CHAPTER - I

THE MAKING OF SUBHAS

IMPACT OF HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

"I was barely fifteen when Vivekananda entered my life. Then followed a revolution within and everything was turned upside down.... certain impressions were stamped indelibly on my mind from the outset."

- Subhas Chandra Bose

Heredity and Environment undoubtedly play a big role in the development of personality. In a human being each trait requires both heredity and environment for its development. An individual is affected by his family, school, social customs and conventions, social contacts and various other factors. According to Sigmund Freud,¹ an individual’s personality is shaped in the first few years of his life and the rest of his life is but an expression of these traits embedded in the early years of his life. To understand and analyse the personality of a person like Subhas Chandra Bose the relative influence of nature and nurture - the extent to which each of these factors affects the budding individuality - is to be carefully considered.

The word ‘heredity’ (from L. hereditas, heirship) is the particular property of organic beings by which offsprings have nature and characteristic of parents or ancestors (atavism) ‘Like begets like’ has been a maxim since ancient times. But although the fact of heredity has been generally known for centuries, the actual mechanism by which inherited characteristics may be transmitted to successive generations could not be satisfactorily explained.

until sophisticated research techniques disclosed the true nature of the universal reproductive process.

It is interesting to note that when the general principles of genetic transmission were finally discovered in 1857 by the brilliant Austrian monk, Gregor Mendel, they were ignored. In fact, Mendel lived to see his published findings denied even the courtesy of attentive study; not until several decades after his death (1900) and not were the Mendelian laws given serious considerations and became the basis for future studies in genetic transmission. Mendelism is the system of heredity formulated from Mendel's conclusions. Briefly summarised, the Mendelian system states that an inherited characteristic is determined by the combinations of two hereditary units (now called 'genes') one from each of the parental reproductive cells or gamets. However, since large number of characteristics are inherited simultaneously, the process is almost always quite complex. The expression 'Mendelian heredity' is now restricted to transmission of characteristics by chromosomes.

The transmission of characteristics alone does not go a long way in building man’s personality. Many of the characteristics are exogenous or due to outside or environmental agencies even when the child is still in the mother's womb. So environment is another contributing factor, along with heredity, in the manifestation of the many traits of man. Heredity and environment, in fact, are inter-related. As has been pointed out by Lumley, 2 “It is not heredity or environment, it is heredity AND environment.”

Environment is something immediately surrounding an object and exerting a direct influence on it. The particular type of environment that exerts the strongest influence on a growing child is the social environment. 3

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social environment is a conglomeration of all the social factors that have an indirect or direct bearing on the mental set up of a growing child. Actually it is a crucial determinant in the process of the growth and development of a child.

The greater environmental effect on intellectual development during the early years of a man may be attributed to the fact that intelligence (as measured by IQ) is a developing function with its more rapid growth rates at the life's beginning. Benjamin Bloom⁴ presents data suggesting that from birth to age 4, the individual develops 50 per cent of his mature intelligence; from age 4 to age 8 he develops another 30 per cent and between the ages of 8 and 17 he develops the remaining 20 per cent. A perusal of the life history of Subhas Chandra Bose makes it amply evident that it was both heredity and environment which had full play in shaping and building his personality. But it is interesting to note that the graph of his mental development did not follow the beaten track – he etched his own track in his own way. Basically his personality was creative. And it is also a basic fact that unless persons with creative temperaments are well equipped to exercise independent judgement to stand alone at times in the face of opposing forces, it is doubtful whether their contribution to society or country would be ever possible. The easy path would be to conform, to embrace the dominant view, to adjust. In fact, original thinking and independence of judgement go together.

Subhas had in him what has been termed by Catherine Patrick⁵ the 'Creative Process'. Although 'Creative Process' remains a mystery in many ways, there have been attempts to trace its course by identifying a number of phases. Relatively, these phases are termed as 'preparation', 'incubation' and 'inspiration'. The phase of preparation is regarded as the first requisite for

originality of approach or what may be called creative production. After an initial self-prompting by his insight, the creative person sets out to examine an area of difficulty. At the outset he literally floods himself with the diverse judgements of those who before him had been interested in the problem and chose to record their individual encounters. In this fashion imagination receives the data that later will manipulate to form an original idea. Next comes the phase of 'incubation'. Incubation is that process which facilitates the transition of an idea from its inception to a visible manifestation. During the incubation period the creative person is plagued with unrest as he tries to get hold of the ordinary structure that will merit his expression. Much of the bizarre behaviour attributed to persons with originality is observed during this phase. In trying to get the so-called irrational ideas into the conscious realm such a person is dissatisfied with himself. Questions of different types and nature perplex him. This is actually what happened to Subhas. In one of his letters to his mother, Subhas writes, "Mother, what in your opinion is the purpose of education? Your are spending so much on us – you are sending us to school by car in the morning and fetching us again in the afternoon, giving us sumptuous food four or five times a day, dressing and clothing us, employing servants, I wonder what are all these trouble, struggle and effort for? What after all is the purpose I am unable to understand." In another letter, he echoes the same sentiment: "Mother, how much longer shall we sleep? How much longer shall we go on playing with the non-essential? Shall we continue to turn a deaf ear to the wailings of our nation? Our ancient religion is suffering the pangs of near death – does that not stir our hearts?" 

