

POLICY BRIEF

Feb 5, 2021

Dr. Monika Chansoria is a Tokyo-based Senior Fellow at The Japan Institute of International Affairs. Previously, she has held appointments at the Sandia National Laboratories (U.S.), Hokkaido University (Sapporo, Japan), and Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (Paris). Dr. Chansoria has authored five books including her latest work, *China, Japan, and Senkaku Islands: Conflict in the East China Sea Amid an American Shadow* (Routledge © 2018).

Japan, *Hikari Kikan*, and Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army: The Defining, Yet Unfinished 1940s Connect

Dr. Monika Chansoria

January 2021 marks the commemoration of Subhash Chandra Bose's 125th birth anniversary, commencing on the day of his birth, January 23.

India gained freedom from the British rule following a long, protracted independence struggle, which had many phases, and defining moments. A significant one amongst them was the role of the Indian National Army (INA) under Subhash Chandra Bose with crucial assistance and aid from Imperial Japan. Bose's view of India's struggle for independence differed radically from Mahatma Gandhi's. For him, the war presented a golden opportunity to reach out to the adversaries of Britain, namely Germany and Japan, and seek their assistance to free India from under the oppressive British rule. Gandhi opposed this realist mode of thought and as a consequence Bose found himself marginalized within the Congress.¹ Subhash Chandra Bose, popularly known as *Netaji* (Respected Leader) among Indians the world over, became the undisputed leader of this militant wing of India's nationalist movement, over the disagreement of using force against the British Empire with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Notably, despite the opposition of Gandhi, Bose was elected President of the Indian National Congress in 1938, and once again in 1939.²

Bose was convinced that the Second World War had provided a golden, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for India to gain its freedom. This was India's last and desperate chance. It was then or never. Nurtured in a family on reformist doctrines prevalent in Bengal at

Disclaimer :

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of The Japan Institute of International Affairs or any other organization with which the author is affiliated.

1 For details see, GD Bakshi, *Bose or Gandhi: Who Got India Her Freedom?* (New Delhi: KW Publishers Pvt Ltd., 2019) Chapter 2: *An Overview of the Freedom Struggle*.

2 Joyce Chapman Lebra, *The Indian National Army and Japan* (Singapore: Asia Pacific Press Pte. Ltd., 1971) *Introduction*, p. xiv.

the turn of the century, Bose was a Bengali revolutionary. He advocated the use of force as the only means to rid the Indian motherland of British imperial power. Placed under house arrest in 1940, Bose managed to elude the authorities and escaped to Afghanistan and thereafter to Germany which was under the rule of the Nazis at that time.³ Lebra's study displays intense focus on the interaction between Japan and the Indian independence movement in East and Southeast Asia. The logic of the alliance was the existence of a common enemy, Britain. The version of cooperation between Empire of Japan's pan-Asian push southward and Indian nationalism was limited in a sense.⁴ The initiative was exhibited by both sides: on the Indian side by Subhash Chandra Bose and his revolutionary predecessors, Mohan Singh and Pritam Singh, and on the Japanese side by a young major sent by the Imperial General Headquarters to Bangkok on an intelligence mission. This young officer, Major Iwaichi Fujiwara brought India to the attention of the Imperial General Headquarters (IGHQ) and instrumentally helped organize the INA. Archives reveal that it was Fujiwara who established the initial credibility of Japanese aid for the Indian independence struggle and that it was Captain Mohan Singh, a young Sikh POW (prisoner of war) from the British-Indian Army, who cooperated with Fujiwara in the nascent inception of the INA.⁵

This paper focuses on reviewing the primary arguments made in the 1971 seminal study on the subject by Joyce Chapman Lebra titled

The Indian National Army and Japan. In the course of her book, Lebra argued that from the Indian standpoint, the struggle throughout Asia during that time period was directed at gaining independence, with the roots of Indian nationalism extending back into the 19th century under the *British Raj* (British Rule).⁶ During the early decades of the 20th century, the political mainstream of Indian nationalism followed the Gandhian doctrine of non-violent disobedience. But there was another concurrent tradition, a heterodox political vision that was equally rooted in history, calling for armed resistance.

Situating India in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: Japan's Perception and Approach

For Japan there were strategic considerations vis-à-vis the total war. India, as far as Japan was concerned, remained a peripheral concern and was not as clearly defined as Tokyo's aims and objectives for Southeast Asia, or, for that matter, in the grand design for Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere which was first conceived in 1940.⁷ According to the latter, Greater East Asia would sweep through Southeast Asia westward to the then Indo-Burmese border. The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere sought to constitute an economically self-sufficient entity under Japan's leadership, both, by diplomatic and military means.⁸ Lebra's account acknowledges that Japan's military administration was to respect existing local organizations and customs⁹ and that by late 1941, control of resources necessary for the war

3 Ibid., p. xv.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. xiv.

7 Lebra, n. 2, Chapter Five: *Japanese Policy toward India*, p. 60.

8 Ibid.

9 Liaison Conference, "Essentials of Policy Regarding the Administration of the Occupied areas in the Southern Regions" November 20, 1941; also see, Nobutaka Ike, *Japan's Decision for War*, (Stanford University Press, 1967) pp. 249-253.

effort became a focal point of this plan.¹⁰ India bordered the western perimeter of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, with Japan being at war with Britain – the colonial power that was occupying India.

