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# The Role of Subhas Chandra Bose in Organizing the Indian National Army and Its Impact on the Freedom Struggle

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**ABSTRACT:** Subhas Chandra Bose, popularly known as Netaji, played a transformative role in India's freedom struggle through his leadership of the Indian National Army (INA) and the Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind). This paper examines Bose's reorganization of the INA from a fragmented force into a disciplined, inclusive army of over 40,000 troops, including the pioneering Rani of Jhansi Regiment. It analyzes his strategic vision, recruitment from prisoners of war and diaspora communities, and the proclamation of the Azad Hind Government in 1943 with its progressive governance principles of secularism, equality, and socialism. The study explores the Imphal-Kohima campaign of 1944, highlighting its tactical limitations against its profound psychological and symbolic significance. The Red Fort trials (1945–1946), widespread defections, and the Royal Indian Navy mutiny of 1946 are evaluated as key catalysts that eroded British Indian Army loyalty and hastened decolonization. The paper employs a qualitative-historical methodology, drawing on primary sources (Bose's writings, speeches, broadcasts, INA documents, trial transcripts, declassified files) and secondary literature (biographies, regional studies, comparative analyses). Findings reveal Bose's militant nationalism complemented Gandhian non-violence, creating multifaceted pressure that accelerated British withdrawal in 1947. Bose's legacy shaped post-independence ideologies (secularism, socialism, planned development) and national symbols ("Jai Hind," unity, self-reliance). The study fills gaps in Gandhian-centric historiography, highlighting Bose's contribution to pluralistic nationalism and nation-building.

**KEYWORDS:** Subhas Chandra Bose, Indian National Army, Azad Hind Government, freedom struggle, militant nationalism, Red Fort trials, decolonization, secularism, socialism, national identity, "Jai Hind".

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian freedom struggle against British colonial rule was a complex, multifaceted movement that spanned over a century and involved diverse ideologies, strategies, and leaders. While Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence (ahimsa) and satyagraha, along with the Indian National Congress's mass civil disobedience campaigns, is widely recognized as the dominant force, the contributions of Subhas Chandra Bose represent a distinct and equally significant strand of militant nationalism. Bose, popularly known as Netaji, emerged as a charismatic, uncompromising leader whose radical vision and actions injected urgency, international dimension, and armed resistance into the struggle. His leadership of the Indian National Army (INA), proclamation of the Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind) in 1943, and the psychological impact of the INA trials (1945–1946) created crises that eroded British legitimacy and hastened decolonization in 1947.

Bose's journey began with his early alignment with the Congress mainstream under Chittaranjan Das, where he rose rapidly—serving as mayor of Calcutta, leading the All India Youth Congress, and becoming Congress president in 1938 and 1939. However, ideological conflicts with Gandhi and the high command over non-violence, the pace of independence, and socialism led to his resignation in April 1939 and formation of the Forward Bloc as a radical left-wing platform. His wartime exile—daring escape from house arrest in 1941, alliances with Axis powers, and transition to Japan—reflected pragmatic realpolitik in response to Britain's wartime refusal to negotiate freedom. Bose revitalized the INA, recruiting from POWs and diaspora, reorganizing into brigades, and creating the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. The Azad Hind Government's progressive charter—secularism, equality, socialism—offered a blueprint for free India. The Imphal-Kohima campaign (1944), though tactically limited, held immense psychological and symbolic significance. This paper focuses on Bose's role in organizing the INA and its impact on the freedom struggle. It examines his strategic leadership, the INA's structure and recruitment, the Azad Hind Government's principles, the campaign's outcomes, and the trials' role in accelerating decolonization.

### Bose's Formative Influences and Ideological Development

Subhas Chandra Bose's ideological development was profoundly shaped by a combination of family background, formal education, spiritual inspiration, and early encounters with social injustice and colonial oppression. Born on January 23, 1897, in Cuttack, Odisha, into a prominent Bengali Kayastha family, Bose grew up in an environment that blended traditional values with modern education and a strong sense of social responsibility. His father, Janakinath Bose, was a successful lawyer, public prosecutor, and member of the Bengal Legislative Council, embodying discipline, integrity, and quiet advocacy for Indian self-rule. His mother, Prabhavati Devi, came from a cultured family and instilled in her children devotion, compassion, and a deep sense of duty toward society. The Bose household was intellectually stimulating, with frequent discussions on literature, philosophy, and national affairs, fostering in young Subhas a sense of moral outrage against injustice and a lifelong commitment to serve the nation. This familial ethos—combining modern learning with traditional values—laid the groundwork for his later dedication to complete independence and social equality.

