

Subhas Chandra Bose and Participation of Youths in the Freedom Movement

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Abstract:

Subhas Chandra Bose was a charismatic and visionary leader who played a crucial role in India's struggle for independence from British rule. Revered as 'Netaji', Bose earned immense respect and admiration for his relentless dedication, supreme sacrifice, and unwavering patriotism. A dynamic leader within the Indian National Congress (INC), he was twice elected as its President, advocating for complete independence rather than mere dominion status. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Bose believed that only armed resistance could uproot British imperialism. In line with this conviction, he established the Indian National Army (INA) on 21st October 1943, inspiring thousands of Indian youths to rise against colonial rule. Bose's contribution extended beyond military efforts—he was deeply committed to mobilizing youth, students, laborers, and women as integral forces in the freedom movement. At youth conferences and public gatherings, he emphasized the role of young people in initiating societal change, urging them to challenge the status quo with restlessness and courage. His engagement with the youth is reflected in his speeches and writings, particularly in his book *The Indian Struggle*. Bose also advocated for women's empowerment, supporting the formation of separate organizations like the Jhansi Rani Regiment, which became a prominent part of the INA. Throughout his political journey, Bose aimed to unite all revolutionary and militant factions to achieve his vision of a liberated and progressive India. He envisioned a society where women would enjoy equal rights and share equal responsibilities alongside men.

Keywords: Patriot, independence, imperialism, organization, freedom movement.

Introduction:

Subhas Chandra Bose was one of the great leader and remarkable personality as far as the freedom movement of India against the British is concerned. His supreme sacrifice for the cause of the country, his strong dedication and vision for the movement against the British had earned him the title 'Netaji'. He was a very popular and strong leader of the INC for which he was twice elected the President of the organization. Bose strongly believed that an armed rebellion is necessary to fight against the British Raj and overthrow them from India. Keeping with this aim he had formed the INA on 21st October, 1943 and started an armed coup and inspired thousands of Indian youths to join the struggle for independence from the British colonial rule. His passionate nationalism, inclusive vision, and radical strategies made him a symbol of hope and inspiration for the Indian masses, especially the youth. Subhas Chandra Bose remains a towering figure in India's freedom movement and a true embodiment of selfless service to the nation.

Discussion:

The ideas and principles of Swami Vivekananda and Ramkrishna Paramahansa had greatly influenced the life of Subhas Chandra Bose and it helped him to develop his character as well spirituality. Swami Vivekananda's ideals of 'tyag' (sacrifice) and 'seva' (service) from a very early age. Under their influence he developed a spirit of defiance that prepared him to reject imperial authority and encouraged him to work for the independence of the country. To fulfill his parent's wishes he went to London in 1919 to complete for Indian Civil Service examination and within a year he was ranked fourth in the ICS examination and he was selected for administrative work of the colonial government. But his desire to work for the freedom of the country and atrocities committed by British Government in India forced him to quit his high paying ICS job 22nd April, 1921 and came back to India to join the freedom movement of the country. When he was writing to his brother about resigning his ICS job, Bose had written the telling line, "Every Government servant whether he be a pretty chaprasi or a provincial governor only helps to contribute to the stability of the British Government in India."¹

