CHAPTER - II

SUBHAS - THE STORMY PETREL RETURNS TO INDIA

The Political Career of Subhas Chandra - July 1921 to October 1924

"There is only one means of achieving India's independence and that is to fight for it. Those who were hoping at one time to get independence through non-violent struggle now realise that the British Government will never give in to India's demand until they are overthrown by force."

Subhas Chandra Bose

16 July 1921 - the day Subhas landed in Bombay - may be considered a red-letter day in the political scenario of India in the sense that events started taking a new turn - a most significant turn - from that date. The stage was all set to usher in a new personality, a magnetic force, so to say, who would give a new dimension and a new twist to the political maneuvering that was going on in the boiling political cauldron of India and which ultimately moulded the shape of the events that were subsequently to emerge.

To understand Subhas it is necessary to have a glimpse of the plethora of events that were happening when Subhas set foot in India. And the pivot of the political machination that was going on was M.K.Gandhi who was the most important personality in India at that time. Subhas, immediately after his landing in Bombay, made a bee-line to meet him with an inquisitive mind to get himself acquainted with his mind. To know Subhas one has to know Gandhiji - his mind and art, because Gandhiji and Subhas acted as a foil to each other. And hence a slight detour is necessary at this stage.

A peep into the past indicates that Gandhiji had evolved his own technique during his sojourn in South Africa. He had used Satyagraha to mean
passive resistance or civil disobedience. Gandhiji made the first experiment of this particular technique when the South African Government passed a legislature which made it obligatory on the part of all Indians to carry in their person certificates of registration which contained their finger-prints. Under the leadership of Gandhiji a public meeting was held at Johannesburg where the Indians thronged in large numbers. It was resolved to defy the legislation. Gandhiji became the leader of the Passive Resistance Association that he founded. These passive resisters who were undaunted and adamant in their resolution were imprisoned.

But not satisfied with this, the Government, with a view to restricting the urban immigrants, came out with another legislation but this also faced the same stubborn defiance. As a mark of protest against the immigration laws, Gandhiji, with batches of Indians, crossed the frontier into Transvaal; immediately they were sent to jail.

But the momentum of this passive resistance soon evaporated and the morale of the Satyagrahis was at a low ebb. To boost up the sagging morale of the fellow Indians, Gandhiji, with the help of a German friend, who was an architect by profession, built what he called 'Tolstoy Farm'. This acted as a great booster to the Satyagrahis. Later on, this was to give Gandhiji an impetus to build similar Gandhian ashrams in India (like the Sabarmati Ashram) which played a significant role in the Indian National Movement.

In the meantime, fuel was added to the fire when the Supreme Court of South Africa came out with a judgement with the apparent object of humiliating the Indians. The main contention of this judgement was that all marriages not solemnized according to the Christian rites and not registered with the Registrar of Marriages were to be deemed to be illegitimates. Very naturally the entire Indian community flared up in resentment and anger. The
Government responded by putting hundreds of Indians including Gandhiji in prison. But Gandhiji's object was fulfilled. Clamour of protests and strong condemnation forced the Government to come to an agreement. This agreement was reached after a series of negotiations that Gandhiji had with Lord Hardinge, General Smuts and C.F. Andrews. And ultimately the government of South Africa conceded the major demands of the Indians. All the objectionable legislations were rescinded. This was the first victory of the satyagraha movement enunciated by Gandhiji. Armed with this new-found weapon in his armoury, Gandhiji landed in India in January 1915 where his experiments got an opportunity of full play.

Gandhiji returned to India at the late age of 46 - for an Indian of his generation - after a sojourn of three years in England and eighteen years in South Africa. In England he had read the Bible from cover to cover. He also read and reread the Gita - the Hindu scripture. He took Christ's admonition 'to turn the other cheek' literally and he interpreted the battle-field of Kurukshetra in the Gita not as an historical account glorifying violence but as an allegory illuminating the futility of violence. He believed that the means and the ends must cohere because the end is pre-existent in the means and in the long run ultimately destructive means cannot bring about constructive ends. He influenced and inspired not only fellow Indians but also personalities like Albert Lithuli, the founder of the African National Congress in South Africa, Martin Luther King (Jr), the Civil Rights leader in the USA, Archbishop Helder Camara, the Human Rights Activist in Brazil. It was Martin Luther King (Jr) who once said in an emotive outburst before the American Jewish Congress: 'Perhaps if there had been a broader understanding of the uses of'

1 'Satyagraha' literally means 'persistence in truth.' It has been translated variously as non-cooperation, passive resistance and civil disobedience. The Satyagraha pledge was first taken at a public meeting in Johannesburg in South Africa, on 11 September 1906, against the Asiatic
non-violent action in Germany when Hitler was rising and consolidating his power, the brutal extermination of six million Jews and a million war-dead might have been avoided. Germany might never have become totalitarian. If Protestants and Catholics had engaged in non-violent direct action and had made the oppression of the Jews their very own oppression, and had come onto the streets to scrub the sidewalk, and had Gentiles worn the stigmatising yellow armbands by the millions, a unique form of mass resistance might have been developed."

Gandhiji came to India in January 1915, and as Subhas says, "A happy combination of factors helped to bring Mr. Gandhi to the forefront in 1920."

The first task undertaken by Gandhiji was to acquaint the people of India with his latest weapon - Satyagraha. With this object in view he first set up in Ahmedabad an 'ashram' on the banks of the river Sabarmati in 1915. He named it the 'Sabarmati Ashram.' Gandhi was of the firm belief that India could meet the powers of brutal force only with the power of what he called "soul-force."

