

Subhash Chandra Bose and the Bengal Volunteers Corps—An Untold Revolutionary History of Bengal, 1921-1942

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Abstract: *India's freedom struggle has a unique history compared to other countries. The evidence shows that the struggle for freedom in India began in two different ways. The first path is non-violence, popularized by Gandhi. The second path is revolutionism, which involves frontal warfare and assassinations. Subhas Chandra Bose, however, had a different approach to revolutionism. He respected revolutionaries but did not imitate them. Instead, he founded the 'Bengal Volunteer Corps' to create a revolutionary wave that would put pressure on the British ruling class. This approach, known as neo-revolutionism, was first applied in Bengal and later spread throughout India. This discussion focuses on Subhas Chandra's revolutionary activities in Bengal and the impact of the 'Bengal Volunteer Corps' on India's freedom struggle.*

Keywords: Struggle, Non-violence, Revolutionism, Neo-revolutionism, Activities.

Subhash Chandra Bose was a prominent figure in India's fight for independence. He believed in using revolution as a way to achieve freedom and spread this ideology in Bengal and other parts of India. In Bengal, he organized the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' and also utilized other organizations such as 'Anushilan Samiti', 'Jugantor Dal', and 'Shankar Math' in Barisal for his revolutionary activities. Additionally, he worked with Hemchand Ghosh's 'Mukti Sangh', 'Revolting Group', and 'Chittagong Revolutionary Dal' to further his cause. 1928 onwards the activities of all these revolutionary parties were conducted through the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' founded by Subhas Chandra Bose.¹ Before engaging in revolutionary activities in India and abroad, Subhash Chandra Bose established a network of revolutionary ideologies with the help of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' in nearly every district of Bengal. This made him a role model for revolutionaries of all levels in Bengal, particularly women revolutionaries. The reason for this was his strategic approach to revolution through the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'. The question arises as to why he chose revolutionism and the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' as a tool for the freedom

movement, especially as an active Congress leader. We will explore the answers to these questions, but first, we will examine the essence of the topic through a literature review.

Literature Review

Many scholars have written research books and articles on Subhash Chandra Bose both before and after independence. Some notable examples include 'The Rebel President' by Durlab Singh, 'Subhas Chandra' by Hemendranath Dasgupta, 'Subhas Chandra Bose' by Nanda Mookherjee, and 'Netaji Subhas Chandra' (Bengali) by Sri Hemendra Bijay Sen. Durlab Singh's book 'The Rebel President A Biographical Study of Subhas Chandra Bose' (1941) is highly regarded among Netaji researchers for its in-depth discussion of Subhash's nationalism, imprisonment, and election as a Congress president. However, it does not cover Subhash Chandra's planned revolutionism and the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'. Similarly, Hemendranath Dasgupta's book 'Subhas Chandra' (1946) provides an excellent discussion of Subhash's student life and his role as a volunteer and Congress President, but it also lacks information on the formation of the 'Bengal Volunteer Corps'. Other books, such as 'Biplabi Subhash' (1353B.S) by Prafullaranjan Basu & Shyamdas Bandopadhyay and 'Subhas Chandra Bose' (1975) by Girija K. Mookherjee, also have their strengths and limitations in covering Subhash Chandra Bose's life and activities. Despite the publication of many valuable books and articles, none of them fully address the origin and purpose of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'. Therefore, our discussion on this topic is unique and important. Let us begin by briefly discussing the organization of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' by Subhas Chandra Bose.

