CHAPTER- VI

SUBHAS

HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS STUDENTS
AND THEIR MOVEMENTS

"I have at all times been laying considerable stress on the youth and students' movements in this country, because I am convinced that the future of this country is in the hands of our students and young men."  

Subhas Chandra Bose.

According to Subhas, one of the most encouraging signs of his time is the growth of a genuine students' movement all over India. Subhas, in his The Indian Struggle, gives a clear account of the genesis of the student movement. "When the boycott of the Simon Commission was launched .... students all over Bengal, and particularly in Calcutta, took an active part in it. Disciplinary action was taken against many of them by the college authorities and then the students began to feel the want of an organisation of their own. Out of this experience the Students' Movement in Bengal was born. "

Subhas has a clear conception about the objective of the youth movement. "There is no dearth, at home or abroad, of institutions and movements. Why, then, has the youth movement been organised ? The reason is not far to seek. The young men of all countries are getting impatient and discontented. What they want they do not get ... Therefore, they are in revolt

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1 Speech at the Lahore Session of the Punjabi Students' Conference, 19 October 1929, "Punjab and Bengal, Students and Politics" in Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugita Bose (eds.), The Essential Writings of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose., Oxford University press, Delhi, 1997, p. 103. (Hereafter Essential Writings)

and are determined to sweep away all men and systems that stand in their way.”

Subhas, in fact, is quite aware of the fact that the students of his time are very much conscious of the inimical forces gripping them like vice from all sides. Chains of bondage scourge them all the time. Instead of being only tame followers they want to hold the reins in their own hands and face all the consequences that might ensue. They are restless; they are active; they are prepared to share any responsibility; they want to chalk out their own plan of action. As Subhas says: “They rather feel that the country and the country’s future belong more to them than to the older generation and it is therefore their bounden duty to accept the fullest responsibility for the future of the country and to equip themselves for the proper discharge of their responsibility.”

The youth abhor the idea of sitting idle and be mute spectators of happenings over which they have no control. And the idea of bearing silently the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune is repugnant to them. To keep their head high at all times without caring for the consequences is their motto of life.

Subhas feels for the youth; he has always a soft corner in his heart for them. He remembers the early days of his life when he himself was a student. And that is why he always encourages the students’ movements. Recapitulating those days Subhas says: “… when I was a student, I and some of my fellow students – including my seniors as well as my juniors – had to suffer some persecutions at the hands of the authorities and in those days, with the exception of the late Babu Motilal Ghosh and Deshbandhu C. R. Das, few public men came forward to give us their support and protection. Consequently, I have a first-hand knowledge of the humiliation and

4 Speech at the Lahore session of the Punjabi Students’ Conference, 19 October 1929, “Punjab and Bengal, Students and Politics” in Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugata Bose(eds) The Essential Writings of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Delhi, 1997, p. 103. Oxford University Press.
persecution which sometimes befall the lot of students of our country."\(^5\) And so Subhas feels happy to take upon himself the onerous task of helping the student movements.

Subhas gives other reasons too for his attachment to student movements. One of the reasons is that during his stay at Cambridge, Subhas got a first-hand experience of the student community of England. He had observed that the students there enjoyed a superior status in the eyes of the public as well as the Government and this feature was nowhere to be found in India. And that is why he was always ready and eager to espouse the cause of the student community.

But Subhas knows there are no dearth of people, eminent people they might be, who look askance at the student movements or youth associations. They, in fact, do not have a clear conception about such associations or movements. Subhas clarifies his point by emphasising that a social service league or a famine relief society can never be called a youth association. The main prerequisite of a student movement is a gnawing feeling of impatience, restlessness and a sense of frustration with the existing order. There are also others who participate in the movement without having a clear idea of the inner significance of the movement. What prompts them is the desire to swim with the tide, because it is prestigious to be associated with student movement.

While delineating upon this theme – The Role of the Youth in our National Life – in his speech as President of the first C. P. Youth Conference at Nagpur on 29 November 1929, Subhas very cogently expresses his views regarding the essential creed of the Youth Movement. From the dawn of the

present renaissance, he says, movement after movement emerged in this country. But the very fact that in spite of this another movement slowly but steadily establishing its hold on the young people of India, is sufficient reason itself for its emergence and existence. The Youth Movement has come and has come to stay because there is a genuine need in the heart of the youth for such a movement. Very emphatically he says, "there is certainly some fundamental craving in the soul of the individual and of the nation to satisfy for which the Youth Movement had to be created." And this fundamental craving is the insatiable hankering for freedom from the claustrophobic atmosphere of bondage. Youth Movements, according to Subhas, are not reformist in outlook but revolutionary.

