"...... are you prepared to accept the reference to the Round Table Conference? I would not call it a round table. It is certainly not round. I would call it a square. A Round Table Conferrence is a conference between two belligerent parties ... I ask you whether the people of India are invited to send any of their representatives with full powers to negotiate with the representatives of the British Government?"

Subhas Chandra Bose

It was a sadder but wiser Subhas who returned to his own arena of political activities after his release from prison (in May 1927) on health grounds and after a sojourn in Shillong for recuperation. Though keenly feeling the absence of his dear departed leader and preceptor Deshbandhu C.R. Das, he realised that the time had come when he himself must hold the reins in strong hands and do his utmost to steer his country to its destination. But to him the task, however difficult it might be, had a strong anchor. It was the idealism of Deshbandhu which was ever alive in his mind. He had learnt from him what is meant by true patriotism. This patriotism cannot be realised if one is incapable of identifying one's life with the life of the nation. He believed that "the man in whom patriotism has been roused as a result of this
identification of his own life with that of the nation, he alone can find a new ideal, can create a new nation.\(^1\)

To attain this ideal, Subhas knows, is not an easy task - one has to pass through rigorous test. What is required is sincere and undiluted engrossment with an 'Idea'. This is the real 'Sadhana'. And after this comes the culmination - 'Siddha'. "Those who want to be builders of the nation they must succeed in the 'sadhana\(^2\)'s", expostulates Subhas.\(^2\) And having learnt this lesson of idealism from Deshbandhu, Subhas gives his clarion call to the people of Bengal while he was convalescing in Shillong: "I have this to say to young Bengal - if you want to be real men, if you want to create a new nation, if you want to bring into fruition the dreams of a free India - then come, let us lose ourselves in this 'Sadhana'\(^3\)". Thus Subhas ardently wanted young Bengal to emulate the precepts preached by Deshbandhu C R Das.

But Subhas knows that this ideal is not a lifeless and motionless entity. It has got "speed, locomotion and life-giving power".\(^4\) This ideal can be detected only by a person endowed with real insight behind all visible phenomena. This ideal, Subhas knows, prompted Swami Vivekananda to lay the foundation of true nationalism in India by preaching the essential unity of all religions and sects. And this ideal became the guiding force in Subhas when he entered the beleagured amphitheatre of political squabbling. And that is why he emphatically proclaims the dreams nestling in his mind: "One of the dreams that has inspired me and given a purpose to my life is that of a great and undivided Bengal devoted to the service of India and of humanity - a Bengal that is above all sects and groups and is the home alike of the Moslem,

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1 Subhas Chandra Bose, "Deshbandhu and Nation Building". Netaji wrote this article in Shillong in May 1927. This was published for the first time in Netaji Collected Works, Netaji Research Bureau, (hereafter cited as N.C.W), Vol 5, Calcutta 1985, p. 198.
2 Ibid., p. 198
3 Ibid., p. 199.
4 Ibid., p. 10.
the Hindu, the Christian and the Buddhist. It is this Bengal - the Bengal of my dreams - that Bengal of the future still in embryo - that I worship and strive to serve in my daily life.⁵

But the task was a formidable one. There were problems galore. Subhas, who was in constant touch with his brother Sarat Chandra Bose and others when he was in prison was not unaware of the menacing clouds vitiating the political atmosphere of the country. Those were the days of the darkening doldrums. Subhas, in a letter to a political worker in Calcutta in 1926 before he left Mandalay prison, unhesitatingly expressed his dismay:

"All over Bengal there are only groupism and internecine quarrel. Throughout Bengal today a scramble for power is in progress. Those who have power are much too occupied in holding on to it. Those who have none are determined to grab it."⁶ In fact, the general condition of the country was one of mutual suspicion, apathy and sometimes hatred.

