



Historical study of contribution of Barhath family in the struggle for Indian independence

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Abstract

Since time being history is studied from various approaches and point of views, In general Indian history is mainly written from the point of views of Marxist and nationalist historians. In the bright light of these views, there are various sections of societies, families, individuals etc whose contribution in Indian history went unnoticed. Here comes the role of subaltern approach which tried to fill this gap by studying the history of masses, With its limitations it also failed to holistically cover the contribution of all heroes of history in nation building. The Barhath family from Shahpura, Rajasthan is also such an example whose unparalleled contribution in the struggle for Indian independence from mighty British empire is per se missing from mainstream history writing, Today we are enjoying freedom, talking about fundamental rights and constitutionalism but if we pause a little and reflect back in time we will soon realise that this could have not been possible without the sacrifices made by our freedom struggle heroes, revolutionaries and politicians, The need to remember their sacrifices is of paramount importance but mainstream history writing is unable to give right place to some of these revolutionaries who sacrificed their whole family in the Yajna of Indian independence. The Barhath family originally from Shahpura Bhilawara, Rajasthan were the Jagirdar of the Riyasat and enjoying all the luxuries of the time, Thakur Kesari Singh Barhath's father Shri Krishna Singh Barhath was a close aid of Maharana of Mewar. Kesari Singh himself served high positions in the state of Mewar and he was among the main advisors of Maharana Fateh Singh, He also served as the president of ethnography department of the state of Kota, Kesari Singh's grit for freedom, swaraj, swadesh, swadharm was such that he sacrificed all these for his values, Kesari Singh, his brother Jorawar Singh Barhath, his son Pratapsingh Barhath and son in law Ishwardan Aashiya all participated in revolutionary activities against British rule, Kesari Singh was pioneer in organising revolutionary movement in Rajputana, He established organisation like Veer Bharat Sabha on the lines of Abhinav Bharat, He propagated ideas of independence through journals like Rajasthan Kesari and strengthened the revolutionary activities in Rajasthan with Arjunlal Sethi, Ramnarayan Chaudhary, Rao Gopal Singh Kharva etc, Kesari Singh was also engaged in social reforms, He was a highly intellectual person with high degree of literary, political and economic understanding, His economic views exposed the exploitative nature of British rule which reflects from his words –

“People are machines to print money and government is a tool to acquire that money”

His son Kunwar Pratapsingh Barhath was a close aid of Ras Bihari Bose, Sachindra Sanyal etc in the revolutionary movement. Pratapsingh and his uncle Jorawar Singh Barhath were involved in throwing bomb on viceroy Lord Hardings in Chandani Chowk Delhi in 1912, Hence it becomes essential to study the contribution of this family in detail.

Keywords: Kesari Singh Barhath, revolutionary movement, freedom struggle, Independence

Introduction

In historiography it is said that history is written by winners. In consonance with this view and apposite to it evolves various approaches to study history. These approaches such as nationalist, Marxist, colonial history, subaltern history etc try to cover holistically the history of India, But there are some sections whose rightful place in history writing went unnoticed. Rajasthan is full of such examples, Especially during freedom struggle Rajasthan, the contemporary Rajputana was centre of revolutionary activities, political movement, tribal revolt, peasant movement etc and contributed their share in the freedom for Indian independence, But it is unlikely that this part of the freedom moment is hidden in the mainstream history. Barhath family sacrificed whole family in this struggle, This research paper on Barhath family will unfold various layers of hidden history of sacrifices and will bring forth their contribution to the mainstream. In the Amrit Mahotsav of Aajadi it is our duty to bring the contribution of lost heroes to the light and to help increase the nation's consciousness about patriotism. In the history of Indian independence this a unique example where whole family sacrificed their lives in the

Rajsubayagya of freedom struggle. Their unparalleled patriotism reflects in letter of Kesari Singh to his daughter – “You will be happy to know that in the important region of our country the freedom struggle started from our family. Our sacrifices in this Rajsubayagya became pious and sacred”

In this research I will try to throw light on the literary, political, social contribution of Kesari Singh Barhath, contribution of Pratap Singh Barhath and Jorawar Singh Barhath in the revolutionary movement during 1st half of the twentieth century.

Introduction of Barhath family

The Barhath family is from Sauda Barhath clan of Charan community. Originally their ancestors were from Gujarat. One of their forefathers Baruji helped Rana Hammir in the conquest of Chitore, Rana Hammir gave Jagir to Baruji and from thereon history and glory of Barhath family started, One of their ancestors Barhath Naruji fought Aurangzeb's force while protecting Jagdish temple in 1680 and gave up his life in this endeavour. We can see that glory, valour and patriotism was in blood of this family and lineage was carried forward by the Barhath trio (Kesari Singh Barhath,

Jorawarsingh barhath and Pratapsingh Barhath) during freedom struggle. Kesarisingh's father and Pratapsingh's grandfather shri Krishna singh Barhath was a learned person who got his education from renowned poet Kaviraja Shyamaldas Dhadhadiya. He wrote a book 'Rajputana Ka Apurva Itihas' on glorious history of Rajasthan. The Barhath trio always followed the values of their family and contributed uniquely and unparallelly in the endeavour of indian independence

