

Saluting August 15,1947

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August 15, 1947 is a glorious and memorable day for all Indians, the day when the long suppressed nation got utterance. It was the day when India got her independence from the mighty British Empire. The day reminds us about the end of the British Colonial Authority from India and the end of the widespread movements that continued to roll the nation's economy. The day brought new light and ray of new hopes for India. When the world was asleep, India woke up to life and freedom. A new nation was born on that day bringing the end of the colonial rule, suppressed agitations, movements, etc.

First, the Portuguese came to India in the 16th century followed by the East India Company in the guise of traders in Bengal. The British East India Company came to India in the middle and late

1700s and occupied vast tracts of Indian soil for 347 years whereas the Portuguese and the French had kept their influence on some parts of the country. British East India Company generated more than ten percent of England's revenue per annum to Britain by slaughtering the vibrant economy of India. Against this troubled backdrop, the British rise to power was slow, but remarkably steady because of the competition of the French with the British in acquiring Indian territory.

After the Battle of Plassey, the British Army under the leadership of Robert Clive defeated the Nawab of Bengal and the British East India Company was established. That was the initial entry of British Raj in India. The Battle of Buxur encouraged the East India Company to gain and strengthen administrative rights over Bihar, Bengal and Orissa in 1765. A series of Acts were proclaimed by the British Parliament to strengthen the administrative control of the newly conquered provinces of India, like the Regulating Act of 1773, the Indian Act of 1784, the Charter Act of 1813. Then, the English language was introduced as the medium of instruction in India in 1835 by

the British Empire to strengthen their grip over Indians and to effect broad reforms within colonial India. The triggering of the Indian rebellion of 1857 was a period of uprising in India against the British Rule and it was India's first National War of Independence. It brought about signs of valour and bravery about the sacrifice made by the freedom fighters of Indian heroes with accounts of unimaginable horror and destruction. The uprising was the result of creation of cultural and ethnic differences between the British Officers and Indian soldiers. The policy of divide and rule and attack on the culture triggered widespread resentment among the Indian rulers like Mughals and ex-Peshwas. The war of 1752 brought about a turning point in the history of modern India. The British embarked upon a series of reforms to pacify and integrate the Indian elite and rulers. The Rani of Jhansi joined the rebellion to protect her own interest. Following the Uprising, the British Crown in Parliament formally took over the responsibility of ruling India from the British East India Company and at the end, the Moghul Dynasty came to an end and Queen Victoria took the reign of India with the title of Empress of India in 1877.

What was happening in the Indian society all this while was difficult to overlook. A cultural revolution under the leadership of Raja Ram Mohan Ray had been taking place even before the event of Uprising of 1857. Sati was banned, the Arya Samaj came forward to propagate a new and refined religion, education for women was encouraged and a new breed of intellectuals taking their root mostly from Bengal, took the mantle of showing their presence in Indian freedom movement. This new breed of Indians was a power to reckon with. After the Uprising, India was poised at the dawn of a new era of political awareness.

Dadabhai Naoroji was the first Indian to become a member of the House of Commons of the British Empire by successfully contesting an election. The concept of “Swaraj is my birth right” was coined by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, which thrilled and inspired the hearts of millions of Indians. Like Netaji, Tilak advocated the policy of extremism, non-violence and abandonment of British goods supported by Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Rajpat Rai. However, the Congress Party of 1906 did not support the acts of violence and disorder.

Bengal took the lead to start the first organised militant movements and it later took political turn giving birth to Indian National Congress with prominent moderate leaders seeking only their basic rights to appear for civil services examinations and more rights, economic in nature, for the people of the soil of the nation. Leaders like Lal Bal Pal and Shri Aurobindo adopted more radical approach for getting political independence from the British Raj. Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi came to the forefront to adopt the policies of non violence. Subash Chandra Bose adopted the policy of violence with military approach to engineer the independence movement. A proper mix of non-violence engineered by Mahatma Gandhi and violence launched by Netaji shook the strong foundation of unshakable British Empire. Leaders like Swami Sahajanand Saraswati advocated for economic freedom of the peasants and labour classes along with political freedom as British East India Company generated more than ten percent of England’s revenue for onward transfer to Britain. The Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi launched

the first Non-cooperation movement in 1920. The movement in the form of protest involved surrendering all titles, honorary offices and nominated posts in local bodies. All sorts of government functions and ceremonies were boycotted showing feeling of strong nationalism. But the British tried to suppress it with iron hand.