It is interesting to note that practically the whole gamut of the Gandhian technique like non-violence, non-cooperation and passive resistance were not something novel or unique to the people of Bengal who had a foretaste of the multi-faceted programme of the Swadeshi Movement of 1905. And Subhas, an avid reader of Indian politics, was not unaware of it. The Swadeshi Movement was launched when the wily British Government concocted a plan to stifle vociferous Bengal by partitioning it. Risley, the then Home Secretary, cogently spelt out the underlying object of partitioning Bengal - "Bengal united is power. Bengal divided will pull in several different directions."

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1 Law Amendment Ordinance. According to Gandhiji, Satyagraha eschews the use of violence in every form without injuring the opponent.
ways. That is what Congress leaders feel: their apprehensions are perfectly correct .... One of our main objects is to split up and thereby weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule."

The Government announced the deadline - 16 October 1905 - when the partition would be effected. And when that day arrived the whole of Bengal was agog with excitement and anger. There was spontaneous 'hartal'; people came out on the streets defying all orders and singing 'Bande Mataram'. As a mark of unity and solidarity people tied 'rakhi' in each other's hands. Tilak, the great nationalist leader, took upon himself the task of inseminating the mass movement to the different parts of India, especially to Bombay and Poona. What Gandhiji called 'soul - force' later, was palpably evident in what may be called atma-shakti or self-reliance advocated by the sponsors of the Swadeshi Movement.

Gandhiji's formal launching of the Non-co-operation Movement in August, 1920 coincided rather accidentally with the passing away of Tilak. People spontaneously observed 'Hartal' and started Satyagraha. They came out on the street and paid homage to the departed soul by fasting and offering prayer. It looked like the regeneration of the mass movement that had been launched on 16 October 1905, the day partition became effective. The term 'Satyagraha', embraces non-cooperation, passive resistance and civil disobedience. Eschewing the use of violence in every form is the main creed of satyagraha. It became the most important weapon in the armoury of Gandhiji when he took the reins of the freedom movement in his hand.

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5 Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Poona was an outspoken journalist. He was imprisoned in 1897 for an article published in his Kesari, a Marathi newspaper. A true patriot, "Swaraj is my birthright" he thundered, and was acclaimed by people as 'Lokmanya' (respected by the people.)
Gandhiji, in fact, was profoundly influenced by the writings of Thoreau and Tolstoy. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) was a mystic, a naturalist and a social critic who championed the individual against social organization and materialistic civilization. In 1845, Thoreau built himself a small cabin on the shore of Walden Pond near Concord, where he remained for a few years ‘living deep and sucking all the marrow of life.’ His essay "Civil Disobedience", espousing the doctrine of passive resistance, deeply influenced Gandhiji. Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), Russian novelist and philosopher, is one of the world's greatest writers. About 1876 the doubts which had beset him since youth, gathered force, and he passed through a period of intense self-searching, the outcome of which was conversion to the doctrine of Christian love and acceptance of the principle of non-resistance to evil. The steps in his conversion are set forth in his Confessions (1879). He preached not only non-violence but also a Rousseauistic simplicity of life. It is very natural that these two writers would greatly influence Gandhiji's thoughts and beliefs. Gandhiji also imbibed the philosophy of Jesus Christ. Regarding this, Subhas says :" It is a well-known fact that Mr. Gandhi had in his earlier life been considerably influenced by the teaching of Jesus Christ and the ideas of Leo Tolstoy. It cannot therefore be claimed that he was altogether original in his ideas or novel in his practice." But it is not that Subhas disowns the merit of Gandhian philosophy. As he says: "But his real merit was a two-fold one. He translated the teaching of Christ and the ideas of Tolstoy and Thoreau into actual practice and demonstrated that it was possible to fight for liberty without resorting to violence."

But the views of Subhas were diametrically opposite. As he says in one of his broadcast talks on 10 July 1944: ".. the Independence of India can never be achieved through a non-violent struggle. If, however, the miracle was

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6 N.C.W, Vol. 2, pp. .50-51
7 Ibid
possible, and "Satyagraha" by itself could bring us our cherished goal - nobody would be more happy than ourselves. Subhas is more explicit in another of his reported statements in an interview he gave (vide. Enclosure in 'Budapest Despatch' No. 126 of 12 May 1934) : "As to the part played by Gandhi within the National Movement, Mr. Bose explained that Gandhi's influence was made up of two separate components, on the one hand, his living example and his pure character and on the other his political orientation. His pure and lofty character would always afford an example to the Indian masses. As regards his politics, however, many members of the Nationalist Movement felt that a more radical and uncompromising attitude was necessary. Gandhiji's unswerving belief in non-violence, his noble character and, his uprightness were merely being exploited by the English for their purpose."

To resume our narrative - Gandhiji undoubtedly was sitting on the high pedestal of public opinion when Subhas, after his stay in England returned to India. He had thrown scornfully away the coveted post of the Indian Civil Service because, as he felt, he could not serve two masters - his motherland and the foreign rulers. "If I did not dream of India's freedom, I would have accepted the chains of slavery as something eternal."

The first thing that Subhas did after landing in Bombay, was to rush to this uncrowned king of India, to explore his mind, because it was imperative on his part to chalk out his own future course of action. His object was to acquaint himself with the 'modus operandi' of this great personality. As Subhas himself says: "My object in seeking an interview with Mahatma

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10 Subhas Chandra Bose n.8, p.76.
Gandhi was to get from the leader of the campaign, I was about to join, a clear conception of his plan of action."

Subhas was already acquainted with the methods and tactics employed by revolutionary leaders in other parts of the world and naturally these were quite different from the methods of Gandhiji - hence, the doubts and curiosities in his mind. And so he "... desired to obtain a clear understanding of the details - the successive stages - of his (Gandhiji's) plan leading on step by step to the ultimate seizure of power from the British Government. " Subhas had mainly three questions in mind. "Firstly, how far the different activities conducted by the Government were going to culminate in the last stage of the campaign, namely the non-payment of taxes? Secondly, how could mere non-payment of taxes or civil disobedience force the Government to retire from the field and leave us with our freedom? Thirdly, how could the Mahatma promise 'Swaraj' that is Home Rule, within one year - as he had been doing ever since the Nagpur Congress?"

