

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Role of Newspapers in India's Freedom Movement

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Abstract: The Indian freedom movement relied heavily on communication networks to mobilize public opinion against colonial rule. Among the leaders who effectively understood and utilized the press was Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Bose used newspapers, journals, and propaganda publications as political instruments to challenge colonial narratives and promote militant nationalism. This research paper examines the relationship between Bose and newspapers, focusing particularly on the period around Indian independence in 1947. The study explores Bose's role as a journalist and editor, his association with nationalist publications, and the broader function of newspapers in shaping nationalist consciousness. It also analyzes how newspapers portrayed Bose, the Indian National Army (INA), and the political developments that led to independence. The paper concludes that newspapers served as both tools of political mobilization and historical records that documented Bose's influence during the final phase of British colonial rule.

Keywords: Subhas Chandra Bose, newspapers, Indian freedom movement, nationalist press, Indian National Army, propaganda, journalism, 1947.

Introduction - The press played a significant role in the development of nationalist consciousness in colonial India. Newspapers functioned not only as sources of information but also as instruments of political resistance against British imperial rule. During the early twentieth century, Indian nationalist leaders increasingly used journalism to disseminate political ideas and mobilize mass support for independence. Among the leaders who recognized the strategic importance of the press was **Subhas Chandra Bose**, a prominent revolutionary nationalist and political leader of the Indian freedom movement. Bose's association with newspapers began early in his political career and continued throughout his involvement in nationalist politics. He served as editor, contributor, and promoter of several nationalist publications that advocated independence and criticized colonial policies. The period leading to 1947 was particularly significant because newspapers became platforms for debates regarding independence, the role of revolutionary movements, and the legacy of leaders such as Bose. The activities of the **Indian National Army (INA)** and the trials of its soldiers generated widespread public attention, and newspapers played an essential role in shaping public opinion regarding these developments.

This research paper examines the relationship between Bose and newspapers with special reference to the political developments surrounding 1947. It highlights how the press served as a powerful medium for nationalist propaganda and political mobilization during the final phase of India's

struggle for independence.

Objectives of the Study: The main objectives of this research paper are:

1. To analyze the relationship between Subhas Chandra Bose and nationalist newspapers.
2. To examine the role of newspapers in spreading Bose's ideology and revolutionary nationalism.
3. To study how newspapers represented Bose and the Indian National Army during the final phase of the freedom struggle around 1947.
4. To evaluate newspapers as historical sources for understanding Bose's contribution to India's independence.

Research Methodology: This research adopts a **historical and qualitative methodology**. The study is based on the analysis of both **primary and secondary sources**.

Primary Sources: Primary sources include contemporary newspapers, journals, and propaganda publications related to the Indian independence movement. These sources provide insights into how Bose and the INA were portrayed in the press during the 1940s.

Secondary Sources: Secondary sources include books, biographies, historical analyses, and academic journal articles that examine Bose's political ideology and the role of the press in the freedom movement. The study also utilizes archival records, memoirs, and scholarly works to contextualize the relationship between journalism and political activism in colonial India.

Literature Review

Scholars have extensively examined the role of the press in India's freedom struggle. Historians such as Bipan Chandra, Sumit Sarkar, and Leonard A. Gordon have highlighted the importance of newspapers as instruments of political mobilization. Sugata Bose's work on Subhas Chandra Bose provides a detailed analysis of Bose's political philosophy and his role in international anti-colonial movements. Similarly, Peter Ward Fay's research on the Indian National Army explores the influence of Bose's leadership on nationalist politics during the Second World War. Several studies have also analyzed the role of the press in shaping public opinion about revolutionary leaders. Newspapers often served as platforms for ideological debates between moderate and radical factions within the nationalist movement.

However, relatively few studies specifically examine Bose's relationship with journalism and newspapers. This research seeks to fill this gap by focusing on Bose's engagement with the press and the role of newspapers in representing his political activities during the final phase of the freedom struggle.

