

Chapter V

Subhas Chandra Bose: The Pilgrim in Politics

In the pre-independence political scenario of India Subhas Chandra Bose appears to have emerged from a high drama of personal heroism and bravery without even a trace of fear and cowardice. One could justifiably feel applying the word *charisma*, in the Greek sense of the term to Bose's person and role. Giving up, voluntarily, the coveted saddle of Civil Service in British India, he threw himself, heart and soul, into the rough waters of anti-British politics. He played the role of *enfant terrible* in the Indian National Congress by challenging the rightist policies of the political respectability, including Gandhi. His resolutions as the President of the Congress were inclined towards socialism and the left. He was an uncompromising strategist, believing it right to strike the irons when it was red. He vowed for complete national independence and disdained any compromise in the anti-imperialist struggle for attaining it. His disagreements with the Congress High Command led to his alienation from the Congress ideology, and Bose floated his own party, calling it the Forward Block for establishing "a thoroughly modern Socialist State"¹ The height of the drama of Bose's life was reached when he escaped from his internment in Calcutta under the vigilant eyes of the British police and spies. He traveled incognito through the entire expanse of northern India, and went out to Kabul, and from there to Germany, and finally emerged as the Supreme Commander of the Indian National Army at Singapore. The escapade left his people with wide-eyed wonder, and it vied, in daring and courage, with Shivaji's getting away from Aurangzeb's prison in Delhi. The rest is history, and Bose came to be enthroned in the hearts of his countrymen as the leader of leaders, and earned for himself the appellation "Netaji", by which he is unmistakably known and referred to. Epic analogies are available for Bose's dramatic career; he stood to Gandhi as Arjuna did to Bhisma, reverent to and yet rebelling against. If Gandhi

represented the political wisdom of India, patient and ever watchful of the ancient values, Bose, much in the likeness of Vivekananda, symbolized her youth. From across the decades, it is still possible to hear Bose's call: "Forward, therefore, and ever forward, my countrymen"²

I

Bose wrote two autobiographies. In one of these he described himself as "an Indian pilgrim". Another called *The Indian Struggle* deserves to be put on the same shelf with Jawaharlal Nehru's *The Discovery of India*, though narrated with a candour in a language shorn in poetry, yet not lacking in fire and passion. The account of Subhas Chandra Bose's ideas of State and anti-imperialist politics are given in terms of his two autobiographies, namely, *An Indian Pilgrim*, and *The Indian Struggle*. These are the two basic sources works for his ideas and actions. One can follow the pilgrim's progress through the pages of his autobiographies. There are albeit other studies of Bose's life and actions, some of which are valuable in themselves. But ours have been the intention of studying Bose in terms of his own account. He was capable of remarkable objectivity about himself. Mention may be made of the account of his great escapade narrated in the third person. This deserves to be quoted: "After considering the different means whereby this (i.e., Indian freedom fighters should have first hand information as to what was happening abroad and should join the fight against Britain and thereby contribute to the break up of the British Empire), could be done he found no other alternative but to travel abroad himself. Towards the end of January, 41, he quietly left his home one night at a late hour. Though he was closely watched by the secret police he managed to dodge them and after an adventurous journey, managed to cross the Indian frontier. It was the biggest political sensation that had happened in India after a long time". This is narrated on page 346 of *The Indian Struggle*. This sense of impersonality could have been a remnant of Bose's study of Vedanta since his childhood. There was a mystic side which did not shed completely. It is possible, with the help of these autobiographies, to relate Bose's ideas of state that he envisaged for India. And

that is what we shall endeavour to work out in the present context. But before we could carry out the project we should gather the images of the man as they come out from the pages of the autobiographies.

Bose's description of himself as an Indian pilgrim is quite significant. The spiritual ring about the phrase tells a lot. Bose grew up as an introvert, perplexed by doubts and anxieties. His description of his adolescent psychological life is candid and honest in detailing his acute mental conflict. Bose chanced upon the works of Swami Vivekananda, and the message that emanated from the books, moved him profoundly. "I was thrilled to the marrow of my bones", Bose records.³ Thus Vivekananda enters Bose's life, and kindled the fire of patriotism in him, and his motherland became the queen of his adoration. It was, he said, "a revolution within and everything was turned upside down"⁴

