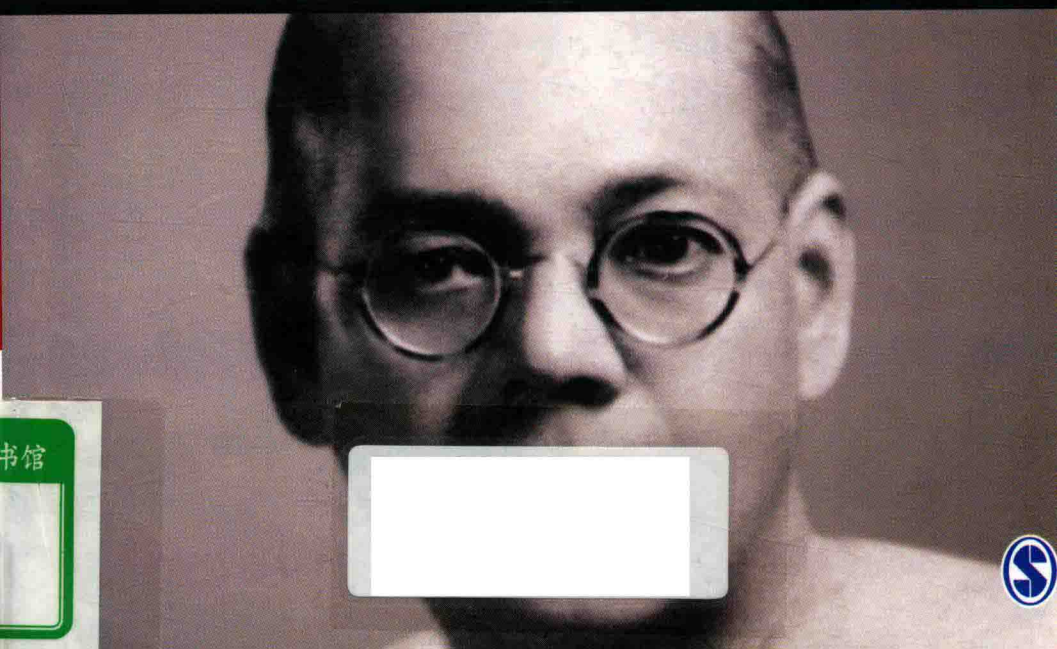


Madhuri Bose

The **Bose** Brothers

and Indian Independence

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The
Bose Brothers
and Indian Independence
An Insider's Account

Madhuri Bose



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Advance Praise

A valuable addition to the biographical literature encompassing the crucial decades around Independence.

Professor Joachim Oesterheld

Historian and Specialist on South Asia,
Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany

Netaji's grandniece tells the story of the Bose Brothers' contribution to India's struggle for independence through the eyes of her father, Amiya. She relies on extensive conversations with her father over the years that have shaped her own view of the history of Indian independence. The result is an interesting insight into the experiences, perceptions and analyses from the inner circle of the Bose family.

Dr Jan Kuhlmann

Historian and a Netaji Scholar

The legend of the two shining stars of Indian patriotism, Subhas Chandra and Sarat Chandra is truer than truth itself. Madhuri Bose, a family insider, has chronicled it in a way, at once moving and charming. The inspiring legend has gained in the telling and is embellished by the first-person recollections from Amiya Nath Bose. The story unfolded in this beautiful narrative is indeed a priceless legacy of nascent India.

Justice M. N. Venkatachaliah

Former Chief Justice of India

Madhuri Bose has thrown new light on aspects of India's independence struggle. The story she tells—and the new material contained in it—will be invaluable to scholars both in India and elsewhere. It is also a reminder of the complexity of the independence movement and of the different perspectives of some of the main players.

John McCarthy

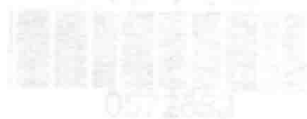
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to India (2004–2009)

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for International Affairs

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Madhuri Bose



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To My Father

Who remained a lifelong flag bearer of the Bose Brothers

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Foreword

This illuminating book is an important addition to the literature on India's freedom movement and the roles in it of the formidable Bose Brothers, Sarat and Subhas. It is also extremely readable, not many will put it down midway.

