

Subhas Chandra Bose : A Legend and Challenge (II)

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

Congress and the issue of partition

Gandhi, who often said, 'You shall have to divide my body before you divide India', or if partition happened, it would be over his dead body, now said to Nirmal Bose, 'With whom was I going to carry on the fight? Don't you realise that, as a result of one year of communal riots, the people of India have all become communal? They can see nothing beyond the communal question. They are tired and frightened. The Congress has only represented this feeling of the whole nation. How can I oppose it?' (Gordon/Freedom 22)

Partition was nightmarish to many. It became so in the life of people particularly in the two partitioned provinces of India—Bengal and Punjab. Sri Aurobindo ever disfavoured partition. So he sent his special emissary to the Congress leaders in 1942, urging them to accept the Dominion status for the time being, as Cripps offered, so as to avoid partition. The wiser leadership rejected the advice. In his message over the All India Radio, Trichinopally on 14 August 1947, Sri Aurobindo said among other things that, 'It is to be hoped that the Congress and the nation will not accept the settled fact as forever settled or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled; civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and

foreign conquest. The partition of the country must go. . . .'³

In spite of his passion to be the final word in the Congress from which Subhas was suspended, Gandhiji with his strong moral and ethical judgment could not deny that partition could be saved had Subhas been there. 'Before he was assassinated in 1948, Gandhi—a senior journalist told me—rebuked Nehru and Patel for not being able to reign in partition madness and wished that his "other son" (Subhas) was here!' Reminded by Congressman, who had witnessed the dressing-down, that Bose was dead and he had himself come to that belief, Gandhi shot back, "He's in Russia".' (Anuj 45)

Congress assumed a dictatorial character during Gandhi's presence and continued under the hegemony of one family from Nehru's time. The consequences of it are felt now in all political circles. Nehru was Gandhi's selection as the custodian of India after the partition-riddled freedom was won and always remained his faithful follower. After partition and independence, Gandhi was almost nowhere in the running of the country. He continued to remain on his chosen path of moral and ethical reformation of the people and country living at his secluded corners. He was not fit to rule, but he fixed the ruler who enjoyed power till 1964. The result has been variously discussed by many historians.

Netaji in Exile

It needs to be mentioned that in spite of his ambivalent attitude towards the British, his praise for their real worth and wrath for their domination of India, his opposition to imperialist British was unflinching. Never was his tenacity, promise and determination got reduced by any personal friendship at the cost of the country. His attitude was observed by his rivals from the beginning of his political career which he made clear to Gandhi also. Going to jail and again sitting for discussion type of movement, he never indulged in. Since the British rulers knew it, their actions against him could be read accordingly. While others were kept in jail and brought out again as per need and convenience, Subhas passed the major portion of his time as active politician out of the country or in distant jails or in house arrest. The reason was, they assured themselves, that this popular, selfless lover of the land should not get opportunities often to influence his countrymen so that might truly expedite the parting days of the British Raj. They were truly afraid of Bose's presence among the countrymen as his rivals in the country were afraid of his presence after his disappearance. False rumour of his getting killed in air crash was spread not due to their asinine ideas but because of their fear of that genuine, sincere and fearless personality's return which would shatter all pseudo leadership and dictatorship in due course. So all his adversaries took all precautions to see him exiled, out of the reach of the millions of the country.

Subhas for the most part of his political career was exiled forcibly and, towards the middle of the World War, he took his decision to plunge headlong in the struggle, in the real field of war, to accomplish a real struggle of 'Do or Die'. He would be

successful had the Axis Power not dwindled against the Nuclear Power; had it not been followed by killing of Musolini, suicide of Hitler and fall of Japan. It must be understood that Subhas knew all the implications of inviting the young imperialists to his country in league with the fascists and dictators. He knew all the possible consequences and yet risked all. He was in good humour with all such powers even up to the end and was in good relationship with Russia also, though we are still in the dark as to what happened of him in course of time.