But, as Subhas had apprehended, Gandhiji couldn't give any plausible explanation. It seemed to Subhas that Gandhiji was just toying with different ideas, experimenting with new fangled methods which had not passed the test of time.

But it was a clash of ideologies or a clash between these two personalities which gradually intensified as time passed and propelled these two devoted freedom fighters to opposite poles. Any question of conciliation between these two was next to impossible because while Gandhiji's main tenent was 'Satyagraha' and non-violence, Subhas Bose's creed, so to say, was to take recourse to any means to achieve his one and only object - freedom of

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12 Ibid. p. 58.
his motherland. And that is why it has been said that his "unique personality shone forth when he alone of all the leading figures in the inner circle of the Congress kept himself unaffected by the magic charm of Mahatma Gandhi." 13

Subhas was a person who was not prepared to be influenced by the charisma of Gandhi. Nor did he come to India with a closed mind. He was very much conscious about the need of the hour. He knew that leading personalities of practically the whole of India with a few exceptions like the towering figure of C.R. Das and others had congregated under the banner of Gandhiji. Already, prior to his coming to India on 14 February, 1919, a Satyagraha pledge had been drafted and signed by some leaders including Vallabhbhai Patel and Sarojini Naidu. This was as a sequel to the introduction of two repugnant bills known as Rowlatt Bills. 14 The 'prima facie' objective of the two bills was to curb whatever civil liberties were there on the pretext of containing terrorist violence. The pledge that was taken, clearly reflects the mind and philosophy of Gandhiji. It read as follows: "Being consciously of opinion that Bills known as the Indian Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill No 1, of 1919) are unjust, subversive to the principles of liberty and justice and destructive of elementary rights of individuals on which the safety of the community as a whole and of the state itself is based, we solemnly affirm that in the event of these bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a committee to be hereafter appointed, may think fit, and we further affirm that in this struggle we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property." 15

14 In December 1917, a committee was formed under the direction of Mr Justice Rowlatt the purpose of which was to investigate the revolutionary movement in India. The findings of the committee were issued in April 1918 in the so-called Rowlatt Report. The committee recommended that many of the provisions of the Defence of India Act should be made permanent. This meant the suspension of trial by jury and 'habeas corpus'.
15 Quoted in R.C.Majumdar, n 13, p. 5.
Subhas had read this pledge while in England and he was quite aware of the difference between preaching and practising as applied to Satyagraha. 6 April, was the scheduled date for launching the ‘Satyagraha Movement.’ It started with a confusion about dates and this ‘confusion was worst confounded’ when it gave way to disorder and violence. In Delhi, Amritsar, Lahore, Bombay and even in Gujrat, Gandhiji’s home town, this violence took a serious turn and the situation became really grave. Satyagraha failed in the crucial acid test.

Punjab at this time was seething with discontent because of severe war-time repression, forcible recruitment etc. Anger rose to a crescendo when two popular leaders, Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew, were arrested and deported - taken to an unknown destination. People were in a frenzy. Satyagraha was set aside. Brutality was let loose. Five white men were tortured, seven Government buildings were torched.

Matter worsened further when the mob was halted at the railway level crossing called Hall Gate Bridge. Firing was resorted to by the police as a result of which several people were killed. And this was just a prelude to the gory tragedy that was soon to be enacted there. It started with the arrival of Brigadier General Dyer who took command of the troops. He issued a proclamation banning all processions, gatherings and meetings. But it had already been announced earlier that a public meeting would be held at Jallianwala Bagh on the fateful thirteenth day of April 1919. People congregated there in large number. General Dyer arrived there with the armed police. Indiscriminate firing started. The result can better be surmised than described. Rigid censorship was imposed. As a result, news of this inhuman atrocities could not percolate outside Punjab. Gandhiji suspended the Satyagraha movement on 18 April 1919. It may be that he did that realising
the futility of Satyagraha in the face of bullets. But mysterious was the ways of the main votary of Satyagraha. The reason Gandhiji advocated was that indication of good will on the part of the rulers had prompted him to abandon the programme for the time being. Subhas was aware of all these facts when he confronted Gandhiji after returning to India.

Subhas was very much aware of the volte-face of the leader of the Satyagraha movement. So when he landed in India questions galore were pestering his mind and he was determined to lay his heart bare before Gandhiji and see if the latter could resolve his doubts. Subhas cogently describes his first meeting with Gandhiji: "I reached Bombay ... and obtained an interview with Mahatma Gandhi. My object was to get a clear conception of his plan of action. I began to heap question after question. There were three points which needed elucidation ... how were the different activities ... going to culminate in the last stage of the campaign? ... how could mere non-payment of taxes or civil disobedience force the Government to retire from the field?, how could the Mahatma promise 'Swaraj' within a year? ... His reply to the first question satisfied me ... his reply to the second question was disappointing and his reply to the third question was no better .... though I tried to persuade myself ... that there must have been a lack of understanding on my part, my reason told me clearly ... that there was a deplorable lack of clarity in his plan which the Mahatma had formulated and that he himself did not have a clear idea of the successive stages of the campaign which would bring India her cherished goal of freedom."

Subhas had already a lurking suspicion in his mind about the efficacy of non-violence and Satyagraha. He spells it out very clearly in a speech. "There is only one means of achieving India's independence and that is to fight...

for it. Those who were hoping at one time to get independence through non-violent struggle now realise that the British Government will never give in to India's demand until they are overthrown by force.  

