THE Oracle

Vol XXXI January 2009 No. 1

Netaji Research Bureau
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NRB NEWS 2008

The Special Netaji Oration 2007 on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of India’s Independence and Golden Jubilee of Netaji Research Bureau was delivered on 27th December, 2007, by Amartya Sen, Lamont University Professor, Harvard University, and Nobel Laureate, on “Is Nationalism a Curse or a Boon?” The Governor, Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi, was the chief guest. The full text of Professor Amartya Sen’s Netaji Oration is featured in the special Golden Jubilee Number of The Oracle. Professors Rajat Kanta Ray, Pranab Bardhan, Kaushik Basu, Saugata Roy, Purushottam Bhattacharya and others took part in the question-and-answer session. Professor Sugata Bose moderated the discussion and Professor Krishna Bose gave the vote of thanks.

The Sisir Kumar Bose Lecture 2008 was delivered on 11th January, 2008, by Dr Chun Lin of the London School of Economics on “China’s Post-Mao Economic Reforms: A Critical Assessment”. Professor Sumantra Bose was in the chair and moderated the discussion that followed the lecture.

The Vice-President of India, Mr. Hamid Ansari, visited Netaji Bhawan on 18th January, 2008. He was shown around the museum by Professor Krishna Bose and Professor Sugata Bose.
The traditional Netaji Birthday Assembly was held on 23rd January, 2008, on the grounds behind Netaji Bhawan. A special four-volume CD and DVD-set entitled “Netaji and India’s Freedom” containing a documentary film on Netaji, Netaji’s speeches and INA music and songs published by Netaji Research Bureau in collaboration with Saregama was ceremonially released on the occasion. A special Golden Jubilee number of The Oracle including Amartya Sen’s special Netaji Oration as well as the Netaji Oration by C.A. Bayly and the Sisir Bose Lecture by T.N. Harper was also launched on the occasion. The Minister of External Affairs, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, was the chief guest. The Governor of West Bengal, Mr Gopal Krishna Gandhi, presided and once more gave an eloquent presidential speech. Professor Leonard Gordon also spoke. Professor Sugata Bose gave the welcome address and Professor Krishna Bose delivered the vote of thanks. Pramita Mallick presented the opening music and Chandrabindoo performed a special Netaji Birthday Concert.
Professor Ayesha Jalal, Mary Richardson Professor of History at Tufts University, delivered a special lecture on the themes of her new book Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) on 3rd August, 2008. Professor Rajat Kanta Ray was in the chair. A lively discussion among historians followed the lecture.

Dr Tahmima Anam, author of the award-winning novel A Golden Age, set in the context of the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971, gave a reading in honour of the memory of Sarat Chandra Bose on 10th August, 2008. Professor Sugata Bose was in the chair.

An audio-visual programme on the poetry of Jibanananda Das, Dhansiri Naditir Pashe, by Navajesh Ahmad of Bangladesh was presented on 8th November, 2008.
A debate on the motion “This is Bengal’s Darkest Hour” was held on 13th December, 2008. The speakers were Dr Kunal Sarkar, Dr Sandip Chatterjee, Mr Saugata Roy, Mr Samik Lahiri, Mr Pradip Gooptu, Mr Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Mr Roopendra Narayan Roy and Mr S.B. Ganguly. Professor Sumantra Bose was the moderator. The motion was carried by an overwhelming majority.

Netaji Museum continued to be a major attraction for visitors from different parts of India and abroad. Many young students from disadvantaged backgrounds were allowed free entry. Distinguished visitors included the Vice-President of India, Mr Hamid Ansari, on 18th January, 2008, Mr. Sak Chee Mun of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore and Mr Rusata Abhakorn of the Chiang Mai University, Thailand, on 26th March 2008, Mr Hideaki Domichi, Ambassador of Japan, and Mr Fuzio Samukawa, Consul-General of Japan, on 4th October, 2008, Mr Jin Matsubara, M.P., Japan, on 7th October, 2008, and a group of Harvard, Stanford and Princeton alumni on 29th December, 2008.

Scholars and students came to study as usual in the Bureau’s library and archives. In addition to the paperback edition of Chalo Delhi, the Golden Jubilee number of The Oracle and the four-volume CD and DVD set published by NRB were much appreciated by the general public.
INDIA FREED MEANS HUMANITY SAVED

Welcome address by Professor Sugata Bose
23rd January 2008

Shri Gopal Krishna Gandhi, Governor of West Bengal, respected Right Honourable Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Union Minister of External Affairs, members of the diplomatic corps, distinguished guests!

On behalf of Netaji Research Bureau it is once more a great privilege for me to be able to welcome you to the traditional Netaji Birthday assembly at Netaji Bhawan, this time on the occasion of Netaji’s 111th birth anniversary. I am very grateful to Monidi, Pramita Mallick, for creating the atmosphere on this auspicious occasion with her beautiful voice and music. Today I am welcoming you. Seventy years ago on Subhas Chandra Bose’s 41st birthday the people of India welcomed him back from a European sojourn on 23rd January of 1938. Subhas Chandra arrived in Karachi from Naples as President of the Indian National Congress, our Rashtrapati in those days. And one day later on the 24th of January he reached Kolkata. Mahatma Gandhi had made it known that Subhas Chandra Bose was going to be the next president of the Indian National Congress in early November of 1937. And then on the 18th of November Subhas Chandra left for Europe. He arrived in Naples and from the 27th of November 1937 to the 7th of January 1938 he was in Badgastein in Austria. And, while there, during ten days he wrote ten chapters of his autobiography An Indian Pilgrim. On the 7th of January he went to Britain and met all of the major political leaders of that country. He also had a quiet meeting with President de Valera of Ireland who was visiting London at that time, then went on to Czechoslovakia to meet President Edward Benes and from Naples returned to the subcontinent. Here in Calcutta in one day in long hand he wrote the long speech that he gave as President of the Indian National Congress at Haripura. And just behind me you can see a photograph of Subhas Chandra Bose as Rashtrapati among the galaxy of leaders of the Indian nationalist movement at that time including of course the Father of our Nation Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and others.