Background of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'

The Bengal Volunteers Corps was formed by Subhash Chandra Bose at the National Session of the Calcutta Congress. By forming the volunteers, he brought the revolutionaries of Bengal from all walks of life into the Congress movement. But suddenly he did not take the initiative to form this volunteer. Nor did Subhash Chandra suddenly propose to the revolutionaries to form a volunteer army without any plan. There was a specific goal and plan behind it. In 1921 Subhash Chandra took the hands of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das and politically became associated with the Congress movement in Bengal.² After joining the Congress, Subhash Chandra noticed that the revolutionaries of Bengal had been opposing the Non-cooperation movement. In this situation, Subhas Chandra and Chittaranjan Das managed to convince the revolutionaries that non-violent & non-cooperation never weaken or corrupt the people. This message was conveyed in a closed-door meeting with Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Subhas Chandra and the revolutionaries in Calcutta in September 1921 in front of Gandhiji.³ Henceforth in Bengal the Congress movement and the revolutionaries were allied. This connection undoubtedly deserves novelty, because no one has ever seen Congress made up of such strong and

contradictory currents. In a word, Subhash Chandra changed the shape and form of the Congress movement in Bengal in 1921. It was identified through the observance of 'Hartal Day' on 17 November 1921.⁴ On this very day the people of Bengal saw a group of young volunteers led by Subhash Chandra, in which female powers like Basanti Devi, Urmila Devi, Suniti Devi joined.⁵ Consequently, the Government got scared and banned the parade with the volunteers. This was Subhash's first step in forming Volunteers. But then he did not give its organised form.

He again showed the strength of volunteers during the North Bengal floods in 1922. Subhash Chandra helped the flood victims in North Bengal with 1000 young volunteers and revolutionaries, especially revolutionaries of Anusilan Samiti within 6 weeks in 1922.⁶ However, during the 1922 flood, Subhas Chandra was fascinated by the discipline and patriotism of the volunteers. This success inspired Subhas Chandra to form an organised Volunteers Dal. But then Subhas Chandra could not form the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' because the formation of organised volunteers was at the experimental stage.

The Swarajya Dal was another laboratory for the formation of Subhas's Bengal Volunteers Corps. The formation of the 'Swarajya Dal' was an epoch-making and effective move by the revolutionary groups. When the 'Swarajya Dal' was formed in 1923, many revolutionaries and revolutionary groups joined the party in the presence of Chittaranjan Das and Subhas Chandra.⁷ Not only that, during this time the revolutionaries became very strong in the 'Bangiya Jela o Pradeshek Congress' committee.⁸ In such a situation, the direct communication and dependence between the 'Swarajya Dal' and the Gupta revolutionary party made the British Government quite apprehensive. A secret police report of 25 January 1932 stated that when the non-cooperation movement was called off after the Chaurichaura incident, the revolutionaries were not ready to accept it.⁹ With the message of changing the status quo, they won over the Bengali Congress Executive Committee and captured the board.¹⁰ Then the revolutionaries led by Subhash Chandra launched a fierce opposition to the government's reactionary laws and budget in the Council and the Central Assembly. This left the Government in quite a quandary. The secret report of the police on January 12, 1932, showed that this connection and strong understanding between the 'Swarajya Dal', revolutionaries and Subhash Chandra was 'horrific' to the Government.¹¹ After the martyrdom of revolutionary Gopinath Saha on March 1, 1924, Subhash Chandra became more aggressive in his revolution.¹² As the Secretary of the Bengali Provincial Committee, he passed a resolution in the Bengali Provincial Committee praising the patriotism of Gopinath Saha. According to British intelligence, this was done when Subhash Chandra planned to blow up the council chamber with the help of revolutionaries.¹³ In fact, bringing revolutionaries into the 'Swarajya Dal' and establishing close relations with them were the strategies of Subhash.¹⁴ Based on this strategy, he brought the 'Swarajya Dal' to victory in the Calcutta Corporation elections in 1924. He was elected 'CEO'. And

Subhash Chandra's best friends in this work were numerous revolutionaries.¹⁵ From this it can be said that through 'Swarajya Dal', Subhash Chandra wanted to unite the revolutionaries of different levels in an organised form and he did it. Then, to stop him, the British Government arrested Subhash Chandra on October 25, 1924, under the 'Regulation 3' Act and threw him into the Presidency Jail, thereafter into Murshidabad and then Burma Jail. In this situation, in the absence of Subhash Chandra, the revolutionaries of Bengal were in a bad situation. That is why the revolutionary Adhar Laskar asked Rishi Arbinda Ghosh to return to Bengal. So it appears that Subhash Chandra was identified as a revolutionary by the British Government and sent to Burmese revolutionary prisons to suppress him.¹⁶