Next comes what may be termed as the 'inspirational moment' when everything falls into place. It is also the 'illumination phase' when the high pleasure of illumination paves the way to rational judgement as a determinant

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7 Ibid. p. 126.
to a firm foundation. This 'illumination phase' is very clearly illustrated in one of the letters of Subhas to his friend, Hemanta Kumar Sarkar: "I have very largely solved my life's problems ....... I now want the iron will to carry out the plan into systematic details." Elsewhere also he writes, "Today I found the solution of a long-standing question in my mind. As I sat inside the temple reflecting, the answer came." The answer is that he realised that, 'LOVE is the essence of the universe and is the essential principle in human life.' He further says, "I may be asked how I came to the conclusion that the essential nature of reality is LOVE. I am afraid my epistemology is not quite orthodox. I have come to the conclusion partly from a rational study of life in all aspects – partly from intuition and partly from pragmatic consideration. I see all around me the play of love; I perceive within me the same instinct; I feel that I must love in order to fulfil myself and I need love as the basic principle on which to reconstruct life." 

This reveals that in Subhas' perception, 'Love' is the dominating force of human life. It is the cement that binds, according to him, the entire humanity. His perception of love towards every aspect of nature bears a tradition nurtured by the Buddhist philosophy and the Hindu philosophy. His epistemology is something metaphysical, marked by a large degree of intuition and sentimentalism.

But love is not the only force in nature to be reckoned with. As a matter of fact, natural and physical worlds depend on the principle of the survival of the fittest. It is also one of the cardinal principles of Realpolitik. But it was overlooked by Subhas Bose; it slipped out of his vision. So it is a lacuna in his epistemology. Politics is not the field suited to love. If we analyse his political career (which will be unfolded in the subsequent chapters)

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9 Ibid, p. 108.
we would find that he faltered on many an occasion. After all, politics involves craving for power; it is the power equations that really matter in politics. The binding force of love appears to have no practical value in politics. Mahatma Gandhi’s political career is also illustrative of this fact. Gandhi’s epistemology was based on love but when he got himself involved in mundane politics, he failed to operationalize this principle. According to him, love is an instrument, a political expediency to achieve the goals. He used the instrument of love in politics, in such a manner that power equations should be subservient to his political calculations. Thus, Gandhi’s political dreams could reach fruition in 1942 through the first mass upsurge in the Indian history when Bose was far way and that, too, in the missionless voyage.

The entire political career of Subhas was permeated by love. It is this factor of love which actually governed his interpersonal relations in the power equations in the Congress. We find from his political career that he could not even believe in the conspiratorial role of Gandhi against him. One specific evidence of Gandhi’s conspiratorial role against Subhas could be found just on the eve of the Tripuri Congress in March 1939. While a meeting of the Working Committee was fixed to be held at Wardah, on 23 February 1939, to discuss the agenda for the Tripuri Session of the Congress, Subhas requested his colleagues to postpone the meeting by sending a telegram but the Gandhites inferred this as an expression of the lack of confidence of Bose as Congress President, and refused to co-operate with him. Twelve of the followers of Gandhi resigned from the committee with Gandhi’s consent and Gandhi himself left for Rajkot. Despite Gandhi’s rebuff to Subhas on various occasions like this, he said, “..... I have on some occasions felt constrained to differ from Mahatma Gandhi on public questions, but I yield to none in my respect for his personality..... it will be a tragic thing for me if I succeed in winning the confidence of other people but fail to win the confidence of
India’s greatest man.”  Subhas, in fact, lacked the shrewdness in politics which Gandhi had, despite being a ‘Mahatma’, but he had been very much polite towards Gandhi throughout his entire career though the latter was not convinced by the self-effacing nature of Subhas.

How did heredity and environment cast their relative influence on the building of Subhas Bose’s personality which played a decisive role and was instrumental behind many of his political decisions? To get an answer to this question, one has to examine the birth, parentage and early environment of Subhas and to find out what impact they had on him. His mother was an emblem of love. She belonged to the renowned Dutta family of Hatkhola in north Calcutta. Her father Ganganarayan Dutta was a benevolent gentleman with a love for young students. His munificence helped many a promising student achieve success in life. Janakinath Bose, the father of Subhas, was an eminent lawyer of Cuttack and rose to be a Government Pleader and Public Prosecutor. He also became a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. Like his wife Probhabati, he had a soft corner in his heart for the poor and destitute children. He met the educational expenses of many young students. He spent money freely for charitable purposes. As Subhas says in his autobiography, his father had always a soft spot for the poorest of the poor and before his death he made provisions for his old servants and dependants. And Subhas inherited this instinct from his father.

