

Life and work of subhas chandra bose persuasive essay



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Towards a revival of the Bose legacy Madhuri Bose “ Rose early but found Prabha still suffering. A son was born at midday...

” reads a brief entry in Janakinath’s diary dated 23 January 1897. The newborn, the ninth child of Janakinath Bose and Prabhavati Devi was named Subhas Janakinath was then practicing law in Cuttack, in the state of Orissa. He headed a large extended family, in which, Subhas was to later recall in his autobiography An Indian Pilgrim, he felt “ like a thoroughly insignificant being.

My parents awed me to a degree”.

It is now 111 years since the birth of Subhas Chandra Bose, and sixty-three years since his last known journey out of South East Asia, reportedly to the Soviet Union, in mid-August 1945. On 23 January every year Subhas’ birth anniversary is celebrated across India. Speeches extolling Bose’s charisma and personality, his unique contributions towards Indian independence continue to be made, and stirring national songs continue to be sung in his honour.

On that day, in addition to institutionally sponsored events, spontaneous remembrance ceremonies organized by neighbourhood and citizens’ groups also take place. This is a unique feature associated only with Subhas’ birth anniversary which reflects the depth of people’s veneration for him after more than half a century of his disappearance. This, in a sense, is a fitting tribute to a man who dedicated his life to liberating India from British colonial rule, and had a vision to make Free India one of the leading nations in the world.

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But, 23 January will pass and Bose will again be relegated to the pages of history. Though deified by many, his ideology and mission are forgotten, or are not even known by the younger generations of Indians. From his entry into the Indian political movement in the early 1920s, throughout his prison years and bouts of serious illnesses, Subhas had developed his thoughts on social, political and economic issues which then formed the basis of his ideology.

His famous address as the President of the 51st Session of the Indian National Congress at Haripura in 1938 contains the crux of his political and economic thinking and plans.

Is it widely known that it was in Haripura that Subhas launched the very first Planning Commission for India? In all his key addresses in India and abroad, in articles published in various journals, Subhas articulated his vision for Free India. In his view the most important problems to be addressed in independent India were that of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, challenges which have still not been met today after sixty years of independence. Together with the celebratory functions, a more fitting tribute to Subhas' memory will be to effectively propagate his vision and ideology which will in turn promote a better understanding of the history and politics of India, and also inspire the present generation of Indians to shape India on the basis of the high moral values and principles that Subhas stood for and practised all his life.

Subhas' works should be part of school and university curricula. Research institutes, including the Netaji Institute for Asian Studies (Kolkata) should

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actively encourage and support national and international scholars to reassess Subhas' role in the Indian independence movement, and also his contemporary relevance.

A deeper study of his works will show that many of his social and economic plans still remain valid under present day conditions.

In the current Indian situation where there is a bankruptcy of leadership, ideas, commitment and action, Subhas' message, through his writings, speeches and commentaries may help to resurrect the failing morale of those who are working to bring positive change in this country. Above all, Subhas' life-long emphasis on the importance of communal harmony and unity among peoples, irrespective of birth, caste, creed and religion, has not only remained relevant, in fact it has even gained a sense of urgency.

In a world torn by ethnic, tribal, religious and regional conflicts, Bose's unqualified rejection of bigotry of any kind from the very outset of his entry into the Indian political scene, and his repeated call for unity among all the peoples of India, famously reflected in the motto of his Indian National Army – Unity, Faith and Sacrifice, can help to create the only secure foundation of contemporary India.

Conscious of the grave danger that communalism posed to a country such as India, where people of many faiths were inextricably mixed together over centuries, Subhas had again and again warned against the virus of religious bigotry entering the fabric of politics.

In referring to what should be the attitude towards religion and caste, Subhas had declared "... the Government of Free India must have an absolutely neutral and impartial attitude toward all religions and leave it to the choice of every individual to profess or follow a particular religious faith" (The Fundamental Problems of India, address at Tokyo University, November 1944).

Subhas' legacy will be better served if he is brought alive through his works.

However, there is another reality. During the time of the British Raj, Subhas as their Enemy No 1 was blacked out and his book *The Indian Struggle* banned in India. This is understandable and could have been expected from a colonial power determined to hold on to India and ready to suppress any threat to their rule.

It is therefore particularly ironic that after the government of free India came to power, a systematic attempt was made by forces in the new administration to reduce Subhas to merely a Bengal hero, who though deemed idealistic was seen to be misled, and had made the terrible mistake of finally discarding Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent way to independence. It is only because Subhas had entered the minds and hearts of the Indian people, and of the peoples of Asia, that all attempts at diminishing his stature and role in Indian and global politics have not fully succeeded.

The role of the first government of independent India under Prime Minister Nehru in this process of suppression and distortion cannot be ignored nor denied.

Historians have noted that Nehru had always perceived Subhas as his main rival, and his own statements bear evidence to that fact. Subhas himself had once written that “ nobody has done more harm to me personally and to our cause in this crisis than Pandit Nehru (letter to his nephew Amiya Nath Bose, 17 April 1939).

As more evidence begins to emerge it will be possible to make an objective and proper assessment of the role and personalities of our leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and others. When in August 1945 Subhas disappeared, his beloved elder brother Sarat Chandra Bose was in prison. Sarat and Subhas had shared an extraordinary relationship as brothers. Their close personal and emotional bond was enriched and deepened by their shared social and political ideology and goals.

After Sarat was released in September 1945, he immediately resumed his campaign for a free and united India.

He also decided to acquire the Bose ancestral house on Elgin Road in Calcutta to establish an institution for the study and propagation of Subhas' ideology. Soon after, in 1946, Sarat inaugurated ' Netaji Bhawan' at their ancestral house and laid the foundations for a Netaji museum and research centre in the name of his brother, who was by then popularly known as Netaji (our leader). It was Sarat's wish that the Bose house should also be used for public and charitable purposes. The Azad Hind Ambulance Service which he set up provided much needed medical and social services in the city, especially during the dark days of communal trife.

These were tumultuous times for Bengal and India as a whole. A new alternative was beginning to emerge in Bengal's political firmament. Sarat Bose was seen to carry the torch forward. He became the undisputed leader of the Congress Party in West Bengal. He was then elected leader of the Congress Party in the Central Legislative Assembly and became the Leader of the Opposition. Sarat's membership of the Interim Government was, however, short-lived.

