CHAPTER 7:
INDIAN NATIONALIST RESPONSE TO FASCISM
- POLARITY AND COMPLEMENTARITY
CHAPTER 7: INDIAN NATIONALIST RESPONSE TO FASCISM-POLARITIES AND COMPLEMENTARITIES

The relationship between India and Italy during the inter-war period has been neglected by researchers and historians for many years. The end of the Great War witnessed the emergence of Fascist Italy with military strength. But in the immediate post-war period, the principle of non-violence was the dominating factor behind political activities in India. India was a British colony with no-economic or political freedom, and at the same time there was a period of Great Depression in Italy. The Indian Nationalist leaders had to face tremendous organizational difficulties. Similarly, after attaining independence in 1870, Italy had to confront a number of internal problems. Some eminent persons of the Indian intelligentsia had entered into friendly relations with Italian scholars and Government during the 1920’s and 1930’s. Italian Renaissance, in fact, was pervaded by the literary and artistic ideals of Italian Renaissance. They might have interpreted the rise of Italy under the amazing personality of Mussolini as Italian Renaissance. So the interest in Italy can be explained both in terms of cultural and political factors. To them, it was the personality of Mussolini, which could restore law and order in the country after the devastating First World War. Mussolini encouraged industry and carried out major public projects; and made Italy more prosperous. At the same time, he wished to build a vast empire, and indulged in an aggressive foreign policy and destroyed all political opposition. The eminent personalities in India had intention to study the justification of the anti-fascist propaganda and real state of affairs prevailing there in Italy under Mussolini’s dictatorship. So, this and the culture and tradition in Italy might have
been the factors which prompted them to cultivate relationship with Italy and avail of the opportunity to visit the country.

It is not easy to delineate the theoretical assumption of fascism because it has no consistent philosophy of its own. In fact, the fascist movement has preceded the fascist theory. ‘It has been constructed partly as a justification of the strategy and tactics of the fascist movement, and partly as a repudiation of the principles and policies of its political rivals.’¹ The theory of fascism was built upon the negation of Marxism and rejection of liberal principles. Fascism rejected the theory of Marxism based on class war as harmful for the nation. While Marxists believed in an international brotherhood of workers, the fascists denied it by supporting an aggressive nationalism. On the other hand, Fascism believed in the supremacy of the state over the individual. Individual liberty had no meaning in the fascist state. No political party or political opposition was tolerated by the state. The most common features of fascism were ‘nationalism, often expressed in essentially racist tones as a way of building national unity in the face of class divisions, anti-communism and a hatred and contempt for democracy - even if its institutions had been used to gain power. The latter view was usually linked to a well-developed theme of the need for firm leadership, the appeal being to the strong man who would solve a country’s problems as long as he was given loyal and unquestioning obedience.’² The capitalist system leads to continuous mass unemployment and a lowering of the standard of living, and reduction of profit. As a result, fascism emerged as an effort to save capitalism by instituting a totalitarian dictatorship. The fascist movement was built up


with the co-operation of its private armed forces to establish a totalitarian society. The
traditional value of fascism was national identity, racial purity, social discipline,
authoritarianism and militarism. It was a political reaction of the disenchanted lower
middle and working classes. The newly established regime was seeking legitimacy,
and trying to shape its own ideology. In spite of its repressive measures, fascism in its
initial stage took up the task of national reconstruction in the post-war Italy. The
Fascists were nationalists first and last, but their nationalism was of a narrow and
chauvinistic kind, openly advocating aggressive warfare and imperialist expansion. In
that sense, the response of the Indian nationalists to Fascism and Mussolini assumed
two different forms. On the one hand, there were many personalities of the Indian
nationalist movement who scornfully rejected Fascism and Mussolini and on the other
hand, there were some nationalists who admired Mussolini’s personality, and Italy’s
economic prosperity and discipline under his leadership.

India was a British colony and at the same time Italy had friendly relations
with Britain at least up to 1935. Fascist Italy who opposed to individualism, liberalism
and parliamentary democracy, set to adopt a diverging path from India who adopted
the principle of parliamentary democracy and individual liberty. It is difficult to relate
one who is lover of humanity, ardent advocate of humanism, internationalism and
champion of liberty and equality, to different ideologies of fascism. Mussolini himself
was following the developments taking place in India already since 1924, before his
rise to power. ‘In an article written for Milan’s daily Il Popolo d’Italia, Mussolini
Commented on the Moplah rebellion of 1921, predicting as inevitable, the end of
British rule in India. According to Mussolini, the rebellion was led by Muhammad Ali
and Gandhi and was backed by Bolshevik propaganda. He said that the India
insurgency represent the beginning of a vast upsurge throughout all Asian colony and
that European supremacy on the Asian continent seemed to be on the verge of a collapse.\textsuperscript{3} In order to discover the linkage and relation between Mussolini and India’s nationalist leaders, it is necessary firstly to recapitulate the fundamental features of their political thought and then, explore the linkage and relation between Mussolini and India particularly in the realm of political relation and thought.

\textsuperscript{3} Mario Prayer, \textit{Italian Fascist Regime and Nationalist India 1921-45}, International studies, Vol. 28 (1991), No.1, 249-270 (pp.249-250).
RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND ITALY

Rabindranath Tagore was not a politician in the strictest sense of the term, yet he was devoted to the Indian freedom movement. According to a scholar, ‘The political thought of Tagore is little known, less understood in our country. The chief reason is that Tagore is not a politician in its technical and professional sense, he is a political thinker. As a poet of patriotism, a prophet of nationalism and a lover of humanity, he is widely known. But his political thought has not attracted due attention, because he could not and did not find any particular political school or a political party to seizure of power or for the pooling of national energies in furtherance of an agitation programme…he propagated nationalism in the context of internationalism.’

Rabindra Nath Tagore played a dominant role in the Swadeshi movement that swept through Bengal in the first decade of the twentieth century ‘Rabindra Nath Tagore was drawn to the fold of the revolutionary nationalists early in his life and became a disciple of the great Bengalee revolutionary Rajnarayan Bose. However, he did not take much time in abandoning the career of a revolutionary too, and turned to the Upanishad’s for gathering his life-ideals.’

The poet took active part in politics for a long time though his mind was not confined to particular political doctrine. He kept his mind always open towards on vital issues. He first, participated as a political man in the Hindu Mela, a patriotic gathering held annually at Calcutta in 1867 sponsored by Rajnarayan Bose.

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5 M. N Jha, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, (Meenakshi Prakasan, Ansari Road, Delhi- 6, 1975,) p. 150.
purpose of Hindu Mela was to infuse the sense of patriotism in the people. Tagore
was on the side of the weak against the injustice and exploitation by the strong. He
took up his pen to vent his opinion. He was a poet, philosopher, humanist,
educationist and a religious thinker. He wanted to look upon humanity as something
above all nations. Tagore drew inspiration from eastern as well as western civilization.
He followed the cultural and spiritual tradition of India. He devoted his entire life to
the cause of Indian culture, world culture and the great cause of humanity. ‘His
concept of nationalism was different form the common wave of nationalism.
Nationalism to him did not mean national vanity…. His patriotism meant love for the
country, love for the world and love for humanity…. His nationalism was
internationalism in outlook for he was lover of humanity.’ 6 Tagore wanted to develop
greater self-reliance. He spoke of universal religion and cosmopolitanism. His sense
of nationalism was subdued by his passion for internationalism. Tagore’s political
philosophy rose above regional considerations. He believed in spiritual nationalism
and democracy. He considered political agitation as important for social and cultural
reform. ‘He knew that without political freedom, India cannot play her role as a
spiritual guide and preacher of humanity. He inspired the nationalists and ardent
patriots to sacrifice everything for the honour of their country.’ 7 He played an
important role during the days of Indian struggle for independence. He gave up his
knighthood in protest at the time of the Jallianwala bag massacre. Tagore awakened
the national spirit and thereby wanted to build up a good and egalitarian society.
According to him, ‘If India, pursues political independence to the exclusion of all else,


she may attain a sovereign state, it will be one, however, in which the old social and moral maladies are not purged but magnified. Above all, a narrow quest for political liberty will only obscure India’s real goal, which must always remain that of moral and spiritual freedom for individual in society.\textsuperscript{8}

Tagore is widely known as a poet of patriotism, a prophet of nationalism and a lover of humanity. His political ideals were influenced by the principles of humanism. He wanted to establish universal peace. His message was actually the message of advanced humanity. He conquered the narrowness of regionalism. His anxiety was equal in national and international issues. He wanted political liberation of all the countries of Asia and Africa. ‘The goal of human life, according to Tagore, was to shatter the bonds of his impressed self, to continue the struggle and to offer freedom and be free. This is the base of Tagore’s Universalism.’\textsuperscript{9} Tagore wanted to create a new world. He was a humanist and internationalist. His mission was to reconcile between East and West. He was a great admirer of ancient sages. He selected a tranquil and peaceful place at Shanti Niketan to establish a school which converted into a University under the name of Visva-Bharati. He advocated a national pattern of universal education. He wanted to develop the character of the people. Real education will develop true patriotism and humanism. He wanted to create a heaven of freedom. ‘But he rejected the western form of freedom, which was external and superficial. He wanted all round development of the human personality and the society. He wanted to


\textsuperscript{9} Dr. Sachin Sen, \textit{The Political Thought of Tagore}, (General printers & publishers Ltd. 119, Dharmatala street, cal. 1947), p. 110.
liberate the mind of man from superstition, ignorance, jealousy and hatred. He thought that political freedom could be realized through inner spiritual freedom.\textsuperscript{10}

Tagore wanted to convey his ideas through his poetry, novels and other literary works. He has preached true humanism in his dreams like ‘Abhisar’ ‘Pujarini’ and ‘Chandalika’ etc. The true concept of Tagore’s patriotism can be found in his novel ‘Ghare-Baire’. In this novel, Nikhilesh is the representative of Tagore’s political thought. His concept of Swadeshi Samaj and ideas of village uplift have been expressed through the voice of Nikhilesh. ‘One of the persistent themes in Tagore’s poetry is his longing to return again and again to the shore of humanity, leaving the world of idle imaginings. Moral progress is the record of man’s attempt to live the good life in his day-to-day activities. The ascetic, sitting in his corner, derides this grand self-expression of humanity in action.’\textsuperscript{11} Tagore denounced the ideology of nationalism, which called for man’s instituted loyalty to the state of his birth. According to Tagore, freedom could be what one spiritual consciousness is made of it. Tagore emphasized the need for a spiritual reawakening and self-realization. The use of this highly suggestive word, Sadhana or self-realization is bound up with another fundamental question of freedom. He loved his country in the content of humanity and fought for his country in the pursuit of world peace and universal freedom. According to Tagore, the central subject of the study of Political Science is the study of state. Tagore exalted the society above the state. He wanted to establish a welfare society. He did not believe about the ugliest side of patriotism and nationalism. He wanted restriction of state functions and maximization of individual liberty ‘Emphasis


on supremacy of the state, according to Tagore, led to all calamities in India and this is the main reason of Tagore’s anti-state attitude...He should not be treated as anarchist, rather he is an individualist who believes in maximization of the individual liberty.\textsuperscript{12} Tagore gave superiority to man, not a state. He was concerned with man, not as the citizen of a particular state. Though he did not advocate withering away of the state, he wanted that state should not grapple with the liberty of the individual. He was an individualist. So, Tagore was a humanist, poet of the world, cosmopolitan in outlook, champion of liberty, fraternity, equality, universal peace and internationalism and spiritual nationalism, but totally opposed to aggressive nationalism.

Tagore wanted racial synthesis and cultural co-operation. He wanted a synthesis of eastern spirituality and western thought and culture. He regarded himself as a citizen of the world. He was India’s cultural ambassador to the west. His understanding of western culture was based not merely on the study of western thought and philosophy, but also on his extensive travel in the west. As Tagore was not a philosopher of Political Science, so he could not go deeper into the theory and practice of Fascism. Tagore might have taken the rise of Italy under the amazing personality of Mussolini as Italian resurrection. This, and the culture and tradition of Italy might have been the factors, which prompted the poet to pay a visit to Italy.

