



## REVIEW ARTICLE

### LESSONS ON LEADERSHIP FROM LIFE OF NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE: THE GREAT INDIAN FREEDOM FIGHTER

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#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Article History:

Received 07<sup>th</sup> April, 2018  
Received in revised form  
04<sup>th</sup> May, 2018  
Accepted 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2018  
Published online July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018

##### Keywords:

Indian Freedom Fighter,  
Inspiring visionary,  
Leadership,  
Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

#### ABSTRACT

Leadership is the ability to influence an individual or a group towards the accomplishment of goals in a given situation. Leaders are visionaries with a poorly developed sense of fear and no concept of the odds against them. In this competitive era when people are busy to fulfill their self interest only, the existence of visionary leader is reducing dramatically. Incredible India has produced many great leaders, since its ancient times. The study on their lives will always be inspiring to present generation for dedicating themselves towards the betterment of nation in all respect. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was the great freedom fighter whose action motivated Indian youths to be active and awaken and which ultimately forced British government to rethink for India's independence. His life is a great example of leadership from which modern Indian leaders can learn many lessons. He was enthusiastic, disciplined, selfless and inspiring leader with strong confidence on his own capability and a clear goal of independent India. He exhibited development of a dedicated team, strong command, extreme coolness of mind, correct judgment and also demonstrated his clear vision, strong responsibility, and high risk taking capability.

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#### INTRODUCTION

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century when globalization and open business opportunity among countries have created an atmosphere of either flourish or perish, the necessity of dynamic team with its effective leadership is found most important for achieving success all over the world. People working in an organization need individuals (leaders) who could be instrumental in guiding the efforts of groups to achieve goals and to fulfill objectives of both the individuals and the organization. A good leader motivates his subordinates, creates confidence and increases the moral of the workers. Successful leaders are becoming scarcest resource of any business enterprise. 'Leadership is the process of inspiring individuals of a group to give their best to achieve a desired result'. According to Peter F Drucker, 'Leadership, the human behavior, lifts a man's vision to the higher sights, raises a man's performance to the higher standards and builds man's personality beyond its normal limitations' (Cohen 2018). There are certain characteristic features of leadership. It is the *relationship between two or more people* in which leader is having more influence and power than his team members. The leader will *have always followers* who are influenced to follow the direction of leader suspending their own judgments. Leadership is essentially a continuous process of *influencing behavior*.

Leader always influences its team members by giving right direction in right time and setting up an example of role model. He/she will *have more power* to direct different activities to different team members for successful completion of the work. Team members cannot put question on this power. Leader *motivates its team members* to have their individual goals set up by themselves in such a way that they do not conflict with the organizational objectives, and also influences his/her followers by setting an *exemplary standard* before them. Leaders challenge the process and search for opportunities. They take risks but regard and recognize individual contributions. Leader should not follow any unfair practices like favoritism and nepotism and should remain always *fair and impartial* in all his/her decisions and actions (Sannigrahi 2011). United we stand but divided we fall. According to this principle, the creation as well as maintenance or retention of a group or team is an essential role of a leader. The good leaders in teambuilding act as encourager, harmonizer, compromiser, expediter, standard setter, group observer and follower. If leader fails, there will be frustration, disharmony and criticism resulting disintegration of the group.

#### Netaji, the leader of Indian freedom-fighting era

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23 January, 1897 in Cuttack, Orissa. His father, Janaki Nath Bose, was a successful lawyer in Cuttack. His leadership attitude was expressed from his college life. In an incident where Bose beat up his professor (Otten) for his racist remarks, brought him notoriety as a rebel-

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Indian in eyes of British government in India. His father wanted Subhas to become a civil servant and therefore, sent him to England to appear for the Indian Civil Service Examination. He was placed fourth with highest marks in English, but on hearing about the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre he left his Civil Services apprenticeship midway to return back to India in April, 1921. To secure India's freedom from British colonial rule he left the life of comfort and joined in freedom-fighting movement. Subhas was young and energetic leader highly influenced by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. He was deeply committed to the youth movement. He was admired by youth Indians for his great ability in organization development. He became even President of Indian National Congress in 1938-39. But he left congress with a difference in opinion that he along with other young leaders wanted a 'complete self rule and without any compromise' while the senior leaders of congress were in favor of the 'dominion status for India within the British rule'. He fought for motherland to make it independent from British rule and led the Indian National Army (INA) to fight with British soldiers from Burma side. But during 2<sup>nd</sup> World war due to defeat of Japan after atom bomb devastation by USA at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the efforts of INA as well as Netaji Subhas failed. Although it was believed that Netaji died in a plane crash in Thailand, but many commission started by Indian government could not give a concrete decision about his death. However, mystery still prevails as even report of Justice Mukherjee commission, tabled in the Parliament on 17 May 2006 said that Mr Bose did not die in plane crash and Indian government rejected that finding (Bhattacharyya and Guha, 2006).

### Netaji – the visionary leader

Many scholars have argued that Netaji understood the depth of the revolution better than even Gandhi and that, despite the eventual failure of the INA troops to take back the country from its colonisers, it was the one true move that heightened Britain's decision to offer greater concessions to the Indian public (Ray 2017). He was a good writer and orator. His inspiring speech and radio talks always inspired the common people of India. Some of his inspiring quotes are mentioned here which helps to know his life story, ideology and vision for independent India (Pimputkar, 2017).

- "Reality is, after all, too big for our frail understanding to fully comprehend. Nevertheless, we have to build our life on the theory which contains the maximum truth".
- "One individual may die for an idea, but that idea will, after his death, incarnate itself in a thousand lives".
- "Remember that the greatest crime is to compromise with injustice and wrong. Remember the eternal law: you must give if you want to get".
- "Freedom is not given, it is taken".
- "No real change in history has ever been achieved by discussions".
- "The secret of political bargaining is to look stronger than what you really are".
- "For enslaved people, there can be no greater pride, no higher honour, than to be the first soldiers in the army of liberation".

