INA’s Model of Inclusive Nationalism and Its Relevance in Contemporary India

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Abstract

India, the land of perennial wisdom remained British colony for a long period. She had to fight a strong struggle for her independence from the British rule. While fighting British rule, Indian intelligentsias since the beginning of freedom movement were much concerned about free India. They in this effort put forth different socio-politico-economic models, both utopians and practical about Independent Bharat. However, to find a perfect socio-political model suitable for diversified Indian society, eternally gifted with various regions and religions, cultures and sub-cultures, Varna’s and castes, was a very difficult task. This concern grew more seriously during first half of 20th century. Fortunately, Azad Hind Fauj and its visionary leadership also devised and practiced some standard ideals of nationalism, unity and harmony. These ideals later evolved into pragmatic models of unity and harmony, thereby paving the way for independence. These models were not conceptual or utopian but practical; and practiced both in west and in east by true nationalists of Azad Hind Fauj. This piece of research will therefore, explore and analyze I.N.A.’s Model of Inclusive Nationalism and its relevance in contemporary India.

Keywords: Freedom Movement, Inclusive Nationalism, INA.
1. Introduction

Colonial India faced many challenges throughout the course of its vibrant journey but India stood always up against the challenges coming in its way. Different than earlier but a more crucial challenge in her history came from the British rule, which tried to destroy the very foundations of Indian civilization. Their process of socio-civilizational engineering conjoined with ruthless exploitation intensified more vigorously during first half of 20th century. British imperialists not only exploited, but also through their Machiavellian policies and ideological tools tried to divide Indian society on various grounds and change the structure of Indian society, with the intention to dismantle the very harmonious edifice of Indian civilization, for their imperial gains. Moreover, the world during first half of the 20th century was passing through its transforming phase and the politico-economic currents at the global level posed some serious challenges to world. For some time Indian intelligentsia particularly freedom fighters too got confused by these global currents. In these circumstances to keep India united and to win, freedom from foreign rule was a serious challenge for Indian intellectuals. However, in this period of chaos and confusion and divide and rule some nationalist intellectuals of Azad Hind Fauj rose to the occasion and saved the civilization from complete collapse. The visionary leadership of Azad Hind Fauj put forth some pragmatic models of nationalism, unity and harmony. These models experimented in both west and east by soldiers of Azad Hind Fauj, later became guiding principles for whole India during INA Trials. This piece of research therefore, will explore the INA’s Pragmatic Models of Inclusive Nationalism.

2. Morphology of Indian Society

Unlike man a society or a nation is also a living entity; but only when all its social, cultural and civilizational components and psycho-mental traits work harmoniously and unitedly. India in spite of being a small world in itself with different cultures; religions, races,
languages, and regions, is a vibrant living entity that has lived thousands of years on the principle of harmony and unity. This unified harmonious socio-civilizational edifice of India rests on some basic pillars; composite culture, communal harmony, non-violence, brotherhood, morality and social values, whose cementing materials are mutual-trust, mutual-respect, adaptation, accommodation, cooperation, toleration, fraternity, egalitarianism and positive thought. Amit Kumar Sharma, an Indian anthropologist writes, “The cultural unity of Indian civilization is based on complementary, reciprocity and exchange between different groups”.

These ingrained elements of Indian civilization form base of Indian society and have always cemented Indians into a living nation. The harmony and unity in diversity is now the international hallmark of Indian Nation. According to Spengler, “each civilization constructs its own identity and has an organic passage of time”. These two features developed by Indian society, helped India to keep up its vibrant journey and face all the odds coming in its way with time and space. It was this unity and harmony that won for India freedom from colonial rule and it must be this harmony and unity that would free India from all ills. Thus, not unity in uniformity but unity in diversity must be identity of India.

3. Azad Hind Fauj (1942-1945)

Azad Hind Fauj or Indian National Army a brainchild of Subash Chandra Bose was formed at two fronts. On western front, it was established in January 26, 1942 by Subash Chandra Bose, in Germany and on eastern front, INA was founded on February 17, 1942, under commandershhip of Mohan Singh, at the request of Major Fujiwara and Pritam Singh in Singapore. Azad Hind Fauj in east worked as an armed wing of Indian Independence League an organization working for freedom of India in Southeast Asia. Whereas, in west Azad Hind Fauj worked as an armed wing of Free Indian, a political organization coordinating freedom struggle from Europe.

