Chapter - VI

DEMOCRACY AS VISUALISED

BY SUBHAS CHANDRA
After Gandhi the most important political figure in the Indian political scene of the twentieth century was Subhas Chandra Bose, popularly known as Netaji. It was not that Subhas Chandra was important as the second man of the Gandhian tradition of politics, but as the man who was philosophically closer to Gandhi but in political practice, was different from Gandhi. Thus Gandhi and Subhas were one in root but different in branches. This is a very interesting episode of Indian struggle for freedom but at the same time a tragic one.

Gandhi and Subhas pursued two characteristically different ways and means for attaining freedom for the country. Though their ways diverged, their objective remained common. There was essentially a very large measure of identity as far as their philosophical faiths and socio-political views are concerned. 'Love' was the essence of reality for both Gandhi and Subhas. In his autobiography, Gandhi wrote: "God is not a person but a force—the undefinable mysterious power that pervades everything; living power that is Love."¹ Two major elements of Satyagraha were truth and non-violence. He defined it to be soul-force, or love-force, force which is born of truth and non-violence. This concept of love was the source of inspiration of all of the Gandhian activities. Almost a similar thought is expressed in Subhas Chandra's autobiography: "The essential nature of reality is love. Love is the essence of universe and the principle of human life. I feel...I need love as the basic principle on which to reconstruct life."² To Gandhi, non-violence was the expression of love. Gandhi observed: Non-violence is the law of human race... It does not avail to those who do not possess a living faith in the God of love."³ Having equal faith in the 'God of love' Subhas wrote "Reality is the spirit, the essence of which is love, gradually unfolding in an eternal play of conflicting forces and their solutions."⁴ However this process, according to Subhas, need not always be non-violent.

Their first faith was in God and spiritual values of life. Gandhi and Subhas entered politics to serve God through service to man. Subhas defined his concept of politics as "collective sadhanc", and said: "I have not accepted politics or national service as any kind of profession. The way of liberation of my country is
the way of my worship, my *sadhana*, my salvation." Politics was not a profession but a higher mission of life for both Gandhi and Subhas.

But it is a tragedy that two different groups have been build up after their name and an atmosphere of conflict has been created by preaching Gandhi and Subhas as opponents. And the country is suffering for it today.

But the fact is that Gandhi and Subhas are so close to one another regarding the source of their thought, their sphere of work and ideology which cannot be compared with others. Though Nehru was like a son to Gandhi and he was the political heir of Gandhi, at the same time it is true that there was a wide gap between them as far as their thinking is concerned. The opportunists used this personal proximity between Gandhi and Nehru for creating a cleavage between Gandhi and Subhas.

The differences of opinion and conflict between Gandhi and Subhas Chandra were not due to personal reasons but due to the differences in their temperament, interpretation of the prevailing situation and choosing means to confront it. Following the dictates of moral principles, Gandhi could not separate the means from the ends. Noble ends can only be achieved through noble means. Subhas Chandra, for the freedom of the country, was more interested in the ends and not so much about the means. The gulf between them, according to Gandhi, was on the means to be adopted: the violent or non-violent.

Gandhi-Subhas differed in their approaches. However, they had deep regard for each other. A kind of subterranean affection would flow between the two. It was Subhas who first called Gandhi ‘Father of the Nation’ in his broadcast over the Rangoon Radio (on 6 July 1944)⁶ and one of the brigades of Azad Hind Fauj (INA) was named as the Gandhi Brigade. Even after his escape from India, Subhas maintained the same personal admiration for Gandhi and the same ideology of his activism and militancy. He always accepted Gandhi as ‘India’s greatest leader.’⁷ On the other hand, Subhas Chandra’s escape to Germany had made a great impact on Gandhi. Formerly he did not approve many of Bose’s actions. But there was a
change in his outlook... 'he admired the courage and resourcefulness that Subhas Bose had displayed in making his escape from India. Gandhi’s admiration for Bose reached its height when he said that Bose was ‘a patriot of patriots’ in a conversation with Louis Fisher, an American journalist. Gandhi acted as a shrewd politician, especially in relation to Bose’s politics. But he was affectionate to Bose as a person. He said, ‘Netaji was like a son to me’ while addressing the I.N.A. prisoners in the detention camps (in 1945). Pages 86-87 and 175-177 of the Complete works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. LXIX record Gandhi’s expressions of affection for Subhas.

