Chapter-1

Introduction

I

Nirmal Kumar Bose is a name to reckon with reverence, versatility, vividness and prolificacy. There are very few leaves of Indian society that were kept unturned by Bose. He loved donning many caps at a time, which he did with marvelous élan and will. So it shall be difficult to identify him with just a specific arena of social life and living. He was an ardent and pragmatic nationalist, a citizen with deep concern and empathy for the underdogs, an anthropologist with a deep penchant for the rigorous field work, a connoisseur in temple architecture and pre-historic archaeology, a scholar of human geography, interpreter and secretary of Gandhi, a cognoscente of civilizational studies, a social scientist with acumen in tribal welfare, a masterful executor of policies for developments and planning in remote areas, a sociologist with a thorough knowledge of Asian studies especially zeroing in on Indian society and culture, a savant in the field of urban sociology and many more. These variegated drives led him to hold many important institutional positions in subsequent parts of his life. This can probably give us an inkling of the nature and scope of his personae and to fathom why his work cannot be put into just one specific ambit in general.

Nirmal Kumar Bose was born on 22nd June 1901 at Gopimohan Dutta Lane, Bagbazar, Calcutta. Once he grew up, Bose idealized his father Bimanbehari, a doctor, who was well known for his knowledge, wisdom, dedication for his service and strong personae. Bimanbehari rarely advised his young son about mending his mischievous ways. Young Nirmal was very good in sports. According to Surajit Chandra Sinha, Bimanbehari used to tell his wife, that Nirmal will become a very famous person. Sinha even remembered child Nirmal at the age of ten or eleven telling his mother that he would leave home and work for his country once he grows up (Sinha: 1994:3).

Even Bimanbehari Bose was a man of repute and esteem. He was born in the year 1869 in the village of Dasghara in Hoogly district of West Bengal. He was born to his father Bhairab Chandra Bose, a humble grocer to have hailed from north Calcutta. But his lineage falls back to the rich descent which has cradled famous personalities like the renowned scientist Satyendranath Bose and the likes of Subhash Chandra Bose.
He seemed to have scaled this height through severe struggle and perseverance. He fell back solely on his scholarship money and the paltry sum that he scrounged by giving lessons to youths. So strong was his urge to study that at times when he ran cash-strapped, he borrowed money from such doyen like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. But he kept his word and never dithered to repay back his debt. This was noteworthy among the innumerable debtors of Vidyasagar who dilly-dallied when their turn came to pay off. After having finished his studies, he joined as an assistant civil surgeon in the medical department of government. Bimanbehari married Kiranshashi Devi, daughter of Nabin Krishna Sarkar belonging to an affluent family of Bagbazar. Kiranshashi Devi imbibed Brahmo ideology from her parental family. In 1917, Bimanbehari passed away after which Kiranshashi Devi rigorously followed the lifestyle of a widow with strict adherence and commitment. Nirmal Kumar Bose inculcated an immense sense of discipline, perseverance, cleanliness and judiciousness from his mother. However, one thing about his mother, which repelled him, was her religious and social conservatism, which he could not embrace wholeheartedly. He was more catapulted by his father’s scholarship, dedication and liberal outlook.

Bimanbehari was reticent who mostly kept to himself. His great sobriety and sincerity gravitated Bose. Bose tried hard to tread his footsteps. His father too was delighted at his son’s erudition, merit and his interest in sports. He advised his son to stall his temerity. Bose’s urge for adventure and sports coupled with his restlessness nevertheless perturbed his mother, but Biman Behari would incessantly try to pacify his mother though she unabatedly kept worrying for her son. Even Surajit Sinha writes,

Bimanbehari rarely advised his young son about mending his exuberance and turbulent ways. Young Nirmal was very good in sports. Bimanbehari used to tell his wife: You will see, Nirmal will become a famous person. (ibid: 2).

Perhaps the trait of altruism that he had imbibed from his father had trailed him throughout his life. He recounted how his father often helped the poor but meritorious students from the paltry sum that he could save. He even advised the same to his son whom he taught to help the impoverished but brilliant students whenever he could.
He took it to his heart and diligently followed the steps of his father. It only testified his innate penchant of altruistic acts for people and his nation. Bimanbehari died in 1917 when Bose was only seventeen. Though his father left him at a tender age, he left an indelible impact on his son which did not ebb out even in the later years. He went on to become a man with a firm persona, steeped in a disciplined crust and gifted with enormous benevolence. He acquired this trait from his mother, Kiranshashi Devi as well. Kiranshashi’s father Nabin Krishna Sarkar was a man of high repute and stature, both in affluence and social esteem. His daughter, though born with a silver spoon, grew up to lead a very regimented and organized life. Nirmal Bose must have learnt this art of self-restraint and self-abnegation from his mother. A small instance, can corroborate this trait. Sinha narrated, the following incidence,

In 1943 when the horrifying famine engulfed Bengal, Bose was stationed at Dumdum Central Jail. He made a plea to the jail authorities. Since as ‘A’ grade prisoner they were entitled to a sumptuous meal, he appealed that they might be served once a day, so that the famished millions don’t starve. Most of the said prisoners did not pay heed, but devoured happily. But Bose kept to his resolution without a rumble. His weight reduced drastically but he continued with his exercise unabatedly till he was released. Amongst all these doldrums, his concentration for his studies and researches was unequivocally exceptional (ibid: 46).

As can be presumed, Bimanbehari was both responsible and materialist. He left enough resources for his son. But Nirmal was too restrained to lead an opulent life. He was not a spendthrift, but maintained judiciousness wherever he went. He stayed back in Kolkata to finish his studies, though Kiranshashi Devi spent a rigorous life of a widow self-dependently in Puri. But however engaged he might be in his studies, he frequently visited his mother, so that she did not feel lonely in the absence of his father. Bimanbehari had a government service for which he was repeatedly transferred to the erstwhile Bengal Presidency, which constituted of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. So he travelled to a lot of places and went to numerous schools, such as Patna Sanskrit School (1906-1911), Sagar Dutta Free School, Kamarhati (1911-1912) and Ranchi Zilla School (1916-1917). It was from this school that Bose cleared his matriculation examination in 1917. After this he joined Scottish Church College, to study I. Sc in Calcutta. But after his arrival in Calcutta, Bimanbehari Bose passed away within a
few months. Nirmal Kumar Bose was then only 17 but, though having understood what a catastrophe had befallen him, he firmly clung back to his studies.

II

While in college he developed a deep penchant for science. He was in fact enrolled in intermediate science. But not only in studies, he had unequivocally excelled in sports as well. Some of his peers were in touch with the radical revolutionaries. Bose was deeply aware and perturbed by the stigma of being subjugated by the imperialist rule. He had a deep concern for the shackled country men. However, he was not a jingoist and so was not catapulted towards the belligerent form of nationalism that his peers were affiliated to. He felt that such a terroristic revolution could not form a constructive and sensible plank that could direct an independent India.

