

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

: A CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF NETAJI'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

India's greatest firebrand militant nationalist, Subhas Chandra Bose made unbound sufferings and sacrifices in his struggle against the British for his country's freedom. And for that he was imprisoned eleven times by the Raj and had to spend about nine years in jail, in exile and in detention. From the very inception of his political life, Subhas Chandra was brought into jail on allegation of terrorism, his foreign voyage was restricted, false propaganda against him was exercised by the British. But he was never depressed by any harsh steps taken against him, because his goal of life was the emancipation of his motherland. With this end in view he acted in the political field — India's struggle for freedom and became one of the greatest political heroes in India for ever.

But during the formative period of his life, he was never influenced by politics. He had grown up in a family where politics was totally restricted. His father, Janakinath Bose was totally indifferent to politics and never allowed his family members to exercise any political activities at home.

In the Protestant European School where he studied first, he had no opportunity of association to influence or cultivate him politically. In his subsequent schools and colleges — Ravenshaw Collegiate School, Presidency College and Scottish Church College, his apolitical character was not disturbed in spite of the Oaten incident mentioned in Chapter I and terrorist revolutionary activities in his hostel. Upto his departure for England in 1919 he did not develop politically and the

pivot of his life was exclusively spiritual and humanitarian largely under the influence of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

At Cambridge, Subhas Chandra enjoyed a peculiar atmosphere which was totally absent in British India. He highly appreciated the help of the Englishmen to him for accommodation and expressed his satisfaction on the Cambridge Professors' high sounded intellect. He went there for appearing Indian Civil Service Examination and passed with fourth position. At the early moment of his stay at Cambridge, he was neither impressed nor influenced by any political proclivity. But the post-war events and particularly the Jalianwallabagh Massacre and Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement for the first time made him politically aware about the need of a political movement to defend his motherland and protect her national honour. Gradually a political consciousness and sensitivity appeared in his mind and it inspired him to adopt a bold decision to resign from the I.C.S. as a mark of protest to dissociate from the administration of the British Raj.

Thus we find that Subhas developed a political trait in his character quite late in life without harbouring any political bias in spite of the political surroundings around him in his time.

Returning from Cambridge to India after his resignation, he first met Mahatma Gandhi at his residence and when Gandhi failed to meet his queries, he rushed to Deshbandhu C.R. Das and accepted him as his political guru, instead of Gandhi.

In the first interview with Gandhi, Subhas Chandra was dissatisfied with former's emphasis on means to achieve the ends of the struggle. As a patron of non-violence, Gandhi gave emphasis on means whatever the ends might be. He wanted to win over the British with love and persuasion and not with force. Hence his approach was one of passivism. On the other hand, as a young activist, pragmatic and

revolutionary, Subhas Chandra gave emphasis on the end whatever the means might be. The end was the freedom of India. As the passive resistance propounded by Gandhi had already availed of no effective result, Subhas Chandra pleaded for active resistance as a means. Hence he developed a philosophy of activism in himself. He was disappointed with Gandhi's unpractical expectation of a change of heart of the Britishers in India. He acclaimed C.R. Das as a practical politician.

Subhas Chandra Bose's role in the Freedom Struggle in India can be discussed under four phases -

- i) The Swarajist phase : 1921-1925
- ii) Post-Swarajist and Pre-Forward Bloc Phase : 1925-1938
- iii) Forward Bloc Phase : 1939-1941
- iv) Military phase : 1941-1945

In the Swarajist phase, 1921-1925, under the direct influence of Desbandhu Chitta Ranjan Das, Subhas Chandra's political ideology of uncompromising national struggle took a definite shape with a firm determination to achieve complete independence.

While Gandhi launched the non-cooperation movement in 1921 a policy of action, Subhas Chandra extensively supported him. He was not a blind opponent of Gandhi. He praised, "The year 1921 undoubtedly gave the country a highly organised party - organisation. Before that the Congress was a constitutional party and mainly a talking body. The Mahatma not only gave it a new Constitution and a nation-wide basis but what is more important, converted it into a revolutionary organisation".

