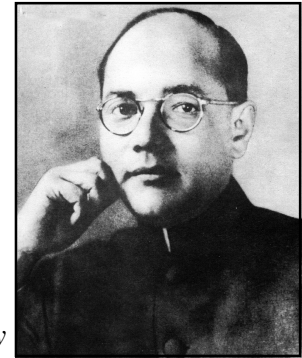


Social, Economic and Political Philosophy of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose



Dr. R.C. Roy

Subhas Chandra Bose, as an outstanding leader of the Indian National Movement became a legendary figure to be almost worshipped as a great hero and a charismatic leader. A study of his biography unfolds before us his unflagging zeal, as an empiricist, in gaining a theoretical foundation for a plan of action, in his own personal life and in Indian freedom movement and in this respect he was influenced by his own parents, Beni Madhab Das, Headmaster, Ravenshaw Collegiate School, teachings of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Aurobindo Ghosh, C.R. Das, Lenin, Mustapha Kemal Pasha, De Valera, Joseph Mezzini, Count Cavour, Garibaldi, and the impact of freedom movements in other countries such as American War of Independence, Italian struggle for liberation and unification, liberation struggle in Czechoslovakia and Irish struggle for freedom. In this background his social, economic and political concepts were empirically formulated for an objective observance and ramification with the sole objective of emancipation of Mother India from the British rule of exploitation and oppression and reconstruction of Free India.

The credential of Subhas Chandra Bose as a socio-political thinker will be well traced on a careful study of his activities, letters,

writings and speeches at different phases of the freedom struggle, indicating a process of evolution of his social, economic and political concepts connected with the development of his own mind responding to the shifting environment in India and the World outside. The sum of his ideas and convictions constitutes his philosophy, though he was more of an actionist.

1. Social Concernt:

(a) Views on religion, communalism etc.

It was under the influence of his parents that Subhas Chandra Bose developed a profoundly religious and spiritual frame of mind, and love for Hindu scriptures from his early life to the last days of his glorious career in the battlefields of South East Asia in 1945. His religious and spiritual propensity was further elevated and broadened in contact with the teachings of Ramkrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda. He always had a small copy of Bhagavat Gita in the breast pocket of his field uniform. He would plunge into deep meditation at dead hours of night even in the battlefields of South East Asia. While in Singapore he used to drive to Ramakrishna Mission late at night, change into a priestly silk dhoti, shut himself up in the prayer room with rosary in hand and

spent a couple of hours in meditation. He would display his deep devotion to God in the hours of sorrows and sufferings, weal and woe of his life.

At the time of the proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, he took the oath, "In the name of God, I take this sacred oath that to liberate India and the thirty-eight crores of my countrymen. I, Subhas Chandra Bose, will continue the sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life." Again, on the day of taking over direct command of the I.N.A. on 26 August 1943, he said "I pray that God may give me the necessary strength to fulfil my duty to Indians, under all circumstances, however difficult or trying they may be." Again in his address to Indian National Army at Singapore, he said, "May God now bless our Army and grant us victory in the coming fight."

Subhas Chandra Bose accepted Upanishadic concept of '*Tyaga*' and imbibed the ideal of renunciation for self-realisation and became determined to work ceaselessly for the benefit of the country and its toiling masses.

Subhas Chandra Bose, being a Secularist, had an attitude of impartiality towards all religions. According to him, the Government of Free India must have an absolutely neutral and impartial attitude towards all religions and leave it to the choice of every individual to profess or follow a particular religion of his faith; Religion is a private affair, it cannot be made an affair of the State.