Bose, as we have earlier said, had developed a keen urge for the famine affected areas of Bankura and joined the relief camps organized by a voluntary group under the surveillance of Brahmo Samaj. He swiftly conducted a survey among the victims without having been trained in the canons of research methodology. He realized that to initiate the rehabilitation process promptly, social and economic survey of the communities ravaged by the disaster was almost an imperative. So he started a quick survey even though he was an unwary researcher. Simultaneously he was working in congruence with the working men’s institution in Goabagan to spearhead adult education among the factory labourers. In 1918 Bose joined 2nd St John’s Ambulance Brigade in Calcutta of which he was a member throughout his life.

Next year Bose joined Presidency College in Calcutta with honours in Geology along with Chemistry and Mathematics. While studying Geology he developed a deep ardency for rigorous field based works. He idolized one of his teachers, Prof Hem Chandra Dasgupta, the erstwhile Head of the Department of Geology, who was known for painstaking field based research. He therefore developed a deep ardency for rigorous field based works. His teacher’s indefatigable and dogged ways of judgement, clarity of thought and concept, and his ingenuous way of delivering lectures captivated Bose. He was considered an outstanding student in Presidency College who excelled in sports as well. He was selected the cricket captain of his college. He passed B. Sc with a stunning 1st class marks in Geology Honours after
which he enrolled himself for M.Sc. in Geology in the same college in 1921. In 1923 he joined the department of anthropology for M.sc course in Calcutta University.

After sometimes the student community got engaged in the non-cooperation movement propagated by Gandhiji. At that time Desbandhu Chittaranjan Das once instigated the students of Presidency College to join the movement. This stimulated the students so much so that they marooned their colleges in groups to partake in the movement. However, unlike his peers, Bose did not renounce his studies. He decided to stay back till he consummated his studies because he was not ready to compromise with his academics. From his later writings, we find that even Gandhiji himself encouraged pursuance of studies even at the cost of nationalism. Once in a meeting with Gandhiji, Bose accosted the Congress leader Abdul Ghaffar Khan, his son Abdul Ghani Khan and Professor Krishna Kripalani. They were all discussing the potentiality of the young boy to serve the nation. Abdul Ghaffar Khan himself being a steadfast patriot tried hard to coax his son to join the movement. But the reluctant boy instead wanted to concentrate on art and painting which had caught his fancy. His son Abdul Ghani Khan after finishing his studies abroad returned back to his homeland. He became a disciple of the famous artist Nandalal Bose and took his lessons but this bothered the nationalist father.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan finding himself helpless, pleaded with Gandhi to butt in. Khan thought Gandhi’s arbitration would exhort his son to embrace politics. He eagerly waited for Gandhi’s mediation. He thought Gandhi being a staunch nationalist would egg on his son to partake the freedom struggle. Gandhi wanted to know what Nandalal Bose, a painting ace, opined of his disciple. Krishna Kripalani told him how the young boy gained accolades from his master but immaculate mastery would need continuous perseverance and effort. Gandhiji immediately arranged for a job and heartened him to persist with his art. This encouraged the young boy to pursue his passion without being distracted (Bose: 2007:84-86)².

Likewise, Bose himself did not leave his studies mid-way. Though perturbed about the national crisis, he decided not to renounce his studies. It also shows a very notable attribute of Gandhi’s personae which he imbibed. Bose was not an instinctual man and did not take impulsive decisions. He valued education and could not leave it at the spur of the moment. Even Purnima Sinha, as translated by the researcher writes,
Bose was not capricious and did not take whimsical decisions. He could not be characterized by fickleness of disposition and mercurial moods. He was firm and well-founded with a robust character. Bose stayed back in his college to complete the experimentations in the laboratory which he had been continuing for long, though most of his friends had abandoned college. His chummy friend Soumen Thakur too eschewed his studies on patriotic grounds which Bose did not (Sinha: 2001:6)\textsuperscript{3}.

As has already been mentioned, Bose unlike his other peers was not a jingoist. He loved his country and was steeped in a strong nationalist crux but he correspondingly continued his studies as well. Nothing could stall his studies as he felt serving the nation would be meaningless without a scrupulous knowledge of science and society. Arbitrary service to society devoid of a scholastic and pedantic backdrop will imperil any attempt to resurrect the lost pride of the nation and of other reformatory drives. He revered and approbated studies and academic research not only for donnish practice, but also for social service. So nationalism is a ringer for scholasticism and must be pursued together. For him knowledge should be properly used to serve the countrymen and here lies the true worth of education. He felt his erudition could be applied for the amelioration of the conditions of the poor denizens.

Once he went to meet Satish Chandra Dasgupta, who was involved in the functioning of the *Khadi* organization. He espoused the issue of a Bengali sweeper community near Beleghata. He lamented how the community is getting extinct from the heart of the society. The high infant mortality and their debilitating health fore grounded, especially on chronic Pneumonia amplified their conditions. It was not just poverty which exacerbated their predicament because in most families, both the couple works to fend for themselves, but their morbidity is high owing to their alcoholism and adultery. Conjugal relations are therefore flimsy and fugacious magnifying the decay of the community (Bose: 1930: 20-21). Bose felt these problems of this community should be taken up by a social scientist to lengthen their life expectancy rate as well as to strengthen their conjugal bonds so that the community does not perish.

So Bose was an educationist who worked tirelessly for the distressed masses and tried hard to veer his knowledge towards altruistic goals. He wanted to use the knowledge that he had acquired in building up a just society. To advocate this idea, he went on to translate basic social science into an applied science. For him there is no point in
being an arm-chair social scientist. To explore the earth around us, a thorough understanding of the real predicaments is all that is necessary. Once he went on a trip to a district in Mumbai, where he met a professor of history who played host to him. It was gradually unfurled that he came here not just for historical research, but with a latent commercial interest. He wanted to dabble with shares and debentures. A new company was about to be set up on which he wanted to invest. So he wanted to venture into the site before buying stocks. Bose treated him with deference and respect, but his lethargy for field work irritated him (Bose: 2007:52).

Bose felt that no research on archaeology and history could be done in a void. The ingredients and quintessence of a research like this are always embedded within the real flora and fauna of the site. This must be explored by the researcher himself. He might have to trudge up the hill since this cannot be studied atop an ivory tower. Bose therefore said,

> The professor loathed this and never preferred researching through tried-and true means. Instead, he would observe through a telescope from a remote corner down the rugged hills. This way he lost sight of the empirical and proven techniques of objective research. He was more interested in the paraphernalia of research and less into its crux. Grants and funds were all that catapulted him to initiate a research (ibid: 52-53).

Bose was a hard core researcher. The intensity and probity with which he worked among all adversities was unimaginable. This echoes the indomitable altruism and benevolence with which he worked. It was towards this goal that he tip-toed applying his erudition and scientific spirit. This compassion, philanthropy and patriotism mapped his trajectory which later on amplified into a nationalist curve. This was reflected in his biography.

III

Bose kept his studies incomplete and remained engrossed in Gandhian politics and strategies. He felt that this path which Gandhi showed might lead the youths of the country to a new way, though the road might not lead to Swaraj. Finally, he decided to forsake his government college. (Sinha: 2001:6) For sometimes he stayed on his
own and then spent some time with his mother in Puri, a pilgrim site in Orissa in eastern India. For a while he remained quiet. He observed the scenario around him and absorbed as much as he could. Especially he kept himself abreast with the Gandhian literature and action plans. While in Puri he spent an ample time meandering around the temples. One of such was the temple of Konark on which he expounded. He felt such a temple like this was unparalleled in independent India.