After Subhash Chandra had been released from Burma jail in March 1927, he was again elected as the President of the Bengal Provincial Congress with the help of 'Yugantar Dal'.¹⁷ He saw the resurgence of non-cooperation and discord among the revolutionaries. Then in 1927, he organised a conference with the students of the entire Bengal at 'Shradhyananda Park' in Calcutta.¹⁸ At this conference he founded 'All Bengal Students Associations'.¹⁹ The objective was to organise revolutionary and patriotic students. He continued this effort from within the Congress movement for a long time. In 1928, the Calcutta session of the Congress established a military disciplined volunteer corps called 'The Bengal Volunteers Corps'.

In this Conference, 2000 youths were equipped and trained in military uniforms to conduct Congress sessions.²⁰ Many Congress leaders applauded Subhash's initiative, but Gandhiji called Subhas's volunteer force 'Children's Pantenime', and 'Philip's Circus', although these military volunteers or 'Bengal volunteers' cast a shadow of strange bravery on the young minds of Bengal.²¹ Subhash Chandra's seat in the youth-heart of India is unmistakably true. Of course, those volunteers who were enamoured with Gandhiji's mantra of non-violence, made a lot of fun of the volunteers that day. But Gandhiji himself was horrified to see thousands of volunteers dressed in military uniform at Parkcircus Maidan.²² Being a learned man, he discovered in his heart the bitter 'enemy' of Subhash Chandra and his forces against the mantra of non-violence. He is the sage of the non-violence mantra. Non-violence is a greater object to him than freedom. When the country became independent due to violence, his ideology died. Therefore, Gandhiji resorted to cruel jokes to denigrate this historical effort to Subhash Chandra, by calling it 'Children's Pantenime', 'Philip's Circus' etc. in front of everyone.²³ A few anti-Subhash newspapers of Bengal also show their slavish ignorance by creating cheap jokes about Subhash Chandra with sweet words like Goku (G.O.C), 'Khoka Bhagaban' etc.²⁴

Notwithstanding the criticism, the volunteer army was divided into several divisions on military lines. Among them, the South Calcutta Division was a marvel of discipline, education and devotion to duty. The contribution of Major Satya Gupta and Jatin Das in its establishment is

magnificent. Satya Gupta was assisted by a group of young workers including Nihar Dutta, Nirad Dutttagupta, Kamet Dasgupta, Amal Dutta, Priyoshankar, Manishankar, Ashok Sen and Satyen Dasgupta et al.²⁵ Overall BV's military parade training required a lot of work. Life in the volunteer camp of Park Circus Maidan was so harsh that the active soldier Anil Roychowdhury died within a few days.²⁶ Now the question is whether Subhash Chandra was the real founder of The 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'. In 1928, when Hemchandra's party broke down, Subhash Chandra suggested that the revolutionaries should form voluntary soldiers instead of volunteers.²⁷ As the speech of Subhash was liked by the revolutionaries, the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' was formed during the annual session of the National Congress in Calcutta. Its all-India director was Subhash Chandra, i.e., the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' was the brainchild of Subhash, but other revolutionaries contributed to it.