He left the Interim Cabinet and the Congress Party refusing to agree to the partition of India on communal lines.

Within a few short years a greater tragedy was to strike. On 20 February 1950, the very morning Sarat was to make an urgent appeal to the people of the two Bengals to reunite, he suddenly passed away in an attempt to keep alive the Bose legacy and to give it concrete shape, the close followers of the Bose Brothers, supported by Sarat's family, set up The Sarat Bose Academy at Netaji Bhawan in 1952. It gathered within its fold eminent historians, lawyers, journalists and other committed voluntary workers.

It also attracted interested persons from overseas.

The Academy launched an ambitious programme to develop Netaji Bhawan as a centre of excellence for research and exchange on both national and international affairs. It also aimed to function as a centre for the promotion of arts, music and languages, while continuing to provide other public services. It was to be the main archive for the works of Sarat and Subhas and for all types of documents and records related to them.

The major objective of collecting key documents as well as photos and films on the life and activities of Subhas Chandra Bose began in earnest.

Amiya Nath Bose, General Secretary of the Sarat Bose Academy, who took up his father Sarat's mantle, engaged himself fully in this task. He collected a substantial amount of materials, including primary documents, newspaper clippings, journals, films and other source materials on Netaji's activities both in India and abroad. All of these materials were deposited at the Netaji Museum and archives to be made available “..

. to students and scholars for the study of and research about the life and work of Netaji ... “.

The Sarat Bose Academy began publication of Subhas and Sarat's works, and set up a comprehensive photographic exhibition portraying the life and work of the Bose Brothers.

By the late 1950s, significant progress had been made in the collection of materials for the Netaji Museum and its archives, and it was concluded that it would be appropriate to create a separate body ' to undertake a systematic study of Netaji's life and mission'. This led ultimately to the creation of the Netaji Research Bureau in 1957 under the chairmanship of the well-known journalist Satya Ranjan Bakshi and Sisir Kumar Bose (a son of Sarat Bose) as General Secretary.

Thus, Netaji Bhawan, with its three main organs, namely, the Sarat Bose Academy, the Netaji Research Bureau and the Azad Hind Ambulance Service, was designed to act as the lead institution to uphold and promote the Bose

Brothers' legacy, and to work towards realising their cherished goals.

However, here again the forces bent upon destroying the Bose legacy went to work.

Gradually the Netaji Research Bureau came under the direct influence of the Nehru dynasty dominated Central Government. The Sarat Bose Academy moved out of Netaji Bhawan. Netaji Research Bureau became the only organ to remain under the directorship of Sisir Bose.

Since its inception until now, over a period of fifty years, the Netaji Research Bureau has accomplished one of its basic goals and has published, in twelve volumes, almost all of the writings, speeches, letters of Subhas, the bulk of which was originally collected under the auspices of The Sarat Bose Academy. Reportedly Netaji Research Bureau has obtained substantial funding from the Central Government to carry out its work. But judged against its own objectives, and what was envisaged by its founders, the work of Netaji Research Bureau may be said to have been limited.

Netaji's own works are not widely available, and conditions of access to the archives at Netaji Bhawan are obscure. Was there a price to pay for support from those who have an interest in keeping the Bose Brother's legacy in check? In view of the current realities of India today, those who believe in Subhas' ideology and its relevance in contemporary India, must take the initiative to revive, disseminate and act on the basis of that ideology. Such initiatives are already being taken by certain civil society and media groups both in India and abroad.

This year a major website is being launched by a voluntary group called MissionNetaji which will be an online archive for all of Subhas' works, a data base of bibliographies and of scholars. It will also contain photographs and audio-visual materials.

The overall objective is to provide access to relevant materials to all those who wish to study the life, activities and ideology of Subhas, and also to those who wish to define their actions in terms of Bose's vision of India and the world. The author is the daughter of Amiya Nath Bose. Ms Bose is an international human rights specialist and is currently based in New York.

Based on an article published in Asian Studies, the journal of the Netaji Institute for Asian Studies, Kolkata. Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle for Independence By Andrew Montgomery When one thinks of the Indian independence movement in the 1930s and early 1940s, two figures most readily come to mind: Mahatma Gandhi, the immensely popular and "saintly" frail pacifist, and his highly respected, Fabian Socialist acolyte, Jawaharlal Nehru. Less familiar to Westerners is Subhas Chandra Bose, a man of comparable stature who admired Gandhi but despaired at his aims and methods, and who became a bitter rival of Nehru.

Bose played a very active and prominent role in India's political life during most of the 1930s. For example, he was twice (1938 and 1939) elected President of the Indian National Congress, the country's most important political force for freedom from the Raj, or British rule. While his memory is still held in high esteem in India, in the West Bose is much less revered, largely because of his wartime collaboration with the Axis powers. Both

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before and during the Second World War, Bose worked tirelessly to secure German and Japanese support in freeing his beloved homeland of foreign rule.

During the final two years of the war, Bose — with considerable Japanese backing — led the forces of the Indian National Army into battle against the British. Ideology of Fusion As early as 1930 — in his inaugural speech as mayor of Calcutta — the fervent young Bose first expressed his support for a fusion of socialism and fascism: / 1 “... I would say we have here in this policy and program a synthesis of what modern Europe calls Socialism and Fascism. We have here the justice, the equality, the love, which is the basis of Socialism, and combined with that we have the efficiency and the discipline of Fascism as it stands in Europe today.

In years that followed, the brilliant, eclectic Bengali would occasionally modify this radical doctrine, but would never abandon it entirely. For example, in late 1944 — almost a decade-and-a-half later — in a speech to students at Tokyo University, he asserted that India must have a political system “ of an authoritarian character. . . To repeat once again, our philosophy should be a synthesis between National Socialism and Communism.

” / 2 In the wake of the crushing defeat in 1945 of Hitler and Mussolini, “ fascism” has arguably been the most despised of all political ideologies.

Postwar western society recognizes no fascist heroics, and even considers “ fascist” traits — particularly the authoritarian, charismatic, personal style of leadership, and the positive evaluation of violence and the willingness to use <https://assignbuster.com/life-and-work-of-subhas-chandra-bose-persuasive-essay/>

it for political purposes — to be decidedly unpalatable. In India, though, Bose is regarded as a national hero, in spite of his repeated praise (as will be shown) for autocratic leadership and authoritarian government, and admiration for the European fascist regimes with which he allied himself.