The temple stands out for its sprightly and boisterous mood, precision and completeness. In those days’ temple sculptures were vivid and elaborate, but were hardly meaningful. The artists flaunted such motifs to amass accolades, but they rarely rendered relevant and underlying meanings to such temple architectures. Konark temple carved a niche for itself owing to the ostentatious yet eloquent designs that the artists engraved. This was a notable achievement because the era of the Konark temple was impregnable with a rich history of Orissan culture and civilization. The temple grew up to be an old and wise narrator of this tale. For the first time the mute sculptures were enlivened to portray the socio-historical panorama of legendary figures like Narasinghadev of the Ganga dynasty and his gallantry. His dynasty brought splendour and bountifulness everywhere. The people lived in peace and tasted freedom. Therefore, the artists of the time captured and encapsulated this vibrancy and bestowed on their sculpture this zest. The temple of Konark belonged to the sun God. He is the creator and the propagator of the world around. He is the initiator, institutor and sire of the earth. Everything is bridled and reined in by him. This idea of omnipotence and majesty has been rendered to this architecture, and this probably was the chief goal of the craftsmen.

Bose said such an architecture and acumen were unthinkable in a shackled period. It definitely speaks at large of the courageous artists who did not hesitate to speak freely of the supremacy of the civilization. Bose went on to describe the hierarchy in which the idols had been arranged. The base was composed of the animals in different postures succeeded by a rung of men and women of differing ranks in various postures. While the motifs have climbed atop, eroticism had given way to materialism, banality and utilitarianism. The artists had depicted the vigour of the civilization. It has also criticised the parasitic sages of the industrious regime. Bose admired the gigantic structure and the underlying authority of the temples. What is astounding about Bose is his analytic skill in describing the mood and the context of
that regime. This quizzical and coherent reasoning helped him to grow up into a well-founded social scientist. For the time in which he was not pursuing his studies, he did not sit indolent, but wandered around to explore the world around.

Thus one other attribute worth mentioning is the malleable and supple bent of his mind. He was not snobbish or snooty who would insulate himself just in his own area of study. He was an intense researcher and knew how to extract resource worth studying from an otherwise mundane and banal world around. Thus he was a versatile researcher with multiple areas of interest. He was industrious and could not sit still. It only tells us of the ever-persistent and perennial flow of ideas and analysis that inundated his mind. He was a true researcher of Indian history and tradition because the intent and unrelenting way through which he unalteringly searched for data on Indology is worth mentioning.

While in Puri, he was busy analysing the nitty gritty and aesthetics of temple structures. He went on to meticulously measure the buildings and structures to fathom the intent of design and architecture. Suddenly he went on to meet an old artist Ram Maharana, who showed him an old and brittle book on the art of architecture. He was taken aback by the tenacity of the old man to preserve this book among his severe penury, destitution and indigence. Bose asked the old man, what kept him going. The poor old craftsman replied that it was his sheer reverence and veneration for such old documents that was supreme and unquestioning. He said he knew that his generation was dead and gone and few were left to canonize such stuff but he was hopeful. The awaiting generation might need these tattered remains to rebuild a strong and robust civilization on the remaining of the past. (Bose: 1930:250-251).

Thus from here we can unearth the approach of Bose which was deeply steeped in unearthing the old and the traditional motifs as well as unmasking the underlying meaning beneath it. He worshipped and idolized the old and never snubbed at it. Thus Bose’s penchant for the amalgamation of the past with the present, a juxtaposition of tradition with modernity always pervaded his studies. He wrote prolifically and especially his work on temple architecture could outmatch others. Sinha wrote,

He wrote prolifically and did not sit on his writings but industriously circulated and published them in forms of books, articles in journals and newspapers, speeches, informal discussions etc. As he read and wrote a lot, he believed in spreading the information acquired in every possible
way. He started this from quite an early age. So he ended up writing as many as seven hundred articles and numerous books. (Sinha: 2001:1).

The words of the dying craftsman touched him that, he read and translated the book, which was later published in the name of *Cannons of Orissan Architecture*, in 1932. His training in geology and anthropology also helped him to appreciate architectural patterns. He was in to temple architecture, and this was reflected in his works. Thus, D. K Bhattacharya talking of N.K Bose said,

There is no doubt that Bose was highly impressed by the lofty temples of Orissa much before he joined a Master’s programme. This must have had a continued effect on him from as early as his school days. It is, otherwise, difficult to explain how he could bring out his significant work titled: Canons of Orissan Architecture within five years of his passing M.Sc. in anthropology, in spite of the fact that the anthropology syllabus, which he studied, nowhere deals with temple architecture. There is no doubt, therefore, that he had to self-teach himself this specialized branch of knowledge. Later in his presidential address in the Anthropology and Archaeology session of Indian Science Congress held in Allahabad in 1949 he mentions the work of Stella Kramrisch, Fergusson and also many Indian experts who influenced him in this area. It is interesting to see that Bose does not always stick to the established terms (all derived from Sanskrit) used to designate the various morphological parts of a temple structure like Shikhara, Jangha, Amia, Kalasha etc. Instead he went around the colonies of local artisans (who are even today working in modern temples) and borrow the Oriya terms used by them. Another important aspect of this great work was that he incorporated the essence of the text of Bhuvanapradipa. The original Sanskrit manuscript is believed to have been lost, but an Oriya rendering of some parts of it was available. This, indeed, shows Bose's deep seated interest in temple architecture (Bhattacharya: 2008: 20).

Not just his erudition in temple architecture was outstanding, but we must also take note of his unbelievable grip on the Sanskrit language which helped him to comprehend the old and classical manuscripts of ancient Indian temples. It not only infers Bose’s thrust on indigenous texts, but also on the appropriate ways of studying them without Western import. Bhattacharya therefore, in reference to his masterpiece *Cannons of Orissan Architecture* further added,
Further, anybody who has seen this Magnum opus of Bose would realize that for a student of pure science, his understanding of Sanskrit is indeed surprising. Almost fifty percent of this 210-page work is full of Sanskrit slokas (chantings) from Bhubanapradipa and lines from Oriya Silpasasstra juxtaposed together. This laborious work brings an altogether new dimension to the study of temple architecture. The western scholars, as well as their Indian disciples, trained in the schools of Europe, lost the means of gaining an insight into the traditional power of architecture of the Indian craftsmen. They did not know how buildings and temples were classified by the builders themselves, what distinctions were drawn between different varieties of temples, which were considered the finer points in building-technique and so forth. (Bose, 1932/1981: Introduction) This book reflects that he must have drawn from ancient texts rather than depending on the otherwise exhaustive works and comments by western scholars available (ibid: 20).