Historical Context: The Press in Colonial India: The emergence of nationalist newspapers in India was closely linked with the growth of political consciousness during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Newspapers such as *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Hindu*, and *Kesari* became powerful voices of nationalist opinion. The British colonial government recognized the potential of the press to influence public opinion and therefore introduced restrictive laws such as the **Vernacular Press Act (1878)** and the **Press Act (1910)**. These laws allowed authorities to censor publications and suppress nationalist journalism. Despite these restrictions, the nationalist press continued to flourish. Newspapers played a crucial role in informing people about political developments, organizing protests, and encouraging participation in the freedom movement.

Subhas Chandra Bose and Journalism: Subhas Chandra Bose's involvement with journalism began during his early association with the Indian National Congress and the Swaraj Party. Under the mentorship of **Chittaranjan Das**, Bose became actively involved in nationalist journalism. Bose served as editor of the newspaper *Forward*, which was established by Das to promote the ideas of the Swaraj Party. The newspaper quickly became one of the most influential nationalist publications in Bengal. In addition to *Forward*, Bose was also associated with several other publications such as *Banglar Katha* and *Swaraj*. These newspapers were used to criticize British colonial policies and promote the demand for complete independence. Through editorials and articles, Bose emphasized the need for strong leadership, national unity, and revolutionary action against colonial rule. His writings reflected his belief that political freedom could not be achieved without organized

resistance.

Bose, Propaganda, and International Media: During the Second World War, Bose expanded his use of media and propaganda beyond India. After leaving the country in 1941, he established networks for broadcasting nationalist messages through international media. The **Free India Centre** in Berlin and later the **Provisional Government of Azad Hind** used radio broadcasts and publications to mobilize support for India's independence. Several newspapers and journals were published in different languages to reach Indian communities abroad.

These publications included:

1. *Azad Hind*
2. *Voice of India*
3. *Awaz-e-Hind*
4. *Young India*

These newspapers and bulletins were designed to counter British propaganda and highlight the

The Indian National Army and Media Representation: The formation of the **Indian National Army (INA)** marked a significant phase in Bose's political career. The INA sought to liberate India through armed struggle with the support of Axis powers during World War II. The activities of the INA attracted considerable attention from newspapers both in India and abroad. Nationalist newspapers portrayed the INA as a symbol of patriotic resistance, while British-controlled newspapers often depicted it as a threat to colonial authority. The INA trials held in 1945–46 generated widespread public sympathy for the soldiers and intensified nationalist sentiment. Newspapers played a crucial role in reporting these trials and mobilizing public opinion in favor of the INA.

Representation of Bose in Newspapers around 1947: The year 1947 marked the culmination of India's struggle for independence. During this period, newspapers frequently discussed Bose's legacy and his contribution to the nationalist movement.

Several themes dominated newspaper coverage of Bose: **Bose as a Revolutionary Leader:** Newspapers portrayed Bose as a symbol of militant nationalism who advocated direct confrontation with colonial rule.

Legacy of the Indian National Army: Press coverage emphasized the influence of the INA trials in generating nationalist sentiment and weakening British authority.

Mystery of Bose's Death: Although Bose was reportedly killed in an air crash in 1945, debates regarding his death continued in newspapers during the years leading up to independence.

These discussions contributed to the formation of Bose's enduring legacy as one of the most influential leaders of the freedom movement.

Discussion: The relationship between Bose and newspapers illustrates the broader connection between media and political movements. Newspapers served several important functions during the freedom struggle:

1. Dissemination of nationalist ideology
2. Mobilization of mass political support
3. Countering colonial propaganda
4. Documenting political developments

Bose's use of journalism demonstrates his understanding of the importance of communication in political struggle. By using newspapers and propaganda networks, he was able to reach audiences both within India and internationally.

Conclusion: The role of newspapers in India's freedom movement was crucial in shaping nationalist consciousness and mobilizing public opinion against colonial rule. Subhas Chandra Bose recognized the power of the press and used it effectively as a political tool. Through his association with nationalist publications and propaganda networks, Bose promoted revolutionary nationalism and challenged British colonial narratives. Newspapers also played an important role in shaping public perceptions of Bose and the Indian National Army during the final phase of the independence movement. The study concludes that newspapers were not

merely observers of historical events but active participants in the struggle for independence. They served as platforms for political debate, instruments of propaganda, and valuable historical sources documenting the contributions of leaders such as Subhas Chandra Bose.

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