Gandhiji with his experienced brain could read the storm raging within Subhas and advised him to report to C. R. Das. Subhas was already well-acquainted with the national stature which this great personality had attained. In fact, he had already written a letter to Das from Cambridge intimating him that he had resigned from the Indian Civil Service and had decided to join the political movement. As Subhas says: "Stories had reached us in England that he (Das) had given up his princely career at the Bar and was going to devote his whole life to political work, while making a gift of his entire property to the nation. In my eagerness to meet this great man, I overcame the somewhat depressing effect of my interview with Mahatma Gandhi and I left Bombay with the same excitement and the same enthusiasm with which I had landed there. " The year was 1921 and Subhas was only twenty-four. And this was Subhas' actual debut into the national movement when India was going through a cataclysmic transformation. 

Subhas, on his arrival in Calcutta, was warmly received by C.R.Das. He felt that at last he had found a leader; his mind was set now to follow this great personality. But Subhas was never destined to be a blind follower of anybody. His first task was to take stock of the prevailing political situation of the country and gauge the depth of the different currents and cross currents in the national movement. Gandhiji was undoubtedly the towering figure. But Subhas did not fail to discern cracks in this tower. Gandhiji's avowed declaration of winning Swaraj within a year proved to be a mirage. The very declaration itself, according to Subhas, was not only unwise but foolish.

17 Subhas Chandra Bose, n. 8, p. 14.
There was another point too that brings out Subhas' political acumen. Subhas, with his psychological insight, could fathom the sinister implication of allowing the setting up of the Khilafat Committee as an independent organisation quite apart from the Indian National Congress. It was because that when Ghazi Mustafa Kamal Pasha took the reins of Government of the New Turkey in his own hands and expurgated the office of Khilafa, the Khilafat question was altogether shelved and quite a number of the members of the Khilafat groups joined pro-British Moslem organisations. But, according to Subhas, Gandhiji was lacking in sagacity to take a glimpse of the future and ascertain the implications of the consequences that might evolve. The picture would have been otherwise if all Khilafatist Moslems had become an integral part of the Indian National Congress.

"The real mistake in my opinion", says Subhas, was "in allowing the Khilafat Committee to be set up as an independent organisation throughout the country, quite apart from the Indian National Congress ... if no separate Khilafat Committee had been organised and all the Khilafatist Moslems had been persuaded to join the ranks of the Indian National Congress, they would probably have been absorbed by the latter when the Khilafat issue became a dead one." But it didn't take long for Subhas to make an indepth study of the political situation of the time and to realise that "... the entire intellect of the Congress has been mortgaged to one man and those who dare to think freely and speak out openly are regarded by Mahatma and his disciples as heretics

19 "The Sultan of Turkey was considered by many to be the Caliph(Khalif) or successor of the Prophet Muhammad and was looked on as the head of the world-wide Muslim community. His dominion, the Caliphate (called Khilafat in India) was greatly reduced by the term of the treaty ending the First World War. India's Muslims were outraged over this attack on the integrity of their religion. A Khilafat Movement soon started and gathered momentum." Peter Heehs, India's Freedom Struggle : A Short History, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988, pp. 88-89.
Subhas, in fact, after coming to Calcutta got the first opportunity to come into personal contact with the prominent leaders of the Congress when they were staying as guest of C. R. Das. The occasion was a conference between Gandhiji and the ex-revolutionaries with the ostensible object of solving a knotty problem. These ex-revolutionaries had ideological differences with Congress and they did not subscribe to Gandhiji’s policy of non-cooperation. To tide over the crisis, C. R. Das who was keen on having their active support, arranged a conference behind closed doors in September, 1921. Gandhiji and members of the Congress Working Committee were staying as guests of C. R. Das. And there Subhas came into personal contact with prominent leaders of the Congress like Pandit Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai and Maulana Mohammed Ali. Ultimately, C R Das was successful in his mission and everybody promised full cooperation with the Congress. But the crux of the matter is this that Subhas realised that Gandhiji alone without the active support of such stalwarts would be like a rudderless beat. And that is what actually happened after the demise of those great personalities.

After this followed what may be called a a lull before the storm. Subhas was biding his time for an opportunity to jump into the fray when the opportune moment comes. And ultimately the ordained time came with the announcement of the impending visit of the Prince of Wales to India. The Congress Working Committee seized the opportunity and announced a ‘hartal’ - general boycott of the Prince's visit. The response to this call was unique especially in Calcutta. The Government reacted sharply and issued urgent

21 Ibid., p. 78.  
22 The motive behind the Prince's visit was to assuage the public feeling and win support for the Government. But the Indian people viewed the whole exercise of the Government as an added insult to the injury inflicted at Jalianwalabagh.
notifications declaring this to be illegal. Subhas, who had been waiting with his irresistible energy to contribute his mite, thus expresses his feelings: "We had been spoiling for a fight in Calcutta and the official notification therefore was thrice welcome to us." 23 Subhas in the meantime had become a member of the Provincial Congress Committee. In a closed-door meeting of the committee comprising 300 members from Bengal there was a unanimous decision to start civil disobedience. C. R. Das was vested with full powers to organise the movement. The Movement had Subhas in the forefront 24; and with bull-dog tenacity he master-minded the campaign. And, as anticipated (not apprehended), along with C.R. Das and other organisers of the Movement, he was arrested on 10 December, 1921 and sentenced to six-month jail term.