Like the leaders he admired in Italy and Germany, Bose was (and still is) popularly known as Netaji, or “revered leader.

“His name,” explains Mihir Bose (no relation), one of Subhas’ many biographers, “is given [in India] to parks, roads, buildings, sports stadiums, artificial lakes; his statues stand in place of those of discarded British heroes and his photograph adorns thousands of calendars and millions of pan (betel-nut) shops.” It is always the same portrait, continues the writer: Bose in his Indian National Army uniform, “exhorting his countrymen forward to one last glorious struggle. / 3 No less a figure than Gandhi paid tribute to Bose’s remarkable courage and devotion. Six months after his death in an airplane crash on August 18, 1945, Gandhi declared: “The hypnotism of the Indian National Army has cast its spell upon us. Netaji’s name is one to conjure with. His patriotism is second to none.

. . His bravery shines through all his actions. He aimed high and failed.

But who has not failed.” / 4 On another occasion Gandhi eulogized: “Netaji will remain immortal for all time to come for his service to India. / 5 Many of Bose’s admirers have been inclined to downplay or even ignore the fascist elements in his ideology, and even to pretend they never existed. For example, the text of Bose’s inaugural speech as mayor of Calcutta, cited

above, was reprinted in a laudatory 1970 “Netaji Birthday Supplement” of <https://assignbuster.com/life-and-work-of-subhas-chandra-bose-persuasive-essay/>

the Calcutta Municipal Gazette, but with all references to fascism, including his support for a synthesis of fascism and socialism, carefully deleted.

/ 6 Several admiring biographers have found it easier to ignore the fascist elements in his ideology than to explain them.

Their subjective accounts do not even inform the reader that Bose spoke positively about some features of fascism, or else, in an attempt to remove from their hero any possible taint, they qualify his remarks in ways that he himself did not. / 7 ' Fascist'? During his lifetime, Bose was frequently denounced as a fascist or even a Nazi, particularly in the wake of the radical, revolutionary (as opposed to reformist) views he expressed in radio addresses broadcast to India from National Socialist Germany and, later, from quasi-fascist Japan. 8 For example, The Statesman, a highly influential Calcutta periodical, charged in November 1941: " Mr. Bose's views are those of the Nazis, and he makes no secret of it," / 9 while the BBC, Britain's worldwide radio voice, frequently accused him of " Fascism" and " Nazism.

" / 10 Additionally, historians and writers who do not admire Bose readily point up his " fascist" views. A. M. Nair, a historian who has written favorably of Indian revolutionary Rash Behari Bose (who had sought Japan's help during and after the First World War), found nothing to praise about Subhas Chandra Bose.

After all, wrote Nair, he was clearly a fascist.

/ 11 Recognized Leadership Bose, a patriot of almost fanatical zeal, first joined the Indian national movement in 1921, working under C. R. Das,

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whom he idolized. He was jailed for six months in 1921-1922 because of his political activities. Immediately upon his release, the 25-year-old Bose organized (and presided over) the All-Bengal Young Men's Conference. As a result of his remarkable leadership abilities and ambition, he advanced quickly through nationalist ranks.

He was soon elected General Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (BPCC). In 1924, at the age of 27, Bose was elected the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, which effectively put him in charge of the second-largest city in the British empire. As a result of his close ties with nationalist terrorists, in late 1924 he was detained by British authorities and held, without trial, for three years in prison. In 1928, the 31-year-old Bose was elected president of the BPCC, and, at the Calcutta meeting of the Congress party held that

December, he came to national prominence by pressing (unsuccessfully) for the adoption by his provincial committee of an independence resolution.

By 1930 Bose had formulated the broad strategy that he believed India must follow to throw off the yoke of British imperialism and assume its rightful place as a leader in Asia. During his years in Mandalay prison and another short term of imprisonment in Alipore jail in 1930, he read many works on political theory, including Francesco Nitti's *Bolshevism, Fascism and Democracy* and Ivanoe Bonomi's *From Socialism to Fascism*.¹² It is clear that these works on fascism influenced him, and caused an immediate modification of his long-held socialist views: as noted above, in his inaugural speech as mayor of Calcutta, given a day after his release from Alipore jail,

he revealed his support for a seemingly contradictory ideological synthesis of socialism and fascism. Until his death 15 years later, Bose would continue publicly to praise certain aspects of fascism and express his hope for a synthesis of that ideology and socialism.

His detailed comments on the matter in his book *The Indian Struggle: 1920-1934*, which was first published in 1935, accurately represent the views he held throughout most of his career. As such, the most important of them, along with Bose's own actions, will be analyzed here in some detail. Program Outlined Contending that the Indian National Congress was somewhat "out of date," and suffered from a lack of unity and strong leadership, Bose predicted in *The Indian Struggle* that out of a "Left-Wing revolt there will ultimately emerge a new full-fledged party with a clear ideology, program and plan of action. / 13 The program and plan of action of this new party would, wrote Bose, follow this basic outline: / 14 " 1. The party will stand for the interests of the masses, that is, of the peasants, workers, etc. , and not for the vested interests, that is, the landlords, capitalists and money-lending classes.

" 2. It will stand for the complete political and economic liberation of the Indian people. " 3. It will stand for a Federal Government for India as the ultimate goal, but will believe in a strong Central Government with dictatorial powers for some years to come, in order to put India on her feet. " 4.

It will believe in a sound system of state-planning for the reorganization of the agricultural and industrial life of the country. " 5. It will seek to build up a new social structure on the basis of the village communities of the past, that

were ruled by the village “ Panch” and will strive to break down the existing social barriers like caste. “ 6. It will seek to establish a new monetary and credit system in the light of the theories and the experiments that have been and are current in the modern world. “ 7.

It will seek to abolish landlordism and introduce a uniform land-tenure system for the whole of India. 8. It will not stand for a democracy in the Mid-Victorian sense of the term, but will believe in government by a strong party bound together by military discipline, as the only means of holding India together and preventing a chaos, when Indians are free and are thrown entirely on their own resources. “ 9. It will not restrict itself to a campaign inside India but will resort to international propaganda also, in order to strengthen India’s case for liberty, and will attempt to utilize the existing international organizations. “ 10.