Hugh Toye has rightly estimated the comparative roles of Bose, Gandhi and Nehru in 1938 itself thus: ‘Bose was now (1938) a man of more than national status. Abroad he ranked after Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru as an Indian politician. Within India his personality had proved to many the most attractive of the three. In some places his reputation rivalled that of Gandhi himself.’

It is generally viewed that Subhas and Nehru were much closer to one another as far as their thinking is concerned. But this view does not appear acceptable since the definition of modernity was not the same to both of them. To Nehru, modernity was equivalent to Westernization. He gave stress on planning and industrialisation centering which human prosperity would be possible. Subhas Chandra Bose was also in favour of machine and industrialisation. Thus he gave importance to the need of material prosperity in the national life. Yet he believed that material development is not the summum bonum of a nation’s development. Human beings must attain spiritual development by transcending material prosperity. Material prosperity is needed for enabling man to look inward. Bose, the ardent follower of Swami Vivekananda, believed like his master that for the full-fledged development of man and the nation there should be a synthesis of material and spiritual prosperity. This view of Bose takes him away from Nehru, who was a believer in Western type of materialism.
Subhas Chandra always wanted to harmonize between the existing ideologies which was called Socialism by him. He did not hesitate to accept whatever was good of Fascism or Communism. He, at the same time, rejected their defects.

Nationalism was a living truth in Subhas Chandra's ideal. He stressed on love as the central principle of life. A person who is devoid of love can never become a patriot. But Nehru was so much influenced by Marxian thought and all his thoughts were so much based on Marxian principles that he did not want to think of anything beyond material prosperity. Though he described himself as secular and an atheist, yet due to contradiction in his character he probably did not know what he really was. And it was because of this vacillation in his thought and work that he could not understand the ethos of the Indian life. He became a leader, a Prime Minister, delivered number of speeches, but inspite of that he could never become an 'Indian' in the true sense of the term. On the contrary, Subhas believed that in order to work for the development of India one has to become completely Indian in his thoughts and beliefs, one has to know the history of India and has to make Indian tradition his own. He explicitly stated that humanity cannot be rescued by any "ism". What is necessary is character building. As Swami Vivekananda used to say "Man-making is my mission." The basis of nation-building and the development of any kind of "ism" is man. Thus spirituality, not institutional religion is the guiding principle of Subhas Chandra's life.

Following Swami Vivekananda, Subhas said, "Freedom, freedom is the song of the soul." Freedom is necessary for the soul as oxygen is for the lungs. To Subhas, equality is also necessary. But equality is not possible without freedom. Freedom, too, is impossible without equality. Both of them can be fruitful when there is a harmony between the two. One is meaningless without the other. This equality and freedom should be established in all spheres of society—in the nation, economy, culture and in the field of consciousness. This all-round harmony is the ideal of our time. He knew that freedom of the country in all respects would not be possible if there was no consciousness about freedom among the
countrymen. So he engaged himself in creating a parallel stream of consciousness by preaching the ideal of revolution among the youth.  

He believed that "Life is one whole... Human life cannot be split up into compartment. All the aspects or phases of national life are interrelated and all the problems are interwoven." He said that "I am led to the conclusion that the principles that should form the basis of our collective life are justice, equality, freedom, discipline and love... I shall go further and say that these principles constitute the essence of socialism, I understand of socialism what I would like to see established in India." Freedom should be the basis of social reconstruction and the main principle of life. "In my opinion, however, the fight for political freedom will have to be conducted simultaneously with the fight for socio-economic emancipation..." The economic form of this equality and freedom is socialism.

"If freedom is to be the cardinal principle of our life— the elan vital of all our activity— it should also be made the basis of social reconstruction. It will be seen at once that if the principle of freedom is to be applied to society and made the fundamental basis of the future— it will mean nothing short of social revolution.... Thus freedom implies equality and equality connotes fraternity... the inequalities of wealth which stand in the way of the social advancement will have to be removed and equal opportunities for education and development will have to be given... these should be some of the basic principles of the new society we want to build." So Subhas declared in 1931, "I want a Socialist Republic in India."