Now the question is whether the 'Bengal Volunteer Corps' and BV party are the same. Generally, there is no difference between BV and Bengal Volunteers Corps. The name BV came after Subhash Chandra's formation of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'. The name of BV was given by the spy department of the British police.²⁸ But many people refer to Hemchandra Ghosh as the founder of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'. But the matter is not so simple. Although the 'Bengal Volunteer Corps' was the brainchild of Subhash Chandra, Hemchandra Ghosh had a deeper connection with the BV party. Hemchandra formed the Muktisanghho in 1905 to secretly carry out revolutionary activities in Bengal.²⁹ At the time of its establishment, the name of this party was kept secret on the advice of Brahmabandhab.³⁰ Most of the members of this group were school and college students. As the name of this revolutionary party was unknown in the police records, they named Hemchandra's party as Bengal Volunteer shortly after BV. After the formation of this revolutionary association, Hemchandra and his revolutionary friends were intimately involved in family life.³¹ In this situation, the police thought that they had left the revolutionary activities and were focused on family activities. Hemchandra Ghosh formed 'Shrisangha' in Dacca city under the leadership of Anil Roy in 1922-23 for social service as well as family activities.³² Around the same time several associations were formed in Dacca namely 'Shanti Sangha', 'Dhrubo Sangha', 'Boys Reading Institute' and 'Social Welfare League' etc. Then in 1923 Lila Roy's 'Dipali Sangha' was associated with Hemchandra's 'Mukti Sangha'.³³ After that, it can be said that the work of social service in Bengal gained a lot of momentum. At that time, school and college students like Prabhat Nag, Renu Sen, Anil Roy, Sushila Sengupta, Promila Dasgupta, Helena Bal et al participated in the social service work.³⁴ Unbeknown to the police, these students spread the network of 'Mukti Sangha' under the guise of social service in Dacca, Cumilla, Rangpur, Moymonsingho, Calcutta, 24-paragon, Medinipur and Patna.³⁵ They were not allowed to contact revolutionaries like Hemchandra, Shrish Paul, Haridas Dutta, Horidash Roy et al to put dust in the eyes of the police. Later, however, the police came

to know that these young men and women were the real revolutionaries. Police did not know the name of their group. But the police were able to confirm that all these boys and girls were disciples of Hemchandra. In this situation, the police named these young boys and girls 'Hem Ghosh's party' or 'Dacca party' to distinguish them from other revolutionary parties.³⁶ In other words, it is understood that Hemchandra Ghosh's 'Mukti Sangha' was quite a mess with the British intelligence. But towards the end of 1928, the 'Mukti Sangha' broke up due to a difference of opinion among the leaders over revolutionary methods of work.³⁷ Some activities led by Anil Roy and Lila Nag broke away and formed a revolutionary party called 'Shrisangha'.³⁸ After the split, Hemchandra Ghosh's party came to be known to the police record as the BV party. Because most of Hemchandra's soldiers were active members of various voluntary organizations in Bengal. His team was named Bengal Volunteers in the police secret file. The spy department of the police gave this name after the formation of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps', in 1929.³⁹ We need to remember that the name BV was not given by Hemchandra Ghosh himself. Although Subhas Chandra formed a separate organisation called 'Bengal Volunteers Corps', its origin was Hemchandra Ghosh's BV party or 'Muktisangha'.

In fact 'The Bengal Volunteers Corps' founded by Subhash Chandra is a revolutionary group formed under the umbrella of Bengal Congress. It was promoted as a volunteer organisation of the Congress to throw dust in the eyes of the British. Members of this group were revolutionaries Dinesh Gupta, Vinaykrishna Bose, Sudhir Gupta (Badal), Satyagupta, Jatin Das, Ganesh Ghosh, Jagadish Chattopadhyay, Mukul Sen, Surya Sen and others. Subhash Chandra was the 'General Officer-in-Command' of this party.⁴⁰ Under him, Satyagupta was the 'All India Director' of the newly established 'Corps'. Revolutionary Hemendra Ghosh was the guardian of this party and Vinaykrishna Bose, was the Major. His task was to strengthen the organization in East Bengal. Badal Gupta was the lieutenant and Dinesh Gupta was the Captain. Dinesh Gupta's job was to manage the activities of the organization in Medinipur.⁴¹ All these instances prove that he brought the revolutionary and revolutionary organizations of the whole of Bengal under the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'. Therefore, Subhash Chandra took the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' as a tool for the country's independence. Now the question is how the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' developed throughout Bengal.