It will endeavor to unite all the radical organizations under a national executive so that whenever any action is taken, there will be simultaneous activity on many fronts. ” Synthesis Bose went on to note that Nehru had said in 1933: “ I dislike Fascism intensely and indeed I do not think it is anything more than a crude and brutal effort of the present capitalist order to preserve itself at any cost. ” There is no middle road between Fascism and Communism, said Nehru, so one “ had to choose between the two and I choose the Communist ideal. / 15 To this Bose responded: / 16 “ The view expressed here is, according to the writer, fundamentally wrong. .

. One is inclined to hold that the next phase in world- history will produce a synthesis between Communism and Fascism. And will it be a surprise if that synthesis is produced in India?..

. In spite of the antithesis between Communism and Fascism, there are certain traits in common. Both Communism and Fascism believe in the supremacy of the State over the individual. Both denounce parliamentary democracy. Both believe in party rule.

Both believe in the dictatorship of the party and in the ruthless suppression of all dissenting minorities. Both believe in a planned industrial reorganization of the country. These common traits will form the basis of the new synthesis. That synthesis is called by the writer “ Samyavada” — an Indian word, which means literally “ the doctrine of synthesis or equality.

” It will be India’s task to work out this synthesis. ” Before taking a closer look at these remarkable words, four points need to be made. First, Bose’s fascist model was almost certainly Mussolini’s Italy, not Hitler’s Germany.

In 1934 Bose made the first of several visits to Fascist Italy and found both the regime and its leader very agreeable. On that occasion he had a cordial (first) meeting with Mussolini — “ a man who really counts in the politics of modern Europe. ” / 17 After *The Indian Struggle* appeared in print in 1935, Bose made a special stop in Rome personally to present a copy to the Duce.

/ 18 Second, the book was completed a full year before the commencement of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia (Abyssinia), in October 1935.

While Bose would, by the time he completed his book, have known about such violent incidents as “ The Night of the Long Knives” — the SS killing of dozens of SA men on June 30, 1934 — he had no real reason to consider the European fascist regimes unusually violent, murderous or bellicose. “ I should like to point out that when I was writing the book,” he later explained, / 19 “ Fascism had not started on its imperialistic expedition, and it appeared to me merely an aggressive form of nationalism . .

. What I really meant was that we in India wanted our national freedom, and having won it, we wanted to move in the direction of Socialism.

This is what I meant when I referred to a “ synthesis between Communism and Fascism. ” Perhaps the expression I used was not a happy one. ” Third, despite Bose’s claim to represent the political left, and that a party supporting a fusion of fascism and socialism would be ushered in by a “ Left-Wing revolt,” the ideology he expounded might more appropriately be regarded as right wing.

Bose’s ideology was radical and contained socialist elements — such as the desire to abolish the traditional class structure and create a society of equal opportunity, and the claim to represent the peasants and workers.

To that extent it can be considered left wing. It is worth noting that Hitler’s “ right wing” political movement — the National Socialist German Workers’ Party — shared many of Bose’s “ socialist” goals. / 20 Nehru, a committed socialist, challenged Bose’s characterization of himself and his followers as left wing: “ It seems to me that many of the so-called Leftists are more Right than the so-called Rightists. Strong language and a capacity to attack the old
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Congress leadership is not a test of Leftism in politics. / 21 Lastly, it should be noted that Bose was willing to tone down his more radical political beliefs on those occasions when he considered it advantageous or necessary to do so.

For example, in his February 1938 inaugural speech as President of the Indian National Congress, Bose — probably in a sincere attempt to placate the Gandhian faction — made statements that appear to represent almost an about face from the political views he had expounded in *The Indian Struggle*. In a future independent India, he said, / 22 “ the party itself will have a democratic basis, unlike, for instance, the Nazi party which is based on the “ leader principle. The existence of more than one party and the democratic basis of the Congress party will prevent the future Indian State becoming a totalitarian one. Further, the democratic basis of the party will ensure that leaders are not thrust upon the people from above, but are elected from below. ” It is possible that these statements reflect a temporary change of mind, but it is more likely that they reflect Bose’s efforts during this period to gain further political respectability, to prove that he was more than just a radical and revolutionary Bengali.

By doing so he apparently hoped to win wider acceptance of the policies he wanted to implement in his year as Congress President: policies which were not especially radical or revolutionary.

/ 23 According to Nirad Chaudhuri, his former personal secretary, Bose tried very hard during this period to seek agreement with the Gandhian faction over the direction the Congress party should move, and even “ showed

something like tender filial piety towards Gandhi,” of whom he had been very critical in *The Indian Struggle*.²⁴ It is against this political background that Bose’s statements to the Congress party meeting in February 1938 should be seen. A year later he successfully recontested the presidential election, but two months afterwards was forced to resign because of his inability to resolve his differences with Gandhi and the Gandhian faction. Probably believing that his earlier suspicions of democracy had been proven correct, and feeling that there was now no use in trying to win the favor or approval of more conservative elements in the Congress party, Bose once again proclaimed his belief in the efficacy of authoritarian government and a synthesis of fascism and socialism. Many similar examples can be cited to show how Bose outwardly (but probably not inwardly) modified his views to suit changing political contexts. A Life for India Throughout his political career, India’s liberation from British rule remained Bose’s foremost political goal; indeed, it was a lifelong obsession.

As he explained in his most important work, *The Indian Struggle*, the political party he envisioned “ will stand for the complete political and economic liberation of the Indian people. Speaking of Bose a few days after his death in August 1945, Jawaharlal Nehru said: / 25 “ In the struggle for the cause of India’s independence he has given his life and has escaped all those troubles which brave soldiers like him have to face in the end. He was not only brave but had deep love for freedom. He believed, rightly or wrongly, that whatever he did was for the independence of India.

.. Although I personally did not agree with him in many respects, and he left us and formed the Forward Bloc, nobody can doubt his sincerity.

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He struggled throughout his life for the independence of India, in his own way.

“ Along with his abiding love for his country, Bose held an equally passionate hatred of the imperial power that ruled it: Great Britain. In a radio address broadcast from Berlin on March 1, 1943, he exclaimed that Britain’s demise was near, and predicted that it would be “ India’s privilege to end that Satanic empire. ” / 26 The fundamental principle of his foreign policy, Bose declared in a May 1945 speech in Bangkok, is that “ Britain’s enemy is India’s friend. / 27 Although these two speeches are from his final years, they express views he had held since before his April 1921 resignation from the Indian Civil Service.