Along with heredity it might be worthwhile to take into consideration the impact of family environment on the development of the personality of Subhas – its actual influence in the making of Netaji. During the formative period of his life there were influences galore. He was brought up in a big family. His parents had eight sons and six daughters. “Ours was not a rich but

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what might be regarded as a well-to-do middle-class family. I had no personal
eexperience of what want and poverty meant and had no occasion to develop
these traits of selfishness, greed and the rest which are sometimes the
unwelcome heritage of indigent circumstances in one's early life.\textsuperscript{11} The
presence of so many brothers and sisters also had a psychological effect on his
mind. Moreover, his father's broad outlook and sympathy influenced the
mental attitude of the rest of the family. All the family members abhorred
words like 'provincialism' and 'parochialism'. Subhas frankly admits in his
autobiography, "Such parental influences work unobtrusively and only in later
life can the children discover by a process of analysis what helped to mould
their character or give their life a definite direction".\textsuperscript{12} Moreover, in his
family, servants, not quite a few in number, formed an integral part of the
household. They had served long in the family and enjoyed pension after their
retirement. Subhas learnt a lesson from this. "Commercialism had not then
permeated and distorted human relationship"\textsuperscript{13}

It emerges from the above discussion that many traits in Netaji’s
personality can be attributed to his heredity and the environment of his family,
which later influenced many of his political decisions during the crucial years
of India's independence struggle. First, Subhas inherited the benevolent
character of his father which broadened his heart and banished all meanness
from his mind. This sometimes made him unsuitable to the realpolitik which
was often exposed during India's freedom movement especially in regard to
his relations with Gandhi.

Secondly another important trait of Subhas' personality, as revealed in
his autobiography, is his self-less devotion to humanity. This was rather an
off-shoot of the environment of the family in which he was born and brought

\textsuperscript{11} Subhas, n. 6, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 4.
up. As he admitted, the sympathy and compassion expressed by his parents towards the servants of his family shaped his subsequent mental attitude towards servants\textsuperscript{14} and depressed people.

Subhas was admitted to a missionary school – Protestant European School – when he was a child of five. There the majority of the students and teachers were Anglo-Indians. Here he “internalized some of the values of the ideal Englishman.”\textsuperscript{15} Here he learnt certain things like punctuality, manners, neatness etc. But even at that very early age he felt that the education imparted there did not conform to the needs of the Indian students. And here for the first time in his life he became conscious of the fact that, as he himself says, “We had been living in two distinct worlds and as our consciousness developed we began to realise slowly that these two worlds did not always match …………… Small incidents ……… began to open our eyes to the fact that as Indians we were, a class apart, though we belonged to the same institution.\textsuperscript{16} This was the realisation of a boy of twelve.

This transplanted in the mind of Subhas the seed of acute antipathy to the British even in his boyhood. It gradually blossomed into an uncompromising hatred towards the British which was later reflected in his unbending attitude towards the British Raj on the question of Indian Independence as opposed to Gandhi’s soft and compromising outlook on the same issue.

Subhas welcomed his new admission into the Ravenshaw Collegiate School in January 1909. And here came in him a radical transformation – both mental and psychological–because of various contributing factors. Subhas

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Subhas Chandra Bose, n. 6, p. 23.
found students of all religions—Hindu, Muslim, Christian—studying in the 
school and came in close contact with them. And this was a sort of awakening 
— a realisation. He realised that Indians are Indians. They are neither 
Bengalees, Oriyas or Punjabis, nor Hindus, Muslims or Christians. This 
feeling of oneness — the inherent unity of this great country — captivated his 
mind. Thus, in the congenial atmosphere of the Ravenshaw Collegiate School 
he acquired a new trait. This was the feeling of secularism which dominated 
his personality and was unmistakably manifested in different phases of his 
political career. Subhas developed within himself a magnetic power to draw 
people of different religions and of different religious beliefs under one 
banner, which he did as Commander-in-Chief of the Indian National Army. 
Actually, here, we find the Making of Subhas.

The Headmaster of the Ravenshaw School, Beni Madhav Das, left a 
profound impression on the mind of Subhas at the youthful and formative 
period of his life. He inculcated into the mind of young Subhas something 
which helped him grow up in mental stature as well. He taught Subhas the 
power of meditation\(^{17}\) - how to delve deep into one's mind. He further roused 
in him “a vague perception of moral values – an inchoate feeling that in human 
life moral values should count more than anything else”\(^{18}\). And it was also Das 
who roused in him an aesthetic sense and made Subhas realise the inherent 
relationship between man and nature.

Subhas fruitfully utilized everything that was taught to him. He 
became a nature – lover and a nature-worshipper. He came to believe in what 
may be called ‘Pantheism’ – the belief that God is present in nature and not 
separable from it. He also became an avid reader and admirer of the poems of 
the great romantic poet William Wordsworth who was a believer in this creed

\(^{17}\) Meditation can, in fact, work as miracles if one knows truly how to meditate. 
\(^{18}\) Subhas Bose, n. 6, p. 29.
of pantheism. The eyes of Subhas were now opened to the "hidden and neglected beauties of nature." He says he found an indescribable joy among flowers, sprouting leaves and growing plants.\textsuperscript{19} "Without nature to soothe one’s soul and to inspire him in his moments of weakness, man, I think, cannot lead a happy life."

\textsuperscript{20} Beauty of nature in all her aspects engrossed the mind of Subhas. He could visualise not only the serene beauty of the budding flowers and green leaves of the plants and trees, the ethereal beauty and divine grandeur of the sunset at sea, but also the majestic splendour of the snow-capped peaks of the towering mountains. All these enchanting sights enlivened his imaginative powers. He could visualize the scenes. In another letter to his brother, Subhas writes, "What a beauty! .... The Western horizon all rose-red in the rays of the setting sun!..... It is so very beautiful and so enchanting to the eyes and the soul!"\textsuperscript{21} He went to Darjeeling and was enthralled by the magnificent sight of the Kanchenjungha and he immediately penned the words: "There are mountains and mountains all around and – the sky-scraping, shining white peaks of Kanchanjungha covered with perpetual snow. How fascinating is this place!... From one end of the horizon to the other there are ranges of snow-capped mountains – like waves lashing against the sky.\textsuperscript{22} It seems the words flow out from a nature-worshipper, – not a politician.