All-out efforts to gain power

On 18 March, 1941, after facing unprecedented hardship and difficulties he could start for the Russian border disguised as Orlando Massotta with an Italian passport and eventually reached Germany. Although his immediate call for an Axis declaration on Indian independence was not successful, he was helped to establish his Indian Independence League office engaging Indian employees. Gradually he became widely known in Berlin and welcomed by Indians. From this point he became known as 'Netaji' and his slogan and greeting, 'Jai Hind' became popular which is still a part of the concluding words of speech in India.

The most important work of Netaji in Germany was the creation of the INA. Netaji was convinced that without an army of her own India would not be able to win and retain her independence. Soon after my arrival in Berlin I was taken by Netaji to visit the INA training centre at Frankenberg near Dresden. There we found that most tremendous enthusiasm prevailed among the men. They all had a profound faith on Netaji and were prepared to die for him and for the cause. Another aspect which impressed me very much was their extraordinary strength of solidarity. There was no difference

between Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs and Christians. . . . Major Krappe was in charge of the military training of the INA. Major Krappe had a profound respect for Netaji, treated the INA men as his own children and took a keen interest in their training. (*Netaji in Germany* by Promode Sen Gupta/Purabi 86-87)

Subhas established effective contact with Japan. With German help, in their Uboat with Abid Hussain he embarked on his next journey during the perilous days of the World War on 8 February, 1943, and on reaching a prearranged spot in far away Madagascar, they met with a representative of Japan waiting with submarine. In the water amid scattered boats, men and whizzing bullets they were transferred in a dinghy to the submarine which took them to Sabang on the northern tip of Sumatra Island and from there they were flown with the Japanese Liaison Officer to Tokyo on 13 June, 1943.

After the fall of Singapore the Indian Prisoners of War were at the disposal of Japan. Capt Mohan Singh was in charge of the INA (Indian National Army) but he had serious dispute with the Japanese. The INA was then disbanded and he was under arrest. Great revolutionary Indian leader, Rash Behari Bose, was in the overall charge of the Indian Independence Movement in South East Asia. Subhas arrived in Tokyo at this point of time and was received by the Japanese Premier, Tojo. He said in the Diet, 'Japan is firmly resolved to extend all means in order to help to expel and eliminate from India the Anglo-Saxon influences which are the enemy of the Indian people, and enable India to achieve full independence in the true sense of the term.' (Anup 350)

Bose arranged a press conference there and made two radio broadcasts calling upon Indians to gather under his banner. He then

moved to Singapore and assumed the charge of the Indian Independence League as its President and called for the allegiance of the INA which was reorganized by Rash Behari Bose. On 9 July 1943, Bose addressed a gathering of 60000 people and said, 'There is no nationalist leader in India who can claim to possess the many-sided experience that I have been able to acquire.' And with extensive tours to neighbouring countries like Rangoon, Bangkok and Saigon he began his campaign, meeting and exhorting Indians and others sympathetic to the cause, making hard labours day and night in organizing the movement in different ways. In August he assumed the Supreme Command of the INA.

It is to be remembered in this context that Subhas, with some other students, once petitioned to the Government for a University Military Training Corps for military training during his college days in India and repeated it in Cambridge. He got himself trained in the meantime which no other top-ranking civilian leader of the time could dream. He always felt that Indians essentially required such trainings to effectively combat imperialism. His idea of leading militarily also among other means became successful here to the extent possible.

Inauguration of Provincial Government

On 21 October, 1943, Bose inaugurated the Provincial Government of Free India and appointed a Council of Ministers. Next day the Provincial Government declared war on Britain and America and a number of governments quickly accorded recognition to the Government. He considered his Government as an ally of the Japanese Government and felt that he should be consulted in war efforts in the East. As earlier, the in-charge of the Japanese forces

there did not agree, but Bose insisted and spoke to Tojo.