The portraits on which this book sheds light are intimate ones, though the word 'interior' may be more apt. Here we are offered, among other things, the inner thoughts of Subhas Bose in his 20s, 30s and early 40s, communicated to a brother older by eight years and also to the brother's son Amiya Nath, 17 years junior to Subhas and devoted to his uncle.

Clearly Subhas nursed high expectations from Amiya Nath. In one significant letter written in 1933, he asks his nephew, then 18 years old, to seek 'the loftiest heights' and explains how he can do it. He should work hard but aim 'to serve others and die for others'. Arrogance, Subhas adds, was 'a great sin'; a really great person is self-confident but arrogance-free. Moreover, life's key principle 'is to give and not to take'. Those who are mean to us can be conquered by love.

This remarkable advice was also a challenge to which, it must be said, Amiya Nath rose manfully. Like father Sarat, and grandfather Janakinath Bose, Amiya Nath became a successful lawyer. Bold, self-confident and dedicated to his country's liberty, he spent most of the Second World War years in England, from where he remained in secret contact with Uncle Subhas, who was in Germany from April 1941 to February 1943.

Some years after independence, Amiya Nath entered the Lok Sabha (in opposition to the Congress) and later served as India's Ambassador to Rangoon, where the family members of Burma's hero Aung San were Netaji's warm admirers.

It is Amiya Nath's daughter Madhuri, who has created this valuable book. I say 'created' rather than 'authored' for two reasons. First, the book offers sentences from Amiya Nath, from his father Sarat, and from Subhas, not merely those from

Madhuri's pen. Second, the book follows a creator's design. Starting with a glimpse of Amiya Nath's relationships with his father and uncle, and concluding with the deaths of Subhas, Sarat and Amiya Nath, in the middle chapters, it provides the stirring story, often in Amiya Nath's words, of two extraordinary brothers who gave their joys, comforts and lives for the freedom and unity of their beloved land.

If in the end the goal of unity was not achieved, it was not for lack of trying by the Bose Brothers. Part of the book's merit is its ability to convey the spirit of Sarat Bose's earnest effort in 1947 to preserve a single Bengal in the subcontinent's east, even if partition in the west was unavoidable.

Quite a few will be startled to learn from these pages that Subhas's clandestine network in Kolkata included friends who were able to smuggle out, for his inspection, an entire dossier of files that the British-run police was keeping on him. For about seven successive nights in the summer of 1939, Subhas and his nephew Amiya Nath pored over files secretly brought to their Elgin Road home from intelligence headquarters on Elysium Row (now Lord Sinha Road) and returned discreetly to their shelves at dawn. Containing information on who in Subhas's circle were informers, the files were helpful to Subhas when in January 1941 he made his famous escape from house arrest in Kolkata all the way to Afghanistan and Germany.

Thus, while the imperial armour contained chinks, the empire's foe possessed resourceful agents.

The book also captures the family's shock and disbelief at the report in August 1945 of Subhas's death in an air crash, as well as the family's initial surprise and subsequent delight on learning that Subhas had married Emilie Schenkl of Austria and had a daughter from her called Anita. We discover, too, that Amiya Nath had met Emilie Schenkl in Europe in 1937, while she was assisting his uncle as interpreter and secretary.

Not surprisingly, the Bose Brothers' differences with Gandhi feature prominently in the book. Neither Gandhi nor the Bose Brothers could tolerate India's inferiority or subjugation, but Gandhi opposed the use of the gun or the bomb for liberty. He thought that while the British knew how to suppress a violent rising—they had done so in 1857—non-violent resistance would baffle them. Moreover, once violence was legitimised in India's

struggle, armed Indians would bully their compatriots. Women, the lame, the blind and the downtrodden would go to the wall.