To produce this cornucopia or store of writings, Bose sought immense institutional help. He had strong faith on institutional set ups that could lend support to grand ventures and large scale public pursuits. R.K Bhattacharya therefore writes,

Looking through his official correspondence, it reveals the spirit with which he approached the authorities. He expressed himself plainly regarding the needs of the organizations and importance of the work. There is not a note of submissiveness in his approach- a marked departure from today when the ministry with the purse strings holds the whip hand! It is remarkable that the ministry in charge of the Survey complied with the demands quite readily, from this we can gauge the respect and esteem that Professor Bose was held in. It was under his persuasion that the publications of the Survey complied with his demands quite readily. It was under his persuasion that the publications of the Survey were freed of the shackles of the government presses that used to cause enormous delay in publication. The Survey was able and is still able to approach other publication houses for publishing their findings. These are the legacies that we have inherited and these have enriched the Survey greatly (ibid: 4).

His belief on institution and networking was thus very strong and very well heard of. Bose believed that often it was not feasible to work upon an enterprise all alone. Bose said,
At this point we seek collective endeavor and fall back on group
dynamics. It is expected that such conjoined and collaborative task will
stand out from the follies and banality of individual drudgery which has
made life immotile and steadfast. So institutions grow up from the
communal and mutual urge to work hard and to bring momentum to life.
But if they become embroiled in internal bickering, execration or
detestation and become over-zealous to spill out incense and
invidiousness at others, institutions lose their meaning and become
ineffectual and inert (Bose: 1930: 7-8).

Bose has, therefore, fathomed the usefulness of institutional support and the
subsequent service that it provides. He realized all these from a tender age and it
started from his penchant for reading, writing and delivery. That way Bose was a very
good communicator. As one of his students, Bimalendu Bhattacharya, former Vice
Chancellor of North Bengal University, recollects about his teacher,

I had been one of his direct students, listening to his classroom lectures
delivered in his inimitable style over a period of four running years, this
adds further to the great emptiness created by his absence. I vividly
remember how he was full of dreams and plans, his ideas tumbling out
and spilling over a room full of listeners, sweeping off all their feet with
their heady ambition, holding them spellbound, after which he would
read out for and vanish in the Himalayas like Huckleberry Finn headed
for the open, beyond ‘civilization’, planning incredible missions even at
his advanced age (Bhattacharya: 2002: 6-8).

He thus lectured and wrote prolifically, especially his work on temple architecture, as
mentioned before could, outmatch others. After he left his college, Bose decided to
deliver lectures to the pilgrims of Puri on the temple architecture. He thought the
spectators of these temples got enthralled by the wondrous sculpture, but apprising
them of the socio-historical backdrop might leave behind an indelible imprint on
them. So he started to orate on the temple dynamics standing in front of the temple.
Once as he stood, expatiating to the audience huddled around him, the renowned
educationist, Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, the erstwhile Vice Chancellor of Calcutta
University, was captivated by his speech. He accosted Bose and came to know that
having kept his post-graduate programme in Geology incomplete, he had come here.
Sir Mukherjee understood that finally he had bumped into a boy impregnable with
ideas and beaming with potentiality. He coaxed him to join the newly established
anthropology department as a post–graduate student. He mollified him by saying that the university was not a governmental institution and so Bose should not have any inhibition in joining the department. He must find his true calling and forte in learning for nation-building. (Sinha: 1994:7-8). Bose pondered over it and gave it a serious consideration. This only shows the malleable and flexible mind set of Bose. He was not obdurate but believed in going with the wind.

It was not too long back when he had decided to forsake college to toe the line of Swaraj. He felt that non-cooperation movement was the need of the hour. Everywhere around the policy of renouncement was in vogue. People were deserting schools and colleges in masses. This abandonment was coupled with both sentiment and reason. Sinha said,

> Whether shucking off or leaving institutions would do any good is not known, but at least it shall invigorate our insipid soul and resuscitate or revivify our lost spirit back into action. Men cannot treat each other as equitable. That’s why the society is strewn with conflicts and discord. This disaccord is noticed on the familial, political and social plane. This conflict has either demoralized or unnerved men or has led to his emancipation. Rousseau’s Bolshevism, Ireland’s Sibkinism are all revolutions or repulsions in various forms. Society must learn to veer out its grudges and umbrage in a proper way. This is a necessity. (ibid: 9).

We thus find that Bose was both sensible and responsive to the need of the hour. While he was deeply enmeshed in Gandhian ideology, he did not stick to it blindly. He was not hardnosed and did not take a stand-point orientation, as many exponents did. He was more qualitative in his approach and liked constructing reality according to the contextual fabric of the society. So though having pursued his studies in hard sciences, he was not a head strong empiricist. He took life the way it came without owing rigorous allegiance to any hard-core fetish. But his penchant for studies brought him back to the academic ambit at the behest of Sir Mukherjee. He explained Bose that the university is not a governmental institution. It shall not hurt his nationalist agenda. Bose agreed to his proposal readily.
Henceforth started yet another episode in his life. Having joined the Department of Anthropology, he got an opportunity to work and interact with the several human groups in society. He worked assiduously collecting evidences as objectively as possible. The university also realized the perseverance with which he worked hard. In the year 1925, not only he superseded his own cohorts but topped the university across the departments. His research experience of the geology department helped him immensely. His predilection for this new subject can be comprehended by a quick gaze at his biographical backdrop. His intent urge for social benevolence enveloped in nationalist spirit was evident. This was coupled with his roots in Orissa that boasted of its ancient and sustained tradition as well as its eloquent folk culture which must have inspired Bose.

In the meantime, he studied the fishermen of Puri and the Munda tribes of Ranchi. The teachers of his department understood that an extremely potential, brisk, quick-witted and discerning student had joined their department. The dissertation paper of his post-graduation course conducted on the spring festival stands out for its perceptive approach and for the vividness of details. The richness of the literature which he reviewed at such a tender age, is amazing. This stupendous account of the Holi festival was penned out by Bose for his post-graduation classes. It also charts out his analytical and sapient mind that turned him such a genius at adolescence. It only maps out his locus of interest that lied especially around Ranchi and its neighbourhood which he inhabited. He was a keen observer and so observed everything that came his way. He did not have to go afar but he ventured and embarked upon all that was mundane, common place, banal, ordinary and simple.

This acclimatization with the near and dear ones happened rather early. He did not look atop but his near ambience tried to mould his research objects. This was probably possible because of his empathy and passion for the people and the place that came in his way. That way he was an inductive researcher. He did not embark upon a mission with a pre-adjudged and foreordained assumption. He disliked working with formal-deductive hypothesis. He rather travelled and peregrinated the areas that he chanced upon and tried locating the idiosyncrasy as thoroughly as possible. His work on the spring festival was a significant study, which initiated and instituted his calling as a social scientist engraved along the contours of civilizational
perspective. This work was noteworthy and revelatory for reasons more than one. It not only gave us an inkling of his budding scholarship but also the perspective that later on became his hallmark. Towing this line of civilizational perspective, Bose started off his journey to shed light on Indian traditions and culture and how it produced colourful amalgamations and admixtures. Sinha said,

Perhaps the most significant intellectual enterprise in anthropology for a ‘decolonized’ has been that of N.K Bose (Sinha,1967). During his five years’ association with the Anthropological Survey of India, Professor Bose tried to build up a cadre of field anthropologists who would be committed to knowing the nature of this civilization and the process of this transformation on the basis of accurate field observation and comparison of notes (Sinha:1971: 10).