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2 Ibid. p, 72
Although, Indian National Army collapsed much before achieving its desired goal of independence, yet it changed the course of National Movement and took struggle to the doors of freedom. It became a symbol of national unity and a model of inclusive nationalism uniting almost all people and major political parties of India. Therefore, INA emerged as an immediate threat to British Raj and cause of its early withdrawal from India. 

On the one hand in the country there was a demand for Pakistan and on the other hand Hindus and Muslims showed a tremendous unity when the I.N.A prisoners were put on trial by the British Indian government. By putting three officers of INA belonging to three major Indian religions on trial, British were actually checking the unity of India, which they had seldom failed to break throughout the course of their rule over India. However, during this crucial period the INA sympathy did a cementing work for the united India, for it demonstrates a completely different trend of Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity at a time when the British were dividing the nation using religion as a tool.

Fortunately, in this atmosphere of acute crisis and confusion, some pragmatic socio-political models accepted to all the communities of Indian society and a positive synthesis of both western modernism and eastern spiritualism came from the leadership of Azad Hind Fauj. These were not theoretical models or abstract ideals but pragmatic models, experimented both in west and in east, where they succeeded effectively. The acceptance of these harmonious socio-political models, by the Indians living abroad and their successful implementation is a sufficient proof that these are perfect models for free and future India.

4. INA’s Models with special reference to ‘INA’s Model of Inclusive Nationalism’

Being the embodiment of unity, harmony, patriotism and pluralism; the models and ideals developed and practiced by Azad Hind Fauj are always relevant to India, owing to their compatibility to the basic traits and tenets of Indian society. Therefore, the re-adoption and

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3 Bakshi, G. D. *Bose an Indian Samurai: Netaji and the INA: A Military Assessment*
reimplementation of these models and ideals is the need of the hour. Following are some of
the important models developed by Azad Hind Fauj for free India: INA’s Model of Inclusive
Nationalism, INA’s Pragmatic Model of Communal Harmony, Pragmatic Model of National
Unification and Model of Social Egalitarianism. In this piece of research we will explore,
analyze and discuss INA’s Model of Inclusive Nationalism

5. INA’s Model of Inclusive Nationalism

Nationalism is a broad concept; therefore, there comes various interpretations of nationalism
depending upon time, space and circumstances. The concept of nationalism in India is of a
different content and nature than that of European concept and even context. Indian concept
of nationalism is well rooted in Indian socio-cultural ethos as well as an outcome of a unified
reaction to foreign domination. Contrary to this, the European concept of nationalism is the
byproduct of socio-political crisis and racism. Regarding the origin of nationalism in India,
there appears two dominant narratives. One pan-Indianism which see the seeds of nationalism
in India even before the coming of English people and second European product that says, it
developed as a reaction to English imperialism. However, when one searches within the
broad framework the roots of nationalism in India, the traces of its proto-forms are frequently
available before Europeans. However, the concept of nationalism in its modern sense
developed during 20th century.

The Indian concept of nationalism is more moral and spiritual than material. Ours
nationalism is a genesis of our dynamic socio-civilizational values that have developed over
thousands of years of peaceful co-existence and synthesis. Indian nationalism is deeply
rooted in our social ethos and shared history. The seed of this nationalism were sown by our
great ancestors; religious heads, social figures, kings and nobles and genuine intellectuals. It
was nourished by our Sufi-Bhakti tradition and finally colored with the blood our great
freedom fighters. Indian nationalism is neither jingoism nor political chauvinism. It is a
socially evolved process not a politically sponsored project. It is a noble thing not a marketable product. It is an honorable trait not a hallow slogan.

