

# Role and contributions of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in India's freedom struggle – A historical analysis

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**Abstract** - Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose is not only a national hero but a true patriot who sacrificed his whole life to liberate the sufferings of Indian masses from the shackles of British imperialism. Though, he had passed ICS exam (Indian Civil Service) he refused the coveted luxurious white color job and dedicated his life for India's freedom struggle. He was a keen observer of not only Indian society but also Japanese and European societies. Due to his constant travel within the country and abroad, he was clearly aware of several social problems persisting and its magnitude. He had clarity about the intentions of British colonial rule. He had been twice elected as the President of the Indian National Congress, was put behind the bars for eleven times and had escaped from house arrest on the eve of Second World War. During a time, when transportation facility was very meager and not up to the extent of present-day world, he traveled all the way to Afghanistan and finally to Germany in disguise of Orlando Mazotta (Italian name). There Subhas Chandra Bose started mobilizing the masses through his radio lectures. His lectures were so popular, that, it is said, in terms of contribution to India's freedom struggle and popularity, Mr. Bose is next only to Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose had carried out a perilous 90 days long submarine journey and reached Far East, where he formed the Azad Hind Government and its dedicated self-reliant provincial military force, the Indian National Army (I.N.A). He could mobilize the non-resident Indians and during the 2nd World War, nine independent countries gave recognition to Mr. Bose's government in exile. Subhas Chandra Bose's charismatic personality had attracted a number of contemporary political personalities in Europe and in East Asia and Bose was revered by them as Netaji (our respected leader as called by non-resident Indians). Bose's army had hoisted the tri-colour Indian flag in the Indian territory. This paper is an attempt to highlight the important contributions of Subhash Chandra Bose, in India's freedom struggle.

**Index Terms** - Contributions, Freedom, Self-reliance, Mobilisation, Formation

## EARLY LIFE

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23rd January 1897 in Cuttack, Orissa Division, Bengal Province, to Prabhavati Dutt Bose and Janakinath Bose, an advocate by profession, belonging to a Kayastha family. He was the ninth in a family of 14 children. His family was pretty well off. He was admitted to the Protestant European School (presently Stewart High School) in Cuttack and then shifted to the Ravenshaw Collegiate School. After securing the second position in the matriculation examination in 1913, he was admitted to the Presidency College. He was influenced by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna after reading their works at the age of 16. He felt that his religion is more important than his studies. In those days, the British in Calcutta often made offensive remarks to the Indians in public places and insulted them openly. This behavior of the British as well as the outbreak of World War I began to influence his thinking. Despite, he was ranked fourth in the Indian Civil Services Exam (ICS) and got selected for the administrative job, he rejected the most coveted job because according to Subhash Chandra Bose, accepting that ICS job offer, is nothing but serving the British.

He resigned from his civil service job and returned to India. He started the newspaper 'Swaraj' and took charge of publicity for the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. His mentor was 'Chittaranjan Das' who was a spokesman for aggressive nationalism in Bengal. In the year 1923, Bose was elected as the President of All India Youth Congress and also the Secretary of Bengal State Congress. He was also the editor of the newspaper "Forward", founded by Chittaranjan Das. When, Chittaranjan Das was elected as Mayor of Calcutta Municipal Corporation in 1924, Bose worked as its CEO. In a roundup of nationalists in 1925, Bose was arrested and sent to prison in

Mandalay, where he contracted tuberculosis. In 1927, after being released from prison, Bose became general secretary of the Congress party and worked with Jawaharlal Nehru for independence. In late December 1928, Bose organised the Annual Meeting of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta. His most memorable role was as General Officer Commanding (GOC) Congress Volunteer Corps.

#### ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

The towering charisma of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose as a military leader, puts him at the fore front of Indian independence movement. Being a great orator, prolific writer and an epitome of simple living and great thinking, he was always known as a man who always practiced, what he preached. Infact he was the first Prime Minister of India in exile and supreme commander of INA. During and after the 2nd World War, Bose's patriotic attitude, academic excellence, authorship, and journalistic approach was highly appreciated. The first Indian Nobel laureate, Rabindra Nath Tagore had adored Bose as Deshnayak i.e. country's national hero, while Mahatma Gandhi called him as "Patriot of patriots, prince of patriots.

During the mid-1930s Bose travelled in Europe, visiting Indian students and European politicians, including Benito Mussolini. He observed party organisation and saw communism and fascism in action. In this period, he also researched and wrote the first part of his book 'The Indian Struggle', which covered the country's independence movement in the years 1920-1934. Although it was published in London in 1935, the British government banned the book in the colony out of fears that it would encourage unrest. By 1938 Bose had become a leader of national stature and agreed to accept nomination as Congress President. He stood for self-governance, including the use of force against the British. This meant a confrontation with Mahatma Gandhi, who in fact opposed Bose's presidency, splitting the Indian National Congress party. The rift also divided Bose and Nehru. Bose appeared at the 1939 Congress meeting on a stretcher. He was elected president once again over Gandhi's preferred candidate Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Later due to enraging internal politics, he resigned.

