

Chapter 4 Inherited intent on “independence”

The outbreak of the Greater East Asian War and the establishment of the Indian Independence League

Behari Bose published many books in Japan. Although they are not popularly read today, all of them are historically valuable documents, appealing to the Japanese people and those in politics, regarding to the British oppression in India and the Indian resistance movement against it. Moreover, Behari Bose regarded the struggle between Asia and the West as mental and philosophical conflict, as Okakura Tenshin and Tagore did.

Asia is the mother of many peoples (all of them are the most important peoples) and the mother of all the important languages in the world, and the mother of the various religions in the world, including Christianity. Even various religions which were disseminated to other continents and achieved great development—Muslim in Asian and American Continents, Judaism in Europe and America and others—also originated in Asia.

The Victory of the Youthful Asia, written by Rash Behari Bose, published by Heibon-sha.

Asia is the birthplace of the world’s five great religions—Judaism, Christianity, Muslim, Hinduism and Buddhism. In addition, alphabet, the decimal system, astronomy, compass, and printing, which have greatly contributed to mankind, all originated in Asia. However, the Western world was supported by colonialism since the Age of Exploration or the Age of Sail and from the British Industrial Revolution onwards, the West developed modern states and capitalism with the machinery culture. The rich Asian Continent was put under the control of Europe and America, and being exploited, Asian people came to feel inferior to the West mentally. Asian people wrongly thought that the Whites are better and stronger than non-Whites. This wrong view was overcome by Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War. Japan’s victory over Russia was not just a military feat. Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War awakened the entire Asia from the coma of passive obedience.

It was at the time of the Russo-Japanese War that the movements to revive Asia arose among countries in this vast Continent. Aiming to liberate their own countries from the oppressive foreign powers, the Turkish Youth Party was established, Persian youths united to achieve independence of their home country, Indian youths got encouraged to fight for their country’s independence, Chinese began dreaming of the government “of the Chinese, for the Chinese and by the Chinese.” All these movements took place soon after the Russo-Japanese War. Other minor Asian countries also awoke from their long coma and began endeavoring to make up for the lost time in order to realize the true humanly progress.

The Victory of the Youthful Asia, written by Rash Behari Bose, published by Heibon-sha

However, Behari Bose emphasized that Asian restoration does not mean that Asian countries become independent so that they may be as strong as Europe and be able to control others.

Asia's mission is completely different from that of Europe. The West used their power and knowledge not for the humankind but for their own selfish purposes and for increasing their own interests, ruthlessly victimizing millions of people. Opposing to the West, free and independent Asia will endeavor, not for our selfish interests, but for the world peace, and happiness and contentment of the entire humankind on earth, regardless of class, principle, color of the skin or religion. The major task of independent Asia is to create a new civilization capable of bringing happiness to the entire humankind.

The Victory of the Youthful Asia, written by Rash Behari Bose, published by Heibon-sha

Thus, Behari Bose continued to speak and work politically with the thought, anticipating the Declaration of the Greater East Asian Conference, the Bandung Conference (the Asian-African Conference) and the ideal of the World Federation.

Behari Bose did not regard Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War simply as the result of excellent war commanders or Japan's successful modernization. Behari Bose travelled across Manchukuo, visited war ruins and the War Memorial Museum at Port Arthur. He wrote that at the museum he was reversely impressed by the exhibited Japanese weapons which were much inferior to Russian weapons. Behari Bose interpreted that materially inferior Japan's victory over Russia demonstrated to the world the truth of "the victory of idealistic civilization over the materialistic civilization," far beyond the concept of the colored peoples' victory over the Whites or Asia's victory over the European colonial regime.

Behari Bose thought the colonialization of India was the very foundation on which Britain and other European countries engaged in colonizing the entire Asia. In principle, Britain's exploitation of Indian riches led Europe to prosperity and brought dishonor to Asia. Therefore, the independence of India did not remain just an Indian issue, but it would bring liberation and independence to the entire Asia and consequently the salvation of the entire world which had been disfigured by Europe. Behari Bose pointed out that at the same time in Europe and America, many people remained unhappy and that there were other countries and peoples that were oppressed as badly as or even worse than Asians. To liberate all those who were suffering was the Asian mission.