Bose showed how civilization was composed of the multiple elements of the nation. The way the simple and complex cultures went on playing hide and seek among themselves in the larger fabric of the civilization had been analysed with apt attention by Bose. This work on the spring festival of Holi that he penned at such a tender age probably developed the sharpness and the precision of his approach. This was likely for a researcher who is very focused and converged on his epicenter. This helped him to stay firm so that he does not go astray from his research objective. It was grounded affirm on portraying the civilizational panorama as a cosmopolitan amalgamation of the high and the low culture. He probably was hell bent to generate a cosmopolitan science of history for analysing the Indian civilization.

Bose was not conservative in building up his work ponderously as if to show that Indian civilization is nothing but the handiwork of the elite and the sanskritic culture. The brahminical and the adjoining higher culture had been treated at par with the lower and the native cultures which for long had been looked down with apathy and contempt. The sociological processes of accommodation and assimilation are seen running throughout his work. He believed in giving an equitable and even-handed place to both the great and the little cultures. This just and unprejudiced outlook was always reflected in his work. He showed that the civilization grew through the symbiotic relationship nestled between the royal, prime and the pink cultures as well as the native, indigenous, autochthonous and the aboriginal ones. There is a perennial flow between the upper and the lower crusts of the cultural whole which pops up and
weaves the fine fabric of civilization. It is such that no single genre of culture can owe allegiance to the making of the mighty and dynamic civilization. The ongoing swing oscillating along the continuum of cultural soul throws up the various versions of the civilization where no culture finally surpasses the other. The gallantry and glory of a particular culture over the other is just an evanescent and transient reality and does not reign supreme. The spring festival of India, as he penned out for his post-graduation dissertation thesis, was just an instance of the victory of the nativity over the cream and lathery.

V

While undertaking a post-graduation course in anthropology, Bose learnt the ropes of field research. Thereupon he decided to work on the tribes in the Mogalbandi and Gadjat areas in Orissa. There some farmers had started settling along the bank of the river owing to the fertility of the soil. The emigrant farmers from the plains squatted on the embankments in such a way that the indigenous tribes such as the shabar and the koles had to be ousted from their native place. They had been forced to take refuge in the jungles. Such had been the brashness and cussedness of the Hindu farmers that they forced out the natives from their roots. The helpless and poor tribes moved into the forest and somehow eked out a living for themselves. The productive banks of the river had been taken over by the alien men from the plains who have reclaimed the area for their selfish needs to replace the original inhabitants. The tribes lived in close proximity but were still banished by the Hindus. Yet the latter sought help from the tribes when needed but there developed little fellow feeling or cronyism between the two. Bose repented that herein lays the great tragedy of a mighty civilization like this. Pradip Kumar Bose (2011), in one of his excerpts on Bose narrates an instance like this,

The Hindus loathed them though the tribes did not dither to do any menial task for the Hindus. When Bose went to learn their language, a Hindu Brahmin mocked at him. He ridiculed the language of the tribes as being nebulous and murky and far away from the dialect of any civilized community, almost analogous to apes and baboons. This affront by the Hindus was marked by a deep sense of insolence and indignity towards the tribal culture. Bose was deeply hurt by such a contemptuous and temperamental attitude of the great traditions that did not keep any leaf unturned to hate and detest their aboriginal brethren (Bose: 1930: 78-79).
Thus we find that Bose’s approach from the very beginning had been based on charting out the stature of the working relationship between the various layers of the civilization. He was concerned about whether the various echelons could amalgamate with one another. His analysis also brings out the brutal story of injustice meted out to the lower reaches despite their hard work and toil. Such a partisan attitude shows how a civilization grows up by feeding on one culture while the other hangs loose. It speaks of the conspicuous consumption of the elite culture on the hard-earned resources of the other lowly culture. Here a brief mention can be made of Thorsten Veblen’s *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) which also speaks of such prejudiced bifurcation. He argued that there was a fundamental split in society between those who make their way via exploitation and those who make their way via industry. In early barbarian society this is the difference between the hunter and the gatherer tribes, but as society matures, it translates into the difference between the landed gentry and the indentured servant. The ‘leisure class’ is the parasitic one that feeds on the hard earned resources of the manual class. Veblen talks of the overt manifestation of power and the deep seated carves of exploitation that the social order is interspersed with. Veblen therefore said,

As societies mature, conspicuous leisure gives way to "conspicuous consumption", but both are performed for the sole purpose of making invidious distinction based on pecuniary strength, the demonstration of wealth being the basis for social status (Veblen:1899:3).

Bose likewise wanted to see the mode of interaction and the concomitant understanding between the various layers of the civilization. Bose, therefore, wanted to dabble with the micro tradition of the *Juang* tribes and the extent of their exploitation by the Hindus. He wanted to analyse the regional and socio-cultural history of a small district named Pal Lahara in Orissa. Pal Lahara is a small town in Angul district of the state of Orissa, not far from the banks of the Rengali Reservoir which is to the west, and the Malayagiri Forest Range to the southeast. Pal Lahara is the sub-divisional headquarter of Pal Lahara subdivision of the Angul district in Central Orissa. The town is situated on the bank of river Mankara. It was a relatively large princely state at one time until its territory began to perish. The forests in the area are rich in bamboo and the local *Juang* people are adept at basketry.
That Bose decided to select this marginal region as his research site talks of his interest not only in the civilizational studies but also of regional studies. This is equally true that any micro study of a region stands meaningless and incoherent if we do not bridge it with macro perspective surrounding the entire national panorama and its ensuing history. A brief reference can be made of the eminent author Satish Chandra Mitra. Based on his collections, Mitra wrote a district history entitled *Jassore-Khulnar Itihas*. He writes that

> While narrating the history of Khulna and Jessore, he had to juxtapose it with the change and continuity of the larger Bengal. If these places sever their ties with Bangladesh, there is little worthwhile to write about them. (Mitra: 1922).

This is what Bose wanted to do. He vividly researched on the tribal cultures in Orissa and presented numerous monographs on the aborigines. He probably wanted to show how these micro studies influenced the macro studies of the larger civilizations. While there were very few attempts to study such remote and popularly held obnoxious cultures, little interest had been shown to espouse these small traditions as distinct and discreet identity. This is true because these cultures while serving to present the peculiar and indigenous roots stand to complement the greater traditions with an intentness little heard of. The former, however downcast and imperious might be, must accommodate the little tradition for its own drives. Likewise, the smaller cultures have to fall back on their superior and opulent counterparts. However, at no point does this mutual back-and-forth relation between the two cultures stop, for that shall mean absolute doom or quietus of the civilization.

The Hindu civilization, as Bose pointed, out was amplified and complex, the understanding of which requires rigorous research and effort which he initiated from a tender age. Therefore, a vigorous scientific historical research shall be called upon to study the smaller cultures and the mode of their interdependence with the greater civilization. The tribes being absorbed in to the system, actually work in consonance with a fine tuned socio-economic orchestration. The Hindu civilization can be admired for its seamless *concinnity* of tribes and castes. There might be a latent sense of misgivings and grudges among the lower reaches of the civilization. There might be complaints against the shrewdness of the higher order but despite that the inner soul of the civilization does not get annihilated, it only revitalizes itself.
This is because the idea behind the dynamism of the civilization is that man in the Hindu society is circumscribed by the rigours of the varna system. He is subjugated to the dictums of the society. He has both rights and importunity over the society which he voraciously claims. He also has duties and impositions which he must rightfully deliver. This equilibrium must be maintained without which the society shall lose its vitality and life. This approval for the roles accredited by the society must be approbated. Any resentment or score over the approved echelons will only bring discord and umbrage. As the inmates take care of the society so does the society for them. This reverence and respect for this bond is the cornerstone of a mighty civilization like this. So Bose for long had delved into such refurbishing studies of the civilization and one of his early studies on the Juang tribes corroborates this.

