

## **SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE: AN ANALYSIS OF HIS CONTRIBUTION IN THE INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE AND ITS CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE**

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**DOI: 10.5958/2249-7137.2025.00002.4**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The leadership style of Subhash Chandra Bose was profoundly characterized by a form of radical nationalism that explicitly called for unity between Hindus and Muslims, a theme he meticulously emphasized in his writings and speeches during the critical years spanning from 1939 to 1941. He perceived World War II not merely as a global conflict but as a significant struggle between imperial powers, advocating for a proactive and assertive approach to achieving independence, which included the ambitious proposal for the formation of a dedicated army aimed at liberation. His revolutionary ideas posed a direct challenge to the traditional leadership of the Indian National Congress, as he promoted a more militant and inclusive strategy that fundamentally reshaped the direction and urgency of the Indian independence movement, thereby leaving an enduring influence on its historical development.*

*This paper adopts a narrative literature review-based approach and is based on the analysis of the literature. It explores Bose's ideology, leadership strategies, and significant contributions to India's fight for independence, focusing on his role in galvanizing mass movements and forming the Indian National Army (INA). It highlights his legacy and how his revolutionary ideas continue to resonate in contemporary India.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Freedom Struggle, Independence, Nationalism, Alliance.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Indian struggle for independence was marked by a spectrum of ideologies ranging from moderate constitutionalism to revolutionary nationalism. Subhas Chandra Bose emerged as a radical figure whose vision and actions diverged sharply from those of the mainstream Congress leadership. Often referred to as Netaji (respected leader), Bose's contributions transcended the boundaries of traditional politics, emphasizing the necessity of armed struggle and global alliances. His dream of an India that stands united and thrives independently echoes the contemporary global strides toward autonomy and financial self-reliance. Bose's leadership style and his embracing vision for India serve as a powerful antidote to the prevailing divisive ideologies.

Bose's approach to leadership was characterized by his remarkable willingness to forge alliances with the Axis powers during the tumultuous period of World War II, his fervent advocacy for an armed struggle against colonial oppression, and his tireless efforts to unify the diverse populace

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of India under a singular and compelling cause that transcended regional and communal divisions. Collectively, these multifaceted elements contributed to the enduring legacy of his impact on the movement for Indian independence, leaving an indelible mark on its historical narrative.

### **Early Life and Ideological Formation**

Bose was born into a family characterized by substantial educational attainment and a heightened political consciousness. His father, Janakinath Bose, was a prominent legal practitioner and a staunch supporter of the Indian National Congress, likely instilling within Bose a profound sense of nationalism from an early age. The educational experiences that Bose underwent were instrumental in the formation of his political ideology. He pursued his studies at Presidency College in Kolkata, where he encountered a plethora of nationalist ideologies and movements. His academic environment fostered critical analysis and discourse regarding the prospective trajectory of India. Throughout his collegiate years, Bose found inspiration in notable nationalist figures such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who championed the principles of self-rule and swaraj (self-governance). The philosophies espoused by these leaders deeply resonated with Bose, compelling him to actively participate in the struggle for freedom. The harrowing incident of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919 exerted a significant influence on Bose's convictions. The merciless slaughter of countless unarmed Indians by British forces ignited within him a profound indignation towards colonial oppression and reinforced his dedication to the pursuit of independence. Bose gravitated towards more radical factions within the Indian National Congress, which advocated for the immediate and total liberation from British dominion. His conviction in the necessity for a more militant strategy to attain freedom differentiated him from his more moderate counterparts.

### **Bose and the Indian National Congress**

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, joined the Indian National Congress upon his return to India. He began working under Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, acknowledging him as a political mentor. His involvement in the Congress was significantly shaped by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Sri Aurobindo. Bose moved to Kolkata to collaborate with Chittaranjan Das in the Swaraj Party. He rejected Gandhi's nonviolent approach to independence, advocating for a militant strategy.

In 1928, a divergence emerged at the Guwahati Session of Congress between the new and old factions. The younger leaders advocated for "total self-rule without compromise," contrasting with the older leadership's preference for a "dominion state under British rule." The Congress party opposed these ideas, attempting to suppress the aspirations of dissenting voices. This suppression caused considerable frustration for some members.