On 4 November, 1943, he addressed a conference in Diet building in Japan, which was an immediate success and Japan agreed to hand over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Provincial Government and they further agreed that in the next offensive in 1944 the INA would make an Allied Army under the Japanese Operational Command. On 18 November, 1943, Bose travelled to Singapore passing through Nanking, Shanghai, Manila and Saigon and addressed meetings. He visited and viewed war preparations in those areas and from Shanghai he broadcast a message to Chiang Kai Sheik, the Head of the Government in China. On his return, Field Marshal Count Terauchi, who was opposing his proposals earlier, agreed to consult Bose's Headquarters in all planning and execution in the war front. Intercepted by the opposition of Mohan Singh, however, Japan did not keep their full promise in respect of handing over control of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The Japanese army planned to push to India through Burma and invited a select group from the INA to assist them; but Bose desired that the INA should be at the front to attack and shed first blood on Indian soil. Japan could not agree to such a venture as the INA was made of groups of defeated soldiers who were not so trained. Then time for Imphal campaign came and Bose with his insistence obtained the permission of the Japanese Government to take part in the assault in Indian soil. Despite their support and help from the Headquarters in Tokyo, the Japanese in the field did not fully cooperate with the Indian Army in respect of supplies of food, medicines, air cover and in many other respects and the INA soldiers received worst beatings from the British

army. Japan also suffered many losses and its air force was ravaged. Subhas Chandra then ordered a retreat in September 1944, but his subsequent campaign also proved fatal. The British army pushed back the Japanese and the INA soldiers very badly. While Bose was thinking of reorganizing the INA, the Japanese decided to abandon the Burmese front in April 1945 and that was the death-knell of the INA. It suffered huge losses in many ways. On 11 August, 1945, Bose received the information that Russia declared war on Japan and the next day's message for him was that Japan decided to surrender to the Allied Forces; this was after the droppings of atom bombs.

On 13 August he went to Singapore and discussed his plans with his officers for three days. On 16 August he flew to Bangkok and had discussions with General Isoda, Hachia, the Minister accredited to the Provisional Government of Free India and Kagawa. The next morning he travelled to Saigon with six members of his staff and some Japanese officers in two bomber planes provided by Japan. The planes had to be changed here and Bose wished to be accompanied by all six in his flight beyond Saigon. But they could accommodate only one person besides Bose in their plane which was otherwise full. Bose then chose Habibur Rahman to accompany him. It went to Taipei (Taihoku) in Formosa on 18 August, 1945, for refueling. Shortly after its take off, the plane crashed in the air. With some others Subhas Chandra Bose also died, it was reported. So officially this was considered his life's last journey.

Revolt in Royal Indian Navy

'The Naval Uprising in February 1946 was a turning-point in India's long struggle for independence. The freedom struggle was undoubtedly peaceful as inspired by

Mahatma Gandhi. But in the real politic of the then prevailing world scene, it was the “INA” and the “Naval Uprising” which convinced the British that the Indian Armed Forces could no longer be isolated from the rising surge of nationalism,’ said Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat, PVSM, ADC, The Chief of Staff, Indian Navy, on 19 January, 1998 at Kanpur at a reception to INA and RIN Freedom Fighters. (Revolt of RIN Ratings; February 1946: IBC 21)

The favourable impression was strengthened by the speech of the British Prime Minister in the course of debate in the House of Commons on 15 March, 1946, on the Cabinet Mission’s visit to India. Atlee said that ‘the tide of nationalism was running very fast in India and that it was time for clear and definite action. The Cabinet Mission was going to India in a positive mood. The temperature of 1946 was not the temperature of 1920, 1930, or even 1942. His colleagues were going to India with the intention of using their utmost endeavours to help her attain freedom as speedily and as fully as possible.’ (Ratings 16; April 1996. IBC 16)

Gandhi called the mutiny ‘Unbecoming’ and was relieved when the ratings in obedience to Patel, surrendered. (Rajmohan Gandhi. *Patel—A Life*, Ahmedabad, 1991, as referred in the Review. Ratings 3. IBC 3)

The Review also states that Sardar Patel was vehemently against the movement by Royal Indian Navy and went against all its supporters including Aruna Asaf Ali, their colleague. It says that ultimately it was seen that Congress leaders were against each other in the matter of full support which has been corroborated by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in his book, *India Wins Freedom*.

More interesting would be the eyewitness memoir of the former Prime Minister of India, Mr I. K. Gujral, who was

present at the Karachi uprising of the Royal Indian Navy in 1946. He wrote on 20.2.2006:

The naval mutinies of February 1946 remain indelible in the Nation’s mind and even more deep in the psyches of those like me who had witnessed this turning-point in history of the freedom struggle. . . .

