

The Lost Hero:- Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose

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Towards a revival of the Bose legacy Madhuri Bose “Rose early but found Prabha still suffering. A son was born at midday...” reads a brief entry in Janakinath’s diary dated 23 January 1897. The newborn, the ninth child of Janakinath Bose and Prabhavati Devi was named Subhas. Janakinath was then practicing law in Cuttack, in the state of Odisha. He headed a large extended family, in which, Subhas was to later recall in his autobiography *An Indian Pilgrim*, he felt “like a thoroughly insignificant being. My parents awed me to a degree”. It is now 112 years since the birth of Subhas Chandra Bose, and sixty-four years since his last known journey out of South East Asia, reportedly to the Soviet Union, in mid-August 1945. On 23 January every year Subhas’ birth anniversary is celebrated across India. Speeches extolling Bose’s charisma and personality, his unique contributions towards Indian independence continue to be made, and stirring national songs continue to be sung in his honor. On that day, in addition to institutionally sponsored events, spontaneous



remembrance ceremonies organized by neighborhood and citizens’ groups also take place. This is a unique feature associated only with Subhas’ birth anniversary which reflects the depth of people’s veneration for him after more than half a century of his disappearance.

This, in a sense, is a fitting tribute to a man who dedicated his life to liberating India from British colonial rule, and had a vision to make Free India one of the leading nations in the world. But 23rd January will pass and Bose will again be relegated to the pages of history. Though deified by many, his ideology and mission are forgotten, or are not even known by the younger generations of Indians. From his entry into the Indian political movement in the early 1920s, throughout his prison years and bouts of serious illnesses, Subhas had developed his thoughts on social, political and economic issues which then formed the basis of his ideology. His famous address as the President of the 51st Session of the Indian National Congress at Haripura in 1938 contains the crux of his political

and economic thinking and plans. Is it widely known that it was in Haripura that Subhas launched the very first Planning Commission for India? In all his key addresses in India and abroad, in articles published in various journals, Subhas articulated his vision for Free India. In his view the most important problems to be addressed in independent India were that of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, challenges which have still not been met today after sixty years of independence. Together with the celebratory functions, a more fitting tribute to Subhas' memory will be to effectively propagate his vision and ideology which will in turn promote a better understanding of the history and politics of India, and also inspire the present generation of Indians to shape India on the basis of the high moral values and principles that Subhas stood for and practiced all his life.

About the Museum in Cuttack:-

Located at Cuttack in Odisha, the Netaji Birth Place Museum is an ancestral abode of the great son of the Indian soil, Netaji Subash Chandra Bose. His very name is so powerful that it would not fail in reviving the passion of revolution and patriotism in any Indian. His sacrifices and struggle for the nation can never be forgotten, and have already gained a permanent position in the golden pages of the history of Indian Independence.

Janakinath was the father of Netaji and for this reason the place is also referred as **Janakinath Bhawan**. Born in the year 1897, Netaji shared the house with his huge family of eight brothers and six sisters. The house is a two storied L-shaped building with a temple at the back side. It also has a big stable on the other end. The place has been renovated completely and accorded the status of a museum in the year 2007.

The living rooms of the house have been converted into galleries displaying different photographs of Netaji and his family members. The photographs depict his story at different stages of his life. Netaji Birth Place Museum also contains the old household furniture used by the family in earlier times. There is a library section in the house, which contains the important documents, 22 original letters written by Netaji and a number of books highlighting the biography of Netaji. It also contains the Vedas and other Upanishads.

The museum's gallery also showcases the sophisticated toilets of those days used in the Janakinath Bhawan. Government has also made efforts to repair the dilapidated old stable and horse cart used by the Bose family. The place celebrates the birthday of Netaji every year, with prayers, cultural programs and blood donation camps. **Visit the Netaji Birth Place Museum to relive the olden time and feel the patriotic zeal of Indian freedom fighters.** This place attracts many historians every year.

Early life of Netaji: 1897–1921

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23 January 1897 (at 12.10 pm) in Cuttack, Odisha Division Bengal Province to Prabhavati Devi and Janakinath Bose, an advocate. He was the ninth child of a total of fourteen siblings. He was admitted to the Protestant European School like his other brothers and sisters in January 1902. He continued his studies at this school which was run by the Baptist Mission up to the year 1909 and then shifted to the Ravenshaw Collegiate School. The day Subhas was admitted to this school, Beni Madhav Das, the then Headmaster of the school, understood how brilliant and scintillating was the genius of this little boy. After securing the second position in the matriculation

examination in 1913, he got admitted to the Presidency College where he studied briefly. His nationalistic temperament came to light when he was expelled for assaulting Professor Oaten for the latter's anti-India comments. He later joined the Scottish Church College at the University of Kolkata and passed his B.A. in 1918 in philosophy. Bose left India in 1919 for England with a promise to his father that he would appear in the Indian Civil Services Examination (ICS). He went to study in Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, and matriculated on 19 November 1919. He came fourth in the ICS examination and was selected but he did not want to work under an alien government which would mean serving the British. As he stood on the verge of taking the plunge by resigning from the Indian Civil Service in 1921, he wrote to his elder brother Sarat: "Only on the soil of sacrifice and suffering can we raise our national edifice" Finally, he resigned from his civil service job on 23 April 1921 and returned to India.