Geography dictated strategy and thinking in that India lay west of the expanding periphery of Japan's wartime Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. By early 1941 when the portents of war in the Pacific were unmistakable, Japan's diplomatic communiqués from Calcutta to Tokyo sent detailed descriptions of India's independence movement, particularly the one that was brewing in Bengal.¹¹ The attention of Imperial Japan's Foreign Ministry [the *Gaimushō*] was drawn to Subhash Chandra Bose, the Indian revolutionary in exile in Berlin, by both Calcutta and the Japanese Embassy in Berlin.¹² The IGHQ in Tokyo took notice of the independence movement in 1941. The Japanese military attaché in Berlin was instructed to contact exiled Bose and submit a report on him. It was nearly during the same time, when Major Fujiwara was sent to Bangkok by the Intelligence Bureau of Headquarters on an intelligence mission carrying instructions by the Chief of General Staff, Hajime Sugiyama.¹³ Fujiwara's instructions were general, keeping in mind the situation of India in relation to the total Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, thus allowing him much leeway in the use of his own initiative, in line with Japanese Army policy of assigning important projects to middle-ranking officers.¹⁴

Once hostilities broke out in the Pacific, two events primarily ended up forcing India

to the attention of IGHQ: 1) Japanese military successes in Malaya and Thailand, particularly the capture of Singapore with thousands of Indian POWs; and 2) reports by Major Fujiwara of the creation of a revolutionary Indian Army eager to fight the British out of India. Prime Minister Hideki Tōjō and Chief of General Staff Sugiyama took passing notice of India, when the campaigns in the Pacific were piling up impressive victory after victory for the Japanese. In the first four months of 1942, Tōjō called upon Indians to rise and shrug off the oppressive grip of British rule, several times in Japanese Diet. Moreover, the IGHQ called Indian representatives from Southeast Asia to Tokyo in March for a conference on the means to encourage the independence struggle.¹⁵

'Asia for Asians'

'Asia for Asians' was the overarching goal and shibboleth and Japan wished to see Britain purged from Asia. This fell much in line with Indian nationalists, who, too, aspired to free India. India remained a peripheral interest for Japan in terms of 1) the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and 2) major action of and during the war. Another key aspect of Japanese policy, this toward the INA, was that Japan desired to use and support the INA particularly to foster anti-British sentiment.¹⁶ Japan's reckoning with India was much to the mutual advantage of both nations. Lebra's book posits that for the INA and *Azad Hind* (Free India) Government, the singular goal to be achieved was that of independence which took precedence over all other considerations. It appeared that Japan was willing to grant the

10 Lebra, n. 2, p. 60.

11 For further reading and details see, Radhanath Rath, ed., *Rash Behari Basu: His Struggle for India's Independence*, (Calcutta, 1963), p. 484; also see, Sivaram, *The Road to Delhi*, p. 160.

12 Lebra, n. 2, Chapter Thirteen: *Retrospect*, p. 210.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., pp. 211-212.

16 Lebra, n. 2, Chapter Five: *Japanese Policy toward India*, p. 65.

form, but not the substance of independence to the *Azad Hind* Government. The INA cooperated because without Japanese aid there was no real hope for any effective military action against Britain. Japan had its share of limitations in so far as supplying material and military support to the INA was concerned.¹⁷

At the time, Japan had no ambassador in India under British rule. However, there were Consuls posted to major Indian cities. In April 1941, Consul-General Katsuo Okazaki, posted in Calcutta, sent a confidential communiqué to the Foreign Minister of Empire of Japan, Yōsuke Matsuoka.¹⁸ In his dispatch, Okazaki suggested establishing contact with Subhash Chandra Bose, then in exile in Berlin, and his party in India. Okazaki felt Japan should do its part by establishing contact with Bose and aiding his party. This early Japanese notice of Bose preceded Major Fujiwara's remarks about Bose to the 8th Section, Second Bureau, IGHQ by several months.¹⁹

To summarize, Japan had several political and military objectives in cooperating with the INA: 1) to encourage anti-British sentiment in Southeast Asia, within the British-Indian Army and within India; 2) to develop an intelligence network to implement this aim; 3) to defend Burma and the western border of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, and; 4) to support and assist the Provisional Government of *Azad Hind* (or Free India Provisional Government, FIPG) and INA, within certain limitations, to achieve these aims.²⁰