Gandhi also said that swarāj cannot be attained without the people and the will of the people for freedom is to be aroused. He wanted swarāj for each and every individual. He understood that in our country any system imitating the West cannot be permanent. Swarāj, according to Gandhi, is the attainment of self-restrained development of the human beings. In Gandhi’s opinion moral man is the product of moral law. However, Subhas Chandra, though a believer in spirituality, did not subscribe to this view of Gandhi. In his opinion, as already
stated, man is a mixture of materiality and spirituality. Subhas felt that Gandhi, confused between the political man and the moral man.

Subhas Chandra would not compromise anything for freedom or swaraj—be it individual life, group life or national life. Many of his views were similar to Gandhi’s views. Swaraj does not belong to any particular community, swaraj means a government of the elected representatives of the Hindu, Muslim and other communities. Not only that, they should be the rulers (i.e. completely free) in the true sense of the term. He said that what is more necessary is the swaraj of the poor labourers, peasants and the common people. Freedom should be attained to save these people from destruction. The meaning of freedom is the freedom to live freely as human beings and the freedom for their full development.

Subhas Chandra’s thought can be clearly understood by his speech delivered at Tokyo Imperial University in 1944. In his opinion, “What we in India would like to have is a progressive system which will fulfil the social needs of the people and will be based on national sentiment. In other words, it will be a synthesis of Nationalism and Socialism.” That reconciliation would not follow any bookish formula, development of socialism in India would be possible only according to the Indian tradition, Indian thought and Indian social fabric, although it would be enriched by the experience of other countries. He said that a new kind of harmony would be established in India. He said repeatedly that socialism, too, would be developed on a new basis. “In applying any theory to practice, you can never rule out geography or history. If you attempt it, you are bound to fail, I also think that India should evolve her own form of socialism.” It may be that the form of socialism which India will evolve will have something new and original about it, which will be of benefit to the whole world.

Thus Netaji Subhas Chandra’s ideal of life and programme of action developed in harmony with Indian culture. He said, Indian nation has died many times—but it has again regained its life after death. The reason behind this is that the existence of India, as in the past, so in the present has a relevance. India has a message to convey to the world—there is something in Indian culture
which is very much necessary for humankind and if that is not conveyed to the world, world culture would not flourish properly. Not only that, in the field of science, art, literature, business and trade also our nation would teach the world. India has a mission, Indian civilization has a goal which has not yet been attained. In saying this, Subhas Chandra was completely under the influence of Swami Vivekananda. Subhas Chandra actually assimilated his 'guru' according to his own inclinations and nature. As a result of this, in the Tokyo speech he said, “We want to work in our own way.”

Naturally we shall try to understand the experimentation of other countries, but ultimately we have to solve our own problems on the basis of the Indian conditions and in Indian way. "...We should not surrender to the dictates of Amsterdam or Moscow. India will have to work out her own methods and adapt herself to her environment and to her own special needs."

Netaji firmly believed that the salvation of India, as of the world, depends on Socialism. We have to proceed through our ideas, thought, work, restraint, enjoyment for this new awakening. Our goal of building up a good nation should be at the same level with other independent nations in knowledge and work. But “while seeking light and inspiration from abroad, we cannot forget that we should not blindly imitate any other people and we should assimilate what we learn elsewhere after finding out what will suit our national requirements... I should therefore like to strike a note of warning to those who may feel tempted to follow blindly the tenets of Bolshevism.” He warned the people about the fact that they should not be carried away by the illusion of Marxism. “[Our] socialism did not derive its birth from the books of Karl Marx. It has its origin in the thought and culture of India.” He felt the necessity of protesting against the unscientific application of Marxism. So he said, “Nowadays new thought of Socialism is travelling to India from the West and it is revolutionizing the thoughts of many, but the idea of socialism is not novel in this country. We regard them as such only because we have lost the thread of our own history. It is not proper to take any school of thought as unmistakable and absolute truth... It would therefore be folly to rely for enlightenment on Russia. We shall build our own society and
politics according to our needs. This should be the object and aim of every Indian.”

Subhas Chandra’s Samyavada is a new Socialism based on Indian traditions. He planned a new theory of socialism as different both from extreme Gandhism and extreme Marxism. This socialism is within the Indian ideals which will be based on the foundation of Indian culture and tradition. Harmony between socialism and the other aspects of life will be the main theme of the modern age. Subhas Chandra’s Samyavada is the manifestation of that harmony.