It was the shrewd and subtle diplomacy of the British that the communal problems in dependent India assumed such a dangerous proportion. According to Subhas Chandra

Bose, a nation-wide freedom struggle would result in psychological metamorphosis on political front. Bose was of the firm opinion that economic issues cut across communal divisions and barriers. The problems of poverty and unemployment, of illiteracy and disease, of taxation and indebtedness affected the Hindus and Muslims and other sections of the people as a whole. That the remedy lies in the solution of the political problem on the establishment of a national, popular and democratic government in which people will have direct right to participate and indirect right to criticise. Scientific propaganda was prescribed by him on the above lines to combat communalism. Shah Nawaz Khan said that, for Subhas there were no religious or provincial differences. Hindu, Muslim and Sikh soldiers in the Indian National Army were made to realise that they were sons of the same motherland. That most of ardent supporters and admirers of Netaji were found to be Muslims. Another close associate of Netaji, S.A. Ayar said that, communal harmony of a high order prevailed among the ranks.

In his unfinished autobiography, 'An Indian Pilgrim', we find, Subhas to quote "I was lucky, however, that the environment in which I grew up was on the whole conducive to the broadening of my mind." "The atmosphere was on the whole liberalising. His paternal house in Oriya bazar, Cuttack was in a predominantly Muslim locality and their neighbours were mostly Muslims amongst whom his father Janakinath Bose was like a Patriarch. Janaki Babu had Muslim servants and cooks. The Bose family took part in Muslim festivals like Moharrum, Bose writes in his autobiography, "In fact I cannot remember even to have looked upon Muslims as different from

ourselves in any way except that they go to pray in Mosque."

In his public speech Subhas advocated emphatically the abolition of caste system in India and introduced observance of Anti-touchability Week from April 6th to 13th. He supported intercaste marriage in India. As a true disciple of Swami Vivekananda, Bose understood that the progress of India would be possible with uplift of the down-trodden and the so-called untouchables who constitute the very essence of our society.

All Indians living in South East Asia were united in the Indian National Army irrespective of caste, race, sex and creed under the stirring leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose in a spirit of Unity, Faith and Sacrifice with the sole objective of emancipation of Mother India.

(b) Emancipation of Women :

Subhas Chandra Bose imbibed the ideals of his political mentor, Deshabandhu Chitta Ranjan and spiritual mentor, Swami Vivekananda in regard to female education and female emancipation and used to cite the examples of noble and scholarly women of ancient India like Maitreyee, Gargee, Khana and Lilabatee. Bose wanted that women should be given a very elevated position in the family and society, and believed in female emancipation in the true sense of the term and in liberating women from all shackles and artificial disabilities - social, economic and political. According to him, in the Free India, there must not be any discrimination on ground of caste, race, sex, creed or wealth.

The glorified role played by women in our national struggle, especially during the Civil Disobedience Movement, with undaunted

bravery and exemplary spirit of sacrifice, shaped his attitude towards women. The love and affection and help he received from few women, especially his own mother Prabhavati Devi, C.R. Das's ideal consort Basanti Devi and Sarat Chandra Bose's wife Bibhabati Devi had enormous influence in shaping his views about women.

Subhas Chandra Bose rightly diagnosed that illiteracy and economic dependence were the root cause of serfdom of women. Bose spoke firmly in favour of removing all obstacles in the way of women's emancipation. He spoke in favour of all-round education for women for which he formulated a recipe which included literacy, physical and vocational education or training on light Cottage Industries. He was a supporter of widow remarriage and abolition of *Purdah* system.

When Subhas Bose in his fiery speeches was advocating for all round emancipation of women, movement for women's advancement began to gather momentum, the first women organisation in India, Women's Indian Association being established in Madras in 1917. The National Council of Women in India formed in 1925 began to co-ordinate the work of Provincial Women's Council and other societies with the objectives of women's advancement and welfare and to connect India with international movement.

Subhas Chandra Bose in the later years commended the glorified role played by Indian women in the freedom movement notably in the Congress movement and Civil disobedience struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi in which they had been equal to men in addressing public meetings, conducting

election campaign, taking out processions in the face of lathi charges by the brutal British Police and undergoing privation of prison life, torture and humiliation. Netaji's firm belief was that no country could really be free if her women did not enter the arena in the fight for freedom in various capacities like serving in hospitals as nurses, looking after wounded soldiers and such other auxiliary roles and they can also take up arms against enemies. So he created the Rani Jhansi Regiment and that too as it did not satisfy his faith in complete equality of women with men; he, in the Provisional Government of Azad Hind appointed one woman Cabinet Minister, giving her a position after him in the order of preference.

