



Contribution in Indian Freedom Movement and Views for Economic Development by Two Great Personalities: A Historical Perspective

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Abstract

On 15 August 2021 we celebrated our Independence Day. But we did not receive independence very peacefully and easily. Rather many persons have sacrificed their lives irrespective of caste, creed and religion. In this research article based on secondary sources contributions of two great personalities have been highlighted although there are lakhs of persons who have sacrificed their lives for independence. The names of two great personalities covered here are Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi. Also their views on economic development in nutshell have been mentioned as without economic development of the common masses Independence is not complete.

Key words: India, Netaji Subhas, Mahatma Gandhi and sacrifice.



Full Article

The British came thousands and thousands miles away in India just to exploit our resources including human resources. And for their selfish interest they killed many patriots irrespective of caste, creed and religion. India celebrates 15 August from 1947 as Independence Day because from that day onwards we the Indians were not under the British rule but under our own rule with freedom of speech, freedom of writing, freedom of visiting places etc. We all who were born after 1947 read in the history books how the British rulers treated Indians. Only a few cases, I am highlighting where cruelty of the British Raj may be realised. One was the Jallianwala Bagh incident, another one was the first Partition of Bengal (1905) in the name of religion i.e. 'Hindu Bengal and Muslim Bengal', third one cruel treatment of farmers at Patharughat of Assam. Regarding the Patharughat incident I wish to highlight a few lines, "On January 28, 1894, many local peasants gathered in a protest meeting at Patharughat (also known as Patharighat), condemning the increasing land tax levied by the British. Thousands of people from various villages came forward to take part in this meeting. The frequently increasing tax rates left the poor farmers in a state of despair. As a result, a rebellion brewed in the hearts of the peasants against the British. After much discussion amongst themselves, it was decided that no taxes would be paid to the British, until a proper solution was found to the problem. They were even willing to revolt against the British for the cause.

While the protest meeting was going on, Deputy Commissioner of Darrang district, JD Anderson, Mr Barrington, SP and Mr Remington, SDO, arrived at the venue along with a full police force. When the British officials announced that under no circumstances will the taxes be reduced, the peasants present in the meeting protested against it. On the orders of Barrington, the police opened fire on the gathering present there. Even though the farmers tried to fight back



with the sticks they had with them, they were no match for the sudden firing. On that fateful day, hundreds of people were injured and around 140 of them were killed on spot” (blog.mygov.in/peasants-uprising-of-patharughat/). Like these plenty of examples may be cited about cruelty inflicted upon Indians during the British rule.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: No Indian can forget

On 19 January 2021, Ministry of Culture, (Special Cell) has notified that the Government of India has decided to celebrate the 125th Birth Anniversary year of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose beginning from 23rd January 2021 in befitting manner at national and international level. This is great news for the Indians and thanks to the Government of India as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose’s contribution in the independence movement was colossal, albeit somehow so many years of our independence Netaji's sacrifice was not highlighted as it should be. And in this regard, a simple line will clarify the picture, Mr. Clement Richard Attlee, who was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1945 to 1951 and the Leader of the Labour Party from 1935 to 1955 agreed Netaji was the toughest challenge the British Empire faced. He also stated that because of the military activities of Netaji Subhas Chandra the erosion of loyalty to the British crown among the Indian army and Navy personnel scaled up massively.

Netaji was born on 23 January 1897 in Cuttack, Orissa/Odisha. From childhood he was a patriot and with heart and soul was Indian and he never tolerated any foreigner talking against Indians. In this context an event may be cited. He thrashed a British Professor E.F. Otten in the Presidency College of Calcutta in 1916 for Prof Otten’s racist remark against Indians and for this, Netaji had to suffer also, however with the intervention of Indian scholars and other stalwarts the matter was settled. He was a brilliant student also. His brilliancy may be assumed when he went to England in 1919 to compete Indian



Civil Service as desired by his parents and subsequently in 1920, he came out fourth in order of merit with highest mark in English but he was deeply disturbed by the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre and left his Civil Service probation in midway and returned India. After returning, Subhas Chandra joined Indian National Congress subsequently, he started working under Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, whom he always respected as political mentor. In those days Netaji and other youth leaders were in favour of complete freedom but other leaders were in favour of "dominion status for India within the British rule" and this difference sharply cropped up in 1928 Gauhati (now Guwahati) Session of the Congress.

While Subhas Chandra Bose was Congress president many admired him for his energetic role and that is why he was elected President of Indian National Congress for two consecutive terms but had to resign in the mid of second term due to ideological difference with Gandhiji as Mahatma Gandhi's preferred Pattabhi Sitaramaiah, but he was defeated. It is believed that albeit Pattabhi Sitaramaiah was a Telugu person hailing from the southern part of India but many persons of the southern region of India voted in favour of Netaji Subhas. Anyhow, while Netaji was Congress President he carried out many remarkable works - one was his initiative to keep Assam with India as then Muslim League leaders' had different game plan. In 1938, Assam was passing through a great political turmoil as there was a serious political problem - Muslim League vs. Congress. During that time, Gopinath Bordoloi invited Netaji (President of Congress that time) to come to Assam and intervene. Subhas Chandra immediately rushed to Assam and strongly advocated the formation of the ministry under the leadership of Gopinath Bordoloi. As a sequel, Assamese youths were happy and a booklet on Subhas Chandra was published by some enthusiastic students of Cotton College in 1939, under the umbrella of All Assam Progressive Youth Association (AAPYA, formed at that time). While



Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was Head of Indian National Army (INA) or Azad Hind Fauj, Dr. (Mrs.) Lakshmi Swaminathan met him in Singapore and decided to join the freedom movement as she was impressed with the charismatic speech of Netaji Subhas. She as Captain Lakshmi headed a regiment called Jhansi Rani Laxmi Bai Regiment. It was the first regiment headed by a lady in Asia with around 1000 women personnel. Also it is pertinent to mention that around 60,000 persons consisting of all religions were in Azad Hind Fauj and brigades were in the name of great personalities: Gandhi brigade, Nehru brigade, Azad brigade, Subhas brigade, Rani of Jhansi regiment.