I believe that if only India achieves independence, all humans having been abused or exploited by the Whites will be liberated onto the earth of freedom and return to what they are to be in terms of humanity. Through that, we will be able to become perfectly independent Asian Continent.

[Omitted]

In the future of Asians who are to awake to the great spiritual culture and to develop a new civilization based on the greatness of that culture, lies not only the promise of happiness of their own, but also happiness for suffering Europeans and Americans, through the restoration of Asia. Therefore, the mission of the Asians is to be responsible for the entire world population and only when Asians fulfill this mission, Asians will be able to share happiness with the rest of the world.

The Victory of Youthful Asia, written by Rash Behari Bose, published by Heibon-sha

These words prove that Behari Bose's thought is deeply related with Okakura Tenshin's belief of "Asia is one" and Tagore's love of humanity.

The ideal of the two great thinkers Tenshin and Tagore was inherited in Behari Bose in the form of political movement. And based on this ideal, first, Behari Bose tried to unite independence movements outside the country. The most significant political movement Behari Bose led was the formation of the Indian Independence League.

On December 8, 1941, Japan declared war against the United States and Britain and the Greater East Asian War broke out. Taking this occasion for the best opportunity for Indian independence, Indian independence fighters acting in various parts of East Asia rose for the independence. One of the leaders to unite these fighters was A.M. Nair, who founded an Indian restaurant in Ginza, Tokyo. In his autobiography *An Indian Freedom Fighter in Japan*, he firmly stated that it was totally due to Behari Bose that Indian Independence fighters in various parts of Asia were united to form the Indian Independence League and that the Japanese General Headquarters cooperated in their efforts.

What we aimed initially was to organize Indian residents across Southeast Asia, including Japan, and to establish a guiding principle of how to use this drastically changing situation most effectively to promote the liberation of India.

An Indian Freedom Fighter in Japan, written by A.M.Nair, published by Futo-sha.

The mission was to unify various independence movements conducted separately on their own in various regions into a single organized effort and to act uniformly. The man in charge of this mission in Japan was Chief of General Staff Army General Sugiyama Gen. In February 1942, the Indian

Independence League was formed with Headquarters at Room 202, the Sanno Hotel, Akasaka, Tokyo.

Their first task was to request the Japanese military authorities to protect Indian residents in Southeast Asia, where the Japanese Army was remarkably marching, without regarding Indians as enemy nationals. This request was accepted, and the Japanese authorities even instructed them to follow the procedure: to distinguish Indians among local people, just ask “Gandhi?” and if the person nods or shows any sign of affirmative, then treat the person cordially.

And thousands of people came to the Indian Independence League Headquarters in Tokyo for participation and cooperation. However, an agreement was already made among the three, namely, Behari Bose, Nair and Sugiyama. Their principles were as follows:

1) This organization at any time absolutely refrains from acting for the sake of personal interest or profit of individuals or groups, strictly following the concept of “non-insistence task,” 2) Whatever cultural, political or any other name each group has carried hitherto, once the league was established, every member shares the one and same mind, 3) The league acts in the manner of supporting leaders of the Indian National Congress and must not oppose or defame them, 4) No one besides the Indian people is admitted into the league nor participates in the activities, 5) cooperation on the part of the Japanese authorities is necessary and welcome, but we, the league, decide our policy and carry it out on our own, without any interference from others.

An Indian Freedom Fighter in Japan, written by A. M. Nair, published by Futo-sha.

The principles were stated clearly: the national independence movement is solely for the people. Therefore, even if support from other countries is to be rendered, they decide their movement policy on their own and the membership is exclusively for Indian nationals and Japanese are not admitted for membership.

Concurrently, in the battle zones in Southeast Asia, “F Agent” led by Major Fujiwara Iwaichi was in operation and the formation of the Indian National Army was progressing, led by Mohan Singh, an Indian officer mobilized as a member of the British Army.

On February 15, 1942, Singapore fell. Prime Minister Tojo Hideki made a speech at the Japanese Diet to the effect: “Japan will support Indian independence movement, now is the time for the Indians to rise and expel Britain from their land. Japan’s aid is ‘non-insistence support’ and Japan does not have the least intention to rule India.” His speech clearly showed the firm alliance between the Indian Independence League and the Japanese Government.