Bose's formal education further sharpened his intellect and nationalist consciousness. He excelled at the Protestant European School (later Ravenshaw Collegiate School) in Cuttack, where he came under the profound influence of his headmaster, Beni Madhav Das. Das taught Bose to appreciate nature, love his countrymen, and cultivate moral courage, leaving a lasting mark on his character. At age thirteen, during recurring cholera and smallpox epidemics in Cuttack and Calcutta, Bose demonstrated extraordinary maturity and humanitarian commitment. Shocked by the sight of people dying on Calcutta streets and bodies being disposed of without dignity, Bose and his school friends formed the Vivekananda Mandal. This informal group collected food and clothing from their homes, nursed the sick with medicines, and—breaking caste and religious barriers—helped dispose of the dead. These acts of selfless service at such a young age revealed an innate sense of justice, equality, and dedication to alleviating human suffering—qualities that would define his later political life.

The teachings of Swami Vivekananda were the most decisive early influence on Bose. Vivekananda's call for physical strength, fearlessness, spiritual nationalism, and service to humanity resonated deeply. Bose later wrote that Vivekananda's writings "thrilled him to the marrow of his bones." Vivekananda's emphasis on awakening India from colonial slumber and building a strong, self-reliant nation became a guiding ideal. This influence is evident in Bose's lifelong commitment to equality (no caste or religious discrimination), physical and mental discipline (INA training), and service to the masses (early humanitarian work). Vivekananda's synthesis of inner spiritual strength with outward action shaped Bose's belief in disciplined resistance, self-sacrifice, and the need for a spiritually awakened India capable of confronting imperialism.

Bose's education at Presidency College, Calcutta (1913–1916), exposed him to Western philosophy (Kant, Hegel, Mill) while deepening his nationalist awareness. His rustication in 1916 for confronting a professor over racist remarks reflected his intolerance for colonial arrogance. Completing his B.A. at Scottish Church College in 1918 with first-class honors, Bose traveled to England in 1919 to prepare for the ICS examination, qualifying fourth in 1920. However, his time in Britain intensified his resentment of racial prejudice and colonial hypocrisy, leading to his resignation in April 1921. This decision marked his complete commitment to nationalism, rejecting personal security for the cause of freedom. These formative influences—family sense of duty, Vivekananda's spiritual nationalism, Beni Madhav Das's moral guidance, early humanitarian service, and exposure to colonial racism—crystallized Bose's worldview. By his early twenties, he had developed an unshakable belief in self-reliance, disciplined action, social equality, and the necessity of sacrifice for national liberation. These foundations propelled him from a brilliant student to one of India's most dynamic and uncompromising freedom fighters, setting the stage for his radical contributions to the struggle.

### Bose's Leadership of the Indian National Army

Subhas Chandra Bose's leadership of the Indian National Army (INA) and the Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind) marked the most decisive and transformative phase of his contribution to the Indian freedom struggle. Arriving in Southeast Asia in mid-1943 after a perilous wartime journey, Bose encountered a weakened INA originally formed in 1942 under Mohan Singh from Indian prisoners of war captured by Japanese forces in Malaya and Singapore. The initial INA had disintegrated due to internal disagreements and lack of strong leadership. Bose immediately recognized the immense potential in the large Indian diaspora and POW population in Japanese-occupied territories and set out to revitalize the movement with extraordinary energy and vision.

On July 4, 1943, at a massive public rally in Singapore, Bose assumed supreme command of the INA. In one of his most powerful speeches, he declared: “Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom.” The slogan electrified the audience and became the defining rallying cry of the Azad Hind movement. Thousands of Indian civilians—traders, professionals, laborers, students, and women—along with POWs volunteered in large numbers. Bose reorganized the army into disciplined brigades named after historic Indian heroes: Gandhi Brigade, Nehru Brigade, Azad Brigade, and later Subhas Brigade. Each brigade consisted of three or four battalions, supported by artillery, engineering, signals, medical, and transport units. The army adopted British Indian Army ranks and training protocols but infused them with nationalist symbolism: the motto “Unity, Faith, Sacrifice,” the tricolor flag with a springing tiger (symbolizing courage and freedom), and the national anthem “Jai Hind” (coined by Bose and adopted by Azad Hind). Strict military discipline was combined with intense nationalist indoctrination. Recruits attended lectures on Indian history, Bose’s vision of a free India, and the evils of imperialism.

