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Batukeshwar Dutt: The Revolutionary Who Made the Deaf Hear

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Batukeshwar Dutt: The Revolutionary Who Made the Deaf Hear

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

*marks the death anniversary (1965) of the revolutionary **Batukeshwar Dutt**, who, alongside **Bhagat Singh**, carried out the celebrated **Central Legislative Assembly bombing of April 8, 1929**. His life is a window into the militant, revolutionary strand of India's freedom struggle that ran parallel to the Gandhian mainstream.*

WHO WAS BATUKESHWAR DUTT

Batukeshwar Dutt was a member of the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**, the revolutionary organisation reconstituted in 1928 under leaders such as **Chandrashekhar Azad** and **Bhagat Singh**. The HSRA blended the earlier revolutionary tradition with an explicit commitment to **socialism** and a complete independence for India, to be won through organised action rather than negotiated **concession**.

Dutt was not a fringe figure. He was a trusted operative skilled in the technical work of the movement, and his partnership with Bhagat Singh placed him at the centre of one of the most symbolic acts of the era.

THE CENTRAL ASSEMBLY BOMBING, APRIL 8, 1929

On **April 8, 1929**, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw **two low-intensity, non-lethal bombs** and a shower of **leaflets** from the visitors' gallery into the **Central Legislative Assembly** in Delhi. The bombs were deliberately designed **not to kill**, aimed at empty benches. The action was a protest against two repressive measures then before the House, the **Public Safety Bill** and the **Trade Disputes Bill**.

Rather than escape, the two men **courted arrest**, raising the slogans "**Inquilab Zindabad**" (Long Live the Revolution) and declaring that the aim was "**to make the deaf hear.**" The leaflet, issued in the name of the HSRA, argued that it took a loud explosion to make a deaf establishment listen to the voice of a suppressed people.

Propaganda by Deed

The Assembly bombing is a classic example of "**propaganda by deed**", a strategy of using a dramatic, symbolic act to publicise a cause and rally public sentiment. The intent was never mass casualty; it was **visibility and message**. By choosing arrest over flight, Bhagat Singh and Dutt turned the courtroom into a

national stage.

ELEMENT	DETAIL
Date	April 8, 1929
Location	Central Legislative Assembly, Delhi
Actors	Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt
Method	Two non-lethal bombs and leaflets
Slogans	“Inquilab Zindabad”, “to make the deaf hear”
Organisation	Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)

IMPRISONMENT AND THE 1929 HUNGER STRIKE

Dutt was sentenced to **transportation for life** and shipped to the dreaded **Cellular Jail** in the Andaman Islands, the colonial **penal** settlement reserved for the most feared political prisoners.

In jail, he joined the historic **1929 hunger strike** for the rights of political prisoners, demanding they be treated as political detainees rather than common criminals, with proper food, reading material and dignity. His fellow striker **Jatin Das** carried the protest to its ultimate sacrifice, **dying on the 63rd day of the fast** in September 1929, an event that stirred nationwide grief and admiration.

After independence, Dutt lived in relative obscurity and poverty, a poignant reminder of how many revolutionaries faded from public memory. He died on **July 20, 1965**.

PLACING THE REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

The revolutionary stream did not reject the goal of independence shared with the Gandhian mainstream; it differed on **method and tempo**. Where the Congress pursued mass mobilisation and negotiation, the HSRA argued that a determined minority, through symbolic and organised action, could awaken the nation and expose the coercive nature of colonial rule. Bhagat Singh’s own writings increasingly emphasised **ideology and mass consciousness** over the bomb, marking the intellectual maturing of the revolutionary tradition.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 1: Modern Indian history; the freedom struggle, its various stages and important contributors from different parts of the country.

Prelims pointers:

- **Batukeshwar Dutt** and **Bhagat Singh** bombed the **Central Legislative Assembly** on **April 8, 1929**.
- Both belonged to the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**.
- The action protested the **Public Safety Bill** and the **Trade Disputes Bill**.
- **Jatin Das** died on the **63rd day** of the 1929 jail hunger strike.
- Dutt was imprisoned in the **Cellular Jail**, Andaman Islands; he died on **July 20, 1965**.

Mains question: “The revolutionaries and the Gandhian mainstream shared the goal of freedom but differed on method.” Discuss the contribution of the revolutionary movement, with reference to the 1929 Central Assembly action, to India’s freedom struggle. (15 marks, 250 words)

★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

HSRA: Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, reorganised in 1928; leaders included Chandrashekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh.

Slogan origin: “to make the deaf hear” came from the HSRA leaflet at the 1929 Assembly bombing.

Propaganda by deed: a symbolic, publicity-driven act intended to awaken public opinion, not to kill.

Cellular Jail (Kala Pani), Port Blair, Andaman Islands, housed leading political prisoners.

Jatin Das martyred on the 63rd day of the 1929 hunger strike for prisoners’ rights.

Batukeshwar Dutt born 1910, died July 20, 1965.

The 1929 bombing protested the Public Safety Bill and Trade Disputes Bill.

Sources: National Archives of India · Amrit Mahotsav, Ministry of Culture · Press Information Bureau features

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