### Lesson learnt from leadership of Netaji

Subhas Chandra Bose did not study any management subjects in any college or university. But he was a born charismatic

leader. Lots of leadership qualities were seen in his various activities within short span of life. Becoming President of Indian National congress twice in 1938 and 1939 proved that he was having large youth masses as his follower and he possessed influencing quality. Present management study shows that a successful leader must have qualities like enthusiasm, confidence, toughness, integrity, warmth and humility. The life of Subhas showed that he was most *enthusiastic leader* who did not show any interest to join as IAS under British government but joined in freedom movement for making India free from the clutch of British-raj. He motivated the Indian youth for demanding 'Self rule' for India and even did not think twice for leaving congress towards achieving his goal. He had a *clear goal of 'Independent India'* and he decided to achieve that. Even he *clearly opposed the compromising thought* of Mahatma Gandhi and others who wanted to be satisfied with 'dominion status of India' under British rule, since it was not oriented towards his goal. He was having *strong confidence on his own capability* and left Kolkata on disguise to go out of India and to meet world leaders of Russia and European countries for achieving his goal. He suffered a lot during his journey but neither got disheartened, nor left the job half done. He was very *disciplined but tough* to tackle any odd situation developed inside INA during war and also with Japan when they refused to extend any help in relation to food or transport to INA. His followers *never doubted his integrity* since he was leading the INA honestly *staying in the front* as exemplary leader. He *worked sincerely for nation's interest* and not for his own interest. His sincerity built a *trust among his followers* and all soldiers of INA were ready to sacrifice their lives for making the nation independent. He was having a *warmth (caring and considerate) relationship* with his team members who had noticed his worry when his soldiers were starving for food in the battle ground due to non-cooperation of Japan commanders. He was a strong leader but at the same time he was *willing to listen to everybody* (Humility) and never fail to take the blame. When Japan disagreed to extend any help further in battle field, he ordered his commanders to disband the INA and to guide his soldiers for returning home otherwise British soldiers would torture them. That was the greatness of Netaji who could think the betterment for his soldiers/followers, in that panic situation. His motivational talks not only inspired his INA soldiers but also inspired all youths of India for dedicating their life towards the noble cause of India's freedom. He exhibited development of a dedicated team, strong command, extreme coolness of mind, correct judgment and also demonstrated his clear vision, strong responsibility, and high risk taking capability. Management experts of present day discuss about eight laws of leadership for becoming a successful leader. Those are: (a). maintain absolute integrity, (b). know your subordinates, (c). declare your objectives/expectations, (d). show personal commitment, (e). always remain positive, (f). take care of your people, (g). put duty before self and (h). lead at the forefront (Cohen, 2010). Above discussion clearly shows that Netaji Subhas was having all these qualities and became the legendary hero of India's freedom movement. As mentioned above he could only speak, "One individual may die for an idea; but that idea will, after his death, incarnate itself in a thousand lives. That is how the wheel of evolution moves on and the ideas and dreams of one nation are bequeathed to the next". He was a *visionary and never separated human in man-woman groups*. He respected the power of women and motivated the Indian women to form "Rani-of-Jhansi Regiment" in July 1943 under the captainship

of Lakshmi Swaminathan (popularly known as Lakshmi Sahgal). Netaji had great confidence and faith in women and said that even if they were uneducated working class and kisan women who were being exploited socially, financially and politically were the right material for revolutionary activities and would join the regiment.... Netaji proved that Indian women were second to none when it came to service and devotion to the mother land. They were prepared to undergo every kind of hardship and suffering to achieve the goal (Sehgal, 2006). Even Mahatma Gandhi wrote in 'Harijan on 12 February 1946, 'The lesson that Netaji and his army brings to us, is one of self-sacrifice, unity – irrespective of class and community – and discipline' (Kumar, 2010). Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose is no more with us, but he is still an inspiring leader for youths all over the world.

### Netaji's ideology and leadership - essential need of present India

Different Leadership theories like Great man theory (1860s), Trait theory (1930s), Behavioral theory (1940s & 1950s), Contingency theory (1960s & 1970s), Relationship theory (1970s) and Transformational leadership theory (1970s & 1980s), etc. have been discussed by many Management experts, but the life of Subhas was the combination of all these theories. His life points towards strong dedication for achieving smart goals, consistent efforts irrespective of obstacles, respect to other's emotions, and efforts not for the sake of own selfish interest but for greater interest of countrymen. Since independence, communal, regional and sectarian tendencies have been encouraged by different political parties in India, which today threaten the very existence of our nation. In the economic field, there has been a greater concentration of economic power and wealth in fewer hands. The country is seething with discontent because of unsatisfactory levels of economic growth and growing economic disparities (Bose, 2018). Indian people celebrated his 121st birth anniversary on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018. When India is going through greatest crisis in its history like corruption, black money, nepotism, etc , the time has come to follow the ideology, principles and leadership styles of great revolutionary leader, Netaji for establishing India as one of the most advanced and progressive nations of the world.

### Conclusion

Leadership is a crucial element in the transformation of people. It brings all the difference between success and failure of any event or organization. It is well known today that without harnessing manpower to its full productive capacity all other transformation initiatives would remain sterile and unproductive.

Seventy to ninety percent transformation is possible by leaders only. India will never forget the sacrifice of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. He will remain as a source of inspiration to younger generation for transforming them to a successful leader. India needs these leadership qualities among its future heroes to tackle its crisis and to put itself in the forefront of all developed nations in near future.

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