

Public resentment over the last rites of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev

Amandeep Singh Sekhon*

(Assistant Professor in History at Punjabi University Guru Kashi College, Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo)

Last rites, of a human dead body, carry special significance in every society. Individualistic phase of the body ends with the death of individual, and the body become a social obligation. Every society has some set norms to dispose off the human dead bodies in a dignified manner. It is a kind of social and religious duty incumbent upon the members of the community to which the individual belonged to before his death. Even those who would have paid no heed to the needs of an individual while he was living, would feel concern for his last rites. Social beliefs like 'after life' and 'rebirth' make the non-performance of these rights loaded with many repercussions. Moreover the desire of a family to bid last adieu to their departed member has a genuine emotional aspect which goes beyond social and religious ones, and falls into the universal category of human rights. A society, a community and a family feels betrayed when any of its members is deprived of last rites by the state power, especially when the state power is alien one.

Similar was the reaction of Indian public towards the manner in which the corpses of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were treated after their hangings on 23rd March 1931. The pain was more acute as the hangings were carried out in utter disregard of thousands of memorials sent to Viceroy and consistent efforts of many national leaders for commutation of sentences to an imprisonment for life. Disregarding, all legal and human conventions the revolutionaries were hanged in the evening, a day before the hanging was legally scheduled. The bodies were not handed over to the families. They were stealthily carried to the banks of Sutlej and burnt. The secret manner in which the act was conducted gave rise to wild claims that bodies were cut to pieces and thrown to the river in half burnt condition.

Earlier, in the day, on 23rd March 1931, the High Court of Lahore had disposed off two writ petitions against carrying out the executions on 24th March. The families of three youths were in the city of Lahore, awaiting for the customary last meeting in the Jail which was fixed on 11 a.m. on that day. Rai Bahadur Badri Das, who appeared on behalf of Kultar Singh, the younger brother of Bhagat Singh, while moving writ petition on 21st March 1931 to High Court, mentioned the apprehension that three condemned prisoners would be executed on 23rd March as the last interview allowed to their relatives was fixed at 11 a.m. on that day.¹

The families of all the three revolutionaries reached the gates of Central Jail Lahore, on the morning of 23rd March for the last meetings. The Jail officials did not allow the grandfather of Bhagat Singh as well as his aunts to meet him, on the pretext that they were second and third degree relatives, and only first degree relatives are to

¹ A.G. Noorani, *The Trial of Bhagat Singh Politics of Justice*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996, P-224

be allowed meeting. As a protest, Bhagat Singh's family declined the meeting. In solidarity to Bhagat Singh's family the mother of Rajguru Parbati Devi, who came all the way from Poona for this purpose, and Ralli Devi the mother of Sukhdev, too refused to meet their sons.² The returning back of families from the gates of jail took the form of a procession as people gathered around them on their way back to Lahore. A public meeting was held at Mori Gate. It was here that Bhagat Singh's younger brother Kultar Singh broke the news to Sardar Kishen Singh, which he had learnt from the office of Milap, that Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were being taken towards gallows. The people gathered on the gates of Lahore Central Jail but no one opened the gates.³ The news of hangings was kept a guarded secret. Lala Chint Ram Thapar, uncle of Sukhdev, told the Congress Enquiry Committee⁴, that on the afternoon of 23rd March 1931, he enquired from the Deputy Superintendent of Central Jail about the timing of executions next day but was not given a definite answer. He got to know at a public meeting that they had been executed on 7.45 P.M. on the same day. The noise of slogans was coming from the Central Jail since about 7 O'clock in the evening. Achint Ram, Kishen Sing, Santanam and many other people gathered on the main gate of jail at about 8:15 P.M., but were not allowed to enter. They made many rounds to the residences of various jail officers but got no information about the happenings in the jail. At about 1:00 A.M. the information was officially made public by District Magistrate that Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev had been hanged and their corpses had been burnt by the police on the banks of Sutlej. A reliable source told Lala Achint Ram that the corpses were cut to pieces in the jail itself and were carried away by police party through a backdoor, used generally to carry out the jail garbage.⁵