Bose made a rigorous attempt to infiltrate into their life and culture. To internalize their folkways, he also made attempts to learn their language and imbibe their skills. The tribes were taken aback when they learnt that a civilized and elegant man like him wanted to learn their language. However, once they were convinced, they slogged hard to teach him their language. The tribes performed all the imperative rituals which showed their ingenious will to instill in him their language. The way Bose tactfully won over the hearts of the Juang forest dwellers only showed his apt understanding of the strategies of qualitative research. Bose was quite young when he took up this research but his work captured a matured and mellow approach. He had by then picked up the ropes of an intense field research that is anchored on extensive fact finding and rapport building. Bose felt that the real data can be gathered by intent interaction with the local denizens. That they were shabby and scrubby could not bother Bose, such was his allegiance and attachment to his study. He stayed there for long ignoring the adverse weather and the inimical living conditions. He had to put with them for long to observe their life through a comprehensive lens so as to get a vivid picture. This panoramic view helped him to see how their tribal life was juxtaposed with subtle nuances of the caste system.

He saw this influence as almost imperative since the archaic and preposterous ways of earning livelihood was falling short of daily subsistence. The slash and burn cultivation or the hunting and gathering economy was feeble and emaciated. The Juangs and the Pauri Bhuinyas could hardly make their both ends meet. They realised the utility of plough cultivation as well as the fruits of conjoined farming which could
earn them a substantial surplus. He understood how the strict and repressive forest rules have throttled the already dying economy of the *Juangs* and the *Pauri Bhuinyas*. They found it safer to hinge back on the clogs of the caste based economy of the Hindus because that assured them of a regular and inveterate source of income. This work was later developed into the concept, *The Hindu method of tribal absorption* (1941). His work on the *Juangs* was a major work and can be taken as a stepping stone in the realm of research and practice. Among all his works perhaps his most noteworthy contribution must have been, *The Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption*.

This essay, published on 3rd January 1941, was presented at The Indian Science Congress in Benaras, India. The article presented his idea of unison developing among the tribes and the caste system as an offshoot of the economic and socio-cultural reciprocity. He developed his theory of cultural fluidity on the basis of the unilateral cultural flow from the higher and technologically adept culture to that of the comparatively lower and undifferentiated tribal counterparts. This flow, as Bose presumed on the basis of his field work on the *Juang* tribes, percolated unabashedly with no hindrance from the tribal front. The pace at which the cultural osmosis exudes and trickles throughout the society is pervasive yet so subtle. Perhaps this mute and dumb infiltration of the Hindu vestiges into the tribal body gave impunity against all tribal upsurges. The process of acculturation took place without any seething anger for separatism and annexation. For Bose, the benevolence and the benignancy showed by the caste system had undoubtedly helped to wipe off every possibility of communal dishevelment or disorder. His theoretical contribution was considered a masterpiece which gained accolades from all quarters of academia. He continued with his works in the multiple quarters thus gaining for himself respect and admiration for his various achievements.

**VI**

The work was later on amalgamated with some other works initiated on a wider scope and published in the form of an essay, in the journal *Science and Culture* in 1941. These ideas have later coalesced into his famous Bengali book, *Hindu Samajer Gadan* (The Structure of Hindu Society) (1949), (Sinha:2001:8). Thus we see that his pioneering work on the *Juang* tribes was actually a treasure trove of experiences which he later exploited to form the cornerstone of his later writings. The work was a bed rock of the native and crude experiences he amassed while pragmatically holding
up with the tribes. The work nevertheless helped him form a very insightful perspective and sagacious bent of mind. This gave him a discerning eye to judge and analyse a context with due empathy and judicious concern.

He befriended those people with a proximity and warmth unheard of. Their harsh and excruciating life was unveiled before him. He was not an armchair researcher but lived a life with them. He made them his friends to an extent that he can judge them by their mere personae and attire. For instance, Bose says,

> It is easy to detect a *juang* man in the market because no other communities are as ill-clad as them. He had the eye to discern and espy the conditions of the Birhors despite the polymorphous issues confronting him on the research site. The destitution and the poverty of the Birhors did not evade his sight. The Birhor communities inhabit the districts of Singbhum and Hazaribagh. They make their ends meet by hunting the forest animals and collecting the jungle creepers and foliage. They make ropes of these creepers and sell them in the market. They are absolutely down and out and lead a life of paupers. Whenever the landlords try extracting the revenue from them, they simply flee into another forest (Bose: 1949:32).

What is noteworthy is the way Bose portrays succinctly the severity of their trauma with such vivid details. This is not possible without having intently infiltrated the focused group in question for long. It was definitely a form of humanist research which encouraged Bose to be in the shoes of the others. According to Elizabeth. C. Hirschman,

> As an inquiry and approach, differs markedly from the methods used in the physical sciences because it advocates in-dwelling of the researcher with the phenomena under investigation. Rather than standing apart from the system being studied, the researcher immerses the self within it. Researcher’s understanding, therefore, is deemed within the humanist perspective to arise from direct personal experience, rather than by the manipulation of experiment variables. The researcher serves as the measuring instrument; personally experienced knowledge serves as scientific data (Polanyi 1962). (Hirschman: 1986:238).

That Bose applied the same approach was shown in his study of the (fisher and swimmer) communities. He did an intensive study on this community in Puri and tried to analyse discreetly their living and society. The community was segmented
into two castes such as wada-baliya and jaliya. There was an inherent hostile inter-caste alliance for which the castes practised exogamy. Bose not only did an ethnographic study on the community but he also intently poured over the history of the community. Most of the history was in the form of oral narratives passed down by the preceding generations which Bose absorbed voraciously. He studied the castes vividly and tried to see how these castes were acting as the quasi-castes. Though they hold close resemblance to the Hindu caste system yet their styles of living bear stark contrast with the Braminical order. This is seen on the question of the priesthood where there is a dissension on the universal propitiation by a Brahmin priest. Their rituals are mostly presided over by their own men. It is only in the worship of the village deity that the Brahmin priest is invoked upon. They mostly propitiate the Hindu gods such as the Mahadev and the Nrisingha but there are numerous other gods that they want to placate. They are mostly unknown to the sanskritic Vedic fold. The deities are local models of religiosity for they fall out of the pan Vedic model of Hinduism. The rituals are also preposterous for they challenged the old entrenched rituals of the Hindus.

Bose once visited a household to witness the deity being worshipped by a sorcerer. Their rituals and practices seemed bizarre and strange to him. However, he said that this is how ego-centricism creeps in when individuals ridicule other’s cultures. Bose was sensitive to other’s culture and rituals. He had always been careful and solicitous for the other culture and their peaceful coexistence. Though he felt the practices that prevailed were obnoxious and even to some extent cruel and diabolical, he restrained himself never to go overboard in criticising or objurgating them. But his detailed descriptions showed how the communities took fiendish delight in hurting the animals before slaughtering them before the deities.

