

Subhas Chandra Bose: The Fearless Freedom Fighter

Introduction: A Different Kind of Hero

The story of India's fight for freedom is filled with many great leaders. Mahatma Gandhi is known as the "Father of the Nation" for his path of non-violence and truth. Jawaharlal Nehru was India's first Prime Minister who loved children and built modern India. But there is one hero whose story is like a thrilling movie—full of daring escapes, secret journeys, and a mighty army. His name was Subhas Chandra Bose, but millions loved and called him **Netaji**, which means "Respected Leader."

While Gandhi Ji believed in winning freedom through peaceful methods, Netaji believed that the British Empire, which ruled with force, would only understand the language of force. He thought that freedom was not something to be begged for, but something to be taken. His life was a thrilling adventure, dedicated to one single goal: to see India free. This is the story of that great patriot, a man of immense courage and passion.

Part 1: The Early Years (1897-1921) – The Making of a Rebel

A Bright Boy in Cuttack

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on **January 23, 1897**, in Cuttack, a city in Odisha. His father, Janakinath Bose, was a successful lawyer, and his mother, Prabhavati Devi, was a religious and strong-willed woman. He was the ninth child in a large and loving family.

From a very young age, Subhas was a brilliant student. He was also very thoughtful and kind-hearted. He was deeply influenced by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, who taught that serving the nation and its people was like serving God. Vivekananda's message of having a strong body and a strong mind made a deep impression on young Subhas.

He first studied at a European school where many British children studied. It was here that he first felt the sting of discrimination. He saw that Indian students were sometimes treated as inferior, and this planted the first seeds of anger against British rule in his heart.

The First Signs of Rebellion

When Subhas was just 19 years old, an incident showed his fiery spirit. A professor at his college, a British man named E.F. Oaten, had insulted Indian students. Subhas could not tolerate this. He, along with some other students, confronted the professor and even beat him up. For this, he was expelled from the college. This was his first open rebellion against injustice.

The Big Decision: Saying No to a Luxurious Life

To make his family happy, Subhas agreed to go to England in 1919 to study for the Indian Civil Service (ICS) exam. Becoming an ICS officer was a dream for many—it meant a job with high pay, great power, and a lot of respect.

And Subhas did it! In 1920, he passed the very difficult ICS exam, securing the fourth rank. It was a huge achievement. But his heart was not in it. While in England, news from India, especially of the horrible **Jallianwala Bagh massacre** where British troops killed hundreds of innocent Indians, filled him with rage and pain.

He realized he could not serve the very government that was oppressing his people. In a brave and shocking decision, he wrote a letter resigning from the ICS in 1921. He wrote, "Only on the soil of sacrifice and suffering can we raise our national edifice." He gave up a life of comfort and power for a life of struggle and uncertainty for the sake of his country.

Part 2: The Young Leader (1921-1938) – Learning and Clashing

Meeting the Great Leaders

When Bose returned to India, the country was buzzing with Mahatma Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement. Bose immediately went to meet Gandhi in Bombay. It was a meeting of two very different minds.

Gandhi Ji was calm, patient, and believed completely in non-violence. Bose was full of energy, impatient, and believed that all methods should be used to fight the British. Despite their differences, Bose joined the Indian National Congress, the main party leading the freedom struggle.

He found a mentor he agreed with more in **Chittaranjan Das** (or C.R. Das), a powerful leader from Bengal. C.R. Das was like a political guru to Bose. Under his guidance, Bose threw himself into the movement. He started a newspaper, became the CEO of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, and worked tirelessly.

Prison – A Regular University

For his activities against the British government, Bose was sent to jail many times between 1921 and 1925. But for him, prison was not a punishment; it was a university. He used his time in jail to read hundreds of books on history, politics, and philosophy. His beliefs became stronger. He became convinced that India needed a more forceful approach to gain freedom.

The death of his mentor, C.R. Das, in 1925 was a big personal and political blow for Bose. He now felt more alone in the Congress party, which was increasingly following Gandhi's path.