It was through Vivekananda that Bose's imagination was fired by the life and teachings of Ramkrishna. Monasticism held a spell for him, and he took to religion and yoga seriously, and even left his home visiting the holy places of the Hindus. But the intensity of the religious impulse died down gradually yielding to the idea that spiritual development required social service. One lasting influence of Vivekananda's teaching on Bose was the ideal of the service of Humanity which included the service of one's country. Again, under the influence of Vivekananda, Bose came to believe that revolt was necessary for self-fulfilment. As he entered the college he had by then definite ideas and principles, and made certain definite decisions for himself: that he would not follow the beaten track and was going to lead a life conducive to his spiritual welfare and the uplift of humanity. To quote Bose from his autobiography: "I was going to make a profound study of philosophy so that I could solve the fundamental problems of life; in practical life I was going to emulate Ramkrishna and Vivekananda as far as possible and, in any case, I was not going in for a worldly career".⁵ Bose had taken months and years of groping to arrive at the decisions.

Bose entertained doubts as regards the social and moral values, and longed for a revaluation of existing ones (social and moral values). His doubts were more existential than the Cartesian. For Bose skeptical doubting was “a stepping stone towards the reconstruction of reality”⁶, and he noted that in this respect each individual is a law unto himself (or herself). Bose goes on to remark that no great achievement is possible without a revolution in one’s life, and that the revolution has two stages, one, the stage of doubt or skepticism, and another, the stage of reconstruction. Progress in life, as Bose relates, means a series of doubts followed by a series of attempts at resolving them.

In his undergraduate days he came to imbibe the ideas of Sri Aurobindo through the periodical called *Arya*, which the latter edited. Bose was impressed by Aurobindo’s philosophy. The doctrine of *māyā* was “like a thorn in my flesh”⁷, Bose remarks. He could not accommodate his life to the doctrine, in spite of Vivekananda’s teachings, nor could he get rid of it. The needed philosophy came from Aurobindo. Aurobindo’s conception, as a synthesis of *yogas*, *jñāna*, *karma* and *bhakti* appealed to Bose as “something original and unique”⁸. Bose has related with a feeling of pity the sight of an old decrepit bagger woman bagging for alms in front of his house in Calcutta. “Her sorrowful countenance and her tattered clothes pained me whenever I looked at her or even thought of her ... What was the value of yoga if so much misery was to continue in the world? Thoughts like these made me rebel against the existing social system”⁹. Bose resolved to save his pocket money and spent in charity.

Bose points out that his political consciousness was aroused by the outbreak of the First World War. It came as a shock and made him reevaluate or re-examine his ideas and accepted values. There had set in a partial disillusionment about *Yoga* and asceticism. He asked himself: “Was it possible to divide a nation’s life into two compartments and hand over one of them to the foreigner, reserving the other to ourselves”? He concluded that “If India was to be a modern civilized nation, she would have to pay the price and she would not by any means shirk the physical, the military problem. Those who worked for

the country's emancipation would have to be prepared to take charge of both the civil and military administration. Political freedom was indivisible and meant complete independence of foreign control and tutelage. The war had shown that a nation that did not possess military strength could not hope to preserve its independence."¹⁰

Bose recounts that from his philosophy he acquired intellectual discipline and a critical frame of mind. It emancipated his mind from preconceived notions, and he was led to question the truth of Vedānta, on which he had taken his stand so long. The incident that led to his expulsion from the college is well-known and need not be recapitulated. What is of moment is Bose's remark that the event made his future career, gave him a foretaste of leadership that entailed renunciation, self-confidence, initiative, and, above all, martyrdom. The expulsion was a sort of awakening of reality. This is implied by the remark: "Shankaracharya's Maya lay dead as a door nail".¹¹

Bose resumed his graduate studies in philosophy after having lost two years in having been expelled. But in the meantime, he enrolled himself in India's Defence Force. He found pleasure in soldiering. His feeling of strength and self-confidence grew further. That was a different feeling of life altogether: "What a change it was from sitting at the feet of anchorites to obtain knowledge about God, to standing with a rifle on my shoulder ...".¹²

In Cambridge, Bose studied metaphysics with McTaggart. This left an abiding influence on Bose, and it is evident from Bose's account of his philosophical faith in the autobiography called *An Indian Pilgrim*. We shall come to it later. Bose's study of European history from original sources was an eye-opener. That Europe was not a magnified edition of Great Britain dawned upon Bose. He realized that Europe had a distinct cultural and political identity of her own. This realization had paid dividends during Bose's turbulent years in Berlin and other parts of Europe. The "original sources, more than anything else, I studied at Cambridge, helped to rouse my political sense and to foster my understanding of the inner currents of international politics".¹³