The public of Lahore followed the trail of police party and reached the spot where the bodies were burnt. The police party fled and the people took possession of whatever remains of martyrs they could find. Mrs. Parvati Devi and sister of Bhagat Singh were reported to have recovered the half burnt remains of their bodies from under a broken bridge. The remains were brought to Lahore in a Lorry and a crowd of a hundred thousand protestors marched in processions through the city carrying the ashes and the remains. The processions ended on the banks of Ravi where Lala Lajpat Rai was cremated. S. Kishan Singh father of Bhagat Singh narrated to the gathering the circumstances of the hanging and the manner in which the bodies of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were disposed of by the government.⁶

Next day the Government of Punjab issued a press communiqué, which stated that, "On 23rd March at 8.30 in the night the three bodies were carried in a lorry from Central Jail Lahore. Along with, were two lorries of fuels etc. They also carried police guards. These lorries reached on the banks of Sutlej near Kaiser-i-Hind bridge. One Acharya and a Granthi were present near Gandasinghwala. The bodies were cremated at a quarter to twelve at

² Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich, *Bhagat Singh The Eternal Rebel*, Publication Division, New Delhi, 2007, P-164.

³ Virender Sandhu, *Yug Purush Bhagat Singh Te Uhna De Bazurg*, Bhasha Vibhag Punjab, 1975, P-60

⁴ Instituted to find out the facts about claims and counter claims over last rites of the martyrs.

⁵ *Bhavishya*, 30 April 1931, in *Krantiveer Bhagat Singh 'Abhauday' Aur 'Bhavishya'*, Ed. By Chaman Lal, Lokbharti Paperback, Allahabad, 2017, P- 261

⁶ *Bhavishya* 2 April 1931, in *Krantiveer Bhagat Singh 'Abhauday' Aur 'Bhavishya'*, Ed. By Chaman Lal, Lokbharti Paperback, Allahabad, 2017, P- 217

night and by 4 in the morning the fire extinguished, making the removal of ashes possible. The ashes were collected according to the advise of both the priests and put in a lorry. The lorry carried the ashes to Ferozpur bridge of Lahore and were immersed in the Sutlej at quarter to 6 in the morning. The bodies were burnt completely and no part of them was left behind. The above said Acharya and Granthi had performed all the necessary rituals. The statement that the bodies were cut to pieces before burning is absolutely wrong.”⁷

Probably as a result of this press communiqué majority of news papers and public speakers restrained themselves and avoided direct reporting on the manner of disposing of the mortal remains of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. But the rumors were rife and the details of cremation came out through the reporting of Congress Enquiry Committee, which was instituted to ascertain the truth about the manner of burning of the bodies of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. The newspapers narrated the incident now in the form of the reporting of the proceedings of the Congress Enquiry Committee. The Enquiry Committee visited many places to collect testimonies and evidences. The process of recording the statements was started form 12th April onwards at Lajpat Rai Hall, Lahore. Advocate Prithvichand stated before the Committee that the bodies were burnt near the old bridge and the place smelt of kerosene oil. He also told the Committee that he had got to know that family of Bhagat Singh is in possession of a bone with cut marks. The bone he stated was recovered from the place where bodies were cremated. He stated that he himself had gathered from the same place the stones tainted with blood. Maulvi Shafatulla too confirmed the fact that they had collected the blood stained pebbles on 25th March. He said that the place smelt of kerosene. When the ground was scratched small pieces of bones were recovered from the spot. Parvati Devi and Mrs. Sondhi also disposed before the enquiry committee and stated that they had along with sister of Bhagat Singh and many other women reached the banks of Sutlej where corpses of Bhagat Singh and his comrades were burnt. The place where the bodies were burnt was still warm and soil smelt of kerosene. They recovered small pieces of flesh from the place and one such piece is still with her, claimed Parvati Devi.⁸

The Committee visited Ferozpur on 15th April. They also visited the spot where dead bodies of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukdev were burnt. The place which according to statement of Maulana Shafatulla was initially cordoned with a rope by volunteers, was not found demarcated when the Enquiry Committee visited the spot. The Committee noted in its report that there was no sign of any demarcation as it was destroyed by the police. They so leveled the ground, so that no distinction of the spot could be made out. The Committee on its visit to the spot found three tents of the police with a police party of more than dozen men camping there. Amarnath the president of Naujawan Bharat Sabha showed some bones to the committee, which he claimed were gathered from the spot. S. Labh Singh deposed before the Committee and shared the information that Granthi Natha Singh

