerpts from this book were published in Bengali newspapers. The justification for Sachindra Nath Sanyal, considered a Chanakya in armed struggle, creating literature material can be understood from the following statement written in the preface of the first edition of the book: “To know a society, there is an absolute need to get familiar with the literature of that society. Because the consciousness or the soul of the society is reflected in the literature generated by the people of that society. Today, India is searching for its significance between destruction and construction respectively. Hence,

if the Indian society is alive, then the picture of this unrest in its soul will definitely be reflected in its literature.”⁹

During the trial of the Kakori Case, the British authorities viewed the above book in the context of committing treason. “It is more than writing history, because it has been written very clearly with a purpose -- that is to point out the mistakes committed in the past and ways to avoid them in the future. It explains how revolutionary groups should get organised, how weapons can be procured and how bombs can be made, how to take up false names and disguises and divide the conspirators into groups so that the traitors cannot provide complete information if caught, how to avoid police surveillance, why dacoity is necessary, etc. And the ultimate objective is to loot the government treasury and get the revolutionaries in jail released to achieve mass revolt.”¹⁰

After Gandhiji suddenly withdrew the non-cooperation movement in February 1922, Sachindra again got involved in the revolutionary activities. By 1923, he had formed a big organisation spread over the entire province, which is today's Uttar Pradesh. In 1924, Vishnu Sharan Dublith of Meerut, Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqulla Khan of Shahjahanpur, Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya and his group of Kanpur, Sachindra Nath Bakshi of Banaras, Rajendra Nath Lahiri and many revolutionaries of North India got together and formed an organisation named 'Hindustan

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Republican Association'.¹¹ The organisation became the centre of all the revolutionary activities of North India. Chandra Shekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Rajguru, Shiv Verma, Vijay Kumar Sinha, Batukeshwar Dutt, etc also joined this organisation. Organising everyone to form the Hindustan Republican Association by avoiding the prying eyes of the police, selecting each person and coordinating among them and connecting all the revolutionary organisations with each other in the entire North India speaks volumes about Sachindra Nath Sanyal's hard work, ability and his credibility among the revolutionaries. The establishment of Hindustan Republican Association can be placed at the top among the many such achievements of Sachindra Nath Sanyal.

The constitution of this new outfit, formed on the lines of the Irish Republican Association, was drafted by Sachindra. It reflects his vision and understanding of world politics. According to this constitution, “The objective

of the Association shall be the establishment of a federated republic of the United Provinces of India by organised and armed revolution... The basic principle of the Republic will be universal franchise and abolition of all such systems which render possible any exploitation of man by man.”¹²

The dedication of Sachindra and his fellow revolutionaries towards the basic spirit of Indian culture is reflected in the following two qualifications expected from the district organisers, as mentioned in this constitution: “He should have the ability to understand contemporary political, social and economic problems in the specific context of the civilisation developed in India in particular. He must have faith in the life goal and destination of achieving an independent India, which harmonises the various spheres of human activities, both spiritual and material.”¹³

Leftist writers, under the leadership of Bhagat Singh, did a lot of publicity about adding the word ‘Samajwadi’

(Socialist) to the name of the Hindustan Republican Association in September 1928, but they ignored the fact that no amendment was made in the constitution of the party. This also confirms that Sachindra Nath Sanyal's worldview was in tune with the times and the ideas of old and new revolutionaries were embedded within its scope.

Sachindra Nath Sanyal was one of the few people of his time who had the courage and intellectual conviction to challenge Gandhiji. Sachindra openly challenged Gandhiji by writing a letter and Gandhiji was so generous that he not only replied to it but also published Sachindra's letter as it was, in the 12th February 1925 issue of 'Young India'. Considering Gandhiji as one of the greatest personalities of the contemporary era, Sachindra Nath Sanyal tried to prove logically that the ideals of Gandhism was not in accordance with Indian culture and traditions but is a half-baked mixture of Buddhism with Tolstoyism born out of frustration. He alleged that Gandhi's supporters were obsessed with personality cult. He concluded his letter with these

words: "The revolutionaries have put everything on stake in the service of the Motherland, and if you cannot help them, at least do not be intolerant towards them."¹⁴

There was a wonderful combination of intellectual prowess and qualities of a military organiser in the personality and leadership of Sachindra Nath Sanyal. The pamphlet 'The Revolutionary' written by him is also worth talking about. It can be considered the manifesto of the revolutionary outfit. This pamphlet was distributed in almost all the major cities of India in the single intervening night of 31st December 1924 and 1st January 1925. It was written at the beginning of the pamphlet itself that -- "A turmoil is necessary for a new star to be born. Just as it is natural to experience pain and sorrow at the time of delivery, similarly it is natural to experience revolution and upheaval during the transition period of a country and to usher in a new era." In this pamphlet, the policy of non-violence was criticised and the philosophy of the upcoming armed revolution and its justification was described.

"Our ideal is to serve

humanity in an organised manner... For India to realise its ideals, its separate and independent existence is very important. This freedom can never be achieved through peaceful and constitutional means... Youth of India! Throw away your confusion and face the reality with a strong heart and do not shy away from struggle, difficulties and sacrifices... Indian revolutionaries are neither terrorists nor anarchists... They do not believe that terrorism alone can bring freedom... although it is possible that they may from time to time employ this method as a very effective means of resistance. State terrorism is sure to be answered with counter terrorism. There is a feeling of complete helplessness in every level of our society and armed resistance is an effective way to restore proper spirit in the society... The party will never forget that terrorism is not the goal and will continue to strive to organise a force of selfless and dedicated workers who will devote all their energy to the political and social liberation of their country. They will always remember that nation-building requires self-sacrifice of thousands of unsung men and women who care more for the cause of their country than for their own comfort or self-interest, their own lives or the lives of their loved ones."¹⁵

In order to highlight the need for an armed revolution and to neutralise the false propaganda against the revolutionaries, a pamphlet in Bengali 'Deshbahir

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Prati Nivedan' (An appeal to the countrymen) written by Sachindra Nath Sanyal was also distributed. The British government took these pamphlets, especially 'The Revolutionary', very seriously and arrested Sachindra two months after its release. For writing and distributing the pamphlet, he was tried on treason charges and he was sentenced to two years of imprisonment under Section 124 A of the IPC on 18th September 1925.

While the trial against Sachindra was going on, the brave men of Hindustan Republican Association intercepted the 8 Down Passenger train going from Hardoi to Lucknow on the evening of 9th August 1925 and looted the government treasury. After this sensational incident, the British government left no stone unturned to implicate the revolutionaries in the Kakori Conspiracy Case. After one and a half years of trial, Special Sessions judge A. Hamilton sentenced Sachindra Nath Sanyal to lifelong Kala Pani. Apart from that, Ram Prasad Bismil, Rajendra Nath Lahiri and Roshan Singh were sentenced to death. Manmath Nath Gupta was sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment while Raj Kumar Singh, Rama Krishna Khatri, Mukandilal, Govind Kar and Jogesh Chatterjee were sentenced to 10 years each. Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya and Vishnu Sharan Dublith were given 7 years each while Ram Dulare Trivedi, Prem Krishna Khanna, Bhupendra Sanyal (younger brother of Sachindra Nath Sanyal), Ramnath Pandey,

Pranvesh Chatterjee, etc were given 5 years of imprisonment each. In the Supplementary Conspiracy Case, Ashfaqulla Khan was given death sentence and Sachindra Nath Bakshi was awarded lifelong Kala Pani. However, Sachindra Nath Sanyal and Sachindra Nath Bakshi did not appeal.¹⁶

While serving life term in Kakori Case, Sachindra Nath Sanyal stayed in Nau, Naini and Agra jails for 12 years. According to his son Ranjit Kumar Sanyal, whenever he went to the jail to meet his father, he would always see Sachindra cheerful and smiling. According to fellow revolutionary Rama Krishna Khatri, Sachindra was studious in jail and had a large bundle of books which included novels, books on Indian philosophy, history and other subjects.¹⁷

After the formation of the Congress Cabinet in UP in August 1937 under the Provincial Autonomy Scheme as per the provisions of Government of India Act, 1935, Sachindra Nath Sanyal was released from jail commuting his life term. But for this, he and all the political prisoners had to resort to fasting.¹⁸

As soon as he was released from jail, he started writing articles on politics, philosophy, culture, science, etc in newspapers and magazines like 'Sangharsh', 'Aragami' and 'Pratap'. His wife had complained to his friends that Sachindra had diabetes and the doctor had asked him to take regular walks but Sachindra just kept writing day and night. In 1938, he re-published 'Bandi

Jeevan'. In the same year, his book 'Vichar Vinimay' (Exchange of Thoughts) was published.

The political circumstances changed after the beginning of the Second World War in September 1939. The British government, without consulting the Indians, threw the country into that vicious war. The Congress Cabinets in seven provinces resigned in October-November 1939 in protest against it. Sachindra Nath Sanyal feared that he might be arrested again because his political activities had become a thorn in the eye of the British authorities. The government was aware of the facts that he had gone to meet the old leaders of Ghadar in Punjab, also had a long consultation with Subhash Chandra Bose and met the Ambassador of Japan too. Finally, he was arrested on 13th November 1940¹⁹ and sent to Deoli Camp near Ajmer in February 1941.²⁰ Hindustan Republican Socialist Association revolutionary Ajay Ghosh, who later became the general secretary of the Communist Party, was also imprisoned in the Deoli Camp. Ajay Ghosh was suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis and Sachindra, while taking his care, himself contracted the disease. Diabetes and tuberculosis together took the form of a serious disease. There was no facility for treatment of tuberculosis in Deoli Camp. Since there were no clear charges against Sachindra and no trial was going on against him at that time, Sachindra and his family corresponded at length with the

government to either release him on medical grounds or transfer him to Banaras, or some such jail where there were facilities available for his treatment.²¹ His condition had started deteriorating in jail. Ultimately, due to the efforts of the family and Govind Ballabh Pant, he was released for treatment with the condition that he would have to report to the nearby police station every day. On the recommendation of Govind Ballabh Pant, he was taken to Bhawali Sanatorium. There too, there was no improvement in his condition. So, he was shifted to his younger brother's place in Gorakhpur where he died on 6th February 1943 at the age of 49.

The introduction of Sachindra Nath Sanyal merely as the organiser of the revolutionary outfit will be incomplete. Even while risking his life in revolutionary activities or serving life term behind bars, Sachindra was not only fully aware of the intellectual debates going on during his time but also participated in them.

Sachindra Nath Sanyal's commentary on communism was extremely accurate and critical in the context of many of his revolutionary comrades being attracted towards communism. In the 1920s, when not only the revolutionaries but also most of the Congress leaders, besides Gandhiji, were influenced by the Russian revolution and communism, Sachindra made an objective analysis of the ideology. He began studying and writing about Lenin and

communism in 1921-22. Around the same time, he came in contact with Qutbuddin, who was serving as the messenger of M.N. Roy, and Satya Bhakta of Kanpur. Satya Bhakta first established the Communist Party in India in 1925, although an Indian Communist Party had already been established in Tashkent in 1920. While studying communism in detail from 1923 till his death, Sachindra objectively assessed the merits and demerits of this ideology.

He wrote: "From 1923 till today, I have studied communism to the best of my ability, came in contact with communists and had extensive debates with people of communist ideology. But even today, I firmly believe that communism, despite its inherent great inspiration for human welfare, some absurd principles have been included in it which have no connection with the truth.