Gandhi's non-cooperation call of 1920 galvanised Subhas who had gone to England to clear the ICS exam. This he did brilliantly but, renouncing the career he had earned, Subhas flung himself into the national struggle.

However, disagreeing in the 1920s with some of Gandhi's decisions as the struggle's commander, Subhas also conveyed his disagreement with non-violence as a principle. If suitable opportunities arose for armed action for independence, Subhas would take them.

All know of the Gandhi–Subhas break that occurred in 1939, which this book describes in detail. That split notwithstanding, in the 1940s Netaji would address Gandhi as the Father of the Nation in broadcasts from his Burmese battlefield.

Prior to that, in their last face-to-face meeting, which took place in June 1940, Subhas (to use Gandhi's own words) told the Mahatma, 'in the friendliest manner that he would do what the Working Committee had failed to do'. To this Gandhi evidently responded by saying, 'If at the end of his plan there was Swaraj during my lifetime, mine would be the first telegram of congratulation he would receive' (*Harijan*, 13 July 1940).

Thus conveying the texture of a partnership that transcended major differences, the book also underlines the Bose–Gandhi congruence on the secular character of the state in a free India and on the imperative of Hindu–Muslim friendship.

Not everyone cultivated or cultivates this plant. Sadly, even some who had fought together in the INA under Netaji, succumbed to the poison of 1947. We know that the frenzied killers of 1947 unfortunately included, on both sides of the communal divide, recent INA soldiers as well as demobilised soldiers from the Empire's Indian armies.

Madhuri Bose's book is a helpful reminder that today's India and South Asia can do with Subhas's—and Sarat's—concern for an inclusive state and society, which was the Mahatma's concern as well.

As mentioned before, Sarat Bose's gallant effort in and around May 1947 for a United Bengal unattached either to India or Pakistan is part of this book's story. Nehru and Patel were totally opposed to the bid, as were many in both parts of

Bengal; Shyama Prasad Mookerji, in particular, was championing Bengal's division; yet at one stage it seemed as if both Gandhi and Jinnah might support Sarat's proposal. Then, to Sarat's bitter disappointment, Gandhi apparently backed off.

If Gandhi had continued to support Sarat's bid, would we have seen a United Bengal in 1947? Natural though such a question may be, it cannot be clearly answered. That Gandhi's word was not exactly law with the Congress in 1947 was demonstrated in April of that year, when Gandhi's proposal of a Jinnah-led government in New Delhi to avoid partition was summarily rejected by the Congress.

More than once, the book cites Amiya Nath's appraisal that India's partition had become inevitable after the provincial elections of 1937, when the Congress refused to share power with the Muslim League in the UP ministry. While others have argued similarly, there are indications elsewhere that Jinnah may have chosen a religious or separatist path at least a year earlier than this—in 1936—after being snubbed in Punjab by the Unionist Party's leaders, Fazli Husain and Sikander Hayat Khan.

In May 1938, Subhas Bose, who was the Congress President at the time, held talks with Jinnah in an attempt to bridge the Congress-League divide. Noting that Subhas was 'a good listener', Gandhi, who had encouraged this dialogue, thought that Bose 'may succeed where others might have failed,' but the Bose-Jinnah talks also led to nowhere.

However, it is not to settle or resolve questions of Partition history that Madhuri Bose has created this book. Love for her father, mother, grandfather, grandmother and granduncle has impelled her to produce it, along with the legitimate conviction that her father, Amiya Nath's memories and appraisals of the Bose Brothers should find a permanent record and reach a wider public.

When Madhuri asked me to write a foreword for it, I was touched. I had had the good fortune, in the 1960s and 1970s, to meet Amiya Babu a few times. Much earlier, as an 11 year old in New Delhi, I had received a small prize for a short Sanskrit recitation from the hands of Sarat Babu. That was in end-1946, when, along with Nehru, Patel and a few others, Sarat Babu was a member of the Interim Government that preceded independence.

In his speech on the occasion, Sarat Babu spoke of a book called *Ideas Have Legs*. The phrase was unusual and I remembered it. More than a decade later, I would meet the author of that book, an unforgettable Englishman called Peter Howard.

