



Netaji : An Icon of Courage, Erudition and Nationalism

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Subhash Chandra Bose was born at Odia Bazar Cuttack on 23 January 1897. He was the 9th child and 6th son among fourteen. His father Janakinath Bose was a renowned lawyer and his mother Pravabati Devi was a pious lady. Janakinath was once Chairman of the Cuttack Municipality and was conferred the Rayabhadur title by the British Government.

Subhas began his early schooling at the Cuttack Protestant European School(1902-08) where he realised that foreign and Anglo-Indian students were given better attention, but he was too young to agitate. He moved into the Ravenshaw Collegiate School and studied there from 1909 to 1913. His headmasters, erudite Benimadhav Das and nationalist Narayan Prasad Mohanty were endearing. They had great influence on Subhas. In his teens Subhas had ventured into social service at the outbreak of cholera and smallpox epidemic while brooding about social reforms. He loved to care for the sick and destitute in the

poverty stricken society. In proving his merit, in the meantime, he stood 2nd in the Matriculation examination among the Bengal-Bihar students.



Subhas joined the Kolkata Presidency College in Calcutta for higher studies. Here a students unrest in 1916 against English lecturer Mr. Oten caused his suspension as he was thought to be the mastermind. It was an irony that the same Mr. Oten wrote eulogy on him in later years.

He took admission in Scottish Church College and graduated in first class with honours in philosophy. Next he enrolled in MA Class in investigative Psychology. In his heart no love was lost for Odisha in general and Cuttack in particular, whenever here he used to descend on meaningful social service. On the one hand he came under the spell of guru Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1836-1886) and his disciple Swamy Vivekananda (1862-1902) after going through their teachings. He wanted to lead an ascetic life. He had left his home on several



occasions. Once he had gone in a spiritual mission for six months to find a Sadguru or right spiritual teacher. He, however, could not take spiritual initiation from the famed monk Indra Das. On the other hand he developed inclination towards martial training in keeping with his family tradition.

In line with the wishes of his father and elder brother Subhas left for England on 15 September 1919 to prepare for the ICS examination. He took admission in Cambridge University. Success came for him handy. He stood 4th in 1920 ICS examination, but this couldn't make him happy. The shocking news of the brutal Jaliwanawalabag massacre of innocent citizens changed him altogether. Subhas, the would be high-ranking administrator, was transformed into a nationalistic and patriotic Subhas. His young mind became beligerent. He felt his national and spiritual commitment would certainly remain unrealized with the cosy ICS job, thus he resigned.

Subhas was an adherent of Chittaranjan Das, a noted lawyer with huge income who was honoured with the Deshabandhu title and Gandhiji the Mahatma in 1919 at the Nagpur Congress Session. In a letter to the Deshabandhu Subhas had offered his body and soul in the service of the motherland. This expression revealed the strength of love toward his country. He returned from England on 16th July 1921 and met Gandhiji for the first time in Bombay at his Laberanam Road residence. It was like a catechism. He was satisfied with Gandhiji's vision on non cooperation movement, nonpayment of taxes and the freedom movement as a whole. He was 28 years junior in age to Gandhiji. He jumped into the freedom movement at the instance of Gandhiji and Deshabandhu. This strengthened his own resolve.

The Deshabandhu was his leader, guide and inspirer. Subhas was loyal to him and edited

his "Forward" newspaper in later years. He was taken into custody on 25 October 1924. He spent time in different jails and was shifted to Mandale jail in Burma from where he was released on 31st May 1929 after serving three and half years. During the imprisonment he was elected as a Corporator of the Calcutta Corporation. Then he became Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation in 1931. His good work made him a popular leader.

In 1928 annual Congress Conference the young Subhas was the de facto leader of the volunteers. He was impatient and put forth radical proposals. Here too he moved a demand relating to Indian independence which drew attention of everyone. In 1929 Congress Conference he called for unity among workers and farmers to set up parallel rule. He was a progressive thinker. In the second phase of his political life he went out of the country as an emissary and conducted talks with national leaders of some foreign countries about Indian National movement and in the process gained political maturity.

On 1st January 1932 the Congress Working Committee, dissatisfied with the works of the government decided to launch Satyagraha. Within a few days Subhas was arrested with other freedom fighters and put into Madras jail. His TB relapsed. He had to bear the galling pain of appendix. The medical treatment, he received in India didn't help. He was released on 22 February 1933 for better treatment. He spent four years, up to 1937 abroad. One of his mentors, Vithalbhai Patel, died in a Geneva clinic on 22nd October 1933. Subhas was treated in Vienna. In 1938 Subhas was, elected as the President of the Indian National Congress at the Haripura Session. He enjoyed the confidence of Gandhiji. There were ideological differences, but he never threw any challenge to Gandhiji's leadership. He loved and revered Gandhiji who in his opinion was the best



ever leader of the 380 million people. In 1939 Tripura Congress session he proposed for the issue of ultimatum to the British to leave India and transfer the power to Indians. The call was too early for Gandhiji to accept. Subhas was re-elected as the Congress President at the Tripura Congress Conference defeating Pattavi Sitaramaya who this time was supported by Gandhiji and Sardar Ballavbhai Patel. Gandhiji took exception to the development. He said Pattavi's defeat was his defeat. Disillusioned Subhas and all working Committee members resigned. On 22 June 1939 he formed Forward Bloc a political front, within the Congress. He visited Odhisa as the 2nd World War broke out. He was a proponent of a separate Odhisha State consisting of all Odia speaking areas. He broke away with the Congress and took over the leadership (as commander-in-chief) of the Forward Bloc. He had socialist views, but he was not a communist. His oratorical power, iron will and the strength of leadership unnerved the British rulers.

In 1940 Subhas toured Odhisha and addressed public meetings. He spoke against misrule of the British Government. Pt. Nilakanth Das and Pt. Godavarish Mishra had met him in his Calcutta residence and at his direction a coalition government was formed in Odisha. The greatest achievement of this government was setting up of the Utkal University apart from welfare works. He also worked as the treasurer of the Gopabandhu Memorial. His famous saying was; "Give me blood, I'll give you freedom." The last six years of his life was full of events. He was arrested on 29 November 1940. He began hunger fast till death. The nervous British government set him free but later put him under house arrest. In a notable development desperate to seek foreign help Subhas left his Elgin Road house in disguise as a North Indian Muslim in the night of 17th

January 1941 in his car driven by his nephew Dr. Sisir Kumar Bose. He reached Kabul via Dhanbad and Peshawar. He procured a passport in the name of an Italian radio operator Orlando Mezeta. He reached Berlin on 3rd April 1941 and formed Azad Hind Fouz with Indian troops taken as POW by Germany. Of the 100000 British troops surrendered to Japan 40,000 were Indians who aligned with the Fouz. Subhas had met Hitler, leaders of the Italy and Japan. He formed Azad Hind Government and was accorded support by Burma, Japan and Phillipines. His main aim was to achieve Independence through armed struggle. But destiny had something in store. On 17th August 1945 his air travel began from Saigon to Tokyo. He reached Formosa the next day from where he boarded a plane again. The plane took off at 2.30 PM and broke down in moments. Nothing authentically was known about this brave patriot, fearless leader, rare revolutionary's disappearance or demise. The mystery is still unresolved, but the grateful country remembers this great son for ever. Jai Hind.

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