
UNIT 24 SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE

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24.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you should be able to:

- understand the role of Bose in nation building;
- explain the relationship of Bose's active political life and his philosophy;
- understand his theory of socialism;
- differentiate his views on socialism from other schools of socialism and
- explain his views on nationalism.

24.1 INTRODUCTION

Subhash Chandra Bose was not a political philosopher in the traditional sense. He was deeply involved in national politics of colonial India and concentrated all his energy in overthrowing British rule from the country. The achievement of freedom was thus his prime goal and hence his political ideas mainly revolved around national freedom which would pave way for a bright future for India. There is spontaneity in his political thinking which cannot be separated from his hectic political life.

24.1.1 Early Life

He was born on January 23, 1887 at Cuttack. As a sensitive child he perceived the subtle discrimination, Indians had to suffer at the hands of the British. A resentment developed against the British, with whom he came in contact as a pupil in his school in Orissa. This turmoil tormented teenaged Subhash and made him run away from home in quest of a Guru who could give him solace. In the meantime he studied Swami Vivekananda's philosophy which influenced him deeply and led him to identify spiritualism with social service. He wanted national construction on modern lines. After his early schooling, he joined Ravenshaw Collegiate School. From there he went to join Presidency College, Calcutta, where Indian students were extremely angry against their History teacher E.F. Oaten's arrogant behaviour. Oaten was slapped and beaten up in the college premises. Subhash Bose was suspended and rusticated for this. Later, he graduated in Philosophy from Scottish Church College. He sat in the most prestigious competitive examination of I.C.S. in England and came out with flying colours. However, love for his country made him resign this prestigious and comfortable job on 22 April 1921 and thereafter he plunged in national/freedom struggle wholeheartedly.

24.1.2 His Activities

In 1921, he met Gandhi after reaching India and participated in the non-cooperation movement. In the meantime he came in contact with C.R. Das and became his disciple. He associated with Das's political endeavour and was also jailed along with him. He took over the editorship of a news daily 'Forward' started by C.R. Das's Swaraj Party. When Das was elected Mayor of Calcutta Corporation he nominated Bose as the chief executive. He was arrested for his political activities in 1924. In 1930 he was elected Mayor of Calcutta, the same year he was elected President of A.I.T.U.C. In the thirties, he was closely associated with left politics in Congress along with Jawaharlal Nehru, Congress Socialists, Communists and M.N. Roy. Because of the endeavour of the left group the Congress passed very far-reaching radical resolutions in Karachi in 1931, which declared the main Congress aim as socialisation of means of production besides guaranteeing fundamental rights. Subhash won the Congress presidential election at Haripura with the backing of leftists in 1938. Next year at Tripuri he again won the presidential election against Gandhi's candidate Pattabhi Sitaramayya. However his differences with Gandhi became very wide and ultimately he left the Congress. He founded a new party 'The Forward Bloc'. In 1939, the world war broke out. Subhash felt that the adversaries Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Japan of the main enemy of India, i.e. British imperialism, be utilized to the maximum advantage possible. He therefore jumped with full vigour in this last battle for freedom. He was arrested and put under house-detention. He, however, made a successful escape, by fooling the British authorities and reached Germany after visiting other places. Events moved fast, he reached Japan and from there to Burma and organised the Indian National Army (INA) to fight the British and to liberate India with the help of Japan. He gave famous slogans 'Jai Hind' and 'Dilli Chalo'. He died in a plane crash before realising his dreams. Some people however still think that he is alive.

During a rather hectic life, Subhash evolved his political ideology, about which you will read in the subsequent sections.

24.2 THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF BOSE'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

24.2.1 Idea of History

Subhash interpreted Indian history and asserted that it has to be recorded not in decades or in centuries but in the thousands. India has passed through various vicissitudes of fortune. Neither the individual nor the nation can have an uninterrupted career or progress and prosperity. The same is true for India which has always been characterised by a very high level of culture and civilisation. Bose summarises his readings of Indian history as follows:

- 1) A period of rise has been followed by a period of decline to be followed again by a upheaval.
- 2) The decline is the result chiefly of physical and intellectual fatigue.
- 3) Progress and fresh consolidation has been brought about by an influx of new ideas and sometimes an infusion of fresh blood.
- 4) Every new epoch has been heralded by people possessing greater intellectual power and superior military skill.
- 5) Throughout Indian history all foreign elements have always been gradually absorbed by Indian society. The British are the first and the only exception to this.
- 6) In spite of change in the central government, the people have all along been accustomed to a large measure of real liberty.

To regain lost glory Subhash wanted regeneration of energy in India.