Subhas, in his Lecture at Opera House on the ‘Mission of Young India’ on 22 May 1928, clearly indicates what should be the mission of the youth and youth movements. This mission is the creation of a new world, not only for the youth but for all humanity. The genesis of the youth movement is an inner awakening. Very cogently he asserts: "The mission of youth is first to dream of a ‘kingdom within ye’ and next to strive for its realisation in social and national life. I believe in the mission of the youth for it is in the company that the best in us finds expression."

Subhas points out that India has a two-fold mission. One is to look internally at her own problems – political, economic and social. And secondly, to take a glance at the outside world and try to find out the ways and means for solving the world problems and thus contribute her mite to the world civilization. To achieve this object what is necessary for the Indian youth is to recall India’s glorious past and dream optimistically of a radiant future. And

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not only that. There should be an earnest endeavour on the part of the youth to transform this into reality. Over and above this, a keen awareness of the unity of the Indian society and the continuity of her civilization must be there. Subhas himself visualises the Indian civilization as “a mighty river flowing down the banks of time reinforced at various intervals by different culture streams. From Kashmir to Cape Comorin, from Bengal to Gujrat it is one civilization... We have but to look to our past and develop a historic consciousness to realise the greatness of our civilization, its achievement in art, philosophy, religion and sociology...”\(^8\) And so he exhorts the students to “carry the torch and set ablaze the whole country with sacred fire of revolution, nationalism and patriotism. No power on earth, much the power of Great Britain can quench the sacred flame.”\(^9\)

But unfortunately, Subhas knows very well, there are people who sometimes without realising the real implication of the term ‘youth movement’, mislead the youth by trying to give their own version – youth conferences are nothing but “the back benches of the Indian National Congress.”\(^10\) What they do not realise is that the Indian National Congress, being mainly a political party, cannot cater to to all the cravings of the youth – viz. political, social, economic and cultural. And quite naturally the youth realise that it is not possible for the Indian National Congress to satisfy all their needs. The youth want to subscribe to such a movement which will enable them to have a full play of all their faculties – physical, mental, emotional, psychological, as a result of which they will have the fullest power of self-fulfilment and self-expression.

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Subhas goes further and in his speech, as President of the first C. P. Youth Conference at Nagpur on 29 November 1929, asserts that the Youth Movement "is an emblem of our dissatisfaction with the present order of things. It stands for the revolt of youth against age-long bondage, tyranny and oppression. It seeks to create a new and better world for ourselves and for humanity by removing all shackles and giving the fullest scope to the creative activity of mankind...It is a genuine independent movement, the mainspring of which lie deeply embedded in human nature...In these circumstances one cannot be surprised if some of our elders view these movements with dislike or disfavour."

Subhas, in fact, places youth movement on a high pedestal. According to him, the youth movement is in its scope co-exists with life itself. As there are quite a number of aspects in the life of an individual, so there will be a number of different sections. ..."if we are to rejuvenate the body, we shall need sports, athletics and gymnastics. If we are to emancipate and re-educate the mind, we shall need a new literature, a high and better type of education and a healthy conception of morality. If we are to rejuvenate society we shall have to do away ruthlessly with hide-bound ideas and customs and substitute new and healthy ones instead." Remembering the dictum : 'the old order changeth yielding place to new lest one good custom should corrupt the world' Subhas urges that there should be re-evaluation of the existing order of things-social and moral - in the searchlight of close introspection and only then the path will be clear for the emergence of a new scale of values which will take over and determine the society of the future.

11 Ibid., p. 63.
12 Ibid., p. 64.
13 Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-92), Poet Laureate, 'Ulyssis', The Winged Words, Macmillan, Calcutta, 1974, p. 120.
In his Presidential Address at the C P and Berar Students’ Conference delivered on 1 December 1929, at Amraoti, Subhas reiterates the same point more vigorously: “What is wanted is a transfiguration of our whole life – a complete revolution, if you will. Do not fight shy of the word ‘revolution’. We may differ in our conception of ‘revolution’, but I have yet to see a living human being who does not believe in revolution.”\textsuperscript{14} According to Subhas, there is no basic or fundamental difference between ‘evolution’ and ‘revolution’. If revolution is compressed into a shorter period it becomes revolution and vice versa. But “what we want most of all is the awakening from within. The soul of the nation has to be stirred to its depths – and how we can do this in the shortest possible time–is our chief problem.”\textsuperscript{15}

But Subhas also forewarns. The task would not be easy for the youth. Vested interests will always be there. Attempts will be made to thwart the attempts to bring in any change. Stiff opposition will be there from all sides. “The progress of Youth Movement will have to be effected in the teeth of opposition and in the face of numerous obstacles. Occasions will arise when we shall be hemmed in from all sides and it will appear as if we stand by ourselves cut off from the rest of the world...The rank and file of the Youth Movement should therefore be prepared to face enemies more formidable than those whom the political workers may have to encounter.”\textsuperscript{16}

