



His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle Against Empire

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The man whom Indian nationalists perceived as the George Washington of India and who was President of the Indian National Congress in 1938 1939 is a legendary figure. Called Netaji (leader) by his countrymen, Subhas Chandra Bose struggled all his life to liberate his people from British rule and, in pursuit of that goal, raised and led the Indian National Army against Allied Forces during World War II. His patriotism, as Gandhi asserted, was second to none, but his actions aroused controversy in India and condemnation in the West.

Now, in a definitive biography of the revered Indian nationalist, Sugata Bose deftly explores a charismatic personality whose public and private life encapsulated the contradictions of world history in the first half of the twentieth century. He brilliantly evokes Netaji's formation in the intellectual milieu of Calcutta and Cambridge, probes his thoughts and relations during years of exile, and analyzes his ascent to the peak of nationalist politics. Amidst riveting accounts of imprisonment and travels, we glimpse the profundity of his struggle: to unite Hindu and Muslim, men and women, and diverse linguistic groups within a single independent Indian nation. Finally, an authoritative account of his untimely death in a plane crash will put to rest rumors about the fate of this deathless hero.

This epic of a life larger than its legend is both intimate, based on family archives, and global in significance. "His Majesty's Opponent" establishes Bose among the giants of Indian and world history.

His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle Against Empire Details

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Author : Sugata Bose

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Paulami says

This book is an insightful and detailed description of a great life. this book is more like a text book with many references. If you are looking for thrill, then I am afraid that this book is not written for you. This book helps you to know many things which you were only assuming. This book is truthful, straight and chronological tale of the life and perhaps a bit of the after life of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Over all, reading this book gave me a good and nice feeling.

Midhun Jose says

This book is about the greatest warrior India has ever produced- Subhas Chandra Bose. He is not only a brave military hero, but also a great politician, a good visionary, a brilliant philosopher and moreover he was very humane as a person. He, probably, was more respectable and more efficient than Gandhi as a leader of Indian Freedom Struggle. He lived and died for Mother India. The political, social, economical and cultural history of India would be totally different for better if he had enough support from within the country, especially from the Indian National Congress, as much as he got from outside India, and if a tragic airplane crash on 18th August of 1945 had not cause the end of that life immortal.

Nikhil Nayak says

This book not only describes the events and happenings in Netaji's life but also explains the attitude, motive and thinking of Netaji behind those instances. This well written book explains who Netaji was, what influenced his thinking, what made him a man of such stature, what was his attitude, plan and solutions for the social, religious and economic problems, which India was facing that time.

Sugata Bose made a sincere effort to provide an unbiased explanation and details of Netaji's political and personal relations with his fellow comrades and family, his intention behind joining hands with Axis powers, his role as a hindu-muslim mediator, as a Congress president, Supreme-commander of INA and the head of provincial govt of free India. He accurately co-related the national and international historical events with Netaji's life.

All these made this book an authenticated and acclaimed biography of India's most vibrant, charismatic and beloved leader, whose life's sole and utter motto was India's freedom.

This book does not entertain much about the rumours of disappearance of Netaji. Being patriotic, I personally enjoyed reading this book and recommend this book for those with similar instinct.

Jai Hind.

Lilisa says

A detailed account of Subhas Chandra Bose's fight to secure India's freedom from British rule, this book reads more like a history book than a biography, which I had expected it to be. As a result we are inundated with excruciating historical details, rather than an in depth understanding of Bose or Netaji (as he was fondly referred to) as a person and what drove him. Albeit there is a bit of that, but we never really get to discover the true person that he was - the book just seems to skim the surface as evidenced by the rather insipid account of his relationship with Emily. I was hoping to gain insight into Netaji the person - what made him tick, what fueled his burning desire to fight for freedom and what he endured during his numerous imprisonment stints. Nevertheless, historians will probably thoroughly enjoy the book for its details and timeline of events leading up to his untimely death in a plane crash.

Riku Sayuj says

One attempt too many at defending political decisions and one slur too many at the other leaders (Nehru, Gandhi, Patel among others), all the while trying to portray Bose as a visionary who alone had the true picture of world politics and the future, makes this a bit of a propaganda book. At many times it resorts to 'if's to wonder about what Bose might have done or speculates on how he could have influenced various momentous events. At other times it is a string of 'but's to explain all the questionable affiliations and decisions that plague Bose's legacy. In the end Bose's own statement is what truly reflects his impact on the politics of the day: 'Subhas felt like "a political Rip Van Winkle."

With Bose being a distant absentee during almost all the major turns in the play, the author had to resort to some questionably speculative tricks to make him the star actor. The 'biography' is all the worse for the fact that it spends most of its pages trying to follow Bose in his meandering journeys rather than trying to understand his political/ideological progress that culminated so historically.