The political scenario of the country was so disarrayed at the time that by April 1927, even Pandit Motilal Nehru felt helpless and dejected. The acrimonious political jugglery that was going on at that time was too much for him. He ventilated his feelings to his son Jawaharlal in April 1927: "Indian politics were low enough when you left India a year ago but even you .... can have no idea of the almost universal rot which has since set in."⁷ Even Gandhiji found the political atmosphere stifling. As Subhas says: "Mahatma Gandhi was suffering from acute mental depression and was living in retirement from active politics."⁸ Mr Srinivasa Iyenger who was holding the fort at that time, convened a Unity Conference in Calcutta in November, 1927,

⁵ Ibid., p. 263.
⁶ S C Bose, Correspondence, Netaji Research Bureau, 1967, p. 293.
⁷ Quoted in Peter Heehs, India's Freedom Struggle, 1857-1947, Oxford University Press New Delhi, 1988, p. 103.
to assuage the feelings of the Muslims. But even the nationalist Muslims who were shaken at the demise of C. R. Das were losing their confidence in the Congress. Deshbandhu had a strong hold on the Muslims community who had great faith on him. It was his ardent desire to bring about a lasting Hindu-Muslim entente through a kind of cultural synthesis. While in jail he used to have frequent discussions with Maulana Akram Khan regarding the points of affinity between the two cultures. The death the Deshbandhu on 16 June, 1925, was nothing short of a national calamity and, when Subhas appeared in the political scene, he had to bear the full brunt of it. It was a dishevelled country torn with dissensions and internecine squabble. Hindu-Muslim relationship so zealously fostered by Deshbandhu during his life-time was at its lowest ebb.

The communal question, in fact, was a burning topic at that time and a decision - whether joint or separate electorate should be adopted was the most controversial question. Subhas never believed in communal dissension. He had a firm faith in communal amity. This attitude was appreciated even by the top Muslim spokesman like Abdul Karim (from Burdwan) who commented: "I should not omit to mention that I have noticed with much satisfaction the efforts that are being made by my young friend Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose and others of his way of thinking, to bring about a relation of amity and cordiality between the two communities. ... The Hindus and Mussalmans have to live together in the land of their birth and they cannot afford to constantly quarrel over any matter without damaging their vital interests."9 It was the earnest belief of Subhas that regeneration was only possible if the two communities come together forgetting all their differences to do their utmost and fight for freedom. In an appeal to Congress organisation

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in Bengal on 22 November, 1927, he firmly asserts that everything should be done "to do all that is humanly possible to restore friendly and cordial relations between Hindus and Muslims in every part of Bengal so that both the communities may stand shoulder to shoulder under the Congress banner and heartily co-operate in executing the Congress Programme.\textsuperscript{10}

It was the firm belief of Subhas that the Hindu - Muslim problem was nothing but a cleverly concocted ploy of the British to create dissension between the two communities. It was, according to him, somewhat like the Ulster problem in Ireland\textsuperscript{11} and the Jewish problem in Palestine. "There are hundreds of examples," says Subhas, "to show you that throughout the history of the British rule, the British have tried by every possible means to divide the Indian people. After having done so much to artificially create differences among the Indian people, the British turn around and say that we are not fit to be free."\textsuperscript{12} Also in his Lecture at Opera House on the 'Mission of Young India' on 22 May 1928, he exhorted the students by making them conscious of the underlying unity of the Indian society and the continuity of her civilization. "There is nothing Hindu or Mahamadan about it. It is the result of confluence of cultures. Look at the vision of Taj in moon-light and realise the beauty of the mind that conceived it. One of our Bengali novelists has exquisitely described it as tears crystallized in stone and if the Moghuls had left nothing more behind them than the Taj, I would be grateful to them."\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Subhas Chandra Bose, "Appeal to the Congress organisations in Bengal, 22 Nov. 1927", in \textit{N.C.W.} Vol. 5, n.1, p. 214

\textsuperscript{11} Ulster: northermost of the historic provinces of Ireland. Immediately after the First World War, Ireland, which was always a unified state was divided into Ulster and the Irish Free State. It was a well-known British policy to weaken the country and Subhas was quite aware of this.