His father named Rai Bahadur Janakinath Bose was a Government pleader. In his childhood, the influence of his mother Prabhavati Devi and that of the Headmaster named Beni Madhav Das taught him to learn about the ancient heritage of his motherland and to love India more than anything else in his life.

Subhas was sent to jail about eleven times in his life. He became the President of the Congress Party, but later, resigned due to his differences of opinion with Gandhiji. When the World War II broke in 1941, Subhas was interned in his Calcutta home under constant police guard'. He did not come out of his house for 40 days, nor did he see anyone during that period. And on the 41st midnight, he escaped in the disguise of a Maulavi and reached Germany under an Italian diplomatic passport with an Italian name of Orlando Mazzota.

In Berlin, he formed the first Indian National Army (I.N.A.) with the 'prisoners of war' who were Indian soldiers serving the British Army. Now he came to be known as 'Netaji'. Subhas also founded an Indian Radio Station called Azad Hind Radio in Berlin, from where he had very often to broadcast for his countrymen suggesting about their political activities during the war.

From Berlin, Subhas went to Japan, where the I. N. A. was enlarged with the addition of more soldiers and civilians. The I.N.A. was now a large army. Netaji, as the Chief Commander of the I.N.A., declared war against the British. The I.N.A. fought tooth and nail in the Burma front, and hoisted Indian National Flag in Imphal at Manipur. The war took suddenly a strange turn, because the Japanese who were I.N.A.'s allied forces surrendered. So Netaji had to order retreat of his I.N.A.

Netaji's senior army officials advised him to go to Russia for help. He started for Russia in a Japanese aircraft which unfortunately met with an accident at the time of taking off, and the great Indian leader Netaji died on the spot on 18th August, 1945.

A Life for India:-

Throughout his political career, India's liberation from British rule remained Bose's foremost political goal; indeed, it was a lifelong obsession. As he explained in his most important work, *The Indian Struggle*, the political party he envisioned "will stand for the complete political and economic liberation of the Indian people." Speaking of Bose a few days after his death in August 1945, Jawaharlal Nehru said:

"In the struggle for the cause of India's independence he has given his life and has

escaped all those troubles which brave soldiers like him have to face in the end. He was not only brave but had deep love for freedom. He believed, rightly or wrongly, that whatever he did was for the independence of India... Although I personally did not agree with him in many respects, and he left us and formed the Forward Bloc, nobody can doubt his sincerity. He struggled throughout his life for the independence of India, in his own way.”

Along with his abiding love for his country, Bose held an equally passionate hatred of the imperial power that ruled it, Great Britain. In a radio address broadcast from Berlin on March 1st, 1943, he exclaimed that Britain’s demise was near, and predicted that it would be “India’s privilege to end that Satanic Empire.” The fundamental principle of his foreign policy, Bose declared in a May 1945 speech in Bangkok, is that “Britain’s enemy is India’s friend.” Although these two speeches are from his final years, they express views he had held since before his April 1921 resignation from the Indian Civil Service. It was this principle of making friends with Britain’s enemies in the hope that they would assist him in liberating India that brought him in 1941 to Germany and then, in 1943, to Japan.

Ideology of Netaji:-

Bose had clearly expressed his belief that democracy was the best option for India. The pro-Bose thinkers believe that his authoritarian control of the Azad Hind was based on political pragmatism and a post-colonial recovery doctrine rather than any anti-democratic belief. However, during the war (and possibly as early as the 1930s), Bose seems to have decided that no democratic system could be adequate to overcome India’s poverty and social inequalities, and he wrote that a socialist state similar to that of Soviet Russia (which he had also seen and

admired) would be needed for the process of national re-building. Accordingly, some suggest that Bose’s alliance with the Axis during the war was based on more than just pragmatism, and that Bose was a militant nationalist, though not a Nazi nor a Fascist, for he supported empowerment of women, secularism and other liberal ideas; alternatively, others consider he might have been using populist methods of mobilization common to many post-colonial leaders. Bose never liked the Nazis, but when he failed to contact the Russians for help in Afghanistan, he approached the Germans and Italians for help. His comment was that if he had to shake hands with the devil for India’s independence he would do that.