Subhas Chandra, as already stated, developed his philosophy of life after the teachings of Vivekananda. Vivekananda’s interpretation of Advaitavada influenced Subhas Chandra so much that Subhas Chandra believed that the harmony of Indian society rests on Advaitavada. He called this ideal ‘Samyavada’. This is an Indian word which means the doctrine of synthesis or equality. Subhas Chandra dedicated himself to the task of working out this synthesis in Indian life.

Subhas Chandra said that there has been no scientific development in India as she has remained weak in the external sphere. India has a blind disinterest for modern scientific development, He believed this to be the reason for India’s destruction. He made a plan for the ‘Samyavadi Sangha’ in 1933. He demanded from the workers of this Sangha scientific reasoning.

With this ideal of revolution among youth, Subhas Chandra dreamt of a new national group—‘Samyavadi Sangha.’ Equality in all spheres of society is the aim of Samyavada. “We want the fullest dose of freedom and we want it in every sphere of life.”

Netaji looked at the world through the eyes of India. The vision of India is the vision of synthesis. This synthesis, too, is multi-dimensional—the synthesis of man with society, of the human society with the external world, of one stream of Indian society with the other, of India with the world. A synthesis of so many streams is bound to be complex and diverse.
of the multi-dimensional human life is called the Doctrine of Synthesis or 'samayavada' by Netaji. This unity and synthesis is the main theme of his philosophy of life.

According to Subhas Chandra there is a necessity of manufacturing a huge amount of goods, machinery and the use of science in a huge country like India. He believed that materialism is necessary to some extent because our people are hungry and poor. And this materialism would be possible keeping intact the spiritualism of the past. Ancient India saw this harmony. India has to harmonize between renunciation and enjoyment, between self-control and wealth. Not only India, but the entire human society should develop this harmony. Past should be harmonized with the present to create a new form keeping in view the factor of space and time.

If we have to regain our self-respect we have to advance towards both physical and spiritual field at the same time. He said, "India of the past lives in the present and will live in the future." The spiritual resources of the past would be the basis of new India. But at the same time, responding to the ideas of the new age, modern science should be accepted. Subhas Chandra called it 'Modernism'. He said, we have to stand on modernism. "So we take our stand on modernism." On this point he differed from Gandhi. Gandhi wants to get rid of almost everything of the modern civilization. Subhas Chandra was an enthusiastic preacher of "modernism". Gandhi feared that modern science will bring in Western materialism.

Subhas Chandra believed that though the common people accepted Gandhi's leadership, they could not accept his philosophy of Ahimsa. However, Gandhian philosophy has a universal truth— that is the importance of the spiritual values. In this aspect Subhas has a similarity with Gandhi. Subhas said, "I am not one of those who in their zeal for modernism forgets the glories of the past. India has a culture of her own, which will continue to develop along her own distinctive channel.... We want to build up a new and modern nation on the basis of our old culture and civilization...." He wanted a modern India which has to be necessarily
based on the past. The principle of harmony was the truth of his life. Subhas Chandra was a complete Indian in that respect.

The basis of Vivekananda’s sevavada is his deep spiritualism. The basis of his humanism and human values is spiritualism. The political expression of this humanism is democracy (as an ideal). Subhas Chandra said that the basis of democracy in India would be the harmony of the Indian culture. The theory imported from the West imposed artificially on this country would be of no use. He was clear in his idea that Westminster type of democracy would not be suitable for India. Subhas Chandra stressed on the importance of building up a democratic society as the basis of national democracy. “The gospel of democracy that was preached by Swami Vivekananda has manifested itself fully in the writing and achievements of Desbhandhu [Chittaranjan] Das who said that Narayana lives amongst those who till the land, prepare our bread by the sweat of their brow, those who in the midst of grinding poverty have kept the torch of our civilisation and culture and religion burning.”

Gandhi’s aim was the welfare of all human beings which would be possible only through decentralization. We have come to know about the importance of decentralization from Swami Vivekananda first. Subhas Chandra also wanted decentralization. But in order to avoid chaos in the country just after independence he was in favour of establishing a centralised authority temporarily.

Though Subhas Chandra could not accept Gandhi’s extreme orthodox way and extreme ahimsa, both of them believed love or ahimsa to be the natural instinct of man. The welfare of the society would be possible through these virtues. Ahimsa in not the nature of the weak, it is the weapon of the strong who believe in the power of self. Ahimsa is the power to change the mind of people through love and satyagraha.