Even the firing of the tear gas shells that followed did not affect them, while the determined groups of Ratings peacefully squatted on the tramway lines, ready to face the guns. Their high morale was inspiring. The on-lookers spilled on the road to join the slogan shoutings, ‘*Netaji ki jai*’ and ‘*Bharat Mata ki jai*’.

The Commissioner ordered the firing of the tear gas shells. That made the processionists and the spectators even more excited. They covered their eyes and faces with wet kerchiefs or with clothes got wet with the water sprinkled from the balconies. The women from the balconies passed on to them their wet ‘sarees’ and other garments to ward off the gas. Soon they passed on fruits and sweets and buckets of drinking water without any touch of panic. It was a mela-like atmosphere. The public now mingled with the processionists. It was difficult for police to segregate them. (Ratings 25-26. IBC 25-26)

The humiliation of the INA soldiers—Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian—galvanised the Indians like they hadn’t been ever since India was brought under direct British government rule. The Governor of what is now called Uttar Pradesh wrote to the Viceroy in New Delhi in November 1945 that those hitting the streets were actually suggesting that ‘Bose is rapidly usurping the place held by Gandhi in Popular esteem.’ (Dhar 5)

Clash of policy

The main clash between Gandhi and Subhas was a clash of policy which had begun from the date Subhas met Gandhi. It

was the method of movement for independence: Violent or Non-Violent. Subhas's contest was against the will of the one who felt himself all-in-all in the organization and had an idea that none could override him. He pushed his colleagues against the President who felt cornered and resigned against such dictatorial conduct. It was a clique, more violent than violent combat, silently pushing Subhas to leave the country, leaving the movement in chaos resulting in partition of the country. In this context it may easily be concluded that Indian Independence was won violently. The Quit India Movement called by Gandhi in 1942 was not at all non-violent (all the leaders including him were in jail almost up to the end of the drama). British had to leave India in war-ravaged condition of their country, in the face of naval revolt and near-revolt by the Indian Army which was the result of INA's actions against them.

Responses to the announcement of Bose's death

On 29 August, 1945, in New Delhi, Alfred Wagg, a stringer for the *Chicago Tribune*, rudely interrupted a press conference of Jawaharlal Nehru. He claimed Bose was 'alive and seen in Saigon four days ago.' On September 1, London's *Sunday Observer* picked up Wagg's claim and added that the Japanese report was 'not believed in British and American military circles'. On 11 September in Jhansi, Nehru himself told a gathering that he did not believe in Bose's reported death: 'Yes, I have received a number of reports which have raised in me grave doubts and I disbelieve the authenticity of the news.'

From late 1945 to early 1946, Mahatma was the chief promoter of the Bose mystery.

'If someone shows ashes even then I will not believe that Subhas is not alive,' he told the jailed associates of Bose on 30 December 1945. His January 1946 statement made headlines world over. *The New York Times* on 6 January reported 'Gandhi as declaring in a speech that he believed Subhas Chandra Bose was still alive and awaiting a propitious time to reappear'. All this had a ripple effect and from villages in India's remote corners to the expats across Southern Asia, all took fancy to the idea that Bose was 'in hiding' and would 'come to India as the free President of a free country'. (Anuj 28)

There were many speculations on Netaji's possible destination and stay. Many doubt specially in India and in Bose's family circle about the truth of the news of his death. Habibur Rahman and the British Government brought the evidence of Netaji's death; a charred wrist watch. Capt. Habibur Rahman facing violent attacks on him after partition migrated to Pakistan. Anuj Dhar has reported more such stories telling about Netaji's presence in Russia. 'The whisper of Bose being alive were loud enough to be heard by the Central Intelligence Agency. In November 1950, a highly placed agent in India reported that "it is now currently rumoured in the Delhi area that 'Netaji' . . . is alive and is in Siberia, where he is waiting for a chance to make a big comeback. The spectre of Bose's coming back from the dead still troubled the establishment'. (Anuj 46)

Declassified IB reports

Due to wide demand from the public to declassify the secret files relating to Subhas Chandra Bose remaining in Central and State Government archives for decades,

most of such files have been declassified over the time. One such file records a sensational report that Nehru was keenly alert and eager to know about the whereabouts of Netaji till his death. His successors also maintained this curiosity for 20 long years. This was widely reported in the media. Below is an excerpt of such report published in *India Today* on 10 April, 2015.