Bose came out in the Civil Service Examination, and in consonance with his earlier resolve not to follow the beaten track, he, after an arduous mental struggle of seven months, decided to resign. Bose mentions in a footnote that Lokamanya B.G. Tilak, in course of a visit to Cambridge, had admonished the Indian students not to go for Government service but to devote themselves to national service. Bose had two paradigms to choose between. One, the Ramesh Chandra Dutt paradigm of entering the Civil Service, and the other the Aurobindo Ghose's paradigm of giving up the idea of entering it at all. The latter paradigm was to Bose "more noble, more inspiring, more lofty, more unselfish, though more thorny than the path of Ramesh Dutt".¹⁴ Bose wrote to the members of his family of his conviction: "Only on the soil of sacrifice and suffering can we raise our national edifice".¹⁵ Bose thought that if the members of the services withdrew their allegiance, then the bureaucratic machinery would collapse. The allegiance of a foreign bureaucracy was repugnant to him. He argued that every Government servant whether he be a petty *chaprasi* or a provincial Governor only helps to contribute to the stability of the British Government in India. "The best way to end a Government is to withdraw from it".¹⁶

Bose's autobiography ends with a statement of his philosophical faith. At one time Bose was an absolutist and thought that the doctrine of *māyā* was the quintessence of knowledge. The doctrine intrigued him for long, but ultimately he found that he could not live it, and discarded it on pragmatic considerations. The idea that the Absolute was incomprehensible under human conditions, and that Kant's forms of understanding filter the Absolute for us appealed to Bose. As for the idea that the Absolute could be comprehended through yogic perception, he inclined towards "benevolent agnosticism".¹⁷ He took up the position of a relativist. On the one hand, he would not repudiate the claims on behalf of supra-mental awareness of the Absolute as sheer moonshine, since so many individuals claim to have experienced that in the past, and, on the other, he holds on to the view that truth as known to us is not absolute but relative. "It is relative to our common mental constitution, to our distinctive characteristics as

individuals, and to changes in the same individual during the process of time”.¹⁸ In short, our notions of the Absolute are relative to our human mind, and if such notions differ, they may all be equally true; the divergence may be accounted for by the distinctive individuality of the subject.

Having discarded absolutism, Bose says that the world is real in a relative sense, and then life should become interesting and acquire meaning and purpose. For Bose, the relative reality is dynamic, it moves towards a better state of existence. To say that reality is dynamic is not to imply a meaningless notion. Further, reality is spirit, that it, it works with a conscious purpose through time and space. That reality is spirit is a pragmatic necessity. “My nature demands it. I see purpose and design in nature: I discern an ‘increasing purpose’ in my own life”.¹⁹ The spiritual nature of reality, for Bose, is “an intellectual and moral necessity, a necessity of my very life”.²⁰

The world is a manifestation of Spirit. Our experience is bipolar: there is the self, the mind which receives, and the non-self, the source of all impressions, which form the stuff of our experience. The non-self, apart from the self is also real, and can hardly be ignored. Our knowledge of reality can at best be relative, most of our conceptions of reality are true, though partially. But the conception that represents the maximum truth for Bose may be stated in his own words: “For me, the essential nature of reality is LOVE. LOVE is the essence of the universe and is the essential principle in human life ... I see all around me the play of love; I perceive within me the same instinct; I feel that I must love in order to fulfill myself and I need love as the basic principle on which to reconstruct life”²¹. Bose confesses that his epistemology is unorthodox, and has reached the conclusion partly from a rational study of life in all respects, partly from intuition and partly from pragmatic considerations. Bose has an argument in support of his thesis that the essential principle in human life is love. There is much in life that is opposed to love. The paradox is explained by saying that “the ‘essential principle’ is not yet fully manifest, it is unfolding itself in space and time. Love, like reality of which it is the essence, is dynamic”.²²

