CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE
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Great personalities are often the products of their own times. Political, religious, social economic and cultural environment mould them and they, in turn, remodel it. It is also said that some make history and some are made by history. An objective observer has to assess the role of personalities and their contributions to humanity in this perspective.

"The role which a man plays," wrote Subhas Chandra Bose himself, while writing on the role of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian History, "in history depends partly on his physical and mental equipment, and partly on the environment and the needs of times in which he is born." ¹

Subhas Chandra Bose was one such great personality in his own right. A study of his role naturally has to take into account, the environment of his life. His admirers called him "A beacon across Asia." ² His diplomacy, his political activities, his ideology extended, directly or indirectly, not only to Asia and Europe but also, in a sense, the whole world.

By the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, England was dominating the world political scene. That the "sun never set on the British empire" was a reality. The first challenge to the British Crown, came from the thirteen colonies of North America, during 1773-76. The American independence on 4th July 1776, was the first blow and was the beginning of the fall of the British Empire. It is worth noting that the European Empire was first resisted by a people of European origin. The English Puritans who sailed from England to North America in 1620 by the Mayflower, organised later the thirteen colonies, then the thirteen states and ultimately the United States of America. The civilization of the same Puritan origin resisted first the mother country and the empire. It paved the way for freedom and nationalism throughout the world.

The French revolution of 1789, further, strengthened the spirit of freedom and nationalism. Liberal principles like liberty, equality and fraternity were popularised across the world. Particularly, the Asian and the African countries were aroused to freedom from the clutches of India, the motherland of Subhas Chandra Bose, was not an exception to this spirit and trend.
When Vasco da Gama landed at Calicut, in the present Kerala State of India, in 1498 A.D., to his surprise, he had discovered the sea route to India. His destination was America, but surprisingly, luckily or unluckily, he landed on the West Coast of India. That paved the way for the western influx into India through the sea. Earlier, South India was safe from such an influx, due to non-availability of sea route and due to the high Vindhya mountains separating it from the North.

North India was already penetrated by foreigners through the Bolan and the Khaiber passes in the mountains of Hindu Kush, between Afghanistan and India, though the world's highest mountain range, the Himalayas were supposed to defend the country from incursions in the North. According to the available records on Indian history, the Aryans came first into India in about 1600 B.C., and settled along the plains of the sacred river, Ganges, originating at Go-Mukh in the Himalayas flowing through the present states of the Indian union, the Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, the native state of Subhas Chandra Bose, and even through Calcutta (with the name Hugli), the native town of Subhas, whose house is
situated on the Elgin Road. The river joins the Bay of Bengal at south of Calcutta. It is told that the Aryan civilization defeated the earlier inhabitants called the Dravidians and drove them down to South India. The Vindhya mountains in the middle of the country demarcate the North and South India.

Then came the Greeks, Alexander’s invasion of India (325-326 B.C.) and his agent Selucus’s invasion shook North India. The Greeks did not settle in India due to different environment and their homesickness. The Huns invaded India between 450 A.D. and 475 A.D. and then the Arabs. Mohammad bin Qasim invaded India in 711-12 A.D. Then followed by the Parsees in 739 A.D. Sabuktakin of Afghanistan invaded India between 936 and 937 A.D. Then followed the horrors of Mahmud of Ghazni between 1001 and 1026 A.D. He being an anti-Idolatry, like the other Muslims in general, committed vandalism on the historic Somnath temple. Then started the invasions of Mahmud of Ghori between 1111 and 1192 A.D. These invasions, finally, laid the foundations of the Muslim Raj in India.

Kutubuddin Aibak, a slave-agent of Mahmud of Ghori, in whose memory still stands the Kutub Minar at Delhi, started the Sultanate of Delhi in 1206 A.D., which
continued upto 1526 A.D. The first battle of Panipat (1526 A.D.) ended the Sultanate and brought the Moghul king Babar (1526-1530), to the throne of Delhi in 1526 A.D. Humayun (1530-40) and (1555-56), Akbar (1552-1605), Jehangir (1605-1628), Shaha Jehan (1628-1658) and Aurangjeb (1658-1707) succeeded in turn to the Moghul throne in Delhi. They spread their empire throughout North India and even spread to the South with Aurangabad as the second capital in the South, during the period of Aurangjeb. After the death of Aurangjeb (1707), the Moghul empire began to crumble and met its downfall when Seraj Ud Doula, the last Nawab of Bengal was defeated by the British East India Company in 1757 A.D. at Plassey.

The Advent of the British:

The European traders, the British, the French, the Dutch and the Portuguese flocked to India by the sea route in search for foreign markets for their manufactured goods, during the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, when the Moghul Kings were ruling India. Among them the British traders became dominant with their unique policy of 'Divide and Rule'. They established the East India Company in 1600 A.D. They came to own Bombay, the present second biggest city of India in 1661 A.D. They founded
the Calcutta city, the present biggest city of India, the native town of Subhas Chandra Bose, in 1690 A.D. Their success in the battle of Plassey in 1757 A.D., against Seraj-Ud-Doula, the Nawab of Bengal, led to the assumption of a political role by the Company. It heralded the new era of the British Raj in India with Calcutta as the capital city.