I firmly believe that the best contribution of the Western civilisation is the great idealism of communism. According to this idealism, welfare of the society is the ultimate duty and it is held above caring about the personal gain or loss of individuals.

There is no contradiction between this principle and the ancient Indian ideals. But while accepting the principles of communism, many of my friends have abandoned the spiritualism of India. I could not do it. Hence, even when I was in jail, I faced fierce opposition from my colleagues."²²

While describing the ideals of

communism as great, Sachindra also explained its shortcomings. He did not agree with the economic interpretation of history, dialectical materialism and the philosophical part of communism that lay at the core of it. He saw the biggest evil in communism was that there was no place for freedom of thought and spirituality. Referring to Russia's Bolshevik Party, he even agreed that despite the number of members of the Communist Party (of India) being very less, this party did not deserve to be ignored, because in India today (1938), there is no other such organisation which is working for revolution. However, he was well aware that the Communist Party was run from Russia.²³

In his writings, Sachindra held Indian philosophy, yoga and other traditions as supreme. He reposed his faith in 'karmvaad' (empiricism or the doctrine of salvation through action) and, for that matter, in 'janmantarvaad' (the theory of rebirth). He held that in the social system, stratification on the basis of merit, work and talent is necessary and beneficial, and not on the basis of financial status. According to him, imperialism and dictatorship should be opposed and in their place, an international democratic system should be established which would be based on the best principles of both Oriental and Western civilisations and whose ideal is to serve the mankind.

"Above all, I firmly believe that Indian spiritualism is utmost beneficial for the wellbeing of

the world. I am proud of the fact that in our society, while giving dignity to human beings, we even go to level of putting them in the place of gods. We do not hesitate in calling a person the incarnation of God. But we understand the importance of personal freedom of thought so much that whom we do not hesitate to call the incarnation of god today, we even have the courage to call it an illusion tomorrow. We are also proud of the fact that in our own society, there is so much freedom of conduct that if the father is a Buddhist, then the son can be a Vedachari (one who follows the Vedas) and if the husband is a Shaakta (worshipper of the goddess of strength and power Durga), then the wife can be a Vaishnavi (worshipper of Lord Vishnu).”²⁴

Apart from communism and international politics, due to his thoughts on the direction of freedom struggle, society, philosophy and many aspects of life, Sachindra was a thinker who on one hand was steeped in the Indian knowledge tradition and on the other hand was completely familiar with the contemporary ideological debates going on in the world.

The role of Sachindra Nath Sanyal in organising the revolutionary movement in the Indian freedom struggle has certainly been ignored till now. Sachindra had amazing organisational abilities. During the devastating floods in Banaras in 1913-14, the relief and rescue work done by a young Sachindra along with his friends impressed even the British judges.

According to his brother Jitendra Nath Sanyal, while delivering the verdict in the Banaras Conspiracy Case, judge S.R. Daniels wrote, “Had Sachindra not been misled into a foolish sense of nationalism, he might have developed into a credible citizen dedicated to social work.”²⁵

His fellow revolutionary Vijay Kumar Sinha has paid his tributes to Sachindra in these words: “No doubt, those who were martyred by a single blow of bullet or noose are our venerable ones. But what word should be used for those immortal brave hearts who were martyred by the saw of revolution, tearing apart their entire life into shreds, like Sachindra? By merely calling him a martyr, I feel that I have not been able to fully express my boundless reverence towards him.”²⁶

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Imamuddin Hussain

The Saga of Sukai, a Great Freedom Fighter of the Chauri Chaura Rebellion

Who can forget the Chauri Chaura incident! Sukai is one of the great heroes of this great chapter of the freedom struggle. The tragic story of a true hero

Belonging to the Pasmanda community, Sukai is one of those great freedom fighters who fought shoulder to shoulder along with the Indian people. He was sentenced to death for his participation in the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Chauri Chaura rebellion. The history of the Chauri Chaura rebellion is discussed not only in India but also overseas. But unfortunately, the Indian society has not yet come to know of the dreams and sacrifices of Sukai, the great freedom fighter from the Pasmanda community. The Ashraf elites of India talk about only the martyrs of the Ashraf community but do not admit any discussion of the Pasmanda (Ajlaf-Arjal) Muslims of indigenous origin. They do not remember the patriots who came from the Pasmanda community—Maulana Asim Bihari, Abdul Qayyum Ansari, Atikur Rahman Mansoori, Batakh Mian—even by mistake, nor does the Momin Conference. The Momin Conference is mainly composed of Muslim artisans considered socially backward, and specifically represented the weavers. The Momin Conference became the voice of the downtrodden and the oppressed of

the Muslim community. It was an organisation of artisans, craftsmen and people from the lowest rung of Muslim society. They were continual victims of oppression by the British rulers and the upper caste Muslims.”¹ “The particular feature of the 1943 session of the Momin Conference was that thousands of women too participated in it. More than two thousand representatives and more than 15 thousand common people were present. The resolution passed earlier reiterated that the Momin Conference alone is the representative organization of 4.5 crore Momins.”² This was the only organization which the Muslim League feared. “The Momin Conference attempted to unite other Muslim working class or backward castes such as Raen (growers and sellers of vegetables), Mansoori (cultivators), Idrisi (tailors) and Qureshi (meat traders).”³ According to Papia Ghosh, in 1934, there were more than 500 committees of Momin Conference in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh alone.⁴ Why and how would Sukai’s sacrifice then be remembered? Ashraf (the upper castes among Muslims) historians follow the guidelines of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who in the

Manthan

war of 1857 had described these castes as the badjaat (lowly or malignant) weavers who were the most zealous in this uprising. "The strings of the weavers had been completely sundered; the badjaat (bad caste) were the most enthusiastic in this upheaval."⁵

Whereas unlike the Ashraf elites, Indian society celebrates the anniversaries of its martyrs without discrimination. In 2021, a drama on the life of Sukai was also staged by Abhiyan Sanstha on the centenary of the Chauri Chaura uprising.⁶ Among the 19 revolutionaries who were sentenced to death in the Chauri Chaura uprising, three of them Nazar Ali, Sukai and Lal Mohammad, were all from the Pasmada community.

"Abdullah alias Sukai⁷ s/o Gobar, Chudihar, age 40, capital, district jail, Barabanki. Date of hanging July 3, 1923, morning 6 am.

Nazar Ali, s/o Jian, Chudihar, age 30, Dumri Khurd, district jail, Fatehgarh. Date of hanging July 4, 1923, morning 6 am.

Lal Mohammad, s/o Hakim Shah, Sain, age 40, Chaura, district jail, Rae Bareli. Date of hanging July 3, 1923, morning 6 am."⁸

The names of the 225 accused of the Pasmada community who were freed from death row are mentioned as follows:

"Badku S/o Wazir, Hajjam, Age 17, Badhan

Idan s/o Mohiuddin Julaha, age 17, Bishunpura.

Mahabat S/o Badal, Weaver, Age 38, Dumri Khurd

Nazir s/o Jhingai, Dhuniya, age 48, Baharampur

Parhu son of Imamuddin, Julaha, age 60, Ajodhya Chowk.

Rasool S/o Ilahi Julaha, Pipraich, Age 22

Shahadat S/o Badai Julaha, age 30, Dumri Khurd."⁹

"Bashir S/o Chunrar, Chakia, Chaura.

Teg Ali S/o Sukhu Julaha, Rakba Cantonment, Chaura.

Dina S/o Imamuddin Julaha, Bishunpur Gauri."¹⁰

Not only Sukai, several brave sons of the Pasmada community sacrificed their lives for the country.

Sukai's Brief Life-Sketch

Sukai was born in 1882 in the village Rajdhani, situated at a distance of 12 miles from Dumri Khurd of Chauri Chaura [this



place is situated 20 km south of Chauri Chaura railway station at the Churihar Tola of Rajdhani village, 8 km south-east of the place of Tarkulha Devi.] Sukai's father's name was Gobar. He was engaged in his ancestral occupation of making bangles and selling them. (Suburtan's¹¹ son Rozid Ali¹² says "In those days, there were furnaces for making bangles in our village. Bangles would be made here and would be sold in the surrounding villages from here. About 40 years ago, when bangles started appearing in the market at cheaper rates, our business gradually started closing down."¹³ Sukai began helping his father in the family business since his childhood. They family also had some lands in the village for cultivation, but it did not do much farming work. In that period, they had to do forced labour on the lands of the landlords as well. The landlords oppressed them a lot. When Sukai was young, his parents passed away, throwing the burden of the family on his shoulders. The business began slackening after his father's death. His family had fallen into poverty. Sukai could not have children from his first wife, who often remained ill. After a few years his wife too passed away. Sukai then got married to Tilia and had a son named Rasool from her. However, Tilia's eyes were weak from the beginning.

It was in such a situation the village landlords started grabbing their fields and even dug up the grave of Sukai's first wife. During that period, Sukai had gotten into many quarrels with

Babu Lakshman Singh and Raj Bahadur Singh. He did not get any help from either the landlord or a leather trader Syed Qurban Ali in his dispute over his late first wife's grave having been dug up. His family also hated the Pasmanda castes of the village. They used to harass him in many ways. Nazar Ali too had enmity with Syed Qurban Ali. He had directly accused the latter in his mercy petition, stating, "Syed Qurban Ali's uncle had secretly eloped with my mother."¹⁴ Apart from the British, the village residents were also oppressed by the Zamindari and Nawabi systems. Sukai's mercy petition makes the condition of the village amply clear and how the elite Ashraf gentry responsible for him being trapped in the case.

"I submit that I certainly did not take part in the Chauri Chaura riots. I have been accused because of enmity. I have been punished for working in the Khilafat movement. I have had an old enmity with Babu Lakshman Singh and Raj Bahadur Singh (both landlords of Rajdhani). He had dug up my wife's grave and added it to his field. The entire village knows this. It is because of the enmity of these people that this case has been filed against me. My house is 12 miles away from Chauri Chaura. Muhammad Siddiqui had said in his testimony that another man resembling me had taken part in the riots, and not me. The watchman of Dumri Raj had also said that I did not participate in the riots. Jagtu Pandey's statement was based on what he heard from

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the prosecution's witness Syed Qurban Ali. There were around 300 witnesses in this case but apart from him (Syed Qurban Ali), no one had mentioned my name. I therefore, pray that my life be spared."¹⁵

Sukai had written this letter to the Governor General from the Barabanki district jail on 31 May 1923.

Sukai and the Non-Cooperation Movement

According to Dr. Anil Shrivastav¹⁶ "When the stirrings of the Non-Cooperation Movement began around Gorakhpur, Sukai was automatically inclined towards it. On February 8, 1921, when Gandhi had reached Gorakhpur via Chauri Chaura, Nazar Ali, Lal Muhammad, Bhagwan Ahir and Sukai along with their companions had gone to Gorakhpur to listen to the speeches of Gandhi and other leaders. Soon after, Sukai left his wife Tilia and son of two or three years, Rasool, and went to Ahmedabad to earn a living. He was then 39 years of age. In December 1921, he participated as a volunteer in the Congress

session there."¹⁷

J.P. Rawat too has stated the same thing "On February 8, 1921, Mahatma Gandhi held a meeting at Bale Miyan Maidan in Gorakhpur and called upon the youth to overthrow British rule. Upon the call of the Father of the Nation, the youth of dozens of nearby villages including Chauri Chaura jumped into the fight for freedom."¹⁸

Sukai had decided that while working to support his family, he would devote as much of his time as possible to the cause of the freedom of his country. Whenever he had time while engaged in his job, he would take part in the political activities of the city. He listened very carefully to the leaders of farmers and labourers. While living there, he acquired knowledge about the parties and their politics that took part in the freedom struggle. Even though Sukai was uneducated, his political consciousness had increased considerably. He had now become adept at leading the public. He returned to his village after staying in Ahmedabad for about a year. He had brought a sewing machine at home. Sukai

had been working as a tailor for some time when he was sentenced to death in the Chauri Chaura uprising.

