

Exploring a hermetic world

Shahid Alam tries to fathom an esoteric realm

FOR most people, diplomacy and foreign policy belong to the realm of the arcane and the esoteric, best left to the practitioners and scholars of these two areas. And, as Kamal Siddiqui explains, in the process splitting hair, "...while diplomacy and foreign policy are closely related, they are not synonymous, as diplomacy is just one of the instruments for implementing foreign policy." He then embarks on an exhaustive exercise in providing an overview of various aspects of diplomacy and statecraft. At the very beginning, he proposes a fairly inclusive definition of diplomacy: it is the manner of conduct of diplomats; consists of negotiation, communication, dialogue; entails representation beyond borders; and is associated with not only states, but also non-state entities and multinational organizations. If anyone, on the basis of this definition, comes to the conclusion that s/he is going to come across a textbook, s/he would not be far wrong.

Diplomacy and Statecraft essentially is a well-structured textbook, useful for university undergraduates and graduates, as well as the interested lay reader. Twelve self-contained chapters on the topics covered attest to that characterization: Diplomacy: Towards a General Understanding; The Traditions of Diplomacy; Important Types of Diplomacy; Theories and Style of Diplomacy; Functions of Diplomacy; International Negotiation; Rules and Context of Diplomacy; Public International Law; The Use of Force in International Relations and Coercive Diplomacy; Multilateral Diplomacy and Multilateralism; Globalisation, Diplomacy and IT; and Diplomacy in Islam. Six of these chapters contain case studies that illustrate the matters discussed in them. The author uses an extensive number of reference materials, and acknowledges having used the assistance of different authors to write about individual topics that make up each chapter. And there are a lot of books and other reference materials. The feeling of going through a carefully-organized textbook will grow on the reader as s/he systematically goes through the pages.

Siddiqui draws on former British diplomatic service head Lord Gore-Booth to bring out the core difference between foreign policy and diplomacy: "Foreign policy is what you do. Diplomacy is how you do it." And refers to another former British diplomat, Sir Henry Wotton, who served under King James in the early seventeenth century, to bring out a



Sir Henry Wotton

then immediately alludes to the reality mentioned in terms of the international system: "Given the above scenario, small countries and even middle powers have to consider the opinions of this only super power before taking any action on their own."

The author clearly leans towards multilateral diplomacy and multilateralism in international relations. However, his examples also testify to the effect that great powers (none more so than the US) usually take recourse to multilateralism only when it serves their interests and suits their needs, but that only underscores the functioning of the nation-state-based anarchic international system, where national interests are taken into consideration first and foremost by individual countries, as well as the existence of the implied hierarchy of nations. The weaker states, having relatively little leverage on matters of grave international importance, would prefer multilateralism if only to feel "included" in major negotiations, and possibly even to have their suggestions incorporated into any final resolution. However, the reality of the international system remains, as Siddiqui acknowledges: "...coercive diplomacy seems to be the sole prerogative of the powerful states." Nonetheless, he seems to long for the reverse to occur, of "the possibility of coercive diplomacy being resorted to by weak states or parties against powerful states or organizations (e.g. Cuba under Fidel Castro and Venezuela under Hugo Chavez conducting such diplomacy against the US) either unprovoked or as a retaliation...." One can sense resentment and frustration on the author's part here. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that he clamours, "...changes in the UN Security Council appear to be now a dire necessity, so that the United Nations rather than some super or regional power takes the ultimate decision in important matters relating to war and peace."

Political realism dictates that states have not been, and will not for the foreseeable future, be able to live in total peace. Ironically, the United States, along with France, had tried to bring such a situation about, as far back as in 1928. As the author states, the Kellogg-Briand Pact (named after the signatories, US Secretary of State Frank Kellogg and French foreign minister Aristide Briand) of that year had renounced war as a means of solving international disputes. "It was also ratified by many nations," he notes, "but unfortunately it was violated no sooner than it was signed: Japan attacked Manchuria in 1931, Italy attacked Ethiopia in 1935, and Germany attacked Poland in 1939." Unfortunate, yes, but also illustrative of the dynamics and/or reality of international relations. Just as demonstrative of the usual futility of political idealism being effective in the anarchic international system, is Siddiqui's statement that in 2004, the International Court of Justice had declared Israel's construction of the wall in Palestine as a breach of international law. And, of course, the wall has been completed. He again vents his frustration: "...the impurity with which powerful countries, in general, and the US, the only super power, in particular, violate international law or refuse to be a part of it by not ratifying, is causing deep frustration among the common people of the world...."