Bose was imprisoned during the Civil Disobedience movement in 1930 and released in 1931 following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. He opposed the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the cessation of the Civil Disobedience movement, particularly considering Bhagat Singh's execution. Subsequently, Bose was arrested under the Bengal Regulation and later released on health grounds, resulting in his banishment to Europe. Despite this, both Bose and Jawahar promoted the Karachi objectives of 1931, which emphasized rights and economic policies. The framework for future Congress strategy included economic planning, education reform, land reform, and civil liberties. After returning from Europe in 1936, he was arrested again, but released after a year. In 1938, he was

elected president of the Indian National Congress and established a planning committee for industrialization.

His election as Congress president marked a significant moment, as he received more votes than expected, offending Gandhi's faction and diminishing their interest in the party's independence agenda. Subsequently, Bose resigned from the presidency and established his Forward Block in 1940 following disagreements with Gandhi. The British authorities placed him under house arrest in Calcutta due to his actions, yet he managed to leave India clandestinely in 1941. He sought assistance from Germany and Russia for India's independence and later assumed leadership of the Indian National Army after reaching Japan in 1943.

Following points should be noted in the above regards:

- **Political Apprenticeship:** Subhas Chandra Bose's political journey began under the mentorship of Chittaranjan Das, a prominent leader in the All-India Bengali community. Bose regarded Das as his political guru, which significantly shaped his early political ideology during the 1920s. This period was crucial for Bose as he developed his understanding of Indian politics and the Congress's role in the freedom struggle.
- **Influence of Reformers:** Bose was deeply influenced by various social and political reformers, including Swami Vivekananda and Aurobindo Ghos. Their ideologies contributed to Bose's unique political vision, which combined traditional Indian values with modern political thought. This blend was essential in his approach to the Indian National Congress and its strategies for independence.
- **Ideological Development:** Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, Bose's political ideology evolved significantly. He integrated elements from various political systems, including Fascism, National Socialism, and Marxism, into his thinking. This eclectic approach allowed him to formulate a robust political strategy that aimed at mobilizing the masses for the armed struggle against British rule.
- **Dramatic Escapes and International Relations:** Bose's role in the Congress was marked by his dramatic escape from British home arrest, which underscored his commitment to the cause. His journey from India to Europe, particularly his attempts to garner support from Germany and Russia for India's liberation, highlighted his strategic thinking and willingness to seek international alliances. However, his efforts to secure assistance from these nations ultimately did not yield the desired results.
- **Caste and Social Issues:** Bose also addressed various social issues, including the caste system, which was a significant concern in Indian society. His perspectives on these matters were integral to his political ideology and his vision for a united India, which he sought to promote within the Congress framework.

Subhas Chandra Bose played a pivotal role in the Indian National Congress by developing a unique political ideology, influenced by various reformers and political systems, while also actively seeking international support for India's independence. His commitment to the cause and his strategic thinking were key elements of his contributions to the Congress and the broader freedom movement.

### **Formation of the Indian National Army**

The Indian National Army (INA), led by Subhas Chandra Bose, took on a significant role in the battle for independence from British colonialism. The following delineates the principal dimensions of its contributions:

- **Formation and Ideology:** The INA was conceived as a revolutionary entity with the objective of emancipating India from British subjugation. Although Rash Behari Bose initially initiated the foundational aspects of the INA, it was Subhas Chandra Bose who assumed leadership and reorganized it into a potent military force. His efforts were critical in forging an alliance with Japanese military forces during the Second World War. Bose's leadership was of paramount importance as he endeavoured to integrate diverse factions within the Indian independence movement, encompassing leftist entities, to fortify the collective struggle against colonial oppression.
- **Support from Communists:** The Communist Party of India (CPI) played an essential role in endorsing Bose's endeavours. They facilitated his clandestine departure from India during World War II, which constituted a crucial juncture in his endeavours to galvanize support for the INA. Prominent individuals such as Achhar Singh Chhina and Ajoy Ghosh were instrumental in this undertaking.
- **International Alliances:** Bose aspired to cultivate alliances with international powers to garner support for India's quest for sovereignty. He reached out to Soviet leadership in an effort to solicit their alliance against the British colonial regime. This tactical initiative was an integral component of a comprehensive strategy aimed at leveraging international relations to bolster India's position during the conflict.
- **Military Strategy and Operations:** The INA actively engaged in military confrontations against British forces, particularly in the context of World War II. Bose's military strategy encompassed deception tactics and intelligence operations, which were vital for the INA's operational effectiveness. The establishment of a Provisional Government of Free India in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands represented a significant advancement in asserting Indian sovereignty.
- **Propaganda and Morale:** Bose adeptly harnessed propaganda to enhance the morale of Indian combatants and the civilian populace. He disseminated anti-British propaganda through the Voice of Azad Hind, underscoring the INA's unwavering commitment to India's liberation. This propagandistic effort was directed towards mobilizing support and inciting resistance against British hegemony.
- **Impact:** Despite confronting considerable adversities and ultimately facing defeat, the INA's initiatives inspired numerous Indians and contributed to the escalating discontent towards British rule. The sacrifices rendered by INA personnel and their unwavering dedication to the independence cause bequeathed a legacy within the broader narrative of the Indian freedom struggle.