/ 28 It was this principle of making friends with Britain’s enemies in the hope that they would assist him in liberating India that brought him in 1941 to Germany and then, in 1943, to Japan. Violence or Non-Violence? Bose envisaged that “ the complete political and economic liberation of the Indian people” would inevitably require the use of force.

Just before resigning from the Indian Civil Service, he discussed with Dilip Kumar Roy, his closest friend, the subject of anti-British terrorism. “ I admit it is regrettable,” he said, “ even ugly if you will, though it also has a terrible beauty of its own.

But maybe that beauty does not unveil her face except for her devotees. ” / 29 Violence was not new to Bose, even at that early stage of his career. In 1916 he had been expelled from Presidency College in Calcutta for his part in the violent assault on Professor Edward Oaten, who had allegedly insulted <https://assignbuster.com/life-and-work-of-subhas-chandra-bose-persuasive-essay/>

Indian students. 30 Moreover, although he occasionally claimed to “ detest” violence, / 31 and criticized isolated acts of terrorism (which he considered ineffective and counterproductive), / 32 he was never really committed to Gandhi’s policy of non-violence. / 33 He regarded the Gandhi-supported civil disobedience campaign as an effective means of paralyzing the administration, but regarded it as inadequate unless accompanied by a movement aimed at total revolution and prepared, if necessary, to use violence.

/ 34 Militarism

Related to Bose’s willingness to use violence to gain political objective was his belief — expressed in *The Indian Struggle*, for example — that a government by a strong party should be “ bound together by military discipline. ” Indeed Bose was infatuated with military discipline, and later commented that his basic training in the University Unit of the India Defence Force (for which he volunteered in 1917, while a student at Scottish Church College in Calcutta) “ gave me something which I needed or which I lacked.

The feeling of strength and of self-confidence grew still further. ” / 35 Bose was able to give much grander expression to his “ militarism” when, in 1930, he volunteered to form a guard of honor during the ceremonial functions at the Calcutta session of the Congress party. Such guards of honor were not uncommon, but the one Bose formed and commanded was unlike anything previously seen. More than 2, 000 volunteers were given military training and organized into battalions.

About half wore uniforms, with specially designed steel-chain epaulettes for the officers.

Bose, in full dress uniform (peaked cap, standing collar, ornamental breast cords, and jodhpurs) even carried a Field Marshal's baton when he reviewed his "troops." Photographs taken at the conference show him looking entirely out of place in a sea of khadi (traditional Indian clothing). Gandhi and several other champions of Non-violence (Ahimsa) were uncomfortable with this display. / 36 The Indian National Army A high point in Bose's "military career" came in July 1943 in Singapore.

At a mass meeting there on July 4, Rash Behari Bose (no relation) handed over to him the leadership of the Indian Independence League.

The next day, Subhas Bose reviewed for the first time the soldiers of the Indian National Army (INA), which then comprised 13, 000 men. In his address to the troops, which is a good example of his speaking style, he cited George Washington and Giuseppe Garibaldi as examples of men who led armies that won independence for their respective countries. Bose went on: / 37 "Soldiers of India's army of liberation!

.. "Every Indian must feel proud that this Army — his own Army — has been organized entirely under Indian leadership and that, when the historic moment arrives, under Indian leadership it will go to battle..

. Comrades! You have voluntarily accepted a mission that is the noblest that the human mind can conceive of. For the fulfillment of such a mission, no sacrifice is too great, not even the sacrifice of one's life... "

.. Today is the proudest day of my life. For an enslaved people, there can be no greater pride, no higher honor, than to be the first soldier in the army of liberation. But this honor carries with it a corresponding responsibility, and I am deeply conscious of it. I assure you that I shall be with you in darkness and in sunshine, in sorrow and in joy, in suffering and in victory.

For the present, I can offer you nothing except hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death. But if you follow me in life and in death, as I am confident you will, I shall lead you to victory and freedom. It does not matter who among us will live to see India free. It is enough that India shall be free, and that we shall give our all to make her free.

“ May God now bless our Army and grant us victory in the coming fight! ” This “ Free India Army” (“ Azad Hind Fauj”) would not only “ emancipate India from the British yoke,” he told the soldiers, but would, under his command, become the standing national army of the liberated nation.

Choreography for Impact As his staging at the 1930 Calcutta session of the Congress party suggest, Bose understood early on the importance of political choreography and the aesthetics of mass meetings. After his visits to Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany, he was even more mindful of the importance for any successful broad-based political movement of mass meetings, marches, visual symbols, and ceremonial or liturgical rituals. For example, at the 51st session of the Congress party at Haripura in 1938, Bose made sure that his entrance as the new Congress President would be spectacular.

Escorted by 51 girls in saffron saris (the number corresponding with the number of the Congress session), he was seated in an ancient chariot drawn by 51 white bullocks, and taken on a two hour procession through 51 specially-constructed gates, accompanied by 51 brass bands.

/ 38 Political choreography of this type — although not to this extreme degree — was very evident at all mass rallies (which sometimes attracted crowds numbering as many as 200, 000) of the Forward Bloc party that Bose formed in 1939.

Carefully chosen symbols, slogans and songs, coupled with a flood of written propaganda, were used in an unsuccessful attempt to make the Forward Bloc into a mass party. / 39 Even during the last years of the war, when he was in southeast Asia heading the Provisional Government of Free India and the INA, he continued to choreograph carefully all of his rallies, meetings and ceremonies, in order to maximize their impact. He also realized that his own role in this choreography was central.

Even in the hottest tropical weather, for instance, he wore an imposing military uniform, including forage cap, khaki tunic and jodhpurs, and shiny, knee-length black boots.

Moreover, whenever he travelled “ he demanded all the rights and privileges of a head of state. On his road travels in Malaya, for example, he insisted on a full ceremonial escort; Japanese military jeeps mounted with sub-machine guns, a fleet of cars, and motorcycle outriders. / 40 Historian Mihir Bose argues persuasively that such carefully planned actions were manifestations not of megalomania, but rather of Subhas Bose’s effort to create a sense of <https://assignbuster.com/life-and-work-of-subhas-chandra-bose-persuasive-essay/>

unity transcending class, caste and origin among the large and diverse populations of Indians in Southeast Asia, to increase their political awareness, to arouse and inspire both them and his INA troops, and to show the world that he regarded himself as a political leader of substance and importance. / 41 This naturally raises the question of Bose's leadership style. In the passage from *The Indian Struggle* quoted above at length, he expressed his belief in what he called "the dictatorship of the party" (the party being the governing body of a free India), but he did not specify the precise nature of the party's leadership, or whether it, too, would be dictatorial. Most importantly, he did not state whether he saw himself as the party leader, or comment directly on what role he intended for himself in a free India.