To Rabindranath Tagore, Europe was the shrine of humanity, where human mind was fully awake. Though he was against aggressive nationalism but was perhaps one of the most ardent admirers of the Italian culture and Renaissance. As a poet, Tagore was fascinated by her great poets, literature, love of freedom and humanity. But at the same time, he did not altogether forget the contemporary situation of Italy. The

attraction he felt for the country made him wish to come into contact with her people. Tagore’s first visit to Italy dated back to 1878, when he spent a few hours in Brindisi on his way back to England. The beauty of the Italian landscape and the dark eyes of a few Italian girls reminded him of his native land. ‘In the year 1878 when I was a boy, barely seventeen, I was brought over by my brother to these shores….I feel that I was in the arms of this great mother Europe and my heart seemed to feel the warmth of her breast…..There was an Italian girl there, who remained me of our Indian maidness, with eyes dark like bees, which have the power to explore the secret honey cells of love in the lotus of our hearts.’

Tagore next visited to Italy early in 1925. When Kalidas Nag, then studying at Paris under Sylvain Levi, visited Italy in 1921, he met Carlo Formichi, Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Rome. Nag and Formichi were the major architects behind Tagore’s visit through Italy in 1925. Tagore had become a popular figure in Italy immediately after receiving the Nobel Prize in 1913. The poet had been very anxious to fulfill his desire to come to Italy and his health having improved considerably, he sailed from South America by Italian boat Julio Chezer, accompanied by Surendranath Kar, Rathindranath Tagore and his family. The party reached Genoa on 19th January and they were taken to Eden Park Hotel. Prof Carlo Formichi, Dr Poggi and his party reached Milan on 21th January, where the Poet and others were received by Duke Scotti, G. Cagnola and others. And then they went to Hotel Cavour. ‘Next day, a meeting was organized in this hotel and then a local committee established by Scotti, Cagnola, Preda, Byalani, Mondodori, Poggi, Formichi and others- for exchange the students, Pandits and intellectuals between Italy and India, and decided to visit a Italian Professor, contractual for 2 years, to

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Visva-Bharati for learning Italian literature’. In that evening, Tagore delivered his first speech in Italy on ‘The voice of Humanity’ at Circolo Filologico Mianese, Milan. In his speech, he criticized Europeans for their use of science aimed at instruments of destruction rather than developing the human mind. He further condemned diplomacy and the deplorable game of selfish interests among the nations in Europe. He affirmed great faith in humanity that was never extinguished. ‘I have come to your door seeking the voice of humanity, which must sound its solemn challenge and overcome the clamour of the greedy crowd of slave drivers. Perhaps it is already being uttered in whispers behind closed doors, and will grow in volume till it bursts forth in a thundering cry of judgment, and the vulgar shout of brute force is silence in awe.’

Tagore indirectly criticized the Italian government that was not received favorably by Italian Government circles. He received greetings in Teatro del Popolo (Peoples Theatre) at 23rd January and spent some time with the warm wishes of three thousand school children. Tagore was received interestingly by the Italian people and reciprocated their attachment with an appreciation of Italy’s gift to humanity, as expressed in his poem ‘To Italy’:

‘……….I said to the thee: ‘O Queen,

Like many other lovers, who have brought………….

Their gifts to thy feet,

I have come, as a lark at the gate of Dawn,

Only to sing to thee and them to go

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I said to thee: ‘O Queen

My journey has borne rich fruit in thy words of hope

Floated on the breeze of spring the magic of thy call to me,

Will burst in flowers in our far away forest,

I shall see back my path to thy window

On some sunny day, drunken with the fragrance of roses and

humming with bees’ wings………’

Two Italian Orientalists, Prof. Giuseppe Tucci and Prof. Carlo Formichi had come to Visvabharati to learn Italian language and literature, and then fascist dictator of Italy, Mussolini presented many volumes approximately 500 books of Italian classics to Visvabharati as the first step towards the establishment of a regular co-operation with Italian and Indian universities. The evening of 23rd January, Tagore’s drama ‘The Post office’ was organized but he did not join it on account of his illness. In his farewell lecture to Milan, Tagore expressed his desire to come back to Italy if his health permitted him. In this lecture he said. ‘The very few days I have been able to spend here were made so over flowingly full with the generosity of kindness, that they have brought Italy close to me and given me a feeling that I have known her for long.’

16 Ibid. p. 11.

In 1925, Tagore spent a brief period in Italy. Prof Formichi and Tucci were sent to Santiniketan following a special agreement between the Italian Government and Visva-bharati University. Tagore came to believe that his own ideas in the domain of internationalism and cultural exchange were fully understood. Tagore wrote a letter from Santiniketan to Mussolini to thank him for extending his hands of cooperation. On this background, Tagore decided to accept the Italian government’s invitation for a new prolonged visit to Italy. Tagore visited Italy on an invitation from Mussolini. The poet was very much anxious to fulfill his promise to come back to Italy. As his health had improved, Tagore sailed from Bombay on 15th May 1926, by the Italian boat S.S. Aquitya with Joint Secretaries of Visva-Bharati and the ladies of his family. His party reached Naples on the 30th May, and was received by Prof. Carlo Formichi and the chief officials of the city, bearing a message from Benito Mussolini, welcoming him on behalf of the Italian people as the guest of the Italian Government. He and his party were taken to the Grand Hotel by undersecretary of Foreign Affairs and other officials. The next day, Tagore visited some nearby places, and then meets with his Excellency Benito Mussolini at Palazzo Chigi. Mussolini greeted him with the words ‘Allow me to tell you that I am one of those, who have read every one of your books in Italian and I am one of your Italian admirers. He told the poet how happy he felt that he had come to Rome and enquiring about his stay there, insisted that it should be for at least a fortnight. The poet thanked him on behalf of the Visva-Bharati for sending Dr. Tucci to India, and for the generous gift of books for the Santiniketan library which has opened up a channel for cultural communications between India and Italy.¹⁸ He had received from both Mussolini and the people such a welcome as no foreigners before him. On the 8th June, the poet gave a public lecture

on the ‘Meaning of Art’ under the intellectual union Italy. For him, a reception was made by the University of Rome on 10th June, and gave an address where he said, ‘My friends, I bring you the greetings of love of the youthful minds of India. I hope you will accept me as a fit messenger, though old in years, yet being a poet, I am young in heart, and as such claim to represent the youth of India…I hope you will remember me not as a casual visitor, but as a messenger of the ancient East, and as the poet of youthful humanity. I shall be fortunate if I can help to establish a guest house in the heart of young Rome for pilgrims of truth and love who will come in future.’

On that day of 10th June, the poet was present in Rome at the Annual Choral concert of the school children of the capital. When Poet, Mahalanbis and others entered the hall, the audience saluted in Roman style and the poet raising his hands blessed the children with all his heart. On the night of the 13th June, a performance of Bengali Chitrangada was given in Italian in the Argentine Theatre. Tagore was received twice by Mussolini, and once by the king victor Emmanuel. The poet had a meeting with the king lasting nearly one hour. Nobody was present there. He was much touched by the king’s simplicity and told him to achieve a closer relation between India and Italy through Visva-Bharati. On the 13th June, the poet had another interview with Mussolini. Poet told Mussolini that he had a great hope for Italy’s future. The Poet told that ‘as an artist he had been deeply impressed by the personality of Mussolini. An extraordinarily powerful face with a massive head, the lower portion pleasant, very human and even tender, with a kindly smile which makes his speech peculiarly attractive, and reveals the many contradictions in his character.’ On 16th

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20 Ibid. p. 291.
June, a reception was held for the post at the Leonardo da Vinci Society in Florence and he read his lecture on ‘My School’ in the University Hall on the evening of the 17th June. Just from the departure from Italy, Turin was the last journey of the poet and others. A number of artists, aristocrats, writers, philosophers went to meet Tagore at the Excelsior Hotel in Rome as well as in Florence, Turin and other places. Before leaving Rome, Tagore expressed a wish to meet Beneditto Croce, the Italian philosopher who was well known to Indian intellectuals. In the initial period of Fascist regime, Croce had supported the fascist movement, but after few years, had turned into a critic of Mussolini’s regime. Unaware of these circumstances, Tagore conveyed to Mussolini his wish to meet Croce in Rome. Mussolini assured the poet that Croce would be summoned before him. Various topics were discussed during their conversation on the next morning. Croce’s statement contained an indirect hint about the philosopher’s anti-fascism, which however seemed to have escaped Tagore’s mind. ‘Croce’s words may have sounded quite differently in Tagore’s ears, for the previous day Mussolini had also explained to Tagore that the suspension would have only a temporary character. And Tagore’s reply to Mussolini, in which he expressed his hope that the Duce might act as a leading figure in the cultural reapprochment between East and the West, may prove that Tagore’s admiration for Italy as a country where something new is developing in the cultural field did not in fact embrace that very country he had been seeing with his own eyes over the previous two weeks.’

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21 Mario Prayer, ‘In Search of an Entente : India and Italy from the XIX to XX century,’ (Italian Embassy cultural center, New Delhi, 1994), p. 52.
The significant gift of Italian literature from Mussolini for Santiniketan, and Tagore’s visit to Italy as the guest of Italian government in 1926, created a lot of confusion among the progressive and humanitarian circles all over the world about whether Tagore had any sympathy for fascist ideas. They were pained to see how the unsuspected Tagore was being used by fascist regime to establish its legitimacy. Tagore had in fact released a few interviews, stating that he was going to Italy as the guest of Italian government. The Italian consulate in Calcutta expressed surprise at this statement and requested Tagore to correct himself. Tagore’s visit had indeed an official character. This consternation was accentuated by his appreciation of Mussolini’s striking personality. Reports of Tagore’s visit to Italy and his remarks for Mussolini and the fascist state were widely circulated by the Italian press. These careless comments of Tagore were published in the Italian papers in such a way, as if, the appreciation of Mussolini was synonymous with appreciation for the fascist regime. It was Tagore’s ignorance of the Italian language which made it easy for the interpreter to manipulate his words. ‘Perhaps the only major political error of his career was that he was in part deceived, though only for a short time….his rather carelessly expressed wish: ‘Let me dream that from the fire bath the immortal soul of Italy will come out clothed in quenchless light’, was used as the basis of a campaign to show that he was a convert to totalitarian theory and ideas.’

After crossing the Italian border, when Tagore went to see Romain Rolland at Villeneuve in Switzerland, he devoted all his energy to convince him of the fascist dictatorship; and ultimately helped him to shake off poetic emotion and acquainted him about the real working of the fascist government. Romain Rolland, who was a most devoted admirer of

Tagore’s genius, felt deeply disturbed by the reports then being broadcast about the poet’s supposed views about fascism, and spoke to him about the seriousness of the whole situation. At the same time, the poet was acquainted with the translation from Italian papers. In the course of conversation with Romain Rolland on 25th June, 1926, while appreciating Mussolini’s striking personality and achievements of Italy during his dictatorial rule, Tagore said to Rolland, ‘on my arrival in Rome, I met the French Ambassador. He and others all said that Mussolini had saved Italy from utter ruin…Then I saw Mussolini. In certain ways he had a striking appearance and I thought that his personality may have had a direct appeal to the Italian people.’

Tagore does not seem to have given a certificate to Fascist regime, but a tribute to Mussolini whom he saw as a saviour of Italian state and people from utter ruin.

Though Rolland informed Tagore of what Italian dailies had written and repeatedly requested him to publicly re-affirm his condemnation of fascism, but he refused to comply with Rolland’s request, as he was not a politician. It was only after obtaining first-hand information of what fascism was doing, from distinguished Italian exiles did Tagore change his attitude and agreed to make a public statement to clarify his position. Rolland asked Tagore to review the matter and meet eminent anti-fascist Italians like Salvemini, Modigliani and Salvadori in order to find out the real situation. After meeting Mrs. Giacinta Salvadori, wife of a well-known exiled professor and eye witness to several atrocities of fascism, Tagore changed his mind and consented to make a public statement to stigmatize the fascist doctrine. Tagore did not support fascism is expressed in his reply to Signora Salvadori, wife of Prof Salvadori in course of his discussion with the latter. He openly said, ‘I did not support

23 Visva-Bharati Publications, Rolland and Tagore, 1925 (Sept.) p. 91.
fascism, though I did express my admiration of Mussolini as possessing the creation in human history. I was careful to make this distinction. About fascism, the only thing I said was that it had saved Italy from economic ruins… If on the contrary, Italy in the pursuit of her political power and material gain has sacrificed some ideal of humanity she deserves condemnation, not only for her own sake but for the sake of us all.'

