

Bhagath Singh



One evening a boy of three was out for a walk with his father. There was also an elderly man with the father. Chatting they walked on and went beyond the village. Green crop delighted the eyes. The elders were walking along the edge of a field. Not hearing the footsteps of the boy, the father looked back. The boy was sitting on the ground and seemed to be planting some thing. The father became curious.

"What are you doing?" said he.

"Look, father, I shall grow guns all over the field" was the innocent reply of the boy. His eyes shone with the strong faith that guns would grow in the field. Both the elders were struck with wonder at the little boy's words.

The boy was Bhagat Singh who later fought like a hero for India's freedom and sacrificed his life.

Banga was a village in Layalpura district of Punjab province. A brave man, Sardar Kishan Singh by name, lived there. Vidya vati was his wife. Kishan Singh's family was noted for bravery and love of adventure. Many heroes of his family had fought to free India from the British. Such fighters are called revolutionaries. Kishan Singh too was

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a revolutionary. His younger brothers, Ajit Singh and Swaran Singh, too, had fought to drive the British out of India. Kishan Singh, Ajit Singh and Swaran Singh had all been sent to prison by the Government.

In those days such a revolution had spread all over the country. People were full of determination to win freedom. It was at such a time that Bhagat Singh was born (on September 28, 1907). He was the third son of Sardar Kishan Singh and Vidyavati. At the same time, Kishan Singh and the Uncle Swaran Singh were freed from the jail. It was learnt that another uncle of his, Ajit Singh, too, would be freed. As he thus brought good fortune to his family the child was named Bhagat Singh. 'Bhagat Singh' means 'the fortunate'.

Bhagat was a lovely child. His smile was charming. People used to say that he would become very famous.

His mother Vidyavati's life had been full of sorrow right from the beginning. The revolutionary husband would always be away. Always lurking in Vidyavati's mind was the fear that he might at any time be sent to jail. It was a family of fighters for freedom and one or the other would always be in jail. Vidyavati herself had to look after the affairs of the family. At such anxious times, her children were her only comfort. They were intelligent and brave and this made her forget her misery. Bhagat Singh was her favorite.

Bhagat Singh was admitted to the primary school. From his childhood he was highly interested in studies. He was ahead of the others in his class. He used to write a beautiful hand. He was the favorite pupil of his teachers. Very much liked by his classmates, he

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was their leader. Big boys used to carry Bhagat Singh on their shoulders to the school and back home. His childhood itself indicated that later he would become a leader of revolutionaries.

Bhagat Singh easily made friends with one and all. His companions were naturally his friends. But cartmen and coolies, and the very men who swept the streets were his friends.

Once clothes had to be stitched Bhagat Singh. The old tailors who stitched clothes delivered them at the house and went away. "Who is that who brought the clothes?" asked mother, Vidyavati.

"My friend," replied Bhagat Singh.

"What! Is the tailor, too, your friend?"

Vidyavati asked, surprised.

"Yes, every one in the village is my friend" was Bhagat Singh's reply.

Thus the ability to win the hearts of men grew in Bhagat Singh right from his childhood.

Bhagat Singh had two uncles. Of them, Swaran Singh had again been sent to prison by the British. Life in prison was wretched and he fell ill. His health did not improve even after his release and he died. When Ajit Singh came out of the jail, he left the country. Bhagat Singh's aunts would often recall their husbands' misery, and lament over it. Seeing this, Bhagat Singh would bravely say, "Don't weep, aunt. When I grow up, I will drive out the British and bring back my uncle. I will take revenge upon the British who are the cause for my uncle's illness." On hearing the heroic words of the little boy, the

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weeping women would burst into laughter. At least for the moment they would forget their sorrow.

When he was in the fourth class, Bhagat Singh asked his classmates, "What do you wish to become when you grow up?"

Each boy gave a different answer. "I intend becoming a doctor," said one. Another said, "I will be a government officer." Still another would become a merchant; while another 'would marry'. Bhagat Singh remarked, "Is marriage a big achievement? Anybody can marry. On the other hand, I will drive the British out of India."