24.3 MILITANT NATIONALISM AND PATRIOTISM

Subhash angered that a spirit of militant nationalism is essential to rejuvenate Indians to achieving freedom. Subhash believed in the non-violent path and mobilisation of the people for the cause of freedom; that is why he supported the non-cooperation

and civil disobedience movement but its withdrawal at a crucial moment on the pretext of violence and opportunist compromise was severely criticised by him. He wrote, "If our policy had been one of uncompromising militancy, the Bardoli surrender of 1922 never would have taken place — nor would the Delhi Pact of March, 1931 when the situation was opportune." He felt that, 'Freedom intoxicated' missionaries who are 'morally prepared' to undergo the maximum sacrifice and suffering. These are necessary to attain success in the mission.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Explain in brief the historical foundation of Subhash Bose's political philosophy.

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- 2) What are the various phases of Indian History according to Bose?

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24.4 BOSE'S VIEW ON NATION BUILDING

For Bose a nation is not there merely to satisfy narrow selfish ends. Addressing the students of the Central Provinces at Amravati and Berar, he said, "I have already said that we shall have to change some of our existing ideas of values with regard to good and evil." He advocated the need of a complete overhauling and recasting of the present stereotyped mode of existence, which in turn would lead to genuine national solidarity and would give India a position of glory. For him life, only when inspired above the ordinary by some greater and nobler ideals, has value or significance. Bose asserted that a nation need not exist, or alternately it has no right to exist or live if it has no ambition. However, he also warned that a nation should not strive for progress just to satisfy narrow selfish ends, but should march onwards so that it effectively contributes towards the evolution of the human society.

For nation building Bose asserted the need of 'Swadeshi'.

24.5 SWADESHI AND NATIONALISM

Nationalism is not only a political movement but ethical as well, according to Bose. Its ethical aspect is reflected in the adoption of Swadeshi which was a common cause to be practised religiously. Because when one buys an indigenous product, even though of the worst quality and on higher price he helps the nation. Swadeshi is better than the protection of the native industry. Thus Swadeshi combines sacrifice for the nation and ensures improvement in the indigenous industry.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Discuss Bose's views on Nationalism. What arguments did he give in support of Swadeshi?

- 2) What is the goal of National Freedom according to Bose?

24.6 THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

Overthrowing the foreign yoke nevertheless was the immediate task towards the ideal of achievement of freedom, which Bose made clear in his address to the students at Lahore in October 1929. He said that the ideal we have to hold up is an ideal which will galvanise our whole life. That ideal is freedom. But freedom is a word which has varied connotations. For Bose freedom is an all-round freedom, i.e. freedom for the individual as well as for the society; freedom for the rich as well as for the poor; freedom for men as well as women; freedom for all individuals and for all classes. 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. Thus, for Bose, freedom has many facets as there are different aspects of it. He held socialism necessary for really achieving Freedom.

24.7 BOSE'S CONCEPTION OF SOCIALISM

Subhash Chandra Bose was a believer in socialism. He asserted that he wanted a 'Socialist Republic of India'. However, his concept of socialism was different from that of the others and he called it Indian socialism. Addressing *Bharatiya Naujawan Sabha* in 1931, he said, "If we undertake a comparative analysis of different social and political ideals that have inspired human endeavour and activity throughout the ages, we shall arrive at certain common principles that should form the basis of our collective life. These are justice, equality, freedom, discipline and love." In order to be just and impartial, he advocated treating all men as equal. He asserted that bondage of any kind, economic or political, robs men of their freedom and gives rise to inequalities of various kind. Therefore in order to ensure equality it is necessary to get rid of bondage of every kind. However, he also warned that freedom did not mean indiscipline or license or absence of law. It rather means the substitution of law and discipline, which is very necessary for the struggle for freedom the basis of life. Besides these fundamental principles, Bose asserted that love is the highest principle. Without a feeling of love for humanity neither one could be just to all, or treat men as equal, nor feel called upon to sacrifice, and without that the right sort of socialism could not emerge. Thus, for Bose the cardinal principles of socialism are justice, equality, freedom, discipline and love. He advised his countrymen and women not to ignore the history and traditions of the country while adopting the social and political institutions of the other countries. He asserted that there were all kinds of active nation building programmes and socio-political ideologies in the Western world, such

as Socialism, State Socialism, Guild Socialism, Syndicalism, Philosophical, Anarchism, Bolshevism, Fascism, Parliamentary Democracy, Aristocracy, Absolute Monarchy, Dictatorship etc. He accepted some wisdom in each of them. However, he warned that in a progressive world like ours it would not be proper to accept any one of them as the last word for an ideal or the final solution of all the social and political problems. Because he reasoned that the results of the transplantation of an entire idea or institution in one country from another may not necessarily be agreeable or fruitful. A national institution is the natural result of the history of the people concerned — their thoughts and ideals and the activities of their day to day life. This should be borne in mind. According to Bose social and political institutions cannot be built by ignoring history and the traditions of the people of the country, besides their present condition or prevailing atmosphere of life.