Contribution of Kesari Singh Barhath

Born in 1872, Kesari Singh was son of Krishna Singh and Bakhtawar Bai, He took his formal education under the guidance of his father from Gopinath Ji Shashtri in Charan Pathsala Udaipur, He was influenced heavily by Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati since childhood. Maharishi Dayanand's words "You should become Charan not by your caste but by your deeds" during his visit to Charan Pathsala had long lasting impact on the teenage mind of Kesari Singh and he started following his family values through his deeds, After his formal education, Kesari Singh became main advisor of Udaipur Maharana Fateh Singh, Through his knowledge and oratory skill he inculcated values of patriotism and swaraj in Maharana and other Riyasatdars, Kesari Singh's persona has elements of freedom fighter, poet and social reformer. Due to his fiery spirit and commitment to the cause of Indian independence, he emerged as a key figure in the revolutionary movement of Rajasthan during British colonial period. His sharp writings and political activism not only inspired the youth of Rajasthan but also made significant contributions to India's broader freedom struggle.

Kesari Singh's contribution to India's freedom struggle can be seen on multiple fronts, from revolutionary and political activities to cultural awakening. He founded 'Veer Bharat Sabha' a revolutionary organisation and co-founded Rajasthan Seva Sangh and Rajputana Madhya Bharat Sabha, Through these organisations he organised political and revolutionary activities.

His notable contribution was dissuading Maharana Fateh Singh of Udaipur from attending viceroy Lord Kurzen's Delhi Darbar in 1903, He sent his renowned Dingal poetic work 'Chetawani Ra Chungatiya' to the Maharana during his journey to Delhi, After reading these couplets, Maharana decided not to attend the Darbar, Here is an example of one couplet –

पग पग भम्या पहाड़, धरा छाड़ राख्यो धरम ।
(इंशू) महाराणा र मेवाड़, हिरदै बशिया हिंदरै ।।

(Roamed into wilderness on foots, saved Dharma by leaving home, that is why Mewar and Maharana two words imprinted in the heart of Hindustan)

Kesari Singh was pioneer in raising funds for revolutionary activities and involved in smuggling arms and providing shelter to revolutionaries. He was closely connected with revolutionaries such as Ras Bihari Bose, Sachin Sanyal ect. Due to their activities Kesari Singh, Arjunlal Sethi and Gopal Singh kharwa were on the radar of British intelligence agencies, The British government made Kesari Singh culprit in Mahant Pyarelal murder case and sentenced him with life imprisonment. He was sent to Hazaribagh jail in Bihar and his Jagir was confiscated by the Shahpura estate,

From literary point of view he translated Mazini's biography in hindi, He also translated Budhacharita by Ashvaghosa in hindi, His verses carried potent messages of patriotism, sacrifice and moral duty, His writings were effective tool of mass mobilisation.

During world war 1 in 1914, He prepared for armed revolution by sending a parcel of cartridges to insurgents in Banaras and contacting soldiers in the princely state and the British army,

In 1920-21, after releasing from jail, he moved to Wardha at the invitation of Seth Jamanlal Bajaj, A weekly newspaper named for him (Rajasthan Kesari) was edited by Vijay Singh Pathik and he had contact with Mahatma Gandhi. He was actively engaged in the political movement thereafter and advocated for self government on the lines of parliamentary system, In 1941 his soul found its place in heaven fighting the mighty British.

Contribution of Jorawar Singh Barhath

Thakur Zorawar Singh Barhath was born in 1883 in Devpura (Shahpura estate) to father Thakur Krishna Singh Barhath and Shringar Bai, He received his education in Jodhpur and his childhood was spent in close company of the aristocratic families of Shahpura, Udaipur and Jodhpur. He served Marwar royal court as manager of the Maharani of Jodhpur. In Jodhpur he met Bhai Balmukund. Due to encouragement by his elder brother Kesari Singh he joined revolutionaries in Delhi accompanied by Master Amir Chand and Ras Bihari Bose,

He was among the main accused in Delhi conspiracy case, 1913 in which they threw bomb on Lord Hardinge, the Governor General of British India during royal procession, The plot for assassination of Lord Hardinge was hatched by Ras Bihari Bose and Thakur Kesari Singh and the responsibility of throwing bomb was given to Zorawar Singh and his associates, On 23 December 1912 zorawar Singh and Pratapsingh went to the roof of the Marwari College building in chandani chowk, from there they threw a bomb directed at Hardinge in which a bodyguard was died on the spot and Hardinge suffered injuries,

According to prof. Chintamani shukla—"Chotelal and Pratapsingh told that the bomb was thrown by zorawar Singh", Ramnarayan Chaudhary in his letter to Shankar shahayji shakshena told that –