Disappearance and Death of Netaji:-

The afterlife notion also persists because Netaji’s real life encourages conspiracy theorists. When the story of Bose’s death in 1945 reached Viceroy Wavell he said: ‘I suspect it very much. It is just what should be given out if he meant to go “underground”.’ In 1946 Gandhi claimed that ‘inner voices’ were telling him ‘Subhas is still alive and biding his time somewhere’. Bose certainly had form as an escaper. He spent his life moving easily, sometimes secretly, from country to country. In 1941 he escaped from British house arrest in Calcutta and reached Afghanistan from where, aided by the Italian ambassador and disguised as an Italian businessman ‘Orlando Mazzota’, he travelled up through central Asia to Moscow and from there to Berlin. Soon Britons and Indians could hear his propaganda broadcasts stirring up revolt against the British Empire and boasting about his Indian Legion, a body of soldiers trained by and intended to fight alongside the German Wehrmacht. In 1943, discouraged by Hitler’s lackluster support for Indian independence and aware that the theatre

of war where he needed to pit his troops was now the Far East, he travelled half-way round the world under water by first German and then Japanese submarine to Japan. Admired there, he received official support and set up his 50,000-strong Azad Hind Fauj or Indian National Army (INA), recruited largely from Indian soldiers of the British Empire Army who had been captured by the Japanese in their successful offensive of 1942.

If Netaji became a mystic in his afterlife then this too had a precedent in his former life. Always ascetic and distant from personal relationships (although in 1937 he probably married his Austrian secretary with whom he had a child, Anita, in 1942), he was a student of Ramakrishna; the 19th-century Bengali mystic whose followers believe was an incarnation of God. As a student Bose left home in search of the religious life. In his unfinished autobiography *Indian Pilgrim* he wrote of this time: 'The desire to find a Guru grew stronger and stronger within me ... We looked up as many Sadhus as we could and I returned home a wiser man.'

One of many letters discovered in the Faizabad trunks said:-Crores [many millions] of Indians have put their eyes upon you. One day the Lord will himself salvage the sorrow of the people, the evil will be destroyed and good will prevail. You are our God in human form.

Bose saw his struggle as a moral crusade. The British Empire was evil and he was fighting for the good, in epic terms that Indians love – 'Give me your blood and I will give you freedom,' was his cry. In a country where the lines between mortality, sainthood and the divine are finely drawn, why not bring back the epic hero, Netaji, as a symbolic figure to achieve a Divine Age on earth?

Conclusion:-

When one thinks of the Indian independence movement in the 1930s and early 1940s, two figures most readily come to mind: Mahatma Gandhi, the immensely popular and "saintly" frail pacifist, and his highly respected, Fabian Socialist acolyte, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Less familiar to Westerners is Subhash Chandra Bose, a man of comparable stature who admired Gandhi but despaired at his aims and methods, and who became a bitter rival of Nehru. Bose played a very active and prominent role in India's political life during most of the 1930s. For example, he was twice (1938 and 1939) elected President of the Indian National Congress, the country's most important political force for freedom from the *Raj*, or British rule.

While his memory is still held in high esteem in India, in the West, Bose is much less revered, largely because of his wartime collaboration with the Axis powers. Both before and during the Second World War, Bose worked tirelessly to secure German and Japanese support in freeing his beloved homeland of foreign rule. During the final two years of the war, Bose — with considerable Japanese backing — led the forces of the Indian National Army into battle against the British.

A deeper study of his works will show that many of his social and economic plans still remain valid under present day conditions. In the current Indian situation where there is a bankruptcy of leadership, ideas, commitment and action, Subhas' message, through his writings, speeches and commentaries may help to resurrect the failing morale of those who are working to bring positive change in this country. Above all, Subhas' life-long emphasis on the importance of communal harmony and unity among people,

irrespective of birth, caste, creed and religion, has not only remained relevant, in fact it has even gained a sense of urgency. In a world torn by ethnic, tribal, religious and regional conflicts, Bose's unqualified rejection of bigotry of any kind from the very outset of his entry into the Indian political scene, and his repeated call for unity among all the people of India, famously reflected in the motto of his Indian National Army - Unity, Faith and Sacrifice, can help to create the only secure foundation of contemporary India. Conscious of the grave danger that communalism posed to a country such as India, where people of many faiths were inextricably mixed together over centuries, Subhas had again and again warned against the virus of religious bigotry entering the fabric of politics.

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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Extending A Helping Hand



The Members of Maa Narayani Employees' Fund of Information & Public Relations Department have extended a helping hand towards one helpless child Jeeban Pradhan, who is undergoing medical treatment at Acharya Harihar Regional

Cancer Research Centre, Cuttack by handing over a cash of Rs.10,000/- & wishing speedy recovery of the ailing child.