On March 25, in Tokyo, the Tokyo Conference of the Indian Independence League was held, attended by independence fighters from various regions. The conference was held for three days, and it was decided that the second conference be held very soon in Bangkok, Southeast Asia, closer to the war front. It was also decided that the Indian Independence League Headquarters be moved to Bangkok. The Japanese Army's General Staff Headquarters was to newly organize a larger agent headed by General Iwakuro Hideo for closer coordination, integrating F Agent into the new agent named "Hikari Agent." In principle, details of this new agent were confidential and Behari Bose, Nair and Iwakuro were to decide the basic policy.

On June 15, 1942, the Bangkok conference was held, attended by Behari Bose as chairman and 120 delegates from the Malay Peninsula, Japan, Thailand, China, Manchuria, the Philippines, Borneo and elsewhere. Prime Minister Tojo sent a message. At this conference it was decided that the Indian National Army then under formation be officially put under the command of the Indian Independence League, severed from the single-handed command by Mohan Singh, who tended to be autocratic and arbitrary. The conference ended successfully, among delegates with strong personalities and assertions of their own, solely thanks to Behari Bose's excellent chairmanship well reflecting his humanity, tolerance and straightforwardness not to change the principles to the end.

Based on Bangkok, the Indian Independence League continued their active campaigns toward India, and in India, at the national committee of the Indian National Congress (Congress Party) held in Bangkok on August 8, 1942, they demanded the immediate withdrawal of Britain and adopted "Quit India" resolution, declaring that should Britain refuse to withdraw, they would launch a non-violence national movement throughout India. However, the British authorities immediately arrested National Congress leaders, Ghandhi and Nehru and others, and about sixty thousand people were arrested among protesting citizens. We can see that Japanese Army's advance made a great impact within India.

At that time, the Indian National Army was in Singapore, but due to Mohan Singh's despotic command, there was a total confusion on the scene. Here, too, Behari Bose was trusted to put the Army back in order. When it comes to the Indian National Army, Chandra Bose is always associated with it. However, Nair emphasizes that it was Behari Bose that made the Indian National Army a well-disciplined and competent army. And the Japanese Army separated Indian P.O.W.s from others and spared them hard, physical labor and made them cooperate with the Indian National Army.

Trustworthy Colonel Bhonsle was newly appointed commander of the Indian National Army and competent military men and publicity experts were recruited. The most significant work achieved by

the establishment of the Indian National Army was that they united the Indian people as one nation. The principle of the British rule by division was to divide Indian tribes and religious sects and make Indians compete with one another, and taking advantage of this national division, effectively rule the divided India. Behari Bose prevented conflicts among Indians themselves by uniting India into one.

Rash Behari Bose greatly contributed to reconstructing the Indian National Army and most remarkably he imbued the Indian National Army soldiers with the sense of unity that despite all the diversities Indians are basically one. The Indian National Army consisted of people from various districts, with various religions, habits, customs and personal backgrounds. He succeeded in having these multi-textured people realize that they are one and the same Indians having the same responsibility and power to fight against the British rule, beyond all the differences.

An Indian Freedom Fighter in Japan, written by A. M. Nair, published by Futo-sha.

From Behari Bose to Chandra Bose

Behari Bose was so busy uniting various Indian groups, dealing with certain arbitrary members, negotiating with the Japanese Army and moving restlessly from one place to another in Southeast Asia that his physical conditions got worse and worse with his chronic diabetes. Entering 1943, he became too ill to continue leading the political activities.

From the start, none but Behari Bose could have led the Indian Independence League or independence movements overseas. With the war going on, it was urgent to have someone stand by in case of Bose's absence. Regarding this, from the very early stage (according to his book, at the time immediately after the outbreak of the Greater East Asian War), Nair had been proposing to have Subhas Chandra Bose join them.

Chandra Bose was born in 1897 at Cuttack, Bengal (presently in the state of Odisha). He entered Calcutta University and then he led a students' strike against the British rule and was suspended from the university. Later, he studied abroad at the University of Cambridge. Just like Tagore, he was educated in both Asia and Europe.

From 1921 onwards, Chandra Bose got involved in independence movement more and more.