The last year, the Golden Jubilee of Netaji Research Bureau, has been a very good and productive year for us. We began in early January of 2007 with the release of the final 12th volume of Netaji’s Collected Works entitled Chalo Delhi which contains all of Netaji’s speeches and writings between 1943 and 1945. And we are very grateful that it was Pranab-babu who released that volume in Delhi in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore S. Jayakumar and our former Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral. And then in June while Pranab-babu was on a state visit to Singapore he once again came and released this volume Chalo Delhi in South-East Asia in the historic Raffles Hotel in Singapore. It was
especially appropriate that we had a ceremony in Singapore because that was the place from where Netaji gave his stirring battle cry ‘Chalo Delhi’. And before we had the ceremony at the Raffles Hotel it was my great privilege to accompany Pranab-babu to pay homage at the INA Martyrs Memorial on the seacape in Singapore which the Singapore Government has put up now. The original, of course, was destroyed by Mountbatten’s forces. If you stand there, if you have your eyes open, then you see an expansive green of the Singapore padang where typically a cricket match goes on these days. But if you shut your eyes you can see Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on the balcony of the Municipal Building flanked with its historic pillars taking the salute as the Supreme Commander of the Indian National Army and addressing the soldiers offering them nothing but hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death. And those moving images can be seen on the DVD *Netaji and India’s Freedom* which we will ask Pranab-babu to release.

Shri Gopal Krishna Gandhi has always been with us during the past years. He was with us when we had our Golden Jubilee Conference and the British historian Christopher Bayly gave the Netaji Oration on the links between India and Myanmar and the relationship and comparison between Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Aung San of Burma. Another historian Tim Harper gave the Sisir Bose Lecture on the connections between India and Malaya. Our Governor was back with us last month on the 27th of December. This year we organized the Netaji Oration early, partly because we wanted to hold it within 2007, the Diamond Jubilee of Indian Independence, and Amartya Sen was here. Many of you will have heard his eloquent and erudite Netaji Oration on ‘Is Nationalism a Curse or a Boon?’ So we are always really very happy to welcome Shri Gopal Krishna Gandhi in our midst.

There is a question that is often asked by the media of me on the 23rd of January: has there been a proper assessment of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose? *Netajir sathek mulyaon hoyeche ki?* And typically those who are in politics rather than in the world of learning say in a very grave voice – No, he has not been properly assessed. I do not agree with that. Because I have seen that the people of India have always done a correct assessment of their leader Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. First of all, when he was among the people of India his followers knew his mettle. I remember Mehboob Ahmad telling me that he had the privilege of working with all of the great leaders of India - Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and others - but there was only the one man that he was prepared to die for and that was Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Those who followed his path had made a correct assessment of the leader who never asked them for sacrifices which he himself would not make. And since my childhood I have seen that the common people of India from Punjab and Kashmir in the north to Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the south, from Bengal and Assam, Nagaland and Manipur in the east to Maharashtra in the west, have all recognized what Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was all about. They had absolute devotion to their leader. So it does not really matter whether he received adequate state recognition or not. But there is one more thing that I would like to add. Among historians of the world Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose has been given a proper assessment in true perspective and for that to happen the Netaji Reseach Bureau and the work that Dr.Sisir Kumar Bose started at the Netaji Research Bureau in 1957 played a crucial role. Just as Netaji did not complain that he had been eased out of the Congress, but went out and formed the Indian National Army, and showed the world what he could do for India’s freedom, so also Dr.Sisir Kumar Bose always said that we must not complain. Let us just do Netaji’s work and thus ensure that the message of his life and work is never forgotten in this country.
He started Netaji’s work very early in life when Netaji asked to be driven from this house during his escape. He continued to do Netaji’s work until the last day of his life on the 30th September of 2000. So, I think we Bengalis sometimes are a little too complaining in our attitude. Let us simply do Netaji’s work which will be the best tribute that we can give him.

As we look forward, what we can say is that for the next fifty years the Netaji Research Bureau will continue to do Netaji’s work but we will not be prisoners of the past. There will always be a beautiful museum on the Indian independence movement, there will be the best archives on India’s freedom struggle here in this house. But we want to be accountable both to the past and to the future. There are many fields of work in which Netaji himself had been interested. He was nothing but a forward-looking person. There are many challenges in terms of India’s foreign policy, India’s economic development, a search for a new ethics in human affairs, all of which had captured the attention and the time and the energy of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. That is the kind of work we want to do - we want to build for the future.

You will see that there is a short sentence, which was the last sentence in Subhas Chandra Bose’s famous Haripura address that we have put up on the picture behind me for you to see: “India freed means humanity saved”. And this is something that we should all deeply appreciate. Nationalism, as I mentioned as I was introducing Professor Amartya Sen, was at its best always critical of itself. Netaji always believed in a kind of patriotism or nationalism which would instill in us a spirit of service, which would awaken the creative faculties of our people, which would enable us to transcend our internal divisions along lines of religion or language. But he was always keenly aware of a nationalism that could go on to an imperialist path. And that is not the kind of nationalism that he believed in. Our best nationalist thinkers and leaders had always believed that India has to be great not for herself but for humanity. And this is something that Netaji had also imbibed very early in life once he had read the works of Swami Vivekananda and he decided that his mission in life was encapsulated in a phrase: ‘Atmanang Mokshartham Jagaddhitaya cha’, ‘for your own salvation and for the service of humanity’ you would have to dedicate your life. And he, of course, added in his autobiography An Indian Pilgrim that service of humanity includes service of your country as well. So let us rededicate ourselves to that spirit of service not just of our country but of the whole of humanity in which Netaji believed with all his passion.
নেতাজীর মুলায়ন

প্রবন্ধ মুখোপাধ্যায়

বিদেশ মন্ত্রী

মহামহী রাজ্যপাল শ্রী গোপালকৃষ্ণ গান্ধী, নেতাজী জাননিকার, নেতাজী রিসার্চ বুন্ডের চেয়েরপানিতে কৃষ্ণ সুমুখ, সুগত, মণ্ডে উপহার সূর্যবৃষ্টি, উপহার সাধনাবলী।

