

Subash Chandra Bose: Hero of Indian Nationalism

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Abstract

The contribution of Subhas Chandra Bose is no less. He has been denied his rightful place in the annals of Indian history. Subhash Chandra Bose was one of India's greatest freedom fighter. He revived the Indian National Army, popularly known as 'Azad Hind Fauj' in 1943 which was initially formed in 1942 by Rash Behari Bose. He provided an influential leadership and kept the spirit of nationalism burning during the slack period of national movement in India. In this paper we will study about role of Netaji in National Movement. Netaji was a patriot to the last drop of his blood. In his passionate love for the motherland, he was prepared to do anything for the sake of liberating his country. Subhash Chandra Bose is a legendary figure in Indian history. His contribution to the freedom struggle made him a brave hero of India.

Introduction

The famous freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was born on January 23, 1897 in Cuttack district Orissa. His father Janaki Nath Bose was a famous lawyer and his mother Prabhavati Devi was a devout and religious lady. Unlike other prominent leaders of the Indian freedom struggle, Subhas strongly believed that an armed rebellion was necessary to wrest independence from the British. Subhas Chandra Bose is popularly known as 'Netaji'. In the year of 1902, when he was only 5 year old, he got admission in Cuttack Protestant School and then he started his educational career. In the year of 1909 he got admission in Ravenshaw Collegiate School, Cuttack. In 1913, he started his higher secondary educational academic career in Presidency College, Calcutta. On 21 October 1943, Netaji formed the Indian National Army (I.N.A). Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose is remembered for his Salutation and slogan of 'Jai Hind'. The famous words of Subash Chandra Bose "Give me blood, I will give you freedom" encouraged the freedom fighters. The famous book "The Indian Struggle" was written by him. Netaji Arrived Tokyo in May 1943, Bose attracted the attention of the Japanese high command, including Hideki Tojo, Japan's premier. The Japanese agreed to cooperate in founding an Indian National Army (INA) in Southeast Asia. Bose was flown to Singapore and became commander of the INA and head of the Free India provisional government. The INA included both Indian prisoners of war from Singapore and Indian civilians in Southeast Asia. The strength of INA grew to 50, 000 and fought Allied forces in 1944 inside the borders of India at Imphal and in Burma. For Bose any means and any ally were acceptable in the struggle to liberate India. By the

end of World War II none of Bose's Axis allies had helped, and Bose then turned to the Soviet Union. On Aug. 18, 1945, it is believed that Bose was en route to the Soviet Union in a Japanese plane when it crashed in Taiwan, burning him fatally. However, his death is a very controversial and disputed subject in India. Due to the lack of evidence and records of his final days in his life, Bose indirectly and posthumously achieved his goal of Indian independence.¹

Role of Subhash Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army

While the whole nation was engaged in the August movement, the struggle for independence was carried on by Subhash Chandra Bose outside the frontiers of India. Indians were fighting tooth and nail to liberate their motherland from outside. The Indian National Army and Subhash Chandra Bose were playing their significant role in the freedom struggle of India. Subhash Chandra was one of the foremost among the nationalist leaders of India, brave and youthful he possessed excellent organizing capacity. Subhash Chandra was selected into the Indian Civil Service after a brilliant academic career. In the service when he was called upon to take an oath of allegiance to the crown, he refused to do so and left the job in 1921. During his college career he had shown what he was going to be when he beat an English man black and blue for his having criticized the culture of India. After leaving the service Subhash joined the non-cooperation Movement but was not satisfied with the principle of non-violence of Gandhi and supported Motilal and C.R. Das in the venture of organizing the Swarajist party. Subhash was appointed the Chief Executive officer of Calcutta by C.R. Das, the Mayor of Calcutta. The progressive activities of Subhash invited the displeasure of the Government and were deported to Mandalay. Subhash represented the young and extremist elements in the Congress. He was elected as the President of the Congress in 1938 and again in 1939.² He could not make any compromise with Gandhi and thus resigned his President-ship and organized the famous Forward Block. During Second World War he was put under house arrest in his ancestral house in Elgin Road; Calcutta but escaped and reached Japan. In a romantic and daring journey changing names and looking different he proceeded from there to Moscow and finally reached Berlin in March 1941. The German dictator Adolf Hitler did not like to help him for the cause of Indian independence. In Germany the Indian community hailed him as Netaji and greeted him with the slogan "Jai Hind". From Berlin Radio he regularly broadcasted to India urging his countrymen to rise against the British. He very soon felt that South-East Asia would be a suitable ground for his grand scheme of raising a national army to free India from the British yoke. The golden opportunity for him came when Japan joined the war.³