\textsuperscript{13} Subhas Chandra Bose, "Lecture at Opera House on the Mission of Young India" in \textit{N.C.W.}, Vol. 5 n.1, p. 256.
But the Hindu-Muslim problem was not the only problem that Subhas had to face; he had to grapple with opponents and oppositions at different fronts. Subhas had to confront all these even before he set foot in Calcutta after his release. An interesting and important event was Subhas' election, while he was still in jail, to the Bengal Legislative Council in 1926 which was carried out under the 1919 Act. Subhas ruminates that the election was reminiscent of the early Sinn Fein election in which political prisoners were candidates and the slogan was - 'Put him in to get him out'. Subhas had to face stiff opposition from not only his opponent J.N. Basu, who was a Liberal party Leader and had defeated the Swarajist candidate for the same seat in 1923. The Government of Bengal did not give permission even to the release of the election manifesto of Subhas. The plea was political prisoners were not allowed to issue appeals to the people. But in spite of this in the voting that took place on 17 November 1926, Subhas won by a thumping majority. Sarat Chandra was also elected.

After his release, Subhas, ignoring the advice of his doctors, entered the Council chamber and took the Oath of Office on 23 August 1927. Subhas' plan was to continue the particular objective formulated by Deshbandhu C.R. Das - 'non-cooperation from within the Chambers.' It is interesting to note that this particular objective acted as a catalyst which caused the formation of the Swaraj Party. Deshbandhu's Swaraj Party which was formed on 1 January, 1923, was the outcome of his disagreement with Gandhiji on this particular issue. Deshbandhu was the President of the Gaya session of the Congress held in December 1922. He was of the view that

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14 In Ireland the 'Sinn Fein' 'Ourselves' movement arose at the beginning of the 20th century for liberating Ireland from the British yoke. It became a popular base in Ireland and played a very important role in arousing political consciousness in the people. Subhas was very much influenced by this movement.

15 Subhas says: "When the All India Congress met for the purpose of laying down the programme of work for the next year, that is 1923, Pandit Motilal Nehru stood up to make an announcement about the formation of the Swaraj party." "The Anti-Climax (1922)" N.C. W, Vol.2, n.8.
the non-cooperation would be more effective if it was carried on from within the Council Chambers. He was strongly supported by Pandit Motilal Nehru, General Secretary of the Congress. Ultimately this motion was put to vote. But, in spite of his best efforts, Deshbandhu could not alter the opinion of the staunch Gandhi loyalists and the motion was defeated by 890 to 1748 votes. Immediately Deshbandhu relinquished the office of President and Motilal Nehru followed suit by resigning from the post of Secretary. And the very next day - 1 January 1923 - a new party, the Swaraj Party was formed with Deshbandhu as its President. Deshbandhu entrusted Subhas with the task of circulating the views of the Swaraj Party through the medium of 'Banglar Katha', a Bengali weekly. This dissension or conflict that started in the Gaya session of the Congress, continued for quite some time. But ultimately good sense prevailed and Gandhiji gave up his hostile attitude. He personally met the two leaders, Deshbandhu and Motilal Nehru and tried to bury the hatchet. An agreement was reached which came to be known as Gandhi - Das Pact The main term of the pact or agreement was that Gandhiji would concentrate on the Khadi campaign while the Swaraj Party would be in charge of the political activities. This agreement was later ratified at the annual session of the Congress held at Belgaon.

All these happened before the incarceration of Subhas when he was holding the post of the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation. Subhas came back to the scene after his release in May 1927, and took a plunge in the on-going fray. Fortunately he could see a silver lining: According to him – disgusted with the narrow sectarianism, selfishness and fanaticism, which had enveloped the country after the Deshbandhu, the soul of the people began to stir itself again. A sort of new awakening dawned and people became conscious of the devastating effect of internecine imbroglio. At this time a subsequent move by the government infuriated the people. And
the people forgetting all dissensions unitedly took a stand against the government like a solid rock.

