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## Role of Subhash Chandra Bose in Indian Freedom Movement

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**Abstract:** *The fact is that Subhash Chandra Bose has been denied his rightful place in the annals of Indian history. He founded Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauj) to overthrow British Empire from India and came to acquire legendary status among Indian masses. Subhash also announced the formation of the Independence League. Subhash Chandra Bose was jailed during Civil Disobedience movement in 1930. He took many steps to establish centres in different European capitals with a view to promoting politico-cultural contacts between India and Europe. Defying the ban on his entry to India, Subhash Chandra Bose returned to India and was again arrested and jailed for a year. At the end of his first term, the presidential election to the Tripuri Congress session took place early 1939. Subhash Chandra Bose was re-elected, defeating Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya.. In January 1941, Subhash Chandra Bose disappeared from his home in Calcutta and reached Germany via Afghanistan. In January 1942, he began his regular broadcasts from Radio Berlin, which aroused tremendous enthusiasm in India. In July 1943, he arrived in Singapore from Germany. In Singapore he took over the reins of the Indian Independence*

*Movement in East Asia from Rash Behari Bose and organised the Azad Hind Fauj which played an important role in Indian freedom movement. The present research paper highlights the role of Subhash Chandra Bose in Indian freedom movement.*

**Keywords:** Indian Freedom Movement, British Rule, Indian National Army, Independence League, British Empire.

**Introduction:** Actually Subhash Chandra Bose had been a leader of the younger, radical, wing of the Indian National Congress in the late 1920s and 1930s, rising to become Congress President in 1938 and 1939. However, he was ousted from Congress leadership positions in 1939 following differences with Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress high command. He was subsequently placed under house arrest by the British before escaping from India in 1940 and he arrived in Germany in April 1941, where the leadership offered unexpected, if sometimes ambivalent, sympathy for the cause of India's independence, contrasting starkly with its attitudes towards other colonized peoples and ethnic communities. In November 1941, with German funds, a Free India Centre was set up

in Berlin and soon a Free India Radio, on which Bose broadcast nightly. By spring 1942, in light of Japanese victories in southeast Asia and changing German priorities, a German invasion of India became untenable, and Bose became keen to move to southeast Asia. With Japanese support, Bose revamped the INA, and then composed of Indian soldiers of the British Indian army. To these, after Bose's arrival, were added enlisting Indian civilians in Malaya and Singapore. The Japanese had come to support a number of puppet and provisional governments in the captured regions. Now Bose had great drive and charisma—creating popular Indian slogans, such as ‘Jai Hind’—and the INA under Bose was a model of diversity by region, ethnicity, religion, and even gender.

Then in late 1944 and early 1945 the British Indian Army first halted and then devastatingly reversed the Japanese attack on India. Almost half the Japanese forces and fully half the participating INA contingent were killed. The INA was driven down the Malay Peninsula, and surrendered with the recapture of Singapore. Bose had earlier chosen not to surrender with his forces or with the Japanese, but rather to escape to Manchuria with a view to seeking a future in the Soviet Union which he believed to be turning anti-British. He died from third degree burns received when his plane crashed in Taiwan.

Some Indians, however, did not believe that the crash had occurred, with many among them, especially in Bengal, believing that Bose would return to gain India's independence.

In Germany, he was attached to the Special Bureau for India which was responsible for broadcasting on the German-sponsored Azad Hind Radio. He founded the Free India Center in Berlin, and created the Indian Legion (consisting of some 4500 soldiers) out of Indian prisoners of war who had previously fought for the British in North Africa prior to their capture by Axis forces. The Indian Legion was attached to the Wehrmacht. Its members swore the following allegiance to Hitler and Bose: "I swear by God this holy oath that I will obey the leader of the German race and state, Hitler, as the commander of the German armed forces in the fight for India, whose leader is Subhash Chandra Bose". This oath clearly abrogates control of the Indian legion to the German armed forces whilst stating Bose's overall leadership of India. He was also, however, prepared to envisage an invasion of India via the USSR by Nazi troops, spearheaded by the Azad Hind Legion; many have questioned his judgment here, as it seems unlikely that the Germans could have been easily persuaded to leave after such an invasion, which might also have resulted in an Axis victory in the War. In all, 3,000 Indian prisoners of war signed up for

the Free India Legion. But instead of being delighted, Bose was worried. A left-wing admirer of Russia, he was devastated when Hitler's tanks rolled across the Soviet border. Matters were worsened by the fact that the now-retreating German army would be in no position to offer him help in driving the British from India. When he met Hitler in May 1942, his suspicions were confirmed, and he came to believe that the Nazi leader was more interested in using his men to win propaganda victories than military ones. So, in February 1943, Bose turned his back on his legionnaires and slipped secretly away aboard a submarine bound for Japan. This left the men he had recruited leaderless and demoralized in Germany.