Okazaki's thoughts echoed through Ambassador, Lieutenant General Hiroshi

Oshima, posted to Berlin, who also sent communiqués regarding the Indian revolutionary Bose and his desire to go to East Asia, as Lebra's research notes in *The Indian National Army and Japan*. By January 1941, Bose had begun visiting Oshima and military attaché Bin Yamamoto in Berlin with detailed proposals for military cooperation with Japan against Britain in Asia. It was at this point that Japan's *Gaimushō* learned and took note of Bose's political significance in Berlin, from sources, both in India, and Germany.²¹

***Linking India's Liberation with Greater East Asian Prosperity:
Premier Hideki Tōjō's Focus***

The first and most vital hypothesis to emerge regarding Japanese policy toward India was that *Tokyo at no time planned a major invasion of India or of the incorporation of India into the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere* [Emphasis Added]. There did emerge, however, several indications of a more limited concern with India in late 1941 and early 1942. Decisions reached in the Liaison Conferences and the texts of Prime Minister Tōjō's speeches revealed this concern.²² Besides, Army Chief of General Staff, Sugiyama, took a special interest in India, derived from the years of his service in India as a military attaché.²³ From among staff officers in the 8th Section, Major Fujiwara established liaison with the Indian independence movement in Southeast Asia. Fujiwara had been dismayed at the lack of information on India available in the IGHQ at the time of his assignment in October 1941.

On 15 November 1941, an Imperial

17 Ibid., *Introduction*, p. xv.

18 Ibid., p. 60.

19 Ibid., p. 61.

20 Ibid., p. 67.

21 Ibid., p. 61.

22 Ibid., p. 64.

23 Ibid., pp. 62-63.

Conference decision, the “Plan for Acceleration of the End of the War with America” called among other things for 1) separation of Australia and India from Britain, and 2) stimulation of the Indian independence movement.²⁴ Subsequently, Prime Minister Tōjō declared in the Japanese Diet early in 1942, “Without the liberation of India, they can be no real mutual prosperity in Greater East Asia.” Tōjō mentioned India in multiple Diet speeches, namely on 17 January, 12 February, 14 February, 11-12 March and 4 April respectively. Repeatedly, he called upon Indians to take advantage of the war to rise against British power and establish an *India for Indians*. Tōjō also stated that he hoped India would cooperate in the “establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.”²⁵

And thus, by 1941-42, Japan had been flooded by Indian requests to get Bose from Berlin. Following his escape to Germany, Bose had raised the Indische Legion (Indian Legion)—a brigade size force constituting of Indian prisoners of war. All Indian interlocutors emphasized the vital need for his presence to energize the INA and assume leadership of the armed Indian freedom struggle. He was the only Indian leader they felt with the unimpeachable credibility and the tremendous charisma that could inspire the soldiers of the INA and the Indian diaspora in Southeast Asia, to an all-out effort to liberate India from British rule. The first requests had come from Pritam Singh of the Indian Independence League (IIL) in October 1941 itself.²⁶ These were seconded by

Mohan Singh, who formed the First INA. The calls of the IIL Conferences in Tokyo in March 1942 and Bangkok in June 1942 echoed the national and international stature of Bose.²⁷

Meanwhile in Japan, Prime Minister Tōjō had spoken of India at the Imperial Conference in April 1942. On 17 April, a coordination meeting held between the Japanese Army, Navy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs arrived at an agreement that Japan would invite Bose to come to Tokyo. Accordingly, the Japanese Foreign Ministry sent a signal to its embassy in Berlin to seek the transfer of Bose.²⁸

Bose’s direct avenue to contact Japan was through its Embassy in Berlin where he met and interacted with Ambassador Oshima, and Yamamoto on multiple visits.²⁹ Bose discussed at length regarding India’s desire for independence and his high hopes for receiving Japanese aid and assistance for the same. Having been inspired by the writings of Okakura Tenshin, Bose thoughts, powerful articulation and passionate appeal impressed Oshima and Yamamoto no end.³⁰

Bose’s Arrival in Tokyo

The timing of Bose’s arrival in East Asia was not of his own choice. For over a year before he arrived in Asia, he had been pressing the Japanese ambassador and military attaché in Berlin to arrange for his transportation to East Asia. Bose did not actually reach Tokyo until the

24 For details see, Ike, n. 9, *Japan’s Decision for War*, p. 247.

25 Lebra, n. 2, p. 64.

26 Indian Independence League (also known as IIL) was a political organization. Rash Behari Bose handed over the INA to Subhash Chandra Bose.

27 For further details see, GD Bakshi, *Bose: An Indian Samurai (Netaji and the INA)* (New Delhi: KW Publishers Pvt Ltd., 2016) *Chapter 5: Bose Moves East*, pp. 124-125.

28 *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

29 Yamamoto Bin, “*Kakumeiji Umi o Wataru—Chandora Bosu Berurin Dasshutsu Ki*” (A Revolutionary Crosses the Ocean—Record of Chandra Bose’s Escape from Berlin), *Nihon no Himitsu Sen* [Japan’s Secret War], *Shūkan Yomiuri*, December 1956, p. 123, as cited in Lebra, p. 227.