The concept and magnitude of the Non Cooperation Movement surprised every political leader in India. Gandhiji’s approach of Non Cooperation had touched every man on the street. People came out voluntarily to support Gandhi and his movement.

The government machinery did not actually break down, but came under visible strain and stress. Gandhiji with magical application of his usual innovative skill, mobilized the public in support of freedom movement and the country and the Congress rallied behind him. The right moment had arrived to launch the Quit India Movement. The unnerving part was that the launching of another Civil Disobedience Movement could coincide with the Japanese advances from the far-east towards India. It was an open rebellion championed by Gandhi and adopted by the

masses with voluntary willing spirit to court risks for the freedom that was to be achieved.

The British adopted inhuman and repressive policies in Punjab. On April 12, 1919, General REH Dyer who had taken over the troops in Punjab the day before, prohibited all meetings and gatherings. So when a group of unarmed people congregated at the Jallianawala Bagh, a walled park with only a single narrow entrance, on April 13, 1919 to celebrate the Sikh festival of Baisakhi, General Dyer ordered fire on the innocent people. What followed was to blight the pages of Indian History and its peoples' minds for a very long time to come. A peaceful congregation had been transformed into an unmitigated blood bath.

Later, during the court martial, General Dyer coldly observed that he had fired only 1600 rounds of ammunition on the crowd as that was all he had. He added that he would have fired more had he so deemed fit. It indicated the inhuman feeling of General Dyer to Indians and its freedom struggle.

The brutality of the Jallianawalla Bagh massacre

shocked the country. It also shook the moderates out of their stupor and brought Gandhiji out in the open.

In 1920, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian National Congress launched the first movement of protest – the Non-Cooperation Movement. It involved surrendering all titles, honorary offices and nominated posts in local bodies. Government functions and Darbars were to be boycotted. Parents were requested to withdraw their children from government schools and colleges. Indians stayed away from the British courts and army, and were to stand for elections to government and legislative bodies. Ahimsa or non-violence was to be observed strictly.

The oppressive mood of the British angered the Indian masses to an unbearable extent. Unfortunately, at a time when the movement was showing signs of success, a mob of 3000 people killed 25 policemen and one officer in Chauri Chaura. Similar incidents had taken place earlier on November 17, 1921, in Bombay and on January 13, 1922, in Madras. On February 7, Gandhi suspended the movement. He was arrested on March 13,

1922. Suddenly, the future of Swaraj, or self-rule within a year seemed uncertain.

Gandhi came under criticism from several quarters for dissociating himself from the Non-Cooperation Movement. The man of the masses took the masses along when he made his exit and this was not to be the only time when differences of opinion cropped up in the Congress about Gandhi's actions and each time, in the end, people invariably gave in to the Mahatma. Gandhi had won over the heart of an entire nation.

In 1927 the British government set up a Committee headed by Sir John Simon to review the state of affairs in India. However, the Committee that came to be known as the Simon Commission did not include even a single Indian. The Congress took umbrage to the omission done by the Commission.

At this time, young radicals like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose were insisting on making total independence as the goal of the Congress. At midnight, on December 31, 1929, Jawaharlal Nehru unfurled the Tricolour on the banks of the river Ravi in Punjab and the

Congress called for Purna Swaraj, or Complete Independence. January 26, 1930, was declared as Independence Day. From February 14 to 16, 1930, the Congress Working Committee met at Gandhi's famous Ashram in Sabarmati and requested him to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement 'at a time and place of his choice.'

On February 27, the plan for the agitation was made public. The entire nation was in ferment. Everyone, including the British, was curious to see what the Mahatma would do next.

On March 12, 1930, accompanied by 78 colleagues of the Sabarmati Ashram, Mahatma Gandhi embarked on a 60-mile march to the sea coast of Dandi. He defied the new salt taxes imposed by the government that would directly effect each and every Indian. To begin with, the government thought it better to ignore the event. However, soon the entire country was abuzz with hartals, protests, agitations, processions. The rising tide of discontent had to be checked. Gandhi was arrested on May 5, 1930. Abbas Tyabji took the relay to lead the movement. When Tyabji was arrested, Sarojini Naidu, the nightingale of India, replaced him.