While living in Ahmedabad, Sukai also started understanding the caste system and the cunningness of the Ashraf castes in the Muslim society. Upon returning to his village, he got into a clash with Syed Qurban Ali alias Shikari. Shikari was among the rich people of the village. His family members used to oppress people of the Pasmanda castes. Sukai's first wife's (deceased) grave had been forcibly taken over by the landlords and annexed to their fields. Shikari had an indirect role in this; normally, digging up somebody's grave is a religious matter. If such an incident happens with the Ashraf caste, it becomes a communal matter. But when the same thing happens to the native Pasmandas, the Ashrafs do not care about morality. They have no qualms about siding with the enemy. Nazar Ali too had suffered atrocities at the hands of the Ashrafs. His mother had been mistreated. Syed Qurban Ali's uncle had abducted her and also committed rape on her.

The British police post too had a hand in supporting the exploiters of the village. In those days, the Ashraf castes dominated the high posts in the police department. Wasi Khan, Muhammad Jama Khan, Muhammad Jockey, Ghada Hussain, Mardan Khan, Hasan Jan, etc., occupied the high posts in the police department.¹⁹ Deputy S.P. Khan Bahadur Syed

Ashfaq Hussain²⁰ had been appointed so that the upper caste Muslims could target and punish those from the Pasmanda segments. The result of this nepotism was that not a single Ashraf was hanged, and all of them got away scot-free. This was the reason that the arrogance of the Ashrafs had increased to such an extent that they would beat up the people of Pasmanda community every now and then. When Sukai and his companions began raising their voice on the atrocities being committed against them, the Ashrafs of the village became angry with them. It was for this reason that Syed Qurban Ali²¹ played quite a prominent part in bringing about the death penalty to Sukai in Chauri Chaura. He had crossed all limits of morality whereas he himself had participated in the freedom struggle. A meeting had also been held at his house.

The Uprising of Chauri Chaura

After his return from Ahmedabad to his native village, Sukai started taking Gandhi's movement to every village. He became a volunteer following the establishment of the mandal in Dumri Khurd on January 13, 1922. After the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, a wave of outrage and against the British swept across India. General Dyer opened fire on an unarmed crowd as a result of which hundreds of innocent people were massacred. Due to this the younger generation of Indians became rebellious. Agitated by this incident,

Mahatma Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement. Along with the boycott of British goods, their merchandise began being burnt across the country.

Sukai and people like him hoped that Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement would solve all their problems. He truly believed that they would obtain freedom from the British and would also get freedom from the oppression of the Nawabs and Jagirdars. Believing this, Sukai went from village to village to propagate the message of the Non-Cooperation Movement. He and his fellow volunteers Bhagwan, Bikram, Dudhai, Kalicharan, Lautu, Mahadev, etc., together in a short time, propagated this movement so intensively in the villages around Chauri Chaura that on the day the Chauri Chaura police station was set ablaze, a crowd of about three thousand people had gathered there. According to J.P. Rawat, a weekly market was held on Saturdays in Mundera Bazaar town of Chauri Chaura, where intoxicants like ganja, cannabis, toddy and liquor were openly sold along with foreign clothes. The agitating volunteers began preventing drug abuse by burning foreign clothes on Holi. Some traders, who were stooges of the colonial regime, became upset with these actions of the agitators and the matter reached the police station. Gupteshwar Singh of Chauri Chaura, the then chief of police station, insulted the volunteers and beat them up. As a result, the matter worsened and the workers became furious.

Seeing the matter worsening, the police official was forced to apologize. But being forced to tender a public apology upset him a lot and he decided to teach the volunteers a lesson.”²² The inspector now ordered a lathi charge on the agitators who had been picketing the shops selling foreign clothes and intoxicants. The guards let loose a lathi-charge on the crowd, because of which many of the volunteers dispersed but stood on the side of the rail tracks. The guards then began firing. In response, Sukai too joined in beating up the police inspector and the constables. In order to protect themselves, the agitating volunteers moved away from the police station, picked up stones lying along the railway tracks and began throwing them at the British police. Upon this, the crowd of about 2000 that had gone back return, and now attacked the police personnel. Fearing for their lives, the policemen hurriedly crept into the police station building to hide, locking it from the inside. This was an act that proved fatal for them. That very building was set on fire. All those hiding

inside the police station were burnt to death. The police personnel who were outside were being hounded and beaten up. Muhammad Siddiqui somehow managed to save his own life. He took off his police uniform and threw them away so that people could not recognize him. Later on, he assisted the British regime in getting those involved in the incident punished. Syed Qurban Ali, himself a volunteer in the freedom movement, quickly became a witness for the prosecutors. No one knows how many lives he claimed as the price of saving his own.

A total of 224 people were hauled in as accused and hanged for the Chauri Chaura rebellion. Madan Mohan Malviya fought the case on behalf of those accused. 151 people were saved from the death sentence. 19 people were hanged from July 2 to 11, 1923. In this incident, 14 persons were sentenced to eight years of rigorous imprisonment. But Sukai, Nazar Ali and Lal Mohammad could not be saved, whereas the satyagraha had been organized in Chauri Chaura on the instructions of

District Congress Committee President Subhanullah, who belonged to the class of Ashraf landlords. Maulvi Subhanullah, son of Maulvi Jakaulah, Jafra Bazar, Gorakhpur, was one of the prominent landlords of that time. His ancestors had been staunch loyalists of the British. For siding with the British in the uprising of 1857, he had been rewarded with the zamindari of 52 villages.²³ The land revenue he was supposed to pay had been waived. Moreover, he used to receive Rs 19,000 as monthly revenue.²⁴ No Ashraf came forward for the sake of the Pasmanda people. On the contrary, the Ashrafs left no stone unturned in getting the Pasmandas punished. Gandhi stayed at Subhanullah’s house for 15 days, but no assurance was forthcoming from the latter.

Deputy S. P. Khan Bahadur Syed Ashfaq Hussain (known in the area as Mota Saheb) was appointed at Chaura. The Pasmanda agitators hoped that he would find more favourable government witnesses for them. But he did exactly the opposite. He joined hands with the British regime and assured them that he would get the native Pasmandas involved in this movement punished.

Thus, Syed Ashfaq Hussain, Muhammad Siddiqui and Syed Qurban Ali alias Shikari became united in an ethnical way. Another activist Thakur Ahir was made a witness for the prosecution. Ashfaq Hussain had also paid money to testify against Sukai. “Upon Syed Qurban Ali’s

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exaggerated statement against the agitators, the Sessions Court held that this individual, who was earlier an active volunteer, was giving exaggerated testimony against his former associates to make his witnesses look weaker.”²⁵ Sukai had sent a mercy petition to the British government but the government paid no attention to it. The carrying out of his death sentence could not be prevented. In it, the false testimony of Syed Qurban Ali and the suspicious statement of Muhammad Siddiqui were declared to be wrong.

In his final moments, Sukai had lost all trust in the politicians around him. He saw how the Congress had joined hands with the rich landlords, and how it was using its influence to free those volunteers, who were rich and influential, from punishment. He had not even imagined that Gandhi would withdraw his Non-Cooperation Movement. The biggest blow was that he, a Congress worker, did not get any help from the Congress. The District Congress Committee President, who was also a landlord, did not even make any effort to save him. Truly, Sukai's end was very painful and heartbreaking. He became a victim not only of the British but also of a conspiracy by his own enemies. Ultimately, his execution could not be prevented. After Sukai was hanged, his wife and child had to endure harassment. Sukai was hanged in the district jail of Barabanki on July 3, 1923 at 6 am.

After Sukai's hanging, Tilia went to Barabanki, but could not bring the dead body of her martyred husband to the village. Her husband was buried in the prison premises itself. After Sukai's death, she had to live a very difficult life. The British administration demolished his house. Today, there is no one to tell the history of the torture which she endured after her life was rendered homeless. Sukai's son Rasool was only 3 years old when his home's responsibility fell upon him. We tried to know more about Rasool but could not obtain much information about him.

The Circumstances of Sukai's Family

We met Sukai's present family in his village on 13 August 2023. His house is still in a semi-finished and dilapidated condition. Merely by looking at the house one can easily discern the poverty of this family. Shamsudin Manihar, a resident of this place, said that a road to reach his house would soon be built by the government. One had to toil a lot to reach the place. This village has been named Abdullah Tola with the help of the government school nearby.

After coming here, I felt sad that this freedom fighter, till yesterday known as Sukai, is being today presented in a religious connotation instead of his indigenous identity. In this way, the Ashrafization of people here is being effected.

I and one of my colleagues, J.N. Shah, met Baby Khatoun,

daughter-in-law of Suburtan, daughter of Rasool, son of Sukai (wife of the middle son of Saudagar). He told us that “Suburtan died on 6 August 2021. She had stopped selling bangles for the past one year as she had started feeling difficult to walk. He somehow raised his children Roujid Ali, Saudagar and Akhtar Ali by selling bangles going from door to door. Owing to financial constraints, she could not arrange for the education of her children even till high school. Suburtan's husband Shahadat used to earn his livelihood by running a handcart. It has been nine months since he too passed away. Due to extreme poverty their children started working as labourers. Two of Suburtan's sons presently work as labourers in Pune and one son works in the area near his house. Visitors often keep coming and going here. But till now no one has received any help from the government. Only once did the mother obtain a pass to travel by train. My mother (mother-in-law) went to Delhi many times for availing of government assistance and pension but no one has done anything for her family”.