The nature of the process of unfolding of love is progressive in character. Bose says that progress may not be unilinear, there may be periodic setbacks, but on the whole, there is progress. There is also the intuitive experience that we are moving ahead. And it is both biological and moral to have faith in progress. As for the law of progress Bose takes into account the Sāmkhya, Spencer's view that evolution consists in a development from the simple to the complex, Hartman's idea that the world is a manifestation of blind will, and therefore, it would be futile to look for an underlying idea; Bergson's thesis that evolution is creative, and hence it implies a new departure at every stage, and cannot be predicted in advance by the human intellect, and lastly, Hegel's dogma that the evolutionary process is dialectical. Apropos of his relativism, Bose does not reject any of the views, all of them have an element of truth, and each of the thinkers had sought to reveal the truth as he has perceived it. But Bose is inclined to take Hegel's theory as the nearest approximation to truth, as it explains the facts more satisfactorily. Yet he opined that even Hegel's theory cannot be regarded as the whole truth, since all the facts as we know them, do not accord with it. "Reality is, after all, too big for our frail understanding to fully comprehend"...²³ Nevertheless, he said, we have to build our life on the theory which contains the maximum truth. "We cannot sit still because we cannot or do not know the Absolute Truth" is another characteristic remark of Bose.

Before we pass on to considering Bose's political ideas, we may remark that Bose's position has much likeness to the Buddhist view of steering clear of both eternalism or *Śāśvatavada*, and nihilism or *ucchedavada*. The strong pragmatic accent has a Buddhist ring about it as much as his rejection of Absolutism of the Vedantic variety. Relativism and pragmatism are considerations of a strategist that Bose was in life and action. There is another remarkable feature of Bose's thought, namely his characterization of Reality as Love. Apart from Vaisnavism the metaphysical views of McTaggart could have been a formative factor.

II

We have noticed, while pursuing Bose's autobiography, the element of the rebel in his physical life. He was an inspired rebel. "My life is a mission – a duty", he wrote in a letter dated 20.11.15²⁴, and he hated the philosophy of expediency. One would do well to compare Bose's impatient passion for freedom, his view that reality is Spirit, the essence of which is love with what Albert Camus says in *The Rebel*. Camus defines a rebel as a man who says "no". There is much in Bose to endorse the view, for both Bose and Camus' rebellion is one of man's essential dimensions. It is our historical reality. Bose would have said as much as Camus does: "I rebel, therefore, we exist".²⁵ Camus says that rebellion cannot exist without a strange form of love, to give everything for the sake of life and of living men. It is noble generosity towards the future in giving all to the present. The rebel is a strange lover. All this is no less true of Bose.

III

The Indian Struggle is another autobiographical account of Bose. But it is an autobiography with a difference. It tells the story of India's struggle for independence from 1920 to 1942, giving Bose's own assessment of the process of wresting freedom from the British. The *leitmotif* of Bose's resigning the Civil Service was to dissociate himself from the British colonial administration in India in every possible way. On his return from Cambridge he met Gandhi in Bombay, but realized that Gandhi was not going to be his mentor in politics. It was C.R. Das who caught his imagination, and any reader of the *Indian Struggle* would hardly failed to notice Bose's admiration and enthusiasm for Das; "I feel I had found a leader and I meant to follow him". Bose wrote about Das after his meeting with him.²⁶ Bose's political ideology and sense of strategy can be better appreciated if it were studied in juxtaposition with Gandhi's. *The Indian Struggle* is both an exposition and a critique of Gandhi's political maneuverings of the situations and interfacing with the British colonial power. Speaking n

terms of Freudian psychology one could say that Bose bore a love-hate relationship with Gandhi, whom Bose described as “India’s man of destiny”.²⁷

There is something temperamental about Bose’s descriptions of the periods and turns of India’s struggle for independence. His metaphors are drawn from nature’s disquiet moods and moments. Bose has called his king in terms of Indian psychology one could say that Bose bore a love-hate relationship with Gandhi, whom Bose described as “India’s man of destiny chapters by such names as “The Clouds Gather”, “The Storm Breaks”, “Sign of Coming Upheaval”, “Story 1930”, and “The Barometer Rises”. One could read Bose’s intention of naturalization of the Indian struggle, and the consequences of the revolt. This may have reflected Bose’s passionate impatience with the colonial rule. We may note, in this context Bose’s characteristic remark that “There is no royal road to success in winning political freedom”.²⁸ One is left to surmise if Gandhi could have said this. Gandhi was hardly ever impatient and convinced of his method of *satyāgraha* founded on *ahimsā*, non-cooperation and passive resistance. He would not travel any other path. Bose preferred to change his tactics as and when the situation demanded, Gandhi did not lack a spirit of defiance, but Bose considered Gandhi’s measures as ineffective to “menace the very existence to the Government”.²⁹

While in the Congress Bose devoted his time, thought and energy to consolidating the leftist elements within. Bose represented the “heterodox thought” and “dynamic and radical elements”,³⁰ within Congress. He put the Right-Left encounter in terms of Hegelian dialectics. “Philosophically speaking, Right-consolidation is the ‘thesis’ which demands its ‘anti-thesis’ in Left-consolidation”. Without this ‘anti-thesis’ and the conflict following in its wake, no further progress is possible”.³¹ In order to bringing about left-consolidation, he founded the Forward Block in 1939, and resigned the office of the President of Congress.