Thus patriotism flowed in his veins from the days of his childhood.

By the time he completed his secondary education, Bhagat Singh knew everything about the revolutionaries of his family. He had read all the records about them at home. And the desire to fight for the country's freedom grew strong in him.

Bhagat Singh finished his primary education at Banga. Next he went to Lahore to join a secondary school. The patriot Kishan Singh did not want to admit his son to a school run by the followers of the British. So Bhagat Singh continued his studies in a private school.

Bhagat Singh was a village boy. His father was afraid he would lag behind in his studies. So he engaged a teacher to teach him at home. But within two days the teacher saw how intelligent the boy was. "What can I teach this boy? He has already learnt everything," said the teacher to Kishan Singh.

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Bhagat Singh took to his studies with great zeal. His teachers wondered at his intelligence. He scored good marks in subjects like history, geography and arithmetic. But he had a bad score in English - 68 out of 150! It must have been because he had always hated the British! His words in his letter to his grandfather are really interesting: "My score in English is 68 out of 150.

A score of 50 is enough for a pass. Thus I have passed with credit." That was how the clever boy stated his low score in a round about manner.

It was the year 1919. A very tragic event happened in India that year. British soldiers opened fire on a gathering in Jallianwala Bagh, and kept up the fire for quite some time. There was no way of escape for the people. Countless persons - grown-up men, women and little children - fell down dead. Blood flowed like a stream. The event caused terror and anger in the minds of people all over the country. The tragedy drew the attention of the entire world.

Bhagat Singh was then twelve years old; his mind was deeply disturbed by this event. The next day he did not return home after the school hours. His people at home waited and waited and grew anxious.

Instead of going to school, Bhagat Singh went straight to the place of the tragedy. Somehow managing to push through the police on guard, he went in. He collected a bottle of mud wet with the blood of Indians and returned home. Seeing that he was late, his younger sister said, "Where were you all this time? Mother has been waiting to give you something to eat." But Bhagat Singh was not at all thinking

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of food. Showing the bottle in his hand, he said, "Look here. This is the blood of our people killed by the British. Salute this."

Then he put the bottle in a niche and worshipped it with flowers.

The people who had assembled in Jallianwala Bagh carried no weapons. Nor was there a way to escape from the place. And these people were killed by the British bullets! Such were the thoughts working in the mind of Bhagat Singh. The feeling that somehow the British must be driven out of India became firmer.

"That was the time when the Indian National Congress was fighting for the country's freedom. It awakened the people's love for their country and was uniting the people. Even before entering the ninth class, Bhagat Singh decided to take up this work. He was only thirteen.

Bhagat Singh told his father of his decision and asked for his permission. Himself a revolutionary, Kishan Singh willingly gave his consent. Bhagat Singh left the school and joined the movement.

At that time, there was a powerful anti-foreign cloth movement in the country. If foreign cloth is bought, other countries are benefited. In order to end this, we have to wear cloth made in our country. Foreign cloth must be burnt - so the leaders taught. Bhagat Singh took part in this movement with zeal. Right from his early days, he used to wear only Khadi. With what zeal he helped the cause of homemade cloth and burnt foreign cloth! Every week he would collect foreign clothes, heap them up and burn them.

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In 1922, the Congress organized a procession in the town of Chauri chaura in Gorakhpur District. Then some rogues locked up twenty-two policemen together in a house, set fire to the house and burnt them. Before this, similar acts of violence had occurred even in Bombay and Madras. Mahatma Gandhi felt very sad at all this. He asked the people to end the non-cooperation movement which was then going on in the country.

That was a great disappointment to young Bhagat Singh, a lad of fifteen. Should an important movement be given up, just because 22 persons died? Before that, a nineteen-year-old revolutionary by name Kartar Singh had been hanged by the British Government. Then none of these supporters of nonviolence raised any objection. How could nonviolence become so important now? Such thoughts weakened Bhagat Singh's faith in non-violence and non-cooperation movements. He went on firmly believing that armed revolution was the only practical way of winning freedom.