The move that caused this upheaval was that the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, made an announcement in November 1927 regarding the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission 16 under section 84(a) of the Government of India Act 1919. Subhas makes a succinct analysis of the reasons which might have motivated the Tory Government of England to take this step in spite of the fact that the election was round the corner. The Conservative Party, Subhas opines, apprehended that the Labour Party, in case they came to power, would concede to the Indian demand. And because the next General Election in England was scheduled to be held in 1929, they wanted to throttle any such attempt by the Labour Party.

So a Commission was formed under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon. The Commission, consisting of seven members, had the cooperation of all the political parties of England. The Commission was appointed by a Royal Warrant of 26 November 1927. The main object of the Commission was to investigate the feasibility of the dyarchy system 17 and to chalk out a plan for the introduction of a responsible government for India. But what incensed the Indian leaders was that there was not a single Indian as a member of the Commission. But more than that what enraged the leaders most was the statement of Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India challenging the

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16 According to the Government of India Act of 1919, a Statutory Commission was to be appointed after ten years to review the situation prevailing in the country. So a Commission was appointed in November 1927 under the chairmanship of Sir John and was christened the Simon Commission. Strangely enough, though its main purpose was to prepare a future constitution for India not one of its seven members was an Indian. And quite naturally, a chorus of condemnation denouncing the action reverberated throughout the country.

17 Dyarchy: Under dyarchy (dual government) the powers of the provincial governments are to be divided into 'reserved' and 'transferred' subjects. The reserved subject which included essential areas of law enforcement like justice, police and revenue would be under the charge of the governor. The transferred subjects - education, public health and public works would be entrusted to the ministers who were responsible to the provincial Legislative Councils.
political leaders of India to produce a feasible constitution of India. Subhas was not a person to digest this calmly. He was quite vociferous in strongly expressing his sentiments: "The Secretary of State for India has in a fit of pompus pride challenge India to produce an agreed constitution. If there is a spark of honour and self-respect left in us, we should take up the gauntlet and give a fitting reply by producing a constitution."

But the insult to the injury was that no Indian was thought fit to be a member of the Commission that envisaged a constitution for the people of India. And so the inevitable outcome of the Government announcement was a decision to boycott the Commission. The call of the boycott of the Commission was endorsed by the Hindu Mahasabha. Even Mohammed Ali Jinnah carrying the majority with him was in favour of boycott. Appreciating the sentiment of the people, Madras Congress (December 1927) decided to boycott the Simon Commission at every stage and every form. Under the pressure of the youthful elements, led by Subhas and Nehru, the Madras Congress passed a resolution adopting complete independence as the goal of the Indian people. Mahatma Gandhi, however, after the Congress was over, remarked that it had been 'hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed'. According to Subhas, : "The resolution of the Madras Congress regarding, independence was but the logical fulfilment of a process going on within the Congress for a long time." Subhas also mentions in this connection that: "Lala Lajpat Rai declared that it was passed because many people believed that Dominion Status also meant national independence. At the Lahore Congress in December 1929, a similar resolution was moved by the Mahatma

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21 Subhas, n. 18, p. 161. 
and unanimously adopted\textsuperscript{22}.

In the Madras Congress another resolution was passed which directed the Executive Committee to convene another Conference to be called All-India All Parties Conference under the chairmanship of Pandit Motilal Nehru with the main object of drawing up a constitution for India acceptable to all parties.

But Subhas hailed the appointment of the Simon Commission because he felt that the appointment of the Simon Commission had been made at an auspicious moment and it had a wonderful effect in whipping up the enthusiasm of the people. From one end of the country to the other, the country exhibited a solidarity which it had seldom shown in recent times. And this was what Subhas was longing for a long time and he started playing an important role in the affairs of the Congress. He was appointed one of the three General Secretaries of the Congress along with Jawaharlal and Mr. S. Quereshi.