Subhas Babu I never met. But he is in my mind and heart, as he is inside all who love India and want greatness for her.

May this book's glimpses of the Bose Brothers and Amiya Babu prod all of us to aspire for the 'lofty heights' that Subhas commended to his nephew.

Rajmohan Gandhi

Acknowledgements

This book about the legendary Bose Brothers of India, Sarat Chandra Bose and his beloved younger brother Subhas Chandra Bose, has been a long labour of love inspired by my father Amiya Nath Bose, son of Sarat and nephew of Subhas. As a young man, Amiya had at various key times in Indian history worked closely with both of them, and was thus a direct and compelling witness to the tumultuous lives of his father and uncle.

As an ardent collector and early custodian of the records of the Bose Brothers, Amiya was thus uniquely placed to act as a chronicler of their contributions to the long struggle for independence in the subcontinent. It is fortunate that he has left for all of us the Private Collection of Amiya Nath and Jyotsna Bose, a rich assembly of articles, lectures, notes and memoirs which forms the basis of this book. These will be made progressively available to both a national and global audience, primarily through a dedicated website www.TheBoseLegacy.com.

It may seem unusual as the author to be acknowledging and expressing appreciation for the writings of the Bose Brothers themselves. I found quite simply that this was unavoidable. To begin with, one of the best—if not the best—accounts of the political history of the independence struggle in the two decades leading up to the Second World War is *The Indian Struggle*. This was first written by Subhas in 1934 to cover the period 1920–1934, and updated in the early 1940s to cover the period 1934–1942. The reader will observe in this book that where he needed to, my father Amiya drew liberally on *The Indian Struggle* to place events in context. It is no coincidence that Amiya had initiated and overseen its translation and first publication in Bengali in book form, in 1948 and 1953 for the two sequential parts respectively.

Sarat for his part was just as prolific, with a wealth of written materials in the form of articles, speeches, manifestos,

newspaper editorials, parliamentary interventions, letters and the like. Much of this material has been published by The Sarat Bose Academy established at Netaji Bhawan, Calcutta, in 1952, including the *Selected Speeches and Writings of Sarat Chandra Bose 1947–1950* (1954) and the *Sarat Chandra Bose Commemoration Volume* (1982). A third volume entitled *Interpreting a Nation* (2001) compiled and edited by well-known author and academic, Professor Anjan Bera for the Netaji Institute for Asian Studies in Kolkata, has also informed the preparation of this book.

In his lectures and commentaries about his father and uncle, Amiya made frequent reference to materials which he collected over time from the India Office Library and Records in London, including British India Government intelligence reports emanating from both the British Government in London and from colonial India.

These diverse source materials pertaining to both Sarat and Subhas have been drawn upon extensively, often in original form to illustrate to the reader the ways in which the brothers thought and expressed themselves, and what others thought of them. The source of such materials has been acknowledged in the text.

I recognise here with deep appreciation the role of the late Professor Prasanta Ghosh who did some earlier work with my father on an unfinished biography of Sarat Chandra Bose. In that context he translated from Bengali to English a key item of correspondence from 1930 which had been hand-carried by a teenage Amiya from Subhas to the revolutionary leader Barin Ghosh. A draft of that precious letter was preserved by Amiya Nath and the translation is included in full in the book.

I am indebted to a number of people for the preparatory work on this book, which goes back a number of years. It began with the digitisation and recording of voluminous collections of written materials and transcriptions from audio recordings. Kathakali Mukherjee was with me to initiate that painstaking process. My sincere thanks go to Somendra Narayan Ghosh and Jaya Mukherjee, who worked diligently over the years in pursuit of the task of digitisation. I must thank Madhumita Dasgupta for her work in summarising British Intelligence records. Jayanti Neogy very kindly volunteered to help me with the tedious task

of doing the endnotes for which I am very grateful. My nephew Anirban Ray enhanced the quality of photographs used.