On 22nd June 1939 Bose organised the 'All India Forward Bloc' a faction within the Indian National Congress. Bose advocated a campaign of mass civil disobedience to protest against Viceroy Lord Linlithgow's decision to declare war on India's behalf without consulting the Congress leadership. He was thrown in jail by the British but was released following a seven-day hunger strike. Bose's house in Calcutta was kept under surveillance by the criminal investigation department. Bose's arrest and subsequent release set the scene for his escape to Germany, via Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.

In Germany, he was attached to the Special Bureau for India and was responsible for broadcasting on the German-sponsored Azad Hind Radio. He founded the 'Free India' Center in Berlin and created the Indian Legion (consisting of some 4500 soldiers) out of Indian prisoners of war who had previously fought for the British in North Africa prior to their capture by Axis forces.

In 1943, Bose left for Japan. After reaching Japan, Subhash Chandra Bose took over the leadership of Indian Independence League. Bose was able to reorganise the fledgling army and organised massive support among the expatriate Indian population in south-east Asia, who lent their support by both enrolling in the Indian National Army, as well as financially in response to Bose's call for sacrifice for the independence cause.

Netaji was the early champion of 'Women rights' and 'Women empowerment', who strongly believed that participation of women in freedom struggle is very important. Being a great devotee of mother goddess – Durga, his ideas about 'Women Empowerment' were not simply not only ideas or lip service, instead he proved the fact by establishing the world's first all women regiment within Indian National Army. He strictly instructed the trainers to avoid inadvertent use of rough and vulgar language, while training the ladies, whom Netaji referred as 'Rani's'. Indian National Army had a separate women's unit, the 'Rani of Jhansi Regiment' (named after Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, who fought against Britishers) headed by Capt. Lakshmi Swaminathan, which is seen as a first of its kind in Asia. This was remarkably one of the greatest achievements to induct traditional home bound Indian girls and women as combat soldiers.

Known for his motivational speeches, Bose, most famous quote was "Give me blood and I shall give you freedom". This motivated many youngsters to be a part

of freedom movement against British imperialism. The INA's first commitment was in the Japanese thrust towards Eastern Indian frontiers of Manipur. INA's special forces, the Bahadur Group, were involved in operations behind enemy lines both during the diversionary attacks in Arakan, as well as the Japanese thrust towards Imphala and Kohima. On the Indian mainland, an Indian Tricolour, modelled after that of the Indian National Congress, was raised for the first time in the town of Moirang, in Manipur, in north-eastern India. The adjacent towns of Kohima and Imphal were then encircled and placed under siege by divisions of the Japanese Army, working in conjunction with the Burmese National Army, and with Brigades of the INA, known as the Gandhi and Nehru Brigades. This attempt at conquering the Indian mainland had the Axis codename of 'Operation U-Go'.

The Japanese also took possession of Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 1942 and a year later, the Provisional Government and the INA were established in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with Lt. Col. A. D. Loganathan appointed its Governor General. The islands were renamed Shaheed (Martyr) and Swaraj (Independence). However, the Japanese Navy remained in essential control of the island's administration.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's efforts of social reforms took off in full-fledged manner on a foreign soil as he took over as Prime Minister of India in exile and supreme commander of the Indian National Army. True to his secular and egalitarian outlook, his policy decisions and actions initiated a series of social reforms.

For the first time in the modern history of India, inter dining of Indian soldiers and officers belonging to all castes and religion was introduced. This practice was encouraged against 'Caste system' prevailing in Indian society. Soldiers of Azad Hind Fauz or Indian National Army, were served food cooked in the common kitchen and shared space in common barracks. These are the first successful steps in breaking the shackles of untouchability prevalent in Indian society. Celebrating all religious festivals were introduced in Indian National Army. One of the popular National salute "Jai Hind" was coined and popularized by him as National Salutation. The Marching song of Indian National Army "Kadam Kadam Badayeja" has been incorporated by Indian

Armed Forces later. As per the belief Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose died in plane accident. The death occurred from third-degree burns on 18th August 1945, after his overloaded Japanese plane crashed in Japanese-ruled Formosa (now Taiwan).

## CONCLUSION

For his immense contribution to India's freedom struggle, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was featured on the postage stamps in India from 1964, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2016 and 2018. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport at Kolkata, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Island, formerly Ross Island and many other institutions in India are named after him.

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