We also request the social organizations of the country and the Government of India to conduct extensive research work on the freedom fighters coming from the Pasmanda community and present their history to the Indian public, because due to Ashrafism, the history of not only Sukai but many freedom fighters coming from the Pasmanda community has been completely obscured. ●

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4. Ibid, pp. 346-47.
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7. People from far-off places also know him by the name of Sukai Julaha. According to Subhash Chandra Kushwaha and Dr. Anil Srivastava, they belong to the Churihar caste. They consider the documents of the case as evidence. In this regard, I also talked to Aas Mohammad Ansari, former Rajya Sabha MP. According to him, Sukai belonged to the Julaha caste.
8. National Archives, New Delhi, Home Department, Legal branch, Correspondence 362/1923 and according to the Chauri Chaura records maintained in the District and Sessions Court, Gorakhpur. Evidence of this is also present in the archives of the Sessions Court.
9. Session trial Nos. 44 and 45 of 1922. Judgement
10. Freed by the lower court on March 24, 1923. Courtesy *Chauri Chaura Vidroh aur Swadheenta Aandolan*, Subhash Chandra Kushwaha, p 331.
11. Suburtan was the granddaughter of Sukai. She died on August 6, 2021.
12. Roujid Ali is the youngest of Suburtan's three sons (Akhtar Ali, Saudagar, Roujid Ali). All the sons earn their living by working as labourers.
13. Based on Roujid Ali's conversation with social worker, cultural and theatre artist J.N. Shah on August 13, 2023.
14. *Chauri Chaura Vidroh aur Swaadheenta Aandolan*, p. 260.
15. Ibid, p. 260.
16. Dr. Anil Shrivastav is the author of *Chauri Chaura ka Swatantrya Samar*.
17. Dr. Anil Shrivastav, *Chauri Chaura ka Swatantrya Samar*. p. 24.
18. January 16, 2023, "Apne hi gaanv mein gumnaam Chauri Chaura kaand ke nayak Abdullah urf Sukai ki kahani"—Editorial by J.P. Rawat
19. *Chauri Chaura Vidroh aur Swaadheenta Aandolan*, p. 296.
20. Syed Qurban Ali was one of the prominent businessmen of the area. He would often claim that his family had suffered a lot in the war of 1857. Yet, even after having a business, he was also the owner of a huge plot of land. Subhash Chandra Kushwaha says "Syed Qurban Ali, at the rate of four to five rupees per acre, per year, used to pay a total of Rs.37 in tax. The wealthy Muslims of Dumri Khurd had better relations with the Jagirdar of Dumri. Sukai had also mentioned Shikari in the mercy petition in which Shikari tried his best to trap him".
21. In February, Bahraich Deputy S. P. and acting S.P. Khan Bahadur Syed Ashfaq Hussain (whom people used to call Mota Saheb) was called to Chaura and handed over the reins of the investigation because Ashfaq was his favourite and the D.I.G. hoped that he would find a better witness. Evidence for Prosecution, p.671, testimony of Deputy S.P. Ashfaq Husain.
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23. *Raviwar*, September 27, 1981, p.21.
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Deepesh Chaturvedi

Maghfoor Ahmed Aijazi: A Forgotten Muslim Freedom Fighter

Muslim League, though claiming to be the champion of Muslim cause, but was not the only Muslim organisation that was active before independence. There were organisations and individuals that were working against the aim of the Muslim league and in favour of the independent and united Bharat. Aijazi was one of those

The participation of Muslims in the freedom struggle of India was marked by a diversity of opinions and approaches. Contrary to popular perception, the All-India Muslim League, founded in 1906 to counter the Indian National Congress and to divide the emerging national consciousness on communal lines, did not represent the interests and sentiments of all Muslims in India. It primarily catered to the interests of the Urdu speaking educated Muslim elite constituting landed gentry and business classes, particularly in certain the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), Bombay Presidency (now Maharashtra), and Bengal. It is a fact that Muslims counted for more than twenty percent of the population of British India but between 1892 and 1909, they amounted to around six percent of the delegates to the annual sessions of the Congress, which further dropped to about three and a half percent by 1923.¹ So while majority of Muslim public figures chose to stay away from Indian National Congress, still a significant number of Muslims like Badruddin Tayabji, Rahmatullah Saini (both became Congress Presidents), Maulana Shibli Nomani, Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangoi, Maulana

Sulfulla and Molla Mohammad Shiraji dedicated themselves to the Congress during its early phase.² Several Muslim leaders of Bengal opposed the partition of province such as Nawab Amir Hussain of Central Mohammedan Association, Abdul Ahmed Yusuf Jilani, Abdul Rasul, and Liaquat Hussain.³ In the later decades, a select band of Muslim nationalists like M.A. Ansari, Abul Kalam Azad, Tassaduq Ahmad Khan Sherwani, Rafi Ahmad Kidvai and Syed Mahmud represented their community in the Congress despite increasing pressures from their co-religionists. By the mid-forties, Muslim League's support for a separate Muslim state (Pakistan) gained momentum, In the 1946 provincial assembly elections, the Muslim League was able to win over a significant portion of the Muslim electorate and gain their support. The Muslim League did, however, have a lot of elite Muslim backing, and the advantage it had under the common restricted franchise made it possible for it to win the election. It won handsomely because of the restricted franchise imposed by the Sixth Schedule of the 1935 Act, which removed the vast majority of small businessmen and dealers, peasants,

and countless others from the registers through tax, property, and educational requirements.⁴ However, it still did not capture the views of all Muslims, particularly the marginalized and working-class Muslims. Millions of Muslims remained in India and did not support partition.

Sadly, the nationalist Muslim leaders who opposed separatism and worked against the stream do not have their due place in history. It is the most unfortunate episode in the history of independent India that the establishment and people in power have not given due credit to many of its national heroes and their due space in the saga of the freedom struggle. For most of the time, they remained unsung. There were many groups led by nationalist Muslims that completely boycotted the League's agenda of partition. There has been a tendency to colour Muslim participation in freedom struggle as a monolithic phenomenon under the single umbrella of the Muslim League that led to partition. However, there are many examples, which tell a different tale. Shibli Nomani (1857-1914) criticized Sir Syed Ahmed Khan for his anti-democratic stance that Muslims should distance themselves from Congress and politics, as it would lead to the rise of the lower class that would rule the

gentry. Shakatullah Ansari was a leading nationalist Muslim leader who published *Pakistan: The Problem of India*, which believed that the majority of Muslims did, not put Pakistan's demand, forward. In addition, "All India Muslim League is not the only authoritative and representative political organization of Muslims of India...league is weakest where Muslims are in majority and where Pakistan is to be established".⁵ There were many more organizations and individuals whose names went unnoticed against the Muslim league's propaganda to be solely representing Indian Muslims like Allah Bakhsh, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Abdullah Barelvi,

Momin Conference, All-India Muslim Majilis and Anjuman-e-Watan (Baluchistan), etc. There were societies like the All-India Jamhur Muslim League under the leadership of Maghfoor Ahmad Ajazi who opposed Jinnah's two-nation theory.

Apart from these personalities, many Urdu poets worked vehemently to remove the smokescreen propagated by the League that there is no place for Muslims in Hindu India. There were many poets like Shamim Karhani who denounced the need for Pakistan:-

Nam-e-Pakistan na le gar tujhko pas-e-deen hae

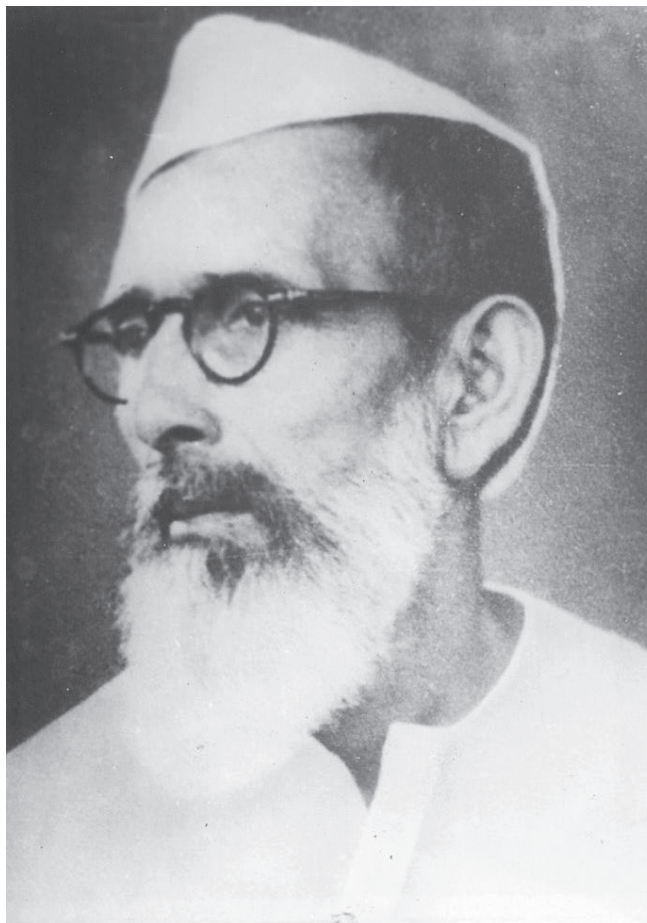
Yeh guzishta nasl-e-Muslim kee badi tauheen hae.

[Do not take the name of Pakistan if you have the least respect for your faith because demanding Pakistan is immense disrespect to Our Muslim predecessors.]

*Tukre-tukre ker nahin sakte watan ko ahle-dil Kis tarah taraj dekhengey chaman ko ahle-dil.*⁶

(Those who have a sensible heart cannot split the country and how will they dare to see a ruined and plundered motherland?)

Many nationalist Muslims raised their voices against separatism but they failed. There could be multiple reasons but the foremost was active



support from the British crown to the Muslim League and their use of terror. Also, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. M.A. Ansari's unexpected deaths in 1928 and 1936, respectively, and Allah Bakhsh's murder in 1943, which meant that the stalwarts vanished in the thick of the struggle, both hurt the cause of nationalist Muslims.⁷ In addition, Mahatma Gandhi creating blunder by accepting Jinnah as the Qaid-i-Azam (great leader), which was until then used in vernacular Urdu newspapers only.⁸

Maghfoor Ahmed Aijazi (1900-66)

Maghfoor Ahmed Aijazi is a good example of forgotten Muslim heroes in the movement for India's independence. He was a Muslim freedom fighter from Bihar with wide public appeal and stature. He worked tirelessly for freedom struggle and constructive programs even after Independence but history stood very unkind to him. The Times of India wrote on 15 Aug 1992, "History has been unkind to him. A man, who shared the travails for freedom with veterans like the Ali Brothers, Maulana Azad, and C. Rajagopalachari, hardly shared the accolades that came in the way of his contemporaries after 1947".⁹ President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed remembered his contribution in the freedom struggle after his demise in 1966 as "he was in forefront of India's War for Independence. The story of his life is a unique and interesting story of an important era of

Maghfoor Ahmed Aijazi was born on March 3rd 1900 in the small village of Dihuli in Muzaffarpur district of Tirhut division in present-day Bihar. He assumed the title of 'Aijazi' because he was a disciple of Ajaz Husain Budayuni, the Khalif of Fazle Rahman Ganj Muradabadi.¹³ His father Moulvi Hafizuddin Husain was a rich landlord of the area who imbibed in him with the feeling of patriotism in his childhood, when he organized peasantry and revolted against the European indigo planters. His mother died very early when he was young

the country".¹⁰ Acharya J.B. Kripalani said after his death, "Dr. Ajazi was a wonderful friend as well as a brilliant patriot and humanitarian. The number of selfless patriots like him is dwindling. For society, his passing is a loss".¹¹ On the other hand, his saga in the freedom struggle went unnoticed for a very long time, until the Indian government finally recognized him as one of the unsung heroes of the Indian freedom struggle on the eve of Amrit Mahotsav of Independence. Additionally, a caption reading "Opposed Jinnah's Two Nation Theory and created All-India Jamhur Muslim League to fight it" was added to the portrait of him in the Azadi Ke Diwane Museum of Lal Qila, Delhi.¹²

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imbibed in him with the feeling of patriotism in his childhood, when he organized peasantry and revolted against the European indigo planters. His mother died very early when he was young. He did his primary education at the local Madarsa and then shifted to North Brooke Zila School of Darbhanga. From a very young age, he participated in and organized protests and marches against the brutal repressive policies of the colonial state. That is why he even faced expulsion from his school for protesting against the Rowlatt Act of 1919. Later, he passed his matriculation from Pusa High School and got admission in the Bihar National College of Patna for his higher studies. In his college at Patna, he organized volunteer corps for the non-cooperation movement and actively participated thereafter in the freedom struggle by boycotting his studies. Prajapati Mishra and Khalil Das Chaturvedi (both became MLA in Bihar assembly) also joined him by boycotting there studies. During his stay at Calcutta, he showed keen interest in the study of medicine and obtained a degree from Calcutta Homoeopathic

Medical College.¹⁴ His elder brother Maulana Manzoor Ahsan was also a freedom fighter who stood by his side until the end.