Siddiqui has an interesting observation regarding the stationing of foreign diplomats in countries of their origin. He singles out the Bangladesh-born British High Commissioner in Dhaka (Anwar Chowdhury) for having crossed the diplomatic red line in interfering in the internal political affairs of the host country. The author believes that the High Commissioner had personal prejudices that could be traced to his Sylheti origin. And then gives this view: "It is common knowledge that out of a deep inferiority complex, Sylheti working class immigrants abroad have a tendency to show off when they visit their home country, getting over involved in local matters. It was as much a folly on the part of the British government to post him to Dhaka as it was for the British government to have accepted him." He talks about the spoils system being the guiding principle behind high postings in the State Department of the United States. Actually, though, the spoils system was abolished with the passage in Congress of the Pendleton Act in 1883, which created a bipartisan Civil Service Commission to evaluate job candidates on a non-partisan merit basis.

Siddiqui comes up with a profound conclusion when he agrees with Anthony and Lang: "...tension between national sovereignty, on the one hand, and universal global concerns for the human condition, on the other is likely to increase as globalization intensifies further in the future." But the book is less about such acute analysis than about being a very good textbook. This observation is reinforced by the hairsplitting typology of diplomacy that the author proposes: revolutionary diplomacy, development diplomacy, summit diplomacy, covert or secret diplomacy, great power diplomacy, 'national' diplomacy, NGO diplomacy, preventive diplomacy, special mission diplomacy, bilateral diplomacy, multilateral diplomacy, and coercive diplomacy. *Diplomacy and Statecraft* will provide readers an adequate and understandable insight into the arcane world of diplomacy and foreign policy.

SHAHID ALAM --- EDUCATIONIST, ACTOR, CRITIC --- IS A FORMER DIPLOMAT

Netaji, the incorrigible nationalist

Syed Badrul Ahsan reads of the lost political leader

SUBHAS Chandra Bose died of grievous injuries, a consequence of the crash of the small plane he was travelling in, in Taipei on 18 August 1945. That was a full two years before the India he loved almost to distraction would achieve freedom from British rule, albeit in bloodied fashion. To this day the question remains: would Bose, had his life not been cut short and had he succeeded in returning to India at the head of a triumphant Indian National Army, have made a difference? Would India remain a single entity and would the Congress and the Muslim League agree to a federal structure guaranteeing equality for all its religious communities? The briefest of responses to these queries would be to suggest that history does not deal with 'ifs' and 'buts'. And yet there is cause for reflection here. Judging by the record, by the tumultuous nature of his politics, all encapsulated in his brief life (he died aged forty-eight), Bose was without question a secular being absolutely driven by a zeal to bring all Indians into a single struggle against colonial domination. As this biography, one as full of substance as it is of pathos, shows, Bose was till the end a follower and admirer of Deshbandhu Chitt Ranjan Das. When Das died at the rather young age of fifty-one in 1925, Bose mourned in the loneliness of prison. In an essay written in gaol, Bose honoured Deshbandhu thus:

"I do not think that among the Hindu leaders of India, Islam had a greater friend than in the Deshbandhu."

