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[Home](#) » [Featured](#) » » [August 1, 2023](#)

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This Hyderabadadi was sole companion of Netaji on his 90-day submarine voyage

Deccan Chronicle. | [Victor Rao](#)

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Abid Hasan Safrani

Hyderabad: Abid Hasan Safrani was Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's close confidant and constant companion from his days in Germany to the years of the Indian National

Army (INA). He was the only one to accompany him on his historic submarine voyage from Kiel in Germany to Japanese territory in Sumatra, Malaysia during World War II.

Safrani was born in Hyderabad on 11 April, 1911 to Tehsildar Amir Hasan and Fakhru Hajja Begum, a lady of Persian origin, he was named Zain-ul-Abdin Hasan. After finishing schooling from St George's Grammar School, he joined Nizam College but left it soon to join Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati ashram in Ahmedabad. In 1935, he went to Berlin to pursue engineering where he met Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and left the course without finishing it. Abid Hasan is famous as the man who coined the slogan 'Jai Hind.'

Post-retirement from IFS, he settled at a farm in Shaikpet spending his last days farming and living a quiet, ordinary life. Little did his neighbours know that they were living next to an individual who had played such an important role in the history of the Indian freedom struggle. He passed away peacefully in 1984.

The venture to bring out 'Abid Hasan Safrani- Netaji's comrade-in-arms' was initiated by C. Narendra Reddy, who is married to Safrani's niece, Kulsum Reddy. Another niece, Professor Ismat Mehdi and his nephew Shehbaz Safrani joined Narendra. The chapters in the book throw light on Abid's Hyderabad connection with Netaji.

It is the chapters written by the authors, articles collected from various sources, reminiscences of family and friends and tributes paid by admirers and notes left behind by Abid himself which were woven together to form the book.

In the words of historian Sugata Bose: The suffix 'Safrani' adopted by Abid Hasan is derived from the word for saffron, a colour associated with sacrifice in the Indian subcontinent.

Quoting from the book, Ismat Mehdi says, "Uncle Zainu's original name was Zainul Abedin Hasan. In the INA, he was known as Abid Hasan Safrani, but to the family he was Zainu Manna or simply Manna."

When asked about the recognition of Abid's contribution in hometown Hyderabad, the retired professor of Arabic, EFLU, Ismat Mehdi says, "His contributions are not recognized in Hyderabad. This is partly due to his humble nature and simple living post-retirement. Our book is an attempt to create more awareness not only about Abid's contribution but also about the INA's role in the freedom movement."

Reacting on receiving the Netaji award (posthumous) on behalf of Abid, she says, "It was an honour to receive the award in 2021 on behalf of my uncle. It also makes me feel happy that he was honoured in Kolkata which was a prominent centre of the freedom movement."

The tale of their arduous and dangerous journey from Kiel to Sumatra is best described in Abid Hasan's interview with Madan Gopal that was published in the Mainstream

journal on 26 July 1997. The relevant extracts are being reproduced in the book in 'From Germany to Japan' chapter with kind permission of the Mainstream weekly taken by the authors.

Madan Mohan: And then you went to South-East Asia in the submarine U-Boat? Please tell me more about it.

Abid Hasan: We had romantic notions about the journey in a submarine. When we boarded it we found that the U-Boat had space enough for only one bed. It was a small room where the entire crew, the doctors and we all sat together. We sat up all 24 hours. And we sat there motionless. There was no elbow room at all. We felt cramped. It was like solitary confinement. Even in jail the living conditions would be better. It took us two months to travel from Germany to a point off the coast of Madagascar. This was the longest lap of our journey.

Madan Gopal: Was the journey eventful?

Abid Hasan: We had to cross the North Sea. This was the only way to get to the Atlantic Ocean. British submarines were systematically firing depth charges and north of Scotland, we had an encounter but we scraped through.

Abid's last meeting with Netaji is best described by Abid himself in the book through his letters.

On 20 August 1945, the Japanese arranged for a plane to take us to Hanoi. I stayed back in Hanoi. The plane carried Netaji and Habib ur Rahman. The plane took off from Taihoku airfield and after the takeoff it broke into two and exploded into flames. While lying on the ground after the flames, Netaji asked Rahman: 'Aap ko zyada to nahin lagi?' (Hope you have not been hurt too badly?). On the way to hospital, Netaji asked: 'Hasan...Hasan, where is Hasan?' Rahman replied: 'Hasan is not here Sir, I am Habib ur Rahman'

OUTSTANDING INDIAN PATRIOT OF HYDERABAD

During his tenure with Netaji, he coined the slogan 'Jai Hind' which was rooted in our patriotic ethos

Five sites where the spirit of Abid Hasan Safrani resides:

- * Abid Manzil at Troop Bazaar where he was born in 1911.
- * St George's Grammar School where he schooled.
- * The family home 'Dhoop Chaon' at Banjara Hills to which he returned in 1946 as an INA veteran from World War II.

* Safrani Bagh in Golconda where he settled after retirement and lived from 1970 until his death in 1984.

* Mir-ka-Daira, a Shia cemetery beyond Charminar where he lies buried.

Quote: "The state govt honours its heroes regularly but no mention of any award to Safrani. Recognition could be made in many ways such as naming a university after him or setting up a special institute for scholars to research on INA," Ismat Mehdi, niece of Abid Hasan Safrani said.