The Simon Commission, popularly known as 'Simon Seven' because there were seven members, came to India in February 1928. And, as scheduled, large scale demonstrations and hartals swept the nation. Subhas, who was at that time the President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, was entrusted with the responsibility of organising the hartal in Bengal and he rose to the occasion and started rousing the dormant national feelings of the people. And he got tremendous response from the people. The whole country became agog with excitement and enthusiasm. Subhas, with his keen political insight, could discern that an opportune moment to strike while the iron was hot had come. He personally visited Gandhiji at his Ashram at Sabarmati and requested him to come out of his hibernation and give a lead to the country. He drew Gandhiji's attention to the great excitement that had gripped the whole country. He told him about the no - tax campaign resorted

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, n.18
to by the peasantry in the Bardoli sub-division in Gujrat under the leadership of Vallabhbhai Patel to protest against 20 per cent rise in land revenue assessment, Subhas himself had visited Poona in May 1928 to preside over the Maharashtra Provincial Conference. He had witnessed terrific excitement among the populace. He had also been to Bombay after that and had witnessed the same scene everywhere. But Gandhiji was still non-committal. A dejected Subhas remarks : "At that time the reply of the Mahatma was that he did not see any light, though before his very eyes the peasantry of Bardoli were demonstrating through a non-tax campaign that they were ready for a struggle."23

Subhas is of the firm opinion that "if the Congress Working Committee had taken courage in both hands, they could have anticipated the movement of 1930 by two years and the appointment of the Simon Commission could have been made the starting point of such a movement."24 Subhas believed in the maxim that as there is a tide in the affairs of man which taken on time leads on to fortune, so there is a tide also in the affairs of a nation. Subhas very much felt at that time the absence of a leader like Deshbandhu who was ever eager to take a firm grip of any situation that might be advantageous for the country. "If a leader like Deshbandhu Das had been available then, the events following the boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit to India in 1921 would have been repeated in 1928"25 Subhas, in fact, never liked dilly-dallying. He liked to take a quick decision and follow it up with prompt action. The word procrastination was not in his dictionary. And so there was no remission on his part to exhort the nation to rise to the occasion. In a speech delivered at a hartal meeting on 4 February 1928 he reiterated: "1928 and 1929 are rare opportunities which fall to the lot of a subject nation - the Indian .... If only the five crores of Bengal stand to a man our victory will be

24 Ibid.
within our easy reach. Let this dying nation meet death not like sheep but as a man.26

In the meantime the Committee (appointed by the All Parties Conference) under the Chairmanship of Pandit Motilal Nehru was engaged in drafting the main principles of the Constitution. One of the vexing problems was the question of Hindu-Muslim representation in the Legislatures. Subhas, who was also one of the members of the Committee, was the 'Bengal Expert' and quite naturally he was requested to produce sufficient evidence in support of his contention that separate electorates or reservation of seats were not necessary for the Muslims of Bengal. Subhas collected all the information available and gave it to the Chairman Pandit Motilal Nehru. He based his evidence on the election to the district boards of some of the districts of Bengal. His evidence was thorough and comprehensive: "During the last two or three years, owing largely to the communal awakening in the Province, the election to the district boards have been run on communal lines; .....the effect has been amply demonstrated by the recent district board elections in eastern Bengal. In the election in Mymensingh held about a year ago, out of 22 members not a single Hindu has been returned in spite of the existence of joint electorate. This is practically the case in Chittagong, Noakhali, Tippera, Barisal and other districts. In the election at Jessore held a few months ago, Muslims have swept the polls and the offices of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman hitherto held by the Hindus have been captured by the Muslims for the first time As a result of this, I am told, Maulavi Nawsher Ali, M.L.C., Chairman and Maulavi Abdur Rauf, M.L.C., Vice-Chairman, who were formerly supporters of separate electorates have now changed their views. I am also told that this has also influenced Sir Abdur Rahim who has till very recently been a staunch supporter of separate electorates........." 27

26 The speech at the hartal meeting on 4 February, 1928, has been given in details in N.C.W., Vol. 5, n.1, p. 237.
report, besides its informative value, shows another significant trait in the character of Subhas. It indicates how assiduously he accomplishes a task or responsibility assigned to him and also how thorough he is in all matters.