But here a pertinent question that very naturally crops up is - how is it that Subhas who was vehemently opposed to Satyagraha and non-cooperation from the very core of his heart and who never failed to express his views openly, could now whole-heartedly support this same non-cooperation movement? To get the answer one has to delve deep into his heart. Immediately after his return to India Subhas had taken a stock of the prevailing situation. He knew that the opportune moment had not yet come - the time to strike and strike with might to smash the opponent was still to come. Now was the time to gauge the strength and weakness of the enemy - the time of reconnaissance. And an innate shrewdness in him prompted him to play a positive role in the Movement. Besides all these, the main incentive of Subhas for joining actively in the Movement was that it was the mainstream of the nationalist India. Moreover, his preceptor and political mentor

24 "When His Majesty, then His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, was visiting India, Mr Bose took a very prominent part in organising what were illegal volunteer corps which were intended to deprive the police of their proper functions and take over their functions from them..." HOUSE OF LORDS, 1st December 1936, The Secretary of State for India (The Marquess of Zetland). Quoted in Nanda Mookerjee, n.9, p. 129.
Deshbandhu C R Das was the backbone of the Movement and Subhas naturally wanted to give his wholehearted support.

During the period of his incarceration in the Presidency Jail and Alipore Central Jail, Subhas had the privilege of staying together with C.R. Das and other prominent leaders. It was indeed a rare privilege for Subhas to spend eight months in 1921-22 in the same jail with Deshbandhu C. R. Das. For about two months they were in the Presidency Jail occupying two adjacent cells and for the remaining six months in the Alipore Central Jail in one big hall with some other friends and compatriots. The time spent there in lively discussion on various topics was really fruitful for Subhas. He came to know a great personality like Deshbandhu C. R. Das very intimately and form a clear perception of the different facets of his life and philosophy. Moreover, some of the dormant beliefs and convictions of Subhas took a distinct shape and had full play because of these discussions. Subhas, in fact, imbibed many of the philosophical, religious and political ideas of Deshbandhu which helped him to embellish some of his own ideas "I for myself can say that it was from him and his writings that I have learnt about the uniqueness of Bengal," says Subhas. 25

The greatest pride of Deshbandhu was that he was a Bengalee. The uniqueness of Bengal is revealed in her literature, her landscape, her folksongs and her character. The character of Deshbandhu, in fact, was a conglomeration of a number qualities of head and heart. He was , as Subhas came to know him, a reputed lawyer, a great lover of men, a devout Vaishnava, a shrewd politician and a conquering hero. It is interesting to note how Subhas with his analytical and ever-active brain cogently analyses and tries to find out the

reasons of this. "I have tried to get a solution of this problem through anthropological studies", he says. 26 Subhas comments that Aryan, Dravidian and Mongolian blood flow through the veins of a Bengalee. And as there are some special characteristics of each race so along with admixture of blood, there must be an admixture of racial characteristics. So Subhas infers: "due to this admixture of blood, the genius of the Bengalee is so versatile and Bengal's life so colourful. The religiosity and idealism of the Aryans, love of art and devotionalism of the Dravidians, intellectuality and and realism of the Mongolians have all very happily blended together in the Bengalee character. That the Bengalees are intellectual and emotional at the same time, at once realistic and idealistic, imitative and creative is due to this admixture of blood." 27

Subhas believes that the culture of Bengal has a unique and distinct form of its own. And not only that. The message is the sum total of the life and history of Bengal as a whole. That message is ingrained in the character of Bengal. The heart of Bengal is always for diversity, harmony and fraternity. Bengal is always for novelty. Bengal's innate nature is always dynamic and not static. She might well be called 'revolutionary'. Subhas firmly believes that not only in religion but in literature as well Bengal manifests herself in diverse ways. He refers to Vidyapati and Chandidas, Mukundaram and Bharatchandra, Kasiram, Krittibas and Ram Prasad who, according to him were 'monumental examples of her new discoveries in the domain of thought and culture. "In the cultural sphere proper", it has been said, "Subhas Bose's" major intellectual achievement was to resume and bring to maturity the different cultural streams of the Bengali Renaissance. To the theories of Bankim, to the preachings of Vivekananda, to the inspiring figure of Aurobindo, to the ideals of C. R. Das

26 Ibid., p. 69.
27 Ibid.
he added a new dimension of practical work, disciplined organization and political radicalism." 28

A radical transformation of our life is the goal of Subhas. But this is possible only when there is an awakening from within. He refers to the French philosopher Bergson and says: "Bergson has talked of the 'elan vital' - the vital impulse - which moves the whole world to activity and progress. What is this 'elan vital' of our national life? It is the desire for freedom, for expansion, for self expression." 29 And this 'elan vital' found full expression in the life of C R Das. While writing of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das in a letter to Hemendra Nath Dasgupta from Mandalay Jail on 20 February Subhas comments: "I will end this letter after I have mentioned another reason for the extraordinary influence which he wielded.............. Thanks to a fine synthesis between his ideal and his practical life, his entire being was getting progressively saturated with this synthesis........As a result of inner purity, which follows the pursuit of action without caring for results, man loses the awareness of ego. And when the ego is transcended he becomes an instrument for the expression of the Divine Will. Then ordinary human beings cannot withstand the energy and the magnetism of a person so inspired...... That is what had happened with the Deshbandhu." 30

Deshbandhu was a devout Vaishnav. According to Subhas, 'Vaishnavism' became the last refuge of his life. He had accepted the world and the human life in its fullest. During the days he spent in jail along with the Deshbandhu, Subhas used to have long discussions with him about various national and political problems. "It was his belief", Subhas says, "that our society, our politics and our philosophy would in the natural course be evolved

29 Subhas Chandra Bose, "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 in, N.C.W., Vol. VI., p. 83
30 Cited in n.25, p. 75.
out of our cultural heritage and our pressing national problems. Hence he could never countenance any struggle or conflict between classes and communities. . . . . Till the last day of his life it was his hope that all our difference could be resolved by concluding pacts between different religious communities, so that all Indians, irrespective of race, caste or creed, would come forward to join the fight for Swaraj. . . . I do not think that among the Hindu leaders of India, Islam had a greater friend than in the Deshbandhu. 31

Deshbandhu never failed to spread his ideas through his journal "Narayan" and various other means. In his discussions he never failed to dwell upon the greatness of Bengal and her unique features. "In Alipore Jail" says Subhas, 32 he used often to give us readings from Bankim Chandra. He was extremely fond of the three different images of the mother as painted by Bankim. He used to go into ecstasies over these descriptions. One could easily feel the depth of his emotions to see him in that state of ecstasy. 32 That is why Subhas says that it was from him and his writings that he learnt about the uniqueness of Bengal.

