



Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: The National Hero of India

Tirthankar Hudati¹, Arati Hudati²

¹ Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering, University Institute of Technology, The University of Burdwan, West Bengal, India.

² Department of History, Memari College, Memari, Burdwan, West Bengal, India

Abstract

“After a lapse of many years I am addressing one (Subhas Chandra Bose) who has come into the full light of recognition. My days have come to their end. I may not join him in the fight that is to come. I can only bless him, knowing that he has made his country’s sorrows his own, that his final reward is fast coming as his country’s freedom”- Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. Subhas Chandra Bose was a prominent Indian nationalist leader who played a key role in India’s struggle for independence from British rule. Here is a short summary of his life and contribution. Born on 23 January 1897 in Cuttack, Odisha. A brilliant student, he studied at Presidency College, Calcutta and later at Cambridge University in England. He passed the Indian Civil Services (ICS) exam but resigned in 1921 to join India’s freedom movement. Became a leader in the Indian National Congress but later disagreed with Mahatma Gandhi’s non-violence approach. Elected President of the Congress twice (1938 and 1939), but resigned due to ideological differences. Escaped house arrest in 1941 and travelled to Germany, then to Japan. Formed the Indian National Army (INA) with the help of Japan to fight against the British in India. Gave the famous slogan: “Give me blood, and I will give you freedom!” INA fought bravely in the northeastern parts of India, including Imphal and Kohima. Known as “Netaji”, meaning “Respected Leader.” Remembered for his patriotism, courage, and determination to free India by any means necessary.

Keywords: Elected President of the Congress, Indian National Army

Introduction

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23 January, 1897. He had a brilliant career at Calcutta University. Completing his studies in India, he went to England. In 1920 he passed the Indian Civil Service Examination. Next year he resigned from the civil service, because his nationalist instinct prevented him from serving the British Crown. Subhas Chandra Bose was a great leader.

Ideas of Subhas Bose And Direction Given by Him to The National Movement

At the age of twenty-four Subhas entered active politics. In 1923 he became a Swarajist, because he was not in love with the Gandhian thought. Bose was a political realist. He was a man of action. He was an agitator and an aggressive fighter for Swaraj. In May, 1939 he organised a new party known as the Forward Bloc. He said in the absence of a disciplined Left Wing Organisation, he could not fight the Orthodox Wing led by Gandhi.

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The Rift with Gandhi: Split in The Congress and Resignation of Subhas Bose

Subhas was elected as President of the Haripura Congress Session in 1938. He sought re-election as Congress President for the Tripuri (Madhya Pradesh) Session to be held in 1939. All radical elements inside the Congress

rallied around him. Gandhi supported Pattabhi Sitaramaya, an outstanding right-wing leader. Bose, however, won by a margin of 95 votes. Gandhi confessed: "the defeat is more mine than that of Sitaramaya."

After Subhas' re-election, a deep rift had started between the orthodox wing and Subhash as to the formation of the Congress Working Committee. Pant, Patel and some other members of the All- Indian National Congress Committee wanted that Subhash Chandra Bose should constitute his working committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhi." However, Gandhi refused to suggest any name. As a result, Bose resigned the Chairmanship of the Party on 29th April 1939. Next day Dr Rajendra Prasad was elected president in his place.

Tagore Blessed Subhash Bose

In an article in Bengali called 'Deshanayak', Rabindranath Tagore, in January 1940, wrote: "After a lapse of many years I am addressing one (Subhas) who has come into the full light of recognition. My days have come to an end. I may not join him in the fight that is to come. I can only bless him, knowing that he has made his country's sorrows his own and that his final reward is fast coming as his country's freedom."