For the above reason, he could not agree with the communists in India also. He felt that the Bolshevik Socialism of Soviet Union did not suit India. There should be assimilation of only those socialistic principles which could suit on Indian requirements. He explained that the Bolshevik theory had been passing through an experimental stage and the communists were departing from Lenin and other Bolsheviks. This departure had been caused by the peculiar conditions and circumstances prevailing in Russia, which compelled a modification of the original theory. He also warned against the unsuitability of Marxian ideas and said that Marxian ideas were coming from the West like 'boisterous breakers' and some people in India were unnecessarily excited and stirred up with these. Most of them, Bose said, who believed that adoption of Marxism in its pure and complete form would make India a land of joy and plenty and pointed their fingers towards Russia, in fact were wrong because the Bolshevism adopted and practised in Russia was not the same as classical Marxian socialism.

The other reason for rejection of communism was the methodology and tactics communists generally employed to achieve their ends. These methods and tactics, he thought, did not suit India and that is why communism could not make much headway in this country.

Indian socialism would therefore be different, he asserted. He said that at that stage it was difficult to chalk out the details of a socialist state (of his dreams). He could only give an outline, the main features and principles of the socialist state. He said, "We want political freedom whereby it meant the Constitution of an independent Indian state, free from the control of British imperialism. It should be quite clear to everybody that independence means severance from the British empire, and on this point there should be no vagueness or mental reservation. Secondly we want complete economic emancipation. Bose elaborated his view of economic emancipation and held that every human being must have the right to work, and the right to a living wage. There shall be no drones in the society and no unearned income. There must be equal opportunities for all, and there should be a fair, just and equitable distribution of wealth. For this purpose, it may be necessary for the state to take over the control of the means of production and distribution of wealth.

Besides economic equality Bose also felt that the third essential feature of real socialism is complete social equality. Social equality means that there shall be no caste or depressed classes. Every man will have the same rights, the same status in society. Bose was not only a believer of eradication of caste hierarchy, but also a supporter of women's equality in social status or in law. Woman will be an equal partner of man was Bose's firm faith.

Nevertheless, the ideal of socialism could not be achieved without social change. Bose had a specific view about social change.

24.8 SOCIAL CHANGE

Bose was of the view that social reforms and the movement for national freedom in India were inextricably related. As President of the Hooghly District Students Conference in July 1929, he said that those who imagine they can make their country politically free leaving its social order untouched and those who think social change is possible without political freedom are wrong. He explains that the former were wrong because once the desire for freedom was aroused in the people, it could not be

postponed on the ground that society had not changed. Similarly, the latter were wrong because a society as 'tattered' as ours and where social repression and economic inequality were dominant, people could not be inspired for political independence.

Thus, a kind of social revolution had been envisaged by Bose. He asserted that there was no fundamental difference between evolution and revolution. Revolution is nothing but evolution taking place within a comparatively short span of time, whereas evolution is only another name for revolution spreading over a longer period of time.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) What is the meaning of socialism according to Bose?

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2) Why did Bose reject Bolshevism and other Western ideologies?

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24.9 THE TECHNIQUE OF NATIONAL AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION — GUERRILLA WARFARE

In a broadcast over Azad Hind Radio Subhash Bose chalked out his methodology of national struggle. He said that the campaign that was going on in India was non-violent guerrilla warfare. He asserted that the object of this guerrilla warfare would be twofold, one to destroy war production in India and the other to paralyse the British administration and all people of India should participate in the struggle. He chalked out a detail programme for the people. He suggested that payment of the taxes be stopped which directly or indirectly brought revenue to the government. The workers in all industries should either launch a stay in strike or try to hamper production by conducting a go-slow campaign inside the factories. They should also carry out sabotage to impede production. The students should organise secret guerrilla bands for carrying on sabotage in different parts of the country. They should also invent new ways of annoying the British authorities, for example, burning stamps etc. in post offices, destroying British monuments etc. The women, especially girl students should do underground work of all kinds, especially as secret messengers or provide shelter for the men who fight. The government officials who are prepared to help the campaign should not resign their posts but those in government offices and in war industries should give all available information to fighters outside and should try to hamper production by working inefficiently. The servants who are working in the houses of Britishers, should be organized for the purpose of giving trouble to the masters, for example, by demanding higher salaries, cooking and serving bad food and drinks etc. The Indians should give up all business with foreign banks, firms, insurance companies etc. For the general public he suggested the following activities:

- a) Boycott of British goods, industry, burning of British stalls and government stores;

- b) Total boycott of Britishers in India, and those Indians who are pro-British;
- c) Hold demonstrations in spite of official prohibition;
- d) Publishing of secret bulletins and setting up of a secret radio station;
- e) Marching to the houses of British government officials and demanding their departure from India;
- f) Organizing of processions for entering and occupying government offices, secretarial buildings, law courts etc. with a view to hampering administration.
- g) Arranging to punish police officers and prison officials who oppress and persecute people.
- h) Begin erecting barricades in the streets where there is a likelihood of attack from the police and military.
- i) Setting fire to government offices and factories which are working for war purposes.
- j) Interrupting postal, telegraph, telephone and communication as frequently as possible.
- k) Interrupting railways, bus and tram services, whenever there is a possibility of hampering the transport of soldiers or of war material.
- l) Destroying police stations, railway stations and jails in isolated places.

24.10 BOSE AND FASCISM

Bose has been called a believer in Fascism. This assumption arose from the fact that he wanted to associate India's freedom struggle with Second World War politics and sought the help of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. He also showed his admiration for Mussolini. Besides in a chapter 'A Glimpse of the Future' in his book 'The Indian Struggle' he wrote "In spite of the antithesis between communism and fascism, there are certain traits common to both. 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 reorganisation of the country. These common traits will form the basis of the new synthesis. The synthesis is called 'Samyavada.'" Bose asserted that it will be India's task to work out this synthesis. Besides the advocacy of this synthesis, in 1941 in Kabul, Bose had said that dissensions in the country would disappear only when an iron dictator rules in India for twenty years. He asserted that at least after the end of British rule in India there must be a dictatorship. And it is for India's good that she should be ruled by a dictator to begin with. None but a dictator can wipe out such dissensions. He believed India needed a Kamal Pasha to cure its many ailments.

Nevertheless, Bose had advocated dictatorship as a panacea for India's problems. However, he could not be branded as a fascist. He never sanctioned the extreme tenets of fascism which sanctioned imperialistic expansion and believed in racialism. He was a votary of the rights of the exploited masses. Thus, although he took armed help from the fascist powers of Europe and Asia, and organised national army for India's liberation, yet he did not preach the ideology of fascism. The Forward Bloc, the party he belonged to summarised its dominant guiding principles on January 1, 1941.

- 1) Complete national independence and uncompromising anti-imperialist struggle for attaining it.
- 2) A thoroughly modern socialist state.
- 3) Scientific large-scale production for the economic regeneration of the country.
- 4) Social ownership and control of both production and distribution.
- 5) Freedom for the individual in the matter of religious worship.
- 6) Equal rights for every individual.
- 7) Linguistic and cultural autonomy for all sections of the Indian community.
- 8) Application of the principle of equality and social justice in building up a New Order in Free India.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) What is the technique of national revolution according to Subhash Bose?

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2) Did Subhash advocate Fascism?

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24.11 LET US SUM UP

Bose's political philosophy has a close link with his political life. Bose stood for militant nationalism for achieving India's freedom. According to him freedom and equality are interrelated. So freedom could be achieved only with socialism. There are four bases of socialism, national freedom, economic equality, social equality and equality of sexes, according to him. Bose felt that India should have its own indigenous socialism, and she should not imitate others' way of life. For national freedom, Bose sought the help of the fascists. However, he himself did not believe in fascism. National freedom and national construction were the core of his political ideology.

24.12 KEY WORDS

Leftists: Those who support radical reforms.

Swadeshi: Using only national products.

Bolshevism: The philosophy of Karl Marx communists adopted after Russian Revolution in 1917.

Fascism: The political creed adopted by Mussolini in Italy and Hitler which believed in unchallenged supremacy of their respective nations all over the world.

24.13 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Subhash Bose, *Indian Struggle*, Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, 1964.

Hiren Mukerjee, *Bow of Burning Gold: A Study of Subhash Chandra Bose*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1977.

Hari Har Das, *Subhash Chandra Bose and the Indian Struggle*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1983.

Subodh Markandeya, *Subhash Chandra Bose, Netaji's Passage to Immortality*, Arnold Publishers, Delhi.

24.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) See section 24.2 and subsection 24.2.1
- 2) Do

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) See section 24.4 and 24.5
- 2) Do

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) See section 24.7
- 2) Do

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

See sections 24.9 and 24.10