Tagore was not aware of the fact that his admiration of personality of Mussolini would be flashed out throughout the world for political gain. After these, he realized his duty to clarify his position. Tagore in his letter to C.F Andrews made his position clear that was published by the *Manchester Guardian* in early August. He wrote, ‘It is absurd to imagine that I could ever support a movement which ruthlessly suppresses freedom of expression, enforces observances that are against individual conscience, and walks through a blood-stained path of violence. I have said it over and again that the aggressive spirit of nationalism and imperialism, religiously cultivated by most of the nations of the west, is a menace to the whole world…The fascist organs are evidently fascinated by the prospect of the economic self-aggrandizement of the nation at the cost of the moral self-respect of the people. But is it not the killing of the goose for the sake of the golden eggs?’

Even Tagore said, ‘My interviews, as published in Italy were the products of three personalities- that of the reporter, the interpreter and mine….The only precaution which I could take was to repeat emphatically to all my listeners that I had no opportunity to study the history and character of fascism. While I wanted to remain neutral I could see that it was difficult. Freedom of expression was repressed in Italy, I never met a single individual in Italy who dared to speak a word against fascism. My tour was officially arranged,

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and I was only taken to places where it was thought it would be safe. Even if I had
freedom I do not think I would have met many individuals who would have been
courageous enough to speak against fascism…. I realized then that it is not enough
that Italy should be prosperous."26

Tagore knows that the co-operation between Italian universities and Visva-Bharati
would then suffer a fatal blow. Prof. Formichi considered this as a declaration of war,
and in a letter to the Poet he compared himself to the epic hero Arjuna. Prof. Tucci,
who was still in Santiniketan, thought it proper for him to leave Tagore’s institution
for good. Tagore was much pained by these developments. ‘Yet, to some extent, the
story of Tagore’s high esteem of Mussolini was true. In 1930, in fact, Tagore wrote a
letter to the Duce, expressing his hope that the friendship between the Italian and
Indian peoples would not be hindered in the least by the misunderstanding between
them of four years earlier.’27 But it is true that in a letter to the Pioneer, a leading
newspaper of U.P., one writer aptly analyzed the meeting between the two men of
contrasting character and personality. In 3.6.1926 he wrote, ‘The meeting between the
great Bengali Poet and Italian Duce at Rome is piquant incident in the international
life today… The Poet Tagore may see much that is admirable in the wonderful work,
which Mussolini has done for his country. The colour of it will fill his artist’s eye.
The dogmatism will appeal to him as a teacher. But he will not fail to see the danger
ahead. How can the present rule dependent on the personality of one man be
eventually consolidated with violent reaction into a real freedom? ………. The
transcendent vision of the Poet-Philosopher may find for Mussolini the bridge, which

26 Nepal Majundar, Bharate Jatiyata, Antarjatiyata o Rabindranath, vol.2, (Days Publishing, Kol-73,

will carry him back safely, and his country to the literary world which the great dictatorship still desires, but to regain.'²⁸ In 1927, in answer to an appeal issued by Henri Barbusse, Tagore gave on this subject a memorable statement. ‘In 1927, the celebrated French writer Henri Burbusse in consultation with Romain Rolland sent a letter to Tagore asking him to sign an Appeal as a token stand against fascism. The Appeal states: ‘Under the name of fascism we see elsewhere, crushed or threatened all the conquests of freedom that had been achieved by centuries of sacrifices and strenuous efforts; freedom of association, freedom of press, freedom of opinion and even conscience itself, all are prosecuted. Gladly signing the Appeal, Tagore said. ‘It is needless to say that your Appeal has my sympathy and I feel certain that it represents the voices of humorous others who are dismayed at the sudden outbursts of violence from the depth of civilization.’²⁹ He was then actually aware of the danger of fascism in the civilization of mankind.

In the post-war Europe, the rise of fascism in Italy under Mussolini brought a new dangerous situation in the history of mankind. The government of Italy wanted to show the visit of Tagore to the world that the renowned Indian Poet was a good friend of fascism. So, the government wants to manipulate his addresses. Tagore was not a politician. It is possible that he was not fully aware of the political significance of his visit to Italy. Tagore never met a single individual in Italy who dared to speak a word against fascism. But on learning the facts, he publicly withdrew what he had said, and latter talked against the movement of Fascism. ‘The Fascist rape of China, Abyssinia, Spain and Czechoslovakia roused his towering rage. In 1936, he sent a memorable

message to the world conference of peace, which had been called by Romain Rolland and Henri Burbusse. In 1937 he wrote a magnificent invocation to ‘Africa’:

‘With man-traps stole upon you those hunters

Whose fierceness was keener than the fangs of your wolves,

Whose pride was blinder than your lightless forests.’

Tagore realized that freedom of expression and other freedom were repressed in Italy under fascist regime. Between the two world wars his voice was raised very high against fascism. ‘An Indian Committee of League Against Fascism and war was set up in Calcutta in 1937 with Rabindranath Tagore as President with many distinguished personalities of Indians as office-bearers and committee members…Yogi Noguchi, the Japanese Poet sent two letters in 1938 to Tagore criticizing him for his forthright condemnation of Japan’s war against China. Tagore’s replies to Noguchi have become historical documents of the anti-fascist traditions of India. He wrote: You seem to agree with me in your condemnation of the massacre of Ethiopia by Fascist Italy but you would reserve the murderous attack on Chinese millions for judgments under a different category.’

So, with the above discussion, we must conclude here that Tagore did not support Fascism, but admired of Mussolini’s striking personality. Admiration of Mussolini’s personality if politically interpreted as fascist admiration, the poet is not to be criticized for this. Tagore appreciated Mussolini’s personality more from the point of view of an artist, than a supporter of Fascism.

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AURbindo’s Political Philosophy and Fascism

Aurobindo Ghosh was one of the major figures in the history of the Indian national movement. He thought not only of political freedom for India, but also of moral and spiritual reawakening of Indians. He was one of the makers of the Indian nation. He was the first to give the inspiring ideology of complete independence for India. Aurobindo grow up in an European atmosphere. Though at the age of seven, he was sent to England and after a long gap of fourteen years, he returned to India, it was in England that his desire to serve his motherland, become explicit. Throughout his sojourn abroad, he was associated with the Indian Majlis, a student association and also joined a secret society called the ‘Lotus and Dagger’ that gave him ample opportunity to foster his patriotism. On the platform of these organizations, he is reported to have delivered fiery speeches denouncing British imperialism. Unfortunately the minutes of these meetings were not recorded as testified by Karan Singh, Aurobindo’s biographer. Returning to India, he joined the Baroda state service and later on became the Principal of Baroda College. While in Baroda, he was attracted to the study of Indian language, culture and history. In 1905 to 1910 Aurobindo pursed a political career as a leader in the National movement in Bengal. It was a bold stroke of vision on his part to have championed the cause of absolute democratic Swaraj for India during this phase. He believed in successful use of Swadeshi, Boycott and Passive Resistance as effective methods to fight against repressive British imperialism. According to Aurobindo, ‘Organised resistance to an existing form of government may be undertaken either for the vindication of national liberty, or in order to substitute one form of government for another, or to remove particular objectionable features in the existing system without any entire or radical
alteration of the whole, or simply for the redress of particular grievances.’

Aurobindo was the exponent of the cult of revolution. He was closely associated with the revolutionary movement in Bengal. He was arrested in connection with the discovery of a bomb factory in Maniktala, Known as the ‘Alipore Bomb Conspiracy case’ (1908), but was acquitted. Aurobindo edited two dailies - ‘Bande Matram’ and ‘Jugantar’. But all of a sudden in 1910, he decided to retire from politics, and go to Pondicherry to spend the rest of life in spiritual pursuits.

As a nationalist leader and the prophet of the Bengal swadishi movement, Aurobindo stood for an inspired and exalted patriotism. He believed that Swadeshi movement was not only merely an economic and political movement; it was an intensely spiritual movement. He believed in spiritual nationalism. In the context of modern Indian political thought, the great contribution of Aurobindo has been his theory of a purified and exalted nationalism. He never interpreted nationalism as a narrow creed. His main contribution was the creation of a climate of revolutionary nationalism. As a political visionary, his dream was the resurgence and liberation of the people of Asia. Aurobindo felt that India had a spiritual message to deliver.

‘………..nationalism, according to Aurobindo, was not a political ideology but Dharma, a way of life which brings about a moral resurgence of the people of India.’

Aurobindo believed that political success cannot be achieved without the incorporation of spiritual and moral values in life. Tapasya, Brahmacharya are essential not only for the salvation of the soul but are also vital for the achievement of success in political struggle. Aurobindo believed that God was behind the national


movement. ‘He became conscious of his peculiar and extraordinary ambitious in life described as his three insanities. The first consisted of his faith that all things belonged to God; and therefore, man had no right to work for his own personal ends. The second consisted of his determination to see God face to face. For this personal perfection through yoga became essential. The third madness consisted of his love for motherland. He thought that if he could not do anything for the elevation of his brethren in the country, he could do nothing for the rest of humanity.’

According to Aurobindo, nationalism is not merely a political programme. It is a religion through which we strive to recognize the presence of God in the nation and in our countrymen. The spirit of India awoke first in the field of religion, and then it entered in by the broad doorway into politics. ‘Exponents of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy have pointed out that his aim is to combine the western and eastern theories of evolution. The former, it is contended, are intellectual and cosmic in outlook; but their standpoint is not spiritual. The latter and the Indian theories, in particular, are essentially spiritual; but they are individualistic, and lack the cosmic outlook. ………The fact remains that in his theory of evolution, the biological emphasis on western evolutionary theories is supplemented by a fundamentally spiritual interpretation.’

His philosophy of history and culture, and his concepts of nationalism, freedom and spiritualized collectivism represent the synthesis of eastern and western concepts. He preached human unity and believed that without the divine remaking of human nature, our civilization is doomed. ‘Besides being a prophet of full independence for India, he also simultaneously accepts the realization of the gospel of human unity as an

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imperative political necessity for mankind. His view that at certain stage nationalism has to be transcended by a religion of humanity is very significant at the present hour.¹⁵

In order to achieve national independence, Aurobindo preferred armed revolution. ‘Aurobindo’s main contribution however was the creation of a climate of revolutionary nationalism. Sri Aurobindo’s dream as a Political Scientist was for the resurgence and liberation of the people of Asia, and her return to her great role in the progress of human civilization. Sri Aurobindo suggested that every means was admissible including violence since the British marauders were in India as the result of forceful conquest. Sri Aurobindo felt that India had a spiritual message to deliver. Hence political freedom is the only desideratum. Aurobindo was engaged in active politics for six years. But even then he created a landmark and he achieved political sagacity and recognition.’⁶ India’s freedom is necessary for the fulfillment of India’s world mission. Aurobindo felt that it was futile to emerge as a nation or to win political freedom, if India was to remain enslaved at heart by a purely materialistic end. Aurobindo’s concept of nationalism is not a narrow concept. It is one kind of internationalism. All the nations should be free. Through nationalism, we are to achieve human unity and universal liberation. He was a true internationalist in the sense that he wanted a type of world federation with retention of national identities. ‘The ultimate result must be the formation of a world-state and the most desirable form of it would be a federation of free nationalities in which all subjection or forced inequality and subordination of one to another would have disappeared and, though

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some might preserve a great natural influence, all would have an equal status. A confederacy would give the greatest freedom to the nations constituting the world-state.\textsuperscript{7} He emphasized that the world-state would be based on spiritual religion of humanity.