While respecting Gandhi, he thought that although Gandhi's "non-violence movement" is a holy ideal, when it comes to the independence in reality, they must fight using force, if necessary. With his clear intention on independence and excellent speeches he made, he got strong support from people and worked remarkably as radical left within the Indian National Congress (Bose thought it necessary to adopt a certain socialistic policy in order to save the poor in India), and at one time he was elected

chairman of the Indian National Congress. However, as Bose's influence became too strong, fearing it should invite total confrontation with the British authorities, Gandhi and other leaders had Bose resign from the post and practically placed him in confinement. Under such circumstances, World War II broke out.

Learning that war between Britain and Germany began, India realized that it was a good chance for India to get independent. It was not that Bose was sympathetic with Nazism, but he was determined to team up with whatever powers for the sake of achieving Indian independence. Bose proposed Gandhi and others that they should call on people to rise against Britain throughout the country. But his proposition was turned down for being too dangerous and Bose himself was arrested and put in prison as a dangerous person. In December, 1941, Bose was temporarily released, when he exiled himself in Germany.

However, it was utterly impossible for Bose to be accepted by Nazi Germany, where the colored people were fundamentally segregated. Hitler was not particularly against Britain's rule over India and he hardly cared for Bose, who asked Germany's support for Indian independence many times. As soon as Japan declared war on Britain and the United States, Bose's hope was turned to Japan and after the Indian Independence League was established, Bose came to strongly request his visit to Japan through Japanese Ambassador in Germany Ohshima. To the Indian Independence League and to Japan, equally, Chandra Bose was the very leader, who was well-known and ready to engage in military action at any time. On February 8, 1943, Bose left Germany aboard U-boat, a German Navy's submarine, and on April 27, he changed boats to a Japanese submarine, in the offing to the southeast of Madagascar Island, Africa and arrived at Tokyo on May 15. Despite his poor health, Behari Bose went to Tokyo and met Chandra Bose, thanking him for coming all the way to Japan. Prime Minister Tojo was doubtful about Chandra Bose at first, but he was greatly impressed with Bose's passion and personality at the meeting and announced full support for Bose.

Then, Behari Bose and Chandra Bose flew to Singapore (at that time, the city was called "Shonan-shi" in Japanese) aboard the same plane. On June 4, 1943, at "the Greater East Asian Theater" (Cathay Hall) in the city, delegates' meeting of the Indian Independence League was held, and it was officially announced that the leadership of the Indian Independence League changed hands from Behari Bose to Chandra Bose. Following is the summary of Behari Bose's speech on the occasion:

Gentlemen and armed gallant fighters!

[Omitted]

Today, we are about to enter the most vigorous, decisive phase of our battle for liberation of our

home country.

I am confident. We are now standing at the doorstep of victory.

Gentlemen, it's been a year and a half since we launched our Indian independence movement in East Asia. The most memorable day to decide all our goals, that is, December 8, 1941 is the day when Imperial Japan gallantly rose to draw her sword of justice, destroy American and British imperialism and relieve the Asian peoples from their shackles. Moreover, this historical date of December 8, 1941 is the day to remember as the day that initially made the Indian Independence movement what it is today.

[Omitted]

Within India, the anti-British revolution has been continuing for eleven months. Britain had boasted itself to break this revolution to pieces within days. And yet, they have failed, haven't they? Despite their cruel violence and constraint inflicted on their fighters, they miserably failed.

Outside the Indian boarder, we, Indians living in East Asia, are standing by, ready to supplement and assist democratic efforts made within India.

[Omitted]

His excellency Prime Minister of Imperial Japan Tojo Hideki reemphasized his promise to totally support India in the sacred war to annihilate Anglo-American powers. This was only a few days ago while I was in Tokyo.

[Omitted]

Gentlemen, you now understand the reason why I am so confident about India's victory.

[Omitted]

Therefore, our duty as Indians is truly clear. For the freedom of India, for justice, morality, human living and better and fitter order for mutual exchange, we Indians must contribute our efforts toward the victory of the Axis and fight resolutely.

[Omitted]

The victory of Japan and the Axis means the freedom of India, freedom of 400 million Indians, Asian glitter and the victory of a new world order.