All over India, the mood was upbeat, the atmosphere was tense and the people gathered on the streets to see what Mahatma Gandhi was telling. Louis Fischer wrote about the Civil Disobedience: "The British beat the Indians with batons and rifle butts. The Indians neither cringed nor complained nor retreated. That made England powerless and India invincible."

When the first Round Table Conference was held in London from November 12, 1930 to January 19, 1931, not a single member of the Congress attended it. The British now appealed to the Congress to work with them. Lord Irwin also declared that Mahatma Gandhi and the other members of the Congress Working Committee would soon be freed to consider the matter 'freely and fearlessly.' The Muslim League under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah demanded separate share in administration in India. It demanded control of foreign affairs and defence, and the matter of minorities. The talk with his Highness, the Aga Khan and Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, ended in a complete deadlock. Gandhi returned to India on December 28, 1931 empty-handed. By May 1934, the Civil

Disobedience Movement had been completely withdrawn.

During World War II, the Congress decided that India should co-operate with Britain on the understanding that complete independence would be granted to India after that. The British, however were unwilling to discuss the issue of independence during wartime. The Congress had the doubt and wonder about the intentions of the government. Meanwhile, the divide between Jinnah's Muslim League and the Congress had grown sharper. In early 1940, Jinnah declared Pakistan as the goal of the League.

After the fall of France in 1940, Gandhi declared, "We do not seek independence out of Britain's ruin." The British reply to this was an offer to discuss an Indian Constituent Assembly, as well as Dominion Status 'after the war'. The offer was spurned. Gandhi with his usual innovative skill had the country and Congress rallying behind him. The right moment had arrived to engineer the Quit India Movement. The unnerving part was that the launch of another Civil Disobedience Movement could coincide with the Japanese advances from the far-east towards India. At the

call of Gandhi to launch open rebellion, the country was willing to court risks for the freedom that was to be won.

The movement was launched on August 8, 1942 in Bombay. Gandhi declared: "I want freedom immediately, this very night, before dawn, if it can be had. You may take it from me that I am not going to strike a bargain with the Viceroy for ministers and the like... Here is the Mantra, a short one, that I give you... Do or die. We shall either free India or die in the attempt." From 1942 onwards it was quite clear that the count down to an independent India had begun.

In 1946, Lord Mountbatten arrived in Delhi amid a buzz of political activity. After World War II, the British seemed keen to wash their hands off India and at the last Mountbatten was entrusted with the responsibility of transferring power to the Indians, safeguarding British interests and prestige for future interaction with Independent India and Pakistan. On 3 June 1947, Lord Mountbatten, the last British Governor-General of India announced the partition of India and Pakistan. Pakistan became independent on 14th August 1947 by becoming a separate Nation. On August 15th of 1947 at midnight, India

became an independent nation. After partition, violent clashes took place between the Hindus and the Muslims resulting in death of many innocent people. Gandhiji, the Father of the Nation, did not join in the celebrations that followed. Communal disturbance shook the two countries with blood bath. He was elsewhere working in riot torn areas helping the people and praying for peace in the subcontinent. He was very sad and disillusioned seeing the riots. He decided to dismember his mind from active politics. Since day of the formation of Pakistan, Gandhiji was seen with suspicion for siding with the Muslims and surrounding Pakistan from India easily. A Hindu fundamentalist called Nathu Ram Godse shot Mahatma Gandhi on 30th January 1950. India lost the Mahatma who thought to form a nation with the dream of Rama Rajya.

Mountbatten was invited to continue as Governor General of India on request of Prime Minister Nehru and Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. In June 1948, Chakravarti Rajgopalachari took over the Governor General of India from Mountbatten. Patel took on the responsibility of unifying 565

princely states, steering efforts by his "iron fist in a velvet glove" policies, exemplified by the use of military force to integrate princely states like Junagarh, Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir into India. The drafting of the Constitution was finalised and completed by the Constituent Assembly with much precision on 26th November, 1949 and India became a Republic on 26th January 1950 with Dr. Rajendra Prasad as the first President of India. With the iron policy of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Goa, Pondicherry and Sikkim were annexed with the Indian Republic. India adopted its democratic principle with the conduction of its first general election in 1952.

The Indian Independence was obtained through the application of proper mix of non-violence coined by Gandhiji and violence adopted by Netaji in cooperation with other militant leaders.