Elsewhere also, while exhorting the student community in a speech at Noakhali Youth Conference on 17 May 1931, he reminds the students of the glorious role they have to play in the times to come for the liberation of their motherland. He reminds the young students of the heroic exploits of Mazzini

\textsuperscript{14} “The Need for Radical Transformation in Freedom’s Cause,” Presidential Address at the C.P. and Berar Students’ Conference delivered on 1 December 1929 at Amraoti, \textit{N. C. W.}, Vol. 6, p. 82.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{16} n. 10, p. 64.
and tells "how the hundred-fold divisions and other barriers then existing could not freeze the genial currents of Mazzini’s youthful heart and thrust him from realising the ideal of securing freedom for Italy." Subhas’ message to the youth is that they should ‘live in history’; they must create history. And to make history they must be prepared for any eventuality. He warns the students that “one who desires to swim with the tide of popular approbation on all occasions may become the hero of the hour, but he cannot live in history; neither can he create history.”

The youth movement, according to Subhas, is both constructive and destructive. As from the ashes of phoenix a new bird is born so from the rubbles of destruction a new construction lifts its head. Destruction can never be an end in itself. And that is why Subhas reminds the youth that the growth and expansion of the freedom movement in any sphere of life means destruction – and sometimes ruthless destruction. And he very clearly points out what is to be destroyed: “There can be no compromise with untruth, hypocrisy, bondage and inequality. We shall have to strike and strike hard if we have to break these shackles.” Subhas comments that this is the reason why youth movements are not reformist in outlook but revolutionary.

According to Subhas, the student movement is not a twentieth century phenomenon. The beckoning of a better world inspired people of all ages and all countries – this is going on happening even from the days of Buddha and Socrates. It is a perennial source of inspiration. This has come to be a characteristic feature of the youth movements that are seen in the modern age. "Whether it is Bolshevism in Russia or Fascism in Italy or the Young Turk

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18 n. 10, p. 65.
19 Ibid., p.66.
Movement in Turkey, whether it is a movement in China or in Persia or in Germany, everywhere you will find the same impulse, vision and objective.  

In a speech delivered at the Rajshahi District Students’ Conference on 17 August 1929, Subhas compares the life, growth and development of a nation to an individual. “In the life of a nation as in that of an individual, there is a law of ‘Motion and Expansion’ which works as long as there is life in it or on him. When this law ceases to work, the individual becomes as good as inert or dead. ‘Motion and expansion’ – these are the two barometers which would indicate the state in which this nation of ours is at present situated.” Moreover the non-functioning of this law indicates the preponderence of alien forces which would soon stifle the nation or the individual.

But inscrutable are the principles which cause the growth and decline of a nation. There are cases where some nations have been completely effaced from the face of the earth while there are others which survive and flourish. Subhas tries to decipher and analyse the causes of these apparently inexplicable phenomena. Unless this ‘riddle’ is solved it might be difficult to create a new nation. According to the Western thinkers, says Subhas, only those nations which are capable of solving the knotty problem can prosper. “The fact is that when a nation shows the sign of decadence, a mighty revolutionary shock to its intellectual outlook is necessary so that it may begin to think anew. The real cause that China, Japan and India have survived the onslaught of this law of civilization is that there were thought-revolution towards the end of Dark Ages.” Also it might be that cultural fusion with foreigners in the different periods of time might have been a contributory cause of their survival. But the real task before the students’ conferences is to

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22 Ibid., p. 20.
be inspired by a new ideal and to generate an ardent zeal to create a new nation.

Subhas tries to answer the question – “what should be the code of conduct in student life which may lead to the attainment of this ideal?” He thinks that the answer may lie in Nietzsche’s theory of ‘Superman’. Nietzsche “… believed that Christian morality led man astray from his true ideals and if a new class of men were to be created, Christian morality had to be scorned and set aside. His theory holds ground even today.” Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm (1844-1900), the German philosopher, was a moralist who passionately rejected Western bourgeois civilization as decadent and in place of its slave morality which would affirm the life-values. This superhuman would represent the highest passion and creativity and would live at a level of experience beyond the conventional standards of good and evil. His creative will-power would set him off from the ‘herd’ of interior humanity.

This ascent or elevation to a higher level of humanity is the ideal goal and attempts are being made in all countries to attain this. Subhas says that great thinkers like Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Thomas Moore and our own ancient rishis tried to attain this ideal which would elevate man to a higher level of humanity. And he calls upon the students and youths of Bengal to have that ideal, that awakening of the self as their goal because all the hopes and aspirations of the future centre round the student community. This is all the more necessary in the present times because, as Subhas ruminates, “… there is no sufficient ‘Motion and Expansion’ of our life force. The spirit of adventure, the urge for the lure of the unknown - all these sadly lack in our youths.”

