

# Amitrakshar International Journal

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## Subhash Chandra Bose: A Catalyst of Courage in Howrah's Freedom Struggle

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**Abstract:** *Subhash Chandra Bose stands as one of the most formidable figures in India's struggle for independence. His fervent nationalism and charismatic leadership played a pivotal role in inspiring countless Indians to fight against British colonial rule. In Howrah District, Bose's influence was particularly significant, as his ideas and actions galvanized local communities to join the freedom movement with renewed vigor. Subhash Chandra Bose's contributions to the freedom movement in Howrah District were marked by his exceptional leadership and vision. His ability to inspire, mobilize, and unite the populace created a strong resistance against British rule. As a catalyst of courage, Bose's legacy continues to be a source of inspiration, reminding us of the collective power of people in the face of oppression. The resilience and determination he instilled in Howrah's freedom fighters played a crucial role in shaping the course of India's struggle for independence.*



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**Keywords:** *Subhash Chandra Bose, Howrah, Uluberia, Forward Bloc, Ambition, Magnetic Charm, Inspiration*

### Introduction

The anti-British Movement in undivided Bengal, also flared up in fiery flames, in Uluberia. The Revolutionary Bipin Behari Ganguly, the maternal uncle of the writer Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, was in a lead role in the spread of an Armed Revolt across the industrial belts of Uluberia, Maju, Dhulagore, and Domjur alongside the town of Howrah. As a matter of fact, Barin Ghosh also visited Latibpur of Uluberia and Bagnun while he was looking after the organisation in Midnapore to coordinate the activities of the freedom fighters.

### The birth of Subhas Chandra Bose, the freedom leader

After Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi assumed leadership in 1919, the nature of the Nationalist Movement in India changed drastically. Under the influence of his 'Nonviolent Policies', the Armed Revolution was temporarily halted. But still, the Armed Followers, kept on continuing their Movement surreptitiously. After Gandhiji explicitly entered the National Movement, the waves of the Non-Cooperation Movement he called for in 1921 swept across the alleyways and atria of undivided India. In the meantime, Subhas Bose who had successfully passed the I.C.S. Examination (Indian Civil Service) but had relinquished any lucrative employment under the British Government took the blessings of *Desh Bandhu* Chittaranjan Das and joined the 'National Politics' directly against the British imperialists. His presence amongst the

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youth was like a shooting up of a meteor onto the 'Swadeshi Movement' in India. The north-west of India followed Gandhi's nonviolence and the East of the country followed Subhas's uncompromising struggle. Young Subhas's magnetism inspired the youth community of Uluberia, who rallied along with thousands of others, on the historic ground of Park Circus, Calcutta in the presence of All India Presidents Motilal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi as chief guests.

Gandhiji's policy of compromise and Non-violent Movement was something that Subhash Bose couldn't agree with. The man whose character was steel, whose mind had been determined to expel the British since his youth; it was impossible for him to suffer the irony of undue and unnecessary subjugation. So, the patriot, who believed in progressive ideology and ideals, and was a shrewd strategist, knew that World War II was imminent, so, one should not wait any longer. After being elected president of the Haripura Congress in 1938, he encouraged ideas of armed opposition within the Congress party. The youth connected with Subhas Bose and that planted the seed of internal conflict within the Congress.

It was his resolution to very firmly declare that no Indians would take part in favour of the British Imperialists in the ensuing World War. At his firm resolution, the British rulers turned violent like ferocious wolves, and, on the other hand, the pro-compromise Gandhiji was annoyed with Subhas' attitude. It was during this time that the 'National Planning Committee' directed by Subhas Chandra raised a proposal for industrialisation in India, which made Bapuji more upset with him. This difference of opinion led to a flare up at the Tripuri Congress in 1939. Ignoring Gandhiji's opinion completely, the firm and determined-minded Subhash Chandra was re-elected to the post of Congress President after winning the contest with Pattabhi Sitaramiya by a huge margin. But because of Gandhi's powerplay with loyalist Jawaharlal Nehru and Jatindra Mohan Sengupta, eventually, he was forced to step down as president on April 29, 1939.