Maghfoor Ahmed was married to Azizul Fatima. He used his marriage function as a political tool to propagate the idea of swadeshi, in which bride and groom wore hand-woven khadi clothes to propagate the importance of the local handicraft industry. After the nikah ceremony, the function got transformed into a public meeting for discussing issues of the future course of struggle and maneuvering. Slogans were also raised for independence and Bharat Mata.¹⁵

He joined the Muzaffarpur District Congress Committee in 1921 and established the Muzaffarpur Shakra Thana (circle) Congress Committee, and served as the Thana unit's secretary. His positive efforts resulted in a police raid and a case got registered against him on December 11, 1921 by colonial authority during the heyday of non-cooperation movement. Later, he participated as a delegate from the Bihar provincial Congress committee in Ahmedabad Congress that was then presided over by Hakeem Ajmal Khan. The famous 'complete independence' resolution was also introduced here by Hasrat Mohani, which was seconded by him. Here, he met with different leaders of the Khilafat committee to support Turkey in raising funds of rupees 150000 as 'Angora fund'. In addition, he

even raised 11000 rupees from his personal appeal.¹⁶ During his participation in the Khilafat movement, he even grew closer to the Ali Brothers. Together with Maulana Azad Subhani and Abdul Majid Daryabadi, became the founding members of the Central Khilafat Committee. Also, at the All-India College Conference in Ahmedabad, he wholeheartedly supported the proposal to form a student volunteer corps by Chairperson Sarojini Naidu and then organized 'Aijazi troops' and Congress Sewa Dals, which then actively educated the masses against the brutal colonial policies and actively supported Congress's constructive programs in Muzaffarpur and surrounding region of North Bihar. In Ahmedabad, he also had a meeting with Mahatma Gandhi, who inspired him with the highest ethos of serving downtrodden and humanity in form of patriotism. And after that, he went on an active tour of the entire north Bihar region to deeply study the issues and concerns facing by them. In addition, he set up Charkha Samitis, Sewa Dal, and Ramayana Mandalis for doing constructive activities, which also helped him in raising the funds for purchasing land for office of the district Congress committee in Tilak Maidan, Muzaffarpur.

Some of the work done by him in mobilizing the masses included selling khadi clothes, burning foreign clothes, boycotting other foreign goods, and asking for a

donation of handful of grains (Muthiya), women's ornaments, and cash. In one such incident at his ancestral village, Dihuli, he burnt a bonfire of his western clothes. In another famous incident, while procuring the grains through Muthiya drive, he had an argument with his cousin on Muthiya drive when he was rejected for fistful of grains from her house. As it became customary to take out a mutthi, or fist, of grain before each meal to support freedom movement. His cousin approached him after recognizing him and invited him to eat, but he turned down the request even for water. He asked to take the meal only after his sister pledged to pay the grains and bring out Muthia.¹⁷

Among the congress leaders, he ran for office as a pro-changer. As he and C. R. Das met at the Gaya Congress in 1922, and launched ardent campaigning for the Congress candidates in the local elections. Along with that, he assumed leadership of the Khilafat Committee in Calcutta at Mohammed Ali Jauhar's request. During a Subash Chandra Bose-led protest march, he was detained but eventually released. In Patna in 1928, he also organised protests against the Simon Commission. Together with Shaukat Ali, Begum Mohammad Ali, Abdul Majid Daryabadi, Azad Subhani, Abul Muhasin Muhammad Sajjad, and others, represented the Central Khilafat Committee at the All Parties Conference and All Muslim Parties Conferences

on Nehru Report. He voiced his disagreement with the Nehru Report (1928), and he and Daudi joined the Ahrar Party (1929), which was against the Muslim League's principles of communal segregation. Aijazi was the Secretary and Daudi was the President of the Ahrar Party. However, he never left constructive programs as adopted in AICC resolutions. In 1930, he mobilized people for the Salt Satyagraha, campaigned against liquor, and linked social reform with the freedom movement; peeved at the growing communal tension of the 1920s, he had also developed some inclination towards the Khaksar¹⁸ movement in 1931. Later in 1934, during the Nepal-India earthquake, one of the worst in Indian history, he and Rajendra Prasad both made large contributions to the relief operations. He oversaw a number of relief operations where he provided food and lodging for the victims.¹⁹ He also stood for the dignity and pride of the Bihari people on different platforms. He protested against the discriminatory seating arrangements for Bihari delegates in the AICC meeting in Delhi in 1923, which was presided over by Maulana Abul Kalam. Later, his demands were accepted.

He started organizing people after joining the Individual Civil Disobedience in 1941. In one such mobilization in Muzaffarpur, Aijazi and his supporters sustained significant injuries because of a lathi charge

by the local police. Even during the death of his eldest son on 25 July 1942, he took part in the Quit India movement and attended the AICC session held in Bombay on 8 August 1942 where he played an important role in the adoption of a resolution demanding complete independence from the British government.²⁰ During the course, an arrest warrant was also issued because of his active involvement in the movement. His house was searched which led him to work secretly. Finally, the British government detained him with other national leaders to put an end to this spontaneous self-sustaining movement, as he along with his brother was on the district magistrates suspected list of the district. During his entire period of involvement, he cumulatively spent 13 years in jail.²¹

Against Muslim League

Ajazi opposed Muhammad Ali Jinnah and his idea of creating a separate Pakistan. He founded the All-India Jamhur Muslim League in 1940 to counter Jinnah's All-India Muslim League and served as its first general secretary. He formed a team of a few individuals in the town of Muzaffarpur to launch a door-to-door campaign persuading Muslims not to fall prey to the League politics. Even in 1947, when Muslims in Bihar began to consider leaving because of protracted and frequent riots, he and his colleagues rode bicycles from village to village persuading people that Pakistan would not

have a different God to protect their lives, property, and honour.²² With such theological allegories, he continued to challenge those who agreed with the League's concept of a separate nation. He used to organize people around mosques and deliver speeches to educate and make people aware of the problems with Jinnah's League resolution that affected the Muslims in Bihar.²³

However, Leagues' supporters who used to show up in groups to his residence, practically spit, and yell slogans met him with vehement hostility. His popular movement against 'Pakistan' was met with sarcastic slogans by the people of the Muslim League whose teenage cadres used to come to his house in groups shouting, "Aijazi! Ghaddaar-e-Qaum", and spitting on the door of his house.²⁴

By studying the personalities of many nationalist Muslims like Maghfoor Ahmed Aijazi, we can say that just evaluation of their contribution is yet to be done. They were the reason that ideas and support for a full-fledged state based on religion in majority of the Muslim areas got rejected. Aijazi left the Congress in 1940 due to political differences, yet continued to resist the 'Pakistan' of League with his own All India Jamhur Muslim League. Despite all the grievances, he never went over to the League. He remained firmly committed to composite nationalism-muttahidah qaumiyyat and kept contesting the two-nation theory until the very end.

He not only actively participated and propagated the pluralistic Indian idea of unity in diversity but also lived by that ethos after independence. He lived until 1966 and worked tirelessly by adopting and propagating constructive programs based on Gandhian philosophy like promoting

better municipal facilities, cultural values, languages, education, and sports among the masses. His contribution to providing educational resources to the less fortunate groups in society is immeasurable. His campaigns were successful precisely because he set

up these democratic movements with strong, natural ties to the populace. His efforts led to the opening of numerous Urdu schools by the government. His protest led to the establishment of the Bihar University's administrative centre at Muzaffarpur in 1952. ●

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- It was also militaristic, with khaki uniforms, organised marches, and mock warfare. The movement's emblem was the spade, egalitarian symbol of the dignity of labour, which its members literally carried around with them. British government regarded Khaksar movement with alarm due to its anti-colonial tenor and pro-Fascist tendencies.
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- Ibid., p.213. This part is taken from the interview of Maghfur's son by Md. Sajjad.
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The Indian revolutionaries of the era of freedom struggle were not only good organisers and enthusiastic brave youth, they were also excellent scholars and original thinkers. They never left a single issue related to the country's independence struggle, political developments or to their fellow revolutionaries without commenting on it. These reactions were also not those of beginners or over-enthusiastic youth. These reactions contained the full gist of the politics and diplomacy of that time. There was an effort to connect the people of the country and the global community with their goals and objectives. Apart from this, they used to write on many topics. These articles can prove helpful in forming the right perspective on the national and global circumstances of that time. Here are some articles for the convenience of readers

Tears of Love for the Kakori Martyrs

Kirti had published this article as an editorial note about Kakori Martyrs in its January, 1928 issue. This editorial note is compiled in the book *Documents of Bhagat Singh and His Associates* edited by Jagmohan Singh and Chamanlal. The editors are of the opinion that it is not written by Bhagat Singh, but by his close friend Bhagawati Charan Vohra

Four heroes of the Kakori case have been hanged. Those beloved heroes joyfully attained martyrdom.

Four sons of Mother India have offered their heads for the Motherland. They have fulfilled their pledge and duty. They have got freedom from the body and left us behind to suffer the pangs of slavery!!!

The condition of the country in which, patriotism is a crime, the desire to free it is a revolt, where the punishment for social work is death, where patriots are hanged to death, is imaginable but undescrivable. Could there

be any further regression of the country? What would be the condition of the citizens of that country in which such injustices are a routine thing and they cannot even let out a sigh against them?

Hindustan is enslaved. Its reins are in the hands of the foreigners. To love it means to invite death. To see the dreams of its independence, means to leave your family and live a struggling life. The love for this Mahiwal has drowned many a Sohni, while wading through deep rivers striving to meet them. Its love has destroyed many-a-love. Its

love is limitless and deep. It has numerous lovers. But it is silent love.

Till when shall this cruelty remain? When shall the truth come out? Till when shall the innocents become martyrs? Till when shall be the patriots shot at? When shall the goddess of freedom present her visage? How many more martyrs are needed?

Oh God! When will the day come when these sacrifices will bear flowers? God, when will we see the day when our gardens would bloom? When will the autumn fade away? Till when will the owls hoot in this garden? When will cuckoo sing again here? When will this cage be broken? When will freedom return? Friends! Four handsome sons of Mother India have been sacrificed at the gallows. They became victims of the bureaucracy. Who could tell that had they been alive, they could have rendered some services? Who could tell that by their presence the world could have been a more beautiful place to live? They were courageous and romantic freedom-fighters. They gave their lives for the country. They graced their mother's womb.

Had Mother India been independent, their sacrifices would have been paid back. Had there been some life in Hindustan, this sacrifice would not have been futile. Alas! The heroes of our independence have left! Nobody recognized them, none told them that they were brave or courageous. Blessed is that place, where you were born. Where you played! Blessed are those paths

where you walked, played. The beloved sons of our motherland have gone. They made their lives a success.