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23 Ibid., p.20.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., p.22
A silver lining in the cloud, however, is visible. Fortunately, the much sought-for awakening has come at last and it is an awakening from within. The youth of today are not prepared to placidly wait handing over all the responsibilities to their elders. They are quite aware of the fact that they have to play their own roles. They must rise to the occasion and shoulder all the responsibilities. They have to sit at the helm and act as navigators. To achieve this, Subhas feels, what is necessary is a strong sense of discipline, and "an abiding faith in ourselves," 26 and a gradual unfoldment of individuality. Fortunately, students have not taken long to realise this. Subhas, in his Presidential address at the Maharashtra Youth Conference, on 22 December 1931, happily observes: "Youth all over the world is impatient with the present order of things. It has a dream, a vision of its own — a vision of a better order of things, and it is now gathering strength everywhere to translate that dream into reality." 27 And India was not lagging behind.

There was a perceptible awakening among the youth during the years 1928 and 1929. The first session of the All India Youth Congress in Calcutta presided over by Mr. K.F.Nariman, the Parsi leader from Bombay, heralded a new factor in public life and infused the student community with enthusiasm. In 1929, student organisations were formed all over Bengal as branches of the Provincial Youth Association and Provincial Students' Association. The students of other provinces also were not sitting idle. Subhas, in his The Indian Struggle, gives a list of some such conferences presided over by different personalities. "Throughout 1929, youth and student organisations grew up all over Bengal. Beside the political conferences held in different districts of Bengal from time to time, separate conferences for youths and for students

began to be held from now onward. In other provinces too, the same phenomena were visible. In Poona, the Maharashtra Youth Conference was held and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru presided over it. In Ahmedabad, the Bombay Presidency Youth Conference met in October 1929, and was presided over by Mrs. Kamaladevi Chattopadhaya (sister-in-law of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu), who within a short time had become a popular figure among the youths. In September, the first session of the Punjab Students’ Conference was held in Lahore and was presided over by the writer. Following this, the Central Provinces Youth Conference was held in November at Nagpur and the Berar Students’ Conference at Amraoti in December, both being presided over by the writer. In the Madras Presidency, too, similar conferences were held. At the end of the year, at Lahore, during the Congress week, an All-India Congress of Students was held and was presided over by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Vice-Chancellor of the Banares Hindu University." 28

During this period of awakening of the Indian youth, the young women of the country were not trailing behind. As Subhas adds in a footnote to his The Indian Struggle, there was “similar awakening among women. In Bengal the Deshbandhu had started in 1921 the Nari Karma Mandir for training women for national service. After his death this institution ceased to exist. In 1928, when the writer resumed his public activities, a political organisation for women was started under the name of Mahila Rashtriya Sangha in Calcutta,, which was followed by many other organisations all over the country." 29

Subhas believed that Indian women had a very important role to play in the national life. Subhas, in fact, was quite conscious of the importance of young women joining the youth movements of the country. “There is another aspect,” he says, “of our movement which has been somewhat neglected in this country – the women’s movement. It is impossible for one-half of the

28 Subhas Chandra Bose, n.2, p.182.
29 Ibid.
In all countries – and even in the Labour Party in England-women’s organizations have rendered invaluable service.”30 In the freedom movement, Subhas feels, young women have an important role to play. “Emancipation of women is also equally essential for the attainment of freedom. The part that women played in the freedom movement in other countries is too well-known to be retold here. Our women folk should now be freed from any disabilities that they may be suffering from and they should be emancipated.”31 But he gives a note of caution: “I do not want the feminine movement of Europe and America to be reproduced in India. I have no love for bobbed hair and short skirts.”32

Subhas is quite conscious of the object of the youth movements. The main object of the movements, Subhas feels, is to inspire the youth with one ideal viz. “to develop their character and personality and thereby render the most effective service to the cause of their country. This movement has or should have, two lines of activity. In the first place it should deal with the problems which relate exclusively to the student population of the day and endeavour to bring about their physical, intellectual and moral regeneration. In the second place, looking upon the subject as the future citizen, it should endeavour to equip him for the battle of life and for this purpose, it should give him a foretaste of what problems and activities are likely to confront him when he enters the arena of life.”33 In his speech at the Lahore session of the Punjabi Students’ Conference, on 19 October 1929, he clearly points out the broad spectrum that the word ‘freedom’ envisages. It has many facets and a varied connotation, he says,” ... By freedom I mean all round freedom i.e.

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33 ‘Punjab and Bengal, Students and Politics’, Speech at the Lahore session of the Punjabi Students’ Conference, 19 October 1929, N.C.W. Vol. 6, p.47.
freedom for man in individual as well for society, freedom for man as well as for women, 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 cast barriers and social iniquities and destruction of communalism and religious intolerance. 34 And he exhorts the student community to rouse this intense desire for freedom within themselves and rise to the occasion. Only this would enable them to reach their coveted goal.