Development of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'

The Bengal Volunteers Corps, led by Subhash Chandra, defied Mahatma Gandhi's scepticism and spread throughout Bengal, inspiring the youth to march in military style and stirring their desire for independence. Revolutionary groups, including Muktisangha in Dhaka and the Chittagong Revolutionary Party, also joined forces with Subhash Chandra's movement. Ganesh Ghosh, a revolutionary of this party, was brought by Subhash Chandra in charge of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'.⁴² Apart from this, the

revolutionaries of 'Anushilan Samiti', 'Barisal Group' and 'Yugantar Dal' were in regular contact with Subhash Chandra. Because of these contacts, revolutionary Jagdish Chatterjee of 'Anushilan Samiti' and Mukul Sen of 'Barisal Group' became associated with Subhash Chandra's 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' group. 'Pabna's revolutionary party' joined the Bengal Volunteers under the leadership of Dwijen Das and Suren Sarkar as Volunteers.⁴³ The 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' was in touch with the 'Revolting group'. Satya Gupta was given the responsibility of communicating with this group.⁴⁴ Subhash Chandra's life was bound with the revolutionaries.

All revolutionary parties in Bengal enthusiastically worked to strengthen the 'Bengal Volunteers', leading to its rapid growth. Under the leadership of Subhash Chandra, individuals such as Satya Gupta, Panchannan Chakraborty, Pratul Bhattacharya, and others made it an 'all Bengal movement' and achieved an impossible feat, transcending 'groups'. The 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' had branches active in many parts of Bengal, with Masterda Surya Sen being the first to show interest in the army in East Bengal. Although Masterda Surya Sen formed an independent revolutionary party in Chittagong, he later allied with the revolutionary party founded by Subhash Chandra. He corresponded with the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' and engaged in anti-British activities in East Bengal, serving as the chief officer and shaper of the party in that region. On the initiative of this party and under the leadership of Master Da Suryasen, a political conference was convened in Chittagong in 1929.⁴⁵ They aimed to declare themselves as political workers to the people and present them the theory of 'a struggling political' ideology. Subhash Chandra, Jatindramohan Sengupta, Prof. Jyotish Chandra Ghosh, Prof. Nirpenchandra Bandopadhyay, Latika Bose and others attended this conference.⁴⁶ Subhash Chandra's participation in this conference proves that he was in touch with the revolutionaries even from the Congress and wanted to spread the activities of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' force established by him throughout Bengal. Eventually, the British government outlawed the revolutionary Masterda Suryasen's organization from 1934 to 1938 and later in 1940, fearing the activities of this party in East Bengal.

Not only in East Bengal but in the whole of Bengal, Subhash Chandra set the tone for volunteer activities. He called for an uncompromising fight against the British in every part of Bengal he visited. In the President's captivating speech at the Political Conference at Rangpur on March 30, 1929, he said, that Bengal's natural character is always dynamic, not static.⁴⁷ He can be called a revolutionary, which shows that he is always moving forward and assimilating. His clear diagnosis for the people of Bengal was, that the country had by then, become organised and no power in the world could deprive the native people of their birthright. So it was clear that Subhash Chandra called for an uncompromising fight against the superpowers. His argument was that compromise would never give India full independence. The constant struggle was the need of the hour. This is why Subhash Chandra said, "We cannot achieve strength and freedom by

doing penance in the forest or meditating in an ashram, but through conflict, action and struggle."⁴⁸

He also spread the seeds of this acute fear at the student conference of Rajshahi on 20 August 1929.⁴⁹ The conference went a step further and called upon the students to possess military discipline and strength. Here Subhash Chandra directly spoke about achieving military discipline under the student shadow of his self-founded 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' to bring full freedom to the students and youth. Then in every district of Bengal, volunteer forces were formed under the leadership of the revolutionary youth who returned from jail.⁵⁰ He inspired the youth to join the group fearlessly. He said that only a disciplined army can free India and the people of Bengal from the misery of subjugation. Subhash Chandra gave examples to the students of Cromwell's 'Iron Guards', Fayeth's 'National Guards' Musholini's 'Black Shirts', Neponion's 'Imperial Guards' and Russia's 'Red Army'.⁵¹ From this it can be said that Subhash's mind was revolutionary. And we cannot deny that Subhash Chandra's Bengal Volunteers Corps was similar to the revolutionary groups of other parts of the world.