The Indian National Army, under the aegis of Subhas Chandra Bose, undertook a multifaceted approach in the Indian freedom struggle, interweaving military action, international diplomacy, and strategic propaganda to confront British colonialism. (Roy, 2022)

### **Legacy and Ideological Impact**

Subhas Chandra Bose's ideology continues to hold relevance in contemporary Indian politics through his emphasis on nationalism, socio-economic development, and international relations. His vision for a powerful, independent India and his strategies for achieving it resonate with current political narratives. Bose's ideas on nationalism, economic models, and foreign policy provide a framework that is still applicable in addressing modern challenges in India.

- **Realism in Foreign Policy:** Bose's advocacy for realism in the context of international relations served to motivate policymakers in the post-independence era to embrace a more pragmatic methodology. This entailed an acknowledgment of the significance of power relationships and national interests in the formulation of India's foreign policy, rather than exclusively depending on idealistic doctrines. His vision posited that India ought to assert its identity as a robust nation-state within a competitive global landscape.

Bose's approach to international relations, which emphasized strategic alliances and a strong independent stance, continues to influence India's foreign policy. His ideas on paradigm shifts in international relations are relevant in the context of India's current geopolitical strategies. (Abhinav, 2023)

His experiences and strategies during the freedom struggle, including forming alliances with Axis powers, highlight the importance of pragmatic diplomacy, a lesson applicable in today's complex international landscape. (Tumiotto, 2023)

- **Cultural Unity and National Identity:** Bose's vision of a multicultural and cohesive India significantly shaped the post-independence discourse on national identity. He posited that India's fortitude resided in its cultural plurality and unity, thereby encouraging leaders to cultivate a sense of belonging among diverse communities. This notion played a pivotal role in the development of policies designed to promote national integration and enhance social cohesion.

Bose's advocacy for Hindu-Muslim unity, along with his broader vision of national integration, remains highly relevant in the contemporary socio-political context, where communal tensions frequently arise. (Bose, Bose, & Bose, 2004)

His construct of nationalism, which transcends religious and ethnic barriers, resonates with modern appeals for unity amidst diversity within India. (Kodoor, 2022)

His ideology advocates for the notion of cultural resilience, which encompasses the modification of traditional cultural forms to fit contemporary contexts while preserving their essence. Through the promotion of a cultural renaissance, societies possess the capacity to forge a dynamic cultural identity that is deeply entrenched in tradition yet receptive to global influences, thereby ensuring both cultural continuity and diversity.

- **Economic Development and State Control:** Bose advocated the state intervention in critical industries alongside a focus on indigenous development. This stance impacted post-independence economic policies, fostering initiatives designed to promote industrialization and self-reliance. Policymakers found inspiration in his vision of a resilient, self-sufficient economy capable of withstanding external adversities.

