

# Subhas Chandra Bose and His Contribution in Indian Freedom Struggle



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# **Subhas Chandra Bose and His Contribution in Indian Freedom Struggle**



Subhas Chandra Bose is considered the most influential freedom fighter with extraordinary leadership skills and a charismatic orator. He was called Netaji. He raised the first Indian National Army (INA), Azad Hind Fauj in 1943 and started an armed coup and inspired thousands of Indian youths to join the struggle for independence from the British colonial rule. His famous slogans are 'tum mujhe khoon do, main tumhe aazadi dunga', 'Jai Hind', and 'Delhi Chalo'. He is known for his militant approach that he used to gain independence and for his socialist policies. Netaji is considered by many as one of the greatest leaders ever born. Subhas Chandra Bose continues to be a symbol of assertive nationalism.

## **Early Life of Subhas Chandra Bose**

Known by the slogan "Give me your blood, and I shall give you freedom" Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was born in Cuttack, Odisha on January 23, in the year 1897 to Janakinath Bose and Prabhavati Devi. Janakinath Bose was one of the successful

lawyer in Cuttack and received the title of “Rai Bahadur”. He later became a member of the Bengal Legislative Council.

A brilliant student, Netaji ranked second in the matriculation examination. He studied at Presidency College, Calcutta (Kolkata), from which he was expelled in 1916 for nationalist activities. In 1916, Subhas reportedly beat and thrashed one of his British teachers E F Otten. The professor made a racist remark against the Indian students. As a result, Subhas Chandra Bose was expelled from the Presidency College and banished from Calcutta University. The incident brought Subhas in the list of rebel-Indians. He was strongly influenced by *Swami Vivekananda*’s teachings and was known for his patriotic zeal as a student. He also adored Vivekananda as his spiritual *Guru*.



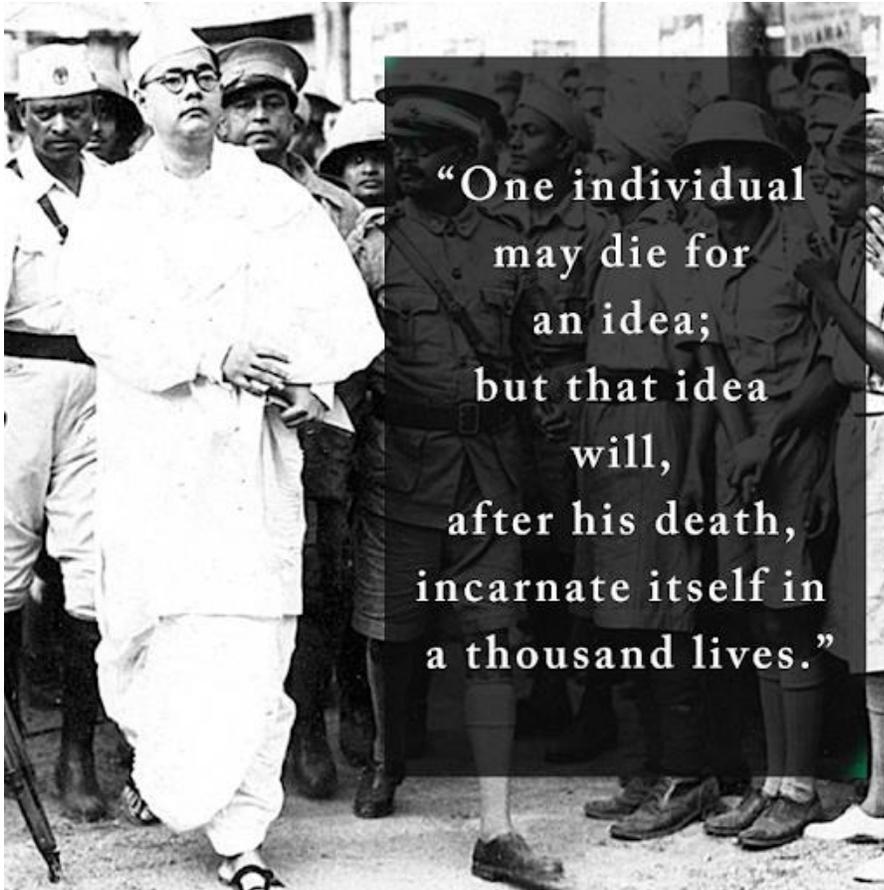
Subhas Chandra Bose at young age

His parents sent him to the University of Cambridge in England to prepare for Indian Civil Service (ICS) examination. In the year 1920, he passed the ICS examination, but on hearing about the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre he quit his high-paying ICS job and came back to India from England in 1921 to join India's struggle for independence. Soon, he left home to become an active member of India's independence movement and joined the Indian National Congress.