I am indebted to my long-time friend Raju Raman who not only translated Subhas's letters to Amiya from Bengali to English, but has readily provided advice and support whenever required. As an authority on Subhas, Chandrachur Ghose of Mission Netaji and www.subhaschandraboze.org in Delhi has been a valuable source of information and confirmation of many aspects of the life and work of Subhas and the volumes that have been written about him.

I am thankful to my 'readers' who carefully perused the manuscript and offered valuable suggestions and editorial comments: my favourite teachers at Modern High School in Kolkata, Chhanda Bose, who taught me the importance of history and Supriya Bhattacharya who imparted to me a love of the English language; my friends Toopsi Ray and Sara Adhikari; family friend Krishno Dey with whom father had shared many of his remarkable experiences.

From faraway Australia, friends John McCarthy (former High Commissioner to India), Peter and Charmaine Maccoll, Alan and Cheryl Swan and Elizabeth Hattie and Colin. McLellan read the final manuscript, and were a collective source of interested, objective and thoughtful commentary.

My friends from across the globe have never ceased to ask through the years about 'The Book' and when it will appear! From London, Trisha Ambris-Dening (in whose home I once spent hours scanning my documents while she went out so as not to disturb me!) and Tracy Ulltveit-Moe in particular have persistently expressed their high expectations of what is to come. I trust that they will not be disappointed.

My brothers Surya and Chandra have been particularly close to the process and have been a constant source of encouragement and support. On many occasions they were able to confirm for me key events in the panorama of our father Amiya's life as it pertained to the vision of the Bose Brothers. Surya was by our father's side during a call on Lord Mountbatten in London in October 1976, a meeting which led to an exchange of correspondence reflected in the book. Chandra has in recent years been very much in the public eye, as part of a collective and ongoing

movement to address distortions in the historical record where the Brothers are concerned, and to declassify documents about Subhas, stubbornly held in secret to this day by successive Governments of India.

My mother Jyotsna has throughout been a pillar of strength for me. When my father passed away suddenly on 27 January 1996, she assumed direct responsibility for the care and protection of the priceless archive assembled by her husband. At the same time, she never ceased to remind me of my own inherited responsibility to put together the book that my father had always intended to write and to which he had already devoted much time and energy. Partly due to my own career path and peripatetic ways, that book has been some time in the making. My mother passed away on 1 March 2015, and was thus not able to see the final published product. That she was able to see and thoroughly approve of the completed manuscript, is of some consolation.

Introduction

My very first history lessons on the epic struggle for Indian independence were from my father Amiya Nath Bose, who grew up in colonial India in the tumultuous decades leading to independence in 1947. As a child, these lessons were for me enthralling *tales from the Raj* with a distinct twist, accounts of momentous events in our history from the perspectives of many of the most prominent Indian nationalist leaders, freedom fighters and revolutionaries. That the narratives were often first-hand and graphic, made the events and the personalities come truly alive for me, born as I was in a different era of independent, though sadly divided India.

I grew up in the extended family home at 1 Woodburn Park in south Calcutta, the three-storied imposing house of my grandfather Sarat Chandra Bose built in 1928 as his family residence, just a stone's throw from the ancestral house at 38/2 Elgin Road (now Netaji Bhawan). It was here at 1 Woodburn Park (now called Sarat Bose Bhawan and run under government auspices as the Netaji Institute for Asian Studies), where Sarat and Subhas, the famed Bose Brothers, lived and worked together during the critical phases of the struggle for Indian independence.

During the working week, my father would be busy with his legal cases at the Calcutta High Court, followed by evening consultations with his clients at home. His continuing engagement with politics and public affairs also took much of his time. So it was usually in the quiet evenings at weekends when he would find time to relax, read (he was a voracious reader) and spend time talking to his children, my two brothers Surya and Chandra, and myself.

Father had a remarkable skill for storytelling or rather 'talking history'. He had a phenomenal memory and cited dates and events with precision and accuracy, which never failed to impress us. He also had a wonderful sense of humour and would