Aurobindo was hostile to the modern or western political and economic formulas. According to him, parliamentary form of democracy is not necessarily suited to India. Anybody who comes to parliament with majority votes should not be a minister; only capable men should be given ministership. Kingship is best suited to India. An ideal government for India may be ‘one Rashtrapati at the top with considerable powers so as to secure a continuity of policy and an assembly representative of the nation. The provinces will contribute to a Federation, united at the top, leaving ample scope to local bodies to make laws according to their local problems. Mussolini started with a fundamental of the Indian system but afterwards began bullying and bluffing other nations for the sake of imperialism. If he had persisted in his original idea, he would have been a great creator.\textsuperscript{8}

Aurobindo admitted that art and music are the passion of Italians even under Mussolini’s regimes. Unlike other dictators, Mussolini had a good relationship with religion. ‘Mussolini did not crush religion in Italy though Kamal and Stalin did. Mussolini, on the contrary, has given more power to the Pope in the Vatican. He has practically recognized the Roman Church as the state religion.’\textsuperscript{9} But Aurobindo could not hesitate to criticize fascism under Mussolini. There is no difference between

\textsuperscript{7} Nirodharan, \textit{Twelve years with Aurobindo}, (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1972), p. 333.


\textsuperscript{9} Ibid. p. 658.
democracy and dictatorship. He felt that in every democratic and authoritarian country, individual liberty has been annihilated. However, he had foreseen that socialism too would take away all freedom of the individual. Aurobindo could not see any difference between Communism and Nazism; and felt that communism was not better than Fascism or Nazism. In his own words, ‘The Nazis call themselves National Socialist while the others are mere socialist; in communism it is a proletarian Government and there are no separate classes. The Nazis have kept the classes, only they are all bound to the state, everything is under state control just as communism…

**Disciple:** But communism began with a high ideal and it must be better than Fascism or Nazism?

**Sri Aurobindo:** In which way better? Formely people were unconscious slaves, now under communism they are conscious slaves. In the former regime, they could resort to a strike when they were dissatisfied, now they can’t. The main question is whether the people have freedom or not. But they are bound to the state, the dictator and the party. They can’t even choose the dictator. And whoever differs from them is mercilessly suppressed. You know the way they are doing it.\(^\text{10}\)

Aurobindo wanted to liberate the spirit of man from all bondage. All types of external freedom are dependent on political freedom, and political freedom can be realized through inner spiritual freedom. Nationalism is not the last category of Aurobindo’s political philosophy. He has been one of the prophets of human unity. He wanted to abolish all political and geographical boundaries. He dreams of an inner oneness of all human beings. Lastly, we can say that, Aurobindo stands as a great intellectual and spiritual force asserting the creation of a phenomenology of political values.

\(^{10}\) Ibid. *p. 201.*
Amongst the leading personalities of the Indian freedom movement, M. N. Roy was undoubtedly the most colorful and the most controversial. Narendranath Bhattacharya was popularly known as Manabendra Nath Roy. Roy’s life and ideas fall in three principal phases. In the first phase, he was a revolutionary nationalist. In the second phase, he was an active Marxist but not an orthodox one. In the third phase, he went beyond Communism, and developed his own philosophy of Radical Humanism. M. N. Roy in his early life, joined a group of anti-British youths. He was involved in political dacoity and a number of conspiracy cases from 1907 onward. He was a leading member of Anushilan Samiti and worked in close co-operation with the Yugantar group. He first left India in 1914 and went to Bolivia to establish contact with German emissaries to collect a cache of arms and money. This mission was unsuccessful. Latter, he traveled on a similar mission via Japan and China, and he reached San Francisco in 1916. He was arrested soon after USA joined the war, but escaped to Mexico in 1917. The Mexican concept of revolution attracted his attention. In his book ‘India’s Past, Present and Future’, Roy made his first attempt to apply Marxism to the study of Indian history. The ongoing Mexican social revolutionary movement gave Roy his first experience of the socialist Party of Mexico met in 1918, and Roy was elected its first General Secretary. As the General Secretary of the Mexican Socialist Party, Roy came in contact with Michael Borodin, who was sent to Mexico as the first emissary of the newly founded Communist International in 1919. Roy’s exploits in Mexico soon drew the attention of Lenin who invited him to attend the Second World Congress of the Communist International. The attraction of going to Russia, the land of Socialist revolution forced him to leave Mexico. His experience
in the USA, Mexico and Germany revolutionized his ideas about revolution. The Second World Congress met in Moscow in 1920. This Congress set out to formulate a policy on what was known as ‘National and Colonial Question’. Roy attended this Congress as an Indian delegate, where he opposed Lenin’s thesis. ‘Lenin advanced the thesis that the masses should obtain the co-operation of the bourgeoisie to over throw their imperialistic yoke. Its implication was that the bourgeoisie would play a progressive role in colonial revolutions. Roy, on the other hand, in this thesis, anticipated that the relationship of the mother country to its colony would change eventually from one of imperialist tyranny to one of mutual co-operation, because the national bourgeoisie may compromise with imperialism in return for some political and economic concessions to their class. Hence, according to Roy, the bourgeoisie would not play a progressive role. He, therefore, wanted colonial Communist parties to lead the proletariat, peasantry and petty bourgeoisie against both foreign and domestic capitalism.’¹ Later, Roy’s thesis modified by Lenin, was adopted as a supplementary thesis. His organizational ability soon won for him almost all the important positions in the Communism International and he was put in charge of organizing Communist movements in the China Debacle of 1927, where he was sent to collaborate with Borodin with the Comintern thesis or China situation that led finally to his break with the new regime of Stalin. He disagreed with the entire ultra-left policy or the extremist policy of red purism of Sixth World Congress (1928) that led to his expulsion from the Comintern in 1929. After that he returned to India but was arrested and sentenced to six years imprisonment. After his release, Roy tried to work from within the National Congress.

Although Roy never subscribed to the Congress ideology, but the Congress being the vanguard of a mass movement, he continued to work inside the Congress, though in his own way, till the beginning of the Second World War. It was on the issue of war that differences arose between Roy and his followers, on the one hand, and the Indian nationalist and orthodox Communists on the other. Roy held that India being a part of the world was inextricably involved in an anti-fascist war prevailing all over the world. He regarded the war as neither an imperialist war nor just a war between nations. For him, ‘It was a cataclysmic upheaval marking a historical turning point; it was an international civil war. The real enemy, therefore, was not a state but a rampant ideology - Fascism.’² It was not a war between democracy and fascism. Rather it was an ideological war. It was a war against fascism. His political ideas were largely influenced by the development of European politics. The inter-war period was characterized by Roy as a period of a conflict between socialism and capitalism. All capitalist powers, fascist as well as the so-called democratic powers, were according to him, united among themselves for a war against Soviet Union. He believed that the Congress opposite to the war and the Quit India movement was not based on principle but was against the eventuality of an Axis victory. M.N. Roy did not like the western type of parliamentary democracy. There were no differences between Fascism and western democracy. In the system of parliamentary democracy, political freedom of individuals is lost. Even Western Democracy and Fascism were considered by Roy as manifestations of the same phenomenon in two different periods of history. Like an orthodox Marxist, he believed that parliamentary democracy was the political expression of the same economic system in its period of decline. He described

Fascism as the administration of the capitalist society in the period of decay.

Describing Fascism and Western Democracy as the twins of capitalism, Roy wrote: ‘The creator of parliamentary democracy was also the promoter of Fascism in a latter period of history. Fascism was created to replace parliamentary democracy when this no longer served the purpose of the creator. The creator was capitalism.’

Roy actually believed that democratic countries were gradually drifting towards Fascism. He described the process of the transformation of parliamentary democracy to Fascism thus: ‘The relative freedom granted by the parliamentary regime enables the working class to organize and otherwise prepare itself for the struggle to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism. Therefore the abolition of their own achievement became necessary for the bourgeoisie in the struggle for defending their power and privileges. The fascist movement is created to do that dirty job for capitalism.’

In the last years of his life M.N. Roy became an exponent of New Humanism or Radical Humanism ‘Roy’s reaction to world war II, his anti-fascist stand and his premonition that Soviet Russia would be involved, led him to swim against the Quit India movement of August, 1942, and urge that all-freedom-loving people should support the allied cause. Expulsion from the national congress followed. This was the beginning of Roy’s great lonely campaign for rational politics and a greater emphasis on a world perspective, which led him ultimately to New Humanism.’

New Humanism is radical in the sense that it penetrates through all abstractions to reach the

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root of society- the individual human being. It is humanist in its dedication to those human values which preserve the integrity of the individual - freedom and truth. ‘Fascism is complete total, all round negation and open denunciation of democracy. So, in order to overcome the challenge of dictatorship, democratic principles must be oriented, parliamentary form of government must be replaced by true democracy, that is radical democracy, is expounded by Roy.’\(^6\) Freedom, reason and morality are the three salient features of New Humanism. Roy discarded religion, but he accepted the spiritual aspect. He believed in cosmo-patriotism and universal benevolism. ‘New Humanism is cosmopolitan in its outlook. Nationalism is not the final stage in this social philosophy. Nationalism is based on racial animosity and is reactionary to the extent that it seeks to neglect social questions.’\(^7\) A confraternity of morally and spiritually liberated individuals is the fundamental requirement for the realization of a better society and free world. New Humanism is pledged to the ideal of a commonwealth and fraternity of free man. He wrote: ‘New Humanism is cosmopolitan. A cosmopolitan commonwealth of spiritually free men would be limited by the boundaries of national states - capitalist, fascist, socialist, communist, or of any other kind, which will gradually disappear under the impact of the twentieth century renaissance of man.’\(^8\) M.N. Roy thinks that man should be entirely and completely free from the bondages like dogmas, religious beliefs, fatalistic fears and superstitions. It gives much importance to rational and scientific thought and secular outlook. ‘Roy accepted that the vital prerequisite for a political and social

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reconstruction was an intellectual renaissance of man and the imbibing of the fundamental essence of the philosophy of New Integral Humanism. The potentiality of freedom is latent in man. The realization of freedom depends upon the awareness by man of his creative powers. Man can attain spiritual freedom by removing all shackles of traditional ecclesiasticism and unfounded supernaturalism. Only spiritually emancipated individuals can create a free society.'

New Humanism inculcates the primacy of values. It enunciates the supremacy of the eternal urge of freedom and offers a concrete programme for the construction of new political and economic order.

Roy observes that the idea of national sovereignty is the logical consequence of the idea of nation state. He was against cultural nationalism because it shuts the society into a shell and makes it not only narrow but also aggressive. It eventually leads to militarism and fundamentalism. Roy advocates a decentralized political and economic structure and powerful autonomous local people’s committees in order to safeguard individual freedom. M.N Roy was a champion of individual freedom and a true democrat. Roy was the first virulent critic of Fascism in India and wrote books on Fascism - ‘Freedom or Fascism’ (1942) and ‘Fascism: Its philosophy, professions and Practice (1976). According to Roy, ‘The rise of Fascism is not a sign of strength but rather weakness of the bourgeoisie, which can no longer rely upon the army and the middle class state officials. The workers are faced with only one alternative; either continued impoverishment amidst capitalist chaos, or through the chaos of


9 V. P. Varma, Modern Indian Political Thought, (Laxmi Narain Agarwal, Educational Publisher, Agra-1, 1978), p. 509.
revolutionary struggle to the glorious goal of socialism.’¹⁰ Even Roy equated the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress with fascism, and he pleaded with the British government in India to oppose this Indian fascism. ‘The philosophy of Gandhi is based upon a spiritual view of life and that led Roy to equate it with Fascism… Roy referred to genealogical kinship between Gandhism and Fascism, both being offspring’s of the spiritual view of life. Both are inspired by the revivalist ideal and deny to progressive significance of modern civilization. Roy made a clear distinction between revolutionary nationalism and revivalist nationalism in India, and maintained that former was revolutionary and the latter was reactionary. Revolutionary nationalism, which seeks to overthrow foreign imperialism as the essential precondition of further social progress… But revivalist nationalism would lead the country to Fascism became; Fascism was described by Roy as nationalism inspired by the revivalist ideal. The ideal of class collaboration was another feature common both to Gandhism and Fascism.’¹¹ Lastly, we can told that he tried to bring to a focus for the elements of rationalistic view, humanistic ethos and a passionate quest for freedom and rejected Fascism in his life.