### **Subhas Chandra Bose and Congress-**

On returning to India, he came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. He joined Non-Cooperation Movement started by Mahatma Gandhi who made INC as a powerful non-violent organization. During the movement, he was advised by the Mahatma Gandhi to work with Chittaranjan Das who became his political guru.

While Chittaranjan Das was busy in developing the national strategy, Subhas Chandra Bose played a major role in enlightening the students, youth and labourers of Calcutta. He was eagerly waiting to see India, as an independent, federal and republic nation. After that he became a youth educator and commandant of the Bengal Congress volunteers. He started the newspaper 'Swaraj'. In 1924, he became the CEO of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation. Bose was sent to prison in Mandalay for nationalist activities in 1925. In 1927, he was released from prison and elected the President of the All India Youth Congress and also the Secretary of the Bengal State Congress. In 1930, he became the Mayor of Calcutta. Bose authored the book *The Indian Struggle* which covers the Indian independence movement from 1920 to 1942. The book was banned by the British government.

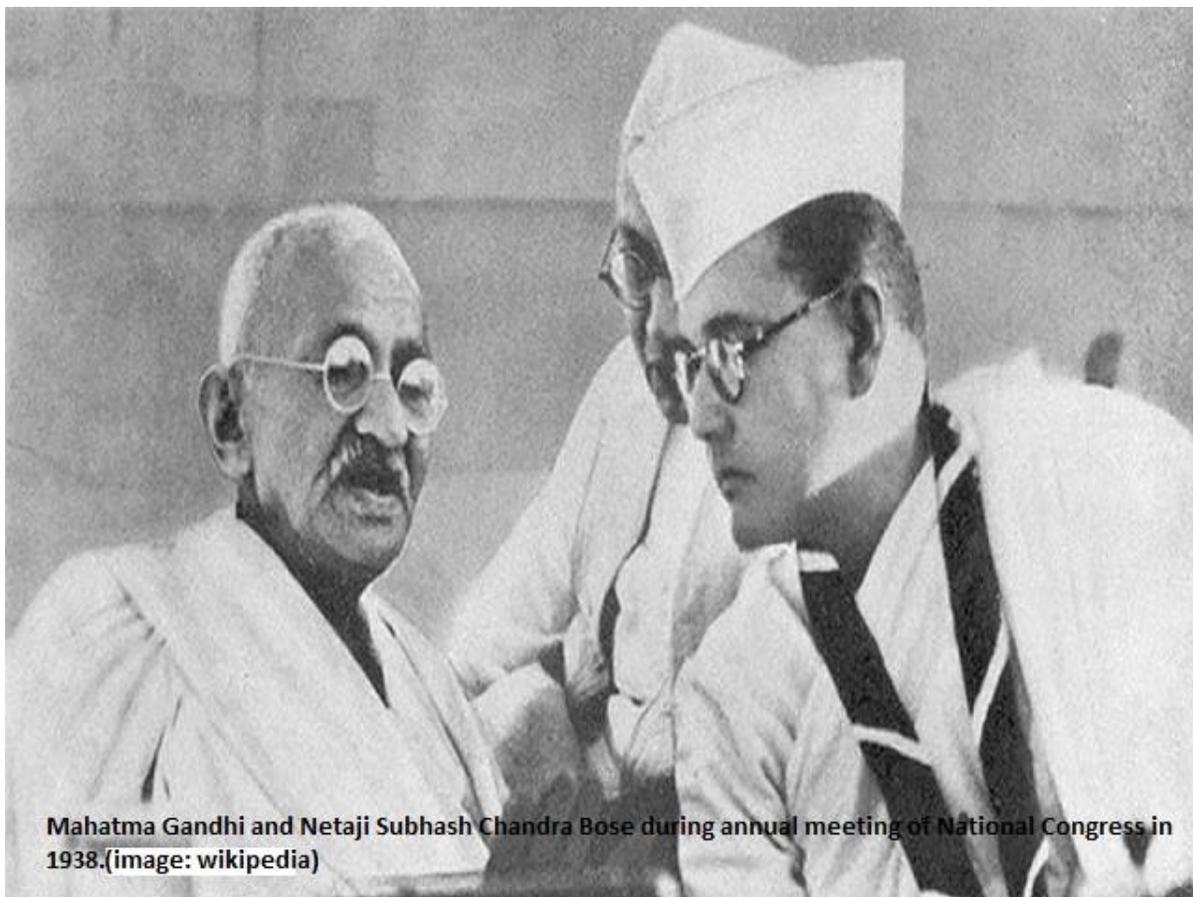


“One individual  
may die for  
an idea;  
but that idea  
will,  
after his death,  
incarnate itself in  
a thousand lives.”