He made a deep study of the lives of the revolutionaries of Ireland, Italy and Russia. The more he read, the deeper grew his belief that war alone could bring freedom. The youth of the land should be inspired to turn to revolution. The very thought of fighting for freedom should thrill the young men. So thinking, Bhagat Singh began to organize the youth.

To continue his studies, Bhagat Singh joined the National College. This college had been started by great patriots like Lala Lajpat Ray. Though he had not been to school for some years, Bhagat Singh had a good knowledge of history and politics. The

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Principal was astonished and permitted him to join the college straight away.

During the day he would listen to the lessons in the class. In the evening he would collect several friends and discuss the coming revolution. This became his daily routine.

At college, Bhagat Singh took part in several plays. A teacher who saw him in the leading roles in 'Rana Pratap', 'Samrat Chandragupta' and 'Bharata-durdasha' remarked, "This boy will become a great man."

Bhagat Singh did not confine himself to the study of books. The more he learnt about revolution, the greater grew his desire to participate in it. Bengal, the home of revolution, caught his attention. He established contact with the revolutionary party of the province. The leader of the party was Sachindranath Sanyal. Every member of the party had to accept one condition. At the call of its leader, he had to be ready to quit home and join him. Bhagat Singh agreed.

Bhagat Singh's grandmother insisted that he should get married. So a girl was chosen. A day was fixed for the formal decision.

The day was fast approaching. But just then the leader of the revolution called him. Bhagat Singh left home and went to Lahore.

For sometime thereafter, nobody knew where he went.

Before leaving home, Bhagat Singh wrote a letter; he said, "The aim of my life is to fight for India's freedom. I don't wish for worldly pleasures. At the time of my Upanayanam (the initiation ceremony

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among the Hindus), my uncle had taken a sacred promise from me; I promised to sacrifice myself for the sake of the country. Accordingly I am now giving up my own happiness and going out to serve the country."

Bhagat Singh reached Kanpur. First he earned his bread there by selling news papers. Then he came to know a revolutionary by name Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi. He got a job in the office of his periodical 'The Pratap'. And he also learnt his first lessons as a revolutionary. Revolutionaries generally change their names so that people may not know them Bhagat Singh became Balawant Singh.

At home Bhagat Singh's parents were much worried about their son. His grandmother, then seriously ill, was very eager to see her grandson. His people searched for him and brought him back.

Even at home, Bhagat Singh could not sit idle. At that time the Akali Dal arranged a procession. But in order to prevent it, the District Collector Dil Bagh Singh issued an order: Nobody should supply either food or drink to the members of the Akali Dal.

The Collector who issued the order belonged to Bhagat Singh's family. But being a government officer, he hated the revolutionaries.

Bhagat Singh thought of helping the Akali Dal people visiting his village. He explained the situation to the villagers and arranged to supply food secretly to the Akali Dal people at night. Thus a week passed. The Dal's program went on continuously and successfully. Throughout the day, there used to be talks on the country's freedom and the duty of the people. Bhagat Singh also used to speak.

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The Collector grew angry that the people had helped the Dal against his orders; He issued a warrant to arrest Bhagat Singh. Then Bhagat Singh was only seventeen. So he was a minor and could not be arrested.

The Collector grew angrier. "Bhagat Singh may be too young but his brain is not too young!" he grumbled.

Bhagat Singh was a fountain of zeal. His village was too small for his activities. He went to Lahore. There a union of revolutionaries by name 'Naujavan Bharat Sabha' was founded. Bhagat Singh became the Secretary.

Like the Kranti Dal in Bengal, the new union started teaching lessons of revolution to the people of Punjab. Outwardly its objects were to spread Indian culture, to make the youth strong and so on. But the real purpose was to bring about a revolution for the country's freedom.