"My classmate and friend Chotelal was accused in lord Harding bomb case, And chotelal told him that the bomb was actually thrown by Zorawar Singh"

Arjunlal Sethi also told his friend Keshavchandra that "Ras Bihari Bose told him that four revolutionary were involved in throwing bomb at Hardinge, he himself, Basant kumar vishwash, zorawar Singh, Zorawar Singh actually threw the bomb,

After the Delhi conspiracy case, revolutionaries led by Zorawar Singh committed many dacoities in the United Provinces and Bihar to obtain funds, Among these the Arrah conspiracy or Nimej murder case was famous, in which Singh was the principal accused, On 20 March 1913 Zorawar Singh along with his aids Motichand, Jaichand and Manikchand killed Mahant Bhagwandas and his servant Banshidhar, Manichand became witness for the government and on the basis of his evidence Motichand was sentenced with death penalty but Zorawar Singh fled and never captured by the British police, The sedition committee

report 1917 in its chapter ““revolutionary crime in Bihar and Orissa”” has detailed description about Zorawar Singh’s role in revolutionary activities and Nimej murder, After fleeing British police radar he spent almost 3 decades in the guise of a sage and changed his name to Sadhu Amardas Bairagi.

Contribution of Pratap Singh Barhath

Kunwar Pratap Singh Barhath was born in 1893 to father Thakur Kesari Singh, He completed his education at Herbert High School Kota and later at DAV high school Ajmer, His father Kesari Singh was a supporter of nationalist education therefore, he was sent to Arjunlal Sethi who ran ‘Vardhaman Pathshala ‘in Jaipur which secretly gave training in revolutionary activities Later he was sent to Delhi to Master Amirchand and introduced to Ras Bihari Bose, He was trained by Mater Amirchand in revolutionary activities and given responsibility for the Revolutionary Party in Rajasthan, Pratapsingh became trustworthy and right hand man of Bose and inducted in revolutionary party He had a leading part in revolutionary projects in Delhi, United Province and Rajasthan.

He along with his uncle Zorawar Singh and Ras Bihari Bose had main role in the plot of bombing Lord Hardinge’s procession in 1912 and was arrested along with Ishwardan Ashiya but subsequently released due to lack of evidence, Ras Bihari Bose in a article named “Me Japan kaise Gaya” wrote about Pratapsingh—”when we were at Nabadwip, Bengal many brother visited us among them I would like to talk about Pratapsingh, when I saw Pratap first time his eyes were burning with fire, He was lion by nature, His father, uncle, grandfather all sacrificed themselves for country”

Sachindra nath Sanyal in Bandi Jeevan wrote a whole chapter on Pratap Singh. some excerpts from this book about him are –

“Pratap, even after a very bad condition of his family contributed immensely in the revolution, In his heart there was no any guilt or hesitation, In the dire situation, he was finding solace and pleasure in completing his father’s assigned task,”

After arrest of his father Kesari Singh the leadership fell onto his shoulders. He took the responsibility to assassinate Sir Reginald Craddock with the collaboration of dissident soldiers of the British Indian Army, The murder was supposed to signal that garrisons of Indian army were also part of the revolution. But unfortunately Craddock did not appear at the planned location and they had to called off the plan

Due to world war 1, the revolutionary party found the perfect time to start armed rebellion and chose 21 February 1915 as the date to start rebellion from Banaras, Pratap Singh was given the charge of Rajasthan to contact military cantonments and collect large amount of guns and other armaments. But the British government came to know about the plan, this information did not reach to Sachin Sanyal and other revolutionaries and they were caught by the already prepared British police, Pratapsingh fled to Hyderabad in Sindh and spent his time in disguise, But after request from fellow revolutionaries he was coming to Rajasthan to take the leadership role but was caught at Ashanada railway station, Jodhpur and booked by police under Benaras conspiracy case,

He was tortured inhumanely by authorities to know the whereabouts of other revolutionaries. He was also lured with high positions in government and condoning the twenty years rigorous imprisonment of his father. Pratap did not budge an inch and refused to betray the revolutionaries. He remained unrepentant, was tortured further and as a result died on 24 may 1918 aged 25.

Archibold Cleveland, the British intelligence officer who tortured Pratap wrote about him that “I have never seen a brave and intelligent person like Pratapsingh, we left no stone unturned to torture him but he did not budge an inch, Eventually he won and we all lost”

Conclusion

The Barhath family stands as a shining example of unwavering patriotism, sacrifices and revolutionary zeal in India’s freedom struggle. Through the fearless poetry of Kesari Singh Barhath, the covert operations of Kunwar Pratap Singh Barhath and the collective efforts of their kin, the family became a symbol of resistance against British colonialism. Their actions not only ignited nationalist fervor in Rajasthan but also connected with broader revolutionary movements across India, Despite facing arrest, torture and personal loss, the Barhaths remained resolute in their mission to liberate the nation. Their legacy serves as a poignant reminder of the contribution of unsung heroes whose courage and ideas paved the way for India’s independence, inspiring future generations to uphold the values of freedom and justice.

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