The East India Company spread its suzerainty steadily throughout North India and then in the South. The Treaty of Paris ended the French power in India in 1763 A.D., except for Pondicherry. The Portuguese concentrated only in Goa, Diu and Daman. The rest of India came under the administration of the East India Company. Some princely states fought unsuccessfully against the Company to preserve their states and to root out the British from the country.

The Company rule in India was shaken completely throughout the country under the leadership of Bahadur Shah, the last Moghul King, whose tomb is now in Burma; the Queen Laxmi of Zhensi and Tatya Topi, in 1857, exactly a century after the establishment of the political power of the Company in India. The Britishers called it a "Sepoys' Mutiny" — as sepoys resisted their officers first on Parade grounds. The Indians called it the First Freedom
Movement, as the resistance was on an all-India level.
This was anyhow, the turning point in Indian history. The
British Crown assumed direct control over Indian affairs in 1858. Incidentally, the University of Calcutta was also founded the same year.

Nationalism and national movements sprouted as part of the Renaissance of India through the religious awakening, social reforms, English education, communications like railways (started in 1853), post and telegraph (in 1854) and the press. The Brahmo Samaj, founded in 1828 by Raja Ram Mohen Roy (1774-1833), the father of Indian Renaissance; the Arya Samaj, founded in 1875 by Swami Dayananda Sawarewati, who first declared "India for Indians"; the Theosophical Society, founded by Madame Blavatski, Col. Olcott and Mrs. Annie Besant; and the Ramkrishna Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda, the patriot saint of India, contributed a lot to the growth of Indian nationalism. Lord Macaulay's Minute on English education of 1832 A.D., gave an opportunity to the Indians to get western education. This prepared the ground for the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885. Nationalism, national movements, social and political reforms, in short, the fate and career of India were tied up to the development
of the Congress. Modern Indian history is nothing but the history of the Indian National Congress. All the prominent freedom fighters of India from Mahatma Gandhi to Jawaharlal Nehru, including Subhas Chandra Bose and Jinnah, were in the Congress. They all came to prominence through their participation in the activities and programmes of the Congress.

The Congress was found by a British Civil servant, Mr. Allan Octavian Hume. It aimed at "the joint efforts of Indian and British democrats, who were primarily moved, not by narrow nationalist motives, but by a genuine devotion to truth and justice, in the vindication of which they both sought the true glory of their respective countries and the happy crowning of a country's work in mutually advantageous collaboration."³

The Bengal Scene:

Bengal's role in the Indian freedom movement was quite impressive because of certain special reasons and circumstances. The British political power was first established in Bengal, when the East India Company defeated Seraj-Ud-Doula, the Nawab of Bengal, at Plassey, in 1757. Thus,

Bengal was the first victim of the British conquest. The Bengalees, naturally, became anti-British and fought against them, first in the form of renaissance - religious and social reforms, then as the moderates, the liberals, the Swarajists, the terrorists etc. Calcutta was first founded by the British in 1690. From the date of its inception upto 1911, it was the Head Quarters of the British authority in India. So Calcutta, naturally, was the centre of all agitations, strikes, protests, movements, etc. Bengal was the first province to be affected by the economic and political consequences of the British rule.

From Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the prophet of nationalism to Subhas Chandra Bose, "The Springing Tiger", many personalities in different walks of life came to prominence in Bengal during the 19th and the 20th century. Nationalism sprouted as a part of Renaissance, through the Brahamo Samaj, started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1828. The religious and social reforms influenced the Bengalees. English education, western ideas and culture first entered Bengal. The result was that Bengal got the first University, the Calcutta University in 1858, which brought about

political enlightenment along with social, economic and educational developments of the people of the province.

Rabindranath Tagore, a Noble Laureate, a Bengali poet of international fame and whose poem, "Jana Gana Mana Adhigayak Jayahe" has become the national anthem, writes:

"We had come to know English through her glorious literature which had brought a new inspiration into our young lives. The English authors, whose books and poems we studied, were full of love for humanity, justice and freedom. We felt its power in Wordsworth's sonnets about human liberty...Shelley... All this fired our youthful imaginations. We believed with all our simple faith that even if we rebelled against foreign rule, we should have the sympathy of the West. We felt that England was on our side in wishing to gain our freedom."\(^5\)

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, author of the novel, Anand Math, and of "Vande Mataram" song, who met with disappointment in service, was "the greatest exponent of nationalism in India."\(^6\)


\(^6\) Dr. B.B. Mazumder, History of Political Thought from Rammohan Roy to Dayanand.
Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar through his social and educational reforms and Sharat Chandra Chatterjee through his heart-touching novels, inspired the people. Ramakrishna Paramahansa, a devotee of Kali (or Durga), the main inspiring deity of Bengal, in whom Subhas Chandra Bose had faith, inspired Swami Vivekananda, a Patriot Saint of Bengal, a religious representative to the world parliament of religions, in 1893, at Chicago, the U.S.A. Subhas Chandra Bose was inspired by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda towards "Swadharma" and sacrifice. Shri Aurobindo was another Bengali patriot turned saint, who made Pondicherry his religious abode, later.