Subhas has very clear-cut views regarding the often-debated question - participation of students in politics. And he cannot tolerate any compromise on this point. Subhas thinks participation in politics is conducive to the development of character and manhood. Very emphatically he asserts, “I know that there are people in this country – even eminent personages – who think that a subject race has no politics and that students in particular should have nothing to do with politics. But my own view is that a subject race has no politics and that students in particular should have nothing to do with politics. But my own view is that a subject race has nothing but politics.” 35 Subhas gives plausible reasons for his assertion. Life to him is one absolute whole: it cannot be split up or fragmentated into different individual sections. National life is to be taken as an absolute whole merging all the different segments. Subhas strongly feels that in every dependent country there is a root cause of every problem it is this political dependence. All the evils and all the sufferings that the people of a dependent country suffer from are the outcome of this political servitude. Obviously therefore, students cannot and should not keep their eyes shut to this vital question of political emancipation.

34 Ibid., p.50.
35 Ibid., p.45.
In this connection another point raised by Subhas is that the future political thinkers and statesmen come out of the ranks of students. "If in India, students do not take active part in politics, from where are we to recruit our political workers and where are we to train them?" he asks. In fact, according to Subhas, "while the youth movement is not merely political, it is not non-political". In the same speech at the Lahore session of the Punjabi Students’ Conference (19 October 1929), Subhas directs the students to have a glimpse of the Chinese history and see what the students have done for their motherland. "The renaissance in modern China," he says, "is due almost wholly to the activities of Chinese students – both men and women. They have on the one hand gone out into the villages and into the towns and factories to preach the message of freedom and on the other hand they have organised the whole country from one end to the other." 

Citing these examples, Subhas points out that there is definitely a need for such encouragement so that future politicians and political thinkers can come out of the rank of students. Moreover, taking active part in political activities is necessary for the development of character and manhood. And very emphatically Subhas asserts: "Bookworms, gold medalists and office-clerks are not what universities should endeavour to produce – but men of character who will become great by achieving greatness for their country in different spheres of life." He wants that students no longer should hanker for degrees and diplomas only. In Japan students go out of their country mainly to learn, not for degrees only. The same idea, Subhas says, should be emulated. The first business of education is to bring out the real man because education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man, as said by Swami Vivekananda.

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36 Ibid.
37 Ibid, p.53.
38 Ibid, p.46.
"The highest duty of a student," according to Subhas, "is to be a real man. To have more education is essential and in that context studies can be accepted as a kind of Tapasya. But without attainment of health, character-building, social service and national work during student life, you cannot have a complete and clean human being ... The education of a student will not end in the university; it will begin there."\(^{39}\) Self education is a continuous process and it should be the utmost concern of the student community to be conscious of this fact. He deplores that the students are gradually becoming 'good boys'. 'Good boy' will not achieve anything. That he who is good at studies eventually attains prosperity is an utterly wrong ideal. Another saying – chhatranang adhyanang tapah – (The only preoccupation of students should be studies) is not wholly true; it is half-truth."\(^{40}\)

Subhas deplores the deterioration in health and the disappearance of vivacity of life among the students. "As a result we are startled by the sound of the gun, we faint when a thief enters with a dagger in his hand and we run away to save ourselves leaving the women-folk at the mercy of God when our houses are raided by dacoits. We have completely given up the practice of lathi-play and wrestling either for the sake of the police or for the sake of so-called gentlemanliness."\(^{41}\) Moreover, a deep dejection clouds the mind and soul of the young students. They have forgotten the joy of life. The reasons are not far to seek. Starvation, lack of health, energy and enthusiasm stare them in the face. "But I say," comments Subhas, "if you lose Ananda what are you left with? Ananda marks the beginning of creation, it is inspiration of Ananda that promotes good deeds .... One must learn to love what is new, one must be crazy about the unknown, one must work for self-expression in freedom and

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p.14.
\(^{41}\) Ibid. p.18.
under the open sky by demolishing whatever is fossilized hindrance to life." 42
And only then joy and happiness will pervade the mind of the young people.

Subhas, in fact, is not a believer in passivism. He is a pragmatist. Metaphysical speculation is not his field. He judges the intrinsic value of any school of thought from the point of view of its actual effects or consequences. In his speech at the third session of the All India Youth Congress held in Calcutta on 25 December 1928, Subhas forcefully express his views on the two schools of thought which have their centres at Sabarmati and Pondicherry. Subhas disparages the propaganda carried on by the Sabarmati school of thought because it tends to create an impression that modernism is bad. And along with this it preaches that "large-scale production is an evil, that wants should not be increased, that the standard of living should not be raised, that we must endeavour to the best of ability to go back to the days of the bullock cart, and that the soul is so important that physical culture and military training can well be ignored." 43 And all these were against the basic tenets of the philosophy of Subhas.

