



Sampreshan

UGC CARE GROUP 1

<https://sampreshan.info/>

ISSN: 2347-2979

Vol. 17, Issue No. 3, September 2024

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**SHAPING IDEOLOGIES: THE EARLY LIFE AND REVOLUTIONARY PATH OF  
SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE**

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**Abstract**

*Subhas Chandra Bose remains a seminal figure in India's quest for independence, celebrated for his revolutionary zeal and strategic foresight. This paper delves into Bose's early life, psychological framework, and the environmental factors that shaped his ideologies. Raised in an affluent Bengali family, Bose's nationalist fervor was deeply influenced by the extremist nationalism of Bengal and the spiritual teachings of Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The study examines Bose's political journey, emphasizing his tenure as Congress President and the establishment of the Indian National Army (INA) highlighting his commitment to militant nationalism. Despite considerable opposition and numerous setbacks, Bose's legacy as a revolutionary leader is indelible. His initiatives spurred mass mobilization and infused a militant spirit into the Indian independence movement.*

**Keywords:** Extremist Nationalism, Indian National Army, Forward Bloc, Revolutionary Ideologies, Bengal Nationalism.

**Introduction**

Subhas Chandra Bose stands as one of India's foremost revolutionary leaders and a vibrant emblem of the nation's youthful energy and nationalism. Despite being a fervent patriot, acclaimed by Mahatma Gandhi as the 'Prince of Patriots', Bose remains one of the most contentious figures in Indian history. To those fixated on ideologies such as Fascism, Nazism, and Communism, Bose was an enigmatic personality, often misrepresented and disparaged by his adversaries. His position as a formidable political opponent to Gandhism made him particularly susceptible to criticism. However, for those who upheld nationalism as a supreme virtue, Bose was perceived as a daring patriot and a radical leftist, renowned for his revolutionary outlook and steadfast opposition to British imperialism.



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The Indian independence movement was characterized by a long and arduous struggle. It comprised two significant phases: the non-violent resistance led by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and the revolutionary activities of militant factions. From 1922 onwards, after resigning from the prestigious Indian Civil Service (ICS) to join the freedom struggle, Subhas Chandra Bose emerged as a beacon of inspiration for the Indian youth. Bose gained prominence as a rebellious leader who dared to challenge the Gandhi-led Congress, and he captivated the Indian populace's romantic imagination as a formidable warrior-statesman and the supreme commander of the Indian National Army. Beyond his charismatic image, Bose was a strategic visionary who offered a compelling alternative to Gandhian ideology and methods. His contemporaries were both perplexed and impressed by his innovative approaches, and he left behind a rich legacy of profound and far-reaching ideologies. Bose's thoughts encompassed a broad spectrum of national issues, and he distinguished himself as a leader with a clear vision for the future. He meticulously planned programs and policies for a free India, setting him apart as a remarkable visionary whose influence extended beyond his time.

This paper provides a brief overview of the life of Subhas Chandra Bose. It also seeks to analyze Bose's psychological framework and the environmental influences that shaped his ideologies. The study examines how his beliefs were significantly influenced by the extremist nationalism prevalent in Bengal, where young individuals competed in their sacrifices for the nation. Additionally, the paper explores Bose's religious orientation and spiritual inclinations to offer a comprehensive understanding of his ideologies.

### **Family and Early Education**

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was born on January 23, 1897, into a large and affluent family in Bengal. His father, Janakinath Bose, was a well-known lawyer and Public Prosecutor in Cuttack, while his mother, Prabhavati, hailed from the distinguished Dutta family of Hatkhola.<sup>1</sup> Subhas was the sixth son and the ninth child in the family. The supportive and nurturing environment of his family undoubtedly played a crucial role in the development of Subhas's personality.

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<sup>1</sup> Adwaita. P. Ganguly, *Life and Times of Netaji Subhas*, Vedantic research Publications: Dehradun, 2001, p. 61.