But nature worship, however mind-soothing and elevating it might be, was not enough – he wanted something more. A restless hankering for what he calls 'a central principle' was constantly nagging him. Endless queries perplexed his mind. "Will the condition of our country continue to go from bad to worse – will not any son of Mother India in total disregard of his selfish interests, dedicate his whole life to the cause of the Mother?" wrote Subhas to

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid}, p. 135.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.} p. 132.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid.}, p 157.
his mother in one of his letters written during 1912-13. And here we find a picture of the 'Netaji in the Making.' It is the picture of a young boy with an unflinching love for his motherland. It gives an indication of the supreme dedication and sacrifice he would be making for his country as 'Netaji' in later life. Not only questions regarding his motherland but questions of various imports, like the purpose of existence perplexed the young mind of Subhas. The age itself was an age of questions, of introspection – the age when the quest for truth had begun in full earnest.

Subhas' formative mind was immensely fascinated and shaped by the socio-cultural and intellectual environment which existed in India from the middle of the Nineteenth Century to the beginning of the Twentieth Century. Enlightenment had dawned. This enlightenment was an unsparing sunrise, revealing the wickedness and folly of age-worn, obsolete ideas which came to be looked upon as anachronism. Stalwarts who came to the arena, and they were not insignificant in number, like Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and many other luminaries wanted to sweep away with their iconoclastic ideas all the cobwebs of ignorance not only from the society of the time but also from the minds of the people. They had started a restructuring of the human values as a whole. A new surge of nationalism pervaded the period. It was now possible, people started realising, to destroy once for all the remnants of the Gothic structures and like a phoenix to start a new. Subhas was in his early teens at that time. But he was an alert witness to the different movements from which he imbibed many ideas. All the time these ideas were being etched on his tender mind, helping him stabilise his

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23 Subhas' spirit of selflessness was better expressed in the remaining portion of his letter to his mother. "How many selfless sons of the Mother are prepared, in this selfish age, to completely give up their personal interests and take the plunge for the Mother, Mother, is this son of yours yet ready ?........ A life in the service of others is the only one worth living" Ibid., pp. 126 – 127. This amply testifies to his burning patriotism even as a teenager.
inner thoughts and beliefs. This experience, in fact, was a sort of revelation to Subhas. He came to believe that because of our conceit we are losing faith in the ultimate values; we are living artificially outside the domain of our spirit. But if a man does not come to terms with himself, if he has not an integrated view of life, he will become a damp squib. This confrontation with ideas of diverse nature was putting a terrific strain on the mind of Subhas.

Amongst the forces and intellectual (socio-religious) movements that influenced the mind of Subhas Chandra in his formative years was the Brahma Samaj Movement, whose main exponent was Raja Rammohan Roy. From Rammohan, Subhas drew two distinct points of inspiration – (a) worth of the individual, man and woman, in terms of his or her inner quality and accomplishment and (b) an individual can be free only when he comes out of the shackles of theology and age-old rites and social rituals. As a matter of fact, Rammohan did not reject any truth to be found in any scripture, but his rational mind would not accept any particular book or teacher as infallible. He ultimately realised that theism lies at the core of every religion but that it found different expressions in different people. Recognising the diversity of different theistic beliefs, he established in a broad sense of toleration, the Brahma Samaj. Subhas went deep into every movement that came in his way and gleaned something vital from each of these. His zeal for social work, his tolerance of all religious beliefs, his human outlook was born of these experiences. And all these were contributory factors which ultimately moulded him into an extraordinary personality who had a concern for everything and everybody.

In this connection, it should be pointed out that the culture which Netaji had inherited in his young and formative phase of life was the result of the introduction of the European Renaissance in a limited scale. Rammohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Rabindranath Tagore, combined with
Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Derozio, symbolized the introduction of the European Renaissance into the Indian culture. The European Renaissance was an attempt to revive classicism which represented three concrete features (a) rationalism, (b) humanism, (c) individualism. Rationalism means the establishment of causal connection in all fields of human life without any distortion by passion, prejudice or sentimentality. Humanism lays emphasis on the strength of man in social change. Individualism had always remained as a bastion of liberty of faith and consciousness.

There is a difference in the classical heritage of the Western world with that of India. The revival of European literature etc. (Greek and Roman) was not based on any artificial distortion regarding class etc. But side by side there was Christianity, which was distorted by the power-loving Fathers including the Pope. When the 16th century unravelled, the Renaissance spirit penetrated into the Church. The Protestant Revolt was initiated by Martin Luthar in 1517. Religion free from casteism and artificial division was the result of this Protestant Revolution.