Surendranath Banerjee and Chitta Ranjan Das were the other prominent Bengalies who took active part in the freedom struggle, the first as a Moderate and Liberal and the latter as Swarajist and revolutionary. Banerjee was the first Indian to enter I.C.S., the "heaven-born service." He passed the I.C.S. in 1860, became Assistant Magistrate in 1871 and later was dismissed due to the anti-Indian policy of the British. He wrote: "My case excited very strong feelings in the Indian community, and the general belief, among my countrymen was, that if I were not an Indian, I would not have been put to all this trouble, and
that the head and front of my offence was that I had entered the sacred preserves of the Indian Civil Service, which so far had been jealously guarded against invasion by the children of the soil. Many years afterwards a Lieutenant Governor told me that it was a wicked proceeding. 7

Chitta Ranjan Das attracted the youth of Bengal, in particular and of India in general, to his political activities. Subhas Chandra Bose accepted him as his political 'Guru' (Teacher) in the very beginning of his public life in 1921.

Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905 fanned the flame of nationalism in Bengal. This partition was annulled under public pressure and agitation in 1911. This was the political scene of India at the time Subhas Chandra Bose was born.

Birth of Subhas Bose:

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on January 23, 1897. That was the year of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign. The Jubilee marked the zenith of the British empire

across the world, excluding only the United States of America which got its independence on July 4th, 1776. The Jubilee was celebrated with pomp and pride throughout India. As if to resist this British imperialism, Bose, a revolutionary nationalist spirit, was born in the same year. Lord Elgin II (1894-1899), was, then, the Viceroy of India.

In the same year (1897) India was rocked with famine, plague and several other difficulties. Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India, wrote in his letter (dated 5-2-1897) to Queen Victoria of England: "The most striking consequence of the utter violence of Her Majesty's most sacred pledges and of Acts and Resolutions of Parliament are the extreme impoverishment of the people of British India and the infliction upon them of all the scourges of the world war, pestilence and famine." 8

Great famine and plague were rampant throughout the country during the years, 1896-97. The plague Commissioner of Poona Mr. Rand and his associate Lt. Ayerst were shot dead in Poona. Tilak, the roaring lion of Maharashtra, the fearless editor of 'Kesari' was prosecuted on charge of sedition and was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment.

It is on record that it was the first prosecution in India under sedition charge. Probably it is for this reason that the British called him "the Father of Indian Unrest".

Subhas was born in Cuttack in the present state of Orissa, which with the present state of Bihar was part of the Presidency of Bengal until 1905. He was born in the first hour of noon on Saturday. The birth time and day were symbolic in his life. 'The first hour of noon' turned later as a symbol of high tension of revolutionary nationalistic spirit, which sprang from Germany to Japan across the world.

Subhas was the sixth of eight sons and the ninth child of fourteen children, eight sons and six daughters, of the family. He hailed from the famous Bose family. His family ancestry "traced back for some twenty-seven generations to Dasarath Bose, the founder of the Dakshina Rarhi (South Bengal) clan of the Booses at Mahinagar, 14 miles to the south of Calcutta." The Booses were "Kaysaths by caste." Among his ancestors, Mahipati was the Finance and War Minister to the King of Bengal, and Gopinath was

10. Ibid.
Finance Minister and Naval Commander to a later King.
Subhas inherited administrative and war like qualities of his ancestors.

Subhas's grand father, Haranath was a 'Vaishnava' by choice, though he was a 'Shakta' by tradition. That marked the flexibility of his mind. He was a religious and social reformer. He stopped animal sacrifice (of goats) at the annual Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of Bengal. Subhas inherited, probably, from his grand father, the cosmopolitan mind and liberal outlook.

Subhas's father was Rai Bahadur Janakinath. He was educated in Calcutta and Cuttack. He joined the Bar as an Advocate at Cuttack in 1885, the year of the birth of the Indian National Congress. He soon built up his flourishing profession. He became the first non-official Chairman of the Cuttack Municipality in 1901. He became a Government pleader and public prosecutor in 1905. He was nominated as Member to the Bengal Legislative Council in 1912 for his thorough knowledge of the Orissa Tenancy Laws. The same year, 1912, he was honoured with the title "Rai Bahadur", in recognition of his services to the Government. He resigned his post in 1917 owing to his differences with the District Magistrate. He renounced
later his title "Kai Bahadur" in 1930, during the freedom movement. These qualities like self-prestige, self-pride, reluctance for power and honours are inherited by Bose. This practice of resigning in protest and returning the titles were common to the Bose family.