This uniqueness in fact, is inherent in the Bengali culture. But the question that crops up is whether this culture is one or diverse. According to the Monists, 33 culture is one and one only and what apparently seems to be the differences in culture are the manifestations of the same culture. But the Dualists 34 differ. According to them culture is bound to be many because culture includes racial characteristics and hence difference of culture is

31 Ibid., p. 67.
32 Ibid., p. 22.
33 Monism is a Greek word meaning 'belief in one'. Monism in metaphysics is a term introduced by Christian Von Wolff for any theory that explains all phenomena by one unifying principle or as manifestations of a single substance.
34 The opposite of Monism is Dualism which refers to any philosophical system that seeks to explain all phenomena in terms of two distinct and irreducible principles. It is opposed to Monism.
inevitable. Considering all the factors Subhas opines: "But the Deshbandhu was dualist-cum-Monist. Culture is both one and many. Even if it is basically one, it is through the utmost variety and multiplicity that unity expresses itself. As there are many trees in a garden and various flowers bloom on the different trees, in the same manner does human society develop different cultures. And as the garden is complete with its many trees and flowers, so does a number of cultures make the culture of Man."  

Subhas, in his Mayoral Address delivered at the meeting of the Calcutta Corporation on 27 September 1930 nostalgically quotes from a speech delivered by Deshbandhu reiterating the same idea: "The great work which I have undertaken for the last ten or fifteen years is the building up of a pan-Indian people consisting of diverse communities with diverse interests but united and federated as one nation." Subhas says that he believes in this statement which is not only the essence of Deshbandhu's philosophy but also, if expressed in modern terminology, the basis of socialism. He refers to the programme chalked out by the Deshbandhu for the amelioration of the condition of the "Daridra Narayan" and says: Once again, if I may put his policy and programme in modern language, I would say that we have here in this policy and programme a synthesis of what Modern Europe calls Socialism and Fascism. Subhas does not fail to clarify the statement and very lucidly he does it: "We have here the justice, the equality, the love, which is the basis of Socialism, and combined with that we have the efficiency and the discipline of Fascism as it stands in Europe today." 

35 Cited in n. 25, p. 73.
36 Subhas Chandra Bose, "The Mayoral Address," N. C. W., Vol. 6, P 127. (Subhas was elected Mayor of Calcutta at a time when he was in prison).
37 Ibid, p. 120.
38 Ibid.
Subhas, with his deep knowledge of history and politics is well aware that a quest for a better order of things has been going on since the earliest ages. Subhas delves deep and tries to trace the psychological impulse behind this universal human craving. He diagnoses the root cause - it is a feeling of acute discontent followed by a desire for a radical change. In his speech "India's Historic Mission", delivered at the Karachi Conference of the All India Naujawan Bharat Sabha on 5 April 1931, Subhas succinctly gives his message. The message, replete with his political wisdom and sagacity, gives a clear idea of the political ideas that are entrenched in his mind. He says: "The message which I have to give is one of complete, all-round undiluted freedom. We want political freedom, whereby is meant the constitution of an independent Indian State, free from the control of British Imperialism ... Secondly, we want complete economic emancipation. Every human being must have the right to work and the right to a living age. There shall be no drones in our society. There must be equal opportunities for all. Above all, there should be a fair, just and equitable distribution of wealth. For this purpose it may be necessary for the state to take over the control of the means of production and distribution of wealth. Thirdly, we want complete social equality. There shall be no caste, no depressed classes. Every man will have the same rights – the same status - in the society. Further there shall be no inequality between the sexes either in social status or in law - and women will be in every way an equal partner with men39."

Subhas, in fact, imbibed many of the basic ideas of the Deshbandhu. To Subhas, like Deshbandhu, the main appeal of socialism lay in its concern for the uplift of the poor and the downtrodden. After the unsavoury experience of his encounter with Gandhiji, Subhas came to Calcutta and was warmly received by the Deshbandhu. He vividly recollects his impression when he

met him first. "I can still picture before my mind's eye his massive figure as he approached me... During the course of our conversation I began to feel that here was a man who knew what he was about - who could give all that he had... By the time our conversation came to an end my mind was set up. I felt that I had found a leader and I meant to follow him."

During the period when C.R.Das was in jail, Gandhiji was holding the fort; he was in complete command. Gandhiji, in spite of the admonition of C. R. Das, rejected outright an overture to conciliation made by the Government proposing a Round Table Conference of the representatives of the Government and the Congress to resolve the outstanding issues. C. R. Das felt that a golden opportunity had been lost. In the meantime non-cooperation continued. C.R.Das was elected President of the ensuing Congress session to be held in Ahmedabad. There, in the main resolution, people were exhorted to observe mass civil disobedience, defying the emergency ordinances. A no-tax campaign was envisaged first in Bardoli and subsequently all over the country. The whole country was bursting with excitement and people were waiting with bated breath to see the result. But while the the tenor was at a crescendo there came the anti-climax. An incident took place on 5 February 1922, in a small village called Chauri Chaura where some police constables were killed by the infuriated mob. Gandhiji was non-plussed seeing the fate of his so-called Civil Disobedience Movement. He immediately called a meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Bardoli and there resolutions were passed suspending the civil disobedience. The no-tax resolution was also withdrawn and thus came the end of the Non-cooperation movement on 12 February 1922.