After his return from London to India on 16th July, 1921, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose involved himself in the nationalist activities by publishing a newspaper called "Swaraj" where he had published various writings to increase the feelings of nationalism in the country. Back in Calcutta, Bose began to live with his brother, Sarat and threw himself in the work of the Congress. The leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and C.R. Das attracted the attention of Subhas Chandra Bose and joined the Indian National Congress in 1921. Though Bose was slightly disappointed with Gandhiji during their first meet but it was C.R. Das who inspired Bose to work for the nation. At the end of July 1921, the All India Congress Committee met in Bombay and decided to step up the Non-Cooperation Movement that had began in January, by concentrating on the boycott of foreign clothes and burning it in the public bonfires. They had also decided to boycott the visit of the Prince of Wales, which was scheduled for November. Gandhiji had given a call for flooding the prisons with volunteers of the Congress. When the Prince of Wales arrived at Bombay on 17th November, 1921, was greeted by a countrywide hartal. Calcutta was completely paralyzed on that day. The British Government had arrested the volunteers of the Congress. Bose declared, "In utter indignation young and old, rich and poor began to pour in as volunteers. The authorities were alarmed and they converted the city into an armed camp.". The Government arrested C.R. Das, Subhas Chandra Bose and many leaders and volunteers of the Congress on 10th December, 1921.² This is the first time that Bose was arrested and after this he was arrested in ten more times by British Government. The first assignment of Bose in the INC was the office of the Principal of the National College and along with it he was also made the Chief of the Publicity Board of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and the Head of the National Volunteers Corps. C.R. Das, the prominent Congress leader of Bengal also gave him the responsibility of keeping contacts with the revolutionaries, some of whom were underground in that time. In 1923, Bose was elected as the President of the All India Youth Congress and the Secretary of Bengal State Congress. When C.R. Das was elected as the Mayor of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, Bose worked as the Chief Executive Officer in 1924. But the British Government had arrested Bose on 25th October, 1924 for participating in national activities and the British Government had accused him that he was the principal organizers of the revolutionary movement in Bengal and had linked with the 'Bolshevic propagandist'. But the charges were unfounded and never established. He was sent to Alipore Central jail till January 1925 and later transferred to Mandalay jail. During the time of his jail term (1924-1927) he used to writes notes on various matters regarding the freedom movement of India. After being released from jail Bose was elected as the

General Secretary of the Congress and worked with other leaders of the Congress like Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, C.R. Das etc, for the independence of India from British dominion. In 1928 Bose had organized the annual conference of the INC at Calcutta.

Subhas Chandra Bose had played an active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 launched by Mahatma Gandhi. He was arrested for participating in the movement. Bose had even protested the Gandhi- Irwin Pact 1931) and opposed suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement especially when Bhagat Singh and his associates were hanged by the British Government. During 1930's Bose had travelled to several European countries and observed the party organization, development of Communism and Fascism in Italy and some other countries in Europe. These ideologies had helped him to adopt more nationalist approach within the Congress. In this period he had wrote one of his famous book 'The Indian Struggle' which was published from London in 1935. But the British Government had imposed ban on this book. The growing popularity and leadership quality of Bose made him President of the INC in Haipura session (1938) and Tripuri Congress session (1939)³. Bose stood for self-governance including the use of force against the British Government. This meant a confrontation with Mahatma Gandhi who in fact opposed Bose's presidency, splitting the INC. He was differed fundamentally from Gandhiji on vital issues such as industrialization and Indian attitude towards the British Government. The growing rift between Gandhiji and Bose resulted resignation of Subhas Chandra Bose from the Congress and founded the Forward Block in May 1939.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was one of the most popular leader of the Congress and his joining in the Congress in 1921, he had worked to involved the youths of the country in the freedom movement against the British power. He wrote in his book entitled 'Dreams of Youth'— "...we have been born into this world in order to fulfill a purpose – to spread a message. Just as the sun rises to flood the earth with light, as flowers bloom in the forest to spread their fragrance, as the river rushes to the sea to bring the sweet refreshing rain– we have come to this world, full of joy and with the fullness of our hearts, to establish a truth. And that is to discover the unknown and mystical purpose of life, through contemplation and a life of action, which only can make our otherwise senseless existence, meaningful." Bose had the believe that the youths of any country can bring changes to the society and they poses the ability to make the world a better place to live. The book 'An Indian Pilgrim' written by Subhas Chandra Bose throws light on his work for the society and independence of India from young age. After his resignation of his ICS job in 1921, he had mainly focused his work relating to the participation of youths of the country in the freedom struggle. He had travelled the country and participated in various meetings of the youth organizations and also participated in labour conferences. His speeches helped for the growth of the feelings of nationalism particularly among the youths of India. In the first Youths Conference held at Nagpur Bose had declared– "every human being – man or woman – is born equal, and he or she shall have equal opportunities of development – that should be our dictum ... there should be equal opportunities for education and development".

