



**FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS
OF
INDIAN REVOLUTION**

Subhas Chandra Bose

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SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

- I. The Anti-Imperialist Struggle and Samyavada
London 1933
- II. Forward Bloc—Its Justification, Kabul 1941
- III. The Fundamental Problems of India, Tokyo 1944



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Introductory

As India approaches the greatest revolutionary crisis of the century, a search goes on for a national political ideology for the Indian people—an ideology that will provide both the theoretical and the practical basis for the grim struggle that looms ahead of us. We believe that in this historical context the political ideas of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose are uniquely relevant and must therefore be preached more widely and more powerfully than ever before.

In studying these three fundamental political theses of Subhas Chandra Bose, the reader will remember that the ideas and proposals are not of either a wandering mystic oblivious of the earth or a doctrinaire revolutionist reared on imported copy-book maxims. The ideas are the product of a scientific and ruthlessly objective analysis of historical situations and tempered by direct and continuous revolutionary experience of a kind quite unknown to any other leader of contemporary India.

The London Address (1933) on Anti-Imperialist Struggle and *Samyavada** was the first detailed and forthright political thesis produced by Netaji soon after his first direct encounter with political movements in Europe. And its fundamental conclusions have largely been sustained in his subsequent writings. The Kabul thesis (1941) which gives the sumtotal of his experience of Indian politics of two decades was written while journeying to launch the Azad Hind crusade. The reader will remember that between this and the Tokyo thesis (1944) lies the memorable saga written in blood and iron—the historic assault on the Indian frontier from East Asia. But then, the warrior paused between battles to tell the world of the historical and cultural continuity of India and

the new political and social system that would be India's contribution to world civilisation.

In India's search for nationhood which is yet to be and a political system that would fulfil the aspirations and needs of her toiling millions, Netaji's teachings must not be lost on the new generation. That is the purpose of this publication.

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The 4th February 1970

Sisir K. Bose

*As to his choice of the word SAMYAVADA to define the ideological objective, Netaji said in 1934: "The idea of SAMYA is a very old Indian conception—first popularised by the Buddhists 500 years before Christ. I therefore prefer this name to the modern names now popular in Europe."

Nevertheless, for full two years, instead of marching ahead we began to retreat. In December, 1928, a resolution was passed at the Calcutta Congress by approximately 1,300 votes to 900, which put back the clock by definitely committing the Congress to the acceptance of Dominion Status. Thus at Calcutta we retreated not only from the position at Madras in December, 1927—but also from the position at Nagpur in December, 1920—because the Nagpur resolution on Swaraj, in view of its vague terminology, could be interpreted to mean that the goal of the Indian people was to be "Independence" and not "Dominion Status."

The resolution of the Calcutta Congress gave the British Government one year's time within which they could offer Dominion Status to India. But the Government had no intention of making any such offer to India. The situation therefore became rather critical for the Congress leaders when the year 1929 began to draw to a close without Dominion Status being in sight. Another gesture was made by the Congress leaders in November, 1929, on the eve of the Lahore Congress, but to no avail. In a joint manifesto—now generally known as the Delhi Manifesto—the leaders agreed to participate in the Round Table Conference in London if some assurance would be given that Dominion Status would be granted to India.

I was one of those who had the temerity to oppose Mahatma Gandhi's resolution on Dominion Status at the Calcutta Congress in 1928 and who had the presumption to condemn the Delhi Manifesto of November 1929. We had to point out that the Round Table Conference was

a misnomer because it was not a Conference of plenipotentiaries representing the belligerent parties. A large number of nondescript Indians nominated by the alien Government would be present at the Conference to do the bidding of the wily British politicians. Moreover, if the Conference by any chance arrived at any conclusions favourable to India—they would not be binding on the British Government. We also pointed out that the primary object of the Government in convening this Conference was to bring the Indians to England and make them fight amongst themselves for the amusement of the British people. We therefore urged that as the Sinn Feiners had boycotted the Irish Convention, which was Mr. Lloyd George's creation, so also the Indian National Congress should leave the Round Table Conference severely alone.

But ours was a cry in the wilderness. The leaders as a body were too anxious to find some honourable escape from the impending fight with the Government which was every day becoming unavoidable. But no such opportunity was given by the Government. Consequently when the Lahore Congress met in December, 1929, the temper of the people had risen and there was no alternative for the leaders but to swallow the resolution on Independence.

But "Independence" which implied severance of the British connection—was like a pill bitter to the taste and difficult to digest. When the Congress unanimously adopted the resolution on Independence and thereby once for all ended the shilly-shallying of the last nine years—the moderate elements in the country

were alarmed. Our leaders lost no time in trying to reassure them and beautiful phrases and attractive slogans were evolved for the purpose. We were told that Independence meant "Purna Swaraj" (an expression which one could interpret according to his convenience). Mahatma Gandhi issued early in 1930 his famous "eleven points" which according to him represented the substance of Independence and could form the basis of a compromise with the British Government. Thus the significance and the effect of the Lahore Congress resolution on Independence was nullified to a great extent through the action of the leaders themselves.