His Majesty's Opponent promises to be a ready reference for students and researchers of history for all the insights and fresh new details it offers into Bose's life. What does strike the reader is the sheer cosmopolitan nature of the man even as he ventured out in defence of his nationalism. Bose was at home anywhere in the world. He had long conversations with Ireland's Eamon de Valera, himself a heroic figure through the Easter uprising of 1916, in London and Dublin. He exchanged views with Harold Laski, Clement Attlee, Stafford Cripps, JBS Haldane and Rajani Palme Dutt. He met Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler but was not impressed by the latter. In Japan, he brought all his persuasive powers into convincing Hideki Tojo that Japanese assistance to the INA would accelerate the process of Indian freedom. And the Japanese did go out, almost on a limb, to help him along. Perhaps no exiled politician anywhere would have done what Bose set out to do: he devised, skilfully, a strategy of influencing Nazi Germany and imperial Japan into freeing all Indian soldiers seized as prisoners of war (they had been fighting for the British) and letting him indoctrinate them in new thoughts of freedom. It was with these soldiers, thousands of them, that Subhas Chandra Bose forged the INA. In October 1943, he announced the formation of a government for free India with himself as president. A full-fledged cabinet was formed, thereby informing Indians as well as their British colonial rulers that the road to independence had been taken. And all this even as, back home in India, Gandhi, Nehru and everyone else were busy adopting newer tactics of dealing with the British and quickly discarding them in favour of even newer ones. In the course of his struggle, Bose never said or did anything to undermine the constitutional struggle within India and consistently made it a point to demonstrate his deep respect for Gandhi.

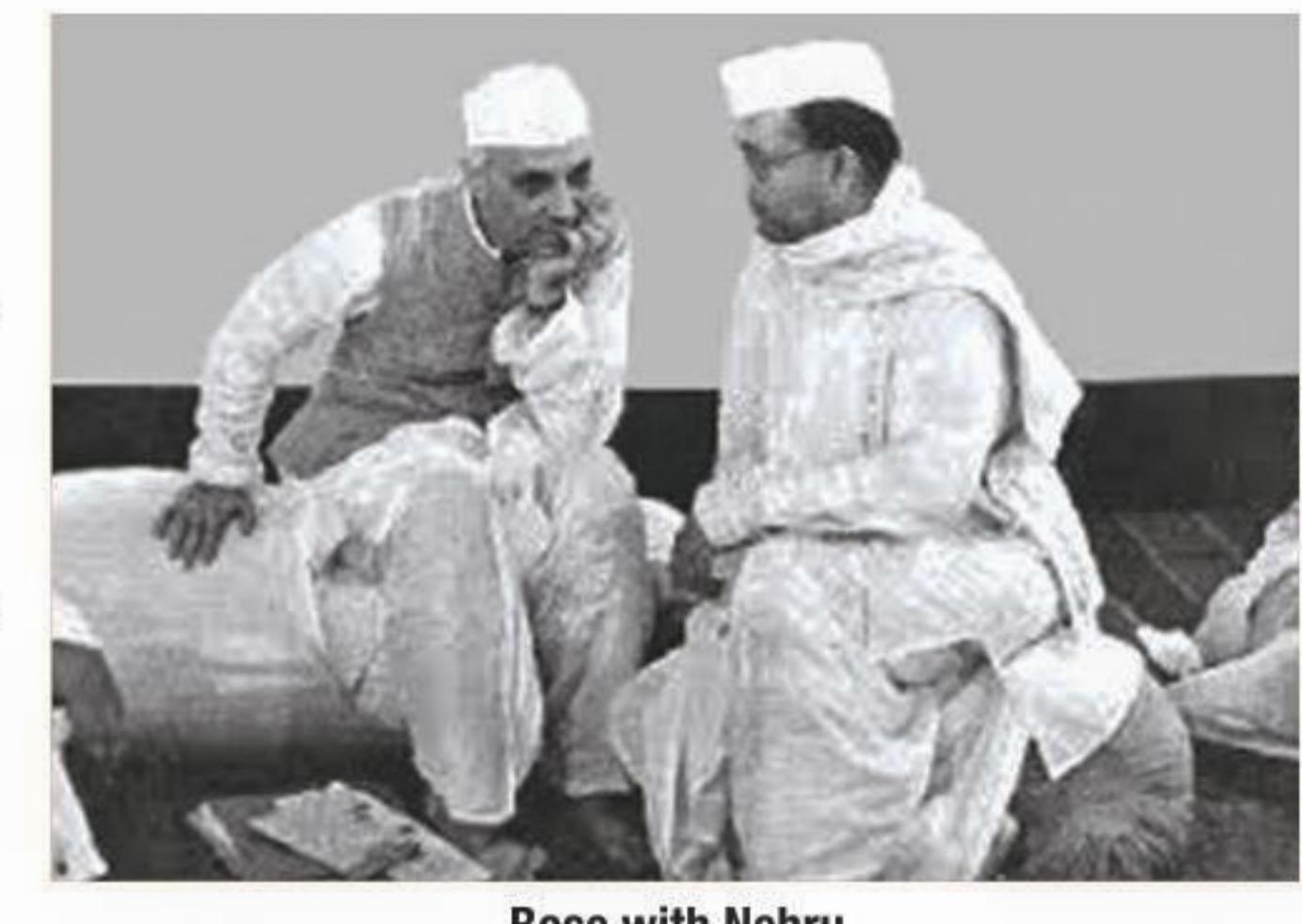
Ironically, it was Gandhi who undermined Bose in 1938 through making it hard for him to make a success of his second term as president of the Indian National Congress. Having cheerfully supported Bose's election as party leader the first time, Gandhi was reluctant to see him around a second time and was distressed when his preferred candidate Pattabhi Sitaramayya was beaten by Bose at the 1938 polls. If ever there was an instance of pettiness on Gandhi's part, this was it. And yet Bose never wavered in his respect for the man who would eventually come to be regarded as father of the Indian nation. As for his relations with Jawaharlal Nehru, they had never been warm but the two men remained on proper friendly terms until the end. Bose was sometimes exasperated by Nehru's efforts to strike a middle or neutral course, particularly when he needed his support in the aftermath of the 1938 election. Bose, the thoroughly Bengali gentleman, was beside Nehru when the latter's wife Kamala died after prolonged illness in Europe. But if Bose's Bengali attributes marked him out as a decent man, his politics was fully Indian. He once corrected a European newsman who had made the mistake of describing him as a politician from Bengal. He was, Bose corrected him, an Indian political figure.