In 1938 he was elected president of the Indian National Congress and formed a national planning committee, which formulated a policy of broad industrialization. However, this did not harmonize with Gandhian economic thought, which clung to the notion of cottage industries and benefiting from the use of the country's own resources. Besides, there seems to have been a basic difference of policy and tactics between Bose and Gandhies in the assessment of India's preparedness for Civil Disobedience movement and the favourable international scenario. Bose's vindication came in 1939, when he defeated a Gandhian rival for reelection. Nonetheless, the "rebel president" felt bound to resign because of the lack of Gandhi's support. He was also against India's joining the Second World War as an ally of British. He said, "By freedom I mean all-round freedom, i.e. freedom for the individual as well as for the society; freedom for the

rich as well as for the poor; freedom for men as well as for women; freedom for all individuals and for all classes.”

Bose’s ideology tilted towards socialism and leftist authoritarianism. He formed the All India Forward Bloc in 1939 as a faction within the Congress. The prime objective of the Forward Bloc was to bring all radical elements of the Congress party. So that he could spread the meaning of complete independence of India with adherence of the application of principles of equality and social justice.



In spite of sharp political differences between Subhas and Gandhi, Bose had deep respect for Gandhi in his heart. In August 1942, when Mahatma Gandhi launched the Quit India movement, Subhas Chandra Bose was in Berlin. It is recorded that reading this news in Berlin, Subhas Chandra Bose told his close

associate CN Nambiar that he needed to “be with Gandhi”. In his Azad Hind Radio message from Berlin, Subhas Chandra Bose had called the Quit India Movement of Mahatma Gandhi, the “non-violent guerilla warfare”. Gandhi also admired the courage and resourcefulness displayed by Subhas in making his escape from India.

Another incident arising from the death of Kasturba Gandhi, the wife of Mahatma Gandhi in 1944 shows how much Subhas Chandra Bose admired them. He issued a statement from Myanmar, then Burma, declaring Kasturba Gandhi, "a mother to the Indian people".

In his radio address, while launching attacks on the British forces, it was Subhas Chandra Bose who called Mahatma Gandhi the father of the nation. In his last radio address from Burma in 1944 that Subhas Chandra Bose said, "Father of our Nation! In this holy war for India's liberation, we ask for your blessings and good wishes.”

### **Ajad Hind Fauj and Subhas Chandra Bose-**

An important development in the struggle for freedom during the Second World War was the formation and activities of the Azad Hind Fauj, also known as the Indian National Army, or INA. Rash Behari Bose, an Indian revolutionary who had escaped from India and had been living in Japan for many years, set up the Indian independence league with the support of Indians living in the countries of south-east Asia.

When Japan defeated the British armies and occupied almost all the countries of south-East Asia, the league formed the Indian National Army from among the Indian prisoners of war with the aim of liberating India from the British

rule. General Mohan Singh, who had been an officer in the British Indian army, played an important role in organizing this army.