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An in-depth examination of Subhas Chandra Bose's life and career reveals a tapestry of contrasting characteristics, which are both fascinating and intricate. Bose emerged as a staunch advocate of militant nationalism, yet concurrently, he harbored a profound spiritual inclination, akin to a pilgrim aspiring to transcend the material world in pursuit of spiritual realization. Despite his role as the supreme commander, who commanded unwavering obedience from his troops and negotiated with the Axis powers, Bose was inherently shy and introverted. As a proponent of rapid industrialization and mechanization in India, seeking to elevate the nation to the level of advanced countries, he simultaneously upheld traditional values concerning Indian culture and heritage. This amalgamation of idealism and pragmatism underscores his identity as both a visionary and a strategist. These multifaceted traits were significantly shaped by the sociopolitical milieu of his time, his familial background, environmental influences, and his education. A comprehensive understanding of Netaji's philosophies and ideologies necessitates an exploration of his life and career.

Janakinath Bose, like many affluent parents of his time, was keen on providing his children with an English education. Subhas Chandra Bose received his early education at the P.E. School and subsequently at the Ravenshaw Collegiate School in Cuttack (1909-1913), and later attended Presidency College in Calcutta. However, the Bose family maintained an environment where Indian culture, religious faith, and practices were held in the highest regard. This cultural milieu elucidates why Bose, despite his Western education, remained profoundly Indian at his core.

The significance placed on Durga Puja and other religious practices within his household instilled in Subhas Chandra Bose a deep religious inclination. His devotion to the Mother Goddess, or Shakti worship, eventually evolved into a reverence for Mother India, influenced by the prevailing Bengali nationalism. In his youth, Bose became so spiritually fervent that his parents and teachers were alarmed to see a promising boy pursuing ash-clad *sanyasis* and *sadhus* in search of a guru. They feared he might renounce worldly life and become a *sanyasin*. However, at the age of fifteen, through extensive travels and pilgrimages, Bose became disillusioned by the widespread corruption he observed in various ashrams.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, his focus shifted towards social service after reading the works of Swami Vivekananda and

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<sup>2</sup> Sisir Kumar Bose (ed.). *An Indian Pilgrimage- Subhas Chandra Bose*. Netaji Research Bureau: Calcutta, 1977, pp. 52-53.



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Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Among these, Vivekananda's call for "*atmanomokshartham jagaddhitaya*" or salvation through service to humanity had the most profound impact on him. As Bose himself stated, '*What I required and what I was unconsciously groping after was a central principle which I could use as a peg to hang my whole life on...*'<sup>3</sup>

### Subhas as Youth Activist

Spirituality remained a defining characteristic of Subhas Chandra Bose's life. He continued his practices of reading the Gita, engaging in yoga, and observing celibacy. However, he relinquished the ideas of renouncing the world and seeking salvation at the feet of a guru. Instead, Bose began to assemble groups of like-minded youth dedicated to social service, which had the additional effect of mitigating his natural reserve and shyness. The establishment of the Neo-Vivekananda group in Cuttack, and subsequently at Presidency College, Calcutta (1913-1915), represented a pivotal development in Subhas Chandra Bose's life. Bose, alongside his group, embarked on journeys to various regions of Bengal, particularly its remote villages, to provide medical treatment to cholera patients and to educate the impoverished populace. These endeavors were instrumental in shaping Bose into a quintessential Indian leader, as they brought him face-to-face with the stark realities of colonial India. He later reflected on this period, stating, '*Weeks of experience opened a new world before my eyes and unfolded a picture of real India, the India of the villages... where poverty stalks the land, men die like flies, and illiteracy is the prevailing order.*'<sup>4</sup> Bose's spiritual proclivities, in conjunction with his veneration of Mother India and dedication to social service, elucidate the often-mystical intensity of his nationalism.

