



**ROLE OF BOSE AND THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY IN
INDEPENDENCE**

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ABSTRACT: Subhas Chandra Bose holds a distinct and influential place in the history of India's independence movement. His firm nationalism, strong organizing skills, and support for armed resistance set him apart from the mainly non-violent approach linked to the Indian National Congress under Mahatma Gandhi. Bose's leadership of the Indian National Army (INA), also called the Azad Hind Fauj, offered a serious effort to oppose British rule through military action. The INA was formed from Indian prisoners of war and Indians living in Southeast Asia. Bose took charge of it in 1943. Under his leadership, the movement created the Provisional Government of Free India and sought aid from other countries for India's freedom. The INA's military campaign failed to free India, but its actions had major political and psychological effects. The INA trials of 1945-46 won broad public support and helped strengthen nationalist activity. This paper studies Bose's contribution and that of the INA to India's freedom struggle, their military and political methods, the importance of the INA trials, and their wider effect on the decline of British authority in India.

KEYWORDS: *Indian National Army, Azad Hind Fauj, Indian Independence, Freedom Struggle, British Rule, INA Trials, Nationalism.*

INTRODUCTION: India's fight for independence developed over many years and involved many ideas, groups, movements, and leaders. The Indian National Congress, revolutionary groups, peasant and labour movements, and regional struggles all helped spread opposition to colonial rule. In this wider effort, Subhas Chandra Bose became one of the most forceful and radical Indian leaders of the twentieth century. Bose did not believe that constitutional talks alone could secure political freedom. He called for a stronger course of action and saw the Second World War as a chance to challenge British power. His political views stressed

discipline, sacrifice, national unity, and complete independence. His connection with the Indian National Army gave form to his plan for armed resistance. Bose took charge of the INA in Southeast Asia in 1943 and rebuilt it as a force committed to India's liberation. The slogan "Jai Hind" became closely linked with the movement. His well-known appeal, "Give me blood, and I will give you freedom," showed his focus on sacrifice and military action.

The INA failed to defeat British forces in battle. Still, it influenced Indian political thought during the last years of British rule. Its legacy became especially important during the INA trials and the political events that followed in 1945-46.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY: The main objectives of this research paper are:

1. To study the political ideas and nationalist views of Subhas Chandra Bose.
2. To examine the origin and growth of the Indian National Army.
3. To assess Bose's role in reorganizing and gathering support for the INA.
4. To examine the INA's military campaign during the Second World War.
5. To study the importance of the INA trials of 1945-46.
6. To assess the contributions of Bose and the INA to India's independence movement.
7. To understand the place of the INA in the growth of Indian nationalism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: This study is historical and analytical. It relies mainly on secondary sources, such as books, research articles, historical records, biographies, archival material, and published works on Subhas Chandra Bose, the Indian National Army, and India's independence movement. The historical method is used to study events in time order and assess their political, social, and military importance. Primary and secondary sources have been examined with care to build a balanced understanding of Bose and the INA.

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE: EARLY POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT: Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23 January 1897 in Cuttack, Odisha. He came from a well-educated family and showed strong intellectual ability from a young age. After studying in India, he went to England and passed the Indian Civil Service examination. He later resigned because he did not want to work for the colonial government. Bose then joined India's nationalist movement. Chittaranjan Das influenced his political thinking, and Bose soon became a leading figure in the Congress.

His views gradually moved away from moderate constitutional methods and, at times, from Gandhi's focus on non-violent mass action. Bose favoured a more militant and centrally directed struggle for independence.

BOSE AND THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS: Bose gained influence within the Congress during the 1930s. He became Congress President at the Haripura Session in 1938 and won re-election at the Tripuri Session in 1939. Differences soon grew between Bose and the main Congress leadership over political strategy and ideology. Bose believed Britain's involvement in the Second World War gave India a chance to intensify its fight for independence.

After resigning as Congress President in 1939, he formed the Forward Bloc to unite radical nationalist groups. The British authorities viewed his activities as a serious threat. They placed him under surveillance and later detained him. In 1941, Bose made a dramatic escape from India and travelled abroad to seek international aid for the independence movement.

FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY: The INA began taking shape in Southeast Asia during the early years of the Second World War. After Japanese victories in the region, thousands of Indian soldiers in the British Indian Army became prisoners of war. With Japanese support, Captain Mohan Singh first organized an Indian National Army. Subhas Chandra Bose later took charge of the movement. Bose reached Southeast Asia in 1943 and assumed leadership of the INA. He aimed to build a disciplined army for national liberation. Under his command, the INA expanded and gained support from parts of the Indian community in Southeast Asia. The INA carried powerful symbolic value. Indians who had once served the British military were now being organized to fight for India's freedom.

BOSE'S LEADERSHIP OF THE INA: Bose gave the INA clear political direction and strong organizational control. National unity. Military discipline. Sacrifice for the nation. Complete independence. Equality among communities. Women's participation in the freedom struggle. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment showed his support for wider participation. It was a women's military unit led by Captain Lakshmi Sahgal. Bose also sought to establish a government for the independence movement. In October 1943, he announced the Provisional Government of Free India, or the Azad Hind Government, in Singapore. Several governments aligned with the Axis powers recognized it. Azad Hind gave the freedom struggle an international and governmental presence beyond British India.

MILITARY CAMPAIGN OF THE INA: The INA fought beside Japanese forces in Burma and northeastern India during the Second World War. Its operations were closely tied to Japan's military plans. In 1944, the INA took part in the Imphal and Kohima campaign, aiming to enter India through the northeastern frontier. Its troops moved into parts of present-day Manipur and Nagaland, briefly establishing a presence on Indian soil. The campaign faced major problems. Supplies were limited, disease spread, the terrain was difficult, Japanese transport systems failed, and Allied forces offered strong resistance. Japanese defeat in the region forced the INA to withdraw. Japan's surrender in 1945 ended the INA's military campaign.