Our Classicism was divided between Vedanta and Brahminism during the medieval period. Rammohan’s bias for Renaissance was buttressed by the introduction of British education and culture. It was not supported by the Classicists. The impact of Rammohan’s Vedantic spirit in the Nineteenth Century social life was sought to be eclipsed by the Hindu Revivalist Movement. The Vedantic spirit was symbolised by Rammohan, Vidyasagar and others. The European Renaissance was introduced in India in a limited way and was not supported by the Hindus. The influence of Rammohan and Vidyasagar was confined to a particular segment of the Bengali Hindus – the upper-middle class and the educated professional class – to which Subhas belonged. The rational outlook of Subhas as expressed in his role in the
formation of National Planning Committee and in his views on agricultural
development, industrial development and Labour Movement revealed the true
impact of Rammohan’s rational philosophy.

Subhas was further influenced by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, a great
social reformer, who founded Arya Samaj. Subhas, in fact, was drawn to
many of the reforms like the removal of untouchability which Swami
Dayanand Saraswati wanted to bring about. In his Satyarth Patrika, Swami
Dayanand critically examined and compared various religions. Discard all
outmoded beliefs and conventions and stand by the downtrodden and the
socially ostracized populace – this was the message of Dayanand Saraswati.
Naturally, Subhas was drawn to this philosophy. The militant nationalism
preached by Dayanand had a great impact on Subhas which reached its
fruition in the formation of Indian National Army.

Dayanand’s socio-religious reforms were designed to lead to the
movement for the revival of the Hindu religion, one of the main
representatives of which in Bengal was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee – an
eminent novelist. Bankim was an epitome of revolution, who used the triple
effect of language, history and religion to arouse a revolutionary fervour
which inspired the extremist revolt in Bengal led by Sri Aurobindo. His poem
Bande Mataram (‘Hail to the Mother’) produced a cataclysmic effect on the
revolutionary movement in our country, specially from the late Nineteenth
Century to the first decade of the Twentieth Century. Naturally, Subhas was
no exception to the electrifying effect of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s
writings; he became imbued with a revolutionary zeal and a patriotic fervour
which formed a dominant part of his personality. And it was due to the
influence of Bankim that Subhas came to regard his country as the ‘Mother’

\[\text{The Arya Samaj Movement aimed at purification of the Hindu religion and society by reversion to the pristine purity of the ancient times.}\]
and strove to remove her shackle of bondage to the alien rule to which India was subjected.

It was Swami Vivekananda who transformed this young Subhas and gave a new dimension to his life. Just a glance at some of the pages of Swamiji’s works made him feel that something was there he had been vainly looking for elsewhere. While Romain Rolland has described Sri Aurobindo as the “intellectual heir” of Vivekananda, Subhas should be regarded as the “true heir of Vivekananda.” Subhas delved deep into Swamiji’s works and it was a sort of revelation to him. Subhas was only fifteen then. But the questions that were haunting his mind were many and sometimes bizarre. And here he got answers to his questions – his doubts and misgivings – why the world exists and how it has come to contain such extraordinary variety of kinds and degrees and why there are so many contradictions. He came to learn that contradictions come from the same truth adapting itself to the varying circumstances of different natures. It is the same light coming through glasses of different colours. But in the heart of everything and everyone the same truth reigns supreme. In this way many of the questions that perplexed his mind so long were now solved. He wrote in his autobiography “I was barely fifteen when Vivekananda entered my life. Then followed a revolution 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.”

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25 Subhas himself writes in his autobiography, “.... my Headmaster ... had given a new impetus to my life, but he had not given me an ideal to which I could give my whole being that Vivekananda gave me.” Subhas Chandra Bose, n. 6, pp. 32 – 33.
28 Subhas Chandra Bose, n. 6, p. 33 For a detailed study of the impact of Swami Vivekananda on Subhas, See Nanda Mookerjee, Vivekananda’s Influence on Subhas, Jayasree Prakashan, Calcutta, 1987.
As he went on reading Vivekananda the true meaning of 'religion' gradually unfolded itself. And Subhas came to believe that idols and temples or churches are only the supports, the helps of his spiritual childhood, but on and on he must progress. Through Vivekananda Subhas became aware of India's cultural unity which is indestructible and runs through a plethora of sects, customs and languages which have survived centuries of onslaughts. The real integration of India into a single entity in spite of some outward racial, linguistics and cultural diversities have taken place through the worlds of Epics and the Puranas and the philosophical literature of Sanskrit, especially Vedanta. And on this integrity stands the cultural oneness of India.

Vivekananda ushered in a ray of hope in the mind of Subhas: As Subhas himself says, "But there is hope yet - I think there is hope yet - the angel of hope has appeared in our midst to put fire in our souls and to shake off our dull sloth. It is the saintly Vivekananda. There stands he, with his angelic appearance, his large and piercing eyes and his sacred dress to preach to the whole world the sacred truths lying embedded in Hinduism!"\textsuperscript{29}

But not Vivekananda alone, Subhas was drawn at this time to the philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna, the spiritual guru of Vivekananda. The quintessence of the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna - salvation through renunciation - attracted him. Not to accept anything blindly but to get that verified and tested by one's power of reasoning first - this was what Sri Ramakrishna taught Vivekananda, and Subhas firmly believed in this. He learnt that through doubting one comes to enquire and through that any truth can be perceived. He came to believe in the dictum - Seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. No ethical code which is based on human opinion alone can command an unhesitating and unflinching obedience and because of this, human morality is subjected to an immense

\textsuperscript{29} Subhas Chandra Bose, n. 6, p. 137.
strain. The standards are to be recognised as human standards and therefore tentative and fallible. These can be accepted only as convenient rules for the general guidance of conduct. Subhas eagerly embraced this philosophy. In his autobiography, he says: “The philosophy in Vivekananda and Ramkrishna came nearest to meeting my requirements and offered a basis in which to reconstruct my moral and practical life. It equipped me with certain principles with which to determine my conduct or line of action whenever any problem or crisis arose before my eyes.” Subhas eagerly embraced this philosophy which got a fresh impetus when he came to Calcutta.