(c) Education :

According to Subhas Chandra Bose, education was necessary for character building and all round development of human life. Education brings forth the internal discipline in the form of control or regulation of mind and thoughts, which in its turn produces external discipline of control of action or deeds.

His spiritual mentor Vivekananda was of the view that education is the manifestation of perfection already in mind. All knowledge, secular or spiritual comes from the human soul. Thus education helps to awaken the mind which is the store house of all knowledge. Education would boost of character, morale, varility and freedom of man. Likewise, Bose in his reconstruction plan, dreamed of an independent India where citizens would be raised to the full status of man in the true sense of the term so that they would breath a free air of social, economic and political justice and liberty. The problem of illiteracy was a fundamental problem to him.

The idea profounded by John Stuart Mill that the democracy based on universal suffrage must be preceded by universal education was well understood by Bose and therefore, he advocated elementary education for all. As a socialist and humanist he wanted mass primary education for all and as an individualist he was in favour of higher education for deserving meritorious and intelligent students. The massive educational reconstruction effected within a very short time in the U.S.S.R. provided a model for Bose to support State controlled educational system for solving our educational problems.

Bose realised that education is a great force in bringing about a sense of national unity and solidarity and for that he was in favour of a common educational policy with a common script which should be 'Roman Script', the common *lingua franca* being *Hindusthani*.

In regard to the system of primary education, Bose was deeply influenced by the *kindergarten* system in Germany and Scandinavia, the Nursery School of England and the *Ecoles Meternelles* of France. He was in favour of visual or sensory method of education. Vivekananda's concepts of man - making and character - building elements in education influenced Bose so much so that, he wanted men of character to free India from the foreign domination. Bose firmly believed that no educational plan would be successful without a comprehensive system of teachers' training.

2. Economic Concept :

In his presidential address at the 51st Sessions of the Indian National Congress held at Haripura in February 1938, Subhas Chandra Bose spelt out his ideas about economic

planning and industrialisation of Free India, "The very first thing which our future National Government will have to do, would be to set up a Commission for drawing up a comprehensive plan of reconstruction." Bose wanted that on the advise of the National Planning Commission, State would adopt a comprehensive scheme for gradually socializing our entire agricultural and industrial system in the spheres of both production and distribution. He also spoke about abolition of landlordism and liquidation of agricultural indebtedness. Subhas Chandra Bose constituted a Planning Committee under the Chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru for rapid industrialisation of India on modern lines in consideration of the latter's close relationship with Mahatma Gandhi, who was not in favour of Industrialisation Programme.

According to Subhas, liberty broadly signified political, economic and social freedom. For him economic freedom was the essence of social and political freedom.

Subhas Chandra Bose bravely fought for India's independence but this independence was also an economic necessity for him. He said, "The problem of giving bread to our starving millions - the problem of clothing and educating them - the problem of improving the health and physique of the nation - all these problems cannot be solved so long as India remains in bondage. To think of economic improvement and industrial development before India is free; politically is to put the cart before the horse." According to him the appalling poverty, high incident of unemployment and low standard of living were due to the foreign domination. In view of all this he desired economic reconstruction and industrialisation on modern scientific and technological methods.

Subhas Chandra Bose said, "The moment India is free, the most important problem will be the organising of our national defence in order to safeguard our freedom in the future. For that we shall have to build up modern war industries; so that, we may produce the arms that we shall need for self-defence. This will mean a very big programme of industrialisation." He felt the necessity of modernising the backward agriculture which in turn would aggravate the problem of disguised unemployment and to remedy this development of industry would be indispensable to absorb the surplus labour from agriculture. He was much impressed by the exemplary success attained by the U.S.S.R. in effecting economic development through rapid industrialisation within a very short period of time, and became a staunch protagonist for similar forced march like Soviet Union and not a gradual one as in Great Britain.