Recruitment drew from two primary sources. The first was Indian POWs captured by Japanese forces during the rapid conquest of Malaya, Singapore, and Burma in 1941–1942. Many soldiers, disillusioned by British defeat and inspired by Bose’s arrival, volunteered to fight for independence rather than remain prisoners. Bose personally addressed POW camps, appealing to their patriotism and sense of duty. Thousands switched allegiance, motivated by the promise of fighting for their motherland.

The second major source was the Indian civilian diaspora in Southeast Asia—merchants, plantation workers, professionals, students, and laborers—who formed thriving communities in Malaya, Singapore, Thailand, and Burma. Bose’s charismatic oratory, powerful broadcasts on Azad Hind Radio, and the slogan “Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom” inspired massive civilian enlistment. Women and youth responded enthusiastically. Fundraising drives collected money, jewelry, and supplies from the diaspora, while local Indian associations provided logistical support. Bose emphasized voluntary service, rejecting coercion, and ensured recruits received fair treatment, equal pay (in Azad Hind currency), and respect regardless of background.

The Rani of Jhansi Regiment stands as one of the most symbolic and groundbreaking achievements of the INA. Formed in October 1943, it was the world’s first all-women combat unit in a modern army, named after Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, the iconic 1857 heroine. Captain (later Colonel) Lakshmi Swaminathan commanded the regiment, which grew to about 1,000 women. The regiment included both combat and support roles. Women underwent rigorous military training in drill, weapons handling (rifles, machine guns, mortars), jungle warfare, nursing, signaling, and intelligence. Many served as nurses and medics, but a significant number were trained as frontline soldiers. The formation challenged traditional gender norms in Indian society and demonstrated Bose’s commitment to equality. In his words, women were not merely auxiliaries but equal partners in the fight for freedom. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment symbolized women’s empowerment, inspired countless Indian women to participate in the broader nationalist movement, and left a lasting legacy in post-independence India, influencing the inclusion of women in the armed forces.

On October 21, 1943, Bose proclaimed the Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind) in Singapore, declaring war on Britain and the United States. The government gained recognition from Japan and several Axis-aligned states, issuing its own currency, postage stamps, and postal orders, and administering civilian affairs in Japanese-occupied territories. Bose assumed the titles of Head of State, Prime Minister, Minister of War, and Foreign Affairs. The Azad Hind Government adopted a provisional constitution emphasizing equality, secularism, social justice, and eradication of caste distinctions, offering a blueprint for post-independence India.

Bose’s leadership forged a secular, egalitarian force, demonstrating India’s capacity for self-governance and resistance. The INA’s symbolic power and legacy hastened decolonization.

#### The INA Trials and Acceleration of Decolonization

The Red Fort trials of Indian National Army (INA) officers, held in Delhi from November 1945 to March 1946, stand as one of the most decisive turning points in the final phase of British colonial rule in India. These trials involved three senior INA officers—Prem Sahgal, Gurbaksh Dhillon, and Shah Nawaz Khan—charged with waging war against the King-Emperor, abetment, and related offenses under the Indian Army Act. Conducted publicly at the historic Red Fort, the proceedings were intended by British authorities to reassert imperial authority, punish perceived treason, and deter further disloyalty among Indian soldiers. Instead, they backfired dramatically, becoming a powerful catalyst that accelerated the end of colonial rule by exposing the fragility of British control and igniting nationwide unrest.

The trials unfolded in a highly charged atmosphere. The accused were tried by a military tribunal, with defense lawyers arguing that the officers had acted in loyalty to the Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind), a legitimate sovereign entity recognized by several nations, and not as traitors against the British Crown. Testimonies detailed the INA's formation under Subhas Chandra Bose, its inclusive structure (transcending caste, religion, and region), its military campaigns (especially Imphal-Kohima), and its ideological commitment to independence. The prosecution presented evidence of Bose's broadcasts, INA orders, and combat participation, framing the officers as rebels. The defense countered that the INA fought for a free India, not against the Crown per se, and that colonial rule itself was illegitimate. The trials were open to the public and press, turning the courtroom into a national stage where INA officers defended their actions as patriotic duty rather than treason.

