

Commander: My Great-uncle Shaheed H.C. Bhattacharya, INA

Buddhist Area Commander in the Second World War Icon

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My Great-uncle Shaheed H.C. Bhattacharya, INA, was my father's youngest uncle and was the youngest son of my great-grandfather Diwan Bahadur B.C. Bhattacharya. Born in Comilla, now in Bangladesh, he received his early education under the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore at Shantiniketan. A pious Buddhist, he decided to remain a bachelor and plunged into India's freedom movement. He found himself interned at Hijli in the building which is now called Old Building of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. Freed after some time, he went back to Comilla and started to mobilise people towards enterprise via an institution that he founded and which he christened the House of Labour. This organisation was loosely affiliated to the Indian National Congress. An expert in firearms, he practised shooting at targets in the forests of Tripura. My paternal grandmother, who was a witness to his activities at Comilla and its environs, recounted to me his activities.

After the Japanese conquest of Myanmar in the Second World War, he went to Yangon. He later joined the Indian National Army under the command of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and was an Area Commander. After the Allied victory in the Second World War, he came back to Comilla with his health broken. He passed away shortly thereafter at Comilla. It is he who brought back to Comilla a few Rupee notes issued by the Japanese in Burma. My paternal grandmother kept the notes in the memory of my great-uncle, Shaheed H.C. Bhattacharya, INA, after his demise and later handed them to me.

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