Since independence, a lot has been achieved by us, a lot more needs to be done in the competitive world. We need to learn from our past and move boldly into the future. We have achieved many milestones, but not enough to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, sickness, terrorism, crime, unemployment, vested interests, political

pulls, presence of gap between the rich and the poor, etc. Our achievements are being globally recognised with rise of GDP growth to 9.4% in recent years and is projected to grow at 8 to 9 percent over the next five to ten years. India has started to infuse self-confidence to turn itself to become a developed nation by 2020. We have to turn ourselves as a military and economic power, hand in hand. We will see an independent, innovative, resourceful vibrant India in the future.

Role of Subhash Chandra Bose for Indian Freedom Struggle.

Subhash Chandra Bose possessed revolutionary mind towards Indian freedom struggle. He was born on January 23, 1897 at Cuttack, Orissa. His father was Rai Bahadur Janakinath Bose, a prominent lawyer of Cuttack, and mother was Prabhavati Bose. Later, he was named as Netaji by the world. He completed his early studies at the European Protestant Collegiate School in Cuttack, He came to Calcutta to study at Presidency College in 1913. Upon completing his graduation, he left India for England to appear at the Indian Civil Service Examination in

which he secured 4th rank. Later it was abandoned by him as he was reluctant to work under the British Government. Thus he resigned and returned to India on the call of Chittaranjan Das.

He believed that only military power could wipe out the British Rule from India. But the concept of non violence was opposed by Gandhiji since it directly conflicted with his policy of non violence. The British Empire perceived Subhas as a potential threat and took urgent steps to arrest him without any charge on October 25, 1924. He was sent to Alipore Jail, Calcutta and in January 25, 1925 transferred to Mandalay, Burma. He was released from Mandalay in May, 1927 due to his ill health. After his return to Calcutta, Subhas was elected President of the Bengal Congress Committee on October 27, 1927.

He believed in communal harmony and worked towards Hindu-Muslim unity on the basis of respect of each community's rights. In January 1930 he was arrested for launching a procession against the imprisonment of revolutionaries. He refused to accept conditional bail and was

sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

Upon his release from jail, Subhas was elected and took charge as Mayor of Calcutta Corporation. Subhash Chandra Bose and Gandhiji, both fought for freedom struggle by steering their ideas. However, the two never saw eye to eye on their views of freedom and the movement itself. According to Subhas, Gandhiji had done blunder to the freedom movement by agreeing to take part in the Second Round Table Conference. Subhas viewed freedom as an absolute necessity, unlike the freedom which Gandhiji was negotiating" with the British. Subhas was arrested again while returning from Bombay to Calcutta, and imprisoned in several jails outside West Bengal in fear of an uprising. His health once again deteriorated and the medical facilities diagnosed him with tuberculosis. It was recommended that he be sent to Switzerland for treatment.

Netaji was imprisoned eleven times over a span of 20 years either in India or in Rangoon. He travelled extensively in India and Europe before starting his political opposition to Gandhiji. In Germany, he instituted the

Special Bureau for India for broadcasting on the German sponsored Azad Hind Radio. He founded “Free India Centre” in Berlin and created the India Legion consisting of about 4500 soldiers who were the Indian Prisoners of war. He formed INA in 1941 and set up Provisional Government of Free India in exile. His great words-”Give me blood, I will give you freedom” spoke of his patriotism.

He had the foresight and vision to not only think of a viable liberation struggle, but also to plan for the country’s economic development in the post-independence time. He formed Forward Bloc to fight against the British Empire in India. Since he had a lot of differences with Gandhiji and the then Congress, he decided to leave India in 1941. He took

support from Britain’s enemies and engineered a war against Britain. The INA did not succeed to capture the British India but shook the British foundation in India. His vision of free India came true on 15th August 1947. On 18th August, 1945, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, died in air crash while flying to Manchuria to ask for Soviet Russia’s help after the surrender of Japan in the world war II. According to British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, the INA under the leadership of Netaji had shook the strong foundation of British Empire in India and made their administration impossible to sustain. Had Netaji survived the air tragedy, we should have seen a different India, more stronger and united, free from poverty, illiteracy, communalism, regionalism, etc. He would

have opposed the tragedy of partition launched by Jinnah and saved lakhs of people to die due to communal riot. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was a mass leader with shining examples of sacrifice. His revolutionary ideas, genuine leadership, foresight, love for free India will encourage the Indians for all the time to come. He was an embodiment of shining examples of courage and self-sacrifice. He will be remembered as a champion of the champions in the memories of Indians.

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