Factors Responsible for the Rift Between the Gandhi Wing and Subhas: His Fundamental Difference with Gandhi

Bose had views radically different from those of Gandhi. In the first place, Subhas believed in Socialism and was well-known for his radical beliefs. This went against the policy and programme of Mahatma Gandhi. Secondly, Subhas believed that freedom could not be obtained without outside support of some kind. The political sky of Europe was overcast with the war-clouds. According to Dr. R.C. Majumdar, "Bose looked upon a war between Germany and Britain as a Godsend which would enable India to exploit the situation to her advantage." Subhash followed the principle that "England's necessity was India's opportunity". Gandhi and Nehru were opposed to this idea. Thirdly, Subhas believed in employing tact and diplomacy while dealing with his opponents. He could not appreciate the openness with which Gandhi laid all his cards on the table at the time of the Second Round Table Conference in London.

Formation of the Forward Bloc: Its Aims and Objectives

Subhas Bose's re-election as Congress President against Gandhi's wishes, his socialist beliefs and his radical ideas, these were, in brief, the factors that led to the formation of Forward Bloc in May 1939. Subhas announced that his Left-Wing Party would function within the Congress.

But the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution, disqualifying Subhas to be a member of any Congress Committee for three years. Forward Bloc's immediate objective. was liberation of India with the support of workers, peasants, youths and all radical organisations.

After attaining Independence Forward Bloc would work for the establishment of a Socialist Society. The measures suggested by Subhas Bose were as follows:

1. State-planning for the reorganisation of agriculture and industry on Socialist lines,
2. abolition of landlordism, i.e., Zamindari system,
3. making the 'right to work' as a fundamental right of the citizens,

4. providing workers several kinds of benefits, and
5. a new monetary and credit system.

Subhas Bose's Escape from House-Prison

The British Government looked upon Bose as their Enemy Number One. Subhas was arrested on 2nd July, 1940. While in prison he decided to go on an indefinite hunger-strike. On the seventh day of his fast the Government looked alarmed. They, therefore, released him on 5 December.

Thereafter Bose was kept in his house at Kolkata under strict watch. On 17 January, 1941 he left his home in disguise. He went to Peshawar dressed as a Pathan and then crossed the Indian border and reached Afghanistan. He then went to Russia. On 28 March, 1941 he flew from Moscow to Berlin (Germany).

Free India Centre In Berlin

Bose was well received by the German leaders. From there he started a deadly propaganda against the British imperialists. A Free India Centre was set up in Berlin in November 1941. He became the Editor-in-Chief of the English monthly Azad Hind.

Broadcasts were also started in English, Hindi, Bengali and other Indian languages from an Azad Hind Radio established in Berlin. Subhas' intense patriotism inspired Indians in a remarkable manner. Subhas Bose founded Free India Centre in Rome also.

Formation of the Indian national army (ina) Indian Independence League

In South-East Asia, the Japanese were getting one success after another against the British. As a result, a large number of Indian soldiers fell prisoners into their hands. After the fall of Singapore in February 1942 Japan captured over 40,000 Indian soldiers as prisoners of war.

The Japanese handed them over to Captain Mohan Singh, who had them surrendered to them after the Japanese forces attacked Malaya. British defeats roused great hopes among Indian soldiers. They were ready to take action, which led to the formation of the Indian Independence League.

The Organiser of the League was Rash Behari Bose, an old revolutionary who had fled to Japan in 1915.

The League aimed at mobilising the members of the Indian community in the purpose of securing Indian independence.

The Tokyo Conference

Indian officers, both military and civil, proceeded to Tokyo to meet the Japanese High Command. At the Tokyo Conference (28 March to 31 March, 1942), the following decisions were taken

1. to expand and strengthen the Indian Independence League,
2. to form under the overall command of the League an Indian National Army (INA), i.e., an Army of Indian Liberation, and
3. to hold a Conference at Bangkok to consolidate these decisions.

The Bangkok Conference: The Ina Was Now Formally Established

The Bangkok Conference was held from 15 June to 23 June. More than 150 delegates from Malaya, Singapore, Burma, Thailand, Hongkong, Manila and Java attended the Conference.

It passed many resolutions, including one which stated

that Shri Subhas Chandra Bose returned from Europe to lead the thousands of Indians who joined the INA (Azad Hind Fauj) which was formally launched on 1st September, 1942."