⁷ *Bhavishya*, 2 April 1931, in *Krantiveer Bhagat Singh ‘Abhauday’ Aur ‘Bhavishya’*, Ed. By Chaman Lal, Lokbharti Paperback, Allahabad, 2017, P- 218

⁸ *Bhavishya*, 23 April 1931, in *Krantiveer Bhagat Singh ‘Abhauday’ Aur ‘Bhavishya’*, Ed. By Chaman Lal, Lokbharti Paperback, Allahabad, 2017, P- 255-257

had given to him. He narrated that, the Granthi was asked to accompany the police at 7 P.M. on 23rd March, but was not given any information why. He and Acharya Jagannath were brought to the spot of cremation in a lorry. Three canes of Kerosene were also carried in the lorry. Later, 4 lorries arrived from Lahore. The lorries were brought near the old bridge. The priests were told that they had to cremate bodies of two Hindus and a Sikh. They were not told the names of the deceased yet Granthi apprehended that they might be Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. He observed the bodies with help of a torch and found out that they were bleeding from nose and mouth. The police tore away their clothes to bathe them and after wrapping them in a cloth put them on a single pyre. Kerosene was sprinkled on the pyres and Acharya and Granthi were asked to set fire to them. Afterwards they were asked to go and sit in the lorry, where they sat for two and half hours. After this duration water was poured on the pyre and ashes and other remains were collected in blankets and immersed in the river. The priests were sent back to Kasur where they reached about half past five.

The witness also made an observation that the burning of bodies was not according to the Sikh rituals as Granthi was neither given proper time for preparation nor 'Krah Prasad' was prepared. Similar observations made by many other witnesses in front of the Enquiry Committee, indicates that disregard of religious rituals was a major cause of concern among the people, or the witnesses who disposed before the Committee wanted to make an appeal to the religious sentiments of the public so that fuel may be added to the public resentment over the hangings of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. Lala Mukand Lal Advocate of Ferozepur expressed the opinion that it is sacrilegious to burn the bodies at night. All the three corpses were burnt in a single pyre which was not a common practice and use of kerosene was also against the rituals. He also stated that bodies were thrown into water in half burnt state. The reason according to him for this was insufficient use of wood for burning the bodies. Labh Singh also told the Committee that Sikh rituals need ceremony of about one hour before burning of the bodies but that much time was not given to the priests for performing the rituals, nor was Krah Parshad prepared, which was mandatory for last rites of a Sikh. Mani Ram Jain stressed that it need 50 Mann of wood for proper burning of the bodies and it was also required that none but priest and relatives of the deceased should touch the corpses. He also emphasized that according the religious practices the corpses cannot be burnt at night and ashes and residues of the deceased are collected on forth day of cremation and immersed in the holy Ganga⁹ Dr. Bodhraj a local correspondent of The Tribune also deposed before the Enquiry that Natha Singh Granthi had accepted that corpses were burnt with help of Kerosene. Natha Singh was asked to come before the Committee. He came to Ferozpure but later on changed his mind and refused to appear before the Committee.¹⁰

Chint Ram Thapar while deposing before the Committee also observed that the burning of three corpses in one pyre was not proper. He stated that according to rituals only near relatives, could be allowed to give a last bath to

⁹ *Bhavishya*, 23 April 1931, in *Krantiveer Bhagat Singh 'Abhauday' Aur 'Bhavishya'*, Ed. By Chaman Lal, Lokbharti Paperback, Allahabad, 2017, P- 257-259

¹⁰ *Bhavishay*, 23 April 1931, in *Krantiveer Bhagat Singh 'Abhauday' Aur 'Bhavishya'*, Ed. By Chaman Lal, Lokbharti Paperback, Allahabad, 2017, P- 259

the corpses. He lamented that even poorest of poor do not use kerosene to burn dead bodies of their near and dears. He stated that one corpse needs at least 12 Manns of wood for burning and the wood of Cheel is never used to burn the corpses. Which he lamented was used in the cremation of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. He told the president of the Enquiry Committee that a reliable person has told him that the corpses were cut to pieces in the jail itself.¹¹

The happenings of that fateful night also found expression in the newspaper articles and public speeches. Many of such articles were confiscated under section 99-A of Criminal Procedure Code and some writers and public speakers were prosecuted under section 124-A of Indian Penal Code.