Nonetheless, clues about these details can be gleaned from other sections of *The Indian Struggle* and from the speeches and statements Bose made at various times throughout his career. **Determined Leadership**

Bose clearly admired strong, vigorous, military-type leaders, and in *The Indian Struggle* he listed several whom he particularly respected. These included Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and even a former British governor of Bengal, Sir Stanley Jackson. / 42 Nowhere in this book is there any criticism of these individuals (three of them dictators) for having too much power, yet another man is chastised for this: Mahatma Gandhi. Bose admired Gandhi for many things, not least his ability to "exploit the mass psychology of the people, just as Lenin did the same thing in Russia, Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany.

/ 43 But he accused Gandhi of accepting too much power and responsibility, of becoming a “ Dictator for the whole country” who issued “ decrees” to the Congress. / 44 According to Bose, Gandhi was a brilliant and gifted man, but, unlike Mussolini, Hitler and the others mentioned, a very ineffectual leader. Gandhi had failed to liberate India because of his frequent indecision and constant willingness to compromise with the Raj (something Bose said he would never do). 45 It is clear that Bose — who believed from his youth that he was destined for greatness / 46 — saw himself as a “ strong” leader in the mold of those named above.

“ I ask those who have any doubts or suspicions in their minds to rely on me,” he told the Indian Independence League Conference in Singapore on July 4, 1943. He continued: / 47 “ I shall always be loyal to India alone. I will never deceive my motherland. I will live and die for India . . .

The British could not bring me to submission by inflicting hardships on me.

British statesmen could neither induce me nor deceive me. There is no one who can divert me from the right path. ” Bose was decisive, aggressive and ambitious, and even as a university student, these features of his personality attracted many devoted followers. Dilip Kumar Roy, his companion during his days as a student at Cambridge, referred to him as “ strength-inspiring,” and the absolute leader of the Indian student population. / 48 Bose’s militarism, ambition and leadership traits do not necessarily indicate (contrary to popular opinion) that he was a leader in the fascist mold.

If they did, one would have to consider all personalities with similar traits —

Winston Churchill, for example — as “ fascist. ” In this regard, it is worth <https://assignbuster.com/life-and-work-of-subhas-chandra-bose-persuasive-essay/>

noting that during his many years as head of various councils, committees and offices, and during 15-month tenure as President of the Indian National Congress (February 1938 to May 1939), Bose never acted in an undemocratic manner, nor did he claim powers or responsibilities to which he was not constitutionally or customarily entitled.

Neither did he attempt in any way to foster a cult of his own personality (as, it could be argued, Gandhi did). However, after he assumed control of the INA in July-August 1943, Bose's leadership style underwent a transformation. First, he allowed a cult of his personality to flourish among the two million or so Indians living in southeast Asia. Prayers were regularly said on his behalf, and his birthday celebrations were — like Gandhi's in India — major festivals.

/ 49 He was invincible, according to one Indian myth from this period, and could not be harmed by bombs or bullets. 50 An image of Bose that stressed his strength of character, military prowess, and willingness to sacrifice for a free India was intentionally promoted in propaganda broadcasts and printed material. With his approval, the title Netaji ("Revered Leader") was added to his name in all articles about him appearing in the newspapers of the Indian Independence League; even his staff officers were permitted to address him with this title. / 51 By the end of the war, few Indians in south Asia still referred to him by name; he was always respectfully called Netaji. 52 Authoritarian Rule Second, in contrast to his statement at the 1938 Haripura session of the Congress party (quoted above) — that leaders would be elected from below — Bose proclaimed, on October 21, 1943, the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind ("Free India").

While retaining his post as Supreme Commander of the Indian National Army, he announced that he was naming himself Head of State, Prime Minister, and Minister for War and Foreign Affairs. 53 (The most important of these positions — Head of State — he anticipated retaining in a free India.) These appointments involved no democratic process or voting of any kind. Further, the authority he exercised in these posts was dictatorial and often very harsh. He demanded total obedience and loyalty from the Indians in south Asia, and any who opposed him, his army or government faced imprisonment, torture, or even execution.

/ 54 Additionally, if wealthy Indians did not contribute sufficient funds to Bose's efforts, they risked confiscation of their property.

Bose's threats were taken very seriously, and had the desired effect: funds did pour in. / 55 His INA troops were obliged to swear an oath of loyalty to both the Provisional Government and to him personally. He ordered the summary execution of all INA deserters, and also prepared (but was never able to implement) law codes for the entire population of India. These laws, which stipulated the death penalty for a range of offenses, were to come into force when the INA, together with the Japanese Army, entered India to fight against the British. 56 With regard to his leadership style during this 1943-1945 period, in fairness to Bose it should be pointed out that the entire world was then engulfed in a horrendous war, and political and military leaders everywhere, on all sides, adapted extraordinarily authoritarian and repressive measures.

Some of the measures and policies adapted by the wartime government of the United States, for instance, were as oppressive and as severe as any planned or implemented by Bose. 57 A New India Bose clearly anticipated that the British would be driven out of India in an armed struggle (under his leadership), / 58 and that a social and political revolution would begin the moment the Indian people saw British rule under attack in India itself. / 59 This revolution, he believed, would bring an end to the old caste system and traditional social hierarchy, which would be replaced by an egalitarian, casteless and classless society based on socialist models.

This process would require very careful guidance, with a firm hand, to prevent anarchy and chaos. / 60 Bose had, in fact, held these beliefs since the early 1930s, as Mrs.

Kitty Kurti, a close German friend of Bose, revealed in her anecdotal memoir. At a June 1933 meeting attended by Kurti, Bose explained that: / 61 “ Besides a plan of action which will lead up to the conquest of power, we shall require a program for the new state when it comes into existence in India. Nothing can be left to chance.