However, although Subhas Chandra believed that freedom is to be attained at the cost of blood, it cannot be said that he rejected the principle of ahimsa altogether for as he was in the Congress he accepted peaceful resistance. To him,
the goal of freedom was more important than violence or non-violence. Swami Vivekananda believed that ahimsa or non-violence is the natural instinct of man, but by continuously following the path of non-violence under the influence of Buddhism man has become dull. So for the purpose of the freedom of the country we have to take refuge to violence temporarily. Subhas Chandra also accepted this line of thought of Swami Vivekananda. Unlike Gandhi, Vivekananda did not base the practical life on the theory of ahimsa. Though accepting the limits of the practical life, he has treated ahimsa as a human faculty.

Swami Vivekananda and Subhas Chandra both dreamt of India’s complete freedom in all respects. Subhas Chandra loved Swami Vivekananda before he loved his country. India was a ‘holy land’ for Swami Vivekananda. Sister Nivedita in *The Master as I Saw Him* says that “the queen of his adoration was his Motherland”.38 To Netaji also India was ‘the divine motherland’. Netaji gave a wider form to the ideals outlined by Swamiji. He gave a full form to India’s freedom struggle following Swamiji’s guidelines. Gandhi said, “The greatest lesson that we can draw from Netaji’s life is the way in which he infused the spirit of unity amongst his men so that they could rise above all religious and provincial barriers and shed together their blood for the common cause.”40

Subhas Chandra believed that ‘the party that wins freedom for India should be also the party that will put into effect the entire programme of post-war reconstruction. Only those who have won power can handle it properly.’41

There can be no question of the Congress Party withering away after political freedom has been won. The party will have to take over power, assume responsibility for administration and put through its programme of reconstruction. Only then will it fulfil its role. The party itself will have a democratic basis. The existence of more than one party and the democratic basis of the Congress Party will prevent the future Indian State from becoming a totalitarian one. Further, the democratic basis of the party will ensure that leaders are not thrust upon the people from above, but are elected from below.42

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Subhas Chandra enunciated what he considered to be the essential features of the future Indian Movement.\textsuperscript{43} 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 organised before we can hope for a national government and the entire nation must be brought under the influence and control of this party. Thirdly, this party 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, caste, sex or wealth. Thus it should aim at a really democratic state in which we shall all be equal and in which there will be no problem of minorities. Subhas Chandra would call this party the "Samyavadi-Sangha" of India.

When the British are expelled from India, the first task will be to set up a new Government and establish order and public security. A new Government will necessarily imply the reorganization of the civil administration and the creation of a national army.\textsuperscript{44} There will be a strong Central Government. Without such a government, order and public security cannot be safeguarded. Behind this Government will stand a well-organized, disciplined all-India party, which will be the chief instrument for maintaining national unity.\textsuperscript{45}

People with parochial outlook have attempted to separate Gandhi and Subhas, but failed. It is a great misfortune for the nation. They differed on issues but not on the basics. They cannot be separated for they are bound by the traditional Indian cultural consciousness. Swami Vivekananda turned it into patriotic consciousness.

Patriotism and character building, in the opinion of Swami Vivekananda, is always necessary for the development of India. He tried to infuse new life into the people. 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.' But it is not the business of a Sannyasin to frame concrete programme of nation building. This work was undertaken by Gandhi and Subhas in their respective ways. In today's
changed situation specifics of Gandhi or Subhas may appear outdated, but their spirit are as fresh as it were in yesteryears.

Notes and References
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 30.
7. Quoted from Jog, N. G., In Freedom's Quest, p. 305 by Rakhal Chandra Nath, Ibid.
10. Quoted from Jog, N. G., In Freedom’s Quest, p. 305 by Rakhal Chandra Nath, op. cit.
14. These words of Swami Vivekananda was quoted by Subhas Chandra in his Speech at the Maharashtra Provincial Conference on May 3, 1928 [Referred by Sankari Prasad Basu, Ibid., p. 143]


24. Ibid.


27. Subhas Chandra's Speech: All India Naojawan Bharat Sabha March 18, 1931 in Karachi and May 23, 1931 at Karachi, [Collected Speeches, op.cit., p. 60 and p. 75].


29. Quoted in Anil Ray, Ibid., pp. 22-23.


32. The Indian Struggle, op.cit., p. 378.
34. Subhas Chandra’s Speech : Imperial University, Tokyo, November 1944, Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 9.
44. The Indian Struggle, *op.cit.*, p. 453.