Within a few days, it started branches in different places. The celebration of the birthdays of revolutionaries became an important part of the program of the union. The members would take out pictures of revolutionaries, decorated with Khadi garlands, in processions. They would cut their fingers and put a mark of blood on the foreheads of the heroes in the pictures. They would lecture about them. It was in these days that Bhagat Singh gained good practice in public speaking. Within a few days he became a good speaker. He got into touch with the students' unions of colleges. He spread the message of revolution everywhere.

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By this time, Bhaaat Singh had caught the eye of the police. His movements were carefully watched by spies.

Once, as he was just leaving the train at Amritsar, the spies followed Bhagat Singh. Trying to escape from them, he began to run. But where ever he went he could not escape. At last he rushed into a lawyer's house and escaped from the police. Then he traveled to Lahore. When the train reached Lahore, he was caught by the police and pushed into the Lahore Fort Jail.

Bhagat Singh did not know why he was arrested. A few days earlier some rogues had thrown a bomb on procession during the Dussara Festival. It killed some people. The police suspected the hand of revolutionaries in it. That was why they arrested Bhagat Singh and pushed him into jail. To find out the secrets of other revolutionaries, they tortured him in many ways. They flogged him with a knot and gored with a spear. But Bhagat Singh did not open his mouth.

Finally, a Magistrate decided that Bhagat Singh could be released only on a bail of sixty thousand rupees who would be prepared to bear such a responsibility? Yet, out of sheer affection for Bhagat Singh, two rich persons came forward. They were Dunechand and Daulatram. On their surety, Bhagat Singh was set free.

If Bhagat Singh participated in revolutionary activities during the period of bail, the two wealthy men would have to pay sixty thousand rupees to the Government. Bhagat Singh did not wish that others should be troubled on his account. That was why he decided to keep

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quiet during the period of bail. At this time his father built a cowshed in his native place, so that Bhagat Singh could run a small dairy. Bhagat Singh took up that work in earnest.

Every day he got up at four. Then he fed the cows, removed the cowdung and cleaned the shed. Next he milked the cows and sold the milk. It was all systematic, and tidily done. Whatever he undertook Bhagat Singh did a good job.

The entire day he was busy with his dairy, but the night brought thoughts of revolution. He joined his friends for discussions. At the same time, he got into touch with the newspapers, 'Kirtee' and 'Akalee'. He wrote articles for them. A journal brought out a special issue to honor fighters who had been hanged; Bhagat Singh himself introduced some of the revolutionaries.

The Dussara Bomb case involving Bhagat Singh was still going on. At last he was released. He was not even on bail. At once Bhagat Singh closed the milk center. He returned to work for the revolution. After attending a meeting of revolutionaries in Delhi in 1928, he never returned home.

In Delhi, Chandrasekhar Azad, a young revolutionary, was introduced to Bhagat Singh. It was as if fire and wind were united. The activities of the revolutionaries gained new strength. Bhagat Singh removed his beard and had a closer crop, so that the police might not recognize him. All these days he had been a hero of the Sikhs; he now became a national hero.

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There was a revolutionary party called the 'Hindustan Prajatantra Sangha' (The Indian Republic Party). The name was changed to 'Hindustan Samajvadi Prajatantra Sangha' (The Indian Socialist Republican Party). Its aim was to establish a republic in India by means of an armed revolution.

When a bomb is thrown to the ground, it explodes causing a deafening sound, and destroys everything near-by. The revolutionaries needed any number of bombs to drive out the British. But where could they get them? Bhagat Singh went to Calcutta to learn to make bombs. There he bought as many bombs as he needed. He also learnt from Jatindranath Das, a revolutionary, how to make bombs.

The revolutionaries set up a factory secretly at Agra to make bombs. But how could they get the money they needed? Sometimes for three days together they lived only on a cup of tea. They did not have beds or rugs though it was biting cold. They were starving. And all the while the thought of the police plagued them. In the midst of all this they went on with their sacred work. And, for money they would sometimes loot government offices.

At last they could make bombs. The bombs were tested at Jhansi Fort. The test was a success.