But what did Bose mean by Leftism? He has clarified the issue in the following manner: “Leftism means anti-imperialism. A genuine anti-imperialist is one who believes in undiluted independence (not Mahatma Gandhi’s substance of independence) as the political objective and in uncompromising national struggle as the means for attaining it. After the attainment of political independence, Leftism will mean Socialism and the task before the people will then be the reconstruction of national life on a socialist basis”.³² Bose looked upon the Rightists as milk and water nationalists.³³ Leftism has had the foes to fight against, one, “foreign imperialism and its Indian allies,” and the other, the Rightists. Leftism, therefore, stands in the chance of being presented both within and without.

Did Bose consider Gandhi a Rightist? No exactly so, But he did think that the Rightists more often than not rallied around the father-figure, had often his blessings. Gandhi represented another face of anti-imperialism, though less radical. “Gandhism,” Bose writes, “envisages an ultimate compromise with imperialism for Gandhism Satyagraha (or Civil Disobedience) must end in a Compromise”.³⁴ Bose was prepared to take any truck with imperialism. Again, “Socially, Gandhism is intimately linked up with the ‘haves’ – the vested interests”.³⁵ Bose thought that the have-nots on becoming class-conscious, would discard Gandhism. He even made a forecast that Gandhism will lose every appeal to large masses of the pesantry and factory workers, middle class youths and students. Bose considered Gandhian ideas of post-struggle reconstruction as partly medieval and partly anti-socialist. The question whether Bose’s judgments are idiosyncratic or historically validated is one which we do not propose to enter into. We are, on the contrary, interested in juxtaposing the two major ideologies that had enlivened the Indian struggle, and appreciate their unique differences.

It should not, of course, be thought that Bose had undermined or rejected Gandhi’s strategies lock stock and barrel. He had admiration and respect enough for Gandhi. He always used the term “Mahatma” for Gandhi. We may note in

passing some of the appreciations that Bose had made of Gandhi and his revolutionary role at hours of national crisis:

- (a) "... the clouds began to gather and towards the end of 1920 the sky was dark and threatening. With the new year came whirlwind and storm. And the man who was destined to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm was Mahatma Gandhi".³⁶
- (b) Bose read the symbolism of Gandhi's appearance and apparel. "His (Gandhi's) loin-cloth was reminiscent of Christ, while his sitting posture at the time of lecturing was reminiscent of Buddha ... all this was a tremendous asset to the Mahatma compelling the attention and obedience of his countrymen".³⁷
- (c) Speaking of Gandhi's role in Indian history Bose wrote: "... there sprang up India's man of destiny – Mahatma Gandhi ... He knew himself, he knew his country's needs and he knew also that during the next phase of India's struggle, the crown of leadership would be on his head".³⁸
- (d) Of Gandhi's march to Dandi in disobedience of the Salt Law, Bose remarks: "The march to Dandi was an event of historical importance which will rank on the same level with Napoleon's march to Paris on his return from Elba or Mussolini's march to Rome when he wanted to seize political power."³⁹

Notwithstanding the appreciation, there is an underpinning of critical evaluation of Gandhi's life and actions and ideas by Bose. For Bose Gandhi's passive resistance was necessary at an hour of history, but hardly sufficient. He wanted the resistance to become active. While it was the time that through Gandhi "the masses of India have learnt how to strick at the powerful enemy even without arms", and under Gandhi's leadership it was "demonstrated that it was possible to paralyse the administration through the weapon of passive resistance," but "while passive resistance can hold up or paralyse a foreign administration, it cannot overthrow or expel it, without the use of physical force

... The people today are spontaneously passing on from passive to active resistance ... The best stage will come when active resistance will develop into an armed revolution. Then will come the end of British rule in India.”⁴⁰