Issues of Urdu weekly Tharthal, Lahore, dated 14th, 17th, 20th and 23rd April 1931 were confiscated under section 99-A of Criminal Procedure Code. An article referred from one of those issues targeted Gandhi-Irwin Pact in the following words, “A truce was reached up, but alas, the Indians had to pay dearly for it. Their best loved youths, the fearless youths who had determined to cut asunder the chains of slavery of the motherland and idols of the nation were hanged. This in not all. Their dead bodies were hacked to pieces and burnt with petrol on the banks of the Satluj. Their ashes were washed away lest the Indians should touch them. That is why the youths feel restless and want the Congress to spurn the truce and begin afresh the war of independence according to the resolution of the Lahore Congress.”¹²

An article published in “Swayamnirnya” on 24th March, 1931 stated that “The authorities do not at all appear to have paid attention even to the fact whether Bhagat Singh’s two petitions to the High Court were disposed of or not. From this one thing is proved that from the beginning there was the game of legally murdering Bhagat Singh and others..... After the decision of the High Court there was so much haste to hang (the men) that contrary to the usual practice they hanged (them) the same night without even waiting till the morning. From this it is proved how very anxious Government officials were to hang Bhagat Singh. In hanging Bhagat Singh with such unseemly haste the authorities have made an exhibition of their vileness and meanness of mind. What else it is?”¹³

The Vir Bharat (Lahore) of the 14th April 1931 expressed the sentiments of anguish in the following words, “Every one feels that Sardar Bhagat Singh and his comrades were hanged in a very barbarous manner. If truth must be told the bureaucracy forgot at the moment that it was necessary for the rulers to be human. Its agents murdered Sardar Bhagat Singh like ferocious dacoits. Then there was no difference between them and the murderers who seek the darkness of night to murder innocent people. To hide one sin another sin was committed

¹¹ *Bhavishya*- 30 April 1931, in Krantiveer Bhagat Singh ‘Abhauday’ Aur ‘Bhavishya’, Ed. By Chaman Lal, Lokbharti Paperback, Allahabad, 2017, P- 260-261

¹² National Archives of India, New Delhi, *Home Political, F.No. 106* of year 1932

¹³ National Archives of India, New Delhi, *Home Political, File No 24/3* of the year 1934

and the half-burnt corpses were thrown into the river to hide their sin in water. Are these the doings of a civilized Govt? Are such inhuman deeds lawful in the 20th century?”¹⁴

An article headed “Inqilab Zindabad” by Sri Ajat Satru, published in the “Yuvak” Vol 2, No.4, For May 1931 stated, “Of course it said, that some burnt pieces of flesh in kerosene oil, some pieces of bones and some stains of blood here and there were found.”¹⁵

The pamphlets and books made more direct assertions than newspapers and were full of emotional appeals. A pamphlet in Punjabi, Nara-i-Jung by Syed Hussain Ali, lamented, “Even their bodies were cut to pieces on Sutlej,Bhagat Singh’s mother weeps and says, ‘I have not been able to get the dead body.’ Alas, Alas what a tyranny these firangis have perpetrated.

Qatl-i-Begunah urf Shahidan-i-Watan an Urdu book published by Ram Parshad, book seller of Lahori Gate, Lahore argues that, “It has never been heard that any one sentenced to death has been executed at night..... These three young men were executed secretly at 7 P.M. in a very strange manner and through queer move of the Government.”¹⁶

An Urdu pamphlet entitled “Lutf-i-Shahadat ya Tin Shahid” asked, “O Britain, what hast though gained by dismembering the dead body? Though should have allowed some visible relic of my Sardar to remain.”¹⁷

The public speakers kept on reminding the highhandedness of the government to their audience months after the happenings. Speaking at a public meeting organized under the auspices of Naujwan Bharat Sabha at Gunj Mandi, Rawalpindi, on 25th March 1931, Amolak Ram Sethi, the President of the City Congress Committee said, “Bhagat Singh was not allowed interview with relatives.... Corpses were burnt on the banks of Sutlej by pouring Kerosene. Half burnt pieces of Martyrs were found.”¹⁸

Gopal Singh while delivering a speech at Zamindara Sabha at Village Suaich, in District Lahore on 7th June 1931, “told the audience that he had seen the bones of Bhagat Singh with half burn flash on them, that Bhagat Singh had been burnt without due respect, the cremation ground had been defiled and now a police post has been built on the spot.”¹⁹