Subhas Chandra Bose's believes on the youths can also be notice during the time of the Simon Commission's visit in the country in 1928. The boycott of the Simon Commission in Calcutta and other parts of Bengal was organized under the leadership of Bose where the youths of Bengal participated in boycott programmes. Bose had made extensive preparations for the hartal that had been planned in Bengal. The city of Calcutta assumed the atmosphere of a besieged city as thousands of police forces were deployed. People had clashed with police forces. Shops had their shutter down in the city. Large numbers of students participated in the hartal and boycott programme. This exhibition of popular anger

against the Simon Commission was a triumph for Subhas Chandra Bose where the youths played a crucial role. The Governor of Bengal, F.S Jackson wrote to Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India , 'I am afraid that Bose is the real cause of the trouble.'⁴

Bose had fully involved himself with youths of the country and working class organizations. At the end of 1928, speaking at the All India Youth Congress, he drew attention to the fact that across the world there was a 'renaissance of youths'. Youth associations, he said, should be dedicated to change, they must be informed by 'a feeling of restlessness, of impatience with the present order'.⁵ He had encouraged the youths to organize themselves against the British. Various references of the works done by Bose for the youths can be found in his famous book 'The Indian Struggle'. At the Maharashtra Provincial Conference held at Poona, in May 1928 he delivered a long speech and given emphasis on the task of organizing labour, youths and students for serving their own interest as well as the interest of the country. He also advocated separate organization for the women which later on resulted the formation of Jhansi Rani Regiment which was mainly associated with the Indian National Army or Azad Hind Fouz. Bose was the politician for the young, for students and for woman of the country. In 1929, at the age of thirty-two, he personally identified with these deprived sectors of the population and travelled around India to speak at youth conferences. Bose's aim was to ignite in the young men and women of India an idealism that he believed would achieved results in the stagnated freedom struggle. Stressing that in all civilizations change had originated with the young section of population. His dream of a society in which 'women will be free and enjoy equal rights with men' but will also accept equal responsibility to work 'side by side with men' to served their society.⁶ As an Indian nationalist who never veered from his objective of complete independence of the country, he wanted a nation rid of all foreign domination and tried quite pragmatically to form a coalition of all militant factions among the countrymen in order to win that freedom.

In the 1930s Subhas Chandra Bose had became the most important and popular political figure s in India. Only Gandhi and Nehru were better known and highly respected throughout the country. In Bengal, Bose was the most eminent politician with no serious political rivals. In this period, Bose continuously appealed to young people to become actively involed in the freedom struggle. During these years, Bose became more and more certain that only armed opposition would free India from British's imperial yoke. Gandhi's non-violent approach, in Bose's view, had produced no meaningful movement towards independence. Instead it had resulted in long prison termsfor all of the Congress's leadership, including himself. These convictions of Bose exacerbated the rift between him and Mahatma Gandhi.⁷

According to Subhas Chandra Bose "The Youth movement in its scope is coexistent with the life itself. It therefore follows that the Youth movement will have as many departments as there are aspects in our life. If we are to rejuvenate the body well, need sports, athletics and gymnastics. If we are to emancipate and rejuvenate the mind we shall need a new literature, a higher and better type of education and a healthy conception of morality. If we are to rejuvenate society, we shall have to do away ruthlessly with hide bound ideas and customs and substitute new and healthy ones instead." He appealed to the youths of the country that "The desire of freedom is the fountainhead of all inspiration, the secret spring of all our creative faculties. When a man is intoxicated with the desire for freedom, his whole aspect changes, as does Nature under the magic influence of Spring." He has also given emphasis that the Youth Movement is an emblem of dissatisfaction of the people with the present order of things under the control of the British Government. To end the age old bondage, tyranny and oppression he asked the

young people to join the freedom Movement which will help to create a better world for the people of India. According to Bose, a free India can preserve humanity by removing all shackles and provide scope for creative activity of mankind.

The youths living in India or abroad played a crucial role in the formation of Azad Hind Fauz under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose in 1943. The Azad Hind Fauz which was popularly known Indian National Army was organized to fight with the British power of India. It was an armed force formed by Indian Freedom Fighters and Imperial Japan on 1st September 1942 in Southeast Asia during World War II. The army was to be raised with Indians in South East Asian countries and the British Indian soldiers captured by the Japanese. Bose visited Japan in 1943 where the royal administration told him to help his appeal. He revived the Indian National Army with Indian war prisoners who had served with the British Indian Army. Captain General Mohan Singh was the first to establish the Azad Hind Fauj in 1942 in Singapore with Indian prisoners of war. Under the leadership of Bose, the INA attacked parts of the northeastern India and were able to capture a few portions as well. Subhas Chandra Bose gave the call of 'Dilli Chalo' during the Second World War to secure India's complete Independence from British Raj. There was also a woman Regiment named after Rani of Jhansi Lakshmibai. During a speech delivered to the soldiers of the Indian National Army, Bose said, "Tum mujhe Khoon do, main tumhe Azadi dunga". (Give me blood and I shall give you freedom). The assault by the INA was an important factor that compelled the British to change their decision and stop operation which paved the way for India's Independence. Large numbers of youth of the country joined the INA under the guidance and leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose. Being inspired by Bose and INA, many people from Brahmaputra valley of Assam also joined the organization. Hearing the news of Bose's visit to Assam few Assamese youth, mostly members of Forward Block from Guwahati proceeded to Lumding to welcome Subhas Bose and INA.