### Unyielding in Purpose: The Legacy and Ideals of the Forward Bloc

On 3rd May, 1939 Subhas Chandra formed a new political party on the doctrine of a different ideology in the name of '**Forward Bloc**' with some selected believers of likeminded members from the National Congress Party. Consequently, in August, 1939 the pro-Gandhi camp expelled him from the Congress party for the next three years. But he was organisationally talented by birth. Therefore, it was next to impossible to extricate him from the inner core of the hearts of the countrymen. The Head Office of Forward Bloc was established in the town of Howrah. Having left the Congress party Harendranath Ghosh, one of the active followers of Subhas Chandra, was given the responsibility to look after the Head Office. Bibhuti Ghosh (Nanu Ghosh) was trusted to maintain the Uluberia branch. An **Anti-British Movement** began at Garh Bhawanipur and it was led by Subhas Chandra in association with Netai Mondal, Tarapada Mazumdar, Sujan Sarkar, Indu Bhushan Chowdhury, Surith Biswas, Madan Das, and several more. In 1939 to 1940 the Freedom Movement in Uluberia blossomed under the expert guidance of Nanu Ghosh. In the name of 'Howrah Seva Sangha', a yoga and bodybuilding club was set up at the hard work and initiative of Nanu Ghosh, Santosh Ghosal, and Gour Mohan Roy in Howrah with its ninety-six branches all over the district. The principal aim and ambition of this physical exercise and body-building club was to motivate and inspire the youths in the Nationalist Movement. A civilian band was also formed in the imitation of military-style musical instruments. Tarapada Das as a trainer of Uluberia used to impart physical and body-building training to the trainees here, and he was assisted by Jiban Das, Kartik Adhikari, Haradhan Ghosh, Madan Hazra, Satya Mukhopadhyaya, and Sheikh Ayub. The organisers also had to visit Hooghly, Midnapore, and 24 Parganas from time to time to look after the other units.

Subhas Chandra with his 'Forward Bloc' followers, began a hurricane tour all over India with the intention of expelling the British rulers from the country. Congressmen, at that point of time, worked at cross purposes when the pro Gandhi group was promoted, the pro Subhash group was subdued, all the while delaying the



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country from being freed from British rule. However, the personal influence of Subhash Chandra was so intense that it was not possible for any party to stop that thought, the youth of Uluberia, Bagnan, and Amta were easily attracted by his magnetic charm.

### Turning Tides: The Political Shift in the 1940 Calcutta Corporation Election

In 1940 the election of the Calcutta Corporation came up. Subhas Chandra wanted to contest it in association with Muslim League. Congress and 'Hindu Maha Sabha' supported this move because the Muslim League's fourteen-point conditions, including Pakistan's demand, could not be accepted by the people of India, and this election was a good way to placate them. As a result, Subhash started *Hindu Maha Sabha* meetings in different parts of Bengal to protect Hinduism and integral India. A famous meeting of the *Hindu Maha Sabha*, that was held at the *Nat-Mandir* of Uluberia Kalibari, was reported in *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on the 26th May, 1940.

Wherever he went to Bengal in 1940, Subhas Chandra received a whole-hearted reception from an ocean of people. When he set out on the 26th April, 1940 from Uluberia Railway Station in the Purulia Fast Passenger train for Bankura, Nanu Ghosh, Shanti Bose, Tarapada Das, Bibek Das, and some philanthropists along with innumerable crowds, the residents of Uluberia gathered there to bid him goodbye. The news of his journey was published in the 'Amrita Bazar Patrika' newspaper on 27.4. 1940:

#### Sj Subhas Bose

*"Departure for Bankura by the Purulia Fast Passenger Train on Friday night, S.C. Bose will be at Bankura on Sunday wherefore he will return to Calcutta on Monday morning."*