Subhas Chandra Bose classified industries into three categories, namely Large-Scale or Heavy Industries, Medium-Scale and Cottage Industries. According to him, heavy industries are important for rapid economic development. In the category of Large-Scale Industries, mother industries produce the means of production or make other industries run successfully and these are metals, heavy chemicals, machinery and tools, and communication industries like railways, telegraph, telephone and radio. He was very much in favour of large-scale industries but at the same time he never lost sight of cottage and small industries in an underdeveloped country like India.

3. Political Concept

The political philosophy of Subhas Chandra Bose requires an enunciation and

analysis from the angles of his spiritualistic, nationalistic, secularistic, democratic and socialistic characteristics.

(i) Spiritualistic Characteristics :

A spiritual approach of life was originally initiated under the influence of his deeply religious parents. Subsequently, his searching mind, right in his school days could explore out the meaning, significance and objectives of human life when he came in contact with the teachings, writings and philosophy of Ramkrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo Ghose. Ramkrishna Paramahansa's emphasis on character building in general and spiritual approach to life. Renunciation of lust and gold and complete self-abnegation are, according to Ramkrishna, indispensable for a spiritual life. Under such influence Subhas Chandra Bose became more idealistic and spiritualistic to state, "I had a new ideal before me now which had influenced my soul to effect my own salvation and to serve humanity by abandoning all worldly desires and breaking away from all undue restraints." Meditation, sex control and *Brahmacharya* became matters of primary concern to him. He began to think of his future in terms of spiritual welfare and uplift of humanity. This became the idealistic dimension of his religious and spiritual bent of mind. Subhas in his college days came in contact with Aurobindo's philosophy through his writings, "We must be dynamos of the divine electricity so that when each of us stand up, thousand around may be full of light, full of bliss and *Ananda*". Impressed him very deeply, Aurobindo Ghosh has written in his *Bhavani Mandir*, "For what is a nation ? What is our mother country ? It is not a piece of art nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of mind, it is a

mighty *Sakti* composed of all the *Saktis* of all the millions of units, that make up of the nation just as *Bhavani Mahisha Mardini* sprang into being from the *Sakti* of all millions of gods assembled in our mass of force and weilded into unity. The *Sakti* we call in India *Bhavani Bharati* is the living unity of the *Saktis* of 300 million people." Subhas imbibed this philosophy of Aurobindo Ghosh and thought of Indian Nation as the Divine Mother, a spiritual entity, a fragment of the universal spirit.

Thus spiritualism became one of the principal characteristics of his political philosophy.

(ii) Nationalistic Characteristics :

Subhas Chandra Bose's father was a government pleader and Public Prosecutor and became a member of the Bengal Legislative Council and earned the title of *Rai Bahadur*, but he resigned from the said post and renounced the title of *Rai Bahadur* as a protest against the repressive policies of the British Government. Moreover, he was a regular visitor to the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress and a staunch supporter of *Swadeshi*. Thus Subhas inherited the spirit of nationalism from his father. In his early life, as a student of the Protestant European School run by the Baptist Mission, Subhas exhibited his spirit of nationalism when discriminatory treatment was made against Indian students. His expulsion from the Presidency College for being involved in Oaten Affair in protesting against the sense of racial superiority of the British is a glaring example of his spirit of nationalism. He expressed his feeling of satisfaction, "I had rather a feeling of supreme satisfaction of joy that I had done the right thing, that I had stood up for our honour and self-respect and had sacrificed for a noble cause."

Subhas's nationalistic zeal was further heightened under the influence of Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda's call "Say brothers at the top of your voice the naked Indian, the illiterate Indian, the *Brahman* Indian, the *Pariah* Indian is my brother" had the echo in the heart of Subhas.