The group of men and women who will assume the leadership of the fight with Great Britain will also have to take up the task of controlling, guiding and developing the new state and, through the state, the entire Indian people. If our leaders are not trained for post-war leadership also there is every possibility that after the conquest of power a period of chaos will set in and incidents similar to those for the French Revolution of the 18th century may be repeated in India .

. . The generals of the war-time period in India will have to carry through the whole program of post-war reforms in order to justify to their countrymen the hopes and aspirations that they will have to rouse during the fight. The task of these leaders will not be over till a new generation of men and women are educated and trained after the establishment of the new state and this new generation are able to take complete charge of their country's affairs. This explains what Bose meant in *The Indian Struggle* when he wrote (as quoted above) of the need for a strong, single-party government, "bound together by military discipline" with "dictatorial powers for some years to come, in order to put India on her feet." Only an very strong government, strict discipline, and dictatorial rule would, according to Bose, prevent the anticipated revolution from falling into chaos and anarchy.

That is why the government would not — "in the first years after liberation" — "stand for a democracy in the Mid-Victorian sense of the term. It would use whatever military force was necessary to maintain law and order, and would not relinquish authority or re-establish more regular forms of government until it felt confident that "the work of post-war social reconstruction" had been completed and "a new generation of men and women in India, fully trained and equipped for the battle of life" had emerged. / 62 Bose clearly anticipated that authoritarian rule would not last beyond the period when social reconstruction was completed, and law and order were established — when India was "on its feet," as he often wrote.

As he frequently stated, Bose aimed for nothing less than the formation of "a new India and a happy India on the basis of the eternal principles of liberty, democracy and socialism.

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” / 63 He rejected Communism (at least as it was practiced in the Soviet Union) principally because of its internationalism, and because he believed that the theoretical ideal found in the writings of Marx could not be applied, without modification, to India.

Still, he maintained socialist views throughout his adult life, and, on very many occasions, expressed his hope for an egalitarian (especially classless and casteless) industrialized society in which the state would control the basic means of production. / 64 He was opposed to liberalism, believing that greater emphasis should be placed on social goals than on the needs or desires of individuals. Individual wishes, he reasoned, must be subordinated to the needs of the state, especially during the struggle for independence and the period of reconstruction immediately following liberation.

Nonetheless, having himself been imprisoned eleven times and sent into exile three times, he was fully committed to upholding the rights of minority intellectual, religious, cultural and racial groups. He hoped for an “ all-round freedom for the Indian people — that is, for social, economic and political freedom,” and would, he said “ wage a relentless war against bondage of every kind till the people can become really free. ” / 65 It could be argued that he was not as committed to the principle of democracy as he was to socialism and freedom (as he defined it).

While he extolled democracy on numerous occasions, at other times his words suggest a belief that other parties would have a place, in a free India, only as long as they were “ working towards the same end, in whole or in part,” as his governing party. / 65 Political pluralism did not appeal to him at

all. He seems to have envisioned a free India that was more authoritarian than democratic.

His own actions as head of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind illustrate a lack of regard for the democratic process. Mass Mobilization

Bose was, nonetheless, a consistent advocate of total mobilization: the mustering of national resources on a scale normally associated with military-like action. Realizing that manpower was easily India's greatest resource (and arguably the only one available to the independence movement), he proclaimed that all Indians — male and female, urban and rural, rich and poor — should actively participate in the fight for freedom. From his earliest days in politics to his death in 1945, he sought to rouse the great Indian masses, and involve them directly in the political struggle.

Their support for representatives at the provincial or national levels was not enough; they must themselves rise up and win independence.

During the 1930s, however, his political position was never strong enough to call for other resources than manpower, nor was India — under British control — able to offer other resources. Additionally, total mobilization during peace-time, without an impending war or revolution in the awareness of the masses, had never been achieved (not even by the Nazis) and, arguably, never could be achieved. Bose, an astute man, no doubt realized this.

With the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, he was at last in a position to appeal directly for total mobilization to the mass of Indians — at least in Southeast Asia, and, less directly to those in India itself.

Along with his call for mass mobilization, he demanded that all available resources be provided for the cause of freedom.

For example, he told a mass meeting in Singapore in July 9, 1943: / 67 “ Friends! You will now realize that the time has come for the three million Indians living in East Asia to mobilize all their available resources, including money and man-power.

Half-hearted measures will not do. I want Total Mobilization and nothing less, for we have been told repeatedly, even by our enemies, that this is a total war... Out of this total mobilization I expect at least three hundred thousand soldiers and three crores of dollars [\$30, 000, 000].

I want also a unit of brave women to form a death-defying regiment who will wield the sword which the brave Rani of Jhansi wielded... ” Of course, Bose demanded not only the total mobilization of Indian resources in south Asia, but of Indian resources everywhere.

68 He called for mass mobilization not only in support of his army, but also for his dynamic new government, the various branches of which required financing and manpower. Women’s Equality As can be seen from the passage quoted above, Bose called on both men and women for total support. Unlike the German National Socialists and the Italian Fascists, who stressed the masculine in almost all spheres of social and political activity, Bose believed that women were the equals of men, and should therefore be likewise prepared to fight and sacrifice for India’s liberation.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s he had campaigned in India to bring women more fully into the life of the nation.

/ 69 After his return to Asia in 1943, he called on women to serve as soldiers in the Indian National Army — at the time a most radical view. “ When I express my confidence that you are today prepared to fight and suffer for the sake of your motherland,” he told the women’s section of the Independence League in July 1943, / 70 “ I do not mean only to cajole you with empty words. I know the capabilities of our womanhood well.

I can, therefore, say with certainty that there is no task which our women cannot undertake and no sacrifice and suffering which our women cannot undergo.

.. To those who say that it will not be proper for our women to carry guns, my only request is that they look into the pages of our history. What brave deeds the Rani of Jhansi performed during the First War of Independence in 1857...

Indians — both common people and members of the British Indian army — who are on the border areas of India, will, on seeing you march with guns on your shoulders, voluntarily come forward to receive the guns from you and carry on the struggle started by you. A women’s regiment was formed in 1943, and came to number about 1, 000 women. It was named, appropriately, the “ Rani of Jhansi Regiment,” after a heroine of the Indian rebellion of 1857-58 against British rule. While those less suited to combat duties were employed as nurses and in other support roles, the majority were trained as soldiers. When the INA attacked British forces from Burma in <https://assignbuster.com/life-and-work-of-subhas-chandra-bose-persuasive-essay/>

east India in mid-1944, the women of the Jhansi Regiment fought alongside the men, suffering equally heavy casualties.

