

# Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and Shillong

- Dr. Sylvanus Lamare



Today, as we celebrate the 125 Birth Anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose we go back into historical records of the visit of this Great Man to Shillong and as Edmundians we feel proud that he also visited St. Edmund's College in 1938.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose visited Shillong on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1927 and stayed at Kelsal Lodge in European Ward and the present day Oakland area. He was in Shillong for health reason and he stayed till 18<sup>th</sup> October, 1927.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose visited Shillong again in September, 1938 as the President of AICC and stayed at Asely Hall near the Earl Sanatorium. On this visit he delivered speeches at Polo (near Matri Mandir), Opera Hall (Police Bazar), Khasi National Durbar Hall, jail Road, Hari Sabha Laban and Hindu Mission Anath Ashram Complex.

When Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, visited Shillong in 1938 Mrs. Uma Purkayastha wrote, "one of the most remarkable and exceptional receptions was offered by St. Edmund's College. It is learnt from the description of Brother Viera, the then Principal of the college, that other than the students and faculty members, some distinguished British officers were also present in that meeting."



During such hectic times Netaji took out the time to visit Shillong as would anybody to unwind from this plethora of stress in the abode of clouds. Netaji received a warm welcome here and was invited by many organisations to preside over gatherings.

He delivered patriotic speeches in Polo (near Matri Mandir), Opera Hall, Khasi Durbar Hall, Jail Road field (in picture), Hari Sabha, Laban and Hindu Mission Anath Ashram Complex.



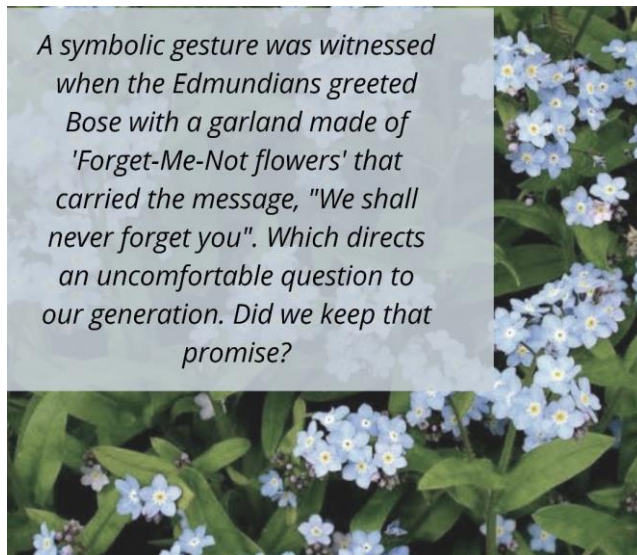
*St. Edmund's College, a reputed Institution run by Irish Brothers who found great respect for Bose since there existed a historical enmity between the Irish and the English, much similar to how Sister Nivedita, an Irish Catholic nun found spiritual strength in Swami Vivekananda but Nationalist strength in Bose. As available from the archives of The Shillong Times, it was one of the most remarkable and exceptional receptions. 'It is learnt from the description of Brother Viera, the then Principal of the College, that other than the students and faculty members, some distinguished British officers were also present in that meeting.'*

*In that august gathering, Netaji said, "...Yes I am a patriot, I love my country. If patriotism and terrorism are synonymous, then I would never object to be abused as a terrorist. My only question is why should our country remain under the yoke of foreign rule? Freedom is the birth right of an individual, so as soon as possible the British should quit our country. We will rule our country ourselves, and this is normal. Even if we shall have to take up arms and plunge into the fight against the British rule. I reiterate, we do not have any animosity against the British. They can stay in our country at ease, but not as ruler."*

*Everyone in the audience was mesmerized at Bose's magnetic personality and oratory; even the British officers present in the gathering were impressed.*



*A symbolic gesture was witnessed when the Edmundians greeted Bose with a garland made of 'Forget-Me-Not flowers' that carried the message, "We shall never forget you". Which directs an uncomfortable question to our generation. Did we keep that promise?*



The Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Centre at St. Edmund's College collected some important documents some important ones are listed below:



It is said that “Netaji had a special association with Shillong and had visited the town thrice in his life time. Highly impressed by the democratic functioning of the Khasi States when he came ... in September 1938, Netaji remarked, “Those who want to know about democracy should come to Khasi Hills”.

*Acknowledgements:*

1. Mrs. Uma Purkayastha's article in “The Shillong Times”, 21.01.2018.
2. From the SEPPA records.
3. Times of India, 24.01.2013.
4. Other sources in the internet.

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