Bose and his Neo-Vivekananda group, however, deliberately distanced themselves from politics. During that period, Presidency College was regarded as a hotbed of revolutionary activity. Nevertheless, Bose candidly admitted that his interests at the time were confined to social service. Notably, he did not engage in active politics until the age of twenty-four. This initial disinterest in politics can be partly attributed to the fact that political discussions were seldom held openly at home. However, Bose had an exemplary role model in his father, Janakinath Bose. J.N. Bose was renowned for his boundless charity and dedication to social

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.67.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 67.



and public welfare. He served as the President of the Calcutta Municipality and was a member of the Bengal Legislative Council for several years.<sup>5</sup>

The year 1916 marked a significant turning point in Subhas Chandra Bose's career. During this time, students at Presidency College confronted an English professor, E.F. Oaten, in response to his arrogant demeanour and racial prejudice. This incident, later known as the "Oaten Affair,"<sup>6</sup> led to Bose being identified as the principal instigator, resulting in his expulsion from Presidency College.<sup>7</sup> The political climate in Calcutta deteriorated following the "Oaten Affair" and Bose's expulsion. In response, the esteemed poet Rabindranath Tagore voiced his protest by writing an article titled 'Indian Students and Western Teachers', wherein he argued that the incident transcended mere local significance. Tagore asserted, "*Our students ... will stand out for their own life of respect. They will never ... allow themselves to be unjustly coerced into submission.*"<sup>8</sup> Reflecting on the tragic event of 1916, Bose wrote:

*"I was not sorry...I had rather a feeling of supreme satisfaction of joy that I had done the right thing...I had stood up for our honor and self-respect and had sacrificed myself, for a noble cause...My Principal had expelled me, but he made my future career..."*<sup>9</sup>

The incident held considerable significance for Bose, revealing the inherent nature of British racial discrimination and imperialistic policies.<sup>10</sup> While he had frequently observed such discrimination in everyday scenarios, such as on trams and at railway stations, this direct experience as a victim solidified his understanding. The Bengali revolutionary belief that the British only respected and responded to the language of force, a notion he had been exposed to

<sup>5</sup> INA Files, Files No. 291/INA, 'Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Indian Man of Destiny', National Archives of India, New Delhi, 1945, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> E.F. Oaten was a professor of English at Presidency College, known for his habit of manhandling students, which led to increasing discontent and protests among the student body. Ultimately, this dissatisfaction culminated in the students' decision to physically confront the professor.

<sup>7</sup> Subhas Chandra Bose, serving as the class representative, formally complained to the principal regarding the incident involving Professor E.F. Oaten. A committee was subsequently appointed to investigate the matter, during which Bose unhesitatingly highlighted Oaten's arrogance and racial prejudice.

<sup>8</sup> Shymalkumar Sarkar, 'Hidden Soul of Harmony', *The Visva Bharti Quarterly*, Vol. 6, Issue 4, 1996, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Sisir K. Bose, Op. Cit., p. 80.

<sup>10</sup> The committee established to address the Oaten affair adopted a rigid and authoritarian stance, failing to address the core issue of Mr. Oaten's insults towards the students. Instead, it punished the students by dissolving student councils and consolidating authority in the hands of the college Principal.



since childhood, became deeply ingrained in his consciousness. This experience cultivated in him a resolute opposition to the British and a strong advocacy for using force in the national struggle. Although the 'Oaten Affair' temporarily interrupted his educational path, Bose was admitted to Scottish Church College after a one-year hiatus in 1917. He excelled in his B.A. (Honours), achieving first-class honors, which greatly pleased his parents. They subsequently sent him to England to pursue the Indian Civil Service (ICS) examination.

Cambridge University provided Bose with his first real understanding of the contrast between life in a free nation and life under colonial rule. He became acutely aware of his country's backwardness compared to the advanced nations of the world.<sup>11</sup> At Cambridge, he appeared for the Indian Civil Service (ICS) examination at his father's behest and secured fourth place. However, his revolutionary and uncompromising nature was evident when he resigned from the ICS, one of the most prestigious positions of the time. In his autobiography, Bose wrote,

*"I had resolved early in life not to follow the beaten track, and further, I had certain ideals which I wanted to live up to. It was therefore quite impossible for me to go into service unless I could make a clean sweep of my past life."*<sup>12</sup>

Even before returning to India, he had already committed himself to the mission of fighting for his country's freedom.