Rabindranath Tagore loved Subhas Chandra Bose, as the many instances cited in this work demonstrate so amply. You get the feeling that even if the poet did not quite agree with Bose's radicalism, he empathised with the indomitable spirit which drove Bose forward. In January 1939, Tagore wrote to Bose:

"Your strength has been sorely taxed by imprisonment, banishment and disease, but rather than impairing, these have helped to broaden your sympathies --- enlarging your vision so as to embrace the vast perspectives of history beyond any narrow limits of territory."

Sugata Bose tells the reader that as the Indian nationalist politician trekked through Asia and then Europe in exile, Tagore depicted, in his creativity, that tale of loneliness in search of freedom. No tribute could be greater for Bose than the intensity with which the bard followed his trail, hoping that he would find his way out of the dark. It was this darkness which Subhas Chandra Bose decided on beating when he surreptitiously made his way out of 38/2 Elgin Road Calcutta in early January 1941 and toward Peshawar. The government's intelligence people and its police would not know until quite sometime afterward that their prisoner had gone. On 19 January, Bose arrived in Peshawar on the Frontier Mail from Delhi with a new identity. He was 'Muhammad Ziauddin' and would remain so till he made his way into Europe, where he expected to garner Italian and German support for his struggle. News of Subhas Chandra Bose's disappearance first appeared in the Ananda Bazar Patrika and the Hindustan Standard on 27 January. Furious British intelligence officers pounced on the Bose family at their Elgin Road home and proceeded to question everyone about Bose's vanishing act. To an anxious Mahatma Gandhi, who had telephoned the family, Sarat Chandra Bose sent a three-word reply: "Circumstances indicate renunciation." The point, a deliberately misleading one, was obvious: Bose had chosen to turn his back on the mundane world and go out in search of spirituality. But Sarat Bose would not be cryptic with Tagore, who too had enquired after his brother. To the poet, the elder Bose had this to say: "May Subhas receive your blessings wherever he may be." Rabindranath Tagore and Subhas Chandra Bose were never to meet again. The poet would die later in the year.