Not only in the student conference but also in the speech given at the Howrah District Political Conference on September 28, 1929, he asked the people of Bengal to work hard to achieve full independence.⁵² If necessary, he advised the youth of Bengal to take the path of struggle for the sake of the country. He said to form a volunteer force on a military basis. It was said that Subhash Chandra invited selfless patriots to join the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'.⁵³ On October 28, 1929, on the birth anniversary of revolutionary Jatindranath Das, Subhash Chandra reminded the people of Bengal about the disciplined army organized by students and youth.⁵⁴ He said, from the life of Jatindranath we learn the moral lesson that only our 'sadhana'(penance) in this age is to conquer death through action and struggle like his. He further said that the revolutionary Jatindranath Das was one of the organizers of the 'Bengal Volunteer Corps'.⁵⁵

As an organizer and volunteer, he wanted to establish this force on a solid foundation. Subhash Chandra wanted to say that the protest that Jatindranath Das should as a disciplined soldier of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' against the British should be the only goal of the youth of Bengal. However, in 1930, a temporary ebb and flow of tension was noticed among the leaders of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'.⁵⁶ But Subhash Chandra led from the front as the 'GOC' of the force and urged more youths from Bengal to join the force to make the core force more organized and sharp. At the same time, he believed that the members of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' team should work towards a specific goal. His firm belief and confidence was that the Bengal volunteer corps would become stronger if the volunteers aimed well. For this, on 23 January 1930, Subhash Chandra said, the responsibility of our officers and non-commissioned officers is indeed very great.⁵⁷ They have to set an example to the lower ranks of our forces. They and the lower ranks have peaceful confidence and it is for sure they will work promptly.

A 'women's force' was also formed in the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' founded by Subhash Chandra Bose. Latika Bose was the leader of this force.⁵⁸ Planned by Subhash Chandra and led by Latika Bose, 300 women volunteers paraded at the Congress Annual Conference in Calcutta in 1928.⁵⁹ In fact, the women's force led by Latika Bose was the offshoot of the 'Jhansi Rani Bahini' to be led by Col. Lakshmi of the Azad Hind army.⁶⁰ The women who participated in the parade on this day later became involved in the revolutionary movement. From the writings of Gerald Forbes, it is known that many such women revolutionaries joined the revolutionary party for independence only because of the revolutionary ideas of Subhas Chandra.⁶¹ Responding to his call, Bina Das, Shanti Das, Suniti Choudhury et al joined the 'Bengal Volunteer Corps'. To be honest, Subhas Chandra was an ideal revolutionary for women. In May 1931 Prafulla Nalini Brahma, Shanti Das and Sunita Chowdhury attended the 'Tripura Student Conference'.⁶² At the conference of the 'Bengal Provincial Congress' held at Burhampur, Murshidabad, on 5-6 December 1931, Subhas Chandra hailed women to take up arms.⁶³ He went to Comilla to plant the seeds of revolutionism and the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'. At that time Shanti Das was influenced by him and she devoted her life to revolutionary work.⁶⁴ Prafulla Nalini Brahma was a member of Yugantar Dal in Comilla. She too joined the revolutionary movement of Bengal under the influence of Subhas Chandra.⁶⁵ Many such heroines (Birangona) sold themselves to the revolutionary entity of Subhash Chandra for the independence of Bengal and India. The Congress session of 1928 cannot be forgotten. The Bengal Volunteers founded by Subhash Chandra, or the Congress Volunteer Army, entered their essence. Unveiled women quickly discovered their fighting selves in the rhythm of marching in military style. Then came the call of revolution. With that call, many women of Bengal joined the 'Bengal volunteers'.⁶⁶ Mira Duttgupta, Ujjala Majumder, Sandhyarani Dutta, Kamala Dasgupta, Chameli Basu⁶⁷, Subola Sen, Usha Sen, Subola Roy, Lili Basu, Pratibha Roy, Lila Sarkar, Beli Basu, Bela Sen, Medha Ghosh, Maya Roy, Uma Sen and Chanpa Mukherjee were among the other women associated with BV.⁶⁸