The most challenging task in 1940s was to motivate people to get ready for the task of sacrifice agitating against brutality of the colonial state. No doubt, the awareness to get liberated was continuously reflected among the masses but the brutality of colonial state was a powerful weapon to discourage Indians from participating in armed rebellion for independence. Truly, Subhas Chandra Bose had created spark among the masses and sacrifice had become ultimate aim of youth to achieve ultimate goal of life even facing worst brutalities from colonial state. The File no.3 of INA papers at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library states that the people of Bahadurgarh had got agitated and the British colonial state was trying to defuse the emerging culture of militarization among the masses.⁸ It states that the Colonial state had set up detention camp at Bahadurgarh and a message was being given to people who dared to participate in any armed activity against the state.

Bose had an extraordinary gift for oratory and he so able to captivate audience that people listened him with great attention. This inborn quality of Bose attracted the youths to join hands with him for the cause of motherland and free India from British colonial power. Many young people had joined the Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauz) due the leadership and vision of Bose. People had found in him a mass leader who worked for the freedom of motherland India. Most of the women soldier of the Jhansi Rani Regiment of the INA was young women. Bose had believed that women can play a leading role in the political development of the country. During 1921 when he had returned to India from England, Bose worked to encourage young women to participate in the freedom movement. Several young and well educated Bengali women joined Bose to implement his ideas for swaraj. He had advocated 'a

society in which the women will be free and enjoy equal rights with men and take upon her all civic and political responsibilities.⁹

Bose's faith on young Indians can also be seen when in 1928, he had become a prominent leader of the Indian National Congress. Bose was appointed as the General Officer Commanding of the annual Congress session to be held at Calcutta in that year. To maintain order in this massive event, Bose organized a corps of uniformed, but unarmed guards, the Bengal Volunteers. Bose's volunteer force numbered 2000 young people, of whom 250 were the sort of committed and determined women who later became the members of Rani Jhansi Regiment (RJR) of the Azad Hind Fauz. They were recruited from local Colleges and associations and some were recruited from the Bengali revolutionary groups who belonged to youth section of the society. Lotika Ghose, young woman was appointed as the Officer Commanding in charge of the women volunteers. Bose had contacted Kalyani Das who was a close friend of him and recruited young men and women as volunteers for the Congress session. Coincidentally, the fourteen year old future Captain Lakshmi Sahgal attended the same Congress Conference with his mother. Bose had commanded the parade like a seasoned military man. She was particularly impressed by the women's wing led by Colonel Lotika Ghose which encouraged her to later join the Rani Jhansi Regiment, a women force of the Azad Hind Fauz.¹⁰ Many other young women had also joined the RJR following the path of revolutionary ideas shown by Lakshmi Sahgal.

Conclusion:

Subhas Chandra Bose had always wanted the youths to have a vision of a better world and character and said that without freedom, an individual and a nation cannot live in dignity. That is why, he wanted the young generation to develop their minds, strengthen their character and have unflinching faith and determination in the national struggle for freedom of the country. We have now crossed now seventy six years as a free nation. But we have yet not succeeded in creating the just socio-economic order and a genuine democracy that Bose had envisioned during his life. The youths of present India, must get inspired by the ideals of Subhas Chandra Bose who had sacrificed his entire life for the liberation of the country. The youths of present must lit the fire of Nationalism, Character development and a vision of a better world and march forward together keeping aside their ideological differences.

Youth power in India can immensely contribute for the cause of nation building and to create a just and fair society for all the people of the country. Youngsters can play a significant role to build a strong and democratic India on the line of ideals set up by Bose. His vision and programmes for a better India is still relevant today. Netaji was a real icon for the youths of India and his life was a story of sacrifice and service to the cause of India.

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