Subhas Chandra Bose was a prominent political leader of the Indian national movement. His whole life was a saga of heroic fight for national freedom. His political views were in support of complete freedom for India. He was an ardent nationalist. The nationalist thought of Swami Vivekananda and his emphasis on social service and reform inspired Bose from his early life. He was influenced by his own parents; Beni Madhab Das, Headmaster, Revenshaw collegiate School; teaching of Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, Aurobindo Ghosh, C.R Das, Lenin, Kamal Pasha, Joseph Mazzini, Cavour and Garibaldi of Italy; and the impact of freedom movements in other countries such as American war of Independence, Italian struggle for liberation, Irish struggle for freedom etc. In this background, his social and political views were formulated with the objective of emancipation of India from British rule and reconstruction of free India.

A major important event in S.C. Bose’s late adolescence which exalted him to eminence in Bengal, took place at Presidency College in 1916. A number of students of the College beat Prof E.F Oaten who had allegedly insulted India. Subhas Chandra openly admitted his participation in this affair. After this incident, it was decided that Bose was to be expelled from the college. Two years latter, he was permitted to join Scootish Church College and graduated with First class Honours in Philosophy and then decided to take his family’s offer to go to England and prepare for the I.C.S. Examination. He successfully completed in the I. C. S. in 1920 obtaining fourth position, but resigned from the I. C. S. to join the national movement. He decided to join the Non-cooperation movement but Gandhi’s sudden decision of withdrawal of
the movement, left him dejected. In 1923, he supported the proposal of his political mentor C. R. Das to carry on the struggle against British within the legislature. After some time, S. C. Bose did take some part in the administration of Calcutta. When C. R. Das became the Mayor of Calcutta, Subhas Chandra was appointed its chief Executive Officer and later Calcutta Mayor. His association with C. R. Das continued till the death of the latter in 1925. S. C. Bose was elected President of the Indian National Congress for two consecutive terms, but had to resign from the post following ideological conflicts with M. K. Gandhi. He believed that Gandhi’s tactics of non-violence would never be sufficient to secure India’s independence, and advocated violent resistance. ‘The only All-India Congress party rival and ideologist who ever seriously challenged Mahatma Gandhi’s leadership.’

Then he established a separate political party, the All India Forward Bloc (1939), and continued to call for the full independence of India from British rule. His radical political ideology was shaped by a consuming frustration with the unsuccessful efforts of others to gain independence for India. He stood for militant nationalism, which was completely opposed to Gandhi’s passive resistance. He was not only for national freedom, but for world freedom. His struggle was against imperialism across the world. With the outbreak of World War II, he saw it as an opportunity to take advantage of British weakness. Bose escaped from India in 1941, traveling to the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany and Japan, seeking an alliance with each of them to attack the British forces in India. With the Japanese assistance, he re-organized and led INA, formed with Indian prisoners of war from British Malaya, Singapore and other parts of Southeast Asia. With Japanese monetary, political, diplomatic assistance, he formed the Azad

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Hind Government in exile and led the INA in failed military campaigns against the allies at, Imphal and in Burma. Netaji moved from one battle field to another. The soldiers showed extra-ordinary fighting spirit and courage. But fate was not favorable. The Allied forces were gaining ground. American bombers raided Japanese towns; Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Meanwhile the British army marched towards the North eastern areas and gained control over Kohima. There was no way out for soldiers of I.N.A but to surrender to the British army.

Subhas Chandra Bose was not a political philosopher. His strength lay in important political activities. He had some independent ideas with regards to the Indian political freedom. His whole struggle was for freedom. National freedom was first priority to him but he was not satisfied with national freedom alone. He hoped for an all-round or total freedom for the Indian people - social, economic political and personal including freedom of the soul. According to him, freedom means liberty, equality and justice to all. In his Presidential Address at the Students Conference held at Lahore in Oct. 1929, he expounded his concept of freedom which he wanted for India: ‘By freedom I mean all-round freedom i.e., freedom for the individual as well as for society, freedom for the rich as well as for the poor, freedom for all individuals and for all classes. This freedom implies not only emancipation from political bondage but also equal distribution of wealth, abolition of caste barriers and social inequalities and destruction of communalism and religions intolerance.’ He was a leftist among the member of Indian National Congress. He was a true Socialist. In the early twenties, he became the founder President of the All Bengal Youth League.

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whose programme announced, ‘Complete independence of India, community of interests with labours and peasants, amelioration of economic condition of the masses, reduction of working hours, a minimum scale of wages, medical leave with full pay, old age pension, compensation for infirmity or serious accidents etc.’ In politics Bose was a realist. He thought that political freedom was not enough. He also wanted economic and social freedom. There should not be any disparity between rich and poor. He wanted to create a united India. Subhas Chandra had two missions in life. The first was for political freedom of the country; and second was the reconstruction of the nation on the lines of socialism. In his presidential address at the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference, Ramgarh (Bihar) on 19th March, Bose said ‘Our main task in the age is to end imperialism and with national independence for the Indian people when freedom comes, the age of national reconstruction will commence and that will be the socialist phase of our movement.’ He saw Socialism in terms of justice, equality, freedom, discipline and love. His socialistic ideas were developed fully in his Presidential Address at the 51st session of the congress at Haripura, 19th Feb 1938. He gave a call to solve the national problems as socialistic lines: ‘I have no doubt in my mind that our chief national problems relating to the eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease and to scientific production and distribution can be effectively tackled only along socialistic lines.’ Bose was a consistent socialist. His socialism was outcome of his own environment, personal thoughts. He had a spiritual

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bent of mind. ‘Netaji realized that India was not suitable to Russian communism. He believed in spiritual communism or Indian socialism. This socialism would work for the masses and promote all rounds good to the people. There would be socialist methods to remove poverty, ignorance and illiteracy. Netaji wanted to accept democratic socialism.’ So in his free India, Subhas Chandra wanted to create an egalitarian society in which all members would enjoy almost equal economic benefits and social status; and there would not be any distinction between man and man on account of their caste and creed.

**BOSE’S OUTLOOK ON FASCISM**

In his political career, S.C. Bose was a consistent advocate of foreign propaganda. He appreciated the significance of propaganda for a modern state. He wanted to use this as a vehicle of India’s struggle for freedom. He had close contacts with European powers. In 1933, he had gone to Europe in order to restore his health but engaged himself for a study of administrative system of European countries. ‘Bose was acutely conscious of the need to create a cultural bridge between Indian and Europe and cultivated contacts with international cultural organizations like the Oriental Society of Warsaw, the Polish Indian Society, the Indo-Czech Association etc.’ In 1933, the Confederation of Oriental Students ‘opened a permanent office in Rome, where it received material and moral support from the Italian Fascist University Groups. The Confederation started a bilingual bulletin, Young Asia/ Jenne

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Asie. It held a general Conference in Rome in 1933 and in 1934. In 1933, the Federation of Indian students also held its annual meeting in Rome, presided over by Subhas Chandra Bose who was at that time in Italy. The Indian students were received by Mussolini and also by the Pope.\(^8\)

Enemies and critics of Bose accused him as ‘Fascist’, because they suspected his revolutionary activities, anti-communist views, proposed synthesis of communism and fascism, advocacy of militarism, plea for a strong party, his ardent nationalism and patriotism and above all, his alliance with the axis powers - Italy, Germany and Japan. Throughout his political career, Indian independence from British rule remained Bose’s foremost political goal. Bose advocated that the political instability of wartime Britain should be taken advantage of rather than simple waiting for the British to grant independence after the end of the war. He believed that India could achieve political freedom only if it had political, military and diplomatic support from outside. ‘In so far as Italian fascism attracted attention in India in the 1920, broadly speaking, the attraction was derived from three elements. First, it was undermining the world order imposed by the main colonial powers, Britain, France, Holland and America. Asia’s national freedom movements, being suppressed by these colonial powers, shared a common, visceral hatred of these powers and instinctively viewed with favor any power opposing them. This was especially so before Benito Mussolini grabbed parts of Britain’s African colonies and invaded Abyssinia. Second, Italian fascism exalted nationalism. As the new nationalism of the colonies inspired all national liberation movements, especially India’s long-drawn out freedom struggle,

fervent Indian nationalist could emphasize with the stress on Italian nationalism, especially because Italian fascism unlike Germany’s Nazism ten years later was not overtly racist or anti-Semitic. Finally, Italian fascism, in the early years laid heavy stress on order, discipline and a parliamentary youth movement - all of which were of paramount interest to a country like India.\textsuperscript{9} According to Netaji, in international field, India would need to take everyone’s help. The central theme or diplomatic line in Netaji’s struggle was that whoever was opposed to British imperialism was a potential friend of India. So, India can develop ties with countries of any ideological leaning in order to win independence. That’s why Netaji differentiated between internal policy and foreign policy. His radical political ideology was shaped by a consuming frustration with the unsuccessful efforts of others to gain independence for India. During his stay in Europe from 1933 to 1936, Subhas Chandra Bose met several European leaders including Benito Mussolini. Subhas Chandra was received twice by Mussolini in 1934. ‘From the testimony of Lother Frank, to whom Bose gave details of his conversation with Mussolini, it is known that Mussolini had said to Bose that if he preferred revolutionary methods to reformist ones, there was a chance to achieve India’s independence.’\textsuperscript{10} Netaji did not hesitate to acknowledge Mussolini’s strength, efficiency and strong personality. He acquainted himself with the programmes of the Fascist Party and realized that this party was engaged in the task of building a new nation and to train citizens suitably for the state.

Bose was impressed with the discipline and organizational strength of Fascism as early as 1930’s when he first expressed his views for a synthesis of Fascism and


\textsuperscript{10} Dr. Sumit Mukerji, \textit{Op.cit. p. 149.}
Socialism in his inaugural speech as mayor of Calcutta. The words he used were words of caution through these were to cause misunderstanding later. ‘I would say that we have in this policy and programme a synthesis of what modern Europe calls socialism and Fascism…. We have here the justice, the equality, the love, which is the basis of socialism, and combined with that we have the efficiency, and the discipline of Fascism as it stands in Europe today.’\(^1\) After observing the regimes of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, Subhas Chandra Bose developed a political ideology of his own that could bring about the liberation of India, and the total reconstruction of Indian society along authoritarian- socialist lines as named by him ‘Samyavad’- a synthesis of justice and equality of socialism, and efficiency and discipline of Fascism. He ‘believed in leader- principle, organization of youth, military discipline, changing the standard of living of the workers and peasants to a high level, one party state and most of other doctrines of ‘Samyavadi Sangh.’ It was thus a synthesis of socialism and Fascism, which was what Bose wanted?’\(^2\) The synthesis, which he regarded as ‘Samyavada’, he felt, India should make efforts to consummate. In the chapter entitled ‘A Glimpse of the Future’ in his book, ‘The Indian Struggle’, Bose wrote: ‘In spite of the anti- thesis between communism and Fascism there are certain traits common to both. Both Communism and Fascism believe in the supremacy of the state over the individual. Both denounce parliamentary democracy. Both believe in party and rule. Both believe in dictatorship of the party and in the ruthless suppression of all dissenting minorities. Both believe in a planned industrial reorganization of the country. These common traits will form the basis of the new synthesis. His synthesis

\(^1\) Sisir Kr & Sugata Bose (ed.); *Netaji collected works’ Vol. 6*, (Netaji Research Bureau, Netaji Bhawan, cal-20, India 1987), p. 128.

is called by the writer Samyavada - a Hindi word, which means literally the doctrine of synthesis or equality. It will be India’s task to work out this synthesis. According to Bose, only a very strong government, strict discipline and dictatorial rule would prevent the chaos and anarchy after independence. He said in his speech at the Rajshahi Student’s Conference in 1929 entitled ‘On the Need for Discipline’, ‘In other countries, the Government itself undertake to impart military training to the people but here in India, obviously, we ourselves have to do it.’ Subhas Chandra stressed the need of a strong single party government bound together by military discipline and dictatorial powers for some years in order to put India on her feet. ‘In an editorial for the Forward Bloc, published on March 13, 1940, Bose wrote ‘Germany may be fascist or an imperialist, ruthless or cruel, but one can not help admiring these qualities of hers –how she plans in advance, prepares accordingly, works according to a time table and strikes with lightening speed. And then he asked almost innocently: Could not these qualities be utilized for promoting a noble cause?’