A new phase in the life of Subhas began when he came to Calcutta after passing the Matriculation Examination in 1913. He stood second in the university. He joined the Presidency College, Calcutta. Subhas chose Philosophy as his major subject of study perhaps in order to solve, as he said “the fundamental problems of life, and delved himself into Kant, Hegel, Bergson and other Western thinkers. His intensive reading of Indian Philosophy started here. In Calcutta he became a member of a group – the Neo – Vivekananda Group.’ Members of the group called themselves the spiritual heir of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. To bring about a synthesis between religion and nationalism in all spheres of life was the main object of this group.

Subhas was still in his teens – only sixteen, when he came to Calcutta. But even at that early age there were no dearth of influences on his receptive mind which were to gradually mould him into a Netaji. At that time he came to be acquainted with the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. Aurobindo was already a legendary figure – a mystic who had come for the rejuvenation of India. His magnetic attraction drew people around him. People thronged to obey his behests. But, says Subhas, “As a college student it was not the mysticism

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surrounding Arabindo’s name which attracted me, but his writings and letters. Arabindo was then editing a monthly journal called *Arya* in which he expounded his philosophy.\(^{31}\) This philosophy had a deep and lasting influence on Subhas. He makes a comparative study of the philosophy of Vivekananda and Aurobindo and says regarding the latter, “I was impressed by his deeper philosophy ... Vivekananda had no doubt spoken of the need of *Jnana* (knowledge) *Bhakti* (devotion and love) and *Karma* (self-less action) in developing all-round character, but there was something original and unique in Arabindo’s conception of a synthesis of Yoga. He tried to show how by a proper use of the different Yogas one could rise step by step to the highest truth. It was so refreshing, so inspiring, to read Arabindo’s writings as a contrast to the denunciation of knowledge and action by the later-day Bengal Vaishnavas....”\(^{32}\) Sri Aurobindo became, in Subhas’ own words, his “spiritual guru”. “To him and to his mission I have dedicated my life and soul. My decision is final and unchangeable”\(^{33}\) he says. India must be free from foreign control, Sri Aurobindo insisted, for only then could she develop and manifest the greatness of her soul. As a self-governing nation, India would be able to fulfil her mission and destiny, which is to lead humanity as a whole. This philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, very naturally, appealed to Subhas. Sri Aurobindo was not a pacifist: he believed that a nation had the right to obtain its freedom by whatever means necessary. The dream of a free India was always haunting his mind and goading his spirit to action. The patriotism of Subhas, his unbending attitude to liberate India and his indomitable courage and spirit of self-sacrifice was undoubtedly influenced by what Sri Aurobindo

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\(^{31}\) Quoted in Chanda Poddar, Mona Sarkar and Bob Zwicker (eds.) *Sri Aurobindo and the Freedom of India*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1995, pp. 131 – 132. Subhas Chandra Bose has spelt the word ‘Aurobindo’ as ‘Arabindo’ in his autobiography. So the latter spelling has been retained while quoting Subhas Chandra Bose. For a detailed study of the political writings of Sri Aurobindo – from 1890 – 92 to the time he left Calcutta for Pondicherry, see *Sri Aurobindo, Bande Mataram*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1973.

\(^{32}\) Cited in Chanda Poddar, *ibid.*, p. 132.

\(^{33}\) Cited in *ibid.*, p. 134.
wrote to his wife in one of his letters: "... while others look upon their country as an inert piece of matter. I look upon my country as the Mother. I adore Her, I worship Her as the Mother. What would a son do if a demon sat on his mother's breast and started sucking her blood? Would he quietly sit down to his dinner, amuse himself with his wife and children, or would he rush out to deliver his mother?"34 This had undeniably electrified the young Subhas and prepared his mind for the ultimate sacrifice that he made for India's freedom.

Sri Aurobindo was a dreamer. He had five dreams, he says, which though seemed impracticable at one time, came ultimately to be true. "The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India. Another dream was for the resurgence and liberation of the peoples of Asia. The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. Another dream, the spiritual gift of India to the world. The final dream, was a step in evolution which would raise man to higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him."35 Subhas was immensely fascinated by these dreams of Sri Aurobindo which had cast a profound impact on his political goals and programmes. Subhas held Sri Aurobindo in high esteem not only as a political leader but also for his spiritual thinking. In his college days Subhas was completely stirred by Sri Aurobindo's writings and letters published in the journal, Arya, which expressed his philosophy. Subhas refers to one such letter in which Sri Aurobindo wrote, we must be dynamoes of the divine electricity so that when each of us stands up, thousands around may be full of the light, full of bliss

34 Ibid., p. 42.
and Ananda.”

And Subhas says he “felt convinced that spiritual enlightenment was necessary for effective nation service”.