Aurobindo's spirit of renunciation and his sacrifice of lucrative I.C.S. career to devote to politics impressed Subhas all the more. Aurobindo's synthesis of spiritualism and nationality had immense impact on Subhas. He resigned from the Civil Service on account of his nationalistic zeal. He writes, "It is not possible to serve one's country in the best and fullest manner if one is chained to the civil service. In short, national and spiritual aspirations are not compatible with obedience to Civil Service conditions." In his letter from Cambridge, addressed to Deshabandhu C.R. Das, he had firmly expressed his decision to resign from the Civil Service and join the freedom movement. On his return from Cambridge he plunged headlong into the national movement.

In order to supplement the freedom movement from outside India he even approached Nazi and Fascist powers to enlist their support. The Axis power and Japan in particular became eager to see India free. Thus, he organised the Azad Hind Fauz comprising 30,000 soldiers and officers and mobilised them on the north-eastern front to give a valiant fight to the British army. There are instances galore to testify his nationalistic fervour.

(iii) Secularistic Characteristics :

Secularism is not irreligion or atheism but tolerance of each-other's faith, mutual accommodation and peaceful co-existence. It involves spiritual consciousness and

establishment of contact with the divine. Subhas's philosophy of nationalism acquired a spiritual tenor under the influence of his parents, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda and Aurobindo. When he thought of Indian nation, he thought in terms of Divine Mother, the Indian nation as God's Beloved Land. He was secular in approach to spiritualism or religion.

Subhas was brought up in a liberal and secular environment of his family which helped him to acquire a broad, non-sectarian and Catholic outlook towards people of all religions. The synthesis of various religious creeds as achieved and propounded by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda developed in Subhas faith and commitment to secularism epitomised to his concept of a broad, integral and composite nationalism. Subhas's secularism originated from his firm faith in a philosophy of synthesis of Indian culture and civilization. In his Azad Hind Government and army he had achieved miraculous success in bringing about a wonderful sense of unity among the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.

(iv) Socialistic Characteristics

In his Free India, Subhas Chandra Bose had the aim of creating an egalitarian society in which all members would enjoy almost equal economic benefits and social status, and there would not be any distinction between man and man on account of accident of birth, parentage, caste and creed. In his presidential address at the Maharashtra Provincial Conference held at Poone on May 3, 1928, he said, "If you want to make India really great we must build up a political democracy on the pedestal of a democratic society. Privileges based on birth, caste or creed should go, and equal

opportunities should be thrown to all irrespective of caste, creed or religion."

In his Presidential Address at the Students Conference held at Lahore in October, 1929, he expounded his concept of freedom which he wanted for India. "This freedom implies not only emancipation from political bondage but also equal distribution of wealth, abolition of caste barriers and social inequalities and destruction of communalism and religious intolerance." He wanted that the privileges of landlords, capitalists and higher classes in society shall be reduced or minimised. He said, "Free India will not be a land of capitalists, landlords and castes. Free India will be a social and political democracy a reign of perfect equality, social, economic and political" shall prevail in Free India.

As a true Socialist, he wanted emancipation of the underdogs i.e. peasants and workers. While stating the objectives of *Samyabadi Sangha* visualised by him, he said "The party stand for the interest groups of the masses, that is of peasants, workers etc. and not for the vested interests that is the landlords, capitalists and moneylending classes."

In the early Twenties, he became the founder President of the All Bengal Youth League of which the programme announced, "Complete Independence of India, community of interests with labours and peasants, amelioration of economic condition of the masses, reduction of working hours, a minimum scale of wages, medical leave with full pay, old age pension, compensation for infirmity or serious accidents etc."

It was under his leadership that the labour strike in the Tata Iron and Steel Works at Jamshedpur ended in an honourable

settlement in 1928. He became the President of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1931. Espousing the cause of labour, he said, "Labour to-day wants the right to work. It is the duty of the State to provide employment to the citizens and where the State fails to perform this duty, it should accept the responsibility of maintaining them. In other words the worker citizens cannot be at the mercy of the employer, to be thrown out on the street at his sweet will and made to starve."