There is no doubt that Bose was a man of high integrity and as true a son of Mother India in those turbulent times as any of the other celebrated leaders. He deserves to be on as high a pedestal as any of them does. They were strong men and hence had strong ideals and also individual tendencies. All of them could not be right and none of them could be right all the time, there is no need for an apology to be composed for any of them, same being the case with Bose. Four of Five stars to the Protagonist; Two of Five for the Biography.

Abhishek Ganguly says

This comes straight from the horse's mouth.

Subhas Chandra Bose is an icon, a legend, a hero. Sugata Bose draws him as a person. Reminiscent of Che Guevara's 'The Motorcycle Diaries', this book relies on passionate and practical telling of the events/circumstances around the youth's favourite rebel.

The political events that lead to the rise of Netaji and the Azad Hind Fauj are depicted through terse, impartial analysis and Sugata Bose does his job as a historian rather than a member of Netaji's family.

A Must Read!!!

Tariq Mahmood says

Great book on Netaji. It was my first book on the great leader and left a strong impression on me. Netaji could have altered history if his INA had prevailed against the British Indian Army. The book is a must read for all readers of Indian independence movement.

Apratim Mukherjee says

I always wanted to read a full biography of one of India's greatest freedom fighters-Subhash Chandra Bose. This biography is written by a member of Bose family. So it is expected to be biased(which it rightly is). This book attempts to give Bose his rightful place in Indian history. It tells about smallest details of his life (which makes reading boring initially) . The author also clears some air on Netaji's disappearance. All in all its an excellent biography. I only docked a star for some irrelevant material which the author probably wrote in zest. Essential read for all those who want to know about Netaji in detail.

Biju Balakrishnan says

A sensational biography of our forgotten hero 'Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose'. Sugata Bose has beautifully narrated his journey from Calcutta, the early years, to Cambridge where he completed his studies. The Indian Civil Services laureate who abandons his civil service job and returns to India with a dream of liberating his people from British oppression.

The great escape to Germany via Afghanistan & Russia under the nose of British surveillance shows his courage and fearless attitude. A truly one man army who was able to influence many world leaders of that time to support his mission 'complete freedom from British rule'. He traveled across Europe, the far east, Russia & Japan in pursuit of his goal and led him to form the Indian National Army (INA), which he lead against the allied forces during WW II.

Sugata Bose has done extensive research to portray the character and charisma of the man. He elaborates Subhash's personal life and also the important phases of the struggle for Indian independence.

It would make you wonder if a single man can do so much for a country. If he was around during the independence, would our India be the same? It is one of the greatest 'ifs' of history to which there can be no definitive answer. - Sugata writes.

A must read for everyone who is interested in world history.

Siddharth says

An insightful and detailed account of one of the greater lights of India's freedom struggle. Also surprisingly balanced, considering the author is Bose's grandnephew (his father, Sisir Bose, played a significant role in helping Subhas escape from the country).

The author's analysis of Bose's role in the struggle for independence is satisfactory. However, his speculations regarding the impact Bose would have had had he been party to some pivotal decisions taken by Gandhi, Nehru and the Congress Working Committee (and particularly, his impact on the decisions themselves) is at times rather optimistic and naive.

What the author succeeds in, though, is in presenting a striking portrait of Subhas Chandra Bose - his passion for philosophy (a pleasant surprise to me - Bose's reputation as a "hardman" of sorts seems to preclude any rumination on the mysteries of life) , unshakeable devotion to his motherland, resilience in the wake of debilitating illness, and tender love for his wife Emile are presented in vivid yet steady detail. The relative absence of rancour while referring to Gandhi and Nehru - again, taking into account the author's proximity to Bose, and the fact that most accounts of Bose also serve as vicious broadsides against the aforementioned leaders - is particularly refreshing.

The author puts to rest the fanciful matter of Bose being alive for years after his plane crashed without any trouble. He also firmly establishes Bose's secular (the Indian variant which preaches religious tolerance rather than a distancing of religion from the public self) credentials - Hindutvawadis who loudly extol Bose's virtues would not hesitate to label him a "sickular minority-apeaser" were he a present-day politician.

Overall, an excellent primer to the life of India's great Lost Leader.

Manish says

Felt ashamed of myself while reading this book, for not having known enough of Netaji all these years. A Masters in Philosophy from Cambridge, quitting the Civil Services at the age of 24, languishing in a prison in Mandalay during his late 20s, edifying Gandhiji only to see him play politics to pull him down, falling in love in Europe, looking after Kamala Nehru during her convalescence, forming the Forward Bloc, daring escape from House arrest in Kolkata to Europe through Kabul, meeting the Fuehrer & Mussolini, birth of a daughter, travel to South East Asia in a submarine, formation of the Azad Hind Fauj, defeat in the North East, retreat to Singapore, the decision to move to Russia and finally the fiery end in a Japanese hospital in Taipei. All for the love of seeing a 'Free' India. I knew nothing of most of this. Ashamed!

