



The Unforgotten Legends of Udham Singh

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ABSTRACT –

Today we are going to talk about a revolutionary who has been given titles like The Patient Assassin, he is the same revolutionary who went to London and killed British officer Michael O'Dwyer. To know who Michael O Dyer was and why Udham Singh had killed him, we have to know about Udham Singh, Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. This story of Udham Singh is related to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Udham Singh was a great revolutionary and freedom fighter. Whose heart was filled with only and only the feeling of patriotism and immeasurable anger towards the British. As a result of his sense of vengeance, he had killed Michael O'Dwyer, the former governor of Punjab. Udham Singh had witnessed the funeral procession of more than 1000 innocent people in a heart-wrenching incident on 13 April 1919. Since then he was deeply hurt and a feeling of indignation awakened in him. Then what? He resolved to avenge the death of his countrymen. He carried out his resolution, then after that he became famous in India as well as abroad by the name of Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Udham Singh. Let us know about this great revolutionary and freedom fighter.

Birth and His Early life

Sardar Udham Singh was born on 26 December 1899 in a Sikh family at Sunam village in Sangrur district of Punjab state. His mother Narayan Kaur / Naren Kaur was a housewife, Who used to take care of both her children Udham Singh and Mukta Singh but unfortunately Sardar Udham Singh's mother died in 1901 two years after his birth and father Sardar Tejpal Singh was an employee in Railways who died in 1907, 8 years after Udham Singh's birth. In this way, at the age of only 8 years, the shadow of the parents had risen from his head.

Now after the death of his parents, In such a tragic situation, both the brothers had to take refuge in the Khalsa Orphanage in Amritsar to lead their further life and to take education. Martyr Udham Singh's name was Sher Singh in his childhood, but he was given the name Udham Singh after being given Sikh initiation rites in the orphanage. Unfortunately Udham Singh's brother also did not stay with him for long, his brother died in 1917 itself. Udham Singh completed his matriculation in 1918. After this he left the Khalsa Orphanage in 1919.

Participate in the freedom movement.

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and His participation in the freedom movement.

There is a place named Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, Punjab. On April 13, 1919, at this place, the British fired bullets on many Indians. Many families were destroyed in that scandal. The British did not spare even children, women and old people. Locked them down and riddled them with bullets. In fact, on that day a meeting was organized in Jallianwala Bagh against the repressive policy of the British, the Rowlatt Act and the arrest of Satyapal and Saifuddin. However, curfew was imposed in the city during this period. But amidst the curfew, thousands of people had come to attend the meeting. There were some people who had gone to see the fair held there with their families on the occasion of Baisakhi, When the British government saw the gathering of so many people at Jallianwala Bagh, they were shocked. He felt that the Indians might be trying to repeat the revolution of 1857 again. He wanted to crush the voice of Indians even before such a situation came and on that day the British crossed all limits of cruelty. When the leaders attending the meeting were giving speeches, Brigadier General Reginald Dyer reached there. It is said that during this time 5000 people had reached there. At the same time, General Dyer surrounded the garden with his 90 British soldiers. They started firing without warning the people present there. British soldiers fired a total of 1650 rounds of bullets in just 10 minutes. During this time the people present in Jallianwala Bagh could not get out of that ground, because houses were built around the garden. There was only a narrow way to get out. People were trapped there as there was no way to escape. To avoid the bullets of the British, people jumped into the only well located there. In some time the well was also filled with dead bodies. The exact figure of those who were martyred in Jallianwala Bagh could not be known even today, but there is a list of 484 martyrs in the Deputy Commissioner's office, while there is a list of 388 martyrs in Jallianwala Bagh. British government documents claimed 379 dead and 200 injured. Although according to unofficial figures, more than 1000 people were martyred and more than 2000 Indians were injured in this massacre of the British government and General Dyer. After this incident, Udham Singh became involved in revolutionary politics and was influenced by freedom fighter Bhagat Singh. In the year 1924, Udham Singh joined the Ghadar Party to overthrow the British rule in India and organized Indians abroad for the same.

