

Religious Ideology of Bhagat Singh

Rakesh

Department of Social Science
Baba Mastnath University
Regi.no...20-BMU-6558

Abstract:

Bhagat Singh's religious ideology evolved significantly over time, influenced by his deep study of political and social philosophy. Born into an Arya Samajist family, Bhagat Singh initially adhered to the rituals of Hinduism, including performing 'Hawan' and reciting the 'Gayatri Mantra.' However, as he matured, his views shifted dramatically, particularly after engaging with revolutionary literature and the works of social reformers like Karl Marx. Bhagat Singh rejected the idea of a divine authority governing human life, believing instead that the pain and suffering in society were the result of societal structures, not divine will. In his prison writings, especially in the article "Why I Am An Atheist," he articulated his stance against the concept of God and religion. He argued that religion was a human construct, created to serve personal and societal interests, often perpetuating inequality and injustice. Bhagat Singh saw religion as a tool of oppression, hindering progress by keeping people subjugated to false beliefs. His atheism was not merely a denial of God but a call for a rational, scientific approach to life, focusing on human welfare and social justice. Bhagat Singh's religious views were deeply intertwined with his revolutionary ideals, advocating for a society based on equality, reason, and collective well-being.

Keywords: Birth of Bhagat Singh, Arya Samajist family, scientific approach, Atheist, Karl Marx's views on religion.

Introduction

Bhagat Singh, one of the most revered revolutionaries of India, developed a unique and powerful religious ideology that evolved over time. Born on September 28, 1907, into a devout Arya Samajist family, he was initially brought up in the traditions of Hinduism, engaging in religious practices like performing 'Hawan' and chanting the 'Gayatri Mantra' during his early school years at D.A.V. School in Lahore. These practices were in line with the Arya Samaj's emphasis on belief in one God, social reform, and rationalism. However, as Bhagat Singh delved deeper into the study of social, political, and philosophical works, particularly those of

Marx, Engels, and other revolutionary thinkers, his perspective on religion began to shift. He started questioning the role of religion in society and its impact on human progress, eventually rejecting the idea of God and religious orthodoxy.

Bhagat Singh's religious transformation was not just a personal shift in belief but a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between religion, society, and politics. He argued that religion, particularly in its institutionalized forms, was a tool used by the ruling classes to keep the masses under control. He viewed it as a mechanism that perpetuated inequality, suffering, and oppression, diverting people's attention from the real causes of their social and economic struggles. For Bhagat Singh, religion was a human creation, designed to serve personal and collective interests rather than offering true moral guidance. His atheism was therefore not a mere rejection of God but a call to embrace rationalism and a scientific outlook, focusing on human well-being and social justice. Bhagat Singh's revolutionary ideology was grounded in his belief that true liberation could only be achieved through the overthrow of both social and religious structures that hindered the freedom and progress of the people.

He decided not to accept the existence of God. Although he accepted it was not an easy task to refuse any kind of supreme authority. Bhagat Singh wrote about views of Karl Marx on religion in his jail diary, page numbers 40 and 41: "Man makes religion; religion does not make man. Religion indeed is the self- consciousness and the self-feeling of man who either has not yet found himself or else (have found himself) has lost himself once more. But man is not an abstract being squatting down somewhere outside the world. Man is the world of men, the state, the society. This state, this society produces religion, produces a perverted form of world consciousness, because they are a perverted world. Religion is the generalized theory of this world, its encyclopedic compend, its logic in a popular form... The fight against religion is therefore a direct campaign against the world whose spiritual aroma is religion." According to him, religion is not produced by divine; man makes society and state; just like religion. Religion has covered a vast area. To raise against the voice of religion means to fight with the world on this issue. "Religion is the sigh of oppressed creatures, the feelings of a heartless world, just as the spirit of unspiritual conditions. It is the opinion of the people. The people can not be really happy until it has been deprived of illusion, happiness by the abolition of religion. The demand that the people should break itself free of illusion as to its own condition is the demand that it should abandon a condition which needs illusion. Bhagat Singh followed Karl Marx's idea

regarding religion. He criticized religion for preventing consideration of people from social injustice and exploitation. He thought that religion could provide people with illusions that gave the tolerance power to accept to live life without protesting traditional social evils. Religion was being used to justify social inequality. People had overthrown capitalism, then there would be no need for religion. The philosophy of Bhagat Singh was influenced by Karl Marx, Trotsky, and Lenin and consequently, he spent most of his time analyzing the history of revolutions and different movements. He started writing against the social and religious odds in the false name of 'Virodhi'. Writings on social-economic issues were one of the traits of Bhagat Singh's writings. Wherever he lived, he did not give up writing. He wrote on each and every issue which was related for awakening the society. Religion and politics must be separated from each other. Otherwise, effective and simple people will use religious tasks to reach their political destination. Communalism is the result of a mixture of religion and politics and people in minority will be exploited in the society.