Regarding the influence of Sri Aurobindo, Subhas further says that at that time he had not been liberated from the cobwebs of Maya. In this task of emancipation, “Arabindo came as an additional help. He worked out a reconciliation between Spirit and Matter, between God and Creation, on the metaphysical side and supplemented it with a synthesis of the methods of attaining the truth – a synthesis of Yoga, as he called it”. There were two areas in which we find the surest and the greatest impact of Sri Aurobindo on Subhas. First, Subhas’ resignation from the Indian Civil Service was undoubtedly influenced by the example of Sri Aurobindo, who had neither any illusion nor felt any urge from within for the same profession, and was seeking some way to escape from that bondage. In spite of putting up a brilliant performance in the Civil Service Examination, Sri Aurobindo managed – by certain manoeuvres – to “get himself disqualified for riding without himself rejecting the Service, which his family would not have allowed him to do”. Secondly, Sri Aurobindo was perhaps the first national leader to assert that a nation is entitled to attain its freedom by violence, if necessity so demands, or if there is no other alternative path to achieve freedom. This trend of violence introduced by him in the Indian politics – which saw the use of bombs against the British during the Swadeshi Movement – reached its culmination in the formation of the Indian National Army to wage war against the British from outside India. This trend of violence directly contradicted the Gandhian technique of non-violence.

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36 Ibid., p. 132.
37 Cited in Ibid.
38 Subhas Bose, n.6, p. 55.
39 Cited in Chanda Poddar, Mona Sarkar and Bob Zwicker, n. 31, p. 44.
The writings of Sri Aurobindo gave Subhas an inconceivable mental strength which stood him in good stead throughout his life. This upsurge of courage as well as self-confidence had its full play in another important incident in his life. This is well-known as the encounter of Subhas with Mr. Oaten, a professor of Presidency College, Calcutta, where Subhas was at that time studying. To vindicate the honour of some of his compatriots who had been insulted by Professor Oaten, Subhas took active steps to the displeasure of the authorities concerned. As a result he was rusticated from the University. This incident had a deep inner significance. As Subhas himself says: “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 the future with equanimity.” 40

The deep influence which Sri Aurobindo’s life and works had on him is summed up by Subhas himself: “Swami Vivekananda died in 1902 and the religio-philosophical movement was continued through the personality of Arabindo Ghose. Arabindo didn’t keep aloof from politics. On the contrary, he plunged into the thick of it and by 1908 became one of the foremost political leaders ….. A life of sacrifice to start with, plain living and high thinking, whole hearted devotion to the country’s cause – all these are highly enchanting to my imagination and inclination. Further, the very principle of serving under an alien bureaucracy is intensely repugnant to me. The path of Arabindo Ghose is to me more noble, more inspiring, more lofty, more unselfish, though more thorny than the path of Ramesh Dutt. ….. The

40 Cited in Subhas Bose, n. 6, pp. 70 – 71. (Italics mine)
illustrious example of Arabindo Ghose looms large before my vision. I feel that I am ready to make the sacrifice which that example demands of me”.\textsuperscript{41}

This stormy transition in his life did not deter him from following a life of social welfare for the uplift of humanity. He realised that, as he says, “a silent change had been going on within me of which I was unconscious at that time. Firstly, I was being pulled in the direction of social service. Secondly, in spite of all my eccentricities, I was acquiring moral stamina. Consequently, when I was faced with a sudden crisis which put to test my sense of social duty, I was not found wanting.”\textsuperscript{42} As a result, the period between his rustication and joining the Scottish Church College, Calcutta, was not spent in vain – he actually became a zealous social worker. He was not averse even to nursing poor people suffering from cholera and small pox. At this time he learnt to shun untouchability because the suffering people belonged to different castes, creed and religion.

Armed with all these experiences and fully equipped to face any eventuality, Subhas resumed his studies at the Scottish Church College, But to make the picture of the ‘making of Subhas Chandra’ complete, still one more experience – a practical training in the art of warfare – was necessary. When Subhas came to Calcutta to resume his studies, a campaign for recruitment to the 49\textsuperscript{th} Bengali Regiment was going on. Subhas attended a recruiting meeting at the University Institute and felt greatly enthusiastic. Of course, he had no idea till then of the important role he would be playing in the Indian political arena, but all along he had an inner urge to avail himself of this training. Strict discipline, unflinching courage, adherence to rigid rules and punctuality – all these and many more can be obtained through a rigorous military training. He offered himself as a candidate. But unfortunately, though he passed every

\textsuperscript{41} Cited in n. 31, pp. 132 – 134.
\textsuperscript{42} Subhas Chandra Bose, n. 6, p. 73.
medical test, he could not satisfy the doctor who was in charge of eye examination. And it was a very dejected Subhas who returned home.

But chance came to him again. War had just broken out and at that time some prominent citizens were trying to persuade the government to admit Bengalees in the army. The Government resolved to start a University Unit in the Indian Defence Force – Indian Territorial Army. Subhas again approached the authorities concerned and he was not disappointed this time. He was admitted. His enthusiasm knew no bounds when his group got into military uniforms and started drilling with rifles. “This training”, Subhas says, “gave me something which I lacked. The feeling of strength and of self-confidence grew still further. As soldiers we had certain rights which as Indians we did not possess. To us, as Indians, Fort William was out of bounds but as soldiers we had right of entry there and, as a matter of fact, the first day when we marched into the Fort William to bring our rifles, we experienced a queer feeling of satisfaction, as if we were taking possession of something to which we had an inherent right but of which we had been unjustly deprived.”