Much of Gandhi’s views of life and the world appeared irrational to Bose. The Swaraj Party was “a rationalist revolt against the Mahatma and his philosophy.”⁴¹ Bose considered one of the reasons for Gandhi’s failure was his playing “two roles in one person”. Reviewing Gandhi’s role in England Bose commented that “Sometimes he conducted himself not as a political leader who had come to negotiate with the enemy, but as a master who had come to preach a new faith – that of non- violence and world-peace.”⁴² Bose did not share Gandhi’s code of ethics, and it is to be conjectured if Gandhi would have used the term “enemy” at all for the British. Bose had even suggested, “If...the Mahatma had spoken in the language of Dictator Stalin or Il Duce Mussolini or Fuehrer Hitler – John Bull would have understood and would have bowed his head in respect.”⁴³ Gandhi and Bose differed in their perceptions of the political situations and responded according to their respective scale of values. Bose himself mentions Gandhi’s “goodness, his frankness, his humble way, his profound considerations for his opponents”,⁴⁴ and notes that all these were construed as weakness. Bose even quotes one of Gandhi’s characteristic remark that he would not be prepared to gain freedom at the cost of Britain’s ruin. The magnanimousness of the remark did not work on the British politicians. As Bose thought, the problem with Gandhi was his playing two roles in one person, that of a political leader and that of a world-teacher. Whether one agrees with Bose or no is another matter. The point is that he thought that way. Bose was for keeping political dealings apart from the higher callings of truth and non-violence. On this score Gandhi would not compromise. One might recall Radhakrishnan’s remark about Gandhi that he was a politician among the saints and a saint among the politicians.

Bose thought that Gandhi was politically a bad bargainer, "The instinct, or the judgment, so necessary for political bargaining is lacking in him." He gives more than he takes".⁴⁵ There was another difference between Gandhi and Bose as regards their perspective of history. Gandhi stood on his native moorings except perhaps his admiration for and deriving inspiration from Tolstoy, Thearou and John Ruskin. These were hardly political in nature. On the contrary, Bose was wide awake of the global political scenario in Europe, and Japan in the Far East. One of his points of inspiration was the Irish nationalist struggle against Britain. Bose's nationalism or patriotism was more international in nature than Gandhi's. Moreover, Bose thought that the Indian struggle⁴⁶ was a continuation of the revolt of 1857. It is a matter of doubt if Gandhi ever thought that way. Bose thought that imperialist power could only be thrown out with military might. That is what is evident from his adventuresome heroism after his escape from India amply testified.

Between 1933 and 1936 Bose traveled practically the whole of Europe outside Russia and studied at first hand the conditions and the growth of the new forces. Bose was convinced that India should make the fullest use of the international crisis of 1939. He stood for "the policy of immediate, uncompromising and all out fight against the British rule in India".⁴⁷ Bose's closing passages to *The Indian Struggle* bears a reference to Gandhi's speech after the "Quit India" resolution was adopted. "In a stirring ninety minutes speech", Gandhi "gave expression to his determination to fight to the finish even if he stood alone against the whole world".⁴⁸ This must have pleased Bose in Europe during World War II. At the time of writing the cited passage Bose had escaped from India, and was busy with performing the historical and stupendous task of raising the Indian National Army to strike the British at India's frontier at Kohima. The rest is history.

Gandhi and Bose had been the two 'movers and shakers' of pre-independent politics in India. To revert to the epic analogy, following R. Zehner's account of Gandhi in *Hinduism*⁴⁹, we might say that if Gandhi played

the role of Yudhisthira, then Bose has been a veritable incubation of Arjuna in terms of his valour, courage, and the final heroic power to strike.

However, our intention in juxtaposing Gandhi and Bose has been to getting an idea of Bose's political ideology, and his concept of State that he might have had for an independent India. It is to that direction now we propose to proceed.

IV

Bose's political ideology has been socialism. For Bose 'socialism' is analytically connected with Leftism. His concept of Leftism meant anti-imperialism. This is a point we have earlier noted. He said, "After the attainment of political independence Leftism will mean Socialism".⁵⁰ Bose has also clarified the point that he does not by 'socialism' mean 'communism', 'Socialism' is a polyguous concept and there are socialisms of various complexions and intentions, and even connotations. Bose had his own term for Socialism; 'Samyavada', by which he meant 'the doctrine of synthesis of equality'.⁵¹ He considered Communism and Fascism as antithetical. But he points out a number of similarities between the outlooks. We may have then in his own words: "Both communism and Fascism believe in the supremacy of the State over the individual. Both denounce parliamentary democracy. Both believe in party rule. Both believe in the dictatorship of the party and in the ruthless suppression of all dissenting minorities. Both believe in a planned industrial reorganization of the country".⁵² Bose hoped that his *Samyavada* would be a sort of synthesis of the common traits. In a statement issued from Geneva in 1933 Bose reiterated his idea of the future political states of affairs in free India. He did not suggest a short cut to either communism or Fascism. In one of his insightful remarks about socio-political theories, he observed that such theories, etc., "are products of their history, environment and needs".⁵³ Hence they are "... liable to change and development just as human life is." We should not mortgage our intellect anywhere, he said. In delineating his own view he proposed to study with critical