Bragging is easy but sacrificing your life is different. The test is a very tough. Many stalwarts used to get defeated during the testing times. Only the truly brave soul would be able to face it.

Whenever the history of independence shall be written, these martyrs would be mentioned 1. Rajinder Lahiri 2. Ramprasad Bismil 3. Roshan Singh & 4. Ashfaquallah would surely be recorded. Then the next generation would venerate these heroes as their idols. Today we are powerless, defenseless. We are the fallen ones, the liars. Today we can't tell our feelings - we are cowards, afraid of speaking the truth because we see the sword of law hanging over us. We can't say, "Martyrs of Kakori! Whatever you did, you did to break the shackles of mother India. Whatever difficulties you faced, that was to free Hindustan. You did whatever was



right from your point of view".

How demeaned is this state of slavery? All sublime values run away from the slaves. They become fake and hypocrites. They also become chicken hearted and cowards. They can't say honest things fearlessly. They have certain things in their hearts but utter otherwise. Their condition calls for pity.

There is only one way to improve this situation, there is only medicine to cure it and that is freedom. Independence can't be had without sacrifices. By respecting the martyrs and remembering their deeds, the desire to sacrifice arises. That country which does not call martyrs as martyrs, how can it become independent?

Look at these lovers who are crucified? They made fun of death. They were not afraid of it. They were already wedded to death and had left the desire for life. They used to sing:-

Ek Mit Jaane ki Hasarat Ab Dil-E-Bismil Mein Hai

How could we compare them with ourselves? They belonged to some other world. They had entered the battlefield after listening to the cries of poor. They had come to Hindustan to serve the hungry and naked. They were here to share the fate of the labourers and peasants. They were worshippers of some high ideals. They were happy in some high flight of dreams. They used to see such dreams where there is no hunger or nakedness. No poverty, nor opulence. No cruelty or injustice. Only love, unity, justice, freedom and beauty. But we? We?... Alas!

For some, principles are means to earn and to take care of their families. Some believe in exalting themselves. For some, it is to collect money by looting the poor and for some,

it is to keep their beautiful bodies away from difficulties.

Everyone has some principles. But their principle was the country its freedom. They had no selfish motives behind that. They had enough to eat and wear. Whatever they did, was for social cause. They were gods of sacrifice. Let's salute these heroes!

Darlings of Motherland! What happened if today out of fear we cannot even utter your names? What happened if today we hesitate to talk? What happened if today there is death like lull in Hindustan and upon uttering your name one becomes a conspirator? What happened if some Hindustani said some bad things to you but a time will come when your sacrifices would be remembered, just as the revolt of 1857 is now called the '1 War of Independence'. Time proves everything, true and without any consideration. Then you will shine in your glory and the entire Hindustan would revere you.

Martyred heroes! We are ungrateful, we do not acknowledge your deeds. We are cowards, we can't speak the truth, kindly excuse us. We are afraid of death, our minds go numb on listening about crucifix. You were blessed. You were lion hearted that you considered the gallows a minor thing. But we? We love our lives, for us every a small trouble becomes life threatening freedom. We shiver by this word. Yes, we love slavery, we enjoy the curse of slavery! Your every nerve, every drop of blood shouted freedom but our every drop of blood, every nerve shouts slavery. How could we be compared? Kindly excuse us and accept these tears of love offered by us. Shout, Blessed be the martyrs of Kakori.....! January, 1928. ●

Courtesy: Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich and Madhavi Kataria Dhaumya (ed.), Writings of *Bhagat Singh and Comrades on Martyrs*; ISBN: 9351138585, 9789351138587, Unistar (2016)

Introduction to the Kakori Heroes

The atrocities committed by the then British rule on the revolutionaries and their families who were considered responsible for the Kakori incident cannot be described. But those heroes neither gave up in any situation nor were they ever sad about their sacrifice for the country. In May, 1927, Bhagat Singh got an article published in Punjabi, entitled *Introduction to the heroes of Kakori* by an assumed name 'The Rebel'. Following the publication of that article, Bhagat Singh was arrested and a famous photograph of handcuffed Bhagat Singh sitting on a cot was taken then. In Hindi, this article is published in an altered way

On 9th August, 1925, martyr Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah and others looted a train near Kakori railway station adjoining Lucknow. All but martyr Chandra Shekhar Azad were, later on arrested. Bhagat Singh had joined the Hindustan Republican Association in 1923.

The Kakori Case has already been dealt with in Kirti. Now we shall write about the Kakori Conspiracy and its heroes who have been awarded harsh punishments for it.

On 9th August, 1925, a passenger train started off from the small-town station of Kakori. This station is about 8 km away from Lucknow. The train must have moved 1-1½ miles further that three young men from second class stopped it and others joined them to loot the Government treasury. They had already told the passengers not to be frightened, as their motive was just to loot the Govt. treasury and not to harm them. Anyway, there were shoot-outs. One passenger got down from the train and got shot to death.

Government incharge, Horton, C.I.D., made enquiry about the case. He was confident from the very beginning that the revolutionary group was responsible for it. He began a search for all of the suspicious people. Meanwhile it was decided to have a state-level meeting of the revolutionary group in Meerut. The Govt. got to know about it. A thorough search was conducted there.

By the end of September, Horton had passed arrest-warrants and on 26th September, many raids were conducted and lot of people were caught. Some escaped out of which Mr. Rajender Lahiri was caught in the Dakshineswar Bomb Case and he was sentenced to ten-years imprisonment, then and there. Mr. Ashfaqullah and Shachindra Bakhshi were arrested later and they were sentenced in a subsequent case.

It is shown by the decision of the judge that after the 'suspension' of the Non-Cooperation Movement, the patriot youths had lost their faith in Ahimsa and had established

a revolutionary party. Mr. Jogesh Chandra Chatterji came from Bengal to U.P. for the formation of this group and after doing the final work went back in September, 1924. By then, the Ordinance was being passed in Bengal and on arriving at the Howrah Bridge, he was arrested. A letter was found in his pocket in which there was some mention about some meeting of U.P. state council and about the organization of his Party. Anyway everything started off again and for that there were some dacoities also. The judge feels that Sh. Sachindra Sanyal is its leader.

Who hasn't heard of Mr. Sachindra Sanyal! He is the author of the famous 'Bandi jeevan'. He is resident of Benaras and had contributed a lot during the Ghadar agitation, 1915. He was the leader of the Benaras Conspiracy and the right hand of Mr. Ras Bihari Ji. He was sentenced for lifelong imprisonment but got released in 1920. Then he got involved in his previous pursuits and in early 1925, wrote the pamphlet 'The Revolutionary' circulated to the entire nation on one single day. Even the English newspapers appreciated its language and thoughts. He was arrested in February. A case was filed against him on this charge and was given two-years imprisonment. From there, he was implicated in the Kakori Case. He is a very brave man. He used to remain happy and keep others also happy in the court. He, himself defended his case. The judge calls him the master-mind. 'Bandi Jeevan' has been translated into Gujrati and Punjabi.

He is a renowned English and Bengali writer. Now he is undergoing two-years' imprisonment.

Alongwith him, his younger brother, Bhupender Sanyal also joined him. He was doing his graduation. He got caught and has been imprisoned for five years.

Mr. Ram Prasad Bismil follows Mr.

Shachindra. It's very difficult to find such a handsome and well-built youth. A great Hindi writer: Author of books like 'Catharine', 'Works of Bolsheviks', 'Wave of the Heart' etc. A well-renowned poet in Urdu, 28 years old. Earlier, in 1919, arrest-warrants were passed in his name regarding the Mainpuri Conspiracy and he had a tough time then. Toiling full day in the fields and finally getting 2.5 annas, which cannot fill a man's stomach. Many a times, he was forced to have grass. But interestingly, he used to write poems then also and remembering Mother India, wail and sing songs. Can you find such a youth? He is an expert in battle-art and the main reason behind his sentence today to be hanged lies here. He laughed off when his sentence was declared.

You can't find such a brave, handsome and able youth and reputed writer.

Mr. Rajinder Lahiri is the third here. He was an extremely handsome youth of 24 years, a student of M.A., Banaras Hindu University. According to the judge, he is a strong pillar of the group. He was one of those who pulled the train chain. Apparently, he was quite frail. He got caught in the Dakshineswar Bomb Factory near Calcutta and was imprisoned for ten years. During the Kakori Case, he had become quite healthy and now has been hanged.



Hero Roshan Singh has also been hanged. Earlier, he used to help the police to catch many dacoits. He also got caught. But he was not a thief. Even the judge calls him a true patriot. Good! hail this hero too.



Then comes Mr. Manmathnath Gupt. He was 18 years old, student of BA, in Kashi Vidyapeeth. Had learnt many languages like Bangali, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya, Hindi, English and French etc. The judge, implicating him in the Kakori case, sentenced him to 14 years, rigorous imprisonment. He is a daring youth and underestimated his sentence. Now-a-days, he is on hunger strike. When the un-official member asked him its reason, he replied that we are humans. We ought to be treated like humans. He thought he won't be able to endure such treatment for 14 years.

Death all-at-once is better than dying every moment he felt. He had gone to the jail during the non-cooperation movement also.

Now, the next person to be mentioned is a great person. He is Mr. Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee. He is a resident of Komilla (Dhaka). Was a student of BA, Philosophy. His professor was quite impressed by him. But he rejected the entire philosophy and joined the revolutionary party. He was arrested under Defence of India Act and tortured very cruelly. Once urine was poured over his head and then he was shut in his cell for 4 days. Even for washing his face, water was not given and his body was badly injured by repeated beatings. But he remained composed.



On getting released in 1920, he continued his work as an ordinary worker in the Congress. In spite of belonging to a poor family, a patriot serves the nation by ignoring his family. He came to U.P. in 1923 and laid the foundations of the HRA. Came back to Bengal in 1924 and got arrested. Earlier his arrest was due to the Ordinance and here Kakori was brought in. He has been sentenced

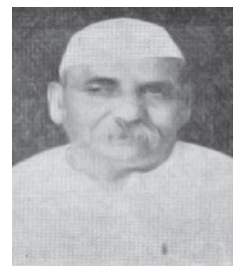
for 10 years. He is a very handsome youth. The judge has praised him a lot.

Mr. Govind Charankaar alias D.N. Chaudhary was caught in Lucknow. He is an old revolutionary. In 1918/1919, the Dhaka police came to arrest him. He resisted by shooting back but as he had no more cartridges and had got wounded, he got caught. He was deported to the Andamans. On becoming extremely ill in 1922 was released. Again arrested in 1925 and is presently undergoing ten years imprisonment.

Now, let's talk about Mr. Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya. He too was a resident of Banaras, was 16- years-old when he got arrested in the case of Banaras Conspiracy. The police couldn't find any evidence against him, so was released and later kept under house-arrest in Bundelkhand. He was a great Hindi author. Was assistant editor in renowned news-paper like the 'Pratap'. Was a good singer. Used to practice Yoga in jail.

Mr. Raj Kumar Sinha a resident of Kanpur. Was a student of B.A., Banaras Hindu University. Got caught with two revolvers in his room. Is a good singer and good-looking also. Very enthusiastic when Mr. Damodar Swarup was summoned to the court in spite of being severely ill, he rebuked the judge in bitter words. The judge warned him that he will be paid back. That brave young man was condemned for 10 years. In one way, his life has been spoiled, but he simply laughs off. Salutations to such a hero and to their mothers.