After the Lahore Congress it was impossible for the leaders not to do anything. The movement was therefore launched with the celebration of the Independence Day on the 26th January, 1930. By April the whole of India was in the throes of a revolution (may be a non-violent revolution). So great was the response of the people to the call to action that even Mahatma Gandhi was taken by surprise and he stated that the movement could have been started two years earlier.

The movement of 1930—like the earlier movement of 1921—took the Government by surprise and for a long time they were at a loss to decide as to the most effective means for crushing the movement. The international situation—economic and political—also helped India. It was therefore a mistake to suspend operations on the basis of what is known as the Delhi Pact (the Gandhi-Irwin Pact) of March, 1931. Even if the leaders wanted a compromise, they should have waited for a more opportune moment, and such a moment

would certainly have arrived if the operations had continued for another six months or one year. But once again subjectivism prevailed—and objective factors and considerations were not taken into account when the Delhi Pact was entered into. I shall even go so far as to say that in the circumstances which prevailed in March, 1931—better terms could have been extracted from the Government if our leaders had possessed greater statesmanship and diplomacy.

As matters stood, the Delhi Pact was an advantage to the Government and a disaster to the people. The Government got time to study the tactics adopted by the Congress organisations in 1930 and 1931, so that they could perfect their machinery for striking a crushing blow whenever the Congress launched the movement once again. It is now a matter of common language that the ordinances promulgated by the Government in January, 1932, and the detailed tactics adopted by them throughout the year, were carefully worked out before the year 1931 came to a close. But what did the Congress do? In spite of the fact that there was seething discontent in the Frontier Province, in the United Provinces and in Bengal, nothing was done by the leaders to prepare the country for the unavoidable resumption of the fight. In fact, I shall not be wrong if I say that till the last everything was done to avoid a possible resumption of hostilities.

The Delhi Pact had on the whole a soporific effect on the popular enthusiasm and passion—nevertheless, the temper of the people was too militant to be soothed by soft phrases. And if this had not been the case,

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We had been engaged in a non-violent war with the British Government—for the attainment of our political freedom. But to-day our condition is analogous to that of an army that has suddenly surrendered unconditionally to the enemy in the midst of a protracted and strenuous campaign¹. And the surrender has taken place, not because the nation demanded it—not because the national army rose in revolt against its leaders and refused to fight—not because the supply of the sinews of war was cut off—but either because the Commander-in-Chief was exhausted as a result of repeated fasting or because his mind and judgment were clouded owing to subjective causes which it is impossible for an outsider to understand.

What would have happened—I ask—if a similar incident had taken place in any other country? What happened to all the Governments that surrendered to the enemy at the end of the Great War? But India is a strange land.

The surrender of 1933 reminds one of the Bardoli Retreat of 1922. But in 1922, some explanation,

¹ Netaji is referring here to the sudden suspension of the Civil Disobedience Campaign by Mahatma Gandhi.—Ed.

however unsatisfactory, could be offered to justify the retreat. The outbreak of violence at Chauri Chaura was suggested as the pretext for suspending the Civil Disobedience campaign in 1922. What explanation or pretext can one suggest to account for the surrender of 1933?

There can be no doubt that the non-co-operation movement that was launched in 1920 and has been in existence in some form or other since that date—was the movement best suited to India in the fateful year 1920. There can be no doubt that in 1920 when political India was looking forward to a more militant plan of action—Mahatma Gandhi was the one man who could stand up as the undisputed spokesman of the people and lead them on from victory to victory. And there can also be no doubt that during the last decade India has completed the march of a century. But standing to-day at the crossroads of Indian History—it is meet and proper that we should try to discover the mistakes of the past—so that our future activity may be directed along the right lines and all possible pitfalls may be avoided.

For the attainment of freedom two paths are open to us. One is the path of uncompromising militancy. The other is the path of compromise. If we follow the first path, the fight for liberty will have to be pursued till we are able to wrest political power in its entirety and there can be no question of a compromise along the road to freedom. If, on the other hand we follow the second path, periodical compromises may have to be made with our opponents for consolidating our

position, before further attempts are made.

At the outset it should strike everybody that it is not at all clear if our movement during the last thirteen years has been following the path of uncompromising militancy or that of compromise. This ideological ambiguity has been responsible for a lot of mischief. If our policy had been one of uncompromising militancy, the Bardoli surrender of 1922 would never have taken place—nor would the Delhi Pact of March, 1931, have been entered into. On the other hand, if we had been following the path of compromise, we should never have missed the opportunity of a bargain with the British Government in December, 1931—when the situation was so opportune. In March, 1931, the situation was not opportune for a compromise from our point of view—nevertheless a truce was established between the Indian National Congress and the British Government. And considering our strength in March, 1931—the terms of the truce were altogether unsatisfactory. In short, as political fighters we have been neither sufficiently militant—nor sufficiently diplomatic.

