LEADER IN NEWS
CHANDRA SHEKHAR AZAD

On February 27, 1931, revolutionary leader Chandra Shekhar Azad, the commander-in-chief of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, **laid down his life in a gun battle with British policemen in what was then known as Alfred Park in Allahabad (now Azad Park in Prayagraj).**

Early Life and Background

- **Chandra Shekhar Azad was one of India's most significant freedom fighters.**
  - Azad played a crucial role in India's struggle for independence, leading revolutionary movements against British rule.
  - His bold actions, strategic planning, and fearless nature made him a key figure in the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA).
  - Despite his young age, he left a lasting impact on India's independence movement.
- **Despite his young age of only 24 when he died on February 27, 1931, Azad's legacy continues to inspire.**
  - Azad was born in 1906 and sacrificed his life in 1931, making his contributions within a short span of just 24 years.
  - His courageous resistance against British rule and his determination to never be captured alive made him a legendary figure.
  - Even after his death, his ideals of patriotism and bravery continue to inspire generations of Indians.
- **Chandra Shekhar was born on July 23, 1906, in Alirajpur (Madhya Pradesh).**
  - He was born in the Bhavra village of Alirajpur district, which was part of British India at the time.
  - His birth took place in a period when nationalist sentiments were growing across the country.
- **Coming from a poor family, he briefly worked in Bombay before moving to Benares (now Varanasi), where he was enrolled in a Sanskrit school.**
  - Azad's family had limited financial means, which meant he had to take up small jobs to support himself.
  - Seeking better opportunities, he traveled to Bombay, but his stay there was short-lived.
  - Eventually, he moved to Varanasi, a city known for its religious and cultural

significance, where he received a traditional Sanskrit education.

Involvement in the Non-Cooperation Movement

- **In Benares, Azad became involved in political activities.**
    - While studying in Varanasi, he was exposed to the growing nationalist movement.
    - He interacted with like-minded individuals who were actively opposing British rule.
- **He joined youth groups organized by the Congress and participated in protests against British rule, including picketing liquor shops.**
    - Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's call for non-cooperation, Azad joined student-led political groups.
    - He actively took part in boycotts and demonstrations, particularly targeting British-made goods and liquor shops.
- **This led to his arrest.**
    - As his involvement in protests grew, the British authorities took notice and arrested him for his anti-government activities.

The Formation of 'Azad'

- **During his trial, when the judge asked his name, Azad responded, "My name is Azad, my father's name is Swatantra (Independence), and my address is Jail."**
    - This incident occurred when he was presented before a British judge after his arrest.
    - His bold response reflected his defiance and deep commitment to India's independence.
    - By claiming his father's name as "Swatantra" and his address as "Jail," he symbolized his complete dedication to the freedom struggle.
- **The judge ordered 15 lashes as punishment, but it was this incident that led Chandra Shekhar to adopt the name 'Azad,' meaning 'free' in Hindi, vowing never to be captured alive.**
    - As punishment for his rebellion, the British authorities flogged him 15 times.
    - Instead of breaking his spirit, this punishment strengthened his resolve.
    - He adopted the name "Azad" (which means "free"), signifying his determination to never be enslaved by the British.

Azad's Shift to Revolutionary Politics

- **Frustration with Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement: In 1922, when Mahatma Gandhi called off the Non-Cooperation Movement after the Chauri Chaura incident, Azad felt betrayed.**
    - Azad initially believed in Gandhi's principles of nonviolent resistance.
    - However, after a violent clash at Chauri Chaura led Gandhi to suspend the movement, Azad was disappointed.

- He felt that India's independence could not be achieved through nonviolence alone.
- **This led him to abandon Gandhian methods and embrace more radical, revolutionary politics.**
  - Disillusioned with peaceful protests, Azad decided to take up armed resistance against British rule.
  - He believed in direct action rather than negotiations with the British.
- **Joining the Hindustan Republican Army (HRA): Azad became part of the HRA, led by Ram Prasad Bismil and Sachindranath Sanyal, which sought to use armed struggle to gain India's independence.**
  - The HRA was a secret revolutionary organization that advocated for the use of force to overthrow British rule.
  - It was founded by leaders such as Ram Prasad Bismil and Sachindranath Sanyal.
- **The HRA raised funds through political dacoities (robberies), one of the most famous being the Kakori train robbery in 1925.**
  - The revolutionaries needed money to fund their activities, so they targeted government assets.
  - The Kakori train robbery involved the looting of a British treasury train carrying government funds.
- **Escape from Authorities: Azad was the only one to escape the authorities after the Kakori robbery.**
  - Following the robbery, most members of the HRA were captured by the British.
  - Azad, however, managed to evade arrest, proving his strategic skills.
- **He took refuge in Jhansi until the trial was over and continued to organize revolutionary activities.**
  - He went into hiding in Jhansi, a city known for its association with Rani Lakshmibai, another freedom fighter.
  - Even while underground, he continued to plan revolutionary actions.

Formation of HSRA and Key Actions

- **Meeting Bhagat Singh and Formation of HSRA: In 1928, Azad met Bhagat Singh.**
  - Bhagat Singh was another revolutionary who believed in armed resistance against British rule.
  - The two leaders shared similar ideologies and decided to collaborate.
- **The two revolutionaries, along with other young fighters, formed the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), a more radical successor to the HRA.**
  - The HSRA was founded as a more aggressive version of the HRA, emphasizing socialist principles.
- **While Bhagat Singh was the ideological leader, Azad was the military strategist and planner for the group.**

- Bhagat Singh provided the ideological foundation for the HSRA's vision of an independent India.
- Azad played a key role in training members in warfare and organizing attacks.
- **He was responsible for training revolutionaries in arms and executing critical actions.**
  - Azad provided military training to young revolutionaries, preparing them for combat.
  - He also planned and executed key attacks against British officials.
- **Assassination of J.P. Saunders: One of the most notable acts of Azad's leadership was the planning and execution of the assassination of J.P. Saunders.**
  - Saunders was a British police officer responsible for the death of nationalist leader Lala Lajpat Rai.
  - Azad played a major role in avenging his death.

The Last Stand and Martyrdom
- **The Last Battle at Alfred Park: On February 27, 1931, Azad was on his way to meet fellow revolutionary Sukhdev Raj at Alfred Park in Allahabad when the police surrounded the area.**
  - Azad was betrayed by an informer who alerted the British police about his whereabouts.
- **Outnumbered and outgunned, Azad fought back fiercely. He killed three policemen before he was injured.**
  - Despite being alone and surrounded, Azad fought bravely against the heavily armed British forces.
- **With only one bullet left in his pistol and determined to never be captured alive, Azad shot himself in the head.**
  - Staying true to his vow, he chose to die rather than surrender to the British.
- **The park where Azad died was later named Azad Park, and a memorial plaque was erected at the site to honor his sacrifice.**
  - Today, the park serves as a reminder of his bravery and ultimate sacrifice for India's freedom.

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