sympathy all the movements and experiments carried on in Europe and America. Accordingly, he enunciated the following “essential features of the future”:

“Firstly, India must be consolidated under a strong central government before we can hope for an internal reconstruction and security from external attack. Secondly, a strong and disciplined party must be organized before we can hope for a national government and entire nation must be brought under the influence and control of this party. Thirdly, this party must stand for the masses as distinct from the vested interests. It must stand for justice for all sections of the people and for freedom from bondage of every kind whether political, economic or social. In order to ensure justice and freedom for all, the party must stand for the principle of equality and work for the destruction of all artificial barriers whether of religion, creed, castor, sex or wealth. Thus is should aim at a really democratic state in which we shall all be equal and in which there will be no problem of minorities. I would call this party the ‘Samyavadi-Sangha’ of India”.⁵⁴

Bose’s idea of democracy was distinguished from what he called “the mid-Victorian”⁵⁵ understanding of the concept. He admired the experiments of party empowerment in Russia, Italy and Germany, and even Turkey of Kamal Ataturk. “ ‘Dictatorship of the party both before and after Swaraj is won’ – that must be our slogan for the future”⁵⁶ was Bose’s cherished ideal. In the considered opinion of Bose the Fabian Socialism of England along with its parliamentary constitutionalism would de-radicalise the progressive and radical elements of society. The “party of the future”⁵⁷ would have to be devoted to the establishment of a socialist regime: “The Samyavadi Sangha will stand for all round freedom for the Indian people – that is, for social, economic and political freedom. It will wage a relentless war against bondage of every kind till the people can become really free. It will stand for political independence for India, so that a new state can be created in free India on the basis of the eternal principles of justice, equality and freedom”.⁵⁸

Bose thought of “Intellectual and practical preparation” for the future possibility of freedom and the means to be adopted for achieving it. Of these, two are significant and deserve mention. (a) “A scientific examination of the rise and fall of empires in other parts of the world” and (b) “A scientific examination of the history of freedom movements in other lands and a study of the gradual evolution of freedom in all its aspects in this world.”⁵⁹ For Bose a political campaign is an objective movement, hence the movement of the future must rest on an objective and scientific foundation. Bose further contended that if the leaders are not trained for post-war leadership, then after the conquest of power a period of chaos would set in. This is the lesson Bose learnt from the aftermath of the French Revolution.

Bose contended that Communism in India “lacked a proper national perspective, and could not develop as the organ of national struggle”.⁶⁰ It did not have its roots in the soil. In order to solving the problems of our national life, when India is free, Bose is unambiguous in saying that “original thought and fresh experiment will be necessary”.⁶¹ The experience of the older generation would be of no avail. The socio-economic conditions of free India would be altogether different from the colonial times. “In industry, agriculture, land tenure, money, exchange, currency, education prison administration, public health, etc. new theories and novel experiments will have to be devised”.⁶² (ibid). Bose noted that in Europe old theories in every department of life was being challenged and new theories were taking place. The same thing, Bose said, will happen in India. “Free India will not be a land of capitalists, landlords and castes. Free India will be a social and political democracy”.⁶³ What is worth mentioning in this context is that Bose did not adopt an apriori approach to problem solving. His awareness of historical changes taking place all over the world was a sort of open book to him. A strong empirical foundation of his thinking gave him an edge over others to foresee the future course of

international politics and plan and extend his strategies. Bose was a political realist with a pragmatic mode of action.

VI

We may now put some concluding remarks. Bose was a great resistance leader. He went about in Europe collecting data regarding reconstruction of the future independent India. His ideas were positively left-oriented though his socialism was of a pragmatic nature. He preferred revolutionary to reformist methods. Without compromising his fundamental democratic attitude towards government, Bose held that during the transitional period of the first few decades a strong and centralized regime would be desirable in India if India wanted to make a success of the political system of it after freedom. He saw it clearly that the Indian nation, composed of different racial and religious groups holding different ethical and moral values could only be integrated fully and assured of a happy future when all these elements could be brought within a free society under a certain authority. Bose urged that India must break away from many of its immobile traditions which no longer served any useful purpose. In this regard he had Turkey's example in his mind.

