

IMPRINTS OF BHAGAT SINGH IN INDIAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Born into a Sikh family which had earlier been involved in revolutionary activities against the British Raj, as a teenager Bhagat Singh studied European revolutionary movements and was attracted to anarchist and Marxist ideologies. He became involved in numerous revolutionary organisations, and quickly rose through the ranks of the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) to become one of its main leaders, eventually changing its name to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) in 1928. Seeking revenge for the death of Lala Lajpat Rai at the hands of the police, Singh was involved in the murder of British police officer John Saunders. He eluded efforts by the police to capture him. Soon after, together with Batukeshwar Dutt, he undertook a successful effort to throw two bombs and leaflets inside the Central Legislative Assembly while shouting the slogan of revolution.

The two men were arrested, as they had planned to be. Held on this charge, he gained widespread national support when he underwent a 116-day fast in jail, demanding equal rights for British and Indian political prisoners. During this time, sufficient evidence was brought against him for a conviction in the Saunders case, after trial by a Special Tribunal and appeal at the Privy Council in England. He was convicted and subsequently hanged for his participation in the murder, aged 23. His legacy prompted youth in India to begin fighting for Indian independence and he continues to be a youth idol in modern India, as well as the inspiration for several films. He is commemorated with a large bronze statue in the Parliament of India, as well as a range of other memorials.

KEYWORDS: European Revolutionary Movements, Parliament of India, Indian National Congress