একটু কথা সুগত বলিলেন নেতাজীর সিটল মুলায়ন সম্পর্কে এবং উদ্ধৃতিতে তিনি দিয়েছেন। মুলায়নের সূচনা করে একটি আলোচনা ভাবে সরকারের শৈক্ষিত্য আর একটি হচ্ছে মানুষের শৈক্ষিত্য। মানুষের শৈক্ষিত্য সম্পর্কে সারা ভারতবর্ধে এবং ভারতবর্ষের বাইরেও অনেক জায়গায়, বিশেষতঃ একটি জায়গার কথা সুগত উল্লেখ করিয়েছিলেন সিঙ্গাপুর সেখানে সুভাষচন্দ্র রায় কোন ঘটনা নেই। ভারতবর্ধে এমন কোন ঘটনা নেই এবং ভারতবর্ধ বলতে আমি অপরের ভারতবর্ধেই বোঝার যেমন জীবন কান্দির থেকে করা হচ্ছে, মনোর থেকে মহারানার কথা বলেছেন যুদ্ধ সেখানে একেকেই একেকেই পশুশালায় থেকে আরম্ভ করে পাঞ্চায়ে হয়ে ভারতবর্ধের এমন কোন ঘটনা নেই যেখানে সুভাষচন্দ্রের নামকরণ কোন মর্যাদা নেই। সে রাত্রি হোক, সে প্লাজার হোক, সে মূর্তি হোক। খুব কম মেয়ের ভাবেই কোন একের দুর্লভ সৌভাগ্য মাত্র। কাজেই মানুষের শৈক্ষিত্য সম্পর্কে এবং সেখানে তার সিটল মুলায়ন সম্পর্কে কারণ কোন ছিদ্র এবং সংগ্রহ নেই। সুগত গতিরের সিঙ্গাপুরের অনুষ্ঠানের কথা বলেছিলেন ভারত সুপরিকল্প এবং ধাের সেই অনুষ্ঠানে উপস্থিতি ছিলেন আদিতে তার মধ্যে একজন। সেই সময় আমাদের চোখের সামনে দাসছিল যে এই স্বদেশধিতে দাড়িয়ে নেতাজী আই। এন. এর স্বাল্ট নিচ্ছে। তাঁর অনবদ্য ভাষণ উদ্ভাবিত করছেন-শুধু সিঙ্গাপুরের লোকের নয় সাধারণ মানুষের এবং তাঁর যে সবাই ভারতীয় তাও নয়। আজকে যখন সিঙ্গাপুরের প্রেসিডেন্ট তিনি আমাদের গল্প করেন, সমস্ত সুগত করেন যে তিনি একজন তরুণ হিসেবে, তখন তার বয়স অনেক কম-তিনিও সেই অনুষ্ঠানে উপস্থিত ছিলেন এবং সেদিন থেকে আরম্ভ করে অজ পথ্য তিনিও নেতাজী অনুরাগী। কথাটির উদ্ভূত একটা করলাম যে কিছু তিনি মানুষকে অনুপ্রাণিত করেছিলেন। আমি নেতাজী রিসার্চ বুন্ডের চেয়ে একজন বাঙ্গালী হিসেবে, একজন ভারতীয় হিসেবে কৃতজ্ঞতা জানায় যে তারা দীর্ঘদিন ধরে, পঞ্চায়ে বছরেরও উপর, ৫১ বছর হল তাত্ত্বিক গঠন সংগে নেতাজী সম্পর্কে যাদবের তথ্য যা হারিয়ে যত্নের জন্য কোন বিন্দু থাকত না, যে তিনি ভিত্তি নয় সুকুমারী সংগে করেছেন, এবং প্রায় এককালে করেছেন ডা. শিশুর সৃষ্টিদান তার সংগে আমার কাজ করবার সুযোগ হচ্ছে রাজনৈতিক সংহারি হিসেবে, তিনি এবং তার পরবর্তীকালে তখন সুগত এবং তার ভাই অনেক ছুটিছিল। কৃতজ্ঞতা উদ্ভূত করে একটা বড় সময় বায় করতেছিল থেকে তাঁর সচেতন তিনি তাঁর সাহায্য নিন, বলা যেতে পারে যে প্রায় এককালে একেমন্ত্রী একটা কাজ, এত বড় কাজ, এক রিসার্চ মেটেডিয়াল, এত তথ্য এবং এত ব্যাপকভাবে সারা পৃথিবীর জুড়ে নেতাজীর কর্মদাতা এবং সেই সাধারণের তথ্য সংগ্রহ করে আজকে শুধু আমাদের কাছে নয়, এই প্রজন্মের নয়, পরবর্তী প্রজন্মের মানুষের কাছেই নেতাজী।
রিসার্চ বুঝার কৃতজ্ঞতার পত্র হয়ে থাকলেন, শুধু একটি অনুরোধ করব-এই কথাটা ফিক্সডিন আরও আলাদায়। হয়েছে যে যেখানে পুনরুদ্ধার এবং ক্ষেত্র চলাচল নয়। তিনি পাঁচ সন্ধ্যাগুম্য এবং তিনি যখন প্রথমকালীন সংগ্রহ করেছিলেন তিনিও আঘাত প্রকাশ করেছিলেন যে কাজটা এগোয়ান।

এই কাজটাকে একটি উত্তরাধিকার করতে হবে। মুক্তি হল নেতাজীর রিসার্চ বুঝার একটি সেটার সম্পর্কে পরিচয় করা দরকার। তার কারণ সেটা ভারতবর্ষের রাজধানী, ভারতবর্ষের সমস্ত অঞ্চলের মানুষের সাধারণ আলোচনার মাধ্যমে পূর্বে পরিচালিত হয়েছিল।

মুক্তি এথান থেকেই হবে কিন্তু এটা বেশি সমস্যাপূর্ণ।

কথাটির উল্লেখ এই কারণে করলাম যে আমাদের সম্পর্কে অনেক দিন কাউঁ ফেরাধিক বা সিক্সিং ভারতবর্ষের রাজধানী এবং ঐতিহাসিক পাহাড়িকার পূর্ব ভারতবর্ষের বিষয় এবং বিমূর্ত আমরা করিনো।

একজন রিচার্জ, একজন শব্দকথিত কিন্তু সেই কাজটা করেন। এবং যে কাজটা নেতাজীর রিসার্চ বুঝার থেকে অত্যন্ত নিঃসরণ সংগে হবে।