And the object of the Pondicherry school of thought is "to create a feeling and an impression that there is nothing higher or nobler than peaceful contemplation, that Yoga means Pranayama and dhyanaa." 44 Subhas is against this philosophy because "this propaganda has led many a man to forget that spiritual progress under the present-day conditions is possible only by ceaseless and unselfish action, that the best way to conquer nature is to fight her, and it is weakness to seek refuge in contemplation when we are hemmed in all sides by dangers and difficulties." 45 Subhas is a believer in the philosophy of activism. Times have changed. Man no longer lives in an

42 Ibid, pp. 15-16.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
isolated corner of the world. India, when she is free, will have to face modern enemies with modern weapons and modern methods. And it is a must for the young people of India to adapt themselves with these modern methods and meet the challenge successfully. It may be mentioned in this connection that subsequently elsewhere Subhas says: "I now feel that I must visit Pondicherry once when I am free. I have received a long letter from Dilip (Dilip Kumar Roy) recently. He was pained when he read my remarks about Pondicherry School of Thought which I made in December 1928 and he took it to heart." 46

Subhas is quite emphatic about the importance of military training for the young people. In a speech at Rajshahi Students' Conference on 20 August 1929, he speaks of the importance of military training for the students. Though in other countries this training is arranged by the Government, this can never be expected from the foreign rulers of India. So the initiative has to be taken by the Indians themselves. Subhas himself, while he was a student of Scottish Church College, Calcutta, availed himself of the opportunity to get military training. When the Government started a University Unit in the Indian Defence Force – Indian Territorial Army – he got himself admitted. Even at that early age he was fully aware of the importance of military training. "The underlying aim and principle behind such training is that if a batch of boys and girls learn to march together in measured feet, they will also learn to work together. If, say, twenty thousand boys are collected together today, a veritable pandemonium will be let loose there, but if the same boys receive proper training and are collected together again, it will look like a disciplined army." 47

According to Subhas, the volunteer movement is nothing new in Bengal. The idea of launching such a movement was there always in the minds of the youths though its full play was not possible because of Government opposition and repression. In his speech at the birthday meeting of Jatindra Nath Das on 29 October 1929, Subhas says: "Jatin was one of those who organised the Bengal Volunteer Corps. His last wish was that this corps should be placed on a sound footing and this will, I hope, appeal to every heart." But the undaunted Subhas had already placed this volunteer corps on a sound footing at the time of the Calcutta Congress in 1928. He had taken a leading part in organising and training volunteers. He was also the G.O.C.- General Officer Commanding – of the Bengal Volunteer Corps (B.V.). Subhas who whole-heartedly believed in military training for the Indian youth organised it efficiently and magnificently. The volunteers recruited, numbering about 2000, were given adequate training by Subhas.

The Volunteer Corps organised by Subhas had different Divisions like : Bicycle Division, Motor Cycle Division, Cavalry Division, etc. Nirod C. Chowdhury, in his The Continent of Circe, an essay on the people of India, gives a cognent and interesting account of this: "I have in my possession the pre-war manual of the infantry training of the British army which belonged to Bose and even annotated by him. The first expression of Bose's militarism was seen at the session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta in 1928. For it, Bose organized a Volunteer Corps in uniform, its officers being even provided, as far as I can remember, with steel-chain epaulettes. Bose designated himself as its General Officer Commanding, G.O.C. for short, and his uniform was made by a firm of British tailors in Calcutta, Herman's." Naturally, the whole thing was unsavoury to Gandhi – the apostle of non-

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48 "Appeal to Erect a suitable Memorial to Jatindra Nath Das", 28 October 1929, N.C.W., Vol. 6 p. 58.
violence, and he (Gandhiji) came out with his critical comment. In the words of Nirod C. Chowdhury: "Mahatma Gandhi, being a sincere pacifist vowed to non-violence, did not like the strutting, clicking of boots and saluting and he afterwards described the Calcutta session of the Congress as Bertrón Circus."^50

It may be noted in this connection that the Bengal Volunteer Corps (B.V.) did not completely disintegrate after the 1928 Calcutta Congress. In spite of the frown of the British ruler it remained loyal to its duties. Subhas, as General Officer Commanding, B.V. Alipore Court, issued a statement addressed to the Bengal Volunteers on 23 January 1930: "It appears that the Corps 'Bengal Volunteers' has incurred the displeasure of the authorities. This is, therefore, just the time when I should address an appeal to the youths of Bengal to join the corps in large numbers. To those who are already members, my appeal is that they should work with heart and soul and see to it that in our absence the work of the Corps does not receive a setback. I have no doubt that the repressive policy of the Government will only help to strengthen our Corps in point of numbers, discipline and organisation. The responsibility of our officers and N.C.O.'s is very great indeed. They will have to set an example to the rank and file of our corps. I have complete confidence in them as also in our rank and file and I have no doubt that they will rise to the occasion."^51