A very strong exception was taken of the fact that the martyrs were hanged in the night and of the fact that their dead bodies were vandalized. In its press communiqué the Government had stated that the reason for not handing over the corpses to the families and disposing them off, was the apprehension, that during the last rites the demonstrations would be held and public order may get disturbed. But the manner of disposing of the bodies and

¹⁴ *Vir Bharat*, Lahore, 14 April 1931, NAI, Home Political, File No 33/2 & K.W. of the year 1931

¹⁵ National Archives of India, New Delhi, HP, F No. 17/5 and K.W. of the year 1932

¹⁶ National Archives of India, New Delhi, Home Political, File No 24/3 of the year 1934

¹⁷ National Archives of India, New Delhi, Home Political, File No 24/3 of the year 1934

¹⁸ National Archives of India, New Delhi, Home Political, File No 17/3 of the year 1932

¹⁹ National Archives of India, New Delhi, Home Political, File No 17/5 of the Year 1932

the last remains of the martyrs did exactly what their dead bodies would have done, had they been handed over to the family. Rather more adverse public opinion was generated when ashes, body remains and blood tainted pebbles collected from the riverside were carried as far as Bombay. Bombay Chronicle reported a public meeting at Azad Maidan in Bombay²⁰, where these relics were presented as a proof that bodies of the revolutionaries were not properly cremated and were rather deliberately dishonoured. The ashes of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were brought to Bombay while they were being ferried to Dwarka. Where as per the wishes of the mother of Rajguru, they were put before the idol of Lord Krishna on 3rd April 1931, and were later immersed by Kultar Singh in river Gomti.²¹

Public resentment over the incident found expression as far as Assam during the public meetings. A public meeting held in Shillong, Assam, on 14th June 1931 passed the resolution expressing, “resentment for executing these three youths ignoring the demands of the crores of the people of Indian.” Delivering speech in support of this resolution Srijut Mahadev Sarma, Ex-member of Assam Legislative council said that, “the Government was so timid that they could not kill publically the three persons mentioned in the resolution but hanged them stealthily after 7 p.m. According to laws no one could be hanged after the sun set. The Government were so timid on account of their being sinful that they removed stealthily the corpses of the three persons after their execution.”²²

The fact cannot be denied that public statements either in written or verbal form have a tendency to sensationalize the issues at hand. No witness came out to dispose before the Enquiry Committee to claim that he actually saw the bodies being cut to pieces. Yet this sensational information was repeated in press and platform. Many writers and orators while mentioning this act of police missed to mention the fact that it were the dead bodied that were desecrated, implying in other words that the revolutionaries were cut to the pieces while they were alive. A Punjabi pamphlet entitled “Watan de la” (Rubies of the Country), written by poet Panchi ji, of Sialkot and printed at the Satnam Dharam Steam Press, Lahore, stated that “.....The merciless showed no mercy to them. They were cut into pieces, put into boxes, put into aeroplanes and they were burnt by pouring kerosene oil and we were not allowed to see them. The dead bodies were thrown into the Sutlej”²³

Atheism of Bhagat Singh is well know, and same probably was the truth about Sukhdev. Yet non-observation of religious ceremonies in last rites were stressed more than human rights of the deceased and their families. Difference between Hindu and Sikh rites was stressed upon. Giani Sher Singh in a press statement issued on 27th March 1931 at Amritsar prescribed last rites of a baptised Sikh for Bhagat Singh. The press communiqué issued by the Government, he said, mentioned that only one Granthi was present at the time of cremation while it require five devout Sikhs to complete the last ceremony. It should be taken care whether the body wore five

²⁰ Bombay Chronicle, 7 April 1931, NAI, Home Political, File No. 33/2 of year 1931

²¹ Bombay Chronicle, 7 April 1931, NAI, Home Political, File No. 33/2 of year 1931

²² National Archives of India, New Delhi , Home Political, File No 17/6 of the Year 1932

²³ National Archives of India, New Delhi Home Political F. No. 33-2 of the year 1934

Kakkars or not.²⁴ This act of the Government was taken as a grave disregard of the religious sentiments of the Indians.