In a fight between an unarmed subject people like the Indians and a first-class imperialist power like Great Britain—the supply of our necessary resources depends on our ability to keep up the enthusiasm of the people and maintain the spirit of opposition towards the Government. In the case of a war between two well-equipped and well-trained armies, the psychological factor is not so important as in our case. In 1922, when the whole nation had been roused to passionate activity and greater daring and sacrifice could be expected

of the people the Commander-in-Chief suddenly hoisted the white flag. And this happened after he had thrown away, a couple of months earlier, a unique opportunity for what would have appeared in the existing circumstances as an honourable compromise with the Bureaucracy.

It is not easy to learn or to remember the lessons of past history and the latest developments in India go to show that we have not yet assimilated the lessons of 1921 and 1922. And unfortunately for us, with the death of Deshbandhu C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru of hallowed memory in 1925 and 1931 respectively --there disappeared from the Indian scene two political giants who might have saved India from the political mess in which she now finds herself.

In December, 1927, when the Indian National Congress met at Madras, the unanimous acceptance of the resolution on Independence gave an indication of the rising temper of our people. And when early in 1928 the Simon Commission landed at Bombay, the demonstrations throughout India were reminiscent of the glorious days of 1921. From one point of view, the situation in 1928 was more favourable than in 1921—because while in 1921 the Indian Liberals were actively opposed to the Congress—in 1928 they were actively opposed to the British Government and in the campaign against the Simon Commission there was a united front of the Congress and the Liberal Party. The arrival of the Simon Commission should therefore have been the occasion for reviving the movement which had been suspended arbitrarily by Mahatma Gandhi in 1922.

I am sure that a resumption of hostilities would have been successfully avoided by the leaders. It is necessary for the workers of to-morrow to realise that the movement of 1932 was not planned and organised by the leaders, as it should have been, but that they were dragged into it. And if this statement be true, should it surprise anybody if the leaders to-day feel anxious to get out of the troubles into which they were forced in January, 1932?

The Delhi Pact of March, 1931, will appear to be a painful document the more we study it :

- (1) In the first place there was not one word of commitment on the part of the British Government on the major issue of Swaraj.
- (2) In the second place there was a tacit acceptance of the proposal of federation with the Indian Princes—a proposal which, in my humble opinion, is disastrous to the political progress of the country.
- (3) Thirdly, there was no provision for the release of the incarcerated Garhwali soldiers—the finest apostles of non-violence—who refused to shoot down their unarmed countrymen.
- (4) Fourthly, there was no provision for the release of the state-prisoners and detenus who were imprisoned without any trial, charge or justification.
- (5) Fifthly, there was no provision for the withdrawal of the Meerut Conspiracy Case which had been dragging on for years.
- (6) Sixthly, there was no provision for the release

of other classes of political prisoners, not convicted for participation in the Civil disobedience movement.

It will thus be seen that the Delhi Pact, by refusing to espouse the cause of the Garhwali soldiers, the state-prisoners, the Meerut Conspiracy prisoners and the revolutionary prisoners, deprived the Indian National Congress of the claim to be the central organ of the anti-imperialist struggle in India. By declining to be the spokesman of these militant anti-imperialist elements in India, the Indian National Congress stood out before the Indian public as the spokesman and representative of the "Satyagrahies" (Civil resisters) alone.

If the Delhi Pact of March, 1931, was a blunder, the surrender of May, 1933, is a calamity of the first magnitude. According to the principles of political strategy, at a time when the new constitution for India is under discussion, the maximum pressure should have been brought to bear on the Government by a strengthening of the Civil disobedience movement on the country. By suspending the movement at this critical hour, the work, the suffering and the sacrifice of the nation for the last thirteen years have been virtually undone. And the tragedy of the situation is that the people who could have effectively protested against this gross betrayal are now safely lodged behind prison bars. As to those who are outside prison, a real protest has not probably been possible because of the 21 days' fast of Mahatma Gandhi.

But the die has been cast. Suspension of the Civil disobedience campaign for one month means virtually a

permanent suspension—because mass movements cannot be created overnight. So the problem now before us is what we should do to make the most of a bad situation and what policy and plan we should adopt for the future.

Before we can solve this problem, two other questions will have to be answered by us :—

- (1) With regard to our goal, is a compromise between England and India ultimately possible ?
- (2) With regard to our method, can India win political freedom by following the path of periodical compromise and without adopting an uncompromisingly militant plan of action ?

To the first question I say that such a compromise is not possible. A political compromise is possible only when there is some community of interest. But in the case of England and India there are no common interests which can make a compromise between the two nations possible and desirable, as we shall see from the following :—

- (1) There is no social kinship between the two countries.
- (2) There is hardly anything in common between the cultures of India and of Britain.
- (3) From the economic standpoint, India is to Britain a supplier of raw materials and a consumer of British manufactures. On the other hand, India aspires to be a manufacturing country, so that she could become self-contained in the matter of manufactured goods and could also export not only raw materials but manufactured goods as well.