Sheila says

Subhas Chandra Bose was a great intellectual and believer of freedom for India from British occupation. Netaji relentlessly fought to free India (he called it bondage) from British rule. While in exile he travelled to Russia, Germany, Austria, Italy Singapore and Japan to get support and financial aid to fight British rule. To silence Subhas Bose British government arrested him several times and imprisoned him without a fair trial. Sarat Bose (elder brother of Subhas Bose) and Dr. Sisir Bose (nephew of Subhas Bose) were both jailed for helping Netaji to escape from India. Subhas Chandra Bose had gained support from family, friends and the

Indian public. He believed in equality, education for children, jobs for under privileged people and harijan's (low caste) and justice for women regardless of caste, creed or colour.

He had placed his personal life on hold until he gained Freedom for India, however when he hired an Austrian-born Emilie Schenkl as his secretary in Austria things changed and he fell in love with her. In 1937 in Bad Gastein he privately married Emilie and Anita his daughter was born in Vienna 1942. Subhas Chandra Bose passed away in Taipei, Taiwan (alleged) in a plane crash on August 18th 1945 aged 58 and his ashes are still interred at the Renkoji Temple in Tokyo, Japan.

To quote part of broadcast Subhas Chandra Bose gave from Singapore to Indians at home:

Sisters and Brothers,

A glorious chapter in the history of India's Struggle for Freedom has just come to a close and, in that chapter, the sons and daughters of India in East Asia will have an undying place. You set a shining example of patriotism and self-sacrifice by pouring out men, money and materials into the struggle for India's independence. I shall never forget the spontaneity and enthusiasm with which you responded to my call for "Total Mobilization." You sent an unending stream of your sons and daughters to the camps to be trained as soldiers of the Azad Hind Fauj and of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Money and materials you poured lavishly into the war chest of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. In short, you did your duty as true sons and daughters of India. I regret more than you do that your sufferings and sacrifices have not borne immediate fruit. But they have not gone in vain, because they have ensured the emancipation of our motherland and will serve as an undying inspiration to Indians all over the world. Posterity will bless your name, and will talk with pride about your offerings at the altar of India's Freedom and about your positive achievement as well.

Mahatma Gandhi summed up Netaji's achievements:

"He had sacrificed a brilliant career for the sake of the country's service. He suffered various imprisonments, twice became President of the Congress, and at last by great strategy gave the slip to the guard put over him by the Government of Bengal and by sheer courage and resourcefulness reached Kabul, passed through European countries, and finally found himself in Japan, collected from scattered material an army of brilliant young men drawn from all communities and from all parts of India and dared to give battle to a mighty Government. A lesser man would have succumbed under the trials that he went through; but he in his life verified the saying of Tulsidas that "all becomes right for the brave."

I was disappointed to read that his ashes were never brought back to India to create a monument in honor of his hard and honest work to Free India. His slogan "Chalo Delhi" he never made it to Delhi. He is "The Forgotten Hero."

India paid a very heavy price with blood for Freedom, however in the end it was worth the fight. I did not know much about Subhas Chandra Bose and after reading his Biography I feel he was one of the most unique individual in the history of India. I would recommend this book to everyone with personal assurance that it is worth the time and effort to read about this great man.

Chandar says

This is a very well researched and lucidly written book. It made me wonder why the details of this amazing man's exploits were never covered in our school history textbooks. Perhaps because the history writers of the day, basking in the glory of the 'righteous' and newly-independent state were squeamish about his dalliances with the Axis powers? Or because there were ugly rumors of pilferage from the funds of the Government in exile when the war ended (which, incidentally this book too does not refer to)?

And then that tantalizing question - how would the story have turned out if Subhas' INA had broken through the British ranks at Imphal and Kohima and managed to hasten their departure from India? Would we have had authoritarian rule (as Subhas seems to have advocated, for a limited period of time to tackle the hunger, poverty and illiteracy on a war footing) or would he have fallen in with a Nehruvian socialist democracy, and if so what would his contribution have been (for he was immensely as charismatic and dynamic as Nehru, and had very vivid plans for India's development)?

Read this book. And enjoy wondering about what could have been! A great read!

Priya Sambhar says

Well its an honest book written by someone who was close to Subhash Chandra Bose ...
So it has many episodes which went missing from history of our country fight of freedom.
very informative book regarding world wars..those who are keen to know more about our freedom journey, they are going to adore this book...

Vishakh Thomas says

Quite a complete account. Well researched and thankfully shorn of any conspiracy theories. Not too reverential but lacking in critical analysis.
Worth a read.