### **Political Ideologies and European Influences**

Bose had well-formed political ideas even before returning to India. His studies in modern European history, which included primary sources such as Bismarck's autobiography, Metternich's memoirs, and Cavour's letters, provided him with a deep understanding of international politics.<sup>13</sup> These readings also instilled in him the belief that every freedom movement should have a revolutionary outlook, with well-defined plans and strategies. His correspondence with C.R. Das from Cambridge attests to these views.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, his fateful journey back to India with Rabindranath Tagore, who shared his perspective that the

<sup>11</sup> Girija K. Mukherjee, *Subhas Chandra Bose*, Publication Division: New Delhi, 1975, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Sisir K. Bose, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>13</sup> Hari Hara Das, *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose-The Great War for Political Emancipation*, National Publishing House: Jaipur, 2000, p. 77.

<sup>14</sup> Hemendranath Das Gupta, *Deshbandhu C. R. Das*, Reliance Publishing House: New Delhi, 1969, p. 56.



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Congress should transform into a more active body with a radical ideology, further solidified these ideas in his mind.<sup>15</sup>

Subhas Chandra Bose experienced inevitable disillusionment upon meeting Mahatma Gandhi, who led more through intuition and inner guidance than strategic planning and deliberate actions. However, Bose was significantly influenced by C.R. Das, whom he embraced as his 'Political Guru'. Bose actively engaged in the Non-Cooperation Movement and later became a member of the Swaraj Party, which was established by Das. From 1921 to 1925, Bose's political career was closely aligned with that of C.R. Das, serving as a devoted lieutenant. The dynamic between Das and Bose had elements of deference, akin to the Gandhi-Nehru relationship. Their interactions were marked by frequent disagreements and intense debates. Initially, Bose may not have been fully supportive of the Swaraj Party's policies and programs, as he, like many 'no changers,' focused on constructive activities. Nonetheless, Das often managed to persuade Bose to adopt his perspective. Once committed, Bose demonstrated unwavering dedication, whether in the protest against the Prince of Wales in 1921, in campaigning for the Swaraj Party or in his role as the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation.

After the death of C.R. Das in 1925, Bose faced the challenge of establishing his identity not only in Bengal politics but also on the national stage. In Bengal, Mahatma Gandhi supported J.M. Sengupta for the prominent positions of Mayor of Calcutta, President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (BPCC), and leader of the Swaraj Party in the Bengal Legislative Council. Meanwhile, a strong faction championed Bose as the rightful successor to C.R. Das, even while incarcerated in Mandalay Jail. This rivalry created lasting divisions within Bengal politics.<sup>16</sup> Nationally, Gandhi recognized Bose as an emerging leftist and militant nationalist, especially when Bose, along with Jawaharlal Nehru, opposed the dominion status suggested by Gandhi and instead demanded complete independence. Bose's activism among the youth, labor, and communists alarmed Gandhi, who saw him as a potential threat to his leadership. Furthermore, British suspicions about Bose's connections with revolutionary movements deepened Gandhi's mistrust.<sup>17</sup> Mahatma Gandhi soon managed to distance Subhas

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<sup>15</sup> Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-42)*, Asia Publishing House: Bombay, 1964, p. 88.

<sup>16</sup> Hari Har Das, Op. Cit., pp. 104-105.

<sup>17</sup> Home Department, File No. 686/31, State Archive of West Bengal, Calcutta. The British consistently harbored suspicions about Bose's connections with revolutionary groups. They believed that he was the inspiring leader of the Jugantar Party, a prominent revolutionary organization in Bengal.



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Chandra Bose from his staunchest supporter, Jawaharlal Nehru, who began aligning with the rightist camp from 1929 onwards.<sup>18</sup> Bose also faced significant government repression; he was arrested for his involvement in labor movements and subsequently exiled to Europe in 1933. This exile ended a promising partnership between Bose and Nehru, one that could have had a profound and beneficial impact on the future trajectory of India's independence movement.