কাজটি উল্লেখ্য যে যখন নেতাজীর রিসার্চ বুঝার একটি পার্থিবত্ব হয় না - Positively স্টাইলিশানের বিষয়গুলো বা তার আশ্চর্যগুলো অঞ্চলেই হবে।

কোনো সেখান থেকে নেতাজীর অবস্থান শিখেছেন-সেখান থেকেই তিনি আই.এন.এ কে পরিচালনা করিয়েছেন-কিন্তু তা ছাড়াও তীক্ষ অংশগুলি অব্যবহিত পূর্বে উপস্থাপিত করা প্রয়োজন।

কাজটি বিহিবিলিয়ার জ্যামিতিগত মাংস দিয়ে করা হবে।

বিদ্যমানসমূহের মাদ্রাসে সাধারণত বিভাগ ও ১৯১৪ সাল পর্যন্ত সম্পাদিত হয় মানুষের সন্তানের।

বিল্ড থেকে সম্মানকরণ প্রশিক্ষিত বিভাগ পরিচালিত হয়।

অনুষ্ঠানভাবে ২১৩৭ বর্ষে আলাদা করে দেওয়া হয়।

টিকে তোমার শ্রদ্ধাগ্রস্ত। কাজটি আমলের Look East Policy বা পূর্বে তাকাও নীতি এটা কিংবা নতুন যা।

এটাকে বলা যেতে পারে যে পূর্বের কৃতিত্ব।

Reinvention, এবং এর প্রয়োজনের কোথায়? মূলধন আমার ধন একটি সম্পূর্ণ থেকে মেসাজ তালিকায় দেখা যায়।

SARRC বাদ দিয়ে।-SARRC এর একটি মাঠ দেশ ভারতবর্ষ।

ভারতবর্ষের সংগে আলাদা East Asia Summit যায় আমারা বলি, যার মধ্যে Asian Country।

Import সব মিলিয়ন গেট স্বরূপ ৩০০ মিলিয়ন ডলার ছিল তার পরিস্থিত।

টার মধ্যে Import প্রায় ১৪০ মিলিয়ন ডলারের মত। আর ২০০ মিলিয়ন ডলার ছিল রাখান।

এবং এই যে সেটি ৮৫ মিলিয়ন ডলার তার বৈশ্বিক ভাবের হয়।

কাজ আমাদের যেটা আমাদের সেটা মূলত পরিবর্তন এশিয়া থেকে চূল, ১০০ মিলিয়ন টনেরও বেশি চূল আমার প্রত্যক্ষ বছর আমাদের কর্ম যেটা মূলত পরিবর্তন এশিয়ার মধ্য পাত্রা।

Gulf Country গুলো থেকে।

কাজটি যে নীতি এবং এই সৌ 12th Volume কথা সৃষ্টি বলল সেখানে নেতাজীর বহু বুদ্ধিয় কিন্তু তার বহু আলোচনায়, বহু লেখায় মাধ্যমে এই সম্পাদকতার ইতিহাস রয়ে গেছে।

বিপদান্তের বিভাগ তবে এই সম্পাদকের কর্মসূচির যে আলোচনা একটি ইতিহাস মেরে যেতে হবে।

একটা মানুষের ভিত্তি করে বড় মাপের

- তার চরিত্রিক গঠন,
- তার মানুষকর্তার গঠন
- তাদের উপাদানের তাপকালীন ইতিহাসের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে থেকে

অকে উপাদান নিয়ে ট্রুটি করে যা তৈরি হয়।

সেগুলো যথাযোগ্য আমার স্থিতিকে চূড়ান্ত করে না পারল তাহলে

সেই মূল্যায়নের ক্ষেত্রে কিছুটা প্রচলিত যুক্তি এবং অসংগতি রয়ে যায়।

এবং এই কাজটা সৃষ্টি তারাবর্ণ দিয়ে হয়।
না, তার জন্যই চাই একটা বৈজ্ঞানিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি, একটা পর্যাবেক্ষণ শত্রু যেটাকে বলা হয় একটা Clinical analytical approach সেটির প্রয়োজনীয়তা এবং সেই বড়ো কাজটি নেতাজী রিসাই বুঝতে করছেন। আজকে নেতাজীর ১১১তম জন্মবারে তাঁর সৃষ্টির প্রতি দৃষ্টি জানিয়ে যে কথা সৃষ্টি আরম্ভ করেছিলেন শেষ করেছিলেন আমিরা তাঁর পুনরারুপান কারণ আমারা সবাই মহামায়া রাজপাল মহাস্থমে ভাষা শুনতে চাই-গত বছর তিনি যেমন সৃষ্টি করেছিলেন নেতাজীর উপর, তাঁর জাতীয়তাবাদের উপর এবং আশা করেছি আজকেও দর্শনে বিপ্লব হবেন না। তাঁর ভাষণ থেকে তাঁর কারণ তিনি যে শুধু আমাদের রাজ্যের প্রধান নন পশ্চিমবাংলার তিনি একাত্বভাবে আত্ম করে তিনি পশ্চিমবাংলার মানুষের একজন হয়ে গেছেন। সাধ্য তাঁকে আমার মনে হয়- আমি মূলত ইতিহাসের ছাত্র কাজেই আমার ইতিহাসের প্রসঙ্গে চলে যাই। পশ্চিমের দশকে রাজপাল হস্তক্ষেপে কুমার মুখোপাধ্যায়ের সহ আজকের প্রায় অর্থে শতাব্দী পরে এমন একজন রাজাপালকে আমরা আমাদের মধ্যে পেয়েছি যাকে আমরা একাকীভাবে নিজের বলে মনে করতে পারি তিনি গোপাল কৃষ্ণ গর্গ- তিনি তাঁর বহুদশ রাজ্যের আগন্তুক সকলের মতো আমিরা তাঁর বহুদশ শুনতে চাই এই কথা বলে নেতাজীর প্রতি প্রণয় জানিয়ে এবং আত্মীয় কৃতজ্ঞতা জানিয়ে সৃষ্টি ও কৃত্তিবাদের প্রতি যে এই অনূর্ধ্বনে তাঁরা আমাকে উৎসাহিত থাকার সুযোগ করে দিয়েছেন–জয় হিন্দ!
AN ICON OF ICONS
Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi
Governor of West Bengal

at the Netaji Birthday Assembly
Netaji Research Bureau, Kolkata
23rd January, 2008

Esteemed Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Krishnadi, Professor Sugata Bose, Professor Leonard Gordon, Upacharya of Visva-Bharati in the audience, Members of the Consular Corps, distinguished invitees,

It is an honour to share this dais with our Hon’ble Minister for External Affairs, who combines his formidable knowledge of history, with a grasp of the economic conditions of our region, its geo-political challenges and its opportunities. Pranab-babu is a parama-sakshya, a pre-eminent witness, and participant in the evolution of Indian statecraft devoting himself to the greatness of India.