30 Lebra, n. 2, Chapter Seven: *Subhas Chandra Bose, Hitler, and Tōjō*, p. 110; also see, *Subhash Chandra Bose: Important Speeches and Writings*, ed., J.S. Bright (Lahore, 1946).

end of May 1943. Apart from tardy bureaucratic delays, part of the time lag was occasioned by the German Foreign Ministry's reluctance to release whom they considered a potentially 'valuable bargaining instrument' in dealing with the British.³¹ Ultimately, *Netaji* moved by train to Kiel. In February 1943, Bose and his Indian secretary, Abid Hassan Safrani, who was one of the leaders of the Irregular Warfare Companies of the *Indesche Legion* slipped away aboard a German submarine, as stealthily as Bose had left Calcutta two years earlier in his escape from India.³² Another account of Bose's departure from Berlin narrates that a submarine can be an extremely cramped and claustrophobic vessel with hardly any room to move around. Besides, the lack of natural light for prolonged periods adversely affects the psyche of even the toughest of men.³³ The U-Boat slunk past the coast of Norway and slipped into the Atlantic Ocean.³⁴ Bose's departure from Germany happened just in time, for within a matter of months, the tide of war turned in Europe. Bose's battlefield lay ahead of him in Burma and Eastern India.³⁵

The submarine carrying *Netaji* finally rounded the Cape of Good Hope and entered the Indian Ocean. It now set sail for off the island of Madagascar. On 20 April by prearrangement, a Japanese submarine left Penang Island for the tip of Africa. It was to rendezvous southeast of Madagascar with the German submarine. The two submarines sighted each other on 26 April and confirmed identity. On April 26, 1943, following a two and a half months undersea voyage, they sighted the Japanese I-29 Submarine off the coast of Madagascar. Unfortunately, the condition of

the sea was *Sea State Five*—with the sea storm so massive that the two submarines could not risk coming close together to avoid an inadvertent collision due to the huge waves. As such, for close to two days they kept sailing parallel to each other but could not risk closing in to affect a transfer of passengers. Ultimately, Bose and Hassan got into the rubber dinghy and paddled for all they were worth.³⁶ After what seemed an eternity, they reached the Japanese submarine I-29. They were soaked to the skin.³⁷ The transfer was made on a rubber raft, and a drenched Bose was welcome aboard the Japanese submarine by Captain Masao Teraoka and Commander Juichi Izu. The Japanese submarine was far larger and roomier. The submarine avoided Penang, taking a circuitous route to the Sabang Island off the north coast of Sumatra. Thereafter, they set sail for Sabang, a group of islands off the coast of Sumatra and finally reached there on May 8, 1943. Bose's epic odyssey had taken him full three months. At Sabang, Bose was received by Bin Yamamoto, President of the *Hikari Kikan*, the group set up by the Japanese chiefly to liaise with the INA. Yamamoto knew Bose very well having been Japan's military attaché in Berlin. From Sabang, Bose and Yamamoto flew to Tokyo, touching down *en route* at Penang, Manila, Saigon and Taiwan. The two landed in Tokyo on 16 May, 1943, where Bose who was travelling incognito as 'Matsuda' was escorted immediately to the Imperial Hotel.³⁸

Interactions between Bose and Tōjō

Arriving in Tokyo, Bose had only one aim. He had to meet Premier Hideki Tōjō. In his meeting with the Army's Chief of Staff, Sugiyama, Bose's

31 Lebra, n. 2, p. 66.

32 Ibid., *Subhas Chandra Bose, Hitler, and Tōjō*, p. 114.

33 For further reading and details see, Kingshuk Nag, *Netaji: Living Dangerously*, (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2016).

34 Bakshi, n. 27, *The Marathon Submarine Voyage*, pp. 129-130.

35 Ibid., *The Under-Sea Option*, pp. 128-129.

36 Ibid., *The Marathon Submarine Voyage*, pp. 130-131.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

faith in Japan's human and material resources came across evidently when he stated without waiting for a response, "If we don't push on with determination, we won't be able to achieve independence."³⁹ Bose explained to Sugiyama with great fervor his hope of first taking Chittagong, then pushing on inside Bengal.⁴⁰ Air power and naval domination by aircraft carrier based naval aviation, had been key to the brilliant early successes of the Japanese Army in Malaya, Singapore and Burma which ended up rolling out the British Empire from the region.⁴¹ The war with Japan in Southeast Asia had nearly uprooted the Empire in virtually under a year.⁴²