‘Two recently declassified Intelligence Bureau (IB) files have revealed that the Jawaharlal Nehru government spied on the kin of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose for nearly two decades. The files, which have since been moved to the National Archives, show unprecedented surveillance on Bose’s family members between 1948 and 1968. Nehru was the prime minister for 16 of the 20 years and the IB reported directly to him. The files show the IB resumed British-era surveillance on the two Bose family homes in Calcutta: 1 Woodburn Park and 38/2 Elgin Road. Apart from intercepting and copying letters written by Bose’s family members, agency sleuths shadowed them on their domestic and foreign travels. The agency seemed especially keen to know who all the Bose kin met and what they discussed. A series of hand-written messages show the agents phoned in ‘Security Control’, as the IB headquarters was called, to report on the family’s movements.’⁴

The Central Government admitted that some such files were not available even after thorough searches. Tampered or not, some pages in such files are not available, blotched or almost obliterated. They cannot be read clearly. All these prove that the then Prime Minister of India was aware of Bose’s presence on earth but he had no control over his stay and movements; so he maintained

such surveillance. Possibly he was afraid of Subhas’s coming back, thus risking his near-autocratic ruling. What efforts he might have made for or against Subhas Bose might be in the files lost which might be known from further searches in Russian archives or elsewhere, if available. This continued after Nehru, for his whole family wished as the first PM wished, and guarded such desire with utmost care. Not only they, but there are people with political bindings and affinities, people with various vested interests and other stakes, who still believe and propagate Netaji’s death in air crash after all falsehood have been laid bare.

But why this secrecy? It may very well be that the secrecies were conspiracies; the secrecies if opened to public view might reveal the real characters of those who are adored by the media and the establishment. Is it not time that we should know the correct positions about Bose’s activities and end, if end happened to the mortal body of the true patriot of India, who did so much including the self-sacrifice for the country after doing such things that ‘No Indian leader of his stature could ever think of the things he did.’ (Dhar 3)

A writer has speculated on reason that, ‘In 1946, the British had already decided to leave India to “God and anarchy”. The primary casualty of Bose’s re-emergence would have been the Congress and, particularly, Gandhi’s anointed leader, Jawaharlal Nehru. Netaji’s jackboots would have become the alternative to both the Mahatma’s chakra and Nehru’s genteel socialism.’⁵

In the face of such speculations and guesses, there began efforts to give a definite shape to the authenticity of his death report so that Indians would only lament but

would never think of any chance of Subhas Bose's return and his being crowned as the Chief of Free India.

On 3.10.1946 one Mangal Singh asked Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, 'A few days ago the Hon'ble Leader of the House (Jawaharlal Nehru) made a statement that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose is dead. Is that the view of the Government of India or his personal view?' 'The Government of India have no view, either way,' Patel yielded. (Anuj 47)

It is said that Vallabhbhai sent Harin Shah, a journalist, to Taipei to report about the death of Subhas. Shah went to Taipei in August 1946 and reported his findings not to his editor, but the 'friendly and most considerate' Indian ambassador. KPS Menon promptly relayed Shah's account to New Delhi through the diplomatic channel.

This report in favour of Netaji's death due to plane crash emboldened those who felt relieved at the confirmation of the genuine patriot's death. 'Thanks to Shah, the Government came to have a clear view. In December 1949 Patel would announce that certain enquiries pointed to the conclusion that Subhas Bose died in an air crash.' (Anuj 47-48)

First official report

S. A. Iyer, former Publicity Minister of the Azad Hind Government wrote to Nehru on 28 February 1952, addressing him as 'Revered Panditji': 'I hope to be excused for encroaching on your valuable time with this letter. You will probably remember, Sir, that, as expressly desired by you, during the interview you granted me on Saturday, September 15, 1951 at Parliament House, New Delhi, I sent you a comprehensive report on the fate of Netaji Subhas Chandra

