Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and INA: Architect of Armed Resistance and International Alliances in India's Freedom Struggle

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore the pivotal role of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army (INA) in India's struggle for independence from British colonial rule, emphasizing his unique path of armed struggle and international alliances. Despite the mainstream non-violent approach led by Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji chose a militant and international strategy to fight imperialism. His revolutionary vision, leadership qualities, and indomitable spirit established him as one of the most influential figures in India's independence movement. The present paper highlights Netaji's early life, education, ideological journey, political career, and leadership role in the Indian National Congress. It also examines his international diplomacy with Axis powers (Germany and Japan) during World War II and the reorganization of the INA. A major finding of the study is the nationwide impact of the INA trials in 1945 which shook the very foundations of the British government and gave a new energy and strength to the national movement.

Key-words*:* armed struggle, freedom, Indian National Army, movement

Introduction

Subhas Chandra Bose was one of the foremost and most influential freedom fighters, as well as a great leader of India's freedom struggle. He was a revolutionary nationalist who inspired countless Indians to join the independence movement against British colonial rule. He sacrificed his life for the freedom of his motherland from the bondage of British rule. He called upon the people of India – "Give me blood, I shall give you Freedom." British power was shaken by this roar of Subhas Chandra Bose. Millions of Indians were ready to sacrifice their lives for this slogan. The path which he had adopted for India's independence was distinct from other leaders. He chose the path of armed resistance to liberate the country. Through the Indian National Army (INA), he transformed the dream of liberation into a formidable force.

His name ranks foremost among the brave souls who died on the altar of freedom. He is remembered with deep respect and admiration for his indomitable spirit among the freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives in the yajna (Yagya) that Indians initiated for the freedom of the country. He shook the very roots of the British government and gave a new energy and strength to the freedom struggle. The slogan given by him, "Jai Hind," became the national slogan of India. No one can deny the fact that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was one of the most

eminent and true freedom fighters of India. His contribution to India's freedom struggle both within the country and abroad, can never be forgotten. As long as he lived, he continued to challenge the British government. Truly, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was one of the greatest and most dedicated freedom fighters in the history of India. While his life remains shrouded in mystery, his ideals of courage, unity, and selfless service continue to inspire generations.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To highlight the life, vision, and political ideology of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose
- To analyse the formation, reorganisation, and military campaigns of the Indian National Army (INA)
- To assess Netaji's diplomatic relations with the Axis powers during World War II
- To explore the transnational dimensions of India's freedom struggle led by Netaji
- To evaluate the overall contribution of Netaji and the INA to India's independence movement

Methodology

The paper, titled "Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and the INA: Architect of Armed Struggle and International Alliances in India's Freedom Struggle" follows a historical and analytical approach. The study is based on both primary and secondary sources. It mainly relies on the analysis of secondary sources such as books, research articles, biographies, government reports, speeches, websites, archival materials and historical records related to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army (INA). The study is focused on the overall contribution of Netaji and INA in India's freedom struggle, particularly highlighting their armed resistance, transnational impact and international alliances.

Early Life and Education

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was born on January 23, 1897 A.D. at a place called Cuttack in the state of Orissa (Now Odisha). At that time, Orissa was a part of the Bengal Presidency. His father, Janakinath Bose, was a renowned and successful lawyer of Cuttack city and was honoured with the title of "Rai Bahadur." His mother, Prabhavati Bose, was a devout and religious lady. Netaji was the ninth child and sixth son among fourteen siblings. He had seven brothers and six sisters. Among them, Sharat Chandra Bose, a prominent nationalist leader, had a significant influence on Netaji's life. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was very fond of reading and writing from childhood. Eager to join his elder brothers at school, he was enrolled in the Protestant European School of Cuttack in January 1902 A.D. He later continued his education at Ravenshaw Collegiate School, one of the most prestigious institutions in the city, and completed his early schooling in 1909. He was known for his sharp intellect and academic brilliance. He was deeply influenced by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Paramhansa.