His descriptions were vivid and lively so as to capture the nooks and crannies of the incident. It was self-evident that the practices were barbaric, especially the act of ripping open the cock’s stomach with one’s own hands and scooping out the intestines and the lungs out of the bird truly stands out to be blood cuddling (Bose:1930). But unlike the other anthropologists he did not loathe or shunned off their practice with contempt but rather tried to reason with them. He legitimized the practice as he felt it to be in sync with their harsh and inimical life conditions. The turbulent sea and the difficult ways in which the Nuliya community struggled to eke out their living made
Bose infer that they are harsh enough to be mollified by easy ways. This belief which underlined their strenuous and arduous life demanded a far more grueling way of appeasing their deities.

So Bose found this communal way of pacifying the divine powers appropriate, keeping in mind the context in which the *Nuliyas* juggled hard with their life. What is very distinct about Bose’s approach is the ambivalence in his perspective. Unlike the other researchers he did not decry other cultures, but rather empathised with them. This is quite unlikely of the other researchers who for their entire life maligned the aboriginal culture and their civilization. They could not have even thought of living with the natives spontaneously, leave apart empathising with them.

Denzin and Lincoln referred to this phase as “the eighth moment of the qualitative research” (Denzin&Lincoln: 1994:7). It is a period which sniffs of imperial smugness and the attempt to view other cultures from the lens of the colonial masters thus making the ethnographic studies an absolute sham. As Denzin and Lincon says,

> In this the traditional period (early 1900s-World War II), other cultures were studied from the perspective of the researcher’s own culture. The classic ethnographic period involved going into another culture, making field notes of observations, and then writing conclusions. The works of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson reflect this period. What the anthropologist was seeking was a positivist understanding of the way things really were, and there was thus a concern with providing “valid, reliable, and objective interpretations” (Denzin &Lincoln:1994 :7).

Thus Denzin &Lincoln said that there are four characteristics of this period of qualitative research. This marked the post-positivist foundation for a reaction against this form of traditional positivist research. He underlines these four characteristics as a commitment to objectivism, complicity in imperialism, a belief in monumentalism and a belief in timelessness or universal nature of findings. But while inserting this objectivism in their studies, early ethnographers often became snooty enough to disdain the people they were studying. Ethnographic studies showed how the British anthropologists were value laden in their thought and approach.

Bose too was embarked on rigorous expeditions to work among the inmates of the less fortunate societies. But instead of politicising strategies to tap the resources of the tribal booties, he was all set to empathise and have a benignant understanding of their
 predicaments. This was perhaps possible because the politically shackled backdrop of his country had surreptitiously taught him the lessons of compassion for these denigrated denizens and to identify with their problems. The nationalist spirit was strong enough to drive him further. It was the time in which, a distinctive tradition of field work was nurtured by the European school as the work of Malinowski testified. The tenuous and the hardy field works had for long been a tradition in the school of British anthropology. Beteille therefore said,

The work of Malinowski and his associates in the London school of Economics did much to establish the standards of fieldwork in anthropology. British anthropologists and those trained in Britain hold by and large that although many had conducted field investigations before his time it was Malinowski who turned fieldwork into a proper instrument of scientific research. The tradition established by him requires the anthropologist to spend a period of about a year in the intensive study of all major aspects of a small community of people. In India a number of field studies have been published in the last two decades. In discussing the nature of Bose’s work, we will have to make a distinction between intensive and extensive field works. It would be misleading to assess Bose’s fieldwork by the criteria established by Malinowski and his successors in Britain and the United States. Bose did not write any monograph on the basis of a long and intensive study of a particular community; even his study of the Juangs was interrupted after a short period when he came under police suspicion. At the same time the total period of time he spent in the field must be much greater than the time spent on fieldwork by most anthropologists whether in the country or elsewhere (Beteille:1992: 12).

It only corroborates the sincerity and the probity with which Bose went on to conduct his field-researches in a style almost unfamiliar at that time. He introduced a novel form of field-research with a style and an approach less dabbled before. Bose truly will be identified as the harbinger of this form of enquiry and knowledge building in the sub-continent setting high standards for the rest to follow.

VII

Whatever be the nature of his field work, as Beteille rightly points, Bose’s work was definitely ardent and rigorous. The effort and the toil he put up on his research were both ingenuous and heartfelt. Over and above, he worked with a conviction and sensitivity unheard of in his days. He was not merely a researcher but also a workhorse for the poor tribes (Beteille:1992). He worked intently and selflessly for
the people. It was really wondrous to think of the acquaintance he developed readily with them and how he became a close cohort and a companion.

He probably was largely influenced by yet another anthropologist of his time, viz, Sharat Chandra Roy, who was known as the father of Indian ethnology. Roy worked as a headmaster of the Mymensingh high school and was later invited to work as Principal of GEL Mission High school, Ranchi. It was during his sojourn at Ranchi that he was intimately drawn towards the sad plight of the tribes. As a lawyer, he visited Chotanagpur to observe the tribes from a close quarter. Bose’s maternal uncle and his relatives were at Ranchi and his uncle had a business centre at Ranchi as a timber merchant. As Bose’s relatives from the maternal side were in Ranchi so Bose from his early childhood was a frequent visitor to Ranchi from Patna where his father was a civil surgeon. Later his parents moved to Ranchi where his father was a civil surgeon. They had their house at the heart of Ranchi which is now the Gujrathi hotel after changing many hands. Bose’s father and Sarat Chandra Roy, the eminent anthropologist were friends as they were staying at Ranchi and their houses were not far off being near the main road, so Nirmal Bose had an intimate acquaintance with the family of S.C Roy right from his boyhood days (Bhattacharya:2002:19). So Roy’s influence on Bose was ineluctable.

He later on developed a towering influence on Bose. Bose’s idea of the Hinduization of the tribes was not altogether naive. It was the very basis of Bose’s understanding of the tribal transition and the keystone of his caste –tribe nexus. These ideas were corroborated by his fieldworks on the Juangs and the Birhor tribes. It was the plank on which he built upon his masterpiece article, *The Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption*. We will come back to this article a little later. But as we find that S.C Roy’s work have been brimful of the proselytization of the tribes. He provided vivid and enriched accounts of the tribal rituals and showed how the castes have enmeshed with them to form an accommodative yet self-asserting concinnity.

