
THE ROLE OF I.N.A. IN 'A BEND IN THE GANGES'

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The Indian National Army, popularly known as the Azad Hind Fauz, occupies an important place in the history of the freedom struggle for India. It swept the heart and mind of the people of India. It, tremendously, stimulated the Indian people's craving for freedom. It took Indians by storm. The Indians took the I.N.A. to be a patriotic legion fighting for the liberation of India from the British yoke. The anti-Bose propaganda giving the impression that the English occupation of India would be replaced by the Japanese occupation of Mother India did not appear to succeed, though; Congress made it a convenient plank.

Rashbihari Bose, a noted Indian revolutionary, had taken political refuge in Japan. Later, he became a Japanese citizen yet, his love for India and his commitment to Indian freedom never diminished. His enthusiasm led him to organize an Indian Independence League. This organization composed of Indians, living in South East Asian Countries, then, controlled by Japan. The League assumed a definite shape at a Conference held at Bangkok in June 1942. Rashbihari Bose was elected its Chairman.

Captain Mohan, an Indian officer of the British Army in Malaya, surrendered to the Japanese. He worked hard relentlessly to ensure the formation of I.N.A. The volunteers from among the prisoners of war, handed over to Captain Mohan Singh by the Japanese, formed the nucleus of this Azad Hind Fauz. **"By August 1942, about 40,000 prisoners signed a pledge to join the I.N.A. under Mohan Singh. On 1 September the I.N.A. was formally established."**¹

The Bangkok Conference decided to invite Subhash Chand Bose to East Asia. On June 13, 1943 Bose arrived in Tokyo from Germany. Rashbihari Bose gave away his power and position to Subhash Chand Bose. **"The Japanese government made an official declaration to (extend all means in order to help to expel and eliminate from India the Anglo Saxon influences which are the enemy of the Indian people, and enable India to achieve full independence in the true sense of the term)."**²

Singapore, at that time, was under the occupation of Japan. Subhash Chand Bose assumed leadership of the Indian Independence League and the I.N.A. in July 1942. A 'Provisional Government of Free India' was established at Singapore on October 21, 1943. It received formal recognition from Germany, Italy and Japan.

Bose motivated I.N.A. to march to Delhi with the slogan that soon became very popular "Chalo Delhi". The I.N.A. recorded early victories. It acted in full co-operation with the Japanese troops that threatened the extinction of the British occupation in South East Asia. The Japanese occupied Singapore, Malaya, and Burma. I.N.A. engaged itself in vigorous offensive in March 1944. It ran triumphantly about 150 miles into Indian Territory through Burma. However, its victories and flying of the national tricolor flag on the Indian soil on March 19, 1944 were shortlived. In May, the British won back Rangoon to give a set back to the I.N.A. The I.N.A. soldiers were captured disarmed and made prisoners.

Malgonkar, in his novel 'A Bend in the Ganges' refers to the popularity and exploits of the Indian National Army. The Japanese invited the convicts at Andaman to **"join our army, serve your country... in the Indian National Army."**³ The Japanese officer, informs of the ever-swelling number of Netajis army : **"Last month, in Singapore, sixty thousand, seventy thousand – they all joined. We will get more, all the prisoners taken in Burma-soldiers trained by the British. They have become our brothers, soldiers in our army – our Indian army."**⁴ The popular slogan of those days 'March to Delhi' made very dear by Netaji is, very well, given expression in the novel. The Japanese office informs Debi Dayal that **"....Subhash Bose will lead the army-the Indian National army-lead it all the way to Delhi. That is what we will do, we and you together-capture Delhi."**⁵ The Japanese office invited Debi to join the army

to work from behind the enemy lines, to blow bridges, sink ships, and burn down aeroplanes. He presented a very rosy picture of the Japanese conquests and free India stating that **"The British are ready to quit, just as they left the Andamans. The Gandhis and Nehrus will never make them quit. The British do not understand passive resistance. They have not given in an inch to your Gandhi from the last twenty years, look how much Japan has taken from them-in no more than two months....."**⁶ Netaji's call to march to Delhi is dramatized in detail. Bose stressed unquestioning loyalty to the cause.

Malgonkar's novel refers to the exploits of Japan and the help and co-operation lent by that country to I.N.A. Netaji's leadership and commanding of the I.N.A., the circumstances and the sources leading to the raising of this Army, the mass willing recruitment of the vanquished Indians under the British flag to the Indian National Army, the high hopes aroused by the Army, the deliberation of the Indians from the British yoke with the help of the Japanese—all these things of history are carefully and accurately delineated by Malgonkar in **A Bend in the Ganges**.

REFERENCE

1. Anil Chandra Banerjee : The New History of Modern India, (1707-1917), New Delhi, K.P. Bagchi and Company, 1983, 699.
2. New History of Modern India (1707-1947) 699.
3. A Bend in the Ganges, 217.
4. A Bend in the Ganges, 217.
5. A Bend in the Ganges, 217.
6. A Bend in the Ganges, 217.