Sans air superiority, the Indian operation was foredoomed to failure. Moreover, lack of naval domination had closed the option of attack on India from the sea flank. Bose and the INA had been pressing for this option as it would get them onto the Indian mainland at the earliest (They wanted to attack via Chittagong into what is now Bangladesh). The very difficult land route from Burma to India's Northeast was a logistical nightmare. Bose still was confident that the very news of an army of Indians attacking India to liberate it from Britain would cause the Indian masses to rise in revolt. This, in turn would inspire the rank and file of the British Indian Armed Forces to open rebellion. The centre of gravity of any offensive directed against British India was not so much to capturing Indian Territory, but turning the loyalty of about 2.5 million Indian soldiers to their British masters. Destroying this allegiance to foreign rule and rulers was the prime objective of Bose.⁴³

It was persuasion by Sugiyama and Foreign Minister, Mamoru Shigemitsu, which at length

prevailed upon Tōjō on agreeing to meet Bose. On 10 June the first of two meetings took place. The enchantment of Bose worked on Tōjō immediately. It had been the same case, be it Sugiyama, Shigemitsu, and nearly everyone Bose met, whether Japanese or Indian. Apart from the impact of his words and passionate devotion to the cause of India's independence, there was something about his face, his voice, and his eyes that captured the attention of anyone he met. Tōjō was enthralled. The meeting was brief, but Bose succeeded when Tōjō promised another meeting four days later. Bose, with his customary frankness, asked Tōjō, "Can Japan give unconditional help to the Indian independence movement? I would like to confirm that there are no strings attached to Japanese aid." Tōjō immediately gave Bose an affirmative reply. If Bose was to secure meaningful help from Japan for the INA, Tōjō's sympathy and cooperation was the crucial pivot. To this end, Bose had succeeded admirably, and Tōjō was ready to public affirm of his official support for Bose and the INA.⁴⁴

On 16 June Bose visited the House of Peers during the 82nd extraordinary session of the Diet. Prime Minister Tōjō made a historic address on the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere which, expectedly, attracted attention outside Japan. Bose listened intently in the audience to interpreters as Tōjō said, "India has been for centuries under England's rule... We wish to express righteous indignation...for their aspirations for complete independence. We firmly resolved that Japan would do everything possible to help Indian independence. I am convinced the day of Indian freedom and prosperity is not far off..."⁴⁵ Concurrently, Tōjō

39 *Gaimushō, Subasu Chandora Bosu to Nihon*, p. 100, cited in Lebra, pp. 114-115.

40 *Ibid.*

41 Bakshi, n. 27, *Bose Moves East*, pp. 125-126.

42 Bakshi, *Bose or Gandhi: Who Got India Her Freedom?* n. 1, *A Summation: Rectifying History*, p. 167.

43 Bakshi, n. 27, pp. 125-126.

44 Lebra, n. 2, *Subhas Chandra Bose, Hitler, and Tōjō*, p. 116.

45 *Ibid.*

also referred to emancipating all of East Asia and ensuring welfare of the people of Greater East Asia. Incidentally, this was not Tōjō's first mention of India in the Diet. Early in 1942, he had spoken of the Pacific War as an opportunity for India to rise against British rule. The 1943 address was different in that Tōjō promised aid and cooperation for Indian independence this time round. Sitting in the audience, Bose felt Tōjō was making him a personal promise which the latter would follow through.⁴⁶

Given the Japanese aim of encouraging India's independence movement as a political weapon against Britain, Tokyo was already predisposed to listen to Bose when he arrived in Japan in the summer of 1943 to plead for Japanese aid to the INA in its proposed thrust into India. Within India, British procrastination in the face of Congress demands for independence led Gandhi to sponsor a Congress resolution in August 1942, demanding the immediate British withdrawal from India. The British responded to the "*Quit India*" demand by throwing Gandhi and most of the other Congress leaders into jail once again. That Gandhi had abandoned his more moderate stance encouraged Indians civilians and the INA throughout Southeast Asia to accelerate the demand for independence. Bose's arrival further ignited Indians patriotism, and this in turn, had repercussions on the Japanese policy towards India and Burma. The forces were all converging in 1943.⁴⁷ Bose's leadership of the Indian independence movement would vindicate the work of the *Fujiwara Kikan* and its successors and cement Indian cooperation with Japan.⁴⁸

Bose was also ready to make public his willingness to cooperate with Japan in the struggle against Britain. On 19 June he held his first Japanese press conference, attended by around 60 reporters wherein he expressed gratitude at Tōjō's Diet speech and referred to the 2000-years-old cultural bond between Japan and India. Tokyo Radio on the same day quoted Bose as saying:

Premier Tōjō is not only taking personal interest in India, but is leaving no stone unturned in order to give all the assistance that lies within the power of the Japanese Government to help India in its struggle against British Imperialism... I can say with utmost confidence that apart from any assistance we may receive from the Japanese Government, Prime Minister Tōjō is personally anxious to see India free from the British yoke at an early date.⁴⁹

Bose also referred to Japan's victory over Russia in 1905 as "... the first harbinger of Asian resurgence... That victory was hailed with great joy not only by the Japanese but also by the Indians. Therefore, Indians feel that the existence of a strong Japan is essential for the reconstruction of Asia."⁵⁰