Gandhiji was vehemently criticised by Motilal Nehru, C.R.Das and many others for stifling the Movement which was proceeding along the scheduled course. Subhas looked upon the whole episode as a disaster. He realised with his analytical mind that this would give a crushing blow to a

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great cause. "To sound the order of retreat just when public enthusiasm was reaching a boiling point was nothing short of a national calamity, " he observed. The Government, finding that the popularity of Gandhiji was at a low ebb, did not delay in convicting him of publishing seditious articles in "Young India" and sentenced him to six years' imprisonment on 18 March 1922.

Subhas was released from prison in August 1922. This was the time to show his mettle by getting involved in different types of constructive and humanitarian work. And psychologically he was tuned to this type of work. Sincerity and devotion to duty were the keynote of his nature. One of his contemporaries cogently brings out this trait in his character. "Subhas pleaded for sincere work and patient suffering. He stressed on all important topics - spread of mass education, Swedeshi, unity amongst different communities, removal of untouchability, prevention of early marriage, abolition of dowry, social services, discipline, upholding truth and justice everywhere .......

Soon Subhas found a job to his liking. When the news of serious floods and the suffering of the rural folk of Bogura, Rajshahi, Pabna, Dinajpur and Rangpur reached Calcutta, Subhas was given the responsibility of touring the area and do his might to redress the suffering of the people, Subhas was among the first batch to go there and take charge of the situation. Sir P C Roy, the well-known scientist, was the President of the Relief Committee. Subhas knew that what was needed most for the relief operation was not money or foodstuffs only but a kind and sympathetic heart. While the relief operation was in full swing, Janaki Nath Bose, Subhas' father, visited him and requested him to come home on the occasion of the family's Durga Puja. But Subhas was not prepared to go home leaving his unfinished work and the helpless people.

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41 Ibid., p.108.
42 Hemendranath Dastupta, Subhas Chandra, Jyoti Prakashalaya, Calcutta, 1946, p.53.
His reply was: "No father, no, you all go to worship Durga at home and I go to worship my real mother Durga with the helpless."43 The relief operation was so well organised and fruitful that even Lord Lytton, Governor of Bengal, who inspected the relief operation was full of praise for Subhas and his team. It also enhanced the prestige of the Congress.

Subhas, in fact, was a sort of catalyst who became an integral part of any Movement. With his mature mind in a young body, his well-thought-out opinion and advice, he was a perennial source of inspiration to leaders like C.R. Das, and others. After the suspension of the Gandhian non-cooperation, C.R. Das changed his line of thinking. He wanted to resort to a novel method of protest. His idea was that Congressmen should contest and win the seats of Legislative Councils. The elected members would carry on non-cooperation in a more effective form from within the Councils.

This proposal put forward by C.R. Das as President of the Congress and Motilal Nehru as its Secretary in the Gaya Session of the Congress in December 1922. Another section of the Congress comprising Vallabhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and C. Rajagopalchari - all staunch followers of Gandhiji, opposed the proposal of C.R. Das which, naturally was defeated by a big majority of votes. C.R. Das was in an embarrassing position and he stepped down as President; and Motilal Nehru also resigned as Secretary of Congress. And the next day 1 January 1923 - they launched their new party - The Swaraj Party - with C.R. Das as its President. Election to the Legislative Assemblies were in the offing and they gird up their loins and started preparation in full swing to strengthen the fledgling party. Subhas was entrusted with more and more responsibilities. He had a flair for forceful writing and it stood him in good stead at this juncture when everything was in a fluid stage. To publicise the views of the Swaraj Party and to ventilate the grievances of the seething

43 Ibid., p.55.
mass, C.R. Das embarked upon a new project. It was the launching of a daily paper which he christened *Forward*. As Subhas himself puts it "....... I ... was entrusted with the organisation of the paper. Though the launching of the paper entailed very hard work on our part, success followed rapidly and in its career the paper was able to keep pace with the growing popularity and strength of the Party."^44^5

Within a short time "Forward" came to hold a leading position among the national journals of the country. Its articles were forceful, its news service varied and up-to-date and the paper developed a special skill in the art of discovering and exposing official secrets. Subhas' political acumen and dexterity in wielding the pen to analyse and cogently express complex secret political matters so that it would reach the hearts of the teeming millions drew unstinted praise from everybody. Subhas had a deep knowledge of history and philosophy and he was now fully conversant with the political situation of the country. Moreover, he had a direct practical knowledge of the nook and corner of the urban and rural areas of the country. And all these gave an edge to his writings. Subhas was also closely associated with a Bengali weekly *Banglar Katha* and two other papers *Atma Shakti* and *Bijoli*. These papers not only expressed the radical views of the Swaraj Party but also helped in the mobilisation of all Indians irrespective of caste, creed, or religion. *Atma Shakti* was complimented by *Forward* on entering its fourth year: "Srijut Subhas Chandra Bose with his wonderful power of organisation conducted the weekly with credit, maintaining the tradition set up by its worthy founder ...... young Bengal has been watching the progress of the paper all these years with

^44^ C R Das started "Forward" in 1923 and incurred the wrath of the Home Department of the Government of Bengal who felt that the paper which had Subhas at the helm might play a major role in turning the minds of the young to the nationalist cause.

considerable interest and have no doubt that it has all along given a proper lead to the thinking section of the young men whose organ it claims to be."\textsuperscript{46}

Subhas during this period was growing up in political stature and maturity and was at the crest of the current movements. And responsibilities \textit{ad infinitum}' were being heaped upon his young shoulders. He created an image of a fire-brand live-wire prepared to face any eventuality, ready to carry out any instruction from his political boss with unflinching obedience. He was deeply involved in the political tug-of-war that was going on between the Swarajists and the others whom he named 'Gandhian No Changers.' Subhas was successful in all his ventures not only with his writing skill but also his debating power which he had mastered while he was a student at Presidency College and Scottish Church College.