At that time Rash Behari Bose was busy in organizing a notable organization in the name of Indian Independence League in Japan to help the end of British rule in India. Rash Behari Bose convened two conferences one at Tokyo in March, 1942 and the second in Bangkok in Jun 1942. The revolutionaries assembled in the conferences decided to form an Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauz) for the liberation of India from the British rule. The army was to be formed with Indians in the South-East Asian Countries and Indian soldiers of the British Army captured by the Japanese. Capt. Mohan Singh was primarily responsible for raising the army. Rash Behari Bose was made the President of the Council of Action. Shortly afterwards Rash Behari dismissed Mohan Singh whose personal ambition endangered the I.N.A. Rash Behari then played a pivotal

role in organizing the movement. Subhash Bose was invited to take up the leadership. In February 1943, Subhash left Germany from Kiel port in a Submarine. Through risk, suffering and untold hardship he finally reached Tokyo in June 1943. He held discussion with the Japanese authorities in the course of which the latter promised the independence of India after the war. From Tokyo he went to Singapore where he was warmly welcomed by Rash Behari and the latter handed over the leadership to Subhash.⁴

Subhash became the President of the Indian National Army as well as the President of Indian Independence League. Addressing a huge meeting at Singapore on 4th July, 1943 Rash Behari said "In your presence to-day I resign my office and appoint DeshSevak Subhash Chandra Bose as President of the Indian Independence League." However Rash Behari remained a courageous and selfless freedom fighter till his death on 21st January 1945. It was Rash Behari who prepared the stage in the East and South-East Asia for Subhash Chandra Bose to play on his significant role which India observed. Paying tribute to Rash Behari on the day of his death Subhash described him as the father of the Indian Independence Movement. Gradually the number of the I.N.A. men began to grow greatly. Assuming the command of the I.N.A. he gave his famous battle cry "Delhi Chalo" (on to Delhi). He worked out a master plan of campaign for the INA with the ultimate goal of reaching Delhi. A provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India) was set up. Its object was "to launch and to conduct the struggle that will bring about the expulsion of the British and of other allies from the soil of India." Addressing the army he said "We have a grim fight ahead us for the enemy is powerful, unscrupulous and ruthless. In this final march to freedom you will have to face hunger, privation, forced marches and death. Only when you pass this test will freedom be yours."⁵ The INA revealed Subhash Bose's greatness as a military leader and an organizer too. One of the INA Brigades advanced with the Japanese army upto the frontiers of India. The Indian national flag was hoisted in Kohima in March 1944. But with the change of fortune in the war and the retreat and defeat of the Japanese the INA collapsed. The role of INA had far reaching influences on the Indian political scene. When the stories of their remarkable courage and sacrifice came to the knowledge of the Indian people at the end of the war, the nation came under a wave of revolutionary upsurge. The British Government could realise that patriotism for Indians was greater than their service to a foreign power. Subhash was the greatest enemy of the Viceroy Lord Wavell. The communists described him as an agent of the "Facist Powers". Gandhiji admired the courage and resourcefulness displayed by Subhash in making his escape from India. Inspite of his principle of violence Subhash Chandra Bose's grand scheme of India's liberation and the high idealism through INA movement inspired the people of India in an unprecedented manner. The organisation of the Azad Hind forces and their exploits are a milestone in the history of the Indian struggle for freedom; the formation of which was the brain child of Subhash Chandra Bose.⁶