Though Subhas Chandra Bose’s philosophy was not the same as Fascism, but there has den a consistent attempt in India as well as abroad to paint him as a Fascist. ‘The main charge of Bose being a fascist was because of his alliance with the Axis powers like Italy, Germany and Japan, during the second world war and his admiration for dictators like Hitler, Mussolini, Kamal Pasha, Lenin Stalin and others.’ Netaji thought it was necessary to critically observe Fascism and explore its positive aspects. But he never advocated the full acceptance of Fascism. ‘His political

views and the alliance he made with Nazi and other militarist regimes at war with Britain have been the cause of arguments among historians and politicians, with some accusing him of Fascist sympathies, while others in India have been more sympathetic towards the real-politik that guided his social and political choice.¹⁷ Netaji’s opponents forget that accepting Mussolini’s importance is not the same thing as accepting his ideology. Similarly, if foreign help works in India’s favor, a friendly relationship should be cultivated. This was the basis of Netaji’s philosophy. Even Netaji himself released a strong statement against his opponents views, ‘In view of the certain statements made in the British press and reproduced thereafter in the Indian press, which may have led to some misunderstanding of my socio-political views, I desire to say that there has been no fundamental change in my position. Since I came to Europe, I maintain more strongly than ever that while it is imperatively necessary that we should study all the modern movements abroad, it is equally necessary for us in India to chalk out the future lines of our progress in conformity with our past history and our present and future requirements… It is necessary for us in India to distinguish once for all clearly between our internal and external policy… In determining our internal policy, it would be a fatal error to say that the choice for India lies between communism and fascism. No standpoint or theory in socio-political affairs can be the last word in human wisdom… My own view has always been that India’s task is to work out synthesis of all that is useful and good in the different movements that we see today… Thus, Netaji himself protested. There was no change in his socio-political views.’¹⁸


¹⁸ http://w w w.subhaschandrabose.org / biography / philosophy 03.html.
If Bose was a Fascist, he would have developed a dictatorial frame of mind and high ambition. He never acted in an undemocratic manner neither did he claim powers or responsibility to which he was not constitutionally entitled nor did he attempt in any way to foster a personality cult of his own. He never sanctioned imperialistic expansion. He was critical of the Italian policy of imperialism. He was orientationally democrat and a nationalist, and believed in resorting to violent techniques for the liberation of the country. Hence, it is clear that Subhas Chandra Bose did not want development of a fascist state in independent India, though he wanted to imbibe some of its positive features in the initial years after independence for India’s development.
M. K. Gandhi was not a system builder in an academic sense. He was not a political philosopher. Without going into disputes, it can be stated that he was not committed to any school of thought. His views were the outcome of responses to particular situations. He had revised his opinion from time to time though his conceptual framework remained the same. He was not a systematic academic thinker in the field of political philosophy, but an inspired teacher and prophet. He was essentially a religious minded man who entered politics because of his great concern for his fellow human beings. He was a humanist and a man of action. But it would be a mistake to underestimate the intellectual sinews of his thought, not only in the sphere of ethics and religion, but also in the socio-economic and political field. Gandhi’s political thought stems from different traditions, Eastern and Western. He had picked up many traditional concepts from his immediate predecessors as well as from ancient texts. Gita was the main source of inspiration for him. He was also influenced by Patanjali’s ‘Yoga Sutra’; the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. From Upanishad’s, he derived the inspiration for his faith in non-possession. He read the New Testament of the Bible and was also influenced by the teachings of Lao Tse and Confucius. Apart from religious literature, some western thinkers like Thoreau, Ruskin, Emerson and Tolstoy also influenced the moral and political philosophy of Gandhi. In fact, Gandhian thought has been influenced more by these thinkers rather than by Indian saints and philosophers. From Thoreau, he got much of his inspiration for civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes. Through his works ‘Unto this last’ and ‘Crown of Wild Olives,’ Ruskin instilled in Mahatma Gandhi respect for manual
labour which lesson he practiced until the end of his death. Emerson gave him the idea of self-rule and Tolstoy’s masterpiece, ‘The Kingdom of God is within You’, inspired him to think in terms of philosophical anarchism. Tolstoy’s ideal of no-possession was developed by Gandhi in his concept of Trusteeship. He was also influenced by the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. His political guru Gokhale and Dadabhai Naoroji also influenced him. Though he was not a system builder, he was a profound thinker, truth-seeker and truth-speaker. When we find that his theoretical formulations and practical pursuits are identical, we have every reason to accept him as a philosopher in the Indian sense.

Mahatma Gandhi was a combination of a prophet and a politician of the highest caliber. So he had combined within himself aspects of the philosopher and politician. His political career passed through three phases. The first phase of his public life began outside India. In South Africa, he was shocked to see the ill-treatment meted out to the Indian settlers. Colour prejudice, and humiliation by Europeans tormented young Gandhi’s soul and led him to enter politics. He developed the method of civil-disobedience, which he named Satyagraha, and eventually succeeded in his mission to a large extent. The second phase of Gandhi’s political career began in India when he returned to the country. In 1915, he came at the Indian political scenario at a very crucial period of the Indian national movement. The moderate leaders were equally frustrated and leaderless, and needed a new leadership and new programme. He fulfilled that requirement. He offered a practical alternative to the futility of verbal violence. So, he became a favourite of the Indian people within a short span of time. From 1920 to 1947 Gandhi dominated the Indian national movement. He applied his philosophy of action - Satyagraha in Indian politics, which had two major elements - truth and non-violence. The Satyagrahi would refuse to submit to whatever he
considered to be wrong. He experimented with it in Champaran in Bihar and in Ahmedabad and Kheda in Gujarat. ‘These first experiments in Satyagraha brought Gandhi into close touch with the masses, both the peasants in rural areas and the workers in the urban areas. This was one of the great contributions of Gandhiji to the national movement.\footnote{Bipan Chandra, Amalesh Tripathi, Barun De, \textit{Freedom Movement}, (National Book Trust, New Delhi, India, 1972), p. 123.} After the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and the findings of the Hunter Committee, he decided to start the non-violent no-cooperation movement. Under his leadership, the Congress, for the first time, decided to launch a nationwide movement in 1920-22. The Indian national movement acquired real mass base for the first time with participation of peasants, workers, students, lawyers teachers etc. the Khilafat Non-cooperation movement marked the height of Hindu-Muslim unity. The second experiment of direct action in Indian politics was the Civil-disobedience movement. The 11 points ultimatum of Gandhi to Lord Irwin after being ignored by the British government, forced Gandhi to launch the Civil Disobedience movement on 12\textsuperscript{th} March, 1930. On his return to India after the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Round Table conference, Gandhi resumed the Civil Disobedience movement in 1932. This movement had the objective of achieving complete independence. There was wide participation of women. The failure of Cripps Mission, rising prices and wartime shortage of food forced the Congress to take active steps to compel the British for accepting the Indian demand for independence. The All-India Congress Committee passed the famous ‘Quit-India’ resolution in 1942 under the leadership of Gandhi. But before the Congress could start the movement, the government arrested Gandhi and other Congress leaders. All over the country people took to violence and attacked the symbol of British authority. In the end, the government succeeded in crushing the movement.
The third phase of his public life commenced after 1947. He could not remain silent spectator to the drama of barbarism and carnages following India’s partition. Gandhi toured the riot affected areas. In order to restore communal harmony, he made a vibrant appeal for Hindu-Muslim unity. But this infuriated the orthodox Hindu and Muslim community; he was shot dead on 30 January 1948.

Though, not a political philosopher in the ordinary sense of term, but for the welfare of the masses, Mahatma Gandhi pushed himself into politics. It can be said that Gandhi considered politics as an instrument for the uplift of mankind in social, economic, moral and spiritual spheres. To Gandhi, politics itself was his religion. He was opposed to politicizing religion. He was for spiritualizing religion. Ideas do not emerge in a vacuum. The political ideas of Gandhi were rooted in the large socio-economic and political processes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The socio-historical cultural perspective of British India remained a constant reference to Gandhi. Gandhi conceptualized a model that gained currency both as a nationalist strategy for political mobilization and for India’s future. ‘What was unique about Gandhi was his ability- to guide the nation towards a goal, following a model which the Mahatma articulated on the basis of his experience as a practitioner of different kinds of politics.’ Gandhi’s political thinking needs to be studied in association with his work in South Africa, his leadership of the Indian struggle for independence from British rule in general and his relation to the Congress party in particular. Whatever ideational content we may extract out of this long period of his dealings with his countrymen and the ruling power in terms political thought grew out of the situations

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with which he was intimately associated and bears the stamp of his practical experience. He strongly felt that without involving himself in politics, it is not possible to remove socio-economic exploitation and political subjugation. An important contribution of Mahatma Gandhi to politics and political philosophy was his spiritualization of politics. He wanted to assimilate religion in politics. To Gandhi, non-violence was a total philosophy of life. It was his firm conviction that politics should be guided by the highest ethical and spiritual principles. He held that means were just as important as ends. He believed that only right means could lead to right ends. ‘He firmly rejected any dichotomy between ends and means. Relating means to ends is the greatest contribution of Gandhi to political theory.’

Politics can be successfully pursued if we can transform the present state of politics, to Dharma politics. By Dharma, Gandhi meant that it should be removed from corrupting influences of existing interests and sectarianism. Gandhi’s stress on the incorporation of moral values in politics represents great contributions to political thought. ‘As a politician, Gandhi was initially a great believer in the use of Constitutional means……. But when constitutional means failed, a different method was necessary, and this was called Satyagraha or soul force.’

Satyagraha aims at conversion through self-suffering. Satyagraha is the heart and soul of Gandhism. The idea of Satyagraha means the exercise of soul-force against all injustice, oppression and exploitation.

There are different forms of Satyagraha. Such as (a) non-cooperation - mild form and (b) civil-disobedience of the laws of the government - extreme form. Gandhi was a

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4 Donald. H Bishop (Ed), Thinkers of Indian Renaissance, (Wiley Eastern Ltd; 40/8 Ballygung circular Road, 1982), p. 222.
believer in the superiority of the soul. According to the political teachings of Gandhi, Satyagraha is a perpetual law against anything repugnant to the soul.

Satyagraha as a method of conflict resolution was definitely Gandhi’s major contribution to political thought, but there were other issues on which he had a novel approach. His conception of democracy was that special stress be laid on intermediate institutions of a voluntary nature where ordinary man would learn self-confidence in tackling his own problems. ‘Gandhi stressed that non-violence alone could lead to true democracy. Politically, democracy implied scrupulous exactness in dealing with opponents. Economically, it meant that weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest. Democracy and violence could not be reconciled. He wanted India to evolve true Democracy.’

The concept of Swaraj or self-rule contains Gandhi’s ideas on the kind of political economy that he envisaged for free India. He wanted decentralized form of government with the village as the unit and functioning for the benefit of the individual. He wanted Panchayat Raj, and decentralization of authority and power. Above the village Panchayat there was to be a hierarchy of indirectly elected bodies. He wanted the constitution to be based on the Panchayat and the basic assumption of this constitution was that individual could grow spiritually only in decentralized village communities. According to Gandhi, Swaraj means freedom from all kinds of bondage and injustice. The basic features of Swaraj are spiritual democracy, equality, justice and trusteeship. Swaraj for him is part of Truth, which is God. Political freedom or Swaraj could be obtained only by intense suffering and struggle. He believed that Swaraj is the champion of the down-trodden and starving

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people. To Gandhi, moral freedom as emancipation from slavery, national freedom as emancipation from the bondage of alien rulers and spiritual freedom as emancipation and realization of truth were all phases of freedom. Gandhi’s struggle for political freedom of India strove to create an egalitarian society based on love, justice and non-violence. Ideal society should be a non-violent and welfare state. ‘What Gandhi continued to aspire for till the end of his life was not parliamentary democracy but Swaraj, where everything would be self-regulated and the state, though it may not wither away, would govern the least.’