In addition to his parents and brothers, Beni Madhav Das, Head Teacher of the primary school in Cuttack, had a special impact on Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. He was a brilliant student. He passed the matriculation examination with the second rank from Cuttack in Orissa. After that, he joined Presidency College of Calcutta (Now Kolkata) for higher education. There, he pursued a B.A. Honors in Philosophy.

During this time, he saw that the British teachers and students of the college used to insult the Indians a lot. This greatly hurt Netaji's self-respect and patriotism. He couldn't bear the tyranny of a British teacher, E. F. Otten, and beat him in response to his racial comments against Indian students. The result was that he was expelled from the college. His expulsion was later rescinded. He then moved to England to pursue higher education where he obtained the degree of 'Tripos' from Cambridge University. He later prepared for the Indian Civil Services (ICS) examination to fulfil his father's wish. In 1920, he appeared for the ICS examination and secured fourth place, an exceptional achievement. But due to his strong sense of patriotism, he didn't accept the job under British rule and resigned from the ICS services, because his pride refused to accept slavery under the British.

During this period, Mahatma Gandhi had launched the Non-Co-Operation Movement (1920-22), a nationwide protest against British imperialism. In Bengal, this movement was led by Desh Bandhu Chittaranjan Das. Subhas Chandra Bose came under his influence and inspired by his ideals, joined the freedom struggle with full dedication.

Netaji's Contribution in the Freedom Struggle Movement

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose made a great contribution to the freedom struggle in India. He was a true freedom fighter. He took a violent approach contrary to Gandhiji. He advocated revolutionaries and a violent path for the freedom struggle. He wanted to liberate the country through armed struggle against British rule. The path that Netaji had adopted for India's independence was different from others.

For taking an active part in the Non-Cooperation Movement, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose had to go to jail along with Desh Bandhu Chittaranjan Das and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. During his imprisonment, he came under the influence of C. R. Das, whom he regarded as his political mentor (Guru). Under the guidance of C. R. Das, he was appointed Principal of the National College, which was established during the Non-Cooperation Movement.

At the time of the arrival of the Prince of Wales in India in 1921 A.D., Netaji led a strong protest and boycott movement. As a result, he was arrested and put in jail. He had to go to jail ten times in his short political life and in total he had to spend eight years inside the jail.

Netaji had several key positions in the Indian National Congress. He was the president of the Indian Youth Congress and also the Secretary of the Bengal State Congress. In 1924 A.D., he was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, and in 1930 A.D., he became the Mayor of Calcutta. He was elected president of the Indian National Congress at the Haripura Session in 1938. However, ideological differences with Gandhiji and

the people of the right-wing congress continued to grow. Despite the opposition of Gandhiji in 1939, he was re - elected as president of Tripuri Congress Session in 1939 defeating Patta Bhi Sitaramayya. Due to internal conflicts and Gandhi's opposition, Netaji resigned from the post of Congress president and established a separate party – the Forward Bloc - in 1939 A.D.

Another contribution of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bos in Indian politics was the entry of Leftist politics. He had a great contribution in the Congress Socialist Party which emerged in 1934 A.D.

Netaji's International Efforts For India's Independence

After the failure of the Quit India Movement led by Gandhiji, the pace of India's freedom struggle slowed down. An atmosphere of despair spread throughout the country. All the prominent leaders of India were imprisoned in various jails. Hence, a leadership crisis arose. In such a state, the torch of freedom struggle was carried forward solely by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose from outside the borders of the country. His clandestine activities and contact with the Axis Powers became a matter of concern of the British government. Therefore, to curb his activities, the British government arrested him under Section 129 of the Indian Security Act on 2nd July, 1940 A.D. and imprisoned him in Presidency Jail in Calcutta.

On 29th November, 1940, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose began his fast in jail. Seeing his deteriorating condition, the British government was terrified and he was released from jail on 5th December, 1940. But after his release from jail, Netaji was placed under house arrest at his home in Elgin Road of Calcutta.