Thus any attempt of comprehension of Bose’s work will remain incomplete without an idea of Roy’s studies. Detailed accounts of Roy’s work will only show great likeness and similitude with Bose’s approach. It is thus evident that Bose absorbed and imbibed the former’s approach in the fullest. As Roy went on to write,
My thanks are due mostly to the people themselves, but more particularly to an exceptionally intelligent Birhor of the name of Budhu of the Andi clan. As the Uthlu or migratory sections of the tribe are always on the move, except during the rainy months when they encamp generally in comparatively inaccessible jungles and hills away from villages and settlements of other castes and tribes, it is only during the rains that one can have an opportunity of studying them, if admitted into their encampments. It was this man who during the rainy months acted as my guide and chaperon to different Uthlu encampments which he ferreted out for me and where I could not have expected a friendly reception but for his introduction and support. In these difficult journeys in some of which we had to walk several miles on foot over hills and through jungles and sometimes had to wade across swollen wetland, rushing hill-streams, Budhu was my constant guide and companion (Roy: 1925: iv-v)

A similar approach was also taken up by Bose when he wrote of his companion Mani, who was his constant companion in Pal Lahara. He was his guide who eventually went on to become his friend. Bose wrote of the dedication and probity with which he introduced Bose to the tribal community. He initiated to acclimatize Bose with the alien culture. He taught Bose the intricacies of the tribal culture and helped him to have a smooth and amiable rapport with the unknown culture. Therefore, Juang culture and rituals were deftly picked up by Bose with a vivacious tribal chief like Mani who introduced him to this tribal clan (Bose: 1949: 17). Sinha also delved upon Bose’s approach of building rapport with the tribal inmates when he said,

Bose had understood that he could not proceed without a proper grip on their language. Conversing in Oriya language will only create gulf with them. To wedge this gap, he requested the tribes to teach him their language, which they gladly obliged him with. The illiterate tribe Mani decided to be his teacher. Mani taught him the language with sincerity and dedication quite unheard of. He invoked the divine powers before starting his lessons. The rituals accompanying the process were rigorous and ponderous. Mani took utmost care to perform them as scrupulously as possible. (Sinha: 1994: 8-9).

This rightly suggests the likeness in their approach where both of them have co-opted a man from the tribal group that he purported to study. This probably was the research strategy that hinged upon to cumulatively escalate rapport with the inmates. This is
necessary to know the intricate details of the tribal life. But this rapport building was not without any purpose. It served to show a human concern about the health and living of the tribes. Not just the morphological studies of the tribes, he circumvented all these to enquire about their living conditions and well-being. So Bose’s work was therefore a kind of humanist study based on snow ball strategy.

Thus we find that S.C Roy must have influenced Bose a lot. The earlier accounts which he had succinctly presented clearly showed the impact of the Hindu castes on the natives. This immensely helped Bose to compose his work on the assimilation of the folk culture into the warp of the mainstream Hindu civilization.

VIII

Thus Bose was seen to don many caps throughout his chequered biography. He was recommended for various posts which he gladly accepted. He was appointed Assistant Professor of Anthropology in Calcutta University in 1938. Eight years later he joined as professor of human geography in the same university. He worked as a dedicated editor of the much esteemed journal, *Man in India* since 1959. He was initiated to deliver lecture at California Chicago University since 1957-58. He was appointed as Director of Anthropological Survey of India in 1959 where he served till 1964. He was invited to join as a member in the enquiry committee formed under Sri Tarlok Singh to probe into the hilly areas of Assam in 1965. In the same year he was invited by the Association of Asian Studies in New York to attend their annual conference. As an expert on Indian social and political change as well as Gandhian political philosophy, he was regularly invited to deliver lectures at the Universities of Columbia, California (Berkeley), Michigan, New York and Harvard. His equally encyclopedic knowledge on Indian society and culture caught the fancy of Asian studies department in the Mexico University where he travelled frequently to present his speech. His equal expertise on the methodology of studying urban sociology also earned him applauds in the Hiroshima University of Japan. For his vivid scholarship on urban studies, Bose was honoured with bronze medals by the university in 1965. After a year he was hailed by the authorities of N.E.F.A to write an article on the problems of educational system in that area.

He was honoured with Sarat Chandra Roy medal for his outstanding contribution in anthropology by the Asiatic society. The medal was named after the eminent
anthropologist and ardent activist Sarat Chandra Roy, whom Bose followed diligently. In 1967 he was appointed Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Tribes. In 1969 Bose was revered as Mahatma Gandhi guest lecturer in Guwahati University. In 1971 he was appointed the President of Banigya Sahitya Parishad. In the subsequent year Bose was appointed as president of Asiatic Society. He was a scholastic man who was revered not only for his erudition but also for his workaholism and empiricism. He did not become indolent even when he had scaled such heights throughout his life, instead he hankered after the true bases of the human civilization and how the individuals can be interrelated with the history and its perpetual change.

**Conclusion**

Bose was a sociologically imaginative man who knew to shift perspectives very well. His writings covered a stupendously wide canvas, viz, the Palaeolithic culture of Mayurbhanj, the material culture of the tribal people, Gandhi’s work and philosophy, nature of social sciences in India and a lot other socially relevant issues. His trajectory would travel across the simple Juang tribe of Orissa to the crisscrossed ramifications of an urban metropolis. He thus showed strong signs of sociological imagination. C.W Mills rightly said,

> The first fruit of this imagination - and the first lesson of the social science that embodies it - is the idea that the individual can understand her own experience and gauge her own fate only by locating herself within her period, that she can know her own chances in life only by becoming aware of those of all individuals in her circumstances. In many ways it is a terrible lesson; in many ways a magnificent one. We do not know the limits of human capacities for supreme effort or willing degradation, for agony or glee, for pleasurable brutality or the sweetness of reason. But in our time we have come to know that the limits of 'human nature' are frighteningly broad. We have come to know that every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives out a biography, and lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of this living, he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove. The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise. To recognize this task and this promise is the mark of the classic social analyst (Mills: 1959).
This is what Bose had tried doing throughout his life. He tried hard to locate the interstices between the individual and society so as to integrate the anomalies that might exist between the two. He tried to connect the individual biographies to the broader historical panorama of which they are a part. In doing so he recognized the distinction of the individual attributes while very diligently tying its knots with the greater collective whole. This is why Bose could travel across the vast horizons of the extensive civilization with élan and aplomb. Bose did this till he breathed his last in 1971. These are the true inklings of a true social scientist which Bose truly was. Such was the chequered life of Nirmal Kumar Bose, which must be now studied in details to look into the nooks and crannies of his life and personae, as well as the socio-political backdrop which moulded him into the crust so colourful yet resolute. Then only we shall be able to appreciate the kind of social understanding that he developed and how it got reflected in the mirror of the social panorama.

**End Notes**

1 Sinha, Surajit Chandra. *Nirmal Kumar Bose: Pragya Paribrajak*. New Delhi: National Book Trust., 1994. Print. This book had been consulted primarily by the researcher for collecting the biographical information of N.K Bose. Since the book was originally published in Bengali, therefore it has been translated by the researcher herself for the purpose of depicting the life history of Bose. Most of the information pertaining to Bose’s biography had been collected from the said book unless otherwise cited in parentheticals and will be presented in translated form by the researcher throughout this chapter.

2 Bose, Nirmal Kumar. *Paribrajaker Diary*. Calcutta: Punascha, 2007. This book was also originally written in Bengali and published in 1960, but later on re-printed in 2007. The current book was accordingly translated into English by the researcher as and when cited.

3 Sinha, Purnima. *Nirmal Kumar Bose*. Calcutta: Paschimbanga Bangla Academy, 2001. This book too was originally published in Bengali and therefore the relevant information had to be translated into English.

This excerpt from *Hindu Samajer Gadan* had been translated by the researcher in her own words.

References