However, Indian nationalism has nowadays become a political brand. Beyond the curtain walls of nationalism, the markets of criminalization are being promoted which is contrary to the very concept of Indian nationalism. These acts and actors of criminalization would demolish the very edifice of Indian civilization. The destruction or defacing of the very forces of nationalism; shared history, secularism, adaptation, accommodation, tolerance, mutual-trust, communal harmony, democratic setup and symbols; history, architecture, historical cities and historical figures, of nationalism would subsequently paralyze the very socio-civilizational structure of India and hinder the positive progress of India.

INA Model of Inclusive Nationalism was based on the very ethics and ethos of Indian Civilization. This inclusive nationalism was the soul of Azad Hind Fauj. Subash Chandra Bose the ideologue of Azad Hind Fauj was a true nationalist and ‘prince of patriots’. Bose’s ideology and actions were not the result of any psycho-mental disorder nor was he a megalomaniac. He did not possess any of the evil traits often attributed to fascist leaders, such as racism, hostile aggression, obsessive hatred egoism, or delusions. He was an ardent patriot. His nationalism was socio-cultural, not racialist, moral not jingoistic, peaceful not vindictive, real not pseudo, genuine not fake spiritual not marketable. That is why "Bose made no differentiation between Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims." Rather “he succeeded in binding together the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Tamils, and Punjabis or for that matter all communities in a melting pot, namely the Indian National Army." That army stood

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4 Harijan, Feb. 24, 1946.
6 Ibid. p. 3.
for India first, India second and India last. His men took the solemn pledge that their loyalty to their religion, language or province would be subordinated to their loyalty to India”.

Moreover, Bose’s radical nationalism was the outcome of useless political methodology of congress and deceitful policies of British rulers, both were big obstacles in the way of independence. His authoritarian outlook did not come from a drive for personal power but for independence of his motherland. He was over ambitious, and sincerely enjoyed the devotion of his followers; his obsession was not adulation or power, but rather freedom for his beloved Motherland, a goal for which he was willing to suffer and sacrifice, even at the cost of his life.

The core elements of this inclusive nationalism follow as below:

5.1 Unity

Unity is the strength of India. The old proverb that ‘union is strength’ is being beautifully experimented in India since decades. It is this union, which gave birth to unity in diversity; a unique feature of Indian civilization, rather a hallmark of Indian Nation. Azad Hind Fauj nourished this unification with their blood; hence became a symbol of national unification.

Dodwell Cooray, a journalist who led the I.N.A.’s broadcasting unit in Rangoon wrote about INA in a profile of Bose, “The Indian National Army comprising many castes and creeds of India was a unified force under Netaji Subash Chandra Bose. Hindu, Muslim and Christian ate at the same table. No religious differences were allowed to mar the unity of the members of the INA, and he forged a bond of oneness between all the members” of Azad Hind Fauj.

The unity and harmony that Azad Hind Fauj achieved will be a limelight for the

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7 Ibid. pp. 3-5.
posterity and INA “will be a pattern and exemplar for all lovers of their country”. Thus, INA was a true symbol of unity and brotherhood both before and after the trials. The civil and military administration of Provisional Government of Free India worked under one command; that of Netaji, one banner; tricolor flag, and with one mission; freedom of India. The leadership of Azad Hind Fauj must be all-praised for this unity and harmony. Suniti Chatterjee credits Bose for making “the Hindu and the Muslim, the Sikh and the Christian, the native Indian and the Anglo-Indian, feel as brothers, as one Indian people, single and the indivisible”. Therefore, this model of national unification is the need of India for all times to come.

Gandhi while paying tribute to Bose's courage and devotion, six months after his death in an airplane crash on August 18, 1945, wrote, "The hypnotism of the Indian National Army has cast its spell upon us. Netaji's name is one to conjure with His patriotism is second to none. . . His bravery shines through all his actions. He aimed high and failed. But who has not failed." On another occasion, Gandhi eulogized: "Netaji will remain immortal for all time to come for his service to India."

5. 2 Communal Harmony

Harmony is the base of Indian nation upon which all the socio-civilizational infrastructure; social, cultural, religious, economic etc and superstructure; political, legal, judicial, ethical, value system etc rests. The bedrocks and cementing materials of this harmony are mutual-trust, cooperation, adaptation, tolerance, fraternity, mutual-respect, egalitarianism, shared-history and positive progressive thought. All these forces harmony have welded India into

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10 Ibid. p. 32.
13 Civilization is an organized culture encompassing many communities, often on the scale of a nation.
one dynamic country. Therefore, any model or principle developed in conformity with the basic tenets of Indian society and satisfying the psycho-mental horizons of all the communities is always acclimatizable and acceptable in this multi-religious and multicultural country.