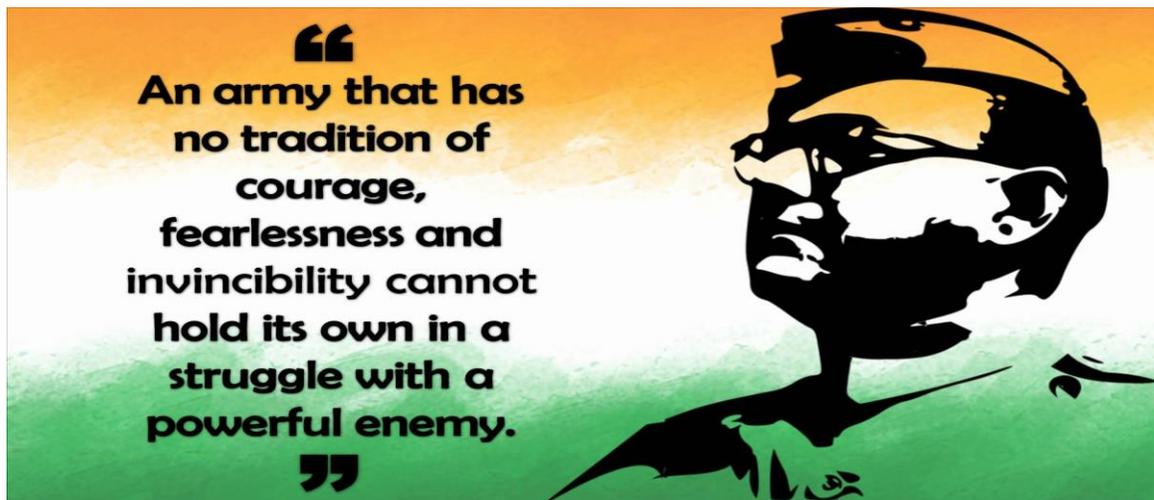
Netaji with Azad Hind Fauj

In the meantime, Subhas Chandra was held under house arrest by the British because of how he had been opposing their rule. However, he left the country secretly in 1941. The authorities did not come to know for many days that he was not in his Barrack (the house in which he was being guarded). He traveled by foot, car and train and resurfaced in Kabul (now in Afghanistan), only to disappear once again. In November 1941, his broadcast from German radio sent shock waves among the British and electrified the Indian masses who realized that their leader was working on a master plan to free their motherland. It also gave fresh confidence to the revolutionaries in India who were challenging the British in many ways.

He visited Japan in 1943 where the royal administration said yes to his appeal for help. It was here that he rebuilds the Indian National Army (Azad Hind

Fauj) to make it an effective instrument for the freedom of India. The Azad Hind Fauj comprised of about 45,000 soldiers, among who were Indian prisoners of war as well as Indians who were settled in various countries of south-east Asia. It was also in October 1943 that he formed a provisional government, one that had been recognised by the Axis Powers during the Second World War. In December 1943, INA freed the Andaman and Nicobar islands from the British and were renamed as Swaraj and Shaheed islands.

Subhas Chandra Bose wanted to free India from the Eastern front. Subhas Brigade, Azad Brigade and Gandhi Brigade were formed. INA marched through Burma and occupied Coxtown on the Indian Border. They were now inside India and were determined to drive out the British! Delhi Chalo (Let's march to Delhi) was the war cry. According to Shah Nawaz Khan, one of the most prominent officers of the Azad Hind Fauj, the soldiers who had entered India laid themselves flat on the ground and passionately kissed the sacred soil of their motherland.



However, the attempt to liberate India by the Azad Hind Fauj failed. Bose, however, was not one to surrender. He attempted to flee and renew his struggle yet

again. He escaped on a plane from the Taihoku Airport but he never made it. It is said that his plane crashed at Formosa, now known as Taiwan. He is said to have suffered third-degree burns and went into a coma and never came out of it.