INA Trial:

In the midst of conflict between the Congress and the League the Government instituted a public trial of the Azad Hind Fouz soldiers on charges of treason. The trial only helped to rouse the people's patriotic emotion. The exploits of INA led by Netaji stirred the whole nation and the country was thrilled with excitement. The congress engaged a set of lawyers including, Jawaharlal Nehru, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Bhulabhai Desai to defend the leaders on trial. The

INA leaders in the first instance were convicted but their sentences were soon remitted and ultimately they were set free. However some INA officers were not released for which there was a public resentment. Demonstrations were organized in different parts of the country. Sarat Chandra Bose, the brother of Subhash Chandra mobilized the public sentiment in support of the INA and made elaborate arrangements for the celebration of the anniversary of the foundation of the Azad Hind Government on 21st October, 1943. The trial of the INA officers in the historic Red Fort became a “tribute to the martial courage of Indians, a symbol of her sense of total independence, a matter more of pride than of justice.” In February, 1946 a serious mutiny broke out in the Royal Indian Navy at Bombay. British troops were called in to crush the rebellious navy men as the Indian soldiers refused to open fire at their brethren. The British Commander-in-Chief General Archinleck warned the army. Nehru declared “Our armed forces have every right to revolt against the foreign ruler in order to achieve the freedom of our country.” The Government had no other way out than to think over the matter of releasing Colonel Shah Nawaz, Major G.S. Dhillon and Captain Prem Sehgal along with other trials who were the heroes of the hour. By the release of these trials the people could believe that it was a great victory for Indians. Gradually the situation in the Indian Army tended to take a serious turn before it ended a few days later owing to the efforts of Sardar Patel. The mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy made it clear that the British Indian Empire could no longer depend on the Indian staff. The realization virtually precipitated the process leading to the transfer of power. The entire history of the Indian National Army was thus the outcome of the master brain and the heroic activities of Subhash Chandra Bose supported by Rash Behari Bose⁷

The Meetings Between Hitler and Bose

In March 1941, Bose reached Berlin via Moscow and offered the Nazis an outright military alliance against the United Kingdom. Far from fearing a German military invasion of India that both Hitler and Field Marshal Erwin Rommel were planning, Bose wanted to include the Imperial Japanese Army as well. For their part, the British were wary of a joint German-Soviet invasion of both Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent. Meanwhile, the AfrikaKorps was capturing thousands of Indian prisoners of war who had been fighting for Britain during 1941-1942, from which Bose envisioned the future ILA that would free their country from the hated British yoke.⁸

They would end World War II as members of Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler's Waffen (Armed) SS, a supreme irony for the “turban-wearing, brown-skinned men” in the ultra-racist Nazi Germany, according to author Christopher Ailsby's book, *Hitler's Renegades: Foreign Nationals in the Service of the Third Reich*. Bose set up the Free India Center in Berlin and began radio broadcasts from Nauen, Germany, to his far-off homeland on February 19, 1942.⁹

Bose's British Broadcasting Corporation rival and counterpart, author Eric Blair (aka George Orwell of *Animal Farm* and 1984 fame), led the Allied propaganda team that fought Bose over the radio. On March 1, 1942, Free India declared war on the United Kingdom. On May 4, Bose met with Italian Foreign Minister Count Galeazzo Ciano in Rome and Il Duce himself on May 5, but still Berlin vetoed overall Axis support for his movement even after Mussolini fully committed Fascist Italy. On May 29, 1942, Bose met the Führer at the Reich Chancellery in