This event, each year, is about the greatness of India.

I had the privilege of being present when Professor Amartya Sen spoke last month under the aegis of the Netaji Research Bureau. Hearing him on nationalism in this magnetic venue, one word glowed in my mind’s dictionary. It glowed like a gilded Byzantine painting on mellowing wood. The word is, of course, ‘icon’.

Netaji is an icon of icons. And he glows. But he does so differently from others. Let me explain why. But let me do so after a reflection on the Greek-derived word ‘icon’.

That noun becomes an adjective in ‘iconic’, a verb in ‘iconify’ and reverts to being a noun in the destruction-signifying ‘iconoclast’ and in the worship-signifying ‘iconolatry’. We love the noun, are prodigal in the use of the adjective and activate the verb in our religious and secular lives energetically. And if we are iconolatrous with some, we are iconoclastic with others – at least mentally!

The family of words built around ‘icon’ is related, consanguinely, to the words around the Greek eidolon from which come the nouns ‘idol’ and ‘idolatry’, as well as the verb ‘idolize’.

The verb ‘deify’, drawn from the Latin deus or God, is not far from the ‘icon’ and ‘idol’ group of words. Human beings the world over idolize and even deify their icons. Depending on the temper of the day
and our own, we upgrade acknowledgement to appreciation, appreciation to admiration, admiration to adulation, adulation to veneration and veneration to worship. We turn humans into icons and icons into idols in quick and easy steps. Great batsmen and bowlers become iconic; iconic players become ‘cricket idols’ with a sensational hit or a googly on the turf. Great actors turn into ‘matinee idols’ with one hit on screen. Personalities in the public domain, to whom admittance in the Hall of Iconic Fame is deeply fulfilling endure rather more hardly than sports or film stars. But, let us make no mistake, we can feel one thing today and another tomorrow, with equal fervour, about the same icon. From deity to idol to human to a human with failings to a failed human with warts is a quick passage.

And when they fall from iconic grace, how they fall! Crashing down they come, biting the dust that held them up. The higher the pedestal, the steeper the fall; the bigger the image, the shorter the shift reserved for them.

In the Byzantine era, the iconophilism of Theodore the Studite and John of Damascus was challenged by the then Byzantine Emperor himself – Leo III who, in 726 CE, ordered the destruction of icons throughout the empire. The Ten Commandments, which forbid the making and worshipping of “graven images”, were taken literally. Large scale destruction ensued. Christianization destroyed the Roman Empire’s religious images.

And yet, all icons and idols require and cherish the attention they get. One hopes the redemptive grace of humour also helps them see their feet of clay through the marble or the bronze that has gone into their installation.

The ever-accessible paraphernalia and accoutrement of ritual worship, now aided by multi-mode technological and photographic devices, places all the procedures of iconolatry and idolatry at the disposal of public piety. Genuflection takes the place of reflection. Ideally, the two together would make for a fine blend – cultural and intellectual. Ritual displaces engagement and the annuities of birthdays and punya-tithis smother the daily relevance of the one being commemorated.

But there can be some great exceptions.

One of the most venerated figures of our times, with the triumphs of the Salt Satyagraha and of the Gandhi-Irwin burnishing his image, Mahatma Gandhi wrote in Young India, in June 1931:

_A correspondent…from Mathura…sends me a horrible portrait representing me as lying stretched on the coil of the thousand-mouthed serpent with the roll of non-co-operation in one hand and the spinning-wheel suspended on the other arm. My poor wife is massaging my legs. The other celebrities have also been pressed into service. I must not violate the reader’s feelings by describing the other features (of this portrait). Suffice it to say that the picture is a caricature of the Vaishnavite legend representing Vishnu resting on the coil of Sheshanag … If they have any regard for my feelings, let the … publishers of the offending picture desist from their activity. There are many other healthy ways of giving expression to and promoting patriotic sentiment…_

The law of opposites, however, did not miss this chance either.

There has been and is an India, the one that believes in hatred and violence, that shall not quite participate in the veneration of Gandhi.
Let me recall an episode that took place here in our city, on 24 August 1947. The iconic Gandhi was in Beliaghata. A violent mob broke into the house he was living in. In his words:

This was about 10 p.m. They began to shout at the top of their voices. My sleep was disturbed but I tried to lie quiet, not knowing what was happening. I heard the window panes being smashed...

...Some had entered the central hall, and begun to knock open the many doors. I felt that I must get up and face the angry crowd. I stood at the threshold of one of the doors. Friendly faces surrounded me and would not let me move forward.

Gandhi then asked them:

What madness is this? Why do not you attack me? I offer myself for attack.

He repeated it thrice and asked his Bengali grand-niece-in-law to translate his words into Bengali. In Gandhi’s words again:

All to no purpose. Their ears were closed against reason. I clasped my hands in the Hindu fashion. Nothing doing. More window panes began to crack.

At that point two Muslim members of the family with whom Gandhi was staying came rushing in pursued by the crowd. One of them was bleeding profusely. He took shelter behind Gandhi. A massive brickbat was aimed at him. It struck another Muslim standing by. A heavy stick narrowly missed Gandhi’s head, crashing against the opposite wall without hurting anybody.

And so, the man who could be depicted as a somnolent Vishnu could also be attacked viciously by the same generation of fellow-Indians.