This indicates how seriously Subhas viewed the Bengal Volunteer Corps. The members of the Bengal Volunteers remained devoted to Subhas. Even after Subhas' 'great escape' from India they did not fail to play their role and carry out his orders. The Bengal Volunteers acted as channel of communication when Subhas was in Berlin. Subhas used to pass on instructions to the B.V. and also to Sarat Chandra Bose through Bhagat Ram in Kabul or through his close associate in India – Satya Ranjan Bakshi. Subhas, at one time, had plans to bolster up a revolt within which would merge with his armed entry into

^50 Ibid
India from outside. The B.V. was expected to be positioned in the front lines of this operation. But ultimately because of strong police surveillance the plan did not fully materialise. The whole episode indicated how seriously Subhas banked upon the youth and student movements.

Subhas, in fact, drew his lessons and inspiration about the efficacy of such youth and volunteer movement from the pages of the history of other countries. "Instances of such solid organisations", he says, "are numerous in history. Cromwell’s ‘Ironside’ was his mainstay-La Fayette had his ‘National Guards,’ Napoleon his ‘Imperial Guards’ and Frederick of Germany had Garibaldi’s ‘Ten Thousand’, Mussolini’s Black Shirts, the Russian Red Army all these are monumental in history."\(^{52}\)

But at the same time Subhas warns against blindly imitating the others; light and inspiration should come from within one’s self. In his speech at the All India Naujawan Bharat Sabha in Karachi on 5 April 1932, while enumerating the weakness in Congress policy and programme he points out the element of uncertainty and mental reservation in the minds of the leaders because the programme is based not on radicalism but on adjustment with the rulers. But this adjustment, according to Subhas, can never kindle the revolutionary spirit of the youth which he so earnestly wanted. Very emphatically he says : “We do not want to tinker with the gigantic problems we have to solve therefore we want a radical militant programme.”\(^{53}\) And Subhas firmly believes that only the youths of the country with their indomitable courage can implement this programme.

Subhas has great faith on the student movement, the main purpose of which is to recreate our whole life. In fact, the youth movement, Subhas

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52 n.47, p.24.
believes, “came into existence to cater to some fundamental craving in the soul of the individual”\textsuperscript{54}. And this fundamental craving is the desire for freedom and self-fulfilment. Subhas is an ardent student of the philosophy of the French philosopher Bergson. Bergson propagated the theory of \textit{elan vital} – the vital impulse which moves the whole world to activity and progress. Subhas applies this theory to our national life and exhorts the youth to rise to the occasion and take up the gauntlet. “If you want to be free, you must revolt against the bondage that surrounds you-if you revolt against bondage and revolt successfully you are bound to win your freedom.”\textsuperscript{55}

Subhas is a visionary. There is no end to his dreams. In his \textit{The Dreams of Youth} (16 May 1925) he succinctly expresses his dreams. Philosophically and very poetically he says: “The high tide of youth has carried us here to make everybody taste the joy eternal (\textit{Ananda}) because we are the manifestation of that bliss (\textit{Ananda-Swarup}). We shall stride across the earth as the very embodiment of \textit{Ananda}. We shall rejoice out of the \textit{Ananda} which is in us and shall also make the whole world resound with our laughs..... Amidst this new awakening, the highest achievement and the greatest hope is that the youth has been able to assert its presence. Now that the slumbering spirit of youth is awake in every sphere of life and in light itself the red glow of youth will shine brightly. This youth movement is all-pervasive as it is universal.”\textsuperscript{56} And he gives his clarion call to the youth: “Oh my youthful harbingers of new life, arise, awake, the streaks of dawn are visible already.”\textsuperscript{57}

The above analysis reveals that the attitude of Subhas towards students and their movements has several dimensions:

\textsuperscript{54} n.10, p.62.
\textsuperscript{55} n.14, pp. 83-84
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ibid.}
(i) **All-round development of the faculties** – Subhas desires that the youth should develop all their faculties – physical, mental, intellectual and supramental. He gives great importance to the all-round development of these faculties in the life of students because it is the students, as he believes, on whom the future of the nation depends. Students are the future leaders of the country. And for future leaders proper development of these faculties is a must; this would enable them to give effective guidance to their country. Subhas, in fact, was deeply influenced by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. His stress on the development of physical and mental faculties of the students corresponds to the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, while his emphasis on the mental and intellectual development of students bears the impact of Tagore. And his focus on the development of supramental consciousness points to the influence of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy on him. According to Subhas, the fullest manifestations of these faculties are the essential pre-requisites in the life of students so that they can become real leaders with leader-like qualities on whom the future of the nation may be entrusted.