Many among public found the burning of three bodies in same pyre sacrilegious. This group of young revolutionaries called Hindustan Socialist Republican Army in a way burnt themselves in the flames of Indian Freedom Struggle as moths to see the glow of revolution on the face of mother India. During their lifetime they idealized the idea of eroding all religious differences in the face of the love for motherland. We can assume that none would have been happier than Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev to forgo all the religious rituals that separate them from each other and to get mingled with each other? The burning of three revolutionaries on the same pyre was ironically the height of their ideals. The English by this act made them one for eternity. The ashes that were ferried to different part of India and bones that were shown in many public meetings belong to all. This was a symbolic union of different religions for the cause of revolution.

When we read the history of Naujawan Bharat Sabha we find out that the braking up of religious boundaries and mingling of the humanity was their mission. Naujwan Bharat Sabha used to oragnised common kitchens for social and religious harmony, where persons from all religions and castes were encouraged to partake food from hands of each other. Yashpal has mentioned one instance where Halal and Jhatka were prepared in one pot and served in the gathering. There may be some exaggeration by Yashpal in this narration, yet he has underlined the spirit which prompted the Naujawan Bharat Sabha to organize such common kitchens.²⁵

The public we can conclude did not display the actual spirit of Bhagat Singh and his Comrades, even while they eulogized them and protested over their hangings and desecration of their bodies. A person it seems loses his identity when he dies as a public hero, and is defined by the public according to their own wishes and beliefs. Same was happening to Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Long live revolution and Down with Imperialism were two main slogans of Bhagat Singh which he wanted to propagate even at the cost of his life. These slogans too were not fully understood in their letter and spirit. Bhagat Singh was not a violent revolutionary and nationalist chauvinist as he is popularly believed to be. In the statement given before Sessions court in Assembly Bomb Case he defined his meaning of Revolution in following words, “Revolution does not necessarily involve sanguinary strife not is there any place in it for personal vendetta. It is not the cult of the bomb and he pistol. By “Revolution” we mean that the present order of things, which is based on manifest injustice must change.”²⁶ The fact that they were not against the British Empire for being a foreign power but were against all exploiters be they Indian or foreigner is born out by the plea of mercy they wrote to the Governor of Punjab on 20th March 1931. “Let us declare that the state of war does exist and shall exist so long as the Indian toiling masses and the

²⁴ *Bhavishya*- 9 April 1931, in *Krantiveer Bhagat Singh ‘Abhauday’ Aur ‘Bhavishya’*, Ed. By Chaman Lal, Lokbharti Paperback, Allahabad, 2017, P- 227-228

²⁵ Yashpal, *Sinhavlokan*, (Complete), Lok Bharti Parkashan, Allahabad, 2017, P-67

²⁶ Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich and Dr. Gurdev Singh Sidhu, *The Hanging of Bhagat Singh: Judgments and other Documents*, Unistar, Chandigarh, 2005, P-201

natural resources are being exploited by a handful of parasites. They may be purely British Capitalist or mixed British and Indian or even purely Indian. They may be carrying on their insidious exploitation through mixed or even on purely Indian bureaucratic apparatus. All these things make no difference.”²⁷

There is no doubt that the hanging of Bhagat Singh and his comrades and the manner in which their corpses were disposed off, created resentment in the public and eroded the legitimacy of the Government, just as it was done by the tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh. It is said that regimens survive more on legitimacy than on arms. By flouting its own rules and hanging Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev in the night and forgoing the human conventions by desecrating their dead bodies the British Empire in India was undercutting its own legitimacy. It were the desperate efforts on the part of the Government to quell the public resentment over the hangings of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev that made it to breach its own conventions and laws. It made the incident more gory and unacceptable. The way Government broke away its own rules and conventions. The way it breached the religious rituals and hurt the sentiments of Indian public made it unpopular among the masses. The governments even today happen to make similar mistakes and face the public backlash. The resentment of public throughout India against the forced funeral rites of Hathras rape victim reminds us that mentality of those in power has not shown any improvement over the years. As a public which claim reverence to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev cannot be expected to support a government which indulges in same highhandedness towards the dead body of a rape victim as shown by the British authorities towards the dead bodies of these martyrs, unless we have two different standards to judge a foreign power and a home grown power.

²⁷ A.G. Noorani, *The Trial of Bhagat Singh Politics of Justice*, Oxford University Press, 1996, P-308