Huge numbers of Subhash' fans greeted him and shouted slogans, "All hail Subhas!" "All hail Forward Bloc!" The crowds also greeted him as the 'Hero of the nation' as published in the column 'Bengal District News' in the 'Hindustan Standard' newspaper on 1.5.1940:

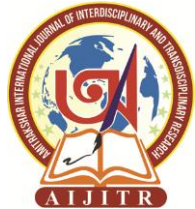
*"Uluberia (From our own correspondent): A grand reception was accorded to Sj Subhas Chandra Bose at Uluberia, a station where he arrived here on his way to Bankura; people began to assemble at the station long before the arrival of the train. When the train arrived, the people received 'Sj Subhas Chandra Bose Ki Jai', and 'Forward Bloc Ki Jai'. Afterwards Sj Bose was garlanded on behalf of the Uluberia Congress Committee. At the request of the local Congress workers, Sj Bose expressed that he would come to Uluberia very soon'*

Therefore, there was no doubt that during the Pre-independence Movement, the majority of the Uluberia masses were pro-Subhas. During the corporation elections, he criticised the newspapers 'Yugantar' and 'Amrita Bazar Patrika', for propaganda suiting the British. On the other hand, *Anandabazar*, and the editor of the Hindustan Standard newspaper, Hemchandra Nag, had presented Subhash as a worthy leader to the countrymen through their newspapers. That was visible when he was travelling from Calcutta to Jhargram in Medinipur. It was published in the Hindustan Standard newspaper 14. 5. 1940:

*'...Accompanied by Sj Rabi Sen, Sj Bose arrived at Midnapur from Calcutta on Saturday night amidst Vociferous shouts of Subhas Chandra Ki Jai. Sj Bose was at Uluberia, Bagnun, and many other stations on his way to Midnapur...'*

Krishnapada Majhi of Bagnun, Bomekesh Manik (later on he became the inhabitant of Knajiakhali, Uluberia), Keshto Chattopadhyay wished to bring Subhash to Bagnun from his Elgin Road residential house for holding a grant public meeting there. But Nanu Ghosh disagreed with the proposal of the pro-Subhash supporters for





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the time being. Since he was the most influential leader of the Freedom Struggle in this region, he decided to hold the debut meeting of Subhash at Uluberia instead of Bagnun.

Whatever the reason, Purnachandra Dutta, the Secretary of the Uluberia Sub-Division Congress Committee, published a tour programme of Subhash Bose for three consecutive days from 3 to 5 May 1940 in the Hindustan Standard newspaper:

*"Sj. Subhas Bose's visit,  
Public meeting at Uluberia  
Place - Uluberia, Nonahat  
Date - Sunday, the 5th May,  
Time - 4 p.m.  
President - Sj. Subhas Chandra Bose  
Public meeting at Bagnun  
Place - Maidan by the side of Bagnun Station  
Date & Time - Sunday, the 5th May, at 5:30 p.m."*

## President - Sj. Subhas Chandra Bose

Loudspeakers and special arrangements for ladies will be made in both meetings.  
3.5.40

Purno Chandra Dutta  
Secretary  
Uluberia Sub-Divisional  
Congress Committee

(Hindustan Standard, 4.5.1940)

On May 6, 1940, in the scorching heat of summer, the undisputed hero of the nation, Subhash Chandra alighted at Uluberia railway station. The elite leader was brought to the public meeting at the Nona hat (Garuhat) area in an open convertible belonging to Kalipada Karmakar. Harendranath Ghosh and Vivek Das accompanying him. Moreover, Tarapada Das, Shanti Bose, Abani Bose, Santosh Ghoshal, Sunil Ghoshal, Vibhuti Acharya, Banamali Dutta, Hiren Hazra, Dhiren Das, child-widow Ms. Kamala Hazra, Tarakanath Ghosh and other compatriots were present to welcome him. Youths and students of Uluberia felicitated their beloved leader by taking out a 'March parade'. Principal Arun Hazra, teacher Vidyut Banerjee, former police officer Jagannath Tewari and all the students of the neighbourhood were present in this parade.