The INA was the brainchild of Japanese Major (and post-war Lieutenant-General) Iwaichi Fujiwara, head the Japanese intelligence unit Fujiwara Kikan and had its origins, first in the meetings between Fujiwara and the president of the Bangkok chapter of the Indian Independence League, Pritam Singh, and then, through Pritam Singh's network, in the recruitment by Fujiwara of a captured British Indian army captain, Mohan Singh on the western Malavan Peninsula in December 1941; Fujiwara's mission was "to raise an army which would fight alongside the Japanese army." After the initial proposal by Fujiwara the Indian National Army was

formed as a result of discussion between Fujiwara and Mohan Singh in the second half of December 1941, and the name chosen jointly by them in the first week of January 1942.

The first INA was however disbanded in December 1942 after disagreements between the Hikari Kikan and Mohan Singh, who came to believe that the Japanese High Command was using the INA as a mere pawn and propaganda tool. Mohan Singh was taken into custody and the troops returned to the prisoner-of-war camp. However, the idea of an independence army was revived with the arrival of Subhash Chandra Bose in the Far East in 1943. In July, at a meeting in Singapore, Rash Behari Bose handed over control of the organization to Subhash Chandra Bose. Bose was able to reorganize the fledgling army and organize massive support among the expatriate Indian population in south-east Asia, who lent their support by both enlisting in the Indian National Army, as well as financially in response to Bose's calls for sacrifice for the independence cause. INA had a separate women's unit, the Rani of Jhansi Regiment headed by Capt. Lakshmi Swaminathan, which is seen as a first of its kind in Asia.

The INA's first commitment was in the Japanese thrust towards Eastern Indian

frontiers of Manipur. Japanese also took possession of Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 1942 and a year later, the Provisional Government and the INA were established in that region. However, the Japanese Navy remained in essential control of the island's administration. During Bose's only visit to the islands in early 1944, when he was carefully screened, by the Japanese authorities, from the local population who at that time were torturing the leader of the Indian Independence League on the Islands. On the Indian mainland, an Indian Tricolour, modeled after that of the Indian National Congress, was raised for the first time in the town in Manipur, in north-eastern India. The towns of Kohima and Imphal were placed under siege by divisions of the Japanese, Burmese National Army and the Gandhi and Nehru Brigades of INA during the attempted invasion of India, also known as Operation U-GO. However, Commonwealth forces held both positions and then counter-attacked, in the process inflicting serious losses on the besieging forces, which were then forced to retreat back into Burma.

Then on 6 July 1944, in a speech broadcast by the Azad Hind Radio from Singapore, Bose addressed Mahatma Gandhi as the "Father of the Nation" and asked for his blessings and good wishes for the war he was fighting. This was the first time that Gandhi was referred to by this appellation. In the

consensus of scholarly opinion, Subhash Chandra Bose's death occurred from third-degree burns on 18 August 1945 after his overloaded Japanese plane crashed in Taiwan. However, many among his supporters, especially in Bengal, refused at the time, and have refused since, to believe either the fact or the circumstances of his death. Conspiracy theories appeared within hours of his death and have thereafter had a long shelf life, keeping alive various martial myths about Bose.

However, among the INA personnel, there was widespread disbelief, shock, and trauma. Most affected were the young Tamil Indians from Malaya and Singapore, both men and women, who comprised the bulk of the civilians who had enlisted in the INA. The professional soldiers in the INA, most of them were Punjabis, faced an uncertain future, with many fatalistically expecting reprisals from the British.

**Conclusion:** Thus Subhash Chander Bose's most famous slogan was 'Give me blood and I will give you freedom'. Another famous quote was 'On to Delhi'. This was the call he used to give the INA armies to motivate them. Jai Hind was another slogan used by him and later adopted by the Government of India and the Indian Armed Forces. Despite Gandhi being in charge of India's freedom struggle and Bose going missing, there was a great wave of

sympathy in India for the INA officers. This culminated in the infamous Bombay Mutiny. Sailors from the Royal Indian Navy in Bombay went on strike in February 1946 protesting the INA trials. To make matters worse, the mutiny spread to Calcutta and Karachi. In all more than 20,000 sailors from close to 80 ships participated in the mutiny. The British panicked and used the British Royal Navy to counter-attack leaving 7 dead. However this scarred the psyche of the British Empire and they knew that there was no way in which they could take on the combined might of the Indian defence forces if all of them decided to revolt. The popular ground report was that the British could no longer hold on to India and Clement Attlee (who had succeeded Churchill as PM) concurred. While the INA trials finally concluded in May 1946, the British decided to make a run for it. In fact they were just out of India in 14 months. This sudden capitulation took everyone by surprise but followers of Bose always maintained that it was because of him. In fact recently one of Netaji's relatives said on TV that Lord Mountbatten admitted in a personal interview

that the abrupt departure of the British was because of Netaji. That is why Subhash Chander Bose is regarded as a prominent freedom fighter leader of India and we can't underestimate his contribution to freedom movement.

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