In February 1928, a committee from England visited India. It came to be known as the Simon Commission. The purpose of its visit was to decide how much freedom and responsibility could be given to the people of India. But there was no Indian on the committee. Naturally Indians were very angry. They decided to make it

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impossible for the Commission to work. They decided to drive it back to England. Wherever the committee went, people protested with black flags, shouting "Simon, go back."

When the Simon Commission reached Lahore in October, it had to face a big procession opposed to it. 'Naujawan Bharat Sabha' arranged the procession. Thousands of people took part in it. Its leader was the elderly patriot, Lala Lajpat Ray. Trouble started near the railway station itself. The revolutionaries did not allow the Simon Commission to proceed. The police could not protect the members. By that time, the Police Superintendent, one Scott by name, ordered a lathi charge. The police began to beat people with heavy sticks. People started running. But Lajpat Ray and his companions did not move.

A police officer by name Saunders rushed forward and hit Lajpat Ray on the chest. It was a powerful blow. Lajpat Ray was old and he was ill. The blow brought him death. He suffered for a month and died.

In his death, the revolutionaries suffered a heavy loss. They decided that they should take revenge and that they should kill Scott who ordered the lathi-charge. They thought of a plan. A revolutionary by name Jayagopal was to observe Scott's movements. Bhagat Singh and Rajguru were to shoot him. They had to plan carefully their escape. So much was planned under the leadership of Chandrasekhara Azad.

But in the beginning itself, a small mistake was committed. Jayagopal mistook Saunders for Scott.

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The appointed day came. That evening Saunders came out of the police station and got on his motor bicycle. Jayagopal who was behind made a sign. Bhagat Singh and Rajguru were waiting on the way. As the motor bicycle neared Rajguru shot at Saunders from his pistol. At once Bhagat Singh also fired. A bullet struck the chest of the man who had struck Lajpat Ray's chest with a heavy stick; Saunders fell down dead. Bhagat Singh and Rajguru ran away. The police chased them. Both of them rushed into a lodge nearby. Then they escaped from the place.

The whole city was filled with the news of Saunders' murder. The police spies began a search for the murderers all over the city.

Next day posters appeared on the walls in all the streets of Lahore. They declared, "Lala Lajpat Ray's death is avenged. Saunders has been murdered." Besides, there were some words of caution addressed to the Government. The posters also contained the name of The Hindustan Samajvadi Prajatantra Sena (The Indian Socialist Republican Army) in red letters. So every one could know who were behind the murder of Saunders, The people's respect for the Kranti Dal grew. Saunders' murder shook the British Government.

Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Chandra sekhara Azad all three escaped from Lahore. Bhagat Singh dressed himself as a foreign youth and wore a hat. Durga Bhabhi, the wife of a revolutionary by name Bhagavaticharan, and their child followed Bhagat Singh, so that people would think they were Bhagat Singh's wife and child. These three traveled by train in a first class compartment. Rajguru left the place disguised as an ordinary worker. Azad traveled as a pundit

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(scholar). The railway station was filled with eagle-eyed spies; but all the three went away.

The police searched and searched for Bhagat Singh and Rajguru, but could not find them. Three months passed.

In April 1929, the Central Legislative Assembly met in Delhi. The British Government wanted to place before the Assembly two bills which were likely to harm the country's interests. Even if the Assembly rejected them, the Viceroy could use his special powers and approve them, and they would become laws. The Hindustan Samajvadi Prajatantra Sena (The Indian Socialist Republican Army) decided to resist the move.

Of course, the revolutionaries escaped after Saunders' murder. But the people of Lahore were subjected to torture by the police. The Sena decided that such a thing should not happen again. The revolutionaries must oppose the British and court arrest. They must see that the objects of the Prajatantra Sena were explained to the people all over the country. With this object in view, the Sena resolved to send Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt to Delhi. Both of them were to go there, throw a bomb in the Legislative Assembly and, get arrested. For this purpose two harmless bombs were made.