Nagendranath Jana, an original resident of the 24 Parganas district, a renowned businessman and philanthropist of Uluberia generously contributed to Subhash Chandra for the proposed construction of Mahajati Sadan at Calcutta and for the welfare service of the nation. He treated sex workers with respect and compassion, also accepting their donation to him wholeheartedly for the service of the country. It is also worth noting that the personality of Subhash Chandra, as an able worker, and patriot, reached the inner core of the hearts of millions. The speech he delivered at the Uluberia assembly on that day set fire to the young men's blood to end the then-British rule. He called the rally: 'The country is ready for struggle.' He quoted Bankim Chandra's sayings "*Jauvan jal taranga rudhibe ke!*" (Who would thwart the water ripples of the youth)

## A New Era Unfolds: Political Shifts After the Great Assembly of 1940



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On the 6th of May, 1940 the great assembly of Subhash at Uluberia and Bagnun was well published with bold headlines in Ananda Bazar Patrika and Hindustan Standard. There was a disagreement between Subhash and the management of Amrita Bazar Patrika. Therefore, the news of the massive assemblies at Uluberia and Bagnun was briefly published much later in that newspaper. Here the news of Hindustan Standard and Amritbazar Patrika are presented briefly:

*"...Sj Bose proceeded to Uluberia by train from where he motored to Bagnun. In both places, he addressed huge public meetings. He was accompanied by Sj Haren Ghose, president of Howrah District Congress Committee; Sj Krishna Kumar Chatterjee, Assistant Secretary, Bengal Provincial Congress Committee; Sj. Manmatha Nath Roy, M.L.A., Chairman, Howrah District Board and Sj. Pratul Ganguly, M.L A... The local Bazar which was lavishly decorated wore a festive appearance on the occasion...and about 8 thousand people at Uluberia to welcome Sj. Bose. The public reception at Bagnun was held under the auspicious of the Juva Sangha and the Congress Committee. Sj. Bose was presented with a purse on behalf of the public and also by Sj. Nagendra Nath Jana, a well-known merchant of Uluberia..." (Hindustan Standard 6. 5. 1940)*

The main topics that Subhash delivered in this meeting were: *Hindu Maha Sabha* and Muslim League, and Congress and Gandhi. He also said about the *Hindu Maha Sabha* and the Muslim League:

*"...even, Sj. Bose, their efforts for arriving at an agreement with the Hindu Maha Savaha failed, [but] they were prepared to make a fresh effort for a statement with them. The Muslim League might be opposed to the Congress but the members of the League were all their own countrymen. Where was the harm therefore in attempting to work on an agreed programme with them in any sphere of activity? The Congress could not leave out any particular individual organisation..."*

### Media as a Weapon

It is surprising that even today the difference between his ideology and Congress politics has still remained. What he said about newspapers:

*"...referred to misleading propaganda that was carried [on] out against them by a large number of newspapers and he mentioned the activities of 'Amrita Bazar Patrika' and 'Jugantar' in this connection. The public resentment on this score found expression through vociferous shouts of 'boycott Amrita Bazar', 'boycott Jugantar' that burst forth from the audience..."*

He did not at all like the attempts to gradually relax the climate of independence of the country by compromising with British rule and the invention of unnecessary non-violence. So in this meeting, he directly criticised 'Gandhiji and Congress':

*"...The [the] mind of Gandhiji and his followers was full of doubts today. They had lost confidence in themselves. It was only when they found that the present leadership of the Congress had failed to give a bold lead to the country that they formed the Forward Bloc composed of the elements in the country..."*

Meanwhile, the peasants of Uluberia became politically conscious with the assistance and help of Bankim Mukhopadhaya, Nitai Mondal of Garh Bhavanipur, Madan Das, Samarendra Nath Baitalik of Shyampur, Bonomali Jana, Madhu Bera and several more. At 5: 30 p.m. on 27th April of the same year, [i.e. 1940] the second conference of 'Howrah Kishan Sabha' (Howrah Peasant Meet) was held at Amta. The flag