The report submitted by Subhas clearly established his point that separate electorate was not at all necessary for the Muslims. And his report was annexed to the original report of the Nehru Committee appointed by the All Parties Conference to determine the Principles of the Constitution of India. The Report was signed by Subhas and other Committee members. The Nehru Report in its preamble admitted that "the committee could not be unanimous on the question of the fundamental basis of the Constitution, since a minority (Subhas says he was among them) would not accept Dominion Status and pressed for complete national independence as the basis of the constitution." 28

The argument of the dissenters was that a resolution on complete independence had already been adopted at the Madras Conference on 19 December 1927. 29

Subhas, in fact, had a clear idea in his mind about the basic points that should form the core of the constitution. In his Presidential Address at the Maharashtra Provincial Conference at Poona on 3 May 1928 he refers to three cardinal points. "These cardinal points," he says, "are as follows:

(i) The constitution should guarantee national sovereignty, i.e. the sovereignty of the people. What we want is government of the people, by the people and for the people.

(ii) The constitution should be prefaced by 'a declaration of rights'.

29 Ibid, p. 161,
which will guarantee the elementary rights of citizenship. Without a declaration of rights a constitution is not worth the paper it is written on. Repressive laws, ordinances and regulations should be unknown in free India.

(ii) There should be a system of joint electorate. ............
Nationalism and separate electorates are self-contradictory. Separate electorates are wrong in principle and it is futile to attempt to build up a nation on a bad principle." 30 

Subhas, it is quite evident from this, had a clear conception of the most desirable and proper approach to a viable constitution which would usher in a dawn of hope, happiness and honour to the country. And that is why in the same address quoting from Tennyson's 'Ulyssis' he urges everybody to stand shoulder to shoulder and say with one heart and with one voice that our motto is, as Tennyson said through Ulyssis, 'To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.' 31

It is interesting to note how the different facets of the character of Subhas are gradually unfolded as one peruses his career and different activities. Subhas was never afraid of calling a spade a spade whatever might be the consequences. At the All-Parties' Conference held in Lucknow in August 1928 he was against the recommendation for dominion form of government because prior to that a resolution "declaring the goal of the Indian people to be 'complete independence' " had already been adopted at the Madras Conference in December 1927. 32 The normal course open to him and younger nationalists like Jawaharlal would have been to publicly stand

30 Subhas Chandra, "Democracy in India," Presidential Address at the Maharashtra Provincial Conference, Poona, on 3 May 1928, in Essential Writings, n.12, p.90.
31 Essential Writings, n. 12, p. 91.
against the adoption of the report at the All Parties' Conference at Lucknow. But the sagacity of Subhas is evident from the fact that he realised that it would be detrimental to the interest of the Congress. The question of national unity was uppermost in his mind and he did not want to give a tool to those seeking loopholes in the Congress camp. Categorically expressing his views he said "... neither Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, nor I accepted the report wholeheartedly. We made it particularly clear that we disagreed with many other members of the All Parties' Conference with regard to the basis of the constitution ...... I still believe as firmly as ever that we acted in the best interest of the country in not dividing the All Parties' Conference on this question." 33 So, according to Subhas, an informal meeting of the members of the Congress left wing was held and it was decided to voice their protest at the Conference. An important decision was also taken - to form an Independence League and to carry on active propaganda through it to make the people conscious of their goal - complete independence. As a resultant of this, the Independence League was formally inaugurated in Delhi. Subhas clearly explains his position in his *The Indian Struggle*: "After the Conference, we started organising branches of the Independence League all over the country and in November, at a meeting held at Delhi, the Independence League was formally inaugurated." 34