Rising Star and Growing Differences

By the 1930s, Bose had become a national leader. He was elected the President of the Indian National Congress in 1938. But his differences with Gandhi and the older leaders were becoming too big to ignore.

- **Gandhi's View:** Freedom through peaceful, non-violent protests. Be patient, change British hearts with truth and love.
- **Bose's View:** The British only understand power. We must use force. We should take advantage of Britain's problems (like the upcoming World War) to launch a massive fight for freedom.

This clash of ideas would soon lead to a big split.

Part 3: The Great Split and The Great Escape (1939-1941)

The Final Break with the Congress

In 1939, Bose decided to run for Congress President again. Gandhi did not want this and supported another candidate. But Bose was so popular that he won the election.

This victory created a huge crisis. Gandhi saw it as a personal defeat. The senior leaders who were loyal to Gandhi resigned from their posts, leaving Bose isolated. He was the President, but he had no power. A sad and frustrated Bose resigned from the post just a few months later.

He then formed his own group within the Congress called the **Forward Bloc**. Its goal was to bring together all the leaders who wanted to fight the British more aggressively.

The Perfect Opportunity: World War II

In 1939, World War II began. Britain was in a difficult fight against Germany and its allies. For Bose, this was the golden opportunity he had been waiting for. He famously said, "Britain's difficulty is India's opportunity." He wanted to start a huge revolt right away.

The British government was terrified of what Bose might do. In July 1940, they put him under house arrest in his Calcutta home. He was watched day and night by police.

The Daring Escape

This is where the story becomes like a spy thriller. On the night of **January 17, 1941**, Bose, disguised as a Pathan insurance agent named **Muhammad Ziauddin**, slipped out of his house. He tricked the British police guarding him.

His escape plan was brilliant and dangerous. He traveled by car and train to Peshawar, on the border with Afghanistan. With the help of friends and secret agents, he crossed the rugged mountains into Afghanistan. From Kabul, he traveled to Moscow and then, in a long and risky journey, he reached **Berlin, the capital of Germany**, in April 1941.

The British were left shocked and embarrassed. Their most dangerous prisoner had vanished from under their noses.

Part 4: The Fight from Abroad (1941-1943) – Building an Army

Seeking Help in Germany

Why did Bose go to Germany? It was simple: Germany was Britain's enemy. Bose believed that to fight a powerful enemy like Britain, he needed the help of other powerful countries. In Germany, he met with leaders, including Adolf Hitler, to ask for support for India's freedom.

It is important to understand that Bose was not a supporter of Hitler's racist ideas. For him, this was a practical partnership, not an ideological one. He was willing to take help from anyone who would help him free India.

In Germany, he started the **Free India Centre** and a radio station called **Azad Hind Radio**. Through his radio broadcasts, his powerful voice reached millions in India, telling them not to lose hope, that freedom was near.

Most importantly, he started forming an army. There were thousands of Indian soldiers who had been captured by German forces in North Africa. Bose convinced these soldiers to join a new force—the **Indian Legion**—to fight for India's freedom alongside the Germans.

A New Battlefield: Southeast Asia

But Germany's war was focused on Europe and Russia. Bose realized that Germany would not be able to help him invade India. So, when Japan, another British enemy, invited him to lead the Indian freedom struggle in Southeast Asia, he immediately agreed.

His journey to Japan was another great adventure. He traveled in a German submarine for three months, then transferred to a Japanese submarine near Madagascar, finally reaching Japan in June 1943. It was one of the most dangerous journeys ever undertaken by a national leader.

Part 5: The Indian National Army and "Chalo Delhi!" (1943-1945)

The Leader Arrives

In Singapore, Bose took command of the Indian Independence League and its military wing, the **Indian National Army (INA)**. The INA was made up of Indian soldiers of the British Indian Army who had been captured by the Japanese. When Bose arrived, it was like a electric current passed through everyone.