Janakinath was a man of unbounded charity. He used to give gifts, alms and charities through young, Subhas, according to the Indian custom. The purpose of this may be that, even their children should inherit their qualities of sacrifice and help. Janakinath used to visit his ancestral village, Kodalia, for religious functions. That shows his traditional, religious and rural bent of mind.

Janakinath had contacts with Keshav Chandra Sen and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasager. He had even thought of converting himself to Brahmoism. He worked for some time as President of the local Theosophical Lodge. He was a regular visitor to the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress, as his sons, Sarat and Subhas came to be involved, later, in active politics.

Subhas's mother, Prabhavati, dominated the domestic affairs. She belonged to the aristocratic family of the Dutts of Hathkola, a northern suburb of Calcutta. In the
beginning, Subhas was "a thoroughly insignificant being" in the large family. As usual in those days, in an aristocratic family, the elders including the parents, used to shower abundant affection on their youngers. Youngsters used to be at the mercy of the family maid. Luckily Subhas got Sherada as his nurse-cum-governess, who called him "Raja" in an usual affectionate manner. In an aristocratic family every child was either "Raja" or "Rani". But in case of Subhas it was symbolic. He really, became 'Raja', later, by being twice the President of the Indian National Congress in 1938 and 1939 and the President of the Provisional Government of the Indian Independence League, and the Supreme Commander of the Indian National Army.

Sherada's innocent guidance became a blessing in disguise to Subhas to become introspective and an introvert. He learnt in his early life the real truth that "industry and good behaviour are the sole passports to success." As Rambha, a maid, inspired Mohandas Gandhi with 'Earn Jia' (enchantment of the name of God), Sherada encouraged the inner feelings of Subhas with her tender care.

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Subhas lived at Cuttack for the first sixteen years of his life, from January 23, 1897 to 1913. His well-to-do aristocratic family was in the midst of a Muslim locality. Muslim children, naturally, became his friends. The harmonious blending of the Hindu-Muslim communities in the locality, naturally, developed in him the cosmopolitan outlook throughout his life. The environment of the locality taught him since his early life the need for Hindu-Muslim unity.

Education:

Subhas's education started in 1902 when he was five years' old. The same year, the British authority in India organised the Durbar at Delhi. It is interesting to note that there was some sort of coincidence between the important events in the life of Subhas and of the British authority in India. The Britishers were exhibiting "a pompous pageant to a starving population" of India which was rocked by the great famine during the period from 1899 to 1901.

The educational institutions, where Subhas studied were those whose products became prominent figures in the history of Indian freedom struggle. They were the Baptist

Subhas first joined the Baptist Mission School, an English elementary school in Cuttack. His elder brothers also had joined the same school. It was an Anglo-Indian Mission School, which was "more Anglo than Indian." The atmosphere at the school was not congenial to Subhas due to its discriminatory policy. "He was not admitted to the sports club... simply because he came of an Indian family. Nor was he admitted to the Boys Volunteer Corps. He was not allowed to take the test for scholarship. Thus it was in his boyhood that he came aware of the two different worlds existing in India."14

Subhas studied in the Baptist Mission School for seven years, 1902-1903. It was during this period that Japan registered her victory over Russia in 1904, which inspired Indian nationalism. "What an inspiration" writes Henry Cotton, "has been afforded by the character of these eastern


islanders'? What an example have they not set to the East of the power of patriotic spirit? The example is not lost on India."¹⁵ That was the "turning point in the political relationship between the East and the West."¹⁶

Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy and Governor-General of India (1899-1905), a high priest of British imperialism, disturbed the politics of Bengal in particular and of India, in general, with his "missions, omissions and commissions," for example his frontier policy, a mission to Shama, the official secret Act of 1904, the Calcutta Corporation Act and the Indian Universities Act.

The partition of Bengal, in 1905, mainly guided by divide and rule policy, rocked both Bengal and India. "The whole purpose and effect of the measure was manifestly Machiavellian."¹⁷ That was not only the first partition of Bengal, but partition of Hindus and Muslims as a prelude for the future partition of India. It led to the establishment of the Muslim League in 1906, at Dacca, the present capital city of Bengla Desh.