The models and socio-political doctrines put forth as well as experimented by the leadership of Azad Hind Fauj were devised in accordance with the fundamentals of Indian society. Bose the architect and guardian of Azad Hind Fauj was well rooted both in Indian tradition, which is based on harmony and synthesis, and modern European traditions, purely materialist but scientific. Bose and his companion INA’s leadership knew Indian psyche and had felt the plus of Indian populace over the years. Therefore, their models and principles were well analyzed and thought experimented, hence acceptable to all the Indian communities living in Europe, Southeast Asia and India.

Subash Chandra Bose succeeded in finding the logic behind growing socio-religious division in India. He found that this is actually the conspiracy of colonial rulers and the division is artificial rather natural. Professor Suniti Chatterji praises Bose for proving that the” Hindu-Muslim communalism is an artificial creation, an incubus, of the British colonial divide and rule policy”.14 This evil creation accompanied all the institutions, systems, ideologies and even reforms introduced by British rulers in India. Since, the Revolt of 1857, popularly known as ‘First War of Independence’ Britishers often used Machiavellian and ideological tools, such as policy of divide and rule, rather than military tools. This was because the Revolt of 1857 opened the eyes and minds of British rulers that their rule in India was in danger and if it has to sustain then the division of Indian society on various grounds is a prerequisite. Because during the revolt both Hindus and Muslims fought together and posed the first ever-greater challenge to Imperialist rule. Thus, this combined national struggle

forced the British rulers to think beyond politico-military solutions. Thus, as Suniti Chatterji says” pitting people alike in blood, language, culture, history, life and mind against each other because of the outer paraphernalia of formal religion”\(^\text{15}\), became agenda of British Indian Rulers in India.

Up to 1940’s this British sponsored Socio-political division had reached to its climax and the mainstream political parties of India were unable to prevent this division. Now the division had taken such an ugly shape, that communal riots were order of the day. The nation was in a state of chaos and the Indian social ethos was breaking down. Besides, the political stalemate between Congress and League was continuously growing towards an extreme extent. The efforts for Hindu-Muslim reapproach done by Bose under congress banner were either rejected or sabotaged by congress. To Bose there seemed no solution of communal problem under congress banner. He therefore, tried to solve this problem first under Forward Bloch platform and then as a supreme commander of Azad Hind Fauj and Chairman of Indian Independence League.

Netaji’s Azad Hind Fauj was a model army that worked on the principle of harmony, and whose only mission was to free India from the clutches of British rule and to be a model army for free India. There was a complete unity and harmony among the rank and file of Azad Hind Fauj. An officer of the INA says, “He (Bose) believed passionately, that all Indians irrespective of region they came from or the language they spoke or religious faith they practiced, were members of the same family”\(^\text{16}\). Even Bose “gave this belief practical shape and convinced all those who came in contact with him that unless this basic fact was not accepted without hesitation, there was no future for India”\(^\text{17}\). Bose was a champion of Hindu-Muslim unity and always stressed for mutual-respect towards other communities. He while appealing for Hindu-Muslim unity “asked the Hindus to bend over backwards, to

\(^{15}\) Ibid. p. 32.
\(^{16}\) Netaji Subash Chandra Bose anti-British war and the Bhagvad Gita: A Postscript. A.R. Seculeratne, P. 177.
\(^{17}\) Ibid. P. 177.
respect the rights of the Muslims and pleaded for concentration over the most important task at hand; ‘the struggle for Indian freedom’\textsuperscript{18}. Because Bose knew that if freedom from British rule had to be won, it needs a combined nationalist front consisting of people from all races, religions, regions and sexes. He was also well aware that Britisher’s would try to split this front using religion as their tool. Netaji therefore, deliberately avoided the use of religion for mobilization of his armies and common people, contrary to other nationalist leaders of India. Therefore, after the formation of Azad Hind Fauj “there however, is no evidence in the literature on Bose …., that he did refer explicitly to the massage of Gita in his speeches on the need for anti-British revolt”.\textsuperscript{19}

