

Netaji :Patron of Nationalism or Admirer of Fascism

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Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose has always been a fascinating figure of Indian Politics. His life, views, principles and means to achieve his goals create debate in course of time. One such phase of his life for which Bose was often criticized by the academia is his relation with "Fascism". His critics often suspect his action, like worshipping of Shakti, fascination with Hindu religion, revolutionary activities and his alliance with the axis power (Germany and Italy) in the Second World War. Various British officials, Congress (few Gandhian) ideologue, Communist party member of India blamed forward block and Netaji as opportunists and fascists. In this discussion we'll go through each and every aspect of his politics and life to understand the reality of these observations and accusations.

Keywords: Fascism, revolutionary, axis power, forward block, Second World War.

Introduction

The term 'fascist or fascism' derived from its Roman root 'fasces', which according to the dictionary meaning, "*Bundle of rods and an axe carried by lecturer before magistrate.*" 'Fascism' also stands for 'methods of Italy, or the anti-communist revolution of 1922. Thus, a fascist may be one who holds the mass (bundle) with the help of the power (axe). It emerge from the ashes of military nationalism. Fascism believed on the totalitarian structure backed with militant nationalism. State has supremacy over every aspect of life. Liberty, equality, freedom of press or human rights doesn't auger well in this kind of structure. Multi-party system were abolished and supremacy of Fascist Party (Single party) is created. Constitutional changes were made so that unique figure of the leader embodying in one individual with total power was created. This political structure emerge in Germany and Italy in late 20s and later gets acceptance in other part of the world.



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Bose being an ardent supporter of Socialism, Nationalism, democracy and liberty can never be a fascist. The seeds of democracy, liberty and justice is sowed by his family. The spiritual bent of his cosmopolitan family and the teaching of Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda, influenced the adolescent heart of Bose towards life. He was impressed by the Vivekananda teaching of "*Atmeno Mokshartham Jagada hitaya Cha*" (For one's own salvation as well as the welfare of humanity). Netaji consider Vivekananda as a teacher, guide and philosopher, which led to his spiritual bend towards nationalism. Bose lived by the principle of *Swadharna* (One's own Principle" He lived up to the ideology of his mentor Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, who used to consider "*life is more important than politics*". Bose has set high standard for his political field, he once mentioned to Mahatma Gandhi on 1939, "I shall not remain in the political field for a single day, if I shall fall from the standard of gentlemanliness".

Many consider Netaji silence on the attacks of Germany and Italy during 2nd world war as support towards Militant nationalism. Netaji favored the cause of military nationalism for freedom of his motherland, but his concept of power is different from fascist. He want power not for himself but for the people of India. Nehru on his letter to Bose on dated 3.4.1939, mentioned the discomfort within congress on this issue and also condemned the actions of Subhash as president of Congress party. But For Netaji there is not much difference between British imperialism and Axis power as they both symbolize the supremacy of one race or country to another. The admiration of Axis Power was because of its organizing capacity rather than of his revolutionary activities. At that time only Germany and Italy has the potential to provide any kind of resilience against the British Imperialism. The concept of "*my enemies, enemy is my friend*" is very much evident in these actions. This is very much in concurrence with British Prime

Minister Churchill view who once said "*I would willingly shake hands with the devil himself if it meant saving my country.*" Bose is also willing to go to any extent for his nation. In a broadcast on 1 May 1942 Netaji mentioned: "*I am no apologist of the three powers, and it is not my task to defend what they have done or may do in future. My concern is with India and, if I may add further, with India alone.*"

Freedom at a glance of Netaji and Fascism

Fascist's concept of freedom is always a narrow, self-centered, and egoist. Subhas, a true lover of freedom could never be a fascist. He was ready for any kind of suffering and sacrifice for the cause of freedom. "*We have to suffer a lot, both individually and collectively before the priceless treasure of freedom can be secured.*" He was fed up with the British posing of racialism, superiority complexion and imperialism. Netaji on his various speeches talks for comprehensive freedom which implies political, economic, social and religious freedom. His freedom implies that he continued, "Not only emancipation from political bondage but also equal distribution of wealth, abolition of caste barriers and social inequities, and destruction of communalism and religious intolerance. A person with such high standard of freedom can't have similar view with the other imperial powers. Bose being a true humanitarian, want to wage war against the world imperialism. Bose proves out to be militant nationalist not the militant imperialism denoted by various academia and British government.