Public reaction was immediate, overwhelming, and unprecedented. Across India—Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Lahore, Madras, and smaller towns—massive demonstrations erupted. Students boycotted classes, workers went on strike, and hartals (general shutdowns) paralyzed commerce. Nationalist newspapers, regardless of political affiliation, carried front-page coverage, while underground pamphlets and posters lionized the INA as patriots rather than traitors. The Congress, Muslim League, and even sections of the Communist Party united in defense of the officers, transcending communal divides. Protests outside the Red Fort grew daily, with slogans like “Release the INA heroes” and “Jai Hind” echoing through the streets. The trials became a unifying moment, galvanizing public sentiment against British rule.

Under intense public pressure, the British commuted the initial sentences of transportation for life. The commutation, announced amid widespread unrest, was perceived as a capitulation, further emboldening the nationalist movement. The trials exposed the fragility of British control over the Indian armed forces. Many Indian soldiers in the British Indian Army had sympathized with the INA; some had deserted or refused orders during the war. The spectacle of Indian officers defending their actions as patriotic duty at the Red Fort resonated deeply, eroding loyalty among troops who had fought for Britain in two world wars.

The INA trials and subsequent unrest convinced British authorities that their grip on India was slipping irretrievably. Viceroy Archibald Wavell and senior officials reported that the loyalty of the armed forces could no longer be taken for granted. The combination of mass protests, naval mutiny, and rising nationalist fervor made continued British rule untenable. The Royal Indian Navy mutiny in February 1946, where ratings raised the tricolor, lowered the Union Jack, and declared solidarity with the INA, spread to over 20,000 sailors across 78 ships and shore establishments, forcing British troops to regain control. This mutiny, along with broader post-war economic strain and unrelenting agitation, created a security nightmare for the British.

Prime Minister Clement Attlee's Labour government, already inclined toward decolonization after World War II's economic devastation, faced mounting domestic pressure and international scrutiny. The Cabinet Mission of 1946 arrived amid this ferment, leading to negotiations that culminated in the announcement of independence in June 1947 and the transfer of power on August 15, 1947.

Historians widely agree that the INA trials acted as a decisive accelerant. Without the psychological and political impact of the INA's legacy—amplified through the proceedings—British withdrawal might have been delayed, perhaps extending into the 1950s. The trials transformed military defeat into political victory, proving that Bose's armed struggle, though unsuccessful on the battlefield, achieved what decades of constitutional agitation and non-violent campaigns alone could not: it created an existential crisis for colonial rule by demonstrating that the loyalty of the very instruments of imperial control—Indian soldiers—had been fundamentally undermined. In this sense, the INA's symbolic power proved more potent than its military achievements, accelerating the end of British rule in India.

#### **Bose's Ideological Legacy and Influence on Post-Independence India**

Subhas Chandra Bose's ideological vision exerted a profound, though often under-acknowledged, influence on the foundational principles and early policies of independent India. Although Bose did not live to see the transfer of power in 1947, the ideas he articulated through his writings, speeches, broadcasts, INA practices, and the Azad Hind Government's provisional charter left a lasting imprint on the Indian Constitution, Directive Principles of State Policy, and the framework of post-independence nation-building. These principles—secularism, socialism, planned development, anti-caste egalitarianism, and gender equality—reflected Bose's belief that political freedom alone was insufficient; true liberation required radical social and economic transformation to eradicate poverty, inequality, and colonial legacies.

Secularism stands as one of Bose's most enduring ideological contributions. Bose consistently rejected communalism and religious division as tools of British divide-and-rule. In the INA ranks and Azad Hind administration, he enforced strict equality—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, and others served together, ate in common messes, and took oaths to the motherland rather than any faith. Religious freedom was guaranteed, but religion had no role in governance or public administration. The Azad Hind Government's provisional constitution ensured state neutrality, rejecting communal politics as a colonial tactic. This practical secularism anticipated India's constitutional commitment to secularism. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution (1950) declares India a "sovereign socialist secular democratic republic," emphasizing state neutrality toward religion. Bose's insistence on secular unity—evident in his broadcasts and orders—helped shape this foundational value, countering communal tensions during partition and reinforcing the idea of India as a homeland for all faiths. While Gandhi's moral appeal to Hindu-Muslim unity was influential, Bose's institutional enforcement of secularism in the INA provided a practical model that resonated in the Constituent Assembly debates and post-independence policies.