Lord Minto II (1905-10) succeeded Lord Curzon as the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in 1908, when Subhas

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¹⁶. Zacharias, Renascent India, op.cit.
¹⁷. Ibid.
was still in the Baptist Missionary School. The Moderate, the Extremist and the Terrorist Movements were in full swing. The Moderates, like Dadabhai Naoroji, "the Grand Old Man of India", Sokhale, Pherozeshah Mehta, Anand Mohan Bose, Surendranath Banerjee and Asutosh Mukherjee were for evolutionary political change, co-operating with the British. "We of the Moderate party believe that the connection of England with India is a divine dispensation ordained for the loftiest and highest of ends." 13

The extremists, popularly known as Lai (Lal Lajpat Rai), Bal (Bal Gangadhar Tilak) and Pal (Bipin Chandra Pal), were roaring from Punjab, Maharashtra and Bengal respectively against the British authority in India. "Indians should no longer be content to be beggars" said Lal Lajpat Rai, "whining for favours; for if they really cared for their country, they would have to strike a blow for themselves." Tilak roared across the country, "Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it." The result was the split in the Congress at the A.I.O.C. meeting at Surat in 1908.

The Terrorist Movement (1905-1911) for which Bengal was the centre, and of which Berindra Kumar Ghosh, brother

of Sri Vivekananda, were the high priests, shook the British authority in India, particularly in Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab. This new cult of revolution developed through the journal, Yugantar (1907). The train in which the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal was travelling, was blown up. The District Magistrate of Dacca was shot in the back, of course, it was not fatal. An attempt was made on the life of Kingsford, Chief Presidency Magistrate, Calcutta, in which two ladies were victimised. Chapekar brothers and Savarkar brothers organised the movement in Maharashtra. Terrorism echoed even abroad. Medan Lal Dhirga assassinated Col. Sir William Wyllie at the Indian Office in London.

The Baptist Missionary school baptised Subhas with discipline, which he developed all along his career, but the racial discrimination pained him to the extent of leaving the school. But, Hugh Toye writes that, Subhas left the school for the preparation in Bengali, which had "become a compulsory subject for the Calcutta matriculation." 19

Subhas left the Baptist Missionary School and joined the Ravenshaw Collegiate School, Cuttack, an Indian Secondary School, in the 4th class, in 1908, and studied

there for five years up to 1913. He had high command over English language due to his convent education and family background. He was looked upon like a hero by his classmates, because of his command over English and of his father's high status. But he was too poor, in the regional language, Bengali. He was even laughed at when a teacher read his (Bose's) composition in the class. He neglected sports, for which he felt later, but became too sportive in politics later. He had interest in "gardening and nature study." 20

Beni Madhav Das, Subhas's head master at the Ravenshaw Collegiate School, could be the first person outside his family to impress on and to inspire in the moral values and social responsibilities. Selflessness and sacrifice of everything for the sake of the motherland were taught by this headmaster. Subhas further developed these qualities. Subhas continued to show his sense of gratitude to him (the Head Master) and to his family even in his later life. "Visitors to the Calcutta Congress in 1928 were astonished to see Bose in his uniform of the G.O.L. of the volunteer Corps running towards the gate to touch the feet of his guru's wife, who happened to be standing there." 21

20. Ibid.
During the Ravenshaw Collegiate school career (1908-1913) itself, Subhas felt an acute mental conflict as he was caught in a dilemma between the worldly life and of mystic life. "It was a period of acute mental conflict," wrote Subhas in his autobiography, "causing untold suffering and agony, which could not be shared by any friends, and was not visible to any outsider." 22 "The mental conflict was," he continued further, "a two-fold one. Firstly, there was the natural attraction of a worldly life and of worldly pursuits in general, against which my higher self was beginning to revolt. Secondly, there was the growth of self consciousness, quite natural at this age, but which I considered unnatural and immoral and which I was struggling to suppress or transcend." 23

Bose was a born spiritualist. He inherited spiritualism from his parents. His maid, Charada, had nursed him further on the same line. Teen age is generally the most delicate and conflicting age between worldly attractions and moral and social responsibilities, fear of the public and above all the self-consciousness on the

22. S.C. Bose, An Indian Pilgrim, pp. 31-32.
23. Ibid.
other. The latter part was specially inspired by Beni Madhav Das, his head master.

During the same period, (1908-1913), luckily, he came under the influence of the works of Swami Vivekananda at a friend's house which helped settling all conflicts in his mind, doubts were cleared and his spirit got the consolation. "I was barely fifteen when Vivekananda entered my life" wrote Subhas, "Then there followed a revelation within and everything was turned upside down. It was, of course, a long time before I could appreciate the full significance of his teachings, or the greatness of his personality, but certain impressions were stamped indelibly on my mind from the outset... Many of the questions which vaguely stirred my mind found in him a satisfactory solution." Subhas got the new ideal from the Swamy: "Atmao Mokshartham Jagada Hitayache" (for one's own salvation and for the welfare of humanity also).