While making the structural postmortem of INA, there was no division on the basis religion, race, caste or sex but “all the companies of the regiments of Indian National Army were mixed up with units of the Sikhs, Muslims, Rajputs, Jats, Garhwalas and Marathas. They all lived together, ate together, and so each considered other as his own brother-in-arms”. Hence, “all their loyalties to their religion or region, if any, were subordinate to their loyalty to india”. Therefore, Indian National Army was “not only a model army but a model citizenry”\textsuperscript{20} as well.

Azad Hind Fauj was an ideologeme of harmony and a symbol of communal harmony, the very base of India’s socio-cultural edifice. Hence, the pragmatic model of communal harmony as advocated, practiced and nourished by INA with their blood, must be a torchbearer to the Indians forever and it is this uniqueness which makes INA and its models relevant in contemporary India as well as future India..

5.3 Tolerance.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. P, 179.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. P, 177.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. pp, 178-179
Tolerance is the ability to endure or bear with patience the opinions, ideologies, beliefs, practices or behavior of others. It also implies lack of prejudice and bigotry as well as displaying an objective and unbiased attitude towards others. Impartiality, broad-mindedness and open-mindedness are the key elements of tolerance. It also is the quality of giving others the autonomy to preach and practice their socio-religious and cultural practices. Indian socio-cultural setup “accepts manifoldness of reality and tolerates plurality of viewpoints, behavior, customs and institutions”. Tolerance is thus, one of the important forces of unity and harmony. Azad Hind Fauj was standard-bearer of tolerance. The officers and soldiers of INA showed tolerance in every aspect of their daily affairs.

5.4 Inclusive approach.

An important feature of INA’s growing strength was the principal of inclusivism and holism. Bose the architect of Azad Hind Fauj believed that all the Indians irrespective of their caste, creed, color, sex, region, religion, language and other affiliations are important players in the freedom struggle, because he knew that freedom could be achieved only through a united struggle. The INA leadership knew that ‘united we stand and divide we fall’. History also bears witness that whenever Indians acted unitedly we succeeded and when acted separately we failed, that is why Bose gave call ‘total mobilization for total war’. The inclusionary approach was backbone of INA’s dynamic journey and peaceful existence. This cosmopolitan outlook transformed INA into a globally recognized army and the government formed by Netaji first internationally recognized government of free India. This perspective of inclusivism adopted by INA developed into concept of oneness; hence it transformed Azad Hind Fauj into a united force.

5.5 Social Egalitarianism

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Netaji envisioned when Britishers would be driven out of India through an armed struggle, a socio-political revolution would begin. This revolution would bring an end to the age-old caste system and traditional social hierarchy. Then this caste-ridden society would be replaced by an egalitarian, casteless and classless society based on socialist models. However, this process would require very careful guidance and tough hand, to prevent anarchy and chaos. Mrs. Kitty Kurti, a close German friend of Bose, thus revealed in her anecdotal memoir, that in 1933, Bose in meeting explained that, "Besides a plan of action which will lead up to the conquest of power, we shall require a program for the new state when it comes into existence in India. Nothing can be left to chance. The group of men and women who will assume the leadership of the fight with Great Britain will also have to take up the task of controlling, guiding and developing the new state and, through the state, the entire Indian people . . . . The task of these leaders will not be over till a new generation of men and women are educated and trained after the establishment of the new state and this new generation are able to take complete charge of their country's affairs".22

Netaji also anticipated that authoritarian rule would not last beyond the period when social reconstruction was completed, and law and order were established… Bose aimed for nothing less than the formation of "a new India and a happy India on the basis of the eternal principles of liberty, democracy and socialism"23

He emphasized that greater emphasis should be placed on social goals than on the needs or desires of individuals. Individual wishes, must be subordinated to the needs of the state, especially during the struggle for independence and the period of reconstruction immediately following liberation. Nonetheless, he was fully committed to upholding the rights of minority, intellectual, religious, cultural and racial groups. He believed for an "all-round freedom for the Indian people such as social, economic and political freedom," and ,

22 61. Kitty Kurti, Subhas Chandra Bose As I Knew Him (1966), pp. 22-28  
23 Ibid. p. 29.  