[Omitted]

Gentlemen, armed gallant fighters, next, you may ask me what I have done in Tokyo to our issue and what I have brought here.

What I have brought to you is this. [Facing toward Mr. Subhas] Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose. We need not introduce Mr. Chandra Bose to you, nor to the world anew now. Among Indian youths, he is the symbol of the best, supreme, most respected and equipped with the highest and the best quality. He is second to none as the leader of the entire India resisting to British Imperialism.

He is the supreme leader and at the same time a never-compromising fighter.

[Omitted]

Gentlemen, now is the happiest time of my life. I stand before you with the man, the only one best equipped with our holy mother country's feature and character, devotedly participating in our struggle for free India.

The heart-felt and zealous welcome rendered by 2 million Indians living in East Asia is not yet enough to Mr. Subhas, nor to me, nor to India.

Gentlemen and armed gallant fighters, I now resign from my current post and hereby appoint Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose chairman of the East Asian Indian Independence League. From now on, Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose is your president and the leader of the Indian Independence War.

I am absolutely confident that you all fight and march gallantly toward victory under Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose's leadership.

Bose Exclaims, written by Rash Behari Bose, published by Seiun-do.

All those concerned were deeply impressed by what Behari Bose did on the occasion beyond all praise. The great leader voluntarily and with heart-felt joy and respect yielded the leadership to another, which was rarely seen among independent fighters.

According to Nair's book, Behari Bose seemed not to support Chandra Bose's intention to invade India with the Japanese Army. However, once he yielded his leadership to Chandra Bose, Behari Bose never once opposed or meddled with Chandra Bose publicly, except offering personal advice.

After he peacefully yielded the leadership to the other, Behari Bose returned to Japan and his already

poor health further deteriorated. What with the defeat in the Battle of Imphal and worsening battle situation, Behari Bose wrote a courageous poem at the beginning of his last book *Bose Exclaims* (published by Seiun-do):

I hereby solemnly pledge,
Whatever great hardships may be coming,
I will never rest not a moment, night and day,
Until the day when the flag of liberty flies over our homeland,
Until the day when the flag of liberty is hoisted by our hands.

I hereby solemnly pledge,
Whatever fearful hardships may be coming,
I gladly sacrifice myself.
Now is the time to reward my beloved country.
With my might, I will remove hardships from my home country.

I hereby solemnly pledge,
Whatever great hardships may be coming,
I will cooperate in annihilating the enemy,
I will free my beloved country crying under unhappy shackles,
I will break violent Britain's shackles.

I hereby solemnly pledge,
Whatever fearful hardships may be coming,
I will gladly follow the call, never looking back,
I will expel the enemy with my hands,
When the enemy comes to our land over the sea.

I hereby solemnly pledge,
Whatever great hardships may be coming,
Deserting my children, my wife, all that I possess,
I will fulfill my pledge, devoting everything I possess,
For my beloved country,
Because I am her child.

Bose Exclaims, written by Rash Behari Bose, published by Seiun-do.

This poem seemingly shows that Behari Bose dedicated this heroic poem to his homeland, India and Japan. In January 1945, Behari Bose passed away. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in June of the same year, his and his beloved wife Toshiko's son Masahide was killed in action during the Battle of Okinawa. Behari Bose and his family dedicated all they had to the movement for the independence of India and the liberation of Asia, building a great bridge between Japan and India.

Behari Bose's remarkable achievements owe much to old Mr. Touyama Mitsuru and Mr. and Mrs. Souma and many other Japanese who supported him. Particularly, the fact that the Soumas had their daughter Toshiko marry Behari Bose is simply amazing beyond words. Who on earth would gladly have their daughter marry to a prospectless, insecure Indian on the run who was wanted with bounty and might be caught and killed any day soon? It would have taken enormous courage to allow their daughter to marry such a man even if the marriage was proposed by the great man like Touyama Mitsuru or Toshiko herself agreed to the marriage. In fact, however, the Soumas willingly had their daughter marry Behari Bose and continued to support the couple after their marriage. I was utterly shocked as an Indian when I learned about this married couple for the first time. Indeed, it is Japanese people that are capable of doing such a miracle. Whenever I think of Behari Bose, I cannot help but feel overwhelmingly respectful toward the Japanese people.