Netaji's ideas of Socialism

Subhas Bose Presidential address at the All India Anti Compromise Conference, Ramgarh (Bihar) on 19 March 1940, proves that he was a true socialist, not a communist or a fascist. Bose's set his prime objective to first achieve national independence and then to reconstruct it on socialistic and democratic lines. In his letter dated 9.10.1925 from the Central Jail, Mandalay, addressed to D.K. Roy, he explained his vision of socialism. He believes that we need to have an indigenous concept of socialism as alien concept won't work in Indian society. He aimed, not only at the material good of all, but even moral good. This concept is against the self-centered approach of fascism. He stood for activism, optimism and modernity, which were far from fascism structure. He criticized the ideas of bondage, tyranny and oppression, which are very much part of fascist ideology. He welcomed the recommendations of the Whitley Commission and the Fundamental Rights Resolution, passed by the Karachi Congress on 29 March 1931. This shows the spiritual bend of Netaji for the high moral ground for governance and society.

Democratic structure and Value System

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose favored strong multi-party democracy in India. Bose wanted to organize Congress on democratic principles. This strongly supports the view that he was a democrat

and not a fascist. Referring to the continuation of the Congress Party even after independence, Bose said, in his Presidential address to the Haripura Congress, 19 Feb. 1938: "*The state will possibly become a totalitarian one if there be only one party, as in countries like Russia, Germany and Italy. But there is no reason why other parties should be banned. Moreover, the party itself will have a democratic basis unlike, for instance, the Nazi Party, which is based on the leader principle. The existence of more than one party, and the democratic basis of the Congress Party will prevent the future Indian state, becoming a totalitarian one. Further, the democratic basis of the party will ensure that leaders are not thrust on the people from above, but are elected from below*". He believed that Congress must be freed from vested interest and internal democracy must prevail within congress. In an editorial, entitled "Our Critics", in the Forward Bloc, on 19 August 1939, Bose maintained that "*forward Bloc had to fight against double enemies, the British Imperialism and the Congress Bureaucratic*".

Concept of Authoritarianism

He blamed the dictatorial tendency of the Mahatma over the Working Committee of the Congress and high command culture in Congress as detrimental for democracy in India. He once mentioned that sometimes I wonder "*which is a greater menace to India's political future: the British bureaucracy or the Gandhian hierarchy*". Bose was criticized on advocating the strong central government and the strong party, an authoritarian character, mentioned by Lahiri. But as per Subhash the "Samyavadi Sangha", would be a centralized and well organized political party. There would be other political parties to have a check on the political fabric of the country. As per Netaji, democracy can only serve its objective only when various ideologies participate in the electoral process, so supremacy of any party or identity is dangerous for the creation of welfare state.

On been a puppet or stooge of axis power, Netaji always maintained that if British imperial power failed to coax or coerce him, so the Axis power won't be able to do so as well. Bose on various occasion maintained his individuality and dignity of the Indians in the meetings. His Provisional Government was quite independent with its own flag, stamps, currency, ministers, army, national anthem, national language (Hindi) and script (Roman). He make sure that only Indian Tricolor would fly on the Indian soil not of Axis power flags. After Japan defeat in WW2, Netaji explained that "Japan has been defeated, not we", which shows his resilience and distance from the Axis Powers, and seeking help from Russia also explain that Netaji is only working for the cause of Indian independence. This proves that he was not a puppet or stooge by any means in hands of fascist powers.

Aim of the study

1. To throw lights on Netaji's ideas on nationalism and socialist state.
2. To give clarity on the misconception of Netaji as an admirer of Fascism.

Conclusion

After considering these points we can easily say that Instead of suspecting Bose as a fascist, we must as Indians consider the political situation of that era and the inspiration provided by Netaji and INA. Bose was, undoubtedly, a born democrat. His spiritualism, his devotion to Vivekananda's teachings would never allow him to be a fascist or a dictator. He was a democrat at heart and all his actions are for the cause of India only. Netaji represent new India, which want to free itself from the shackles of slavery or imperialism of British power. His end justifies his mean, which is complete devotion towards the nation. Being an ardent socialist, democrat and nationalist, he never compromise with the interest of India. In all his speeches to INA, he repeatedly mentioned that if Axis power tries to have any imperialist agenda towards India, then they must be ready to fight with them also. He never supported the fascist agenda and have a distance with their ideologies. The reference of militant nationalism and organizational structure of INA on the basis of Axis powers doesn't make him a fascist. He was the favorite son of India with deep rooted value system in Indian tradition.

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