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was hoisted by Bipin Behari Ganguly in the presence of Bankim Mukhopadhyaya. In the presence of young students like Shanti Bose, Bivek Das, Kanai Ghoshal, Balai Ghoshal, Ajit Mondal, Chittya Dhara, Dhiren Das, and many more, Subhas called upon the nationalist movement to be more aware of the international situation and said:

*"...Sj. Bose addressing the public meeting at Uluberia also dwelt on the international situation and the present political situation in India. He addressed Kishans [Kishans'] workers and students to prepare for the national movement for the emancipation of the Indian masses..."*

With a brilliant speech of a visionary, that talked about the glory of our free country, Subhash Chandra created a spellbinding effect among the youths and students community of Uluberia. The students of the region dedicated themselves collectively to learning the training of *lathi or dandkala* secretly from master Nanu Ghosh under the leadership of Shanti Bose. They also influenced the media to write nationalistic content. An association namely 'Uluberia Ganges Club', established near the bank of the Bhagirathi River by Bibhuti Mondal virtually became a centre for entertainment but actually was a hub for secret political communication. Shanti Bose, Bivek Das, Kanai Ghoshal, Balai Ghoshal, a Gujrati Youngman Mehta (surname is not known), and Ajit Mondal assembled at his residence to study the then political pieces of news and reports published in the Anandabazar Patrika. Suren Banerjee secretly gave away financial assistance for the purpose of continuing the Freedom Movement and, at the same time, encouraged the youths involved in Swadeshi activities. He had good relationships with some Government employees which helped him collect pieces of information secretly and passing them on to the Freedom Fighters. Bijoy Mondal, Pasupati Ghosh, Tarak Nath Ghosh, Chittya Dhara, and a few more took active part in this Movement in various ways and means. In Howrah, apart from the pro-Gandhians and the pro-Nehruvian supporters, there existed an organisation known as the 'Radical Democratic Party' which was established by Manabendra Nath Roy. This organisation from time to time caused inconvenience to the movement of Subhash, though it was not easy to cause harm to a movement which the British considered a threat.

### The beginning of a legend

On 2nd July, 1940 Subhash Chandra conveyed an ultimatum vide a stern and final letter to the British Government to remove the infamous Memorial Halway Monument of Blackhole Murder. The Subhash supporters of undivided Bengal spearheaded a strong Movement in this regard. On the same day, he was arrested. As a result, the whole of Bengal became violent. On 10th July, 1940 an 'All India Subhash Day' was observed in support of him at the ground of Kalibari in Uluberia under the presidentship of Harendra Nath Ghosh. Nanu Ghosh and Shanti Bose delivered their respective speeches at the gathering. In order to participate and join in the activities of Satyagraha Shanti Bose and other Satyagrahis namely Kartik Adhikari, Ratan Das, and Mahendra Nath Das were called upon to Calcutta. At 2:30 p.m. the Movement of Satyagraha started and a police force from Hare Street Police Station arrested Shanti Bose and the other activists. They all were transported to Lal Bazar and Presidency Jail and then to Hooghly Jail. Shanti Bose was released in August 1940. At that time, Samar Mukhopadhyay, Kalipada Mukhopadhyaya, Kesav Sarkar, and Barada Mukutmani were behind bars along with him. The Rebel poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was also with them, and from here, started a force that eventually defeated the British.

### Closing Thoughts: Synthesizing the Journey

The young *Swadeshis* of Uluberia became frustrated when Subhash suddenly disappeared and went underground on the 17th January, 1941. Only the Nanu supporters of the Forward Bloc remained dominant in Uluberia and the organised *Swadeshi* Movement lost its momentum. It is true that the Freedom Movement in Uluberia, except during the regime of Subhash, was only active in some family circles, but always, there was a national consciousness here. Even after Independence, the trend has continued till today in any political movement of Uluberia from the perspective of national interest.





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