The period from 1933 to 1938, although constituting a political exile for Subhas Chandra Bose, was marked by significant political engagement. During this time, Bose, in collaboration with the esteemed patriot Vithal Bhai Patel, sought to influence global opinion in favor of India's struggle for independence from Vienna.<sup>19</sup> Both leaders were inspired by the strategies employed by de Valera in Ireland and strongly advocated for occupying key political positions as long as they maintained majority support.<sup>20</sup> On October 22, 1933, Bose and Patel issued a joint statement from Vienna, condemning the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement and cautioning the Indian National Congress against repeating the missteps of 1922.<sup>21</sup> Given their shared vision and ideological alignment, Patel bequeathed all his properties to Bose in his will. However, this bequest was ultimately obstructed by the intervention of the Congress High Command.<sup>22</sup>

Between 1933 and 1937, Bose developed a definitive ideology necessary for future actions. He endeavoured to establish centers in various European capitals to promote political and cultural ties between India and Europe. Bose spent several months in Geneva, studying the organization of the League of Nations and assessing its potential utility for India's cause. He participated in conferences such as the Conference of the Indian Central European Society and engaged with political leaders like Mussolini and Éamon de Valera.<sup>23</sup> In Germany and Italy, Bose sought

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<sup>18</sup> Nehru and Bose were prominent leaders of the youth faction within the Congress and exhibited a strong inclination towards socialism. However, after Nehru became the President of the Indian National Congress during the Lahore session in 1929, he gradually shifted towards the rightist camp.

<sup>19</sup> Vithal Bhai Patel, the elder brother of Vallabhbhai Patel, was a fervent critic of Mahatma Gandhi. He shared Subhas Chandra Bose's belief in the necessity of foreign propaganda and international support to advance India's cause.

<sup>20</sup> *Bombay Chronicle*, 7 November 1933. This statement of Patel was made in Vienna and was reported in this paper.

<sup>21</sup> M. R. Jayakar papers, P. A. Section ACC No. 612, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

<sup>22</sup> Hari Har Das and B. C. Rath, *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*, Pointer Publication: Jaipur, 1997, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> Woods Collections Papers, P. A. Section Vol. 1, ACC No. 233, National Archives of India, New Delhi.





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official permission to consult archival records and conduct research on revolutionary strategies with foreign assistance.

### **Rise to Congress Leadership**

While Subhas Chandra Bose was in Europe, his candidacy for the presidency of the Haripura session of the Congress in 1938 was proposed. This session was critical, as it foreshadowed a major division within the party. Bose's presidential address showcased a strong leftist ideology and advocated for socialism as a central creed. He urged the shift from passive to active resistance, a viewpoint that Gandhi's adherents misinterpreted as an attempt to dismantle the core principles of Satyagraha.<sup>24</sup> During his presidency, Bose pioneered the establishment of a Planning Commission, the first in India, aimed at creating a blueprint for the nation's post-independence reconstruction. He enlisted the support of scientists and industrialists, appointing Jawaharlal Nehru as the Chairman of the Commission. The Committee produced an extensive 26-volume report, which was presented to the Congress President.<sup>25</sup> Despite this, there were concerns within the Congress, as well as among members of the All-India Spinners Association and the All-India Village Association, organizations closely associated with Gandhi.<sup>26</sup>

Bose sought to leverage his tenure to radically transform the Congress into a progressive and revolutionary organization, underpinned by his foresight regarding the impending eruption of the Second World War. His decision to pursue a second term as president was met with significant resistance from the rightist camp, who perceived his re-election as a threat to their influence. Furthermore, the British authorities speculated that Bose's re-election would considerably weaken the rightist faction, given his robust support base among the youth, trade unions, the Congress Socialist Party, and various revolutionary and militant groups.<sup>27</sup> Undeterred by the opposition, Bose triumphed over Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Gandhi's chosen candidate, highlighting his formidable political acumen.<sup>28</sup> In his 1939 Tripuri Address, Bose articulated a clear and resolute vision for the Congress, signalling his preparedness for a final, decisive confrontation with the British colonial regime. He argued that the Congress should

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<sup>24</sup> Sisir K. Bose, (ed.), *Cross Roads*, Netaji Research Bureau: Calcutta, 1981, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Samar Guha, *The Mahatma and the Netaji*, Sterling Publishers: New Delhi, 1986, p. 199.

<sup>26</sup> Bose endeavoured to assure these organizations that the planning was not intended solely for large-scale industries. He emphasized that these organizations would be allocated a fair share in the economy.