The stage was now all set to hold the Annual Session of the Congress in Calcutta with Pandit Motilal Nehru as its President. It started in a grand style. Subhas had by then become an important member of the Indian National Congress. He had been elected President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (B P C C) in November 1927. At the Conference he had an important role. He was Chairman of the Reception Committee and also the

33 Subhas Chandra Bose, "View on AICC Resolution , 7 November 1928 in N.C.W., Vol. 5, p. 263.
General Officer Commanding (G O C) of the Congress Volunteer Corps. As G O C, dressed in full military uniform, Subhas organised an impressive show. Nirod C. Chowdhury, in his The Continent of Circe, an essay on the people of India, gives his own impression about Subhas. In this connection he says that though Subhas was only play - acting, his mind must have been working in secret on such a scheme ... "About that time," Chowdhury says, "I one day told a friend how Masaryk had organised an army of liberation out of the Czech soldiers of the old Austrian army who were prisoners in Russia. He repeated the story to Bose and told me afterwards that upon hearing it Bose had only remarked : "Where is the man in India to do such a thing?" But my friend added that he had also noticed a strange fire in Bose's eyes."\textsuperscript{35}

This remark, 'strange fire in Bose's eyes', seems to be a truthful reproduction of what actually was going on in the mind of Subhas - the burning desire to make his motherland free from the shackles of British tharldom. And what was going on in the mind of Subhas can be deciphered from a subsequent statement made by him: "If we are to take the history of Asia for our guide, the British dominion in India should be overthrown by external violence exerted by some Asiatic people : just as the Alexandrian empire was overthrown\textsuperscript{36} A close study of the history of Asia no doubt convinced Subhas of this.

But the immediate onerous task before Subhas was to voice his protest against Gandhiji's resolution. And Subhas was prepared to boldly put forward his point of view and face any opposition. So when the main business of the Congress session started it was found that it was not easy to pass the resolution moved by Gandhiji. There was a clash of opinion between the two groups within the Congress. The older group comprising the staunch followers


\textsuperscript{36} N.C.W., Vol.5, n.1, p. 128.
of Gandhiji were satisfied only by the Dominion form of government and hence was inclined to accept the Nehru Report without any amendment. But the Left Wing adhered to the demand for complete independence. Gandhiji and Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Congress President, wanted to bridge the gulf between the two by means of a compromise. But according to Subhas, "the maximum concession which they could make fell short of the minimum demand of the Left Wingers." 37

In fact, the idea of Dominion Status as embodied in the Nehru Report was repugnant to Subhas. He candidly analysed his own views in his Presidential Address at the Maharashtra Provincial Conference in Poona on 3 May, 1928: "India is not Canada or Australia or South Africa. Indians are an Oriental people, a coloured race, and there is nothing common between India and Great Britain from which we may be led to think that Dominion Rule within the Empire is a desirable consummation for India. Rather, India stands to lose by remaining within the British Empire." 38

Jawaharlal too shared the views of Subhas at the beginning and was against the resolution of Dominion Status sponsored by Gandhiji. But subsequently his stand in this respect became dubious. Jawaharlal himself had moved a resolution at the Madras Congress on 29 December 1927, declaring that the goal of India was complete national independence. At that time Jawaharlal's public stand was quite different from the views of Gandhiji and that of his father Pandit Motilal Nehru. But subsequently there was a volte-face on his part. In spite of all opposition Subhas stuck to his points and moved an amendment to the official resolution. It was the first open stand of Subhas against Gandhiji.

38 Subhas Chandra Bose, "Democracy in India" Essential Writings n. 12, p.85.
The amendment motion moved by Subhas gives a clear idea of his psychological insight. With a view to emancipating his motherland from the clutches of British imperialism Subhas was exploring different avenues. He knew that an ultimatum to the rulers would expose the political chicanery resorted to by them and would make it clear that they had not the slightest intention to give complete independence to India. He wanted therefore that the Nehru Report should contain the most important provision - a demand for complete independence. And this would enable the Congress to take an upper hand in the negotiations.