Our generation will not forget the traumatic blasting by the Taliban of the monumental Buddhas at Bamiyan in 2001. But let us not over-connect iconoclasm with the world of Islam. Let us not forget that in Europe, the Reformation saw Protestants destroy Catholic images with zeal, the French Revolution destroying religious and secular imagery likewise, the Russian Revolution do the same with fearful method and the Cultural Revolution do so with ferocity in both the Han and Tibetan regions of China. It is not my intention to chronicle iconoclasm, but I mention the sequence to suggest the perils of the veneration of images – physical or mental – to both the venerated and the venerated.

Iconolatry and iconoclasm occur in real time. In fact, the more we iconify, the more we ensure an opposite fate for the icon. This is because the weave of contestation is so tight and the net of competition so close that belief engenders skepticism, worship triggers scorn. Praise planted reaps resentment. Rage and counter-rage are always in harvest.

Iconolatry and iconoclasm feed each other. Veneration becomes a substitute to understanding the venerated. Violent acts become a substitute to reasoned criticism. Worse still, both iconolatry and iconoclasm cap thought and abort error-correction. They valorize obedience over respect, revolution over reform.
Will iconolatry and iconoclasm, like rose and thorn, exist and co-exist for all time?

Intellectual objections to the veneration of images are as unlikely to work in India as attempts to check vandalism. Humour, of course, can have a role to play, albeit limited. In the early ‘60s Rammanohar Lohia began a campaign of attacking Raj statues in Delhi after his appeal to have them shifted had failed. A cartoonist showed Dr. Lohia hammering away at the nusetip of King George V, with a bystander saying: ‘Go ahead Dr. Lohia he won’t hit back’.

An alternative to dry-as-dust reason will have to be found to counter runaway emotion.

This is where I find the life and work of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose invaluable.

If Netaji became iconic – and he indisputably did – it was almost despite himself. His aim was to resurrect India’s self-esteem and India’s self-confidence. It was Hind, not himself, that he sought to pedestal. Such was the integrity of his purpose, such the intensity of his faith, such the velocity of his commitment that the coalescence became a foundry, a smelt, from which arose an icon that was, unbelievably, and oxymoronically self-denying. His renouncements resonated where others’ pronouncements fell flat.

His saying over the radio that on achieving its purpose, the INA will transmute itself into a participant in the political programmes of the national movement being led by Mahatma Gandhi, must rank among the greatest self-abnegations known in political history. Netaji created a new dimension in iconism which was neither ‘latry’ nor ‘clasm’ but an indefinable noun of nouns that confounds grammar and leaves syntax speechless.

I find it remarkable that the person who achieved countrywide fame as an agitator for the removal, perhaps iconoclastic, of a statue – that of ‘Black Hole’ Holwell, should have a countrywide network of statues to himself. With Shahid Bhagat Singh, he is one iconic figure whose statues have never been and barring some individual aberrant act, will never be touched except with reverence and faith. The reason is not far to seek. Netaji in his statues, like Netaji in real life, will ever be free from the risks of ‘incumbency’.

When he is seen, in statue or portrait, a thirst is slaked but not satiated; a promise is seen, but not saturated; a hope is seen but not with the regret that shadows most hopes. Netaji has scooped incumbency out from availability, surfeit from fulfilment, the dead tare of ritual worship from the undying bullion of spontaneous celebration.

Even more Netaji is iconic not for segments of India but for India as a whole, for all its shards in a great pattern of unity. Netaji is free from and above the risk of denominational fame.

He wields – and I deliberately use the present tense – a plectrum which stirs the many-stringed Veena that is India, to resounding music. But it is, to borrow John Donne’s phrase rejuvenated by Vikram Seth, an Equal Music which does justice to all of India’s aspirations.

A new discipline – psychonotry – will perhaps be needed to go into why Netaji, an iconic figure, will never be ‘clast’. Be that as it may, I see hope in the fact that Netaji and Bhagat Singh show the possibility of reason and emotion, mind and heart, getting twinned. And both working at an unusually high pitch.
Pure reason and emotion by themselves, working in isolation will, in our country, either be ineffectual – or dangerous. We need to see or to show that if intolerance led to the Bamiyan Buddhas being blasted to nothingness, those Buddha statues and the Muslim population had co-existed for over a millennium before their destruction and that their destruction in 2001 was a political act, rather than a socio-theological one.

Netaji also shows something more: the need and the possibility for an alter ego to the nation’s power-structure. Society – cutting across religion, region, and language and class, needs a herald and a tribune that is in moral charge but not in political office. Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru (who consciously remained out of office when Congress assumed ministerial responsibility under the 1935 Act) Netaji, Bhagat Singh and Jayaprakash Narayan were such tribunes. We need to recognize that.

Iconism as a subject has much to teach us, with a deathless icon in Netaji being the subject’s irreplaceable teacher who, in the words of Faiz written in another context, ‘ghaayab bhi hai, aur haazir bhi’.
Dr. Sisir K. Bose’s correspondence with Ambassador Pietro Quaroni in 1970

From the Executive Director
By Air Mail
12 October 1970

Dear Mr. Quaroni,

Your letter of the 3rd July last reached me only day before yesterday. It came by sea mail. This inordinate delay in my receiving this letter of yours explains my previous letter to you and my anxiety regarding your trip to India in January.

As to your trip, I think it will be better for you to fly direct to Calcutta first and return to Rome via New Delhi and Bombay. I would tentatively suggest the following plan:

Arrive in Calcutta: 21 January 1970 (Oration on 23)
Arrive in New Delhi: 25 January 1970 (Republic Day Parade on 26)

Arrive in Bombay: 27/28 January 1970
Leave for Europe: 30/31 January 1970

Arriving in Calcutta a couple of days in advance will be convenient for you and useful for discussions. It will be a good idea to be in New Delhi during the Republic Day Parade. We may arrange important and useful engagements for you in Bombay. If you have the time, we might arrange trips to Darjeeling (from Calcutta), to Agra (from New Delhi) and to Ajanta-Ellora Caves (from Bombay).

Now, as to your oration, the reading time should be one hour. But this does not mean that you have to limit your contribution. It may be much longer for publication purposes. We shall in due course publish it in book form as we have done with Dr. Alexander Werth’s oration (I shall request Dr. Werth to send you a copy of his book as soon as possible). You may read selectively according to your choice and convenience.