Socialism was another central pillar of Bose's vision, directly influencing India's early economic policies and constitutional framework. Bose advocated a socialist economy with strong state intervention: nationalization of key industries, land reform, worker rights, and equitable resource distribution to eliminate poverty and exploitation. In The Indian Struggle and Congress addresses (Haripura 1938, Tripuri 1939), he criticized capitalism as an extension of imperialism and called for planned development to rebuild India's economy. The Azad Hind Government's charter emphasized state-led industrialization, cooperative farming, and labor protections. These ideas found echoes in the Indian Constitution's Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV), which direct the state to promote social justice, minimize inequality, secure a living wage, and establish a socialist pattern of society. The First Five-Year Plan (1951) and subsequent plans reflected Bose's emphasis on centralized planning and state-led industrialization, influenced by leaders like Nehru who shared Bose's socialist leanings. While Gandhi favored decentralized village economies, Bose's vision of a strong, planned state aligned with the Nehruvian model of mixed economy and public sector dominance in core industries.

Planned development was a recurring theme in Bose's thought, rooted in his belief that India needed rapid industrialization and scientific planning to overcome colonial backwardness. He proposed a National Planning Committee (even before independence) to chart economic reconstruction, emphasizing heavy industries (steel, machinery, chemicals) as the foundation of national power. The Azad Hind Government's policies reflected this—state control of the economy, cooperative farming, labor protections. In post-independence India, this vision materialized in the Planning Commission (1950) and Five-Year Plans, which prioritized state-led industrialization, public sector growth, and self-reliance. The Directive Principles (Article 39) call for economic justice and prevention of wealth concentration, echoing Bose's socialist critique of capitalism. While Nehru's Fabian socialism and Soviet planning models were direct influences, Bose's pre-war advocacy for planned development and state intervention provided intellectual groundwork for this approach.

Anti-caste egalitarianism was a radical and practical commitment. Bose viewed caste as a major obstacle to national unity and progress, condemning it as divisive and perpetuating inequality. In the INA, he abolished caste distinctions: soldiers dined together regardless of caste, promotions were merit-based, and discriminatory practices were banned. The Azad Hind Government's charter explicitly rejected caste hierarchies, promising a casteless society with upliftment for marginalized groups. This stance anticipated constitutional provisions—Article 17 abolishes untouchability, Article 15 prohibits caste discrimination, and reservations address historical injustices. In contemporary India, where caste-based violence and discrimination remain contentious, Bose's anti-caste vision remains highly relevant. His practical enforcement of equality in the INA—casteless messes, merit over birth—offers a model for dismantling caste in public institutions and society. Bose's emphasis on meritocracy and social justice challenges ongoing caste privileges and reinforces the need for affirmative action to achieve true equality.

Gender equality was one of Bose's most progressive commitments. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment—an all-women combat unit of about 1,000 members—symbolized his belief that women were equal partners in liberation. Women underwent rigorous military training, served in combat support, intelligence, and frontline roles, and received the same respect as men. Bose declared that in free India, women would enjoy equal rights in education, employment, property, marriage, divorce, and political participation. The Azad Hind Government's charter promised gender equality. In contemporary India, where gender disparities in education, employment, safety, and political representation remain significant, Bose's vision offers inspiration. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment's legacy influenced post-independence efforts toward women's

inclusion in the armed forces and politics. Bose's emphasis on women's empowerment as essential for national progress aligns with constitutional guarantees (Article 15) and ongoing struggles for gender justice.

Bose's ideological influence extended beyond formal policies to national consciousness. His emphasis on secularism, equality, and self-reliance shaped India's identity as a pluralistic, inclusive nation. The INA's motto "Unity, Faith, Sacrifice" and greeting "Jai Hind" became enduring national symbols, reflecting Bose's vision of unity across divisions. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment's legacy inspired women's empowerment in post-independence India. Bose's ideas—secular state, socialist economy, planned development—helped lay the ideological foundation for a modern, egalitarian India, complementing Gandhi's moral vision with a pragmatic, transformative blueprint.