THE INA AND THE IDEA OF NATIONAL UNITY: The INA promoted the idea of a united Indian identity. Bose brought together people from different regions, language groups, religions, and social backgrounds around a shared national goal. The INA included Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and members of other communities. Its internal culture sought to reduce religious divisions and support a wider form of Indian nationalism. This approach helped increase the INA's popularity among sections of the Indian population after the war.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE INA: Women's participation was a major part of Bose's movement. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment, named after the nineteenth-century warrior queen Rani Lakshmibai, was formed as an all-women military unit. Captain Lakshmi Sahgal led the regiment. Its members received military training and took part in several wider activities organized by the INA. The regiment did not take part in major combat on the scale first planned. Even so, its creation carried great symbolic value. It challenged traditional ideas about women and showed that they could take an active role in India's struggle for freedom.

THE INA TRIALS: After Japan's defeat, British forces captured many INA personnel. In 1945-46, the British government began military trials against selected INA officers at Delhi's Red Fort. The first major trial involved Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem Kumar Sahgal, and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon. The proceedings drew intense public interest and widespread sympathy. Political leaders and groups across the political spectrum helped defend the accused officers. Support for the INA became a common public slogan. The trials changed the INA from a defeated military force into a strong political symbol. The public response revealed the strength of nationalist feeling and created serious problems for the colonial government.

IMPACT OF THE INA ON THE BRITISH INDIAN ARMED FORCES: The INA's importance cannot be judged only by its success or failure on the battlefield. Its greater effect was political and psychological. British rule depended greatly on the loyalty of Indian soldiers. The INA showed that Indian troops could shift their loyalty from the colonial government to the cause of independence. Public support during the INA trials increased British fears about the loyalty of the armed forces. The Royal Indian Navy Mutiny of 1946 involved ratings in several places during a period of post-war unrest and rising nationalist activity. The INA was neither its only cause nor its direct cause. However, the INA's example and the public support for its members formed part of the wider setting in which British officials faced growing opposition to their rule.

BOSE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE: Subhas Chandra Bose made several major contributions to India's independence movement.

- **Support for Complete Independence:** Bose consistently demanded full political independence instead of limited reforms or constitutional concessions.
- **Taking India's Cause Abroad:** He sought help from other countries and used the conditions created by the Second World War to challenge British rule in India.
- **A Military Alternative:** The INA offered a military path to independence alongside constitutional politics and non-violent mass movements. It sought to end British rule through armed struggle.
- **National Mobilization:** Bose organized Indians in Southeast Asia and strengthened the political and emotional ties between the Indian diaspora and the independence movement.
- **A Symbol of Sacrifice:** His speeches, slogans, and personal dedication inspired a strong sense of sacrifice and patriotism among his supporters.

LIMITATIONS OF THE INA: A fair study of the INA must also consider its weaknesses.

The organization depended heavily on Japanese troops, supplies, and military plans. This reduced its freedom to make independent decisions. It also lacked the men, weapons, food, and other supplies needed for a long campaign against the British Indian Army and Allied forces. When Japanese military power collapsed, the INA could no longer continue its operations. Bose's wartime links with the Axis powers remain a major and disputed part of his legacy. He worked with Germany, Japan, and other forces linked

to the Axis because he wanted to defeat British rule. That decision has led to lasting debate among historians.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: The importance of Bose and the INA goes beyond their military activities. Their movement had major political effects. The INA became a symbol of opposition to colonial rule. Public support during the trials showed that its cause had gained importance beyond the battlefield. The British government faced several growing pressures. These included political activity, post-war economic strain, labour unrest, discontent within the armed forces, and rising demands for independence. The INA episode formed one part of the wider situation surrounding the end of British rule. It would be wrong to claim that the INA alone forced Britain to leave India. Independence came through several connected causes, including mass nationalist campaigns, political talks, the Second World War, Britain's economic troubles, international changes, and shifting attitudes among Indian soldiers.

Even so, Bose and the INA added to the political and psychological pressure that shaped the final years of British rule.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS: The study of Subhas Chandra Bose and the INA has value in history education. Teachers can use this subject to help students understand:

- Different methods used in India's freedom struggle.
- The link between nationalism and international politics.
- The role of armed forces in movements against colonial rule.
- Women's participation in India's struggle for freedom.
- The need to study evidence and consider different viewpoints.
- The difference between military results and political influence.

Teaching Bose's contribution alongside Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Bhagat Singh, Ambedkar, and other leaders gives students a fuller view of the many ideas and methods within India's freedom movement.

CONCLUSION: Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army hold an important place in the history of India's independence struggle. Bose followed a distinct form of nationalism based on armed resistance, foreign support, discipline, sacrifice, and military organization. The INA did not achieve its immediate aim of defeating British rule through military action. Its campaigns in Burma and northeastern

India failed because of military setbacks, supply problems, and wider political conditions. Its historical value, however, cannot be judged by battlefield results alone.

The INA trials of 1945-46 turned the organization into a powerful nationalist symbol and won broad public support. The INA also increased doubts about the loyalty of Indian personnel in the colonial armed forces. Together with other political, economic, social, and international changes, these developments formed part of the conditions that led to the transfer of power in 1947. Bose's legacy rests not only on the INA's military campaign but also on the powerful vision of an independent India that he inspired. His life and the history of the INA remain important for understanding the varied, complex, and international character of India's freedom struggle.

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