<sup>27</sup> P. N. Chopra, *British Secret Cabinet Papers*, Rima Publishing House: New Delhi, 1992, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Sisir K. Bose, p. 185.



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issue an ultimatum to the British government, demanding immediate national independence, and called for the initiation of a mass Civil Disobedience Movement within six months if their demands were not met. This bold stance underscored Bose's commitment to achieving complete sovereignty for India and his willingness to employ assertive strategies to realize this objective.

This development proved intolerable for the orthodox faction of the Congress, who resorted to highly unconstitutional means to remove the duly elected President from power. The established constitutional right of the President to nominate his Working Committee was challenged by the Pant Resolution, introduced on March 12, 1939, with Gandhi's endorsement.<sup>29</sup> This resolution sought to restrict the President's authority by requiring him to nominate a Working Committee only in consultation with Gandhi. Bose, however, refused to acquiesce to this limitation and subsequently resigned. His resignation was met with relief within British official circles, who had been apprehensive about Bose's potential to effectively challenge British rule due to his extensive popular support, even without the backing of the Working Committee.<sup>30</sup>

The prestige of Gandhi and the right-wing faction reached its lowest point following the resignation of Bose, leading to remarkable demonstrations.<sup>31</sup> In Bengal, widespread protests erupted in response to Bose's resignation, giving rise to disunity, factionalism, and regional hostilities. There was a strong sentiment in Bengal against the Congress high command, with some factions prepared to sever ties with the parent organization. Even Rabindranath Tagore, whom Bose had previously criticized as an 'uncritical admirer of Gandhi' in 1934, openly supported Bose during and after the elections.<sup>32</sup> Tagore urged the people of Bengal to rally around Subhas and provide unwavering support. Emulating the path of C.R. Das, Bose decided to continue his struggle by forming a new party, the Forward Bloc.

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<sup>29</sup> Ram Sharma (ed.), *Netaji-His Life and Work*, Shivlal Aggarwal Company: Agra, 1948, pp. 102-103.

<sup>30</sup> Home Department Section File, File No. 600/39. State Archives of West Bengal, Calcutta.

<sup>31</sup> *Statesman*, 1 May 1939.

<sup>32</sup> *Visvabharati Quarterly*, *Visva Bharati*, Shantiniketan, Vol. 6, No. 1-4, May 1995-April 1996, letter, dated 3 August, 1934, p. 10.



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### Formation of the Forward Bloc

The Forward Bloc was established on May 3, 1939. According to Bose, the primary objectives of the Bloc were to “*combat the increasing drift towards constitutionalism, reconvert the Congress into a revolutionary organization, return it to the path of national struggle, and prepare the country for the impending war crisis.*”<sup>33</sup> However, these goals were not fully realized. Bose faced significant challenges in altering Congress's direction, as he was expelled from the party and barred from membership in any elective Congress Committee for three years. Consequently, the Congress remained indecisive on the issue of civil disobedience. During this period, Vallabhbhai Patel, then President of the Congress, explicitly stated that the Congress would neither engage in civil disobedience nor jeopardize Britain's efforts against the dictators, instead offering their support.

Despite facing consistent opposition, the Forward Bloc made significant progress. Bose embarked on whirlwind tours, addressing students in universities and colleges, as well as trade unions and student movements, thereby expanding the anti-imperialistic platform against the British. The Bloc also organized numerous strikes across the country, advocating the popular slogan “All power to the people” and demanding the immediate transfer of full power to the Indian populace through a Provincial National Government.<sup>34</sup> Financial support for the Bloc also surged, aiding its efforts. As Bose had predicted, India was involuntarily drawn into World War II. In response, Bose organized the Anti-Compromise Conference in March 1940 at Ramgarh, where he proclaimed, “*The age of imperialism is drawing to a close and the era of freedom, democracy, and socialism looms ahead of us. India stands today at one of the crossroads of history.*”<sup>35</sup>

Recognizing the rising momentum in the country, the Congress adopted the policy of Individual Satyagraha in 1939. However, this approach did not meet Bose's expectations. The Forward Bloc continued its strategy of Direct Action and declared April 6, 1940, the day for a nationwide strike against British war policies.<sup>36</sup> This escalation convinced the British authorities of the

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<sup>33</sup> Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugata Bose (ed.), *The Essential Writings of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*, Netaji Research Bureau: Calcutta, 1977, p. 281.