As to the contents of the oration, I feel rather hesitant to offer any advice. Nevertheless, as you have asked for it, I should make the following suggestions:-

1) I think Dr. Werth’s oration is a good model for the purpose. As Dr. Werth has spoken as a German friend of Indian freedom and as one who had direct involvement in it, you will be speaking as an Italian friend of Indian freedom and as one having direct relations with Netaji and his movement.
2) As much of detail as possible of your contact and experiences with our leader during his sojourn in Kabul and your assessment of his personality and ideas on the basis of your direct contact and discussions with him.
(3) Personal accounts of Mrs Quaroni and Mr. Crescini should form part of your oration (we already have an account by Mr. Anzilotti in our files). I wish very much that Mrs Quaroni could also be present at the birthday ceremony and herself present an account. But I do not know at the moment whether that would be possible.

(4) Anecdotes of a personal nature but revealing our leader’s personality either relating to his stay in Kabul or to his visits to Rome will be welcome.

(5) Reactions of Italian Government and semi-Government circles to our leader’s movement you may be able to trace, beginning with his Italian visits of the thirties and ending with his departure for Asia in 1943.

(6) I do not know if Mr. Orlando Mazzotta is still available. If so, it will be most interesting to have from him in his own hand how he felt to lend his name to Subhas Chandra Bose for the sake of India’s freedom.

I have written out the above suggestions rather hastily and at random. I shall be writing to you again whenever anything else occurs to me in this regard. I have no doubt that your oration will be a most outstanding contribution to the work we are engaged in and to the promotion of Indo-Italian friendship.

I shall be grateful for an early acknowledgement of this letter.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Sisir K. Bose

Mr. Pietro Quaroni
Affari Esteri
Rivissta Irimestrale
34, Via Zanardelli
00186 ROMA
Italy

c. Dr. Alexander Werth, Bonn, West Germany
Dr. M. R. Vyas, Bombay
Roma, 3 November 1970

Dear Mr. Sisir K. Bose,

I have received your letter of October the 18\textsuperscript{th}.

You have really very bad luck with me. I am, at the present moment, under treatment for rather serious circulation troubles: it is a rechute of what I suffered last winter. My doctors have prescribed me, above every thing else to avoid all exertions, and they don’t know whether, in January, I shall be fit enough in order to undertake a trip to India; they don’t feel particularly optimistic about it.

Knowing how complicated are the arrangements for such ceremony I prefer not to wait the last minute in order to inform you that I cannot come and tell you straight away the plight of my health.

I am extremely sorry for this. I would have liked so much to be able to render personal homage to the memory of a person I had in so great esteem and to see India again after so many years. But unfortunately when one is not more twenty years old one can not do every thing one would like to do.

Who knows, perhaps with the help of God I may be able to do it another time.

Please forgive me but it is not my fault.

Sincerely yours,

Pietro Quaroni

Dr. Sisir K. Bose
Deshanayak
Leader of the Nation

Rabindra Nath Tagore

Subhas Chandra,

As Bengal’s poet I invite you to the honoured seat of the leader of the people. We have the sacred assurance of Gita that from time to time the Divine champion of the good arises to challenge the reign of the evil. When misfortune from all directions swarm to attack the living spirit of the nation, its anguished cry calls forth from its own being the liberator to its rescue …

Wearied by the concerted conspiracy of sinister forces, both of outside and within, we are increasingly losing the vital power to resist them and recover from their attack.

At such a juncture of nation-wide crisis, we require the service of a forceful personality, the non-chalant confidence of a natural-born leader, who can defy the adverse fate that threatens our progress.

Subhas Chandra, I have watched the dawn that witnessed the beginning of your political Sadhana. In that uncertain twilight there had been misgivings in my heart and I had hesitated to accept you for what you are now. . . Today you are revealed in the pure light of midday sun which does not admit of apprehensions. You have come to absorb varied experiences during these years.

Today you bring your matured mind and irrepressible vitality to bear upon the work at hand. Your strength has sorely been taxed by imprisonment, banishment and disease, but rather than impairing, these have helped to broaden your sympathies – enlarging your vision so as to embrace the vast perspectives of history beyond any narrow limits of territory. . .

Bengali mind is nothing if not logical. It takes enormous pleasure in spinning out subtleties of argument for their own futile sake and proudly asserts the independence of its intellect by contradicting all schemes of enterprise from their inception. No practical proposal, no organization, is safe from its destructive casuistry. But this is not the time for idly indulging in the sterile game of polemics, splitting things to pieces. We need the creative inspiration that would rouse the nation into a unity of will. Let this united will of Bengal ask you to take your place as our guide and also seek to create you by the force of its claims. Through that creation will be revealed the spirit of the people in this individual personality of yours.
The vision of this will I did once realize during the Bengal partition movement. The sword that was raised to divide her living body into two parts was baffled by its resistance. On that day Bengal did not sit down vainly to argue like a wiseacre, weighing her pros and cons against the decree of mighty imperial power. She willed and the obstruction vanished.

In the following generation we have witnessed the manifestation of this will in the heart of the Bengali youth. They were born with the sacred flame that could light the torch of freedom; but they burnt themselves, they missed their path. Despite the fatal futility of the tragic mistake, they made it reveal the magnanimity of their martyrdom, the kind of which was rare in the other provinces of India. This fact will ever remain luminous in our history, that these young souls personated in their lives the irresistible will of their country and suffered.

The negative testimony of the weakness of our country must not be allowed to breed pessimism in our minds. Wherever the signs of her strength have ever made themselves evident we must know that there lies her truth. They are like living seeds that keep the promise of the future in their core. It should be your life’s work to make fruitful in the soil of Bengal all nascent hopes that are waiting in obscurity. Your task will be to know and give recognition to those traits in Bengali character that have permanent worth – their fine sensibility, imagination and understanding, their receptivity – which will guide them into the constructive work of nation building.