But in opposition to such an expectation, the non-cooperation movement even after it had reached the zenith of success was suspended by Gandhi on allegation of

violence at Chauri Chaura. It was Gandhi's well-known practice of compromise. As a protest against the Mahatma's compromising attitude towards the British Raj, Desbandhu Chitta Ranjan Das and Motilal Nehru founded the Swarajya Party. In fact, the Swarajya Party was the product of the pro-changers' active resistance to the British Raj in India. Subhas became an active member of the party. C.R. Das correctly assessed Subhas as a very sincere, dedicate and efficient worker. Hence, during the Swarajist phase under the guru's desire, Subhas became the Chief Executive Officer of Calcutta Corporation while Das became the Mayor

To Subhas, Swarajism was a radical and pragmatic protest against the no-changers of the Congress. But with regard to the concept of Swaraj, Subhas had a different opinion. While the Desbandhu's Swaraj was for Dominion status, Subhas Chandra's was for complete independence of India. The latter's concept was more radical than the former's.

However, on the whole and regarding the method of struggle, C.R. Das's uncompromising attitude towards the British Raj shaped the future political activities of Subhas Chandra Bose for India's freedom.

In this phase, we find initially Subhas Chandra as a student and youth leader. He believed that students and youth were the most radical elements of the uncompromising movement against the British Raj in India. He stated in his speech to the students of Bengal, "You students and young men of Bengal, be you all the votaries of complete independence. You are the inheritors of the future India. It is therefore up to you to take upon yourselves the task of reawakening and galvanising the whole nation. Go forward in the right spirit and your victory is absolutely certain".²

He was strongly convinced that the youths, particularly the students should take part in active politics. He believed that the youths were always for creating a new India — free, great and powerful with better order and revolutionary outlook.

Thus this phase, 1921-1925 was Subhas Chandra's political apprenticeship under his guru Desbandhu Chitta Ranjan Das.

The next phase, that the post-Swarajist and pre-Forward Bloc, 1925-1939 gave a new turn to the political life of Subhas Chandra Bose. During this phase after Deshbandhu's demise in 1925, Subhas Chandra emerged as an independent, mature and vocal radical politician. He outrightly decried the Congress resolution of 1928 for Dominion Status and raised the demand for complete independence. He openly criticised the compromising attitude of the Congress Rightist. When the British Raj in India seemed not to concede even Dominion Status, Subhas Chandra urged the Congress to follow radical steps with a view to paralysing the alien government and thereby compelling them to leave India for their homeland. As against the urge of Subhas Chandra, Mahatma Gandhi and the Rightist leaders were prepared to accept the British offer of Federation, which Subhas vehemently opposed. While Gandhi and the Rightist leaders were content with Dominion Status, Subhas Chandra advocated for complete independence. While Gandhi asked for complete independence in 1929 without meaning seriously and just to take the wind out of the Leftists, Subhas Chandra went one step forward demanding the setting up of an interim government.

During this phase, Subhas Chandra Bose was convinced that a revolutionary radical policy was the effective measure to throw the governmental machinery out of gear. Therefore, he tried his level best to convince Gandhi and the Rightist leaders on behalf of radicalization of the Congress against the passivism, compromise and nascent constitutionalism of the Gandhite Congress. He raised his open criticism of the Rightist policy, the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement and the Delhi Pact which contained no provision for Swaraj. Against the Congress method, Subhas Chandra Bose and Vithalbai Patel issued a joint manifesto from Vienna, in 1933.

containing a strong criticism of Gandhi's policy.

Subhas Chandra observed that to succeed in revolutionary radicalism, countrywide propaganda against the British Raj and for the new radical programmes was a necessity. Observing the compromising attitude of the Congress, Subhas Chandra Bose did not hesitate to warn the Congress of creating a new party within the Congress in the form of Samyavadi Sangtha, which, he expected, would stand for complete independence and active resistance to attain it. He thought of such a strong, centralised and well-disciplined all-India party which would have its representatives from the All India National Congress, All India Trade Union Congress, peasants' organisations, women's organisations, youth organisations, student organisations, depressed classes' organisations and if necessary, from the communal or sectarian organisations.