<sup>34</sup> *Forward Bloc*, 29 June 1940.

<sup>35</sup> Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugata Bose (ed.), *The Alternative Leadership* (Vol. 10), Netaji Research Bureau: Calcutta, 1998, p. 85.

<sup>36</sup> Home Department, Section File No. 600/40, State Archives of West Bengal, Calcutta.



urgent need to detain Bose and suppress the Direct-Action campaign. Consequently, Bose was arrested and interned for several months. Due to his deteriorating health, he was later placed under house arrest. However, he managed to escape from his home and eventually fled the country to seek foreign assistance for India's cause.

### International Endeavors

Bose initially sought support from Germany, but his efforts were met with limited success due to Hitler's racial prejudices, which relegated India to a low status on the racial hierarchy. Although Bose was granted permission to establish a Free India Centre and form an Indian Legion, his activities were subject to constant surveillance and skepticism by the German authorities. This suspicion was exacerbated by Bose's connections with anti-Nazi factions in Germany, most notably Adam von Trott, who was later executed for his involvement in a conspiracy to assassinate Hitler following Bose's departure from Germany. The reluctance of the German regime to fully back Bose underscores the complex interplay of ideological biases and strategic calculations that hindered his quest for substantial foreign aid.<sup>37</sup>

The office of the Free India Centre was established at Lichstenstinalle where many foreign missions were located. Officially commencing operations on November 2, 1941, it enjoyed the same diplomatic status and privileges as other foreign missions in Germany, including additional facilities accorded to diplomatic staff. The Nazi government outwardly displayed a facade of friendly cooperation towards Bose and the Free India Centre.<sup>38</sup> From its inception, the Free India Centre served as a coordinating agency for all Indian independence movements, not only in Germany but also in countries like France and Italy. Its mandate extended beyond political coordination to include propaganda efforts. The Centre began publishing a journal and the Azad Hind Radio conducted broadcasts in major Indian languages, as well as Arabic, Persian, German, and English. However, the German government's evasive stance on the issue of Indian independence and sovereignty strained relations between the Free India Centre and the German authorities. Although German assistance was crucial, Bose was unwilling to

<sup>37</sup> Sitanshu Das, *Subhas: A Political Biography*, Rupa and Company; New Delhi, 2000, p. 436. Adam von Trott, an Oxford-educated individual with a deep fascination for India, was a vocal critic of Nazi racial prejudices and openly opposed Nazi policies. His intellectual background and commitment to principles of justice and equality starkly contrasted with the regime's oppressive ideologies.

<sup>38</sup> S. N. Bhattacharyya, *Netaji Subhas in Self Exile*, Metropolitan Books: New Delhi, p. 52.



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compromise on the issue of India's sovereignty. Consequently, he decided to seek support from Japan.<sup>39</sup>

Germany, however, played a crucial role in equipping Bose with the skills of a military leader. He gained intricate knowledge of high-level diplomacy with foreign powers and learned how to train and equip a revolutionary army, skills that proved invaluable in Japan. Bose's dealings with the Japanese were marked by increased caution and diplomacy. In Southeast Asia, he recognized the necessity of establishing a Provisional Government of Free India, which could declare war against the British, thus legitimizing the conflict. Such a government could subsequently undertake the task of forming a permanent national government, reflecting the will of the Indian people. The Japanese Prime Minister, Tojo, pledged that Japan would provide extensive support to the Provisional Government in its war efforts.<sup>40</sup>