Through Swami Vivekananda, a patriot saint and his Guru (teacher), Swami Rama Krishna Paramahamsa, a silent spiritual revolutionary, entered the life of Subhas. So his teen age became the turning point. "I doubt", wrote Subhas, "if I have passed through a more trying period in

24. Ibid., pp.33-34.
my life than now. Ramakrishna's example of renunciation and purity entailed a battle which raged with all the forces of the lower self. And Vivekananda's ideal brought me into conflict with the existing family and social order. I was weak, the fight was a long drawn one in which success was not easy to obtain, hence tension and unhappiness with occasional fits of depression. "25

Subhas decided to accept the ideals of Swamy Ramkrishna Parmahansa and of Swamy Vivekananda, to lead a spiritual career instead of going in for a worldly career. "I was going to lead," wrote Subhas, "a life conducive to my spiritual welfare and the uplift of humanity... In practical life I was going to emulate Ramakrishna and Vivekananda as far as possible, and in any case, I was not going in for a worldly career."26 He liked the spiritual life most. "One who has tested this heavenly bliss once", he stressed again in a letter to his mother, "will never turn to the sinful material world."27

Subhas had developed the idea that the whole life was a mission for the realization of the Truth, the Divine. "I am most anxious," he wrote in his one of the letters to

25. Ibid., p.35.
26. Ibid., p.345.
27. Ibid., p.129.
his mother between 1912-'13, "to know that you would like your son to be. Merciful God has given us this life, a sound body, intelligence and strength, which are all so precious, but why? He has given us so much, of course, for his worship and his work, but mother, do we do his work?" 28

"Without realization and divine revelation," he wrote to his mother, "life is in vain. Worship, meditation, prayer, contemplation etc., that man engages in have only one aim - realization of the divine. If this purpose is not fulfilled all this is in vain." 29

He had high praise for the mother-land which he placed next only to God, on which God had taken many incarnations. "India is God's beloved land." He wrote to his mother, "He has been born in this great land in every age in the form of the Saviour for the enlightenment of the people, to rid this earth of sin and to establish righteousness in every Indian heart. He has come into being in many centuries in human form, but not so many times in any other country. That is why I say India, our motherland, is God's beloved land." 30

28. Ibid., p. 120.
29. Ibid., p. 129.
30. Ibid., p. 122.
He had faith in God and in the existence of God. It is clear from his argument with his father and in his writing to a friend, Hemant Kumar Sarker:

"He (father, Janakinath) asked me whether the statement about the reality of God as against the unreality of the world might not amount to a mere theory." I said, "It might, but only as long as one simply mouthed it, for the moment it is realised, it becomes a living truth of experience and, what is more, it can be realised. For those who said so had realised it; therefore we too can follow in their footsteps."

"But whoever realised it?", I returned, 'and the proof is their testimony, namely the Upanishads - I do know the Great Being whose colour is the dazzle of the sun and who is stationed beyond the gloom". 31

He had seen many Sadhus and Sanyasis, who used to flock to Puri, popularly known as Jagannath Puri, the abode of God Jagannath. He practised Yoga and mysticism even in his early life, which he continued upto the end of his life.

The Ravenshaw Collegiate School career (1908-1913), in short, added moral, mystic, religious, spiritual and

social dimensions to Subhas’s life. He was a reserved, serious boy, an avid reader, introspective, his mind turning in upon itself in a precocious concern for religious truth, self-control and psychic harmony.\textsuperscript{32}

He passed the matriculation examination from the Ravenshaw Collegiate School, in 1913, with second rank to the Calcutta University among 10,000, being second to one Premath Sercar of the Mitra Institution.\textsuperscript{33} He had passed, even earlier, all his examinations with honours with a high rank.

During his Ravenshaw Collegiate school career (1909–1913), the Indian politics, had witnessed three main changes. First, the Indian Councils Act of 1909 was passed on the lines of the Morley-Minto Reforms, which included the separate communal electorate for muslims. Lord Minto, the then Governor-General of India, even dominated over Lord Morley, the then secretary of state for India, in laying the foundation for communalism in India. Lord Dufferin, also had supported him: “I believe that both with safety and advantage we can give full play to the legitimate and praise worthy ambition of loyal patriotic and educated classes in India.”

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.18.
Second, the office of the Government of India was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi, as announced by the Emperor of India at the Delhi Durbar, of December 12, 1911, to mark the occasion of King George VI as the Emperor of India. The other administrative reorganisation made was that Bengal became only a Presidency with a Governor and his Executive Council, like Bombay and Madras. Lord Carmichael was the first Governor of Bengal as it was proclaimed on March 21st 1912. A separate province of Bihar, Orissa and Chotta Nagpur, from the former Bengal presidency was organised under a Lieutenant Governor, according to a proclamation on March 22, 1912. Assam was separated from Bengal as a Chief-Commissioner's province, by a proclamation on the same day. Third, Lord Hardinge II (1910-1916), succeeded Lord Minto II (1905-10) as the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in 1910.