At a massive rally on July 4, 1943, he was declared the leader of India's freedom movement in East Asia. In a thunderous voice, he declared, "I can offer you nothing but hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches, and death. But if you follow me in life and in death, I shall lead you to victory and freedom."

The soldiers and civilians were mesmerized. They gave him the title "**Netaji**."

Revitalizing the INA

Netaji breathed new life into the INA. He gave them a new spirit and a new goal.

- He established the **Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India)**. This government had its own currency, stamps, and courts. It was recognized by Japan, Germany, and several other countries.
- He gave the INA its famous battle cries: "**Jai Hind!**" (Victory to India!) and "**Chalo Delhi!**" (On to Delhi!).
- In a revolutionary step, he formed the **Rani of Jhansi Regiment**, a unit for women soldiers. This showed his strong belief in the power of women and their role in the freedom struggle.

The Military Campaign and Bravery

In 1944, the INA, along with Japanese forces, finally marched towards India. Their goal was to capture Imphal and Kohima and then march to Delhi.

They fought with incredible bravery. In March 1944, they hoisted the Indian tricolor flag in the town of **Moirang, in Manipur**. This was the first piece of Indian soil to be liberated from British rule by the INA.

The soldiers shouted "Chalo Delhi!" with new energy. However, the campaign faced huge problems. The Japanese supplies ran out. The monsoon rains made movement impossible. The British had stronger air power. The INA soldiers, with little food and ammunition, fought bravely but were forced to retreat. It was a heartbreaking military defeat.

Part 6: The Mystery and The Legacy (1945-Present)

The Mysterious Disappearance

By 1945, Japan was losing the war. Netaji refused to surrender. He wanted to go to the Soviet Union to seek help. On **August 18, 1945**, he boarded a Japanese plane in Taiwan.

The official story is that this plane crashed soon after take-off. Netaji was badly burned in the fire and died in a hospital a few hours later.

But this story was full of confusion and contradictions. There was no clear proof. Millions of Indians refused to believe that their hero was dead. They thought he had escaped and was hiding, maybe in the

Soviet Union, waiting for the right time to return. Many people claimed to have seen him as a holy man in India. Several official inquiries were held, but the mystery has never been fully solved. For many, Netaji simply vanished.

Why Netaji is So Important: The Real Victory

Even though the INA did not win on the battlefield, it won a massive political victory that shook the foundations of the British Empire in India.

1. **The INA Trials:** After the war, the British decided to put three senior INA officers—a Hindu, a Muslim, and a Sikh—on public trial for treason at the Red Fort in Delhi. They wanted to punish them and scare other Indians.

But their plan backfired. The entire country erupted in anger. People saw the INA soldiers not as traitors, but as heroes who had fought for India. The Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, who were usually rivals, both joined together to defend the INA officers. The whole country united for the INA.

2. **Inspiring the Indian Army:** The British Indian Army was the key tool through which the British ruled India. The story of the INA's bravery deeply inspired these Indian soldiers. They started to wonder if they were on the wrong side. This led to mutinies in the Indian Navy and Air Force in 1946.

The British realized a simple truth: they could no longer trust the Indian soldiers to hold down a rebellion. If they tried to hold on to India, they would face a united revolt from the entire Indian population and their own army. This made it impossible for them to continue ruling.

Just two years after Netaji's disappearance, in **1947, India became free.**

Conclusion: The Unquenchable Spirit of Netaji

Subhas Chandra Bose was a hero of a different kind. He did not believe in waiting. He believed in acting. His life was a message of courage, sacrifice, and unwavering determination.

He showed that when a people are determined to be free, they will find a way. He may have died in a plane crash, or he may have vanished into the pages of history, but his spirit never died. His slogans, "**Jai Hind**" and "**Chalo Delhi**," are still used in India today, filling every Indian heart with pride.

He proved that one man's fierce will and passion can shake an empire. He was, and will always be, our beloved Netaji.