### **Indian National Army (INA)**

Bose assumed leadership of the Indian Independence League (IIL) and the Indian National Army (INA) from Rash Behari Bose, a prominent Indian revolutionary who had laid the groundwork for these organizations. Netaji also garnered the support of 3.5 million Indians residing in South-East Asia. He called for the 'Total Mobilisation of men, money, and resources in South-East Asia,' which proved to be highly successful.<sup>41</sup> Netaji reorganized the INA along modern lines and gave them the rallying cry 'Chalo Delhi' (On to Delhi). Intensive training camps were established in several locations in Southeast Asia, and large numbers of men, women, and children volunteered for the army. A separate women's regiment and a youth brigade (*Balasena*) for children aged 13-16 were also formed. Additionally, a Bahadur Group was established to conduct sabotage operations behind enemy lines.<sup>42</sup> However, this group did not achieve significant success, as Netaji's expectation of inciting a mass uprising upon the INA's advance into India did not materialize. The Azad Hind Dal was created to train civilians in the post-war reconstruction of liberated areas.

The INA offensive began on February 4, 1944, in the Arakan Mountains, successfully crossing into Indian territory on March 18, 1944. The Fifty-Fifth Japanese Cavalry and the No. 1

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<sup>39</sup> Subhas Chandra Bose Papers, ACC No. 569, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

<sup>40</sup> History of Freedom movement Papers, P. A. Section, File No. 12/13/1, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

<sup>41</sup> Motilal Bhargava, *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Southeast Asia*, Viswavidya Publishers: Kalady, 1982, p. 65.

<sup>42</sup> INA File No. 72/INA, National Archives of India, New Delhi.



Regiment of the INA, led by Shah Nawaz Khan, engaged in combat with General Slim's Gurkha Regiment.<sup>43</sup> The primary operations of the INA were focused around Imphal and Kohima. By May 1944, they had advanced into Indian soil at Bishenpur. The capital town of Manipur, Imphal, was attacked from two fronts, and Col. Shah Nawaz Khan raised the INA tricolour over the liberated areas. A.C. Chatterjee was appointed as the Governor of the liberated provinces, including Manipur and Bishenpur. However, this success was short-lived. The onset of the monsoons, combined with sustained British and US air attacks, forced the INA to retreat and eventually surrender. During this period, news arrived that Netaji had perished in an air crash in Formosa (Taipei) on August 18, 1945.<sup>44</sup> Despite its military setbacks, the INA had a profound impact on India's freedom struggle. The British decision to conduct trials of INA officers at the Red Fort in Delhi galvanized the Indian populace, sparking widespread protests. This period also saw the revolt of the British Indian Army and the Royal Indian Navy Mutiny, signaling a shift from a non-violent to a more militant phase of resistance. Although Bose could not lead the INA into India and the force was ultimately routed at the border, the revolutionary spirit he embodied permeated Indian society, accelerating the momentum towards independence.

## Conclusion

Subhas Chandra Bose remains an enigmatic and pivotal figure in the annals of India's struggle for independence. His life and career, marked by a profound blend of militant nationalism and deep spiritualism, exemplify the multifaceted nature of revolutionary leadership. Bose's early experiences and the cultural milieu of Bengal significantly shaped his ideological framework, driving him towards a path that diverged from the mainstream Gandhian philosophy. Bose's journey from a fervent youth influenced by extremist nationalism to a global strategist seeking international alliances highlights his relentless pursuit of India's sovereignty. Despite facing numerous challenges, including political exile and opposition from both British authorities and factions within the Indian National Congress, Bose's vision for a free India remained unwavering. His efforts in establishing the Indian National Army (INA) and his subsequent military campaigns, although ultimately unsuccessful in their immediate objectives, had a lasting impact on the Indian independence movement.

<sup>43</sup> Confidential Bi-weekly War Guidance Notes, 14714/377/19, Feb. 1944, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

<sup>44</sup> INA file, File No. 60/INA, NAI, New Delhi.



The legacy of Subhas Chandra Bose is characterized by his indomitable spirit and his ability to inspire mass mobilization. The trials of INA officers and the subsequent public outcry underscored the profound influence of Bose's revolutionary ideas on the Indian psyche. His relentless pursuit of an independent India, coupled with his strategic acumen and visionary leadership, continues to inspire future generations. Bose's life is a testament to the complex interplay of ideology, leadership, and nationalism, and his contributions to India's freedom struggle remain an enduring legacy in the nation's history.