Thus we find that during this phase, Subhas Chandra Bose expected a radical transformation in the platform of the Indian National Congress. But it seemed that the Congress under Gandhi's leadership would never allow the Party to be radicalized and there was a confrontation between the Rightists and Leftists. Subhas Chandra's victory in the Tripuri Presidential election against Gandhi's candidate was a victory of the Leftists under Subhas Chandra's leadership.

The next phase was the Forward Bloc phase: 1939-1941 — a period of radical transformation of India's Freedom Struggle. The Forward Bloc came into existence against the ineffective compromising policy of the Congress and its disapproval of revolutionary radical programmes for India's struggle for independence. It stood, both in national and international level, for relentless militant and uncompromising national struggle for freedom against the British.

He observed that had the Congress adopted the uncompromising revolutionary

programme for India's emancipation, there would have been no need for the formation of the Forward Bloc.

The Forward Bloc was a united front of the radical and anti-imperialist forces, against the British. It was an antithesis to Gandhism as it stood for complete independence against Gandhi's plea for Dominion Status; it stood for uncompromising national struggle against Gandhi's compromise; it stood for opposing Gandhi's Federation and Constitutionalism; and it stood for non-cooperation with Great Britain in the war, against Gandhi's plea for unconditional cooperation. The Forward Bloc stood for socialism and for a socialist state in free India.

Thus the Forward Bloc focused the conflict between the pro-compromising Rightists and uncompromising Leftists in the Congress – a conflict between a policy of constitutionalism and vested interest on one hand, and selfless revolutionary radicalism on the other. “As a result, Bose had to fight on two fronts : the Congress front and the British front, and his fight against the British was largely hindered because of the Rightist opposition, harassment and prosecution. Hence, he was convinced that it was not possible to wage an all out, militant, uncompromising national struggle against the British from within India”.³ Thus he escaped from India with the sole purpose of organising the national liberation movement abroad.

The next phase was a phase of militant nationalism, 1941-1945 in his life. In this phase, his revolutionary radical struggle in India was developed further into an armed struggle. From Berlin, in a radio broadcast, he urged the Indians for a revolutionary programme of total boycott of British goods, Britishers and pro-Britishers. In the same broadcast he urged upon the necessity to punish the police and prison officials who oppressed the people; to put up street barricades against police attack; to burn down government offices and factories working for war ends; to

interrupt postal, telegraphic, telephonic communications, rail, tram and bus services; to destroy police stations, railway stations and jails; to organise guerilla bands by students; to organise underground work by women etc. In this way he sought to paralyse the British administration in India and create all round disorder and confusion.

During the period of his militant struggle, Subhas Chandra was convinced that British imperialism was the sworn enemy of India responsible for India's backwardness and bondage. As it was the blatant violation of the principle of truth, justice, liberty and equality, it should be put to an end. That was the logic behind Subhas Chandra's uncompromising role in the freedom struggle. To him, independence of India was the righteous, sacred and just cause which should guide the freedom fighters to follow all means including violent methods as the last resort, if necessary to make his motherland free from the British rule. To Subhas Chandra, a man of action, Gandhi's non-violent protest against the mighty British power was an absurdity and useless. While Gandhi talked of non-violence, the British continued violence against the non-violent Satyagrahis. He believed that only militant struggle would bring the dawn out of the darkest hour and India would be free before long.

In this phase, Subhas Chandra firmly believed that only an armed struggle would force the British Raj to quit India. Therefore, as part of his national liberation movement in Europe and Asia he raised the Indian Legion in Germany; the Indian National Army was reorganised by him in East Asia which was raised to the status of a real Indian National Army. He established Free India (Azad Hind) Centre in Berlin and the Provisional Government of Free India in East-Asia. It declared war against the Anglo-American Bloc and the soldiers of the I.N.A. fought valiantly under his leadership for India's freedom from the yoke of the British Raj.

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