Two days later, Bose went on air in his first broadcast to India from Radio NHK Tokyo announcing his presence in Japan. In the press conference, much in line with his appeals from Berlin, Bose detailed his plans for the freedom of India and stridently called for the *Quit India Movement* back home to be escalated to an armed struggle and revolt by the Indian masses against the British rule.⁵¹ "Only when the Indian

46 Ibid.

47 Lebra, n. 2, *To India or Not?*, pp. 162-163.

48 Ibid., p. 164.

49 For further details see, Arun, ed., *Testament of Subhas Bose*, (Delhi: Rajkamal Publications, 1946) p. 143.

50 Lebra, n. 2, *Subhas Chandra Bose, Hitler, and Tōjō*, p. 117.

51 *Gaimushō Kiroku* [Foreign Ministry Records], *Dai Tōa Sensō Kankei Ikken: Indō Mondai* [Matters Relating to the Greater East Asia War: The India Problem] *Subasu Chandora Bosu to Nihon*, p. 101, cited in Lebra, p. 117.

people have received their baptism by fire on a large scale, will they be qualified to achieve freedom...” he said. The news of Netaji’s arrival in Japan, electrified the large Indian diaspora in Singapore and other Southeast Asian countries.⁵² Tōjō and Bose were on record to cooperate against the common enemy for India’s liberation. On 27 June 1943, following what was a successful month in Tokyo, marked by many public statements, Bose was on his way to Southeast Asia, arriving in Singapore to a tumultuous welcome.⁵³

1943 Greater East Asia Conference

Towards the end of 1943, in November, delegates from Japan-supported governments in East and Southeast Asia assembled in Tokyo at the invitation of the Japanese Government to attend the Greater East Asia Conference that had been planned much earlier in an Imperial Conference on 31 May in order to “establish the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere to complete the war.”⁵⁴ The Greater East Asia Conference was presided over by Foreign Minister Shigemitsu. Further, Prime Minister Tōjō, Navy Minister, Shigetaro Shimada, and Greater East Asia Affairs Minister, Kazuo Aoki were all present in the assembly.⁵⁵

Bose was invited to the conference, though he attended as an observer rather than a delegate. Japan had not announced that India or the FIPG were to be included in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.⁵⁶ Shortly after his arrival in Japan, Bose broadcast in the *Hindi* language on 3 November, telling his Indian

audience that he had come to Tokyo to thank the Japanese government, personally, for its recognition of the FIPG and for its promised support in the Indian struggle for liberation. He added that he wished to strengthen further friendly relations he had established with the Japanese government during his first visit. This personal connect was proof to the world of the friendship between Japan and the FIPG. Bose felt that enemy propaganda which had misrepresented Japan’s attitude towards India had been foiled substantially.⁵⁷

The conference in Tokyo continued for several days, with speeches by delegates from East Asian governments and statements by Japanese officials. The theme of Indian independence reverberated largely throughout the conference. Ba Maw of Burma spoke eloquently in support of the FIPG on 6 November. “In my view, Asia cannot be free unless India is free... If we wish to destroy anti-Asiatic imperialisms, we must drive them out of their Asiatic stronghold which is India. The British Empire cannot be broken, unless and until British domination of India is broken,” said Ba Maw.⁵⁸ Delegates unanimously passed a motion introduced by Ba Maw to give moral and material support to India in its fight for independence.⁵⁹

Netaji Bose spoke next and reviewed the India’s struggle for liberation and his own role in it. He narrated how he had been imprisoned, and finally managed to escape India, in his determination to seek outside help in the struggle against the British. He thanked nations

52 Bakshi, n. 27, *Chapter 6: The Second INA and the Provisional Government of Free India*, pp. 134-135.

53 Lebra, n. 2, p. 117.

54 *Ibid.*, Chapter Eight: *Bose, the FIPG, and the Hikari Kikan*, p. 130.

55 *Ibid.*

56 *Ibid.*, p. 131.

57 Arun, n. 49.

58 Ba Maw of Burma, *Speech in Support of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind*, pp. 1-5; also see, Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma: Memoirs of a Revolution, 1939-1946*, (Yale University Press, 1968).