As regards Bose's views on the methods of struggle, Romain Rolland records, "he does not regard terrorism as a healthy policy and he is in favour of organised resistance".⁶⁴ There are important musings as regards "the exact form of the future Indian state". Bose wanted "the requirements of the Indian situation" be considered, but, he went to add, "One thing, however, is certain. There will be a strong Central Government, without such a Government, order and public security could not be safeguarded. Behind this Government will stand a well-organized disciplined all-India party, which will be the chief instrument for maintaining national unity".⁶⁵

Bose wished that the state will guarantee complete religious and cultural freedom for individual and groups and there will be no state religion. In the matter of political and economic rights there will be perfect equality among the whole population. He believed that when every individual has employment, food

and education and has freedom in religious and cultural matters, there will be no more any minorities' problem in India.⁶⁶ Bose looked upon the resolution of 1857 as a paradigm of national unity. "The war was fought under the flag of Bahadur Shah, a Mohamedan, and all sections of the people joined in it".⁶⁷ He held the view that the minorities problem in India has been "an artificial creation of the British similar to the Ulster problem in Ireland and the Jewish problem in Palestine. In an article called "Free India and Her Problems", Bose has dealt with such other issues like social problems, finance, Planning Committee and International Relations in a succinct manner. He preferred to have industrialization and organization of the army, navy and air force with the help of scientific and technical expertise of the West. But, for Bose, more important was: "In return, India could contribute something to the common culture and civilization of humanity, in religion and philosophy, in architecture, in painting, dancing and music and in other arts and handicrafts, India could offer something unique to the World".⁶⁸ It was to that end that Bose asked young Indians to fulfil a gigantic task, overcoming tremendous difficulties. He assured us that at the end there will be "joy and glory of struggle and ultimate victory".

Since Bose disappeared from the scene, the world political situation has changed profoundly. British imperialism has been defeated in a large part of Asia and has ceased to be a major threat to human freedom and progress. But that is not to say that imperialism has disappeared from the earth's surface. In fact, it may well have evolved into more sinister forms. In this perspective the impassioned anti-imperialist fire of Bose turns all the more brightly. Bose remains a singular example of a dedicated national revolutionary with a meiotic faith in India's historic obligation to evolve a new social order on the basis of a synthesis of all known revolutionary social experiments. Herein lies Bose's lure as well as relevance today.

Notes and References:

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4. *Ibid.*, p.33.
5. *Ibid.*, p.45.
6. *Ibid.*, p.47.
7. *Ibid.*, p.55.
8. *Ibid.* p.56.
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12. *Ibid.*, p,80.
13. *Ibid.*, p.93.
14. *Ibid.*, p.98.
15. *Ibid.*, p.100.
16. *Ibid.*, p.101.
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27. *Ibid.*, p.48.

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29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*, p.401.
31. *Ibid.*, p.403.
32. *Ibid.*, p.409.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, p.412.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*, p.48..
37. *Ibid.*, p.114.
38. *Ibid.*, p.294.
39. *Ibid.*, p.182.
40. *Ibid.*, p.321-22.
41. *Ibid.*, p.115.
42. *Ibid.*, p.227
43. *Ibid.*, p.229.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*, p.111.
46. *Ibid.*, p.321.
47. *Ibid.*, p.350.
48. *Ibid.*, p.351.
49. R. Zehner, *Hinduism*, London: Home University Library.
50. *The Indian Struggle,op. cit.*, p.409.
51. *Ibid.*, p.314.
52. *Ibid.**
53. *Ibid.*, p.380-81.
54. *Ibid.*, p.381.
55. *Ibid.*, 385.
56. *Ibid.*, p.386.
57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*, p.378-79.

59. *Ibid.*, p.370.

60. *Ibid.*, p.337.

61. *Ibid.*, p.376.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*, p.377.

64. As quoted in *A Beacon Across Asia*, Lothar Frank's Article, "India's Ambassador Abroad, 1933-36", p.67. See also the *Indian Struggle*, P.417.

65. *Ibid.*, p.454.

66. *Ibid.*, pp.454-455.

67. *Ibid.*, p.455.

68. *Ibid.*, p.459.