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hoped to "wage a relentless war against bondage of every kind till the people can become really free."  

5.6 Women Emancipation

Unlike the German National Socialists and the Italian Fascists, who stressed the masculine in almost all spheres of social and political activity, Bose believed that women were the equal to men, and should therefore be likewise prepared to fight and sacrifice for India's liberation. Throughout the 1920’s and 1930’s, he had campaigned in India to bring women more fully into the life of the nation. After his return to Asia in 1943, he called on women to serve as soldiers in the Indian National Army. "When I express my confidence that you are today prepared to fight and suffer for the sake of your motherland," he told the women's section of the Independence League in July 1943, “I do not mean only to cajole you with empty words. I know the capabilities of our womanhood well. I can, therefore, say with certainty that there is no task which our women cannot undertake and no sacrifice and suffering which our women cannot undergo... To those who say that it will not be proper for our women to carry guns, my only request is that they look into the pages of our history. What brave deeds the Rani of Jhansi performed during the First War of Independence in 1857... Indians -- both common people and members of the British Indian army -- who are on the border areas of India, will, on seeing you march with guns on your shoulders, voluntarily come forward to receive the guns from you and carry on the struggle started by you."  

A women's regiment, named Rani of Jhansi Regiment was formed in 1943, and its number came to about 1,000 women. While those less suited to combat duties were employed as nurses and in other supportive roles, the majority were trained as soldiers. When the INA attacked British forces from Burma in east India in mid-1944, the women of the Jhansi Regiment fought alongside the men, suffering equally heavy casualties. When the army was

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24 Ibid. p. 29.

forced to withdraw, the women were given no privileges. Along with the men, they marched for more than a thousand kilometers.  

5.7 Mutual Trust

One of the cementing materials for this unity and harmony was mutual-trust. Bose through his magnetic speeches and selfless nationalism had developed among his followers such a deep sense of unity, communal harmony and true patriotism that they trusted on other fellow brethren more than their own-self. Even Bose himself trusted his commanders beyond limits. Thus, while traveling from Germany to Tokyo he was accompanied by Abid Hassan Safrani and at the time of his alleged death, he had Colonel Habih-ur-Rehman. All his comrades followed this tradition of trust set forth by Bose and all his true lovers must fall this tradition even now.

5.8 Sacrifice

A true sacrifice means to offer as a gift everything a person possesses. The heroes of Azad Hind Fauj offered theirs everything, family, country, jobs and even the dearest and most valuable thing, the life. According to American Heritage Dictionary, sacrifice means ‘To forfeit something for something else considered to have a greater value’. Thus, sacrifice does not mean ‘giving up something for nothing’ but sacrifice means giving up everything for something else, we consider more important. In this context, the soldiers of Azad Hind Fauj considered freedom of motherland more worthy then all the things, which they voluntarily sacrificed, encompassing them even their lives. Therefore, this sacrifice cult developed by Azad Hind Fauj, became an exemplar for Independent Bharat.

6. Conclusion.

India is one of the few civilizations that have survived the shocks, clashes and collisions of time and space and forces of nature and history. It is because Indian society and

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civilization is well rooted in humanism, cosmopolitanism, moralism, universalism, internationalism, pluralism and unity in diversity. The basis pillars of the inclusive nationalism, harmonious and unified socio-civilization edifice are; communal harmony, composite culture, syncretism, non-violence, common goodwill, morality and social values and its cementing materials are mutual-trust, accommodation, cooperation, adaptation, toleration, fraternity, mutual-respect, egalitarianism and positive progressive thought. Nevertheless, these very forces and symbols of Indian civilization are being engineered and demolished for fulfilling the vested political and other interested. Therefore, the need of the time is to save rather promote this basic structure of Indian society. Thus, exploring the models and ideals of Azad Hind Fauj especially INA’s Model of Inclusive Nationalism is an act of this effort.

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