59 Lebra, n. 2, *Bose, the FIPG, and the Hikari Kikan*, p. 131.

of Greater East Asia for their sympathy and support. Bose cited the precedents of Buddhist and Pan-Asian ties and called for creation of regional federations like the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Referring then to Japan's leading role, Bose said:

This is not the first time that the world has turned to the East for light and guidance... I believe that history has ordained that in the creation of a new, free and prosperous East, the Government and people of Nippon should play a leading role. The role for the Government and the people of Nippon was carved out by history as early as 1905 when, for the first time an Asiatic nation stood up to resist Western aggression... The establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere will pave the way towards a Pan-Asiatic Federation.⁶⁰

The fate of all Asia was interlinked, and India's fate was linked with Japan's, Bose reiterated. This was the opportunity India had been awaiting and might not come again for another thousand years. Assured of Japanese support Bose concluded, "We shall go to battle fully confident that the day of our salvation is at hand."⁶¹ The delegates at the Greater East Asia Conference issued the *Greater East Asia Declaration* on 7 November containing five principal points: 1) condemning Anglo-Saxon domination and calling for the restoration of Asia to Asiatics⁶²; 2) calling on Asia to rise and create a new East Asia of sovereign and independent countries; 3) pledging the signatories to the defense of already liberated areas; 4) asserting insistence on free access to natural resources, freedom of communication and trade, and unrestricted cultural interchange;

and 5) demanding that "principles of equality and reciprocity should be extended to govern international relations throughout the world," and condemning race prejudice.⁶³

Japan's Strategic Imperatives

In his third and final visit to Tokyo in 1944, Bose arrived on 31 October and was welcomed by Lieutenant General Saburo Isoda, head of the Japanese-INA liaison organization *Hikari Kikan*, Shigemitsu, and a delegation of Indian students and representatives of the Indian Independence League. Initially escorted to the *Gaimushō* guesthouse where they stayed for ten days, Bose and his accompanies were thereafter moved to the Frank Lloyd Wright Imperial Hotel. On his first day of arrival in Tokyo, Bose called on the new Japanese Prime Minister, Kuniaki Koiso.⁶⁴ Indians residing across East Asia interpreted this visit of Bose as a preparation for the new India offensive. Prime Minister Koiso hosted a state dinner for Bose and reaffirmed Japan's pledge to aid the cause of Indian independence, thereby renewing his predecessor Tōjō's promises that *Japan sought no territorial, economic or military gains in India*. Notably, Koiso said that Japan was repaying an ancient cultural debt to India.

The Ancient Cultural Dimension between Japan and India

Indo-Japanese cooperation in Southeast Asia drew on a cultural connect with its origins rooted in ancient history. For Japan, India was the birthplace of Hinduism, the Buddha and Buddhism. As a source of inspiration for centuries of artistic, literary, and philosophical expression, India attracted devout Buddhist and

60 Ibid., pp. 131-132.

61 Ibid.

62 For further details and reading see, Robert S. Ward, *Asia for the Asiatics?* (Chicago Press, 1945), pp. 189-190, cited in Lebra, p. 132.

63 Ibid.

64 Lebra, n. 2, p. 141-142.

literary figures. Okakura Tenshin and Indian Nobel-laureate Rabindranath Tagore both celebrated Asian spirituality as a heritage which was distinctively Asian.⁶⁵ Indian Pan-Asianism's cultural dimension apart from revolutionary overtones was reflected with Indian exponent of Asian cultural unity and idealism, Tagore, visiting East Asia and strengthening the sense of its cultural identity.⁶⁶ Tagore was eloquent in praise of Japan's achievement and its impact on the rest of Asia, saying:

It was said of Asia that it could never move in the path of progress, its face was inevitably turned backwards... When things stood still like this, and we in Asia hypnotized ourselves into the belief... that it could never by any possibility be otherwise, Japan rose from her dreams, and in giant strides left centuries of inaction behind... One morning the whole world looked up in surprise when Japan broke through her walls of old habits in the night and came out triumphant. It was done in such an incredibly short time that it seemed like a change of dress and not like the building up of a new structure. She showed the confident strength of maturity, and the freshness and infinite potentiality of new life at the same moment. The fear was entertained that it was a major freak of history, a child's game of Time, the blowing up of a soap bubble, perfect in its rondure and coloring, hollow in its heart and without substance. But Japan has proved conclusively that this sudden revealment of her power is not a short-lived wonder, a chance product of time and tide, thrown up from the depth of obscurity to be swept away the next moment into the sea of oblivion. In a word, modern Japan has come out of the immemorial East

like a lotus blossoming in easy grace, all the while keeping its firm hold upon the profound depth from which it has sprung.⁶⁷

While he recognized Japan's achievement, Tagore also retained the great Indian dream of Asian spirituality and its ultimate superiority over Western material power.⁶⁸ He prophesied the day when this confrontation would be apparent to the entire world:

The East with her ideals, in which are stored the ages of sunlight and silence of stars, can patiently wait till the West, hurrying after the expedient, loses breath and stops... Therefore, I ask you to have the strength of faith and clarity of mind to know for certain that the lumbering structure of modern progress, riveted by the iron bolts of efficiency, which runs upon the wheels of ambition, cannot hold together for long... A day will come when it will fall in a heap of ruin and cause serious obstruction to the traffic of the world. Do we not see signs of this even now?⁶⁹

Tagore opened his Calcutta home to many Japanese and Asian priests, poets, artists, and those interested in the Asian culture. There was a fruitful cross-fertilization of ideas and inspiration. One of the Japanese visitors to Tagore's home was none other than Okakura Tenshin (Kakuzō) who famously published his *Book of Tea* in 1902, two years following his visit to India.⁷⁰ Another of Tagore's Japanese visitors was poet, Noguchi Yonejirō, who after his visit to India corresponded with Tagore.