In *His Majesty's Opponent*, you come by a restlessness which underlined the soul in Subhas Chandra Bose. He never trusted the British, who in their turn seemed to be in mortal dread of him despite their belief that he was a quisling of the Axis powers. The fears of the colonial power took on bigger dimensions once Bose's links with the Axis powers became public knowledge. Bose's intention of marching into Delhi and proclaiming victory from the Red Fort was for months and years a fear which kept the colonial administration on its toes. Dilli chalo, the slogan which inspired Bose's followers, took on a darker hue for the rulers with the INA assault on Imphal. It would be a fair assessment to suggest that had the Japanese not begun to fall back in Asia (they had generated enough hatred for themselves in China, Korea and elsewhere since the 1930s), Bose's fortunes could have turned out better. And still the question remains: had the Japanese not lost the war and had the INA

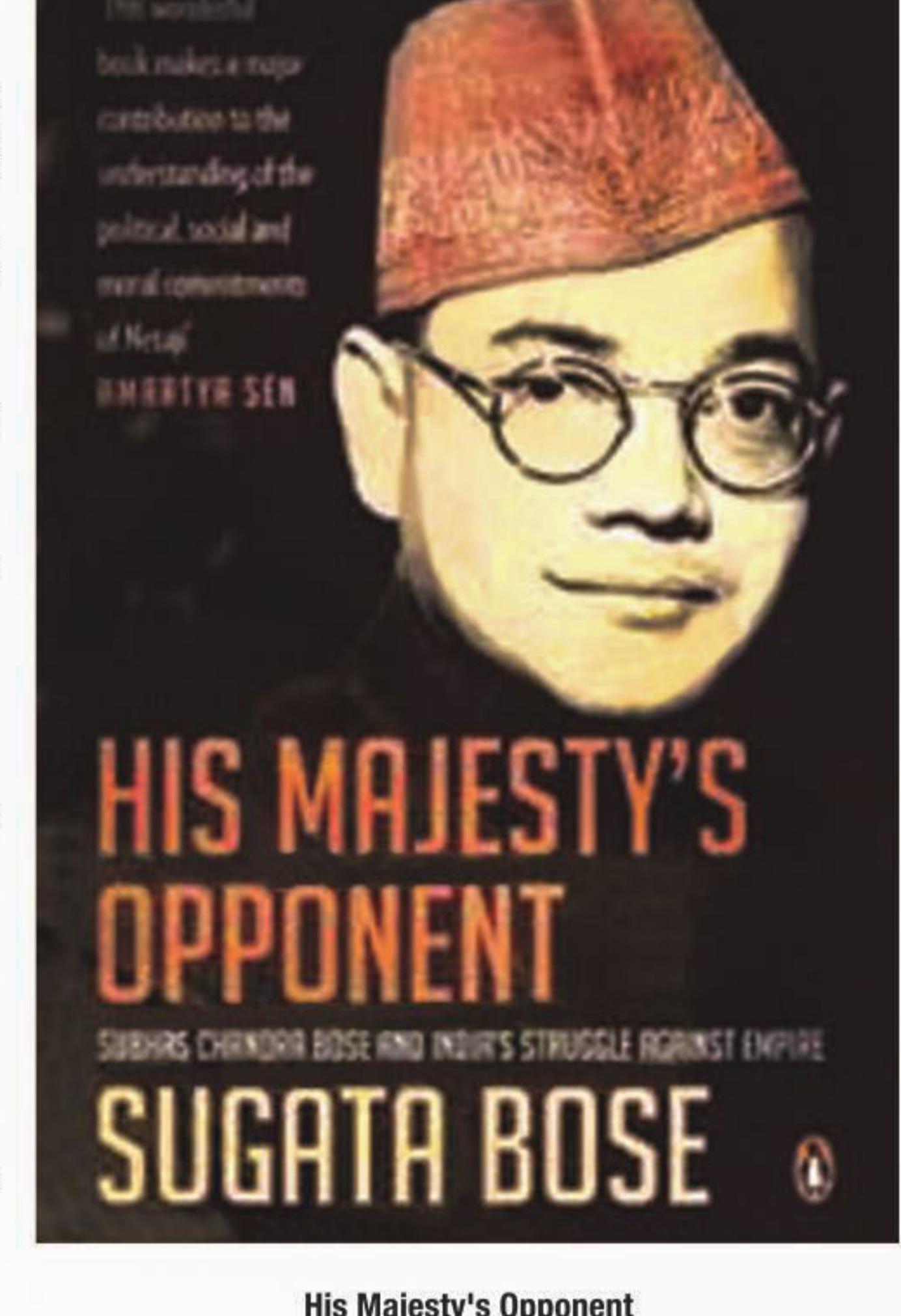


Bose with Nehru

then marched into Delhi, would Bose be able to set up a government free of the shadow of imperial Japan? For himself, right till the end, Bose was adamant in his belief that he would not permit any foreign domination, not even that of his foreign benefactors. In the course of his struggle, beginning with the formation of his government and the setting up of his army, he made it clear to Japan at every turn that he would formulate his own battle strategy and conduct the business of his government on his terms. He did not deviate from that course.

Subhas Bose's work is a necessary tribute to a lost leader. Subhas Chandra Bose's mettle first revealed its quality when he resigned from the Indian Civil Service soon after qualifying at the competitive examinations preceding it. That was a brave act, considering that a place in the ICS was a badge of honour for middle class Indian elite of the time. And elitism was certainly what he kept at bay during the days of his military struggle. His soldiers --- Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs --- all shared the same food rather than follow their distinctive religious preferences. For Bose, it was important that the entire Indian population engage with the struggle for freedom. To that end, he took pains to set up the Rani of Jhansi regiment which brought together women from different religious, regional and linguistic backgrounds and forged in them a militancy that has rarely been witnessed in modern history.

Subhas Chandra Bose's legacy has largely defined the India which took shape, through all the bloodletting of Partition, in the summer of 1947. The Indian national flag stems from his ideas. It



His Majesty's Opponent
Subhas Chandra Bose and