After passing through so many cataclysmic stages and acquiring varied experiences, Subhas had reached the end of a particular phase of his life. The next phase began with his journey to Cambridge for taking the I.C.S. Examination. But now he was fully equipped both mentally and spiritually to brave any situation, to take any decision. And this was Subhas – a ‘Netaji’ in ‘the making’ – who from his early life started his pilgrimage – a pilgrimage not to any particular holy shrine but to a nobler mission – to make his motherland free from the shackles of foreign domination.

In pursuit of his mission Subhas was immensely influenced by the writings of such statesmen and nationalists as Bismarck, Metternich, Mazzini,
Cavour, Garibaldi, De Valera and Kemal Pasha. Bismarck’s *Autobiography* and Metternich’s *Memoirs* were devoured by young Subhas during his sojourn in Cambridge. Similarly, the writings of Mazzini, the apostle of Italian unity, had tremendous impact on Subhas. Bose, like Mazzini, was a man of action and believed that independence could be achieved through constant sacrifice. His emphasis on the role of the youth movement is reminiscent of Mazzini who also laid stress on the role of the youths for the liberation of his country.

Apart from Mazzini, Cavour and Garibaldi also had deep impression in the receptive mind of Subhas who believed, like Cavour, that the liberation of a country could not be achieved without the help of foreign powers. In essence, Subhas combined in himself Mazzini’s patriotism, Garibalidi’s courage and Cavour’s brilliant statemanship.

Moreover, Subhas was deeply influenced by the contemporary movements in the world, e.g., the movement for the unification in Germany, the Sinn Fein Revolution of Ireland, the *Risorgimento* (resurrection) Movement of Italy and the Bolshevik Revolution. All these enriched Subhas’ knowledge of international politics which, in a sense, helped him in strive for India’s liberation. The lessons Subhas imbibed from these movements swayed his political thinking and had the inevitable effect on the political methods adopted by him in search of his goal.

Subhas was also deeply influenced by De Valera, an Irish patriot, who participated in the Easter Rebellion in Ireland against the British and was later imprisoned in 1918. De Valera’s activities had contributed much to the development of Subhas’ indomitable courage shown by him throughout his life and career in order to make India independent.
Kemal Pasha, dubbed as the architect of modern Turkey, was held by Bose in high esteem and he was much influenced by his life and activities. Subhas was actually enamoured of Kemal Pasha who was virtually a dictator, rather a benevolent dictator who used dictatorship to build up a modern Turkey. Subhas’ vision that a free India should remain under dictatorial government for at least twenty years is indicative of Kemal’s strong influence on him. As he himself said in an interview in Kabul that “India needs a Kemal Pasha”.

Thus, Subhas Chandra’s revolutionary spirit drew sustenance not only from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, but was also nurtured by the writings of some patriots and statesmen of Europe, as stated above, during his stay in Cambridge.

In conclusion, both heredity and environment had their respective influences in shaping and developing Subhas Chandra’s personality. Subhas drew his ideological sustenance from the liberal and universal ideas of Rammohan Roy, the militant nationalism of Dayanand Saraswati, the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, the intellectually rich and highly enlightened writings of Rabindra Nath Tagore, and also from the Hindu Philosophy, then highlighted by Max Muller and other Western philosophers. To this was added the profound influence of a number of European nationalists, patriots and statesmen – Bismarch, Metternich, Mazzini, Cavour, Garibaldi, De Valera and Kemal Pasha – who fomented a revolutionary spirit in the mind of Subhas. The philosophical as well as the revolutionary bent of Subhas’ mind owes to the combined impact of these personalities, both Eastern and Western.

44 Cited in Subhas Chandra Chattopadhyay n.27, p-23.
Further, Subhas believed in the idea of ‘romantic militarism’ almost in the line of the German philosophers – Nietzsche and Trietsche – and considered himself ready for the call of sacrifice promoted by a metaphysical entity. This had also deeply influenced the development of his personality.

The major psychological traits in the personality of Subhas Chandra Bose, as it appears from the above analysis, were patriotism, secularism, nationalism, monism, self-abnegation, mystic militarism of the German school (Herder), uncompromising anti-British attitude, leftism, Vedantic Spiritualism and romanticism. It should be mentioned here that ‘love’ was a dominant and determining factor in the psyche of Subhas, which counted prominently in his calculation of political power equations and inter-personal relationship. This was evinced in his failure to believe in the conspiratorial role of Gandhi and his followers after the Tripuri Congress of 1939.

Thus, the unfolding of the personality of Subhas broadly revealed, as a matter of fact, two simultaneous trends: a rational scientific outlook inherited from Rammohan Roy, Vidyasagar, Tagore and others, and a revolutionary spirit influenced by Vivekananda, Derozio and Sri Aurobindo (upto 1909) and such other revolutionary groups like Jugantar and Anusilani Samiti. These two influencing forces always dominated his subconscious mind and produced a certain kind of tension in his personality, ultimately leading to a tragedy in the life and career of Subas Chandra Bose. In the subsequent chapters the different events and stories of Subhas’s political career will be analysed in the light of the dominant traits in his personality as referred to above.