A Memorable Incident:

Subhas left Cuttack for Calcutta and joined the Presidency College, Calcutta, in 1913. His college career from 1913 to 1916 was significant in all respects, in his life. He pursued his life's mission, the realization of the Truth, the Divine. He took philosophy as his major subject to fulfill his mission of life. "I was going to
make a profound study of philosophy\textquotedblleft, he wrote in his autobiography, \textquotedblleft so that I could solve the fundamental problems of life.\textquotedblright\textsuperscript{34}

Subhas came in contact with "the Neo-Vivekananda Group", the activities of which were the study of books on philosophy, history and nationalism, recruitment of members from other colleges and keeping touch with the prominent personalities and visiting important places. The Group accepted Sri Aurobindo Ghose, another patriot saint of Bengal, and who later made Pondicherry his religious abode, as their idol. "When Subhas came to Calcutta in 1913, Aurobindo had already become a legendary figure about whom people talked with enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{35} The youth were attracted by the writings of Sri Aurobindo. The journal, Arva, a monthly, edited by Sri Aurobindo and his letters used to be circulated among the youth.

Subhas used to utilise his vacations for social work in and around Cuttack. Through a society, of which he was a member, he used to collect money and foodgrains on every Sunday, by begging from door to door and the bounty was distributed to the needy. Thus, it is told, he overcome shame. He nursed, patients in a cholera-striken locality

\textsuperscript{34} S.C. Bose, An Indian Pilgrim, p.45.
\textsuperscript{35} N.G. Jog, In Freedom's Cause, p.22.
without the knowledge of his family. His family servant used to come to take him home. Thus, Subhas in his early life itself was well-versed in social work.

Swamy Vivekananda's teachings: "Atmaka moksharathama Jagdâ Hitaya Cha" (for one's own salvation and for the welfare of humanity also) made a great impact on the life of Subhas. To seek salvation Subhas slipped out once quietly with a friend, without his family knowing about it, on a pilgrimage in search of a proper Guru (Teacher). He visited the important religious centres of North India like Rishikesh, Hardwar, Benaros all on the banks of the holy river, Ganga; Mathura, on the bank of river Yamuna, an abode of a legendary figure Krishna, and Gaya (Bodha-Gaya an abode of late Buddha), for about two months.

His family was panicky after searching in vain for him. He described his return to his home in a letter to a friend: "I got off the street car, braced myself up and entered my home." It was a dramatic scene. His mother, naturally, rushed to receive him first, "Mother was informed," he continued, "Halfway up I met her. I made pratnamas to her - she could not help weeping on seeing me. Later she only said, "it seems you have come into this world to kill me. I would not have waited so long before drowning

36. S.G. Bose, An Indian Pilgrim, p.139.
myself in the Ganges; only for the sake of my daughters I have not done it." It is difficult for ladies in the Hindu society, to get married if any one especially a woman commits suicide in their families.

"Then I met father", he continued, "After I had made my prenomen he led me to his room. On the way he broke down and in the room he wept for quite some time holding on to me... Then he laid down and I massaged his feet - it appeared as if he was feeling some heavenly pleasure... When I go away next time", he concluded his letter, "he (father) will probably give up the idea and the effort to get me back... Mother is a fanatic and says that next time I go she will also leave with me and not return home again."

On his return Subhas suffered from Typhoid. With this pilgrimage of his, he came to be called a 'Sanvase', among his friends jocularly.

Subhas passed his Intermediate examination in the first division from the same college. As he was good in debate, he started a debating club. "Debates must be encouraged among us" said Subhas, "the country will need great debaters, parliamentarians when we are free."

He wanted to train the young Indians to be able to take responsibilities on their shoulders. He rightly pointed out the weakness of Indians - in not taking part in debates. "What I want is," said Bose, "that our boys should learn the art of thinking quickly. And then, the art of debate initiates one into the art of self-reliance which is surely a great gain." 38 "We, Indians, are," Bose continued, "to dependent on others - for action, views, initiative - everything." 39

A memorable incident, the real turning point in his life, as Bose said later, happened in the Presidency College, Calcutta, in the year, 1916. Subhas was elected as class representative of the year. He was popular, even a hero among his classmates, because of his fine personality, a high command over English, being a good debater, a class representative and above all his aristocratic family background.

The Presidency College of Calcutta, then, was a prominent college of Bengal with famous Professors on staff, like Sir J.G. Bose, P.C. Ray and others. The college was leading with good results and in sports too. Students

38. Ibid., p. 27.
39. Ibid., p. 45.
were proud and anxious to study in this college. The Eden Hindu Hostel of the College was a centre of revolutionaries.

Rich students, generally, would be a nuisance to the institutions, as they come to the colleges for fun, or to become representatives or secretaries. Subhas was an exception to this. He passed all his examinations in high division with good ranks. He however got himself involved in an incident in the college, only because he was a class-representative then and he had come from an aristocratic family.