On 17th January, 1941 A.D., Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose escaped from his house at night, disguised as a Pathan. He reached Peshawar from Calcutta and adopted the name Ziauddin. With the help of one of his companions, Bhagat Ram, he reached Kabul on 21st January, 1941 A.D. From Kabul, Netaji reached Germany via Russia. The British Government received news of the escape of Subhash Chandra Bose after ten days. His escape from India and his long journey stunned the police. The countrymen also praised his adventure. The main goal of Netaji was to seek support from the Axis Powers (Germany and Japan). With the help of these countries, he wanted to liberate India from the British subjugation.

On 28th March, 1941 A.D., Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose reached Germany and met Adolf Hitler. During their meeting, Hitler assured him of all possible assistance for India's freedom struggle. After that, Netaji started campaigning against the British through Berlin Radio. He also organised the liberation army there. In 1941 A.D., Japan achieved rapid success in the Second World War. Japan took possession of Singapore, Malaya, and Burma (Now Myanmar). Inspired by the success of Japan, Rash Bihari Bose, a prominent Indian revolutionary, organised a conference of the Indian diaspora in Bangkok in 1942 A.D. In this conference, the Indian Independence League was founded under the leadership of Rash Bihari Bose.

During this period, Azad Hind Fouj was formed under the leadership of Captain Mohan Singh on 1st September, 1942 A.D. The main objective of Azad Hind Fouj was to liberate India from

the bondage of British rule. In 1943 A.D., Rash Bihari Bose invited Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose to come to Japan and requested him to take charge of the Azad Hind Fouj. Hence, on 23rd June, 1943 A.D., Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose reached Japan by a submarine. Tojo, the Prime – Minister of Japan, gave him a grand welcome and also assured him of all possible help in the freedom struggle movement of India. From Japan, he reached Singapore where Rash Bihari Bose and the Indians welcomed him. On 25th August, 1943 A.D., Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose became Commander-in-Chief of Azad Hind Fouj and took over all responsibilities. After taking charge, he gave the slogan, "Delhi Chalo" to the soldiers of Azad Hind Fouj.

On 21st October, 1943 A.D., he formed a provisional government of Azad Hind Fouj in Singapore and simultaneously declared war against Britain and America. In a few days, this government was recognised by Japan, Germany, Italy, Burma, Thailand, China and Manchuria. Japan handed over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to this provisional government. In December, 1943 A.D., Netaji hoisted the tri-colour there and renamed the island as "Shaheed" and "Swaraj" dweep.

Now, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose began planning a military attack on India with Japan's assistance. After deciding the strategy with the Japanese military officers, the first battalion of Azad Hind Fouj arrived in Rangoon in January, 1944 A.D. and established their government there. Thus, the historic journey of Azad Hind Fouj began. The soldiers of Azad Hind Fouj reached the eastern border of India. They took control of an Indian outpost named Madok and hoisted the tri-colour there. Following this, the soldiers of Azad Hind Fouj captured Kohima. Now, the army moved forward to take over Manipur's capital, Imphal. But unfortunately, as the rains started, the campaign was hampered. Meanwhile, the situation in Japan started deteriorating in the Second World War. On 6th August, 1945 A.D., the United States dropped an Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and on 9th August, on Nagasaki, devastating Japan. After this incident, Japan surrendered and accepted its defeat in the Second World War.

The defeat of Japan in the Second World War had a direct impact on the army of Azad Hind Fauj. Due to the defeat of Japan, the supply of food and weapons to the soldiers of Azad Hind Fouj stopped, who were on the eastern border of India. The condition of the soldiers worsened due to the rain and cold. The British soldiers re-established control over Burma. In Burma, many soldiers of the Azad Hind Fouj were killed or arrested. The soldiers of the Azad Hind Fouj were forced to surrender to the British army. In this way, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's dream was not fulfilled.

Lastly, Netaji left Bangkok for Tokyo on 18th August, 1945 A.D. Nothing is known of him afterwards. It is believed that his aeroplane crashed soon after taking off from Taipei. Netaji was badly burnt, admitted to a hospital, but died the same day, August 18, 1945 A.D. Still, his death remains a mystery.