Bose's ideas on socio-economic development, particularly his critique of capitalist structures and advocacy for a more equitable distribution of resources, align with current debates on economic inequality in India. (Zoller, 1990)



His vision of a socio-economic model that combines elements of socialism and capitalism, as seen in his concept of *sāmyavāda*, offers an alternative perspective to the neoliberal economic policies prevalent today. (Tumiotto, 2023)

- **Legacy of Direct Action:** Bose's invocation of direct action against British colonial governance resonated with subsequent movements within India. His conviction regarding the necessity of undertaking bold initiatives to realize national objectives galvanized future leaders to adopt more assertive measures in confronting social and political challenges, thereby reinforcing the concept that meaningful change often necessitates decisive intervention.
- **Direct Engagement in Global Politics:** Bose's realist perspective compelled him to endorse direct action and engagement with global powers, even those whose ideologies were antithetical to India's. This pragmatic orientation significantly influenced India's foreign policy to prioritize relationships grounded in mutual advantage, as opposed to rigid ideological conformity. For example, India's nascent foreign policy incorporated the establishment of diplomatic relations with a variety of nations, irrespective of their political frameworks.
- **Focus on Military Preparedness:** Acknowledging the critical role of military efficacy in international affairs, Bose's contributions encouraged post-independence leaders to prioritize defence and security priorities. This resulted in the formulation of policies aimed at enhancing India's military capabilities and safeguarding national security, particularly in response to threats emanating from neighbouring countries.
- **Promotion of Nationalism:** Bose's vision of nationalism underscored the importance of unity and strength in the face of colonial domination. This perspective profoundly influenced post-independence policies that sought to cultivate a robust national identity and foster cohesion among India's diverse communities, thereby counteracting any divisive elements that could undermine the integrity of the nation.

Bose was a passionate nationalist who espoused the notion of total sovereignty for India. He rejected the concept of dominion status and championed a complete severance from British authority. His renowned proclamation "Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom" succinctly encapsulated his dedication to securing independence through any means deemed necessary. (Banerjee, 2024)

- **Sāmyavāda:** A political ideology conceptualized by Subhas Chandra Bose, possesses considerable historical importance within the Indian independence movement as it epitomized a distinctive amalgamation of communism and fascism, tailored to India's anti-colonial context. The development of *Sāmyavāda* by Bose was significantly shaped by his interactions with various European political ideologies during his time in Italy and Germany. This ideology transcended mere imitation of Western political frameworks; instead, it represented an endeavour to establish a non-Western paradigm capable of bolstering India's quest for independence. Bose's methodology was characterized by both strategic acumen and controversy, as it entailed forming alliances with Axis powers during World War II, which he postulated would facilitate India's emancipation from British colonial rule (Tumiotto, 2023).

The intention behind this ideology was to serve as an innovative construct that could underpin both anti-colonial and post-colonial aspirations, rather than functioning merely as a replication of

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European political frameworks. Bose's methodology, inclusive of his conceptualization of Sāmyavāda, enriched the plurality of nationalist discourse in India, which encompassed various viewpoints, including those articulated by figures such as Gandhi, Nehru, and Ambedkar (Lakhera, 2022).

## CONCLUSION

Bose's insights resonate with the imperative to strike a balance between global integration and the safeguarding of cultural diversity. This paradigm advocates for proactive measures in the preservation and revitalization of cultural identities, ensuring their vibrancy and relevance within an increasingly globalized world. Despite the significance of Sāmyavāda as an ideological construct, it was not devoid of its critics. Some critics perceived Bose's alliances with fascist governments as a repudiation of democratic principles, while others regarded it as an indispensable tactic in the struggle against colonialism. This dichotomy illustrates the intricate nature of the Indian independence movement, wherein a multitude of ideologies and strategies coexisted and occasionally conflicted in the pursuit of a unified objective.

While Bose's ideology remains influential, it is important to consider the complexities and controversies surrounding his legacy. His associations with fascist regimes and the ideological synthesis he proposed have sparked debate and criticism. These aspects of his ideology require careful examination to ensure that the lessons drawn from his legacy are aligned with democratic and inclusive values in contemporary politics (Tumiotto, 2023). The ideology and contributions of Subhas Chandra Bose played a crucial role in directing the trajectory of India's fight for independence. While the approaches and alliances he employed continue to incite scholarly debate, his steadfast dedication to self-determination and his capacity to galvanize the masses remain incontrovertible. Bose's life serves as a testament to the myriad strategies that converged to facilitate India's liberation, reminding us of the intricacies and richness inherent in the fight against colonial dominion. His enduring legacy continues to galvanize individuals in India and globally.

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