Bose, under date 24th September, 1951.' (Anup 39)

On 5 March, 1952, Nehru gave a speech for the first time about the plane crash and death of Netaji in Indian Parliament on the basis of the five-page report by S.A. Iyer and said, 'This is the fullest and latest account that we have had. Whether it is the last word or some further information may come later, I cannot say. But it does seem now that it is fairly convincing account.' (Anup 40)

Iyer became the Minister of the Publicity Department of the Azad Hind Government after its formation. He then came in contact with the Indian Independence League and came in close contact of its President of the Singapore branch, Munga Ramamurthy. They later conspired to loot the treasure that Subhas collected from the public and shared it with some big leaders. (Anup 18-19) So Iyer was the first person who betrayed the Azad Hind Government and Munga was his first collaborator.

Committee formed

In April, 1956, in response to the public demand, the Government of India appointed an inquiry Committee to ascertain the circumstances concerning Netaji's departure from Bangkok on 15 August, 1945, and his alleged death in an air crash. The Committee consisted of three members: Shah Nawaz Khan, M.P., Shri Suresh Chandra Bose, elder brother of Netaji and Shri S. N. Maitra, ICS.

This Committee was crippled at its very birth as it was denied any judicial power. Nehru did not allow this Committee even to visit Taihoku for an on-the-spot investigation. This is also borne out by the following excerpt from the letter to

Dr Bidhan Roy. In a 'Secret and Personal' letter to Bidhan Roy, No. 583-PMO/55 dated October 11 1955, New Delhi, Nehru wrote: 'They will not be able to go to Formosa where the accident is supposed to have occurred.' (Purabi 239)

While the two members came to the conclusion that while travelling from Taihoku in a Japanese bomber plane with Habibur Rahman and others Netaji died in an air crash at Taihoku on 18 August 1945, Shri Suresh Bose sent a dissent report stating among other things that there had been no air crash at Taihoku involving Netaji's death. The Government accepted the majority report. (Anup 342-43)

About this Committee's success, in spite of his apparent satisfaction, Nehru's doubt prevailed. He wrote to Amiya Nath Bose, Netaji's nephew, on 22.4.1964,

'My dear Amiya,

I have your letter of the 20th April. I agree with you that something should be done to finalise the question of Netaji's death. . . .' (Purabi 40)

This idea to finalise was due mainly to the reason that there had been demands from the opposition parties to appoint another probe body to reveal the truth. They were not happy about the majority decision of the Committee and Government's acceptance of such report. Things were known and Shah Nawaz was called a 'traitor' in public.

Khosla Commission

In response to a demand by the majority MPs, the Government now appointed a one-man Commission of Enquiry in July 1970 under the retired Chief Justice of Punjab High Court, Justice G. D. Khosla. He visited many countries and examined large numbers of witnesses and submitted its report on 30

June, 1974. It is said that the Khosla Commission refused to accept the very relevant 'Report of the Enquiry' made by the Mayor of Taipei in 1945 on the alleged event of Netaji's death in the Taihoku air crash, when it visited Taipei. Nevertheless, the Khosla Commission report was adopted by the Parliament during Emergency in 1975 without any discussion when most of the opposition members of the Parliament were in detention. (Purabi 242) The Cabinet accepted the findings as it did accept the previous Shah Nawaz Report.

Manoj Mukherjee Commission

A writ petition was filed in High Court at Calcutta under PIL and the High Court gave its judgment on 30.4.1998, directing the Union Government to 'Launch a vigorous enquiry into the alleged disappearance or death of Netaji in accordance with law by appointing a Commission of Enquiry for the purpose of giving an end to the controversy.' (Purabi 254) Accordingly the Government of India vide Notification No. SO 339 (E) dated 14.5.1999 appointed a Commission of Enquiry headed by Justice M. K. Mukherjee, a retired judge of the Supreme Court.