The INA was similar to that of the tricolour. It bore the symbol of the Springing Tiger. A Council of Action was formed under the Presidentship of Rash Behari (Commander-in-Chief of the Indian National Army) alongside the Government with the arms, ships and aeroplanes of the INA.

Ina's Struggle for India's Freedom and Subhas Chandra's Contribution to The Same

Subhas had accepted the invitation of the Bangkok Conference. He left Germany in a German U-Boat and reached Japan on 13 June, 1943. He arrived at Singapore on 2nd July, 1943. Rash Behari happily surrendered all his powers to him. On 5th July Subhas took the salute of the INA. He was greeted as Netaji—the Great Leader.

Subhas Becomes the Supreme Commander of the Ina

On 26 August 1943 Subhas officially took charge of the Indian National Army and became its Supreme Commander. He addressed the army men in these words:

"The Azad Hind Fauj has to be like a steamroller. Let us continue to fight till the National Flag flies over the Viceroy's House in New Delhi."

The Women's regiment, Rani of Jhansi Regiment, was to be 500 strong. It was commanded by Dr. Laxmi Swaminathan, who was made a Captain, later to become Lt. Colonel. A remarkable lady by any standard. — Col. N.S. Gill

Formation of The Provisional Government of Free India

On 21 October, 1943 he announced the formation of the Provisional Government of Free India and declared War on the Allies. Nine countries including Japan, Germany, Italy, Burma (Myanmar) and Thailand gave recognition to the Provisional Government. The slogans—Jai Hind (Victory to India) and Delhi Chalo (march to Delhi)—became the battle cry of the INA.

From Singapore Netaji flew back to Tokyo where he was received with full honours due to the Head of the Government of Free India. On 8 November, 1943 Japan handed over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Provisional Government of India. In the last week of December Subhas paid a visit to these islands and renamed them as Shaheed and Swaraj Islands respectively.

Ina's Victories in South-East Asia

The INA along with the Japanese army overran many territories in South-East Asia. In 1944 they advanced up to the very frontier of India. They captured Kohima and reached Imphal (now in Nagaland and Manipur States respectively). They had the good fortune of planting Tricolour Flag for the first time on the 19 March, 1944. Shah Nawaz Khan, the Commander of one of the INA Brigades, wrote: "While the INA was on the offensive, there was not a single occasion on which our forces were defeated on the battle field".

The Defeat of Japan Sealed the Fate of The Ina

The INA's victories were short-lived. Monsoon started before the fall of Imphal and by the end of May 1944 the Japanese forces started their retreat. Even then the Japanese and along with them the INA men continued to hold on to Burma for almost a year.

After that things just went from bad to worse. Rangoon was

recaptured by the British early in May 1945. INA men were disarmed and made prisoners of war.

The surrender of Japan on August 15 sealed the fate of the INA also.

Netaji left Rangoon for Bangkok. Thereafter he flew to Tokyo. While on way to Tokyo he is said to have received fatal injuries in the plane crash. The Japanese official version was that Netaji died on 18 August, 1945.

Significance of The Struggle of The Ina

Although INA failed in its objective of liberating India from the British yoke, its contribution to India's freedom struggle is unforgettable.

First, the INA and their leader Netaji received great honours from the country for their heroic struggle against the British Raj. The trial of the INA officers—Shah Nawaz Khan, G.S. Dhillon and Prem Sehgal—in the Red Fort at Delhi evoked the sympathy of the entire nation.

The Congress took up their cause. Jawaharlal Nehru, Bhulabhai Desai and Tej Bahadur Sapru fought the case on behalf of the INA officers. The government viewed these developments with alarm. The INA officers were ultimately set free.

Second, the INA spirit started affecting the armed forces of the country. The Indian Navy rose in revolt at Mumbai in February 1946. Similar uprisings took place at Kolkata, Chennai and Karachi also. The naval revolts shook the very foundation on which the British Empire rested.

Third, INA's struggle was an important factor which led the British to quit India.

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