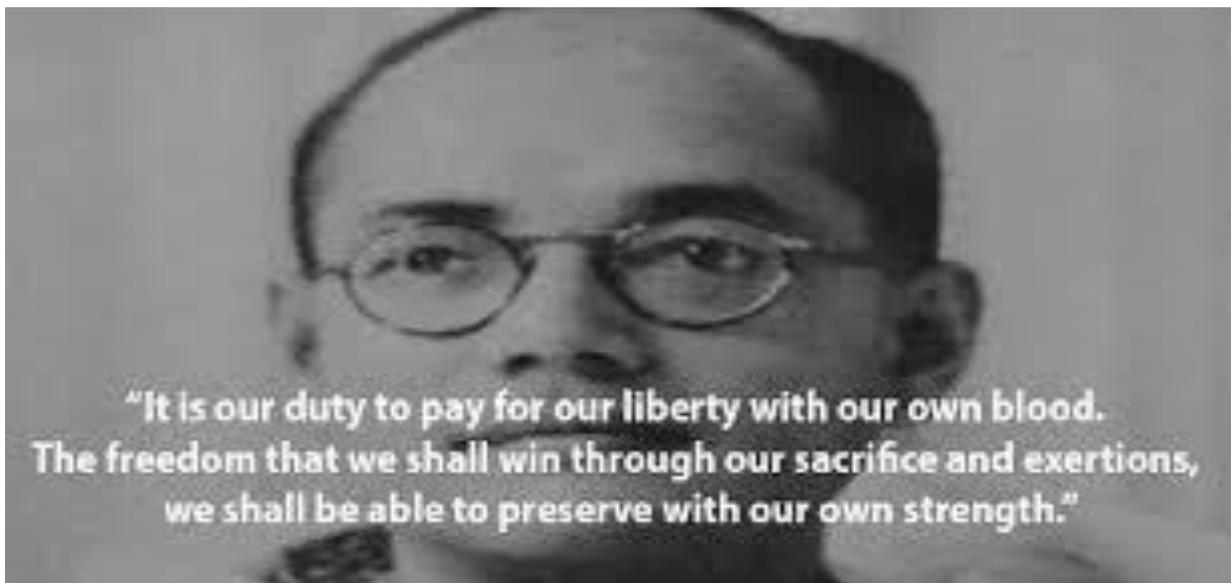
Although it was believed that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose died in a plane crash, his body was never recovered. There have been many theories put forward regarding his disappearance. The government of India set up a number of committees to investigate the case and come out with truth. The Figgess Report (1946) and the Shah Nawaz Committee (1956) concluded that Bose died in the plane crash in Taiwan. The Khosla Commission (1970) also concurred with the previous reports. The reports of Justice Mukherjee Commission, tabled in Parliament on 17 May, 2006 said, “Bose did not die in the plane crash and the ashes at Renkoji temple are not his”. However, the findings were rejected by the government of India.

### His Contribution in Indian Freedom Struggle-

Subhas Chandra Bose was one of India’s greatest freedom fighter. As far as the history of India’s independence struggle against the British is concerned Subhas Chandra Bose will always remain a key figure. A go-getter right from the start, Bose decided to chart his own path towards India’s independence in spite of knowing how hard it was going to be.

He revived the Indian National Army, popularly known as ‘Azad Hind Fauj’ in 1943 which was initially formed in 1942 by Rash Behari Bose. The assault by the INA, no matter how short-lived it was, was an important factor that eventually contributed to the British decision to stop their operations and shift back to their own land. This, in the end, did pave the way for India’s independence.

Subhas Chandra Bose said to the Army, “We have a grim fight ahead us for the enemy is powerful, unscrupulous and ruthless. In this final march to freedom, you will have to face hunger, privation, forced marches and death. Only when you pass this test will freedom be yours.” INA carried out many fights and struggles to bring about freedom in the Indian domain. All these were only possible because of the highly intelligence of Subhas Chandra Bose.



He espoused concrete economic planning and showed the way himself. It also needs to be remembered that it was he who encouraged Indian women to play an important role in the activities for the freedom of India. A women’s regiment of Azad Hind Fauj was formed, which was under the command of Captain Lakshmi Swaminathan. It was called the Rani Jhansi regiment. The Azad Hind Fauj became the symbol of unity and heroism to the people of India. Bose motivated the troops with his fiery speeches. His famous quote is, “Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom!”

Subhas was a great adventurer as well. His military exploits, unmatched patriotism and exemplary bravery have made him a role model for the young men and women of India. He still lives within our hearts and minds and works as a leading light and source of inspiration.

He played a crucial role in freeing the country from the clutches of 200 years of British rule in his own inimitable way, much like the other leading lights of the day such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. He was sent to prison eleven times during 1920-1941. Till the last day of his life as an active freedom fighter, he kept the spirit of fighting the British – even at the time of his death he was planning to migrate to Russia and find a new way to combat the British – and it is this persistence and patriotic fervour that needs to be respected more than anything else. To commemorate his contribution to India's struggle for independence, every year on 23rd January, Subhas Chandra Bose's birthday is celebrated across various parts of the country.

### **Suggested Readings-**

1. Bose, Subhas Chandra, *An Indian Pilgrim: An Unfinished Autobiography*, ed. by Bose Sisir K. & Bose, Sugata, Oxford University Press, 1997
2. Bose, Subhas Chandra, *The Indian Struggle (1920-1942)*, Jayashree Patrika Trust, 2013
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4. Bose Sisir K. & Bose, Sugata, ed., *The Essential Writings of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*, Oxford University Press, 1999
5. Gordon, A. Leonard, *Brothers Against the Raj: A Biography of Indian Nationalists Sarat & Subhas Chandra Bose*, Rupa & Co., 2015