The born leaders of men are never alone and they never belong to the fugitive moment. The eternal message of the sunrise of the future they carry in their own lives …

As I feel that you have come with an errand to usher in a new light of hope in your motherland, I ask you to take up the task of the leader of Bengal and ask my countrymen to make it true …

Let nobody make such a grievous mistake as to think that, in a foolish pride of narrow provincialism, I desire to see Bengal as an entity separate from the rest of India, or dream of setting in my own province a rival throne to the one on which is seated a majestic figure representing a new age in the political history of the world …

Let it be your untiring mission to claim of your countrymen the resoluteness, the unyielding will to live and to conquer, strengthened by the inspiration of your own life. Let Bengal affirm in one united voice that her deliverer’s seat is ready spread for you … May she offer you honour worthy of a leader by retaining her self-respect in trials as well as triumphs …

Long ago at a meeting, I addressed my message to the leader of Bengal who was yet to seek. After a lapse of many years, I am addressing at this meeting one who has come in to the full light of recognition … I may not join him in the fight that is to come. I can only bless him and take my leave knowing that he has made his country’s burden of sorrow his own, that his final reward is fast coming as his country’s freedom.
THE GREAT ESCAPE
A Photo Documentary Presentation
Netaji in his bedroom, December 1940
Subhas Chandra Bose

Jan. 1941

An Autograph

Sarat Chandra Bose
Sisir Kumar Bose 1941.

Wanderer Car in which Netaji was driven from Calcutta to Gomoh by Sisir Kumar Bose 16 - 18 January 1941.
A page from the Registration Book

Exit route from Elgin Road to Grand Trunk Road
The Bungalow in Bararae near Dhanbad where Netaji was hidden during the day of 17 January 1941.

Gomoh Station, where Netaji took the Delhi-Kalka Mail for Delhi on 17 - 18 January 1941.
Aseke Nath Bose 1941, in whose bungalow Netaji secretly spent the day on 17th January 1941.

Facsimile of note to ‘Nirad’ for Sarat Chandra Bose.

Mian Akbar Shah who was in charge of organizing the journey Peshawar to Kabul.

Ahad Khan, Netaji’s host in Peshawar, in whose car Netaji drove from Peshawar to Afghan border.
Bhagat Ram Talwar who escorted Netaji from Peshawar to Kabul and brought news of his departure for Moscow in March 1941 to Sarat Chandra Bose.

Uttam Chand Malhotra, Netaji's host in Kabul.

**WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO SIR SUBHAS CH. BOSE?**

*Unexpected Exit From Home*

Great anxiety prevails amongst the relatives and friends of Sir Subhas Bose since yesterday afternoon when it was noticed that he was not in his room where he was confined since his release from jail in the first week of December last. It is generally known that from the last few days he was observing strict silence and had not been seen returning home.

First news of Netaji's disappearance in Hindustan Standard 27th January 1941.
A view of Kabul, where Netaji remained hidden till his departure for Berlin via Moscow.

Count Schulenburg, German Ambassador in Moscow 1941 who negotiated with the Soviet Government for a transit visa for Netaji through Russian territory to Germany.

Katsuo Okazaki, Japanese Counsel General in Calcutta 1941. Okazaki was driven secretly by Sisir Kumar Bose to Sarat Chandra Bose’s garden house in Rishra in the summer of 1941 when he delivered a radio message to Sarat Chandra Bose from Netaji. Messages continued to be exchanged thereafter between Netaji and Sarat Chandra Bose through the courtesy of the Japanese Consulate till the end of the year.
Mr. & Mrs. Pietro Quaroni. Mr. Quaroni, Italian Minister in Kabul, played a key role in Netaji’s travel to Germany via Moscow. Mrs. Quaroni acted as secret messenger between the Italian legation and Netaji’s hideout in Kabul.
First page of Quaroni’s report to Rome on his conversation with Netaji.
Map showing Neuji's route of travel — from Peshawar to Russian frontier via Kabul, January-March 1941.
Secret message from Schalenburg to Berlin confirming that Soviet Government had agreed to let Netaji travel through Russia & Germany on a transit visa on an Italian passport.

Secret message of German Ambassador Schalenburg recording Netaji’s arrival in Moscow.
you will be surprised to get this letter from me and even more surprised to know that I am writing this from Berlin. I arrived in Berlin yesterday afternoon and would have written to you at once — but I was kept busy till evening. Most of the hotels are full and with difficulty a room could be found for me. I am shifting to another hotel today — "Nurnberg Hof."

My future programme is not settled — but in all probability, Berlin will be my headquarters. I do not know if I shall be able to come to Vienna. So you must come to Berlin to meet me. Can you come? You can understand how glad I would be to meet you.

It is possible that I may require a secretary here. If so, can you come? Will your mother and father agree to it?

My passport is not in my name but in the name of Orlando Mazzotta. So when you write you will have to address me as Orlando Mazzotta. Please treat as
strictly confidential
the fact that I have come here.
you may however tell your mother and sister, provided
they do not speak to anybody else.
kindly let me know by return of
post —
1) if you can work as my secretary here, if I do need a
secretary for my work here.
2) that salary you will require if you come to Berlin.
3) that salary you are getting at present.
4) in which branch you are working now and
what your hours of work are.
5) whether you have kept your telephone and if
so, whether you have the old number R 60-2-67.
6) can you take a short leave from your branch
and come to Berlin so that we could meet?
If you can come, will you be able to manage
the travelling expenses and the expenses here;
if you come for one week to Berlin? do you
know of any place in Berlin where you
could stay, or shall I have to find a place
for you in Berlin? I am asking this
question, only in case we cannot otherwise
meet.

Please write at once to Orlando
Mazzotta, Hotel Nurnberger Hof, near Anhalter
Bahnhof, Berlin. Please find your way
by best means to your mother & father, then
writing to your sister.

after his arrival in Berlin on 3rd April 1941
Netaji after arrival in Berlin as Orlando Mazzotta.
Stir Bose with Indira Gandhi at the Release of Netaji and India's Freedom, proceedings of the First International Netaji Seminar.
Vol XXXI, January 2009  No.1
Photographic and Documentary Materials
From the archives of
Netaji Research Bureau
Cover Photograph: Netaji as Orlando Mazzotta, 1941
Netaji as Deshanayak, 1939
Copyright: Netaji Research Bureau
Edited by: Sugata Bose
Designed and Printed by: Virtual Media
Published by: Dr. Umasankar Sarkar
From:
Netaji Bhawan, 38/2 Lala Lajpat Rai Sarani,
Kolkata 700020, India

Netaji Research Bureau