

Working with Netaji

Speech from YAMAMOTO san

Translated by Mansi ARAI

Subhas Chandra BOSE was a man who laid his life on a hard work: independence of India. A great man achieving feats should overcome difficulties.

I would like to introduce three difficulties that BOSE tackled in early days.

The first trial he tackled was to inject fierce typhoid bacillus into his body by himself in order to escape to Germany from a prison.

If the worst had come to the worst, his life was in danger.

The second trial was to cross over the Khaybar pass in a winter.

The top point of the pass is 1,100m of altitude, 50km away from

Afghanistan boarder, no human trail closed with ice and snow.

He could fall down into the valley if slipped.

The third trial was the underwater cruise for 87 days from Germany to Japan. He walked the tightrope to the Japanese submarine sopping wet in raging Indian Ocean.

It was 16th of May 1943 when BOSE arrived at Tokyo. British seeking dangerous BOSE was how surprised!!

First of all, the strongest impression remaining in my memory is the parade of INA for the inauguration of BOSE as the general on 5th of July 1943. BOSE shouted on a platform to 13,000 INA soldiers filling the Singapore city hall square.

My Soldiers!

I promise to be with you in light or in dark, with grief or with delight, for suffering or for victory.

Those I can give you, starvation, deficiency, marching again...then nothing except death.

But I am sure to guide you to the victory and freedom if you follow me entrusting your life.

“Chalo chalo Delhi! BOSE ki jai! Inquilab ki jai!”

The whole audience was in a big chorus of great delight. Then Netaji could acquire his army that India could not obtain.

Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs got together to go to the war under the leadership of him.

The Provisional Government of Free India was born on 21st of October 1943. They immediately proclaimed the war to U.K. and U.S.A. Rani of Jhansi, lady corps was also established. BOSE was started to call Netaji, and salutation became “Jai hind!”

I would like to talk now about marching (Chalo! Delhi), the Imphal front.

Netaji sent out 3 regiments of the 1st division after reviewing the troops at Mingaladon training field.

INA sallied out to Imphal, North, Front, and South, but was stuck facing a solid garrison.

Japanese army stopped the operation and withdrew. But Netaji asserted that INA would continue the operation. He insisted that it was the proper function of the revolutionary army capturing the independence of their homeland to continue

marching even if destroyed. The commander Kawai persuaded him that there was no worth to send more soldiers to death. Then Netaji issued an order “All soldiers withdraw making frantic efforts”.

Number of INA who joined the operation was more than 20,000, of which more than 3,000 were dead.

In my understanding, the reason why they lost the battle in Imphal was that endemic diseases (malaria, dysentery, etc.) spread out due to run out of food and medicine supplies during rainy season (heavy rain day and night, no sun or stars for months).

Irrawaddy war (20th of January to 18th of May 1945) became the final battle between British and Japanese Armies. 3 regiments of the 2nd division (about 7,200 soldiers) were sent from INA. Netaji made a tour to raise morale of soldiers, and morale of soldiers was high enough, but Rangoon was exposed without defense because they were overwhelmed by 2,000 tanks and fighters.

Japanese Army decided to abandonment of Burma, and left without words on 20th of April 1945. I think Netaji was

determined honorable death rather than surrender, but his predecessor major general LOGANADAN persuaded him to leave.

Netaji and INA have left at midnight of 24th of April. Jhansi corps, 600 soldiers in 15 lorries... It was a big unit.

The road was bad, muddy, chaotic, and flare bombs pouring from the dark sky. I pushed up a vehicle and surprised that the man working together beside me was Netaji.

I like to introduce a private note of an army private Isao YAMADA, a bodyguard of Hikari agency for Netaji.

“Sittang is a treacherous river having 200m of width and 10m of depth. We stood ready in the jungle as we arrive at the crossing point before dawn.

Netaji told me “Take a rest. It is safe” when we stood sentry together. I cannot forget him looking up far west with a German helmet and a dust-coat.

I could imagine his sadness that his dream of Chalo Delhi was fading out.

At the end, I like to talk about death of a soldier Nagai who

was the same age as me and Jhansi regiment.

The rope coupling the rafts of Jhansi regiment has broken, and one of the rafts was flowed. I bound a rope round my waist together with Nagai, and swam the dark river to catch the raft. We tied up the rope and came up to a bank. Nagai crossed the river with a raft in the night, but dead by bomb in the next morning. We dig a grave, and wrapped his body in a blanket. I felt a lump in my throat and could do nothing. We cremated his dead body. We cut his hand and burnt to ashes to bring back. YAMADA wrote a piece of poetry.

Made ashes by cutting hand of my fellow soldier in the jungle toward sundown after leaving enemy planes. We left for Moulmein carrying his ashes.”

I, YAMAMOTO escorted Jhansi regiment for 2 nights and 3 days there. They were well-disciplined and composed. They served me a tea in a morning. It was a tasty chai.

Netaji's plane was crashed in Taipei, and he died in a military hospital. It was just after 10pm of 18th of August 1945. He was 48 years old. Here are his last words to his adjutant, RAHMAN.

“I ask you to tell that BOSE battled for the independence till the last moment. Our brethren will continue the battle even if I died. India will be independent soon.”

On the 15th of August 1947, India became independent.

I wonder why the British, a victorious country left so quickly from India where they ruled for 300 years. Prime Minister ATLEE of U.K. said “Loyalty of Indian soldiers of British Indian Army to the U.K. degenerated because of credit to Chandra BOSE”.

I think the defeat of Indo-Japan Army from the battlefield lead spiritual victory of India. This spiritual victory lighted a fire of patriotism in colonial countries in the world. Patriotism of Netaji has released not only India but also all colonial countries in the world. The latter half of 20th century became the “independence century” for colonial countries in the world.

Netaji was an honorable man who never failed to do what he said. He battled in the front line as the commander, but guarded the end of troops when retreated. He died but led his soldiers to the victory and freedom as promised.