Prof. E. F. Oaten of History, an imperialist British, forcibly pushed away some students, when they were roaming about noisily in the corridor adjoining the room where he was lecturing. Subhas, as a class representative, complained to the Principal against the professor. The Principal did not move. The students of the college went on general strike against the professor demanding his apology to the students. Principal, still, unmoved, instead fined the students. The professor took advantage of this and man-handled a student of the college after about a month. Students revenged by beating the professor, in which Subhas was caught as an eyewitness, though he was not a party to it. The atmosphere was tense. The college was closed. Enquiry of the incident started.
Subhas appeared before the commission of enquiry presided over by Sir Asuthosh Mukharji, former Vice-Chancellor of the University and a judge of the Calcutta High Court. The Principal suspended Subhas saying: "To me, Base, you are the most troublesome man in the college. I suspend you." "Thank you," said Subhas and walked out.

One might judge the behaviour and the words of Subhas as arrogant. Subhas, later justified it on grounds of self respect and the respect of Indian youth. "India has entered on a new life...," he wrote to his friend Hemant Kumar Sarkar, on February 1st, 1916, "Blessed are we that we are living in this auspicious hour... Cease off despair and look yonder to the new light before us, and follow it." "Such a mood," writes Hugh Toye, "in a people was more than difficult." Subhas tried to join some other college in Calcutta to pursue his studies, but he was refused, as the Calcutta University did not permit him. He had no other way except to return to Cutteck, as he was rusticated from the college and from the University.

40. Ibid., p. 69.
41. Quoted, Hugh Toye, op. cit., p. 20.
42. Ibid.
"Lying on the bunk in the train at night", Subhas wrote in his autobiography, "I reviewed the events of the last few months. My educational career was at an end and my future was dark and uncertain. But I was not sorry - there was not a trace of regret in my mind for what I had done. I had, rather, a feeling of supreme satisfaction, of joy that I had done the right thing, that I had stood up for our honour and self-respect and had sacrificed myself for a noble cause. After all, what is life without renunciation."43

This tragic event was a turning point in his life which shaped his future career. He was not disheartened by the incident, instead, accepted it as a challenge. "Little did I then realize the inner significance of the tragic events of 1916." He wrote, "My Principal had expelled me but he had made my future career. I had established a precedent for myself from which I could not easily depart in future. I had stood up with courage and composure in a crisis and fulfilled my duty. I had developed self-confidence as well as initiative, which was to stand me in good stead in future. I had a foretaste of leadership - though in a very restricted sphere - and of the martyrdom that it involves. In short, I had acquired character and could face

43. S.C. Bose, *An Indian Pilgrim*, p. 70.
the future with equanimity." 44

During his Presidency College career, 1913-16, terrorism was at its peak, particularly, in Punjab. An attempt on the life of Lord Hardinge, Governor-General of India, was made. In the Delhi conspiracy case death sentences were passed on Amir Chand, Aradh Behari, Dalmukund and Besant Kumar Biswas. Sikh emigrants from Canada came to India, when the Ghadar party, under Har Dayal, was organised.

Gandhi returned with triumph, in the year 1913, from South Africa. Gokhale, leader of the Moderates, died in 1915, as if to make room for Gandhi.

Subhas stayed for more than a year at Cuttack from February 1916 to July 1917, trying to put his mind into social work like nursing cholera patients and others.

His father and his elder brother moved heaven and earth to admit him to a college. Dr. Urquhart, the Principal of Scottish Church College, Calcutta, agreed to admit him, but on the condition of bringing a no-objection certificate from the Head of the Presidency College. The elder brother and later Subhas himself met the Principal.

44. Ibid., p.71.
the new one, who had succeeded the former, who had retired, and got the certificate.

Subhas joined the Scottish Church College, Calcutta, the last educational institution, he joined in India, in July 1917, to the third year class of the college. As a student of the college, he joined in 1918, the University Training Corps which was attached to the Indian Territorial Army. He enjoyed the military training camp of four months. In a shooting competition, Indian boys beat their British instructor. Subhas would have dreamed then itself, of beating the British out of India later.

This was, in a sense, another turning point in his life, from mysticism to military life. "What a change it was from sitting at the feet of anchorites to obtain knowledge of God," he wrote, "to standing with a rifle on my shoulder taking orders from a British Army Officer."45 He had a satisfaction of getting strength and self-confidence out of military training. "This training", he wrote, "gave me something which I needed or which I lacked the feeling of strength and of self-confidence grew still further."46 He felt proud of being a soldier, as he could go to war.

45. Ibid., p.80.
46. Ibid., p.82.
prohibited places. "As soldiers we had certain rights", he wrote, "Which as Indians we did not possess. To us, as Indians, Fort William in Calcutta was out of bounds, but as soldiers we had right of entry there.... the first day we marched into Fort William to bring our rifles. We could snap our fingers at the police and other agents of the Government by whom we were in the habit of being harassed or terrorised."47

Subhas passed his B.A., from the Scottish Church College, Calcutta, affiliated to the University of Calcutta, with first class honours, with second rank to the University, with philosophy as his major subject, in 1913, at his twenty-two years of age. That was the end of his college career in India.

47. Ibid.