(v) Democratic Characteristics

Subhas Chandra Bose developed an ethical approach to life based on sacrifice, renunciation, self-abnegation and self sacrifice which is in a way the core of a democratic way of life. This ethical and spiritual ideals contributed to his formulation of a political philosophy in consistence with Indian culture and civilisation. "The big joint family taught him love, generosity, kindness, patience, tolerance, co-operation and sympathy, the very ingredients of democracy."

That Subhas valued freedom of thought and action also in larger social context is evident from his letter dated 18.7.1915 written to his friend Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, "No body has really the right to interfere in anybody elses individual philosophy of life or speak against it but the basis of that philosophy has got to be sincere and true as Spencer's Theory is - 'He is free to think and act so long as he does not infringe on the equal freedom of any other individual."

On the changing concept of freedom he said "The concept of human freedom has changed. In ancient times, by freedom people of India meant spiritual freedom - renunciation, freedom from lust, greed etc. But this freedom

also included freedom from political and social bondage." Subhas's emphasis on individual dignity, and identity did never allow him to accept the totalitarian doctrine that "State is the Master, the Individual the Servant." Although in need of "a political system - a state of an authoritarian character" in place of a "So called democratic system" he meant a State, "It will work as an organ or as the servant of the masses ... the servant of the people."

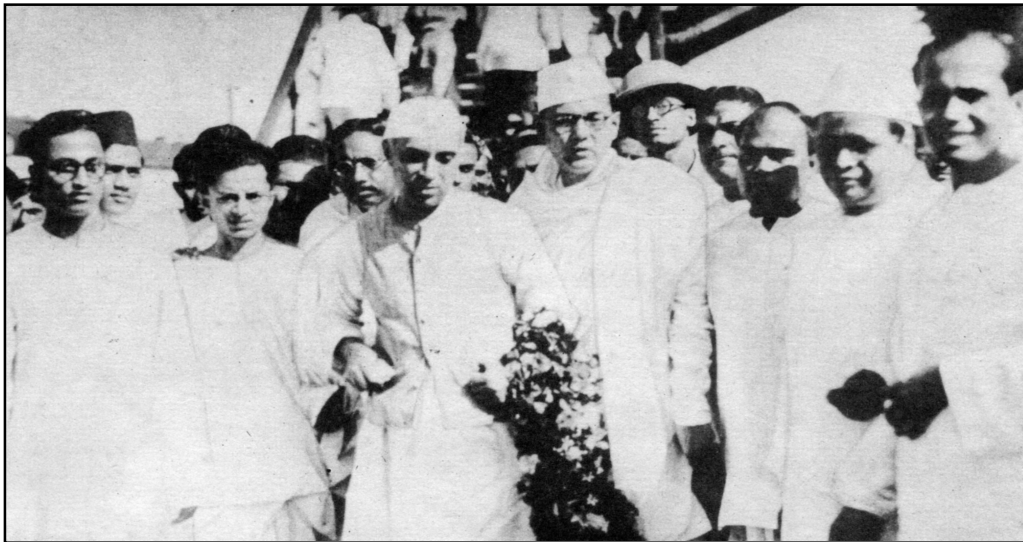
"The political foundation of democratic philosophy is the supremacy of the people as the source of authority." Due to the influence of Swami Vivekananda, Subhas had developed immense faith in the power of the people, which is evident from his letter dated 23.3.1920 written from Cambridge to his friend Charu Chandra Ganguly. "Swami Vivekananda used to say that India's progress shall be achieved only by the peasant, the washerman, the cobbler and the sweeper. These words are very true. The Western World has demonstrated what the power of the people can accomplish."

Democratic theory emphasises on the common man as the agent of change, evolution and progress, and recognises the potency and potentiality of the common man to participate in the political process. Subhas, believing in Vivekananda's view that the Brahmana, the Ksatriya and the Vaisya had their day and now, it was the turn of the Sudras, the poor and down-trodden classes to come up and be an agent of evolution and progress. He said, "The Sudras or the Untouchable Castes of India constitute the labour force, so long these people have only suffered. Their strength and their sacrifice will bring about India's progress."

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Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose with Pandit Nehru and other National Leaders