India's Struggle Against Empire,
Allen Lane (an imprint of Penguin Books)

was Bose who first adopted Tagore's *jana gana mana* as the country's national anthem. Iqbal's *saare jahan se achha Hindustan hamara* was again a song he brought into the struggle and which was retained by independent India's government after the departure of the colonial power. And let it also be recalled that the slogan *Jai Hind* was Bose's contribution to nationalism.

A measure of how Subhas Chandra Bose shaped the public imagination came through the experience Gandhi went through when, after Bose's tragic death and the collapse of his struggle, he visited a group of INA prisoners in the Red Fort in Delhi. They told him that under Bose they had not felt any distinction of caste or religion. "But here we are faced with 'Hindu tea' and 'Muslim tea'." To Gandhi's question of why they put up with it, these Bose loyalists had one answer. This is how the author puts it: "We don't," they said. "We mix 'Hindu tea' and 'Muslim tea' half and half, and then serve. The same with food."

It was inspiration which Subhas Chandra Bose formalised on 21 October 1943, the day he proclaimed the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind in Singapore. As head of state and minister for foreign affairs and war, Bose pronounced the following oath:

"In the name of God, I take this sacred oath --- that to liberate India and the thirty-eight crores of my countrymen, I, Subhas Chandra Bose, will continue this sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life."

His government was a full, vibrant image of an India struggling to be free. A.C. Chatterjee was minister of finance; S.A. Ayer became minister of publicity and propaganda; Lakshmi Swaminathan took charge of women's affairs. Eight individuals from the armed services --- Aziz Ahmed, N.S. Bhagat, J.K. Bhonsle, Gulzara Singh, Mohammad Zaman Kiani, A.D. Loganathan, Ehsan Qadir, Shah Nawaz Khan --- were inducted in the cabinet. Anand Mohan Sahay took over as cabinet secretary with ministerial rank, while the elderly and respected Rashbehari Bose was appointed chief advisor.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's last words, as his interpreter Juichi Nakamura would later report, were uttered late in the evening of 18 August 1945. "I want to sleep," said the heavily bandaged Bose.

In distant Vienna, late that month, Netaji's wife Emilie Schenkl heard of her husband's tragic end on the radio as she sat in the kitchen with her mother and sister. She got up slowly, went to the bedroom where Anita, her and Bose's baby, lay fast asleep. Kneeling beside the bed, Emilie Schenkl could not hold back her tears. "And I wept," she would say years later.

SYED BADRUL AHSEN IS WITH THE DAILY STAR.