Public Reactions to the INA Trials

After the end of the Second World War in 1945 A.D., the British Government decided to initiate the trial of the arrested soldiers of Azad Hind Fauj, who fought for the independence of

the country under the leadership of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. As soon as the trial started, it was met with widespread protest across the country. Initially, the British Government decided to prosecute twenty thousand war prisoners, but ultimately, the trial began with only three INA officers: Captain Prem Kumar Sehgal, Lieutenant Guru Baksh Singh Dhillon and Captain Shahnawaz Khan. Sumit Sarkar, famous Historian of Bengal, has remarked in his book, "Modern India" (P 418) that "Very foolishly the British initially decided to hold public trials of several hundreds of the 20000 INA prisoners (as well as dismissing from service and detaining without trial no less than 7000)."

Once the trial was announced, people from all communities united in protest. In September, 1945 A.D., at the Mumbai session of the Congress, all the leaders criticized this decision of the British Government as drama. The Congress formed the Azad Hind Fauj Bachao Samiti. The famous Congress barrister Bhulabahi Desai was leading the defense lawyers when this historic trial started in the Red Fort at Delhi. Tej Bahadur Sapru, Kailash Nath Katju, Asaf Ali and Jawaharlal Nehru were his assistant lawyers in this case.

Massive protests and processions erupted across the country. Students, shopkeepers, labourers and people of all political parties rose up in unison in protest against the INA officer's case. Shopkeepers closed their shops; students boycotted their classes and workers of all factories from Jagdal to Bazbaz in Kolkata went on strike. The Congress, Akali Dal, Muslim League, Communist Party of India, Hindu Maha Sabha all demanded the release of all INA war prisoners. The wave of resistance spread not only in the cities like Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Madras but also in the remote villages of India. People from all over India jumped into this protest movement irrespective of their caste, religion and community. Azad Hind Week, Azad Hind Day, Azad Hind Flag Day were celebrated in different parts of the country. The Azad Hind Army Defence Fund was established in many parts of the country. Donations of money started pouring in from different parts of India. 'Delhi Chalo', 'Jai Hind', 'Destroy the Red Fort', 'Release the INA prisoners', the atmosphere resonated with the slogans.

The situation grew so intense that Sir Frederick Burrows, Governor of Bengal, wrote to Lord Wavell that "The situation was not only dangerous but also combustible." The British Government is no longer in a position to defy these movements and demonstrations. Hence, despite being found guilty, these officers of Azad Hind Fauj had to be released. This mass movement to free the INA heroes became a milestone in India's struggle for independence. Inspired by the sacrifices of Azad Hind Fauj, the Royal Indian Navy revolted in 1946 A.D. Though Netaji Subash Chandra Bose and Azad Hind Fauj could not achieve complete success, their courage and patriotism reignited the spirit of freedom across the nation which led to the dream of India's independence come true.

Conclusion

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and Azad Hind Fauj played a significant and dynamic role in India's Freedom Struggle, shaking the very roots of the British Government. Netaji instilled fear in the British administration and they began to realize that Indians were ready to take up arms in pursuit of their freedom. He aroused a strong sense of nationalism and resistance

against British Imperialism. The British understood that India could no longer be held in subjugation for long.

Netaji's dream was not only to make India independent but also to establish it as a powerful and self-reliant nation on the global stage. He sought to give India a distinct identity in the international arena. To achieve this, he tried to liberate India from abroad through Azad Hind Fauj. He aimed to free the country by fighting directly against British colonial rule. Although Netaji's dream of achieving independence through armed struggle was not fulfilled, the example of courage and patriotism he set has continued to inspire generations.

In fact, he was a true symbol of patriotism and strength in the national movement of India. He was one of the most eminent and true freedom fighters of India. The path Netaji chose for India's independence was unique, a path rarely seen in History. His contributions to the nation continue to inspire millions of Indians even today. Such a brave and visionary leader is always remembered with deep respect and admiration in Indian History.

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