When the army was forced to withdraw, the women were given no privileges. Along with the men, they marched for more than a thousand kilometers. / 71

Commitment to Youth Lastly, Bose was also deeply committed to the youth movement, a devotion that featured prominently in his political ideology.

Convinced that young people were by nature idealistic, restless and open to new ideas / 72 — such his own radical and militant outlook — Bose

accordingly devoted a great deal of time and effort to the new Youth Leagues that were formed in a number of provinces during the 1920s.

Throughout his career he presided over far more youth conferences than any other all-India political figure, and his speeches to younger people he steadfastly urged a spirit of activism that contrasted sharply with the passivism preached by Gandhi and many of the older politicians. “ One of the most hopeful signs of the time,” he claimed at the 1928 Maharashtra Provincial Conference, / 73 “ is the awakening among the youth of this country. . .

Friends! I would implore you to assist in the awakening of youth and in the organization of the youth movement.

Self-conscious youth will not only act, but will also dream; will not only destroy, but will also build. It will succeed where even you may fail; it will create for you a new India — and a free India — out of the failures, trials and experiences of the past. ” India’s liberation would be achieved not by Gandhi

and the leading politicians of his generation, whose conservative, reformist
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policies bred passivity and inactivity. It would, Bose believed, be achieved only through the efforts and sacrifices of the militant, revolutionary and politically-conscious younger generation. Economic Views

In contrast to the copious record of Bose's political ideology and actions, much less is available about other important elements of his outlook, such as his economic views and policies.

For example, while he condemned capitalism and extolled socialism in the pages of *The Indian Struggle*, Bose was very vague about just what monetary or credit systems he foresaw in a free India. They would be set up, he simply wrote, "in the light of the theories and the experiments that have been and are current in the modern world." Throughout his career he never wrote or said anything more specific about such matters.

He appears to have had no precise ideas about political economy, save that economics was not important in itself but must be subordinated to national political considerations. Any discussion here of what economic systems he favored, and when and how he intended to implement them, would thus be merely speculative.

Unique Political Ideology While Bose's political ideology can reasonably be described as essentially "fascistic," two qualifying points need to be made here. First, his ideology and actions were not the result of any extreme neurotic or pathological psychosocial impulses.

He was not a megalomaniac, nor did he display any of the pathological traits often attributed (rightly or wrongly) to fascist leaders, such as hostile

aggression, obsessive hatred or delusions. Moreover, while he was an ardent patriot and nationalist, Bose's nationalism was cultural, not racialist. Second, his radical political ideology was shaped by a consuming frustration with the unsuccessful efforts of others to gain independence for India.

His "fascist" outlook did not come from a drive for personal power or social elevation.

While he was ambitious, and clearly enjoyed the devotion of his followers, his obsession was not adulation or power, but rather freedom for his beloved Motherland — a goal for which he was willing to suffer and sacrifice, even at the cost of his life. Bose was favorably impressed with the discipline and organizational strength of fascism as early as 1930, when he first expressed support for a synthesis of fascism and socialism. During his stays in Europe during the 1930s, he was deeply moved by the dynamism of the two major "fascist" powers, Italy and Germany.

After observing these regimes first-hand, he developed a political ideology of his own that, he was convinced, could bring about the liberation of India and the total reconstruction of Indian society along vaguely authoritarian-socialist lines. Bose's lack of success in his life-long effort to liberate India from alien rule was certainly not due to any lack of effort. From 1921, when he became the first Indian to resign formally from the Indian Civil Service, until his death in 1945 as leader of an Indian government in exile, Subhas Chandra Bose struggled ceaselessly to achieve freedom and prosperity for his beloved homeland.

The Mystery Begins.

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.. Bose suddenly disappeared in the beginning of 1941 and it was not until many days that authorities realized Bose was not inside the house they were guarding! He traveled by foot, car and train and resurfaced in Kabul (now in Afghanistan), only to disappear once again. In November 1941, his broadcast from German radio sent shock waves among the British and electrified the Indian masses who realized that their leader was working on a master plan to free their motherland. It also gave fresh confidence to the revolutionaries in India who were challenging the British in many ways.

The Axis powers (mainly Germany) assured Bose military and other help to fight the British. Japan by this time had grown into another strong world power, occupying key colonies of Dutch, French, and British colonies in Asia. Bose had struck alliance with Germany and Japan. He rightly felt that his presence in the East would help his countrymen in freedom struggle and second phase of his saga began. It is told that he was last seen on land near Keil canal in Germany, in the beginning of 1943.

A most hazardous journey was undertaken by him under water, covering thousands of miles, crossing enemy territories.

He was in the Atlantic, the Middle East, Madagascar and the Indian ocean. Battles were being fought over land, in the air and there were mines in the sea. At one stage he traveled 400 miles in a rubber dinghy to reach a Japanese submarine, which took him to Tokyo. He was warmly received in Japan and was declared the head of the Indian army, which consisted of about 40, 000 soldiers from Singapore and other eastern regions.

Bose called it the Indian National Army (INA) and a government by the name “ Azad Hind Government” was declared on the 21st of October 1943.

INA freed the Andaman and Nicobar islands from the British, and were renamed as Swaraj and Shaheed islands. The Government started functioning. Early Success and Tragic End Bose wanted to free India from the Eastern front. He had taken care that Japanese interference was not present from any angle. Army leadership, administration and communications were managed only by Indians.

Subhash Brigade, Azad Brigade and Gandhi Brigade were formed. INA marched through Burma and occupied Coxtown on the Indian Border. A touching scene ensued when the solders entered their ‘ free’ motherland.

Some lay down and kissed, some placed pieces of mother earth on their heads, others wept. They were now inside of India and were determined to drive out the British! Delhi Chalo (Let’s march to Delhi) was the war cry. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki changed the history of mankind.

Japan had to surrender. Bose was in Singapore at that time and decided to go to Tokyo for his next course of action. Unfortunately, the plane he boarded crashed near Taipei and he died in the hospital of severe burns. He was just 48.

The Indian people were so much enamored of Bose’s oratory and leadership qualities, fealressness and mysterious adventures, that he had <