Revolutionary Politics

At the time of the First World War, the British had promised that whoever joins the British Army would be given land and financial help, but after serving in the army for two years, Udham Singh had only Rs 200, Udham Singh felt that they have been cheated. Meanwhile, the people of the Gadar Party were distributing revolutionary literature in Punjab, due to the betrayal by the British people and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Udham Singh joins the Gadar Party and starts distributing revolutionary literature of the party by going to villages. Meanwhile he also met radical nationalists like Saifuddin kitchlew and Master Mota Singh. Meanwhile, Udham Singh goes to Uganda to work, where Udham Singh's relations with Gadar revolutionaries become stronger. In 1922, he comes back to India and opens a shop in Amritsar which becomes the center of his revolutionary activities. Later he also joined militant Babbar Akali movement. In 1924, Udham Singh ji went to Mexico legally in the US. Reach and settle in San Francisco which was the focal point of the Ghadar movement. Udham Singh got deeply involved with the Ghadar movement in the US. He travels all over America to collect funds for the charity. This U.S. for about 3 years. While living in, he also works in Chicago, San Francisco, New York, Detroit. Udham Singh also played as an extra in 2 Hollywood movies 'Elephant boy' and 'The four feathers' along with other extra jobs. Apart from this, he also worked in Motor Garage, Howard Boat Building Company, Douglas Aircraft Company and Ford Company. Udham Singh was not only a romantic revolutionary but also a migrant worker. He launched The Azad party as an offshoot of the Ghadar party. He worked as American shipping line with the name 'Frank Brajil' and established contacts with branches of The Ghadar Party. They interact with the Ghadar Party branches at places like Italy, Germany, Poland, Iran, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore. He returned to India in July 1927 he was arrested Under Arms act on 30th August 1927. Even in the jail, he teaches these revolutionary ideas to the rest of the prisoners, for which the British used to flog him and change his jail, during this time, in Mianwali Jail, which is now located in Punjab (Pakistan), he meets Bhagat Singh. Bhagat Singh was serving a sentence for the murder of Saunders and for throwing a bomb in the Legislative Assembly. Udham Singh ji soon develops a good friendship with Bhagat Singh ji. He is so impressed by Bhagat Singh ji that he starts calling him his guru and keeps Bhagat Singh ji's photo in his purse. In 1931, Udham Singh ji comes out of jail and he went to Kashmir and there he managed to escape from the police and fled to Germany. Singh reached London, he goes to England and stays in England for seven years, during which he also travels to countries like Italy, Poland, Hungary, Holland, France and Germany. From Germany they also go to Soviet Union where they make contact with the people working for the freedom of India. He was expert in changing his name and disguise, sometimes he is called Uday Singh, sometimes he is called Frakbrigil, his last name was Mohammad Ram Singh Azad.

The Assassination of Michael O'Dwyer

Udham Singh was an eyewitness to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre that took place on 13 April 1919. Due to political reasons, the exact number of people killed in Jallianwala Bagh has never been revealed. Veer Udham Singh was moved by this incident and took the soil of Jallianwala Bagh in his hand and took a pledge to teach General Dyer and Michael O'Dwyer but incidentally General Dyer died of brain hemorrhage in 1927 and now Udham Singh was eyeing Michael Francis O'Dwyer. To carry out his mission, Udham Singh traveled to Africa, Nairobi, Brazil and America under different names. Udham Singh reached London in 1934 and started living there at 9, Elder Street Commercial Road. There he bought a car for traveling purpose and a revolver with six bullets, bought from a soldier in a pub to complete his mission. This brave revolutionary of India started waiting for the right time to hide Michael O'Dwyer.

Udham Singh got a chance to avenge the death of hundreds of his brothers and sisters in 1940. On 13 March 1940, 21 years after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the Royal Central Asian Society had a meeting at Caxton Hall in London where Michael O'Dwyer was also one of the speakers. Udham Singh reached the meeting place on time that day. He hid his revolver in a thick book. For this, he had cut the pages of the book in the shape of a revolver in such a way that the weapon that killed Dyer could be easily hidden. It is said that as soon as Dyer reached the stage, Udham Singh started firing bullets. After ripping the chest of Michael O'Dwyer, the flame burning in Udham Singh's chest had calmed down for 21 years. Everyone was stunned to see this attack of Udham Singh.