Mr. Vishnu Sharan Dublis lived in Meerut. Was Chairman of Vaishya Orphanage. Had joined the Non-Co-Operation Movement in B.A. and transformed Meerut into another



Bardoli. A meeting of the HRA leaders was being held in his house. Has been condemned for seven years.

Mr. Ramdulare has also been condemned for seven years. He was Kanpur resident. An eager Congress worker and Scout Master. On listening the final judgement on 6th April, all of them sang:

*"Sarfaroshi ki Tamanna,
Ab Hamare Dil Mein Hai,
Dekhna Hai Zor Kitna Baazuye
Katil Mein Hai !!"*

Those sentenced were been ridiculed at. After that, came the hour of pain-the moment to get separated from ones' comrades. We can never forget Rasbihari's following words.

'Ordinary worldly people can never grasp the deep love and friendship among the revolutionaries. Those who have sacrificed their lives for such a mighty cause, how can we ordinary people understand their greatness? We can't even dream of the deep love among the waiting for their dark future together since 1½ years. That moment came, three to neck till death, one sentenced to transportation for life, one 14 years imprisonment, 10 years imprisonment for four and five-ten years rigorous imprisonment for the rest. While passing on their verdict, the judge advised them, "You are true devotees and patriots. But you chose the wrong path". It is only in poor India, that patriots face such an end. The judge left by advising them to re-think about their actions and then..... then what.....? The hours of separation are really terrible. Those who were sentenced to transportation for life, we can never know their feelings. Those who start complaining and get scared at each and every step, how can such coward and weak Indians understand them? The younger ones touched the feet of their elders. They gave them their blessings, hugged them and

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sighed. Then they left. While leaving, Mr. Ramprasad said in a painful manner:

*Daro-Deewar Pe Hasrat Se
Nazar Karte Hain
hush Raho Ahle Watan Hum
To Safar Karte Hain!!*

After saying this, he left for a long, very long distance journey. While at the door, he broke the silence in the big Rainkan Theatre Hall of the Court by saying:

*Hai Hum Jis Par Bhi Tayyar
The Mar Jaane Ko
Jeete Ji Humse Chhudaya
Usi Kashanne Ko!*

Heaving a sigh, we think we have done our duty. We have become so lifeless like that we are not enraged and grieved. Today they are on hunger strike and are suffering and we are mutely watching the drama. May God give them courage and strength so that they can complete their days with bravery and let their sacrifices show its true colour. ●

Message of Shaheed Ashfaqulla from the Gallows

Revolutionary Ashfaqulla sent this message to the countrymen
from Faizabad jail on December 10, 1927

We have played our part on the stage of Mother India, right or wrong, whatever we did, we did that after being inspired by the spirit of patriotism. Let our own people (Congress leaders) praise us or rebuke, but even our enemies had to praise our courage and bravery. People claim that we have tried to spread terrorism in the country, but that is wrong. The trial has gone for so long. Many people among us were free for a long time and some have not been caught yet (indicating Chandra Shekhar Azad). Still neither we nor any of our friends have shot down any of our oppressors. This was not our motive. We wanted to bring revolution in the entire country to gain freedom.

The judges have named us cruel, barbarous and a blot on the mankind. General Dyer, a citizen of our ruling country had ordered shooting of the defenceless men, women and children. How did these protectors of justice greet such brothers and sisters? Then why are we treated as such?

Hindustani brothers! Let you be of any religion but get united for the country's cause. Don't fight among yourselves in futile. The paths may be many but the goal is the same. They are the means to fulfil a single cause, then why is this useless quarrel? Challenge the bureaucracy of the country together and free India. I am really proud that of the seven crores in the country. I am the first Muslim to get to the scaffold for the country.

Finally, my salutations to all!
Let Hindustan be free!
Let my brethren be happy!

Your brother
Ashfaq

From the rare diary of the great martyr Ashfaqulla Khan Warsi 'Hasrat'

Some of the pages from the great martyr Ashfaqulla Khan's jail diary are compiled in a book *Yug ke Devta*. The book is edited by Vidyarnava Sharma and published from Praveen Prakashan, Mehrauli, Delhi. In these pages some of poetic works of Ashfaqulla Khan are also included. *Manthan* is giving it here as our readers can have a glance of the great martyr's poetic abilities as well as his handwriting. Though the photos are a bit blur, yet of great historic importance

For children + friends
 Oh my India, Oh my mother, Oh my
 nurse o country mine
 Why dishonoured are thy breasts
 lusterless thy looks divine,
 Why for thy seat so lonely dost
 Why for thy Khat-khat howl
 & altered gear,
 When the 3 hundred million
 sing, in a chorus mother dear,
 There's no shame, there's no pain
 There's no grief, no sorrows land
 When the 3 hundred million voices
 sing in a chorus mother land.
 There arose lord Buddha great
 who opens heaven's gate above
 Half the world kneels before
 worshipping him in reverent love

3
 King Ashoka spread his deeds
 From Gandhara to Angkor main
 Are there not their countrymen
 Of thy gods thy holy fame
 There's no shame - - - in the land
 In thy light divine has vanished
 In thy days are dark as night
 Thy will is away in glory
 Shine in luster fresh & bright
 Men are we & not merely sheep
 We will receive thy glory grand
 O my goddess! O my life soul
 O my heaven! my mother land
 There's no shame, there's no pain
 There's no grief, no sorrows land
 When the 3 hundred million voices
 sing, in a chorus mother land,
 A. Warsi

4
 A man should ^{be happy} peaceful and satisfied even before in those circumstances when there is death before him, as I do.

2. Life is nothing but a dream & the death is its result.

3. Love & death stand side by side, if you love & love sincerely to a certain thing then be prepared for death.

4. A lover's death is nothing but a complete satisfaction for him.

5
 Patriotism brings with him all sort of troubles & pains but a man who chooses it all the troubles & pains become comfort & ease for him. That is why we are cheerful up to our end.

6. Only for the love of Country I suffered so much.

7. There is no desire if there is, there is only one to see you my children struggling for the same end for which I am expected to be finished.

6
 8. Brothers & friends will accept me after me but I am weeping over their coldness & infidelity towards our motherland.
 9. Keep not children weep not elders, I am immortal, I am in
 10.

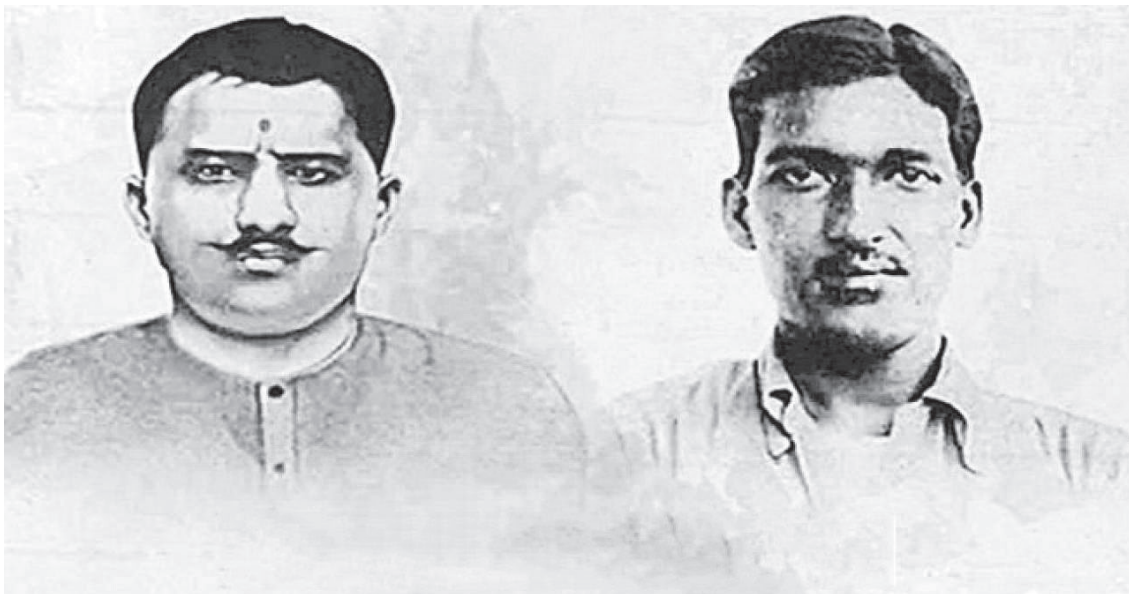
Ashfaq

-Ramprasad Bismil

This memoir of Ashfaq is archived in the works of Ramprasad Bismil. *Manthan* has taken up this particular writeup so that the readers can understand the depth of the relationship between the two

I remember very well, when I came to Shahjahanpur after the royal proclamation; I met you in school. You had a very heartfelt desire to meet me. You wanted to talk to me about the Mainpuri incident. Wondering why a Muslim student of a school would talk to me like this, I replied to your conversation with a little disregard. You felt rather put off at that time. Heartfelt emotions were clearly emanating from you. However, you didn't forsake your intentions just like that, but stuck to your determination. You talked to Congress in whatever way possible and tried to convince through your close friends that you are not a superficial person and have an ardent desire in your heart to serve the country. Finally, you prevailed. Your efforts created a place in my

heart. I was very happy to learn that your elder brother was my classmate and friend in the Urdu Middle school. Within a few days you had become like my younger brother, but you were not satisfied with being only my younger brother. You wanted equal rights, to be counted as a friend. That's precisely what happened. You became a true friend. Everyone wondered what kind of union would there be between a staunch Arya Samajist and a Muslim. I used to reconvert Muslims and lived in the Arya Samaj temple, but you did not care about these things in the slightest. Some of my friends though, held you in contempt because you are a Muslim, but you were firm in your determination. They used to visit me at my Arya Samaj temple. Whenever a Hindu-Muslim scuffle broke out,



everyone in your locality used to openly abuse you and call you an infidel, but you never agreed with their views. You always remained in favour of Hindu-Muslim amity. You were a true Muslim and a true patriot. If you held any thought in life, it would be that God should have given wisdom to the Muslims, so that they would work for the welfare of India by joining hands with the Hindus. Whenever I used to write any article or book in Hindi, you would always request me to write in Urdu as well, so that Muslims too could read those. You studied Hindi well for the sake of understanding the sentiments of patriotism. At home, when you used to talk to your mother and brother, Hindi words would issue from your mouth, which would surprise everybody.

Seeing this attitude of yours, many people used to suspect that you might get 'purified' (converted) by renouncing the religion of Islam. But your heart was not impure in any way; why then would you purify it? This trajectory of yours has totally conquered my heart. Often, the discussion would arise in the circle of friends as to whether one might be deceived by trusting a Muslim. You prevailed, and there was no difference between you and me. At most times, you and I ate food in one plate. The very thought that there is any difference between Hindus and Muslims left my heart. You had unwavering faith and immense love for me. Of course, you couldn't call me by name, but always used to call me "Ram". Once when you suffered palpitations of the heart and were unconscious, you kept uttering "Ram" and "Hai Ram" repeatedly. Your brothers and relatives standing nearby were surprised at your uttering "Ram, Ram". They kept admonishing you to say "Allah", "Allah", but you kept repeating "Ram, Ram". Just then a friend arrived, who knew the secret of this utterance of "Ram". I was summoned

immediately. You felt relief after meeting me, and everyone then understood the mystery of your "Ram! Ram!"