(ii) **Role of the students in the Independence of the Country**:
Subhas believes that the students play a crucial role in the struggle for independence of a country. Accordingly, he gives a clarion call to the students to rise to the occasion and reminds them, in a speech at Noakhali Youth Conference, 17 May 1931, of the heroic role played by Mazzini. “I may refer to the example of Mazzini and Italy of those days and say how the hundredfold divisions and other barriers then existing in the way of freedom, could not freeze the genial current of Mazzini’s youthful heart and thrust him from realising his ideal of securing freedom of Italy.” Subhas is happy to note that “Restlessness is noticed, of late, among the youths and it is

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58 n. 17.
welcomed as a sign of life...”  Subhas’ main focus is on political freedom and for this he does not discard the use of violence if necessary. This is in complete contradiction to the Gandhian philosophy which stands against all sorts of violence.

(iii) **Fight against corruption, religious intolerance etc.** –
Another major dimension of the views of Subhas regarding the youth movement is his exhortation to the students to fight against social corruption, malpractices, irrational customs and conventions. He also appeals to the students to fight for the abolition of caste barriers, destruction of communalism and removal of religious intolerance. In a speech at Midnapore Youth Conference, 21 December 1929, he thunders: “I want a society in which the individual will not be pressed down by heavy injunctions, a society in which caste system will find no place, a society in which the women will be free… a society rid of all inequalities of wealth and in which every one will get equal opportunities for education and development,” 60

(iv) **Subhas as a visionary** – It follows from the statements of Subhas that he is a visionary. He dreams of a society based on economic justice, where there will be no disparity between the rich and the poor. His earnest desire is that students should try their best and work accordingly to bring in a socialist pattern of society. This is an important aspect of his attitude towards youth movement.

(v) **Role of Women** -
Subhas attached great importance to the role young women should play in the broader field of the youth movement. He was so enamoured with the idea that he formed a separate brigade for women in his Indian National Army and

60 n.3, p.95.
assigned specific duties to them. He considered women as an inseparable part of the youth movement.

(vi) **Importance of military training**

Another important dimension of Subhas’ views on the youth movement is the emphasis he lays on the military training to be imparted to the young students. He himself had the opportunity of getting military training while he was a student of Scottish Church College, Calcutta. He firmly believes that the military training imparted to the students can be effectively used later in the pursuit of the country’s freedom movement. His formation of the Bengal Volunteer Corps is a reflection of the importance he attaches to the military training of students. As Subhas says in his *The Indian Struggle*, “At the time of the Calcutta Congress in 1928 and after, he (Subhas) had taken a leading part in organising and training volunteers and in the Bengal Volunteer Corps, of which the writer was the Chief Officer or G O C, he held the rank of Major. The Bengal Volunteer Corps came into existence at the time of the Calcutta Congress……the writer had been entrusted by the Congress authorities with the organisation and training of the corps. Though the Corps was a peaceful and unarmed body, military discipline and training in military drill was imparted to the volunteers and they were also given semi-military uniform.”

In history, the very name ‘Subhas’ conjures up memories of youthful energy and stubborn protests against all forms of corruption, injustice, torture and irrationality. His attitude towards the youth movements of the world along with India bears the stamp of a visionary who could motivate and inspire the youth against the British for winning political freedom and for socio-economic regeneration.

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But, in spite of Subhas’ incredible zeal and electrifying speeches to the students in fomenting protest and movement against the British, he lacks proper organizational planning in respect of co-ordinating, institutionalizing and stabilising the movement. His Bengal Volunteer Corps ultimately was fragmented and members of the Corps later joined such revolutionary groups as Jugantar and Anushitan Samity. All this points to the fact that howsoever glorified Subhas’ political goal may be, he fails to devise proper means to achieve it. This lack of political acumen in Subhas suggests the view at least in some cases, he was not far-sighted enough. Although he was a patriot the like of which is difficult to find, who sacrificed his entire life for the emancipation of his motherland from the clutches of the British, he had a vision of emancipated India where students will be in the forefront. They will be harbingers of a new dawn the streaks of which are already visible.

Subhas invites the students to share some of his dreams and aspiration. He holds before them a vision of the future that awaits them. But, he warns them, that for attaining this glorious future what is needed is supreme sacrifice. And he wants that no impediment should stand in their way. “The path to which I have invited you may be a thorny one”, he says, “but is it not a path leading to glory imperishable?”62 And he invites the student community to form a happy band and march shoulder to shoulder along this noble path.”We shall then justify our human life and through darkness and through sorrow, through pain and through suffering, we shall ultimately reach the supreme goal of life – bliss and immortality”, says Subhas. 63 And he himself, in quest of this bliss and immortality and in quest of freedom, fearlessly ventures towards an unknown destiny leaving the shores of his motherland.

62 n. 14, p. 87.
63 Ibid.