No Indian can forget Netaji's great statement, 'You give me your blood and I will give you Independence!' While I was abroad (visiting some countries) , many Bangladeshis and Pakistanis told me they were great admirers of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

Regarding views on economic development it may be mentioned that Meghnad Saha persuaded Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to set up a National Planning Committee in 1938 that could help in planning and developing the economy to eradicate poverty and focus on development of the agriculture sector. Since Netaji Subhas was made the President of the Indian National Congress, he couldn't take charge of being a President of the National Planning Committee. Thus, he approached Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and convinced him to be appointed as the first president of the National Planning Committee in 1938. After India became independent in 1947, a formal model of planning and Planning Commission was adopted and was reported directly to the Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 15 March 1950. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was made the Chairman of this Planning Commission. In 1951, the First Five Year Plan was launched that mainly focused on the development of the agriculture sector. Thus, it can be said that the original idea



of the Planning Commission is the brainchild of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose (vedantu.com/question-answer/).

Mahatma Gandhi: A Great Icon of India

Mahatma Gandhi's greatest contribution as I feel organised the people of India irrespective of caste, creed and religion to fight against the British rule peacefully to get Independence. His theory was Ahimsa (Non-violence). We all know the International Day of Non-Violence is observed on 2 October, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. According to General Assembly resolution A/RES/61/271 of 15 June 2007, which established the commemoration, the International Day is an occasion to "disseminate the message of non-violence, including through education and public awareness". The resolution reaffirms "the universal relevance of the principle of non-violence" and the desire "to secure a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and non-violence"(un.org/en/observances/non-violence-day).

Indians widely describe Gandhi as the father of the nation. Origin of this title is traced back to a radio address (on Singapore radio) on 6 July 1944 by Subhas Chandra Bose where Bose addressed Gandhi as "The Father of the Nation". On 28 April 1947, Sarojini Naidu during a conference also referred Gandhi as "Father of the Nation". However, in response to an RTI application in 2012, the Government of India stated that the Constitution of India did not permit any titles except ones acquired through education or military service (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi).

Anyway Mahatma Gandhi always had a feeling for the poverty of the Indian masses and he felt once we get independence, economic development will take place. In his autobiography, he clearly mentioned "The grinding poverty and starvation with which our country is afflicted is such that it drives more and more men every year into the ranks of the beggars whose desperate struggle for



bread renders them insensible to all feelings of decency and self-respect. And our philanthropists, instead of providing work for them and insisting on their working for bread, give them alms”. Revealing point here is that Gandhiji was deeply worried about the poverty of the masses. He asked to provide bread rather than alms. In fact Gandhiji initially was not inclined in politics but when he arrived in South Africa at the age of 24 years to work as a legal representative for the Muslim Indian Traders based in the city of Pretoria, he developed his political views, ethics and political leadership skills. Initially in South Africa, he opposed the idea that Indians should be treated at the same level as native Africans while in South Africa. He also stated that he believed "that the white race of South Africa should be the predominating race." After several treatments he received from the Whites in South Africa, Gandhiji began to change his thinking and apparently increased his interest in politics. He was thrown off a train at Pietermaritzburg after refusing to move from the first-class. He did not take it easily and protested so he was allowed in first class the next day. In 1915, Gandhi returned to India permanently as in the meantime he was quite popular and brought an international reputation as a leading Indian nationalist, theorist and organizer. He joined the Indian National Congress and was introduced to Indian issues, politics and the Indian people mainly by Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Gokhale was a key leader of the Congress Party best known for his restraint and moderation, and his insistence on working inside the system.

In the context of economic development, his vision was development of villages as “India lives in her villages” and he wanted “self-sufficient villages”. K.S. Bharathi in his book on “The Economic Thought of Gandhi” has clearly mentioned that the Gandhian economic system is based on certain assumptions. These inter alia, include a) every individual in the society has a right to the basic economic needs like food, shelter and clothing and b) the means of production



should be easily owned and operated by the ordinary people. Self-employment should be the basis of production. When people are self-employed, the wealth of the nation would be in the hands of the masses. To address the problem of unemployment Gandhiji was not in favour of large scale industries. He rather wanted regeneration of the village economy. Gandhiji conceived of a society in which one economic community would not exploit others – a classless society. Gandhiji's philosophy was of a village swaraj satisfying certain essential conditions of economic self-sufficiency. Each village was to be a kind of self-contained republic and capable of satisfying its important requirements. According to him every village should grow its own food and cotton for its cloth. This view of Gandhiji is very much relevant today.

In a country like India where crores of rural people are still in blights of poverty, poverty alleviation programmes which are being implemented by our Union Government and respective state governments are having great relevance. With the eradication of poverty, "village swaraj " as viewed by Gandhiji may be achieved. Gandhiji's idea of "village swaraj " may be described as "my ideal of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic. Independent of its neighbours for its vital wants, and yet inter-dependent for many others in which dependence is necessary. Thus, the village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children".

Conclusion: Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi are two great sons and real icons of India, particularly to the younger generation, and their lives are nothing but stories of dedication, service to the people of India and sacrifice. More research and studies should be carried out about their contribution in the Independence movement also their views for economic development etc.



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