

The modern media claims that Japan's war against Europeans and Americans 70 years ago was merely an extension of the global "aggressive war" that was World War II. However, a closer look at the Greater East Asia War will demonstrate that it was in fact an Asian struggle against Western colonialism. A show of Asian unity was the Tokyo Greater East Asia Conference held on November 5 and 6, 1943. Surya Kumar Bose commemorated the attendance of his granduncle, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the Head of State of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and the Supreme Commander of the Indian National Army, at that meeting in a speech given on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Greater East Asia Conference. The aim of the Conference was to declare a new order in East Asia, an order that was free of Western colonialism and to start a new era with Asians in full control of their own destiny. Given her historical and cultural significance, India was seen as pivotal to Asian freedom. Indeed, Prime Minister of Burma Dr. Baw Maw, who spoke at the Conference, emphatically stated: "Asia... cannot be truly free unless India is also free".

Netaji pointed out the long-standing bonds of friendship between India and Japan and based on these ties, it was natural for both countries to cooperate. India received Japan's full support in her struggle for independence from British domination by aiding the Indian National Army.

A widespread misconception of the Greater East Asia Conference is that it was merely war-time theater. Reading Netaji's speeches, however, one can feel his emotional intensity and readily see that the modern perception is sheer nonsense. Netaji stated that the Conference was not all like previous Western attempts to bring stability to the world—rather, those conferences were merely designed to maintain European and American dominance. In stark contrast, the Greater East Asia Conference centered around "liberated nations" creating a "new order" in Asia "on the basis of the sacred principles of justice, national sovereignty, reciprocity and mutual aid and assistance". Indeed, Netaji envisioned for India a society free from "not only political bondage" but also "economic and social bondage" and a society in which all Indians regardless of religion, caste or gender can participate. His "universalist" vision for India was consistent with "Indian thought and culture" and he further hoped that such a vision encompasses the world. Perhaps it was this vision of universalist freedom that frightened and upset European and American colonialists at the time. It is truly amazing that there are those that still demonize Netaji, his struggle to overthrow British rule and his association with Japan, yet they remain silent concerning British atrocities during the soul-crushing era of occupation. As Surya Kumar Bose noted, in the end, "Subhas Chandra Bose certainly lost in battle but he won the war for Indian independence." Today, free India and Japan do in fact have "lasting and strategic partnerships". We are indebted to Surya Kumar Bose for conveying Netaji's words from 70 years ago to a modern audience.