

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

COURSE CODE : ENG -G E 404

COURSE TITLE : LANGUAGE , LITERATURE AND CULTURE

SEMESTER : IV

COURSE CONTENT :DR SHAHLA REHANA

INTRODUCTION TO DREA LAND

Bhagat Singh's importance lies in the fact that he represented the character and temper of the revolutionaries of his times. He was both an activist and a thinker. His ideas are no less important than his death as a martyr. Bhagat Singh considered the British Rule in India as immoral and unjustifiable . He wanted an uncompromising struggle for freedom. For him , freedom of the country was only the first step to wider freedom for a majority of people-workers and peasants.. His ultimate goal was the end of oppression and exploitation of Indians .Bhagat Singh claimed revolution as a birth right, rejected Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and had an antipathy towards the reformist attitude of the Congress. His belief in Marxian Communism,his atheism, his

belief in armed rebellion as a means to uphold the dignity of the suppressed and humiliated were ideas that were endorsed by the Indian youth in the twenties and the thirties.

Lala Ram Saran Das was convicted for life in 1915 in the first Lahore Conspiracy Case. While in Salem Central Prison, Madras presidency, he wrote a book of verse entitled *Dreamland*. It was during this conviction that he passed on his manuscript to Bhagat Singh for an introduction. In this article Bhagat Singh, while appreciating the spirit behind Ram Saran Das's work, has criticised his utopian approach to the problems of revolution. He has also expressed himself on such subjects as God, religion, violence and non-violence, spiritualism, literature, poetry, etc.]

In *Introduction to dream land* , Bhagat Singh makes it clear that he did not believe in violence as an integral part of revolution. By revolution, he understood a change in the social order based on justice and equality. He routed for the rights of the labourers to address the inequalities and disparities in society .

Without reorganising the social structure of society , any talk of ending war seemed to him absurd. Universal peace under exploiting societies was unimaginable and hypocritical. Such a society would necessarily be socialistic. He also considered

revolution, like freedom, the birth right of people "Any man who stands for progress has to criticise, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith." It is reason and reason alone which should be made a test to find out what is worthwhile to be preserved in religion. He found faith in God as Almighty, Omnipresent, Omniscient, and Omnipotent as essentially an irrational belief. To Bhagat Singh, the belief in God was the invention of those who wanted to keep the people under their subjection by preaching the existence of a supreme being and then claiming an authority and sanction from him for their privileged positions. However, he accepted the argument that religion has essentially a reactionary role to play as it has always sided with tyrannical and exploiting institutions, men and classes. Originally, the idea of God was invented to give courage to man to face all adversities and also subdue his arrogance and pride. The idea of God is helpful to man in distress. As a realist, Bhagat Singh wanted to get rid of such notions.

Bhagat Singh considered economic independence as the ultimate goal and the first step towards it was political freedom. He asked the revolutionaries to be extremely cautious and balanced in their expectations. He warned them against utopian thinking. Revolution could not be made by emotional and reckless men. What was required was patience, sacrifice and absence of individualism.

Courage, strong will and sustained hard work were to be indispensable qualities for the revolutionaries. He writes,

“I could not find any revolutionary party that had clear ideas as to what they were fighting for, with the exception of the Ghadar Party which, having been inspired by the USA form of government, clearly stated that they wanted to replace the existing government by a Republican form of government. All other parties consisted of men who had but one idea, i.e., to fight against the alien rulers. That idea is quite laudable but cannot be termed a revolutionary idea. We must make it clear that revolution does not merely mean an upheaval or a sanguinary strife. Revolution necessarily implies the programme of systematic reconstruction of society on new and better adapted basis, after complete destruction of the existing state of affairs (i.e., regime).”

In Indian political field, the liberals wanted some reform under the present government, while the extremists demanded more and espoused radical means to achieve the same purpose. The revolutionaries, were inspired by the American, French revolution, Russian revolution, and favoured extreme methods to overthrow colonial rule.

He adds, “At the utmost we can say that war shall have to be retained as an institution for the transitional period. We can easily understand if we take the example of the present-day Russia. There is the dictatorship of the proletariat at present. They want to establish a socialist society. Meanwhile they have to maintain an army to defend themselves against the capitalist society. But the war-aims

would be different. Imperialist designs shall no more actuate our dreamland people to wage wars. There shall be no more war trophies. The revolutionary armies shall march to other lands not to rule down from their thrones but to stop their blood-sucking exploitation and thus to liberate the toiling masses. But, there shall not be the primitive national or racial hatred to goad our men to fight.”

Bhagat Singh knew that the socialist society cannot be brought about by violent means, but that “it should grow and evolve from within”. The author suggests education as the only weapon to be employed. The capitalist governments do not want to educate the masses as they may start questioning the government, and it will become difficult for those in power to suppress their valid demands. According to him, the revolutionaries were striving to capture power to organize a revolutionary government which should employ all its resources for mass education, as was being done in Russia. After capturing power, peaceful methods were to be employed for constructive work, and force would be employed to crush any obstacles.

Questions :

- 1) Criticism and independent thinking were considered by Bhagat Singh to be the most important qualities for a revolutionary. Discuss.
- 2) Bhagat Singh accepted the argument that religion was basically a reactionary force because it always sided with the tyrannical and exploiting classes and institutions. Discuss
- 3) What are Bhagat Singh's views on war?
- 4) Why did the revolutionaries want to capture power ?