On the 8th of April 1929 the two men took the bombs and entered the Assembly Hall. They sat in the visitors' gallery. The session commenced. The bills were placed before the Assembly by the Government. The members rejected them. In the end, a member of the Government began an announcement that the Viceroy had exercised his special powers. At once, a bomb fell from, above and

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exploded causing a fearful sound. Immediately another bomb fell. There were sounds of shooting, too. The entire hall was filled with smoke. People ran helter skelter. Some were so frightened that they fell down unconscious. By that time, red pamphlets fell from the visitors' gallery. In them, particulars of Prajatantra Sena (the Republican Army) were given and the Government was condemned.

The Hall was filled with the slogan, 'Long Live Revolution!'

The police rushed to the spot. Only Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt were there. They were holding pistols. Afraid of them, the police moved back. But both threw down their pistols and got them handcuffed.

The bombs thrown into the Assembly Hall killed no one. Four or five persons received very minor injuries; that was all.

It was not the revolutionaries' object to kill anybody. The incident drew the attention of the entire world. The Kranti Dal's name became a household word. The British Government trembled.

After the incident, the Government got scent of the factory at Lahore. The Government seized enough material to make seven thousand bombs. Another big factory at Shaharanpur too was discovered by the Government. Within a few days, most of the leaders of the Kranti Dal were arrested. The Government filed a case against them, accusing them of executing the Lahore plot. Bhagat Singh and his companions were kept in prison in Lahore.

The trial of the accused commenced. In those days political prisoners were not treated properly in the jail. They were not given

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proper food. They were made to suffer in every possible way. Bhagat Singh and his companions decided to fight against the wretched conditions. Bhagat Singh was sure of being hanged. But he thought at least the other political prisoners could benefit. All the revolutionaries went on fast. They fasted for two months. Then the Government said it would consider their demands. Some gave up the fast. But Jatin Das did not. He did not listen to anybody. On the 64th day of his fast, he died. Bhagat Singh fasted for thirty-two days thereafter.

The trial of Bhagat Singh and his companions began; it drew the attention of the whole world. The court was heavily guarded by the police. No spectators were allowed inside the court. The prisoners were brought to the court in chains. They used to shout 'Long Live Revolution' and only then enter the court hall.

Bhagat Singh and BatukeshwarDutt stated, "If the deaf are to hear, the sound has to be very loud. When we dropped the bomb, it was not our intention to kill anybody. We have bombed the British Government. The British must quit India and make her free." They also explained the objects of their association. The whole world came to understand their aim and activities because of the press reports.

Finally judgment was given. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were to be hanged; some were to undergo life imprisonment; some were to be kept in jail for five years, some for seven, some for ten years.

Bhagat Singh was to be hanged! When the news spread, the people all over the country were mad with rage. Thousands of

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appeals were sent to the Government, pleading that he should be saved. Several leaders of public life joined in the appeal. But all attempts failed. It was decided to hang them on the 24th of March 1931. Even the members of the prisoners' families were not allowed to meet them. Moreover, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged a day before the appointed day, that is, on March 23rd.

Even on the day of their hanging they were fearless. They were cheerful. They competed with one another to be hanged first. It was decided that first Sukhdev would be hanged and then Bhagat Singh and finally Rajguru. All the three climbed the platform. Kissing the rope, they themselves put it round their neck. They died with the name of Bharat Mata on their lips. Such was the end of the three champions of freedom.

That day no one in the jail touched food. Everyone was in tears. The next day, not knowing that the three prisoners had already been hanged, their relatives came to meet them. But it was all over with them. The dead bodies of the martyrs had been secretly burnt on the bank of the river Sutlej. Getting a clue thousands of people raced to the spot; but only the ashes remained. The people sobbed, with the ashes in their hands.

All over the country tributes were paid to the heroes who fought for freedom and sacrificed their lives. Hundreds of songs were composed and sung about the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh. Even today, the heroic spirit of Bhagat Singh is an unfailing source of inspiration to the youth of the country. His courage, spirit of adventure and patriotism are an example to one and all.

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