In the meantime, C.R.Das with his formidable lieutenant Subhas by his side started his campaign to storm the bastion of the Bengal Legislative Council. Das' plan was to stall the policies of the Government from inside the Council chambers which would naturally bring discomfiture to the Government. His efforts were crowned with success and the Swarajists came out with flying colours in the election. Das' next venture was to capture and obtain full control of the largest municipality in India - The Calcutta Municipal Corporation. The Calcutta Municipal Act had been amended in 1923 and Das knew that it would be difficult to muster sufficient number of votes and win control of the municipal administration. But the results indicated a thundering success for the Swaraj Party. C.R.Das was elected Mayor and Mr Saheed Suhrwardy, Deputy Mayor. Subsequently, Subhas was appointed to the coveted and very responsible post of the Chief Executive Officer at the age of twenty-seven. Subhas had an apprehension that people might think that he got the post because he was related to Sarat Bose who was

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Forward}, 20 October, 1925.
an Alderman. But the word 'nepotism' was not in the dictionary of Subhas. He immediately wrote to the Secretary to the Calcutta Corporation: "I understand that my name is going to be proposed for the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation. I beg to notify to the Corporation through you that I am related by blood to Alderman Srijut Sarat Chandra Bose, he being an elder brother of mine. I shall feel obliged if you will place this letter before the Mayor of the Corporation and take his direction regarding this letter .....". This indicates the straightforward nature of Subhas and love of transparency in all his actions.

As the Chief Executive Officer, the administrative talents of Subhas had a full play. With renewed vigour and energy he wanted to bring in many innovative measures within the purview of the activities of the Corporation. The main object was to ring out the old and ring in the new and to usher in measures which would benefit the citizens. With this end in view it was decreed that everybody including the Mayor should come dressed in home-made khadi. It may be mentioned in this connection that under the new constitution of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation there was a division of functions - the Chief Executive Officer being the head of the administration and the Mayor being the head of the Corporation as a whole.

Subhas initiated quite a number of innovative measures. Much to the chagrin of the Government, Subhas started the practice of providing employees with khadi-made uniforms. Production of various items required by the Corporation came to be indigenously produced. As a result various commodities required by the Corporation like hose-pipes, electric bulbs, mantles for gas lamps came to be produced by Indian companies.

47 N.C.W., Vol. 2, p.20
For the first time in the history of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation a separate Department of Education was started and a distinguished educationist Kshitish Chattopadhyay, a graduate of Cambridge University, was placed at the helm. Earnest efforts were made to spread free primary education for all classes of children. As a result the number of corporation schools shot up within a short time.

Various other measures like improving the city's health services, augmenting the water supply, starting of the Corporation Workers' Co-operative Stores, opening of a modernized tiffin room for the workers gave a new look to the Corporation. Many of the officers of the Corporation were white men but Subhas knew how to deal with them. As he says: "At that time nearly all the departmental heads were Britishers, but with one or two exceptions, I had no difficulty whatsoever in dealing with them." Though quite warm and informal with his friends, Subhas was very much conscious of the dignity of the post he was holding and did not hesitate to cut to size anybody who violated the prescribed decorum. His friend Dasgupta cites an example how Subhas brought to book such a recalcitrant British engineer - one Mr. Coates. Coates had the habit (or according to Subhas - audacity) to smoke before Subhas who was his superior officer: "... One day Subhas in his usual serious manner with the smile of an I C S officer reminded the Chief Engineer - 'Is it proper, Mr. Coates, to smoke before a superior officer?' Mr. Coates - 'Sorry?' (and he left it in the trash) Since then Mr Coates did not smoke a second time unless Subhas gave him permission." 

48 An anthropologist by training, Mr Chattopadhyay, surveyed the public education system in Calcutta and devotedly worked for the expansion of free primary education. Selecting the right man for the right job was the basic principle of Subhas.
49 Bose, The Indian Struggle, n.45, p. 106.
50 Hemendranath Dasgupta, n. 42. p 71-72
Subhas felt that adequate publicity was needed to make the people aware of the multifarious activities undertaken by the Corporation. A novel idea came to his mind - to bring out a publication which will highlight all these. And out of this brain wave was born the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette* - masterly edited by Amal Home and published weekly from 15 November, 1924. Another innovative measure was to give civic reception to great national leaders like Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru and others when they visited the city and discard the previous practice of giving civic reception to Viceroy, Governors and high Government officials.

It was quite natural that Subhas would incur the wrath of the Government who had been keenly watching all his activities and was looking for an opportunity to grab him on the slightest plea. Though there were no specific charges against Subhas, it was suspected that he had links with the revolutionaries and in the morning of 25 October 1924, he was put behind prison bars under Regulation III of 1818.

And this was the end of the first phase of the illustrious career of Subhas. But the period of his incarceration - he was released in May 1927 - was not spent in vain. All the time he was preparing himself for the great struggle that awaited him after his return to the battle front after his release. Many events of momentous importance happened during his absence from the scene - the political arena of Bengal. The most cataclysmic event was the passing away of his political mentor C.R.Das which stunned the whole country. It seemed that a sudden void had been created in the political sphere. So long Subhas had been working under the direct guidance and inspiration of C.R.Das. He now knew that he would have to put on the mantle of the departed leader and would have to play a most vital role - a much bigger role.
To know a great personality one has to look at him when he lays bare his mind and soul. It might be possible to get a glimpse of this superman from the many letters he wrote from the prison to those who were close to him. In these letters he candidly reveals his feelings, emotions, beliefs, convictions - and his dreams. Before passing on to the next phase of his hectic activities after his release, it might be worthwhile to get a picture of Subhas - the Man Behind Netaji - from the fascinating letters he wrote from the Mandalay Central Jail.