The report of the Commission was placed before the Indian Parliament by the then Home Minister on 17.5.2006. The Action Taken Memorandum stated: 'The Government has examined the report submitted by the Commission on November 8, 2005 in detail and have not agreed with the findings that Netaji did not die in the plane crash and the ashes in the Renkoji Temple were not of Netaji.' (Purabi 256)

With reference to the Terms of References, the Commission reported that Netaji was dead but not due to a plane

crash as claimed earlier. But where and how he died could not be given in the absence of any clinching evidence. It also reported that the ashes at the Renkoji Temple in Japan were not of Netaji.

However, the same Government which accepted the other reports earlier, rejected the last one without assigning any cause. So the mystery remains.

It is interesting to note that Justice Mukherjee in his reports wrote: ‘The absence of any record relating to Netaji’s death and cremation (in respect of which he [Dr Yoshimi] claimed to have played a pivotal role) clearly demonstrates that he was not telling the truth.’ (Mukherjee Commission Report. V.1. p.74. as quoted in Ghosh 94)

Regarding the documents submitted by Harin Shah, the Mukherjee Commission reported that ‘Even a cursory glance of the entries in these documents makes it abundantly clear that they could not and do not by any stretch of imagination relate to Netaji.’ (Anup 644)

And about the plane crash theory, the report states, ‘Not a scrap of paper—not to speak of any contemporary official document—was forthcoming to corroborate the oral version of the plane crash even though it was expected that in the official course of business there would be record maintained by the authorities concerned to prove the fulcrum of the crash.’ (Anup 636)

Under the above conditions, the Mukherjee Commission dismissed the verdict of both the Committee and Commission prior to him including the death certificates. He submitted his report verbatim in accord with the terms set for his Commission. But power gives blunt tenacity to hold on to its own conviction on the basis of which the Committee and Commission’s

verdicts were upheld in Parliament by the ruling Government and the last report was rejected as not acceptable by the same Government, incidentally run by the same party. Long live democracy!

Other searches

The search for the truth was also made by many independent personalities who had doubts about the story of the air crash. Noted among them were Dr Satyanarayan Sinha, H. V. Kamath, Samar Guha, and many others. All these searches revealed gradually that the air crash theory was an utter falsehood. Similarly, doubts have been expressed about the truth of Bose’s ashes allegedly kept in the Renkoji temple.

It must be admitted that Gandhi galvanized the people of India for quite some time and, in his social position, he went on deciding the political fate of the country. He was called ‘Father of the Nation’ by none else than Subhas Chandra Bose in a radio broadcast from Singapore in 1944. Hailing Subhas as ‘Prince among Patriots’ by Gandhi earlier in 1942, when the former was in command of the Indian National Army, was a lesser degree of an acknowledgement of his patriotism. At the time of India’s achieving the political freedom Gandhi allowed himself to recede, almost compulsorily, to the background and after the independence almost none of his pet ideas were translated into action. How many people follow him now? Is non-violence—physical, economic, moral and ethical—the leading force in the country? How many people fast for their inner reformation? Fasting is only an instrument of political action, a way of creating pressure on the opponent, then and now; consider if it is fully non-violent in the real sense—Satya or Truth! Real spirituality is one thing and

rites are different as we always view around us in innumerable fashions. The ways of life and lifestyle of M. K. Gandhi as a dreamer and social practitioner was great though grotesque, he had great power over his people; but as a political leader, how many Himalayan blunders didn't he commit? Some he himself admitted. If Netaji's disappearance remains a shameful mystery, M. K. Gandhi's position also remains misty.

'In the high politics of the end game, Partition and the transfer of power, Gandhi, sidelined by his erstwhile lieutenants, wandered about the country to Calcutta and Noakhali like some later-day Lear, deploying the remnants of his moral authority in a vain attempt to quell the communal furies which Partition had unleashed.'⁶

comments Anil Seal, a modern historian.

History, Politics, Literature and some such things are very controversial. It is desirable that all the students and learners should be given the opportunity to learn from different sources afresh so they can arrive at their own opinion on the subjects like the roles of revered personalities and leaders, their actual position in society, weaknesses and strength. They should learn the true history of India—ancient, medieval and modern, for example, the whole story of Netaji's disappearance, his efforts and activities to free Mother India. I think India has not yet paid the tribute due to her greatest patriot, freedom fighter and true leader. Let there be a proper evaluation of Netaji by his unbiased countrymen. ■

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