65 Ibid., *Retrospect*, p. 212.

66 Ibid., *Tokyo Conference*, p. 54.

67 For details see, Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (London: 1950), pp. 49-53.

68 Lebra, n. 2, *Tokyo Conference*, p. 55.

69 Tagore, n. 67, pp. 64-91.

70 For more details see, Okakuro Kakuzō, *The Book of Tea*, (New York, 1902), p. 126.

The Incomplete Finalé of Cooperation between Japan and the INA's Independence Movement for India

Significantly, during his last visit, Bose was honored by an audience with Emperor Hirohito, who knew of Bose's exploits.⁷¹ In a mass meeting organized at the Hibiya Hall under the joint auspices of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association and the Japan-India Society, Bose addressed a mixed Indo-Japanese audience and spoke continuously for two hours about Indian independence.⁷²

In the following days, Bose held several meetings with members of the cabinet. There were additional negotiations with Army Chief of Staff, Yoshijiro Umezu, Army Minister Sugiyama, Navy Minister Mitsumasa Yonai, and Naval Chief of Staff, Koshiro Oikawa. Present at most of the meetings were Isoda, General Seizo Arisue, Chief of the Second Bureau (Intelligence), IGHQ, and Lieutenant General Kenryo Sato, Chief of the Military Affairs Bureau of the General Staff.⁷³ During the negotiations, Bose made several demands including an expansion of the size of the INA by at least 50,000 men, a loan agreement, better weapons including tanks, planes, and guns to supplement captured British stores, widespread distribution of literature that he wrote, and transfer of all POWs to the INA. Finally, it was decided that the INA would be expanded by 40,000 men, along with an assurance that arms, ammunition and supplies would be forthcoming.⁷⁴

The logic of geography in Southeast Asia

and the common enemy, Britain, made the form of cooperation between Japan and the Indian independence movement only natural.⁷⁵ As far as Japan's strategic imperatives were concerned, India formed the western perimeter of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, which included Burma. From 1941 onwards until the very end, the Imperial General Headquarters and the Cabinet had begun considering India's place in the Southeast Asian scheme of things. India loomed important in the thinking of Imperial General Headquarters for other reasons, as the former constituted a defense perimeter to the west of Burma. Securing this border against any further Allied offensives was one imperative, though the issue was where exactly to establish the line of defense.⁷⁶ In his 18 June 1945 broadcast from Singapore, Bose appealed to Indians residing inside and outside India not to give up the struggle, and never to compromise.⁷⁷

The Japanese-INA combined offensive in Imphal-Kohima was launched a little too late. Despite the odds, Japan's Imperial Army almost pulled it off with the battles of Imphal-Kohima being the hardest fought by the British Empire at the time, given the successful Japanese tactics of infiltration and encirclement.⁷⁸ There is considerable concurrence on the argument that though the INA lost the battles of Imphal-Kohima, but won the War of India's Independence in the larger picture. After the war, when the British put select INA officers on trial at the iconic Red Fort of Delhi, the people of India were enraged, because of both, the trial, and news of Bose's death. It triggered widespread mutinies in the Royal Indian Navy,

71 Lebra, n. 2, *Bose, the FIPG, and the Hikari Kikan*, p. 142.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid., p. 143.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid., *Retrospect*, p. 217.

76 Ibid., Chapter Nine: *To India or Not?* p. 156.

77 Ibid., Chapter Eleven: *A Plane Crash*, pp. 194-195.

78 Bakshi, n. 1, *Bose or Gandhi*, pp. 62-63.

the Royal Indian Air Force and many units of the British Indian Army, quivering the British to their core. The process of the sun setting on the British Empire had been put in motion.⁷⁹

Writing on Bose, R. F. Mudie, then Home Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council opined, "Bengal's influence over the INA was substantial... It affected all races, castes and communities. Men admired him [Bose] for organizing India's First 'National Army' and for so conducting himself... the Japanese were forced to treat Indians as allies. In the eyes of many, he stood on a level with Gandhi."⁸⁰

On 23 August, Japanese news agency, *Dōmei*, announced the news of a plane crash and of Bose's resultant death. Bose's remains were cremated and his ashes flown to Tokyo to the Army Ministry on 7 September 1945. The ashes were entrusted to Reverend Mochizuki, priest of the Renkōji Temple in Suginami-ku, Tokyo—temple of the revolutionary nationalist Nichiren Buddhist sect where Bose's ashes were fittingly placed to rest⁸¹ following a memorial service on 18 September 1945.

79 Ibid., pp. 47-48.

80 Bakshi, *The Clement Attlee-Chakrabarty Dialogue*, n. 1, p. 70.

81 Lebra, *A Plane Crash*, p. 197.