ACHARYA JAGADISH CHANDRA BOSE*

SWAMI SARVABHUTANANDA**

Acharya Jagadish was by choice a man of science. But he was more. It is indeed remarkable to look at his poetic temperament and keen sense of beauty, philosophical outlook, literary abilities and above all his mystical attitude.

Swami Vivekananda used to say, "Science and religion will meet and shake hands. Poetry and philosophy will become friends. This will be the religion of the future, and if we can work it out, we may be sure that it will be for all times and peoples. This is the one way that will prove acceptable to modern science, for it has almost come to it." (Vol II, pg 140).

In his lecture at the Royal Institution at London on 10 May 1901, Jagadish Chandra too pointed out that the findings of his past four years were actually in resonance with the essence of the Upishad. He said that he firmly believed that One Truth permeates the diversity that we see around. Thus, we see how the sage and the scientist independently verify each other.

In J. C. Bose we find a scientist as well as a mystic. Through his findings in physiology the distinctions between living and non-living became blurred. It tended to build a bridge between physics and physiology, spirituality and science. In fact, modern studies on consciousness takes cue from Jagadish Chandra's experimental results.

In his Inaugural address at the Bose Institute on 30 November 1917, Sir J. C. Bose said, "In pursuit of my investigations I was unconsciously led to the border region of Physics and Physiology and was amazed to find boundary lines vanishing and points of contact emerge between the realms of the Living and Non-living."

Since as a scientist, Sir J. C. Bose could perceive one order running through the universe in all its diverse manifestations, he could see life as a whole. It was indeed on the basis of his discoveries that he, though a scientist, spoke like a mystic.

Again Swami Vivekananda points out, "When the scientific teacher asserts that all things are the manifestation of one force, does it not remind you of the God of whom you hear in the Upishads.... Do you not see whither science is tending? The Hindu nation proceeded through the study of the mind, through metaphysics and logic. The European nations start from external nature, and now they too are coming to the same results." In Acharya Jagadish Chandra we come across such a convergence; hence he was a scientist and mystic blended in one.

In Jagadish Chandra actually reason and emotion were completely amalgamated. He enjoyed not mere scientific experimentations but also art, music and drama as a balancing effect to his life. His Kolkata house was grafted with Buddhist reliefs and some specimens from Harappa on the walls; his drawing room adorned with murals of episodes from the Mahabharata executed by Nandalal Bose. The impressive gateway, bas-reliefs, plaques and well-laid garden of the Bose Institute reveal to us the artist that Acharya Jagadish was. His designing of the Bose Institute with amalak, vajra and symbolism with potent meaning also speaks volumes about his artistic bent of mind. Here again we find Acharya Jagadish's similarity with Swami Vivekananda sharing the same love for art and symbolism depicting Indian heritage.

** Secretary, Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata.

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When Swami Vivekananda was in Paris in 1900 for the Paris Exposition, Jagadish Chandra was also present there as a speaker in connection with the Congress of Scientists, and Swamiji met him frequently. Often the Swami would point out to his acquaintances the greatness of this Indian scientist, "the pride and glory of Bengal". Once at a gathering a student of a celebrated English scientist maintained that her professor was experimenting on the growth of a stunted lily. The Swami humorously replied, "Oh, that's nothing! Bose will make the very pot in which the lily grows respond!" (Life, Vol 2, pg 538).

Lady Abala Bose, wife of Jagadish Chandra, used to narrate how Swamiji, in between his sojourns abroad, would call on his friend in Kolkata and amuse him with stories of his many odd experiences abroad and enjoy the hot dishes of East Bengal – cooked specially for him by her – the hotter the better. One particular visit Lady Bose vividly remembered – the surprise the Swami gave by turning up late one winter evening in complete European attire, driving from Belur in a coach and pair.

However, the Boses were actually more close to Swami Vivekananda's disciple Sister Nivedita. Like her Master, Nivedita realized early in her acquaintance with Jagadish Chandra, the great role he was destined to play in the field of science in general and for the promotion of scientific activities in India in particular. She took his cause to be her own and tried to help him in every respect. In a public reception accorded after her return to India on 3 February 1902 at Madras, she spoke primarily in praise of Dr. Jagadis Chandra Bose in whose scientific genius she felt India might see proof of its intellectual superiority to the West. (New Disc, Vol 6, p 362) His difficulties she made her own constantly inspiring him to "go out and fight" the battle.

In one of her letters to Jagadish Chandra on his birthday in 1910, she compares him with Columbus finding a new world and prophesized that he would one day be regarded as the pioneer of Modern Indian Science. This shows her expectations from Jagadish Chandra.

Her long-dreamt-of centre of research for Bose came to be established when Nivedita was no longer in the land of the living. She passed away at Darjeeling in 1911 under the tender care of Jagadish and Abala Bose. But she still lives as a Lady with the Lamp at the entrance of the Bose Institute that Acharya Jagadish erected to her memory on a striking base relief in bronze.

Another of Swamiji's disciple, Mrs. Sara Ole Bull, was close to the Boses. She helped Jagadish Chandra in his mission in various ways. She had heard of the scientific researches of Prof. Bose and during her visit to Calcutta in 1899 came to pay him a visit in his laboratory. During his second mission to Europe, when the Bose couple fell seriously ill in London, Mrs. Ole Bull rushed from her tour of the continent and found for Jagadish Chandra an expert surgeon helping to nurse him back to health. When the Boses went to America they found a home in Mrs. Ole Bull's house which Jagadish Chandra made his headquarters for his lectures at different American universities. During later visits to America in 1914, when Mrs. Ole Bull's house which Jagadis Chandra made his headquarters for his lectures at different American universities. During later visits to America in 1914, when Mrs. Ole Bull was dead, Prof. Bose and his wife found an equally warm home in the house of Mr. I. G. Throp, a brother of Mrs. Ole Bull, who had married a daughter of the poet Longfellow.

Acharya Bose was also highly regarded within the devotee circle of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda because of his associations with the Swamiji and Sister Nivedita. Jagadish Chandra also admired the Ramakrishna Movement. During his visits to the Himalayas in Kumaons, more than once he stayed at the Ramkrishna Ashrama at Mayavati.

Therefore, it is indeed a great fortune for me to be present here at his 150th birth anniversary and offer my humble tribute to this great son of India who though born Indian yet transcended all parochial borders.

I conclude by quoting Roamian Rolland about Jagadish Chandra Bose, "In your wake will be seen in the richness of her [India's] profound soul, of that inner world which was bequeathed to her by centuries of thought, will add hitherto the Intellectual weapons of Europe, which will be given to her to make her perfect for the mastery of Nature and for the glory of atman."