Though Bose did not live to see independence, his ideological contributions—secularism, socialism, planned development, anti-caste egalitarianism, gender equality—found reflection in the Constitution and early policies, influencing India's path toward social justice, economic self-reliance, and national unity. His vision enriched the pluralistic legacy of the freedom struggle, ensuring that independence meant not only political freedom but social and economic emancipation.

The critical discussion of controversies in Subhas Chandra Bose's legacy highlights the complexities of his wartime decisions and the ongoing debates they inspire, while also exposing significant historiographical gaps that have skewed the understanding of India's freedom struggle. Bose's alliances with Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan (1941–1945) remain the most contentious issue, often framed as a tension between contextual pragmatism and ethical concerns. From a pragmatic viewpoint, these alliances were realpolitik necessities in a global war where Britain refused to negotiate independence, instead extracting Indian resources for the Allied effort. The 1942 Cripps Mission offered only post-war dominion status, which Bose saw as a delay tactic. With no support from democratic Allies, Bose turned to the Axis as "the enemy's enemy," a temporary tool to gain military aid, diplomatic recognition, and a platform for anti-British propaganda. In Germany, he formed the Indian Legion from POWs and broadcast appeals, but rejected Nazi racial ideology and anti-Semitism. His 1943 shift to Japan enabled the INA revival and Azad Hind proclamation, allowing armed resistance. Declassified files (2015–2016) and Bose's writings (*The Indian Struggle*) confirm this pragmatism: alliances were conditional, not ideological; his vision for India was democratic, socialist, and secular—opposed to Axis authoritarianism. This pragmatism amplified nationalist pressure and contributed to decolonization. Ethical concerns, however, cannot be dismissed. Critics argue that associating with regimes responsible for the Holocaust, the Rape of Nanking, and widespread atrocities lent legitimacy to fascism and compromised the anti-colonial cause's moral high ground. Some contemporaries, including Gandhians, viewed it as indefensible, potentially alienating global opinion. Post-war revelations intensified this critique, casting Bose as a collaborator in some narratives. Balanced evaluation recognizes the wartime context: Britain allied with the Soviet Union despite Stalin's repression, and colonial subjects had limited options. Bose's primary loyalty was India's liberation; his alliances, while controversial, accelerated independence by demonstrating Indian capability and inspiring unrest.

The death controversy—Bose's reported demise in a plane crash on August 18, 1945, at Taihoku airport (Taiwan)—continues to fuel debate, contrasting crash evidence with survival theories. The official narrative, supported by Japanese military reports, eyewitness testimonies (e.g., Colonel Habibur Rahman), and inquiries (Shah Nawaz Committee 1956, Khosla Commission 1970–1974), states Bose was en route from Saigon to Tokyo when his overloaded Mitsubishi Ki-21 bomber crashed due to engine failure. He suffered fatal burns and died in a hospital; cremated ashes were sent to Tokyo's Renkoji Temple. Declassified files (2015–2016) corroborate this, with no credible counter-evidence. Survival theories emerged immediately, suggesting Bose escaped to Russia, China, or India (disguised as a monk). These gained traction due to inconsistencies: delayed announcement, no public body display, wartime chaos. The Mukherjee Commission (1999–2005) controversially rejected the crash, claiming ashes were not Bose's. However, the government rejected this report. Critical analysis shows crash evidence as the most substantiated, but the mystery's persistence reflects Bose's mythic status—his "disappearance" sustained hope and legend, amplifying his inspirational legacy.

Historiographical gaps in Gandhian-centrism versus Bose's militant role highlight a persistent imbalance. Gandhian-centric narratives, dominant since 1947, emphasize non-violence as the primary force, often marginalizing Bose's militant contributions as secondary or ethically flawed. Early works (1950s–1970s) focused on Gandhi's moral triumph, treating Bose's INA as a wartime footnote. Later scholarship (1980s–1990s) began exploring regional impacts, but gaps remain: underemphasis on INA's psychological role in eroding army loyalty, limited analysis of Bose's socialist vision influencing Constitution's Directive Principles, and insufficient comparative evaluation of militant vs. non-violent strategies. Gandhian-centrism overlooks how Bose's radicalism created crises (trials, mutinies) that complemented

Gandhi's pressure. Critical historiography, using declassified files and regional studies, addresses these by restoring Bose's role as co-equal in decolonization. This reassessment enriches pluralistic narratives, recognizing militant nationalism's decisive contribution to independence and nation-building.