Murder case against Udham Singh

Udham Singh was charged with the murder of Michael Francis O'Dwyer on 01 April 1940. and was remanded to custody in Brixton Prison. He said in one of his statements that it was worth it. I bought a revolver from a pub and I killed him. I have no fear of any kind and I am not afraid of death at all.

During his trial, Udham Singh went on a 42-day hunger strike but was force-fed. Udham Singh's trial began on 04 June 1940 in the Criminal Court of the Old Bailey before Justice Atkinson. Udham Singh was found guilty of murdering General Dyer and was sentenced to death. On 31 July 1940, Udham Singh was hanged by Albert Pierrepont at Pentonville Prison. On April 1, 1940, about twenty days after Michael O'Dwyer's murder, Udham Singh faced formal charges and was remanded in custody to Brixton Prison. While in custody at Brixton, Udham Singh called himself '*Ram Mohammed Singh Azad*', with the first three words representing the three major religions of Punjab (Hindu, Muslim and Sikh) and the last word Azad meaning 'free'. Which represented his anti-colonial sentiment. In prison, awaiting his trial, Udham Singh went on a hunger strike, which was broken on the 42nd day after he was force-fed by the prison authorities. On 4 June 1940, Singh's trial began at the Central Criminal Court, Old Bailey, before Justice Atkinson, with VK Krishna Menon and St John Hutchinson representing him. GB McClure was the prosecuting attorney. He was questioned about his motivation behind killing O'Dwyer, to which he replied,

I did this because I had many complaints against him. he deserves it. He was the real criminal. He wanted to crush the soul of my people, so I have crushed him. For the whole 21 years I have been trying to take revenge. I am glad that I have worked. I'm not afraid of death. I am dying for my country.

I have seen my people starving in India under the British rule. I have opposed it, it was my duty. What greater honor can be given to me than death for the sake of my motherland?

He was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. He was hanged at Pentonville Prison on 31 July 1940. Udham Singh's ashes being brought to Jallianwala Bagh, On the request of the then MLA Sadhu Singh Thind, Udham Singh's mortal remains were brought back to India in the year 1974 after being kept in a coffin. The casket containing the mortal remains of Udham Singh was received by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the then President Shankar Dayal Sharma and the 7th President of India Zail Singh. Shaheed-e-Azam Udham Singh was cremated at Sunam in Punjab, while his ashes were scattered in the Sutlej River. Some of his ashes are kept in a sealed urn at Jallianwala Bagh.

Achievements and Honors of Udham Singh:

- A museum dedicated to the Singh people has also been built near Jallianwala Bagh (Amritsar).
- The sacrifice given by Udham Singh ji has been powerfully filmed in many Indian films, including (1) Shaheed Udham Singh (1977) (2) Jallianwala Bagh (1977) (3) Shaheed Udham Singh (2000), [Sardar Udham \(2021 \)](#)
- Weapons of Sikh brothers like:- Knife and bullets used during the shooting are displayed in Black Museum which is in Scotland Yard, as a tribute to Udham Singh.
- A police outpost in Anupgarh in Rajasthan has been named after Udham Singh.
- In 2006, Punjab government renamed his village as 'Sunam Udham Singh Wala'
- On his 75th birth anniversary, a band named Ska Vangers released an animated music video titled 'Frank Brajil'.
- His room in the Central Khalsa Orphanage has been converted into a museum.
- A district of Uttarakhand is named Udham Singh which is inspired by his name.
- On March 13, 2018, a 10 feet tall statue of Udham Singh was installed by the International Sarva Kamboj Samaj at the main gate of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. This statue was unveiled by the then Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

Conclusion

Here we studied the whole life of Udham Singh ji, in which we saw that he lived his whole life not for himself but for the nation, we should tell the life story of Udham Singh ji and his sacrifice to our youth.

It is often seen that there are no pictures of Udham Singh ji in various schools of our nation, and when there are no pictures then how will the new generation know about him. We should make it mandatory to describe his contribution in today's syllabus so that this great revolutionary and his dignified contribution is remembered for ages and this will be a true tribute to the devotee of this motherland.

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