Gandhi used two weapons, truth and non-violence, and fought the battle of truth. He considered the state as an organization of violence and force. Being an apostle of non-violence, he was repelled by the coercive character of the state. He postulated that in the ideal state of Ramrajya, there will be sovereignty of the moral authority of the people and the state as a structure of violence would be extinct. He wanted state to exercise minimum functions, transferring more and more power to voluntary associations. If one wants to find a parallel to Gandhi’s thought in western political philosophy, one finds it in philosophic anarchism. Like anarchists, Gandhi was opposed to the institution of state and government. With the philosophical anarchist, Gandhi believed that the compulsive nature the state robbed individual action of its morality. Gandhi wanted all reform to come from within and not to be imposed by an outside authority.

Gandhi was against the modern industrial system. He asked Indians to return to villages and preserve the values of ancient Indian civilization. He also emphasized the importance of physical or manual work. Gandhi criticized western civilization as

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being entirely in terms of money. He was not against machinery but against indiscriminate multiplication of machinery. Industrialization could raise the standard of living, but he had no desire to raise the standard of the masses beyond a certain level. He wanted India to be a land of self-sufficient villages. The keywords of Gandhian economy are self-sufficiency, decentralized production and equitable distribution. Juxtaposed to capitalism, which emphasizes material value, the Gandhian economy, emphasizes humanitarian and cultural values. He was against all centrist phenomena in society and was the sworn enemy of elitism in every form. He regarded the villages as the center of Indian economic organization. He opposed large-scale nationalization, capitalism, urbanization and craze for labour saving devices.

Gandhism is not a systematic well-worked out political philosophy. In the western sense, Gandhi provided empirical suggestion. But Gandhism is significant for some of its dominant moral, sociological and political insights. It is possible to reconstruct a system of Gandhian political philosophy by developing the suggestions contained in his writings. Gandhi was the architect of India’s freedom and a true nationalist but was interested in what was happening elsewhere in the world. He was equally concerned with the miseries of the downtrodden and exploited people, all over the world. So, he was international in outlook. ‘In the international field, Gandhi was greatest advocate of world peace in modern times. He held that injustice and tyranny exercised by one nation over another were intolerable and must be resisted, since individuals as also groups, could not remain for long under such considerations without revolt. Gandhi wanted this revolt to be open and peaceful… Gandhi does not believe that world peace can be achieved through a policy of balance of power or through the fear of utter destruction induced by the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. He does believe purely in a world organization keeping international
peace.’ In the age of full sickening horror and secrecy, he advocated the gospel of truth and non-violence. He believed that violence interrupted the real revolutionary transformation of the social structure. He thought that peaceful solution of India’s problems was not only possible but was the only way to have a real solution. Gandhism is a philosophy of life. It wants to bring about a transformation in human life by the supremacy of self-suffering love. Gandhi had an invincible faith in the nobility of human nature. The significance of Gandhi’s contribution as a thinker of the Indian Renaissance in this respect reaches beyond the frontiers of his own country and his own time and his life. His message addresses itself to our situation today.

Gandhi’s great contribution to politics in particular, and life in general, was his interpretation of non-violence and its applicability in modern age of incessant wars and bloody conflicts. He had simultaneously to play the role of the leader of the nationalist movement in India and the prophet of non-violence in the war torn world. As the threat of war grew in 1930, Gandhi reasserted his faith in the efficacy of the ideal of non-violence. In 1931, after the end of the second session of the Round Table Conference in London, Gandhi while returning to India, met Mussolini. He had agreed to participate in the Round Table conference only on the India Government’s assurance that they would abandon the policy of repression. The purpose of the Round Table conference was constitution building for India. But this conference was a big failure. On his way home, he stopped for a day in Paris, and then took the train for Switzerland, where he stayed five days with Romain Rolland at Villeneuve. ‘On Tuesday, they discussed Gandhiji’s trip to Rome. He wanted to see Mussolini and

other Italian leaders as well as Pope and the invitation Gandhi had received from Italians. Rolland warned him that Fascist regime would exploit his presence for its sinister purposes. Gandhi said he would break through the cordon they might throw around him. Rolland suggested that he put certain conditions. Gandhi replied that it was against his convictions to make such arrangements in advance. Therefore, he finally told Rolland. 'I will accept their invitation, but I will put the condition that in their presence I may be allowed to say whatever I want to say, and to speak freely, and, not about neutral matters; I shall tell them what I think.' He promised Rolland that he would never deliver any public speech, and would refuse any invitation from the regime.

In the previous years of his journey to Italy, the attitude of Italian political writers had not always been favorably disposed towards Gandhi. For instance, in 1942, Giovanni Ansaldo, then an anti-fascist, writing a section of the book ‘What is Britain’ (1942) regarded ‘Gandhi as a rotten egg recycled into the European political market by Romain Rolland and the pacifist movement’. Gandhi’s politics and economics, if allowed free play, would reduce tens of millions of men to starvation. Mario Appelius, a prominent Italian journalist, wrote a book entitled ‘India’ (1925). According to Appelius, Gandhiji possessed the powerful soul of a revolutionary and was stirring up the substrata of the Asiatic consciousness… he was to be considered one of the three unsurpassed spirit of modern history. Mussolini, V. I. Lenin and

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Gandhi, were in fact three apostles of one and the same revolt. Fatherland, Duty and sacrifice were the common foundations of their conception of the state.\textsuperscript{10}

The most exalting tribute to Gandhi was the one by G. Gentile, the philosopher and ideologue of Fascism. ‘An Italian translation of Gandhi’s Autobiography was published in March 1931, with a long introduction by the noted philosopher, Senator Giovanni Gentile, the theorist of Fascism. Gentile interpreted non-violence as the Indian version of the same moral law propagated by Fascism amongst the Italian people. Gentile emphasized the individual’s sense of civic duty towards family and nation, which he considered as the foundation stone of Gandhian philosophy, and which had, according to Gentile, a direct counterpart in the fascist doctrines. Gentile apparently intended to bridge the gulf between Gandhism and Fascism at an ideological level, and to create a general feeling of sympathy for the Indian movement and its leaders among the Italian public.’\textsuperscript{11} Roberto Farinacci, an influential fascist depicted Gandhi as the Mazzini of the Indian people. But Lando Ferretti, Press secretary to Duce, strongly resented Farinacci’s comparing Gandhi to Mazzini on account of the fact that Italy, in his opinion, had nothing to learn from Gandhi and his humanitarianism. The result of this confrontation between them, Ferretti was speedily removed from his post. Gandhi was expected to arrive in a few weeks and it was mainly due to the initiative of the Italian Consul General in Calcutta, Gino Scarpa, that the Gandhi- Mussolini interview could be arranged.


\textsuperscript{11} Mario Prayer, \textit{In search of an entente India and Italy}. From the XIX to XX century. A Survey. (Italian Embassy cultural center, New Delhi, 1994), p. 20.
Gandhi arrived in Rome on 12 Dec., 1931 at 8.30 in the morning. He spent the whole morning in the villa. In the afternoon, he visited the Royal Maria Montessori Method School and then went to the Vatican Museum that was specially opened for him. It had been arranged for Gandhi and Mussolini to meet in the evening. The meeting between Gandhi and Mussolini lasted ten or twenty minutes. ‘On December 12 Gandhi saw Mussolini who was quite cordial to him General Moris, a friend of Romain Rolland was his host Italy gave Gandhi a courteous welcome. Gandhi saw that Mussolini’s eyes were never still. The Dictator asked him what he thought of the fascist state he had built. Gandhi said nonchantantly that he was building a house of cards. The Pope refused to see Gandhi.’

What Gandhi had told Rolland is proved by the tenor of his conversation with Mussolini. Gandhi addressed Mussolini freely ‘It may be instructive to quote a few passages in English translation:

**Mussolini: Do you like Italy?**

**Gandhi:** I like very much your beautiful country.

**Mussolini:** Did you meet the Pope?

**Gandhi:** Unfortunately he could not fix me an appointment. He said he never receives on Sundays, and this morning he was too busy.

**Mussolini:** Do you want complete independence for India?

**Gandhi:** Yes, but we are not opposed to a form of association with Britain on an equal basis.

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**Mussolini:** Are you contemplating a popular form of Government?

**Gandhi:** Certainly, we want a democratic setup.

**Mussolini:** Do you think there will be one man leading the entire nation?

**Gandhi:** No, I think we shall have an elected President for each section of the country.

**Mussolini:** Do you think communism can succeed in India?

**Gandhi:** No, I do not think so.

**Mussolini:** Neither do I. What is your opinion on the situation in Europe?

**Gandhi:** Finally you have put the question I was expecting. If Europe goes on like this, she cannot survive, unless she changes the present economic system, and unless each individual radically changes his attitude towards his neighbours.

**Mussolini:** Do you think East and West cannot possible meet?

**Gandhi:** Why not? Presently the West is sucking the East’s wealth in every possibly way. But as soon as it ceases doing so, it will be possible to start a profitable co-operation.  

So, it is known from this interview that Gandhi couldn’t support autocratic rule but wanted a democratic system.

Mussolini’s government had made arrangements for Gandhi’s travel by train and guided tour through various social welfare institutions introduced by his regimes. Gandhi’s view of fascism was a paradoxical mixture of appreciation and criticism. On his way back to India, he sent a letter to Romain Rolland: ‘Mussolini is a riddle to me.

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Money of his reforms attracts me. He seems to have done much for the peasant class. I admit an iron hand is there. But as violence is the basis of the western society, Mussolini’s reforms deserve an impartial study. My own fundamental objection is that these reforms are compulsory. But it is the same in all-democratic institutions. Gandhi was aware of the apotheosis of violence which Fascist regime represented, but he did not accept that Mussolini was that human nature must ultimately respond to love. ‘It is not that people would necessarily be unhappy under fascism’, he said in 1934. We may leave aside Hitler, but under Mussolini, Italy is certainly better than before. Some of the public utility works undertaken there are commendable. The standard of living has improved. But what does it all avail? There is no freedom there. Whoever dares to oppose Mussolini’s policy invites death. Gandhi was the prophet of non-violence in the war torn world and to a question about Abyssinia; Gandhi replied that if the Abyssinians had adopted non-violence. Mussolini would have had no interest in Abyssinia. ‘Through the pages of his weekly paper, the Harijan, he expounded his non-violent approach to political tyranny and military aggression. He advised the weaker nations to defend themselves not by seeking protection neither from better-armed states, nor by increasing their own fighting potential, but by non-violent resistance to the aggressor. A non-violent Abyssinia, he argued, needed no arms and no succour from the League of Nations, if every Abyssinian man, women and child refused cooperation with the Italians, willing or forced, the latter would have to walk to victory over the dead bodies of their victims and to occupy the


country without the people.” According to Gandhi, under one party rule, the very pretence of morality is given up. This form of government considers certain ends as supreme. Whatever the means, the ends justify them. What was done in the name of Italian nation, fascism violated all the moral values. ‘In international field, Gandhi was greatest advocate of world peace in modern times. He held that injustice and tyranny exercised by one nation over another were intolerable and must be resisted, since individuals, as also groups could not remain for long under such considerations without revolt. Gandhi wanted this revolt to be open and peaceful.’ So, though Gandhi was attracted by development works of Mussolini, but was also aware of the aggressive nature of fascism which he could never support.


JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND FASCISM

Jawaharlal Nehru was a prominent nationalist leader and freedom fighter of India. He was one of the most important personalities who left a lasting imprint on the history of modern India. Born in a lap of luxury, educated at Harrow and Cambridge, Nehru choose to cast his lot with a hard task master like Gandhi, and spent quite a large part of his early life in jail. During his seven years stay in England, Nehru imbibed the traditions of British liberalism. On his return from England, Nehru joined the Allahabad High court as a barrister, but soon he lost interest in the legal profession. He began his political activities by his association with the Home Rule Movement. He met Gandhi in 1916 at Lucknow Congress, and thus began one of the most significant political partnerships of the time. In 1921, he jumped into Mahatma Gandhi’s Civil Disobedience movement. In 1922, he was arrested on account of his participating in Congress sponsored boycott of foreign cloth. In 1923, he was appointed General Secretary of the Congress and held this post for seven years. Nehru became the President of the Indian National Congress at Lahore; and it was under his Presidentship that the Congress declared complete independence for India as its goal in 1929. He again became the President of the Congress in 1936-37 and in 1946. In 1932, he was arrested and sentenced to two years term. But in 1933, he was released from jail and plunged himself in political activities. In 1938, he visited Europe and went to China. In 1942, when the Quit India movement was started, Jawaharlal Nehru, like other leaders, was again arrested and remained in jail for three years. After release from prison in 1945, Nehru became the leading spokesman of the Indian National Congress in several negotiations with the British. He actively participated in Cripps Mission plan, Simla Conference, Cabinet Mission Plan and Mountbatten
Mission plan. In 1946, he became the first Prime Minister, and formed interim government. After 15\textsuperscript{th} Aug 1947, he became first PM, and continued to hold that post throughout his life.

Nehru was not a political philosopher in the academic sense, who would build a logical and rational system of thought, yet he was a man of ideas. The central core of his thinking was based on his implicit faith in western liberalism, which expressed itself in his devotion to the ideals of democracy and individual freedom. Initially, he was influenced by Fabian Socialism. But he gradually realized that the Fabian did not wish to transfer property to the workers; and consequently, he came to call them progressive liberal rationalists. Socialism was deeply rooted in his thinking, which provided the basis for his ideas on planning and the emphasis on social and economic equality. His socialism was flavored with humanism. Nehru had a great compassion for those who suffered violation of their self-respect and dignity. Nehru’s first contact with the rural masses was through the Kisan movement in UP. Nehru, in addition to being a Socialist, was also a profound democrat. In his address to the students of Hindu University, he elucidated the qualities necessary for democracy, and said that democracy demands discipline, tolerance and mutual respect. Jawaharlal firmly believed in the theory and practice of parliamentary democracy. ‘Nehru was genuine democrat, as revealed by his espousal of the parliamentary system, free elections, a free press, freedom of speech, of religion and assembly, political parties and constitutional safeguards for individual rights. Socialism is also rooted in his thought providing the stimulus to planning and the stress on social and economic equality.’\footnote{Michael Brecher, \textit{The philosophy of Nehru} in Verinder Grover, (ed.) \textit{Political Thinkers of Modern India. Jawaharlal Nehru}, vol.10, (Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi- 110027, 1990), p. 18.}
He detested authoritarianism and violence. ‘Nehru was not willing to take over fully any ideology which suggested the necessity at any stage of authoritarianism…. He acquired and maintained throughout his life, a half-liberal, half Marxist, whose idea of socialism encompassed at every stage at large and irreducible measure of civil liberty.’

Nehru was inspired by the Marxist approach to the cosmos and history. But he never became a thoroughly convinced Marxist, although there is a clear evidence of deep Marxist influence on Nehru upon early years. He wrote in 1938 that he was a Socialist in the sense that ‘I believe in socialist theory and method of approach. I am not a communist because I resist the communist tendency to treat communism as holy doctrine and I do not like being told what to think and what to do… I feel also that there is too much violence, associated with the communist method and this produces untoward results as in Russia in recent years. The ends can not be separated from the means.’

Nehru’s concept of Socialist economy differed form the Marxian concept. The concept of matter, motion as the ultimate reality did not satisfy him. Nehru was primarily interested in economic freedom, which was to precede political independence. He saw in Socialism a major weapon that could possibly remove all impediments to progress and he therefore, laid emphasis on the Socialist pattern from the very beginning of this political career. He was trying to prove that a social, political and economic revolution built on the utilitarian philosophy of the greatest good of the greatest number, was possible without violence. The National Planning Commission was set up in 1938 with Nehru as its chairman. In this task, he gave priority to large-scale industries in planning, and incorporating a scheme for cottage

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and village industries for the promotion of employment and all-round development. Through his planning, he sought to give an economic content to freedom. To Nehru, political freedom without economic and social freedom was a mere shadow without substance. His socialism was based on his social ideal of human relations dependent upon individual dignity, equal opportunity for all individuals’ removal of inequalities of income and wealth and prevention of the concentration of economic power. Nehru favored a dissociation of religion and politics, and was opposed to communal politics. ‘Nehru was a committed secularist and felt that the only way to take the nation forward on the road to progress and development would be to keep religious differences at bay by separating religion from politics…. Nehru believed that the modernizing and inclusive principle of secularism would be a more mature way of handling religions divisiveness.’

Nehru was an author of established repute. His ‘Glimpses of World History’, ‘Autobiography’ and ‘The Discovery of India’ are notable contributions of learning in Indian history and Indian political thought. His letters, speeches addresses bear eloquent testimony to his intellectual maturity.

Nehru was a nationalist but did not develop any new theory of nationalism. He defined nationalism as ‘essentially a group memory of past achievements, traditions and experiences, and nationalism is stronger today than it has ever been…. Whenever a crisis had arisen, nationalism has emerged again and dominated the scene, and people have sought comfort and strength in their old traditions. One of the remarkable developments of the present age has been the rediscovery of the past and of the nation.’

To Nehru, nationalism is indeed a noble phase of self- determination and


self-magnification. Nehru’s theory and practice of nationalism had three foundations. First, Nehru was against the racial arrogance of the British rulers. The second source of Nehru’s nationalism was economic. In line with thinkers of the Moderate school, Jawaharlal also blamed the British for the rampant poverty and exploitation of the country. The third root of Nehru’s nationalism was political and administrative. The foreign imperialist rulers concentrated in their hands all initiative and control-mechanisms. They had the monopoly of decision-making. The clever rulers utilized the technique of divide and rule and by creating their pockets of influence tried to disrupt the unity of the country.6 Nehru accepted that in spite of numerous diversities in India; there is a unity throughout Indian history. ‘Nehru had been secularist in his approach. His secularism proceeds from his liberal cultural upbringing. Agnosticism and the absence of any transforming religions experience had strengthened his secularism.’7 In his secular outlook, he was greatly influenced by the family environment and personality of his father. His devotion to scientific methodology with its stress on rationalism helped the evolution of his nationalist political ideology, which in its emphasis on secularist democracy is a counterpoise to religions dogmas. As a secularist, in the western sense, Nehru believed in keeping the state neutral in religions matters.

‘Nehru was an internationalist. He was aware of the dangers of racial chauvinism. His aversion to narrow, egoistic and expansionist nationalism had been great. Hence, during the latter part of the years of freedom struggle, he associated the Indian

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7 V. P. Varma, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, (Educational Publisher, Agra-3 1978), p. 560.
National Congress with a generous international outlook. Nehru considered every major event in terms of its impact on the national movement. His nationalism based on a broad internationalism. In 1932, Jawaharlal noted Bolshevism and Fascism as the two upcoming trends in modern Europe. As a serious student of world history, he disliked wars, which caused devastation. Nehru was influenced by world developments and was convinced that the Indian problem could not be considered in isolation from the mighty war that was ensuing between imperialism and fascism on one side, and socialism and nationalism on the other. ‘The root of imperialism was traced to capitalism, which generated a policy of colonial expansion. Imperialism and fascism stood out as the twin manifestations of decaying capitalism. Nehru saw the world dominated into two groups, imperialism and fascism versus nationalism and socialism, though some overlapping was possible between the two.’

Nehru’s views on war crisis played a leading role in shaping Congress policy on the war. In 1939, this response of the Congress was stated firmly. ‘If the war is to defend the status quo, imperialist possessions, colonized, vested interests and privilege, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and the world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it.’

According to Nehru, the imperialist war of this century was unleashed by aggressive fascism and Nazism. The primary cause of the war, Nehru had written, ‘is the growth and aggression of Fascism and Nazism…. It is clear, therefore that we must oppose fascism… (But) we cannot

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8 Ibid. p. 562.


10 Jawaharlal Nehru, *China, Spain and the War*; (Allahabad, kitauistan, 1940), p. 267.
score a victory over fascism by surrendering our freedom and the struggle to achieve It.\textsuperscript{11}

Nehru’s nationalism clearly discriminated between friend and foe in international field. The target of its hatred and anger were the exploiting systems, namely, imperialism, fascism, capitalism and feudalism. ‘The rise of German fascism in the 1930s did introduce a new element into the equation, for Nehru’s abhorrence of Fascism was as intense as his anger against imperialism. There was, unlike for Bose, never any question of ambivalence on this.’\textsuperscript{12} Nehru never adopted a charitable view of fascism. Between Communism and Fascism, he stated unequivocally that he would much prefer Communism because Fascism to him was an evil with which there could be no compromise and no acceptance. In a press statement of Dec.18, 1933, in \textit{The Leader}, issue of Dec.20,1933, Nehru said, ‘I do believe that fundamentally the choice before the world today is one between some form of communism and some form of fascism, and I am all for the former, that is communism. I dislike fascism intensely and I do not think it is anything more than a crude and brutal effort of the present capitalist order to preserve itself at any cost. There is no middle road between Fascism and Communism. One has to choose between the two and I choose the communist ideal… I may not agree with everything that orthodox communists have done… But I do think that the basic ideology of communism and its scientific interpretation of history is sound.’\textsuperscript{13} In reply to a letter of 13 Oct. 1933 from Dr. Bhagvan Das, philosopher, patriot of Varanasi, who had written on the similarities between Fascism


and Communism, Jawaharlal wrote on 17 Oct. 1933: ‘Briefly I will say that though there may be outward similarity between the communist state and the fascist state, there are fundamental differences. Both are dictatorships but in the former society as a whole profit by it and no special class is a favoured one except in a minor degree. In the fascist state, the dictatorship stands for certain possessing classes who profit by it.’

In 1936, Nehru was in Lausanne, when the news of his being elected as the President of the Indian National Congress for the second time reached and he returned to India. On his way in Rome, he had a curious experience with Italy that could never bring him to adopt a good view towards Mussolini. Nehru himself reported the episode in his ‘An Autobiography’: ‘Some days before my departure (from Lausanne) a message was conveyed to me that Signor Mussolini would like to meet me when I passed through Rome. In spite of my strong disapproval of the fascist regime, I would ordinarily have liked to meet Signor Mussolini and to find out for myself what a person who was playing such an important part in the world’s affairs was like. But I was in no mood for interviews then. What came in my way even more was the continuance of the Abyssinian campaign and my apprehension that such an interview would inevitably be used for purposes of fascist propaganda. No denial from me would go for…. I was assured that our interview would be entirely private. Still I decided to avoid it and I conveyed my regrets to signer Mussolini.’

Nehru’s views reflected his dual concern- the freedom of India and his sympathy for other freedom struggles and revolution against the violence of Nazism and Fascism. Even in an interview to the Press, Simla, in 1945, he continued to oppose Fascism. ‘My opposition to Nazism and Fascism has not undergone any change

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14 Ibid. p. 113-114.

during the three years of my prison life. Nazism and Fascism are immensely
dangerous to any country and to the world at large. I am as firmly opposed to them as
ever before.¹⁶ Nehru, a passionate and genuine defender of freedom - civil, political
and economic, could not support Fascism anymore. He had condemned fascist and
wanted to safeguard liberty and freedom at any cost. In his own words, ‘I had no
doubt then, and I have no doubt now, that Hitler and his subordinate colleagues,
Mussolini and Franco, represent a system that is evil and fundamental bad for Europe
as well as the rest of the world. A victory for him would be a tragedy for all who
believe in a free life for individuals as well as nations.’¹⁷ That is why, the
announcement of Mussolini’s resignation was of great significance to Nehru and the
end of war was a great relief to him. ‘Everybody must experience a feeling of relief at
the end of war, and I am also happy that this carnage has ended. It is good that
Nazism, Fascism and Japanese militarism have suffered a defeat, but my happiness
would have been far greater if I could see militarism also eliminated from the
world.’¹⁸