And what finally was the outcome of this affection and friendship? You too imbibed the hues of my thought. You too became a staunch revolutionary. Now your endeavour day and night was that somehow, revolutionary feelings should enter Muslim youth too. They too should contribute to the revolutionary movement. You tried to influence all your brethren and friends with your thoughts. Similarly, the member revolutionaries too would be surprised as to how I could get a Muslim to become an important member of the revolutionary party. The work you did with me is praiseworthy. You never disregarded my orders. You were always ready to carry out my commands like an obedient devotee. You were a large-hearted person and held very noble feelings.

If I know any peace, it is because you have illuminated my countenance in the world. It has become notable in the history of India as well, that Ashfaquallah contributed to the revolutionary movement. He did not pay any heed to the exhortations of his brethren and relatives and remained firm in his views even after being arrested. Just as you were physically strong, you also proved to be mentally courageous and lofty in spirit. As a consequence of all this, you were accused in the court of being my lieutenant, and the judge, while writing the verdict of the case, placed a garland of victory (the hangman's noose) around your neck. Dear brother, you will be gratified to learn that the one who sacrificed his parents' cherished treasure in the service of the country, also sacrificed his dear friend Ashfaq for that very motherland.

In love that is pure, the remaining of identity is a crime

Never tread here with your head held high. ●

Courtesy: Ramprasad Bismil Rachanawali (Granth evam Rachnaein); pp.101-103

Manthan

Journal of Social and Academic Activism

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Managing Editor

Manthan Quarterly Magazine

Ekam Bhawan, 37, Deendayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi-110002

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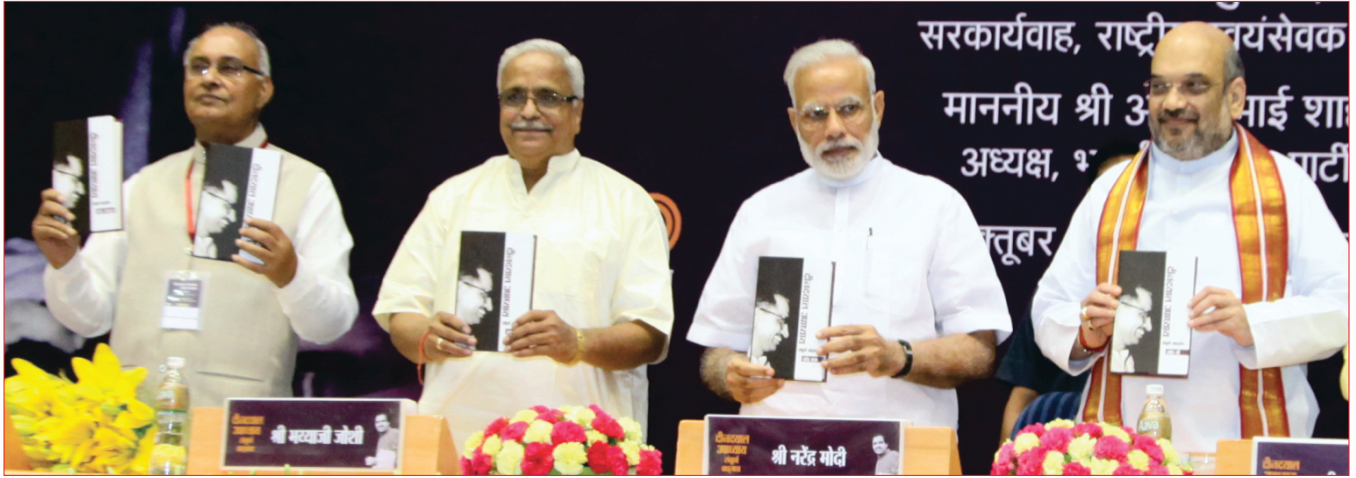
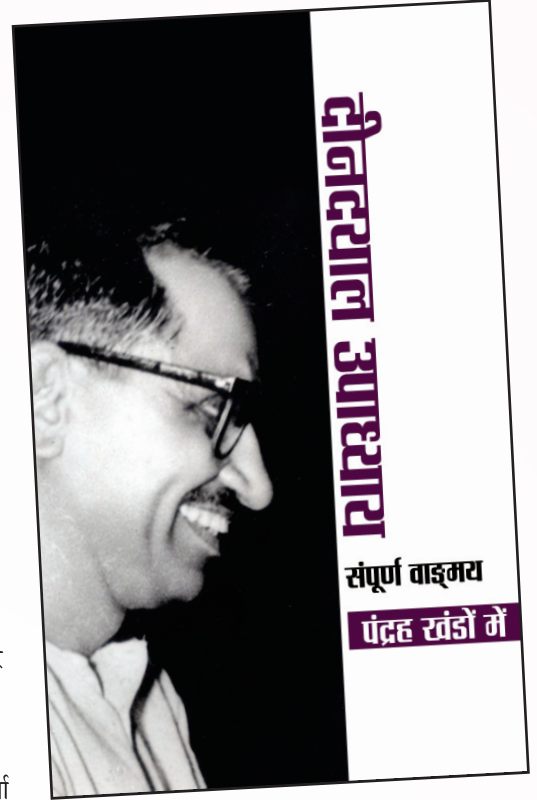
प्रभात

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9 अक्टूबर, 2016 को नई दिल्ली के विज्ञान भवन में पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्याय जन्म शताब्दी वर्ष के अवसर पर डॉ. महेश चंद्र शर्मा द्वारा संपादित एवं प्रभात प्रकाशन द्वारा प्रकाशित 'दीनदयाल उपाध्याय संपूर्ण वाङ्मय' के पंद्रह खंडों का लोकार्पण भारत के प्रधानमंत्री मान. श्री नरेंद्र मोदी, राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ के सरकार्यवाह मान. श्री सुरेश (मय्याजी) जोशी व भारतीय जनता पार्टी के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष मान. श्री अमित शाह के करकमलों द्वारा संपन्न हुआ।

“यह पंडितजी की जीवन-यात्रा, विचार-यात्रा और संकल्प-यात्रा की त्रिवेणी है। यह दिन इस त्रिवेणी का प्रसाद लेने का दिन है। पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्यायजी कहा करते थे कि अपने सुरक्षाबलों को मजबूत किए बिना कोई राष्ट्र अपनी स्वतंत्रता को अक्षुण्ण नहीं रख सकता, इसलिए सुरक्षा-तंत्र मजबूत होना ही चाहिए। पंडितजी द्वारा कही गई बातें आज भी इतनी ही प्रासंगिक हैं।”

—श्री नरेंद्र मोदी, प्रधानमंत्री, भारत

“विचारों का छोटा सा बीज पं. दीनदयालजी ने बोया था, आज वह वटवृक्ष के रूप में खड़ा होकर न केवल भारत बल्कि पूरे विश्व की समस्याओं को सुलझाने की दिशा में अग्रसर है। उनका साहित्य उनकी सरलता, दूरदर्शिता और संकल्पशक्ति का परिचय कराएगा।”

—श्री अमित शाह, राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष, भाजपा



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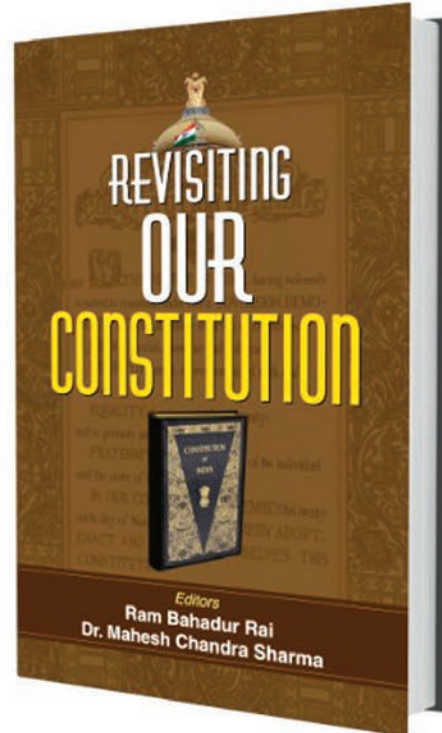
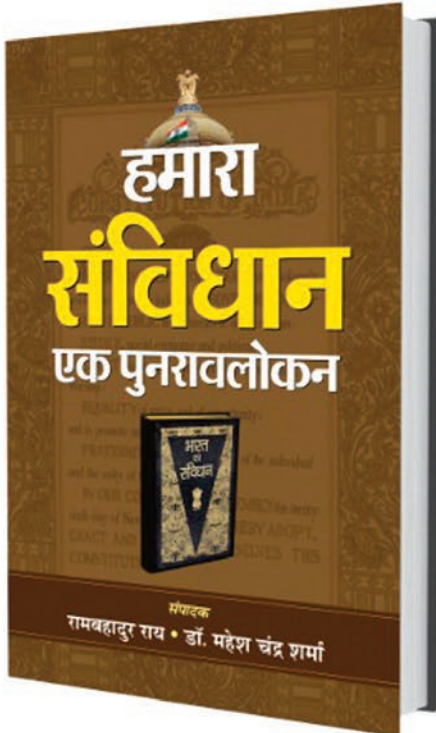
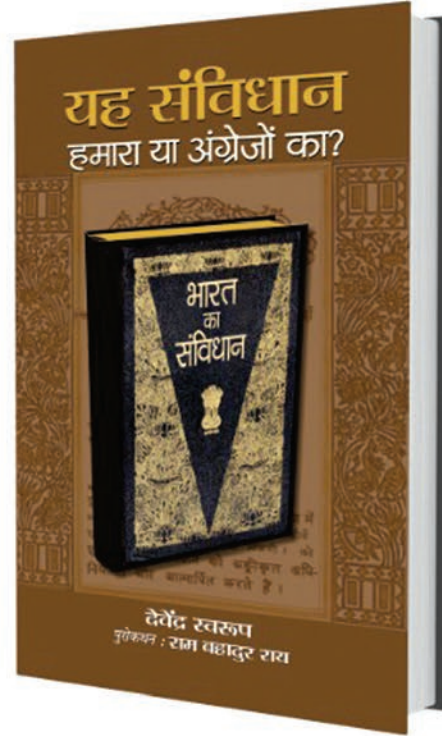
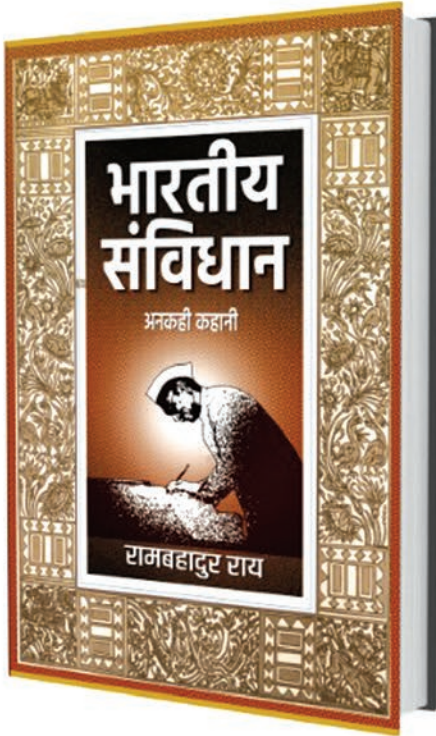
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