Bhagat Singh raised the question on the existence of God and His role to protect human beings. "He even questioned the authority of God by asking if He is omnipresent, why people commit sins or offence. He told if God is everywhere, then how may people can do wrong deeds. God must stop the people from doing wrong. If God loves mankind, then there should not be any kind of sorrow, and agony. It is not possible that God allows one nation to exploit another. Bhagat Singh loves humanity more than religious practices. The entire article "Why I am an atheist" is the reply of Bhagat Singh against the Baba Randhir Singh's idea of God who said, "He has cut his hair so he is not a Sikh." Iftikar Anam and Iqbal Mohammed, *Recontextualizing Bhagat Singh's Freedom Struggle for* The concept of God is so wide in the world, one fears to criticize. People do not know even a small part about God, so they accept the existence of God. Sometimes people consider themselves to be God because they present different examples for removing difficulties of human beings. These people mostly remain busy in their routine work, when they are trapped with problems of life, they move to God or saint. All happened due to ignorance. Secularism was, actually, an article of faith for Bhagat Singh throughout his life. Bipin Chandra described it thus: "More than any other contemporary leader with the exception of Gandhi, he understood the danger that communalism posed to Indian society and Indian nationalism. He often warned his comrades and followers that communalism was as big an enemy as colonialism. Religion, said Bhagat Singh, was the private

concern of a person but it had to be fought as an enemy when it intruded that people must free themselves from the mental bondage of religion and superstition. Religion is a personal matter. Everyone must be freed to adopt any religion and it may be possible for anyone to not follow any religion. We should not be so rigid regarding religion. Rigidness always gives negative output. Narrow thinking about religion gives birth to Communalism. The country like India could not be a slave of another country, if our society was based on scientific approach. Bhagat Singh's ideology was not bounded; it was for all class, creed, caste. Even he impressed the Britisher when he offered himself to shoot in openly so that the message of political prisoner would reach all over India as well as in the England.

Bhagat Singh was not killed by the Britisher, he was killed by the narrow thinking and orthodox ideology of Indian. Bhagat Singh criticized the Almighty God. How God can accept the slavery system in the world. All kinds of social and political evils must be abolished by Almighty God. He will never accept injustice. Poverty, natural calamities, sorrows, agony of people will be vanished merely from the world because of omnipresent God. There will be no need of fatalism if God is our protector. Bhagat Singh believed in logical facts instead of irrational. It means Bhagat Singh was well known about rituals and traditions of Sikhism but he gave more importance to nation than religion. He committed he would sacrifice all for the sake of the country. He never remained on individuals who believed in God and religion. Bhagat Singh acknowledges the Sikh legacy of supreme sacrifices for justice and righteousness. He clarifies that his sacrifices are not for personal gain, survival or comfort but for the larger cause of India's freedom.

God is universal illusion while ghosts is not so popular. God and ghost are both illusionary in existence. Exploiters use the God practices as tool because on the name of God they implement new system to gain benefits. In other words, the concept of God emerged to make people fool and stop to revolt by saying it is the wish of God.

There was a warden in Jail named Chhatar Singh, he was a Sikh, knowing that Bhagat Singh had only a few hours left, he told him to pray God for next world. Bhagat Singh said on this, "Old man, I would gladly comply with your request, but now that the journey's end is very near, if I pray to God people would say that Bhagat Singh was chicken-hearted. I never prayed and now that I am feeling the icy breath of death on my neck, if I started praying people would misunderstand me. It would be better if let me go my own way. I might be abused because I

am an atheist and do not believe in God but nobody would say that Bhagat Singh was dishonest and flinched at the sight of death.”⁷

Bhagat Singh was an honest atheist revolutionary who did not pray even in at his last moment. He knew very well , pray would provide peace. But he also realized if he did, then he could not be proved as a true revolutionary. He always remained an atheist. His commitments would break out and his objective would not be completed. He knew very well ,he had to face this situation just like Kartar Singh Sarabha and Vaillant of France. He once said that revolutionary ideas might be anti-God but certainly not anti- human.”

Bhagat Singh was a great follower of the principles of humanity. To be an atheist is a completely one thing, while being a kind-hearted person and a thinker of well-being of society are different things. To serve society for one is not necessary to be God believer. There were a number of social reformers and thinkers in India who boycotted all kind of ostentations forms but Bhagat Singh denied to accept even the authority of God.

Conclusion

Bhagat Singh's religious ideology was a reflection of his broader revolutionary thinking, shaped by his deep study of political, social, and philosophical ideas. His rejection of religious orthodoxy and the concept of God was not a mere intellectual stance but a powerful critique of the societal structures that he believed perpetuated injustice, inequality, and oppression. By embracing atheism, Bhagat Singh called for a rational, scientific approach to understanding the world, one that prioritized human welfare and social reform over superstition and dogma. His views were in line with the revolutionary ideals of social justice and equality, where religion was seen as a tool of the ruling classes to suppress the masses.

In his writings, particularly "Why I Am An Atheist," Bhagat Singh expressed his conviction that religion often diverted attention away from the real issues affecting the people, such as poverty, exploitation, and political corruption. His rejection of God and religious authority was ultimately a call for a more just, secular society based on reason, equality, and collective human effort. Bhagat Singh's religious ideology, rooted in his commitment to freedom and justice, remains an essential part of his legacy as a thinker, writer, and revolutionary, offering valuable insights into the intersection of religion, politics, and society.

Reference

1. Singh Bhagat, Why I Am An Atheist
2. Hooja Bhupendraa, A Martyr's Notebook (edi.), Pg 33, Indian Book Chronicle, Jaipur, 1954
3. Singh, Bhagat, Why I Am An Atheist
4. Iftikar Anam and Iqbal Mohammed, Recontextualizing Bhagat Singh's Freedom Struggle for Independence of India; Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan, Pg 20. Volume No. 55, Issue No. 1, (January-June 2018).
5. Habib, Irfan. Inquilab: Bhagat Singh on Religion and Revolution, Pg 54, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2018
6. Dr. Singh Veer, The Life and Ideas of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Pg 3, Ashok Vihar, PH-17, Delhi 2010
7. Juneja M.M., Selected Collections on Bhagat Singh, Pg. 115, Modern Publishers Zirakpur, 2013
8. The Manifesto by HSRA, December 1929