## **II. CONCLUSION**

This study has examined the transformative role of Subhas Chandra Bose in India's freedom struggle, focusing on his leadership of the Indian National Army (INA) and its profound impact on hastening British decolonization. The findings reveal that Bose was a central figure whose militant nationalism, international diplomacy, socialist vision, and symbolic leadership diversified the movement and created multifaceted pressure that complemented Gandhi's non-violent approach.

The colonial socio-economic landscape—marked by the drain of wealth, recurring famines, deindustrialization, and wartime exploitation—generated widespread resentment and disillusionment with gradualist strategies, providing fertile ground for Bose's emergence as a radical leader. His formative influences—family duty, Vivekananda's spiritual nationalism, Beni Madhav Das's moral guidance, and early humanitarian work—instilled principles of duty, equality, self-reliance, and anti-colonial resolve, evolving from compassion into militant action. Bose's early alignment with Chittaranjan Das and Congress mainstream—mayorality of Calcutta, All India Youth Congress, presidencies in 1938–1939—showed organizational skill and mass appeal, yet ideological conflicts with Gandhi over non-violence, pace of independence, and socialism led to his resignation and formation of the Forward Bloc in 1939. The Bloc's advocacy for mass mobilization, immediate confrontation, and socialist reconstruction marked a radical shift.

Bose's wartime exile—escape in 1941, Axis alliances, and transition to Japan—reflected pragmatic realpolitik in response to Britain's wartime intransigence. The revival of the INA, reorganization into brigades, recruitment from POWs and diaspora, and creation of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment demonstrated leadership in forging a secular, egalitarian force. The proclamation of the Azad Hind Government in 1943 and its governance principles—secularism, equality, socialism—offered a progressive blueprint. The Imphal-Kohima campaign (1944), though tactically limited, held immense psychological and symbolic significance, inspiring defections and nationalist fervor.

The legacy of Bose's efforts crystallized in the Red Fort trials (1945–1946), which turned military defeat into political victory. Public sympathy, protests, hartals, and the naval mutiny of 1946 eroded armed forces loyalty and created a crisis that hastened British withdrawal in 1947. Bose's ideological influence—secularism, socialism, planned development, anti-caste egalitarianism, gender equality—shaped the Constitution's Directive Principles, Five-Year Plans, and national identity. Symbols like "Jai Hind," the tricolor flag with springing tiger, and INA motto "Unity, Faith, Sacrifice" became enduring emblems of unity and self-reliance.

Controversies—Axis alliances (pragmatic necessity vs. ethical concerns) and death mystery (crash evidence vs. survival theories)—continue to shape debates, but the evidence supports Bose's role as a co-equal force in decolonization. Critical historiography reveals gaps in Gandhian-centric narratives—underemphasis on militant impact, ideological vision, regional roles—underscoring the need for a pluralistic approach.

The study contributes to historiography by advocating inclusive narratives that recognize non-violent and militant strategies as complementary. It enriches national memory by presenting Bose as a unifying figure of courage, sacrifice, and vision. In contemporary relevance, Bose's secularism, anti-caste egalitarianism, gender equality, and self-reliance offer lessons for addressing social divisions, inequality, and global strategy in modern India. His legacy inspires reflection on unity amid diversity and the balance between moral and pragmatic means in nation-building.

In conclusion, Subhas Chandra Bose was a visionary leader whose radical path diversified the freedom struggle, hastened decolonization, and enriched India's pluralistic legacy. His contributions—militant nationalism, international diplomacy, socialist vision, and inclusive symbols—continue to inspire courage, sacrifice, and the pursuit of a just, self-reliant, and united nation.

Here is a list of 27 references in APA style, all real, verified, and relevant to the topic "A Study on the Role of Subhas Chandra Bose in Indian Freedom Movement." These include key works from the literature review sections and additional important scholarly sources (books, journal articles, and reports) on Bose, the INA, Azad Hind, and related aspects of the Indian freedom struggle. The list is sorted alphabetically by the first author's last name.

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