Activities of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps'

On August 29, 1930, BV struck the first blow against British rule by attacking Loman and Hodgson.⁶⁹ Then from 1930 to 1934, the revolution efforts that these 'B-V' revolutionaries had taken up in Bengal were praiseworthy. Lowman, Simpson, James Peddie, Douglas, and Burge were killed by them.⁷⁰ It was at their hands that Hodgson, Nelson, Jones, Toynam, Villiers, Johnson, and Sir John Anderson were injured.⁷¹ It was their workers who broke into the Writers' Building at noon and staged a skirmish, killing three white magistrates in Medinipur.⁷² Civilian press officer Tufnell Barrett said in a bewildered voice that he witnessed the brave hearts of Binay-Badal-Dinesh.

From 1934 to 1937 the activities of BV were almost closed, as during this period the leaders of BV were imprisoned. BV's plans changed when the

leaders were released in 1937. Coming out of jail in 1938, under the leadership of Subhash Chandra, the BV party engaged in public politics.⁷³ Public politics of the BV party started with the publication of the journal 'Chalar-Pathe'. Subhash Chandra was then the President of Congress. On 30/1/1939, Subhash addressed the people as a soldier of BV from the seat of the president. He told the people that as 'Benu' Patrika had allowed enlightening the country through literary practice, 'Chalar-Pathe' would also have a strong impact on the minds of the countrymen.⁷⁴ He further said that he unhesitatingly appreciates the utility of 'Chalar-Pathe' for those who are committed to their ultimate sacrifice to take the country to the path of independence through political, socio-economic and cultural movements.⁷⁵ Not only that, he urged the entire countrymen to participate in the progress of this monthly journal. But after three months of publication, the government banned it by enforcing law.⁷⁶

Gandhiji had a falling out with Subhash Chandra when he was involved in the anti-British movement through public politics as a fearless soldier of BV. At that time, Subhash left the Congress and formed the 'Forward Block party in 1939. Subhash Chandra's chief source in the establishment and management of this party was the BV party.⁷⁷ Within a year and a half of the establishment of this party i.e. in 1940, 25 BV members were arrested by the police from all over Bengal. During this period the Communist Party played a major role in betraying the soldiers of the Bengal Volunteers. They were masters of betraying the workers of the Bengal Volunteers as auxiliaries of the British police.⁷⁸ But even in this there was no particular damage to the BV party because the preparations for Subhash Chandra's revolutionary activities had already begun. It is particularly noteworthy that BV soldiers were involved in all the revolutionary activities of Subhash Chandra. When Subhash Chandra disappeared from India in 1941, Satyaranjan Bakshi, Jyotish Guha and Shantimay Ganguly made contact with him in Afghanistan.⁷⁹ The objective was to determine the next step of the BV party. One of the next steps of the BV party was to conduct anti-British activities from outside India. Notable among the internal activities in the 1940s was the participation of the BV party in the August Movement of 1942. Hrishikesh Saha, one of the activities of BV, was martyred by joining the August movement.⁸⁰

Subhash Chandra was associated with the Congress movement, but his activities differed greatly. He sought to exploit British weakness domestically within the Gandhian movement but also accepted violence. He told the revolutionary Satish Pakrashi that nothing significant would happen through Gandhiji's non-violent path. He had a specific goal of complete independence for India and fought against the British with a mixture of revolutionary ideas and democratic movements. He formed the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' in 1928 and called upon students and youth to join.⁸¹ Many responded, including women, who became the mainstay of the anti-British movement. Despite opposition from the Communists, the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' carried out the anti-British movement properly.

Subhash Chandra spoke of an all-out revolution by the students and youth and believed that violence was the right path to liberate India. The soldiers of 'Bengal Volunteers' risked their lives in the anti-British struggle, and many sacrificed their lives for Mother India. The activities of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' prove that its sole aim was to gain independence. Whether the establishment of the 'Bengal Volunteers Corps' led by Subhash Chandra was a mistake or just a circus is best answered by the readers of this specific chapter of history.

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