Berlin. According to Getz, “The Führer ... asked Bose what his plans would be if the Axis refused to help him. Misunderstanding slightly, Bose told his interpreter to ‘please tell His Excellency that I have been in politics all my life and that I do not need advice from anyone.’” A second and final meeting between Hitler and “the Indian charlatan” took place the following July 15 at Wolf’s Lair, Hitler’s headquarters at Rastenburg, East Prussia.¹⁰

Hitler’s Views on India

Following a dismal luncheon, Hitler told his guest that his favorite film was *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, and that the movie was compulsory viewing for his SS because “this was how a superior race must behave.” Then he launched into a tirade for the benefit of the former British Viceroy of India about what to do in response to Great Britain’s current problems in that unhappy land: “Shoot Gandhi! If that does not suffice to reduce them to submission, shoot a dozen leading members of Congress, and if that does not suffice, shoot 200 and so on until order is established,” said Hitler. That night, Lord Halifax, called the “Holy Fox” by his peers, confided to his diary, “He struck me as very sincere, and as believing everything that he said.... We had a different set of values and were speaking a different language.” Earlier, in his infamous book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler turned his attention to the subject of British India. “I still remember the hopes, childish as they were incomprehensible ... to the effect that British power was on the verge of collapse in India. ‘Some Asiatic jugglers ... real ‘fighters for Indian freedom’ ... had ... [been] expecting the end of the British Empire to follow from a collapse of British rule in India. If anyone imagines that England would let India go without staking her last drop of blood, it is only a sorry sign of absolute failure to learn from the World War ... and ignorance on the score of Anglo-Saxon determination.... ‘England will lose India either if her own administrative ... machinery falls a prey to racial decomposition ... or if she is bested by the sword of a powerful enemy. Indian agitators, however, will never achieve this ... I, as man of Germanic blood, would ... rather see India under English rule than under any other.’” So Hitler concluded in 1925, but he was proven dead wrong on August 15, 1947, when, in fact, Great Britain did grant independence to such “Indian agitators” as Mohandas K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose, the last name being virtually unknown in the world outside India to this day.¹¹

Bose and the Axis

Known to his many followers as the Netaji of the Azad Hind movement, Bose was called “the darling of the Axis” by his biographer Marshall J. Getz in *Subhas Chandra Bose* (2004) and termed a “charlatan” by German postwar chronicler Max Domarus in *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations, 1932-45*. Having met with Hitler, Italian Fascist Duce Benito Mussolini, and Japanese Premier General Hideki Tojo, Bose was, at one time or another, backed by all three of the major Axis powers. By 1943, he also held a trio of titles. Indian nationalists had felt sympathy for the Kaiser’s Germany during World War I; thus, Bose later saw Hitler as a fellow revolutionary against Great Britain. By 1941, Bose had helped create the Indian Liberation Army (ILA) and joined the fascists in what he thought was the most direct path to Indian independence and home rule. He had headed the All-India Trade Union Congress in 1929, and the Raj later branded Bose a terrorist and had him jailed. Elected mayor of Calcutta in 1930, Bose published

his book, *The Indian Struggle*, six years later. During the years 1933-1936, he traveled to Warsaw, Prague, London, and Dublin. He was hailed in Dublin as a kindred rebel. Bose also appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine. While abroad, Bose studied the revolutions of Italy, Ireland, Turkey, and Russia. His turn toward fascism came as a result of Soviet attempts to dominate China and also the Soviet abandonment of the domestic Indian Communist Party.¹²

Conclusion

Netaji's heroism and adventurous spirit will inspire millions of young persons in India.

"Supreme sacrifice was Netaji's motto, is it impossible that he chose to remain oblivious to his living compatriots so they could provide leadership without the fear of a resurrected leader from the ashes of Netaji!" "But it hardly ever occurred that even though the British rulers were his life-long enemies, his real enemies were none other than his own people, his beloved Indians. His own colleagues in politics, his rivals in the Indian leadership who didn't hesitate to dispatch him from the position of Congress President. And this happened whilst he was very much alive and amongst them. What were they capable of when they had some reason to presume he was dead..."

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