Subhas while moving his amendment to the resolution moved by Gandhiji, was quite outspoken when he referred to the cleavage between the older and the new school of thought in the Congress. He felt that it was of no use to keep one's eyes closed like an ostrich to this glaring fact. He reminded the participants of the new awakening and resurgence discernible in the youth - the harbingers of new hopes and aspirations. "They are no longer prepared," he said, "to follow blindly. They have realised that they are the heirs of the future, that it is for them to make India free and with this new consciousness they are preparing themselves for the arduous task that awaits them." And Subhas reiterated that, in his opinion, it would be suicidal to ignore this sentiment of the youth.

Subhas, in his speech, did not fail to point out another important factor - the implication of the then international situation. The Madras resolution of complete independence had given India a new status. And hence, asking for Dominion Status at this stage, would be like putting the hands of the clock back. Subhas had a great abhorrence for slave mentality and he believed that this mentality could be dispelled only by standing for complete

and full independence. And he was far-sighted enough to see that the clouds of another war were looming large in the horizon. He could realise that the Treaty of Versailles was nothing but a feeble attempt to satisfy all the nations concerned. It did not satisfy the people of Italy, the Balkans, Russia, Australia, Hungary and so on. There was also the combination of capitalist countries against Russia. And the race for disarmament was in reality a big farce. So India must be on the alert with a new, master-plan to obtain a firm grip on the evolving situation in the new world order. He concluded with a final appeal which is redolent with the deepest feelings of his heart: "In conclusion I wish to make a final appeal. I do not think it will mean the slightest disrespect to our leaders if we accept the amendment. Respect and love, admiration and adoration for leaders, is one thing, but respect for principle is another thing. Accept my resolution, and inspire the younger generation with a new consciousness." 40

Subhas was not a demagogue, but undoubtedly he was a forceful speaker. His speeches delivered at various places and on various occasions are replete with clear logical reasoning to drive home his point. In a letter to one of his friends written much later he writes that nothing can deter him from saying what he wants to say whatever might be the consequence. "I have spoken bluntly because I am a plain blunt man who has the courage to call a spade a spade. I shall continue to fight and stand for Bengal and for the best interests of India even if I am an inglorious minority of one." 41 But in this case when Subhas brought in the amendment, 42 Gandhiji and his staunch followers remained adamant. They had come to the Congress session with a closed mind

40 Ibid., p. 95.
41 N. C. W., Vol 8, p. 83.
42 "This Congress adheres to the decision of the Madras Congress declaring complete independence to be the goal of the Indian people and is of opinion that there can be no true freedom till the British connection is severed." Forward, 1 January 1929, p. 5.
and naturally they were not receptive to the arguments put forward by Subhas. And so the inevitable happened - the amendment was lost by 993 votes to 1350. Gandhiji, as apprehended by Subhas, strongly stood in favour of the resolution ignoring the amendment put forward by Subhas. But, as a concession, he suggested that an ultimatum should be given to the Government that in case of compliance by December 1929 the non-cooperation movement would be revived again. The original resolution to have a two years' ultimatum was thus reduced to one year because of the pressure exerted by Subhas and the Left Wingers. Gandhiji's task became easier when he became successful in appeasing Jawaharlal who bowed down to his wishes.

But Subhas, the staunch votary of complete independence, was determined to propagate his message to his countrymen residing in different parts of this vast country. At the time of the All Parties Conference in Lucknow in August 1928, Subhas had floated the idea of organising an Independence League. The main business of this League would be to carry on publicity work all over the country to give an impetus to the demand for complete independence. Jawaharlal at that time had clearly accepted the idea and had participated in the deliberations of the League. Branches all over the country were organised to propagate the main idea of the League. The Independence League was formally inaugurated in Delhi in November 1928.

The amendment motion of Subhas favouring complete independence was defeated, but he was partly vindicated when Gandhiji had agreed to reduce the period of ultimatum from two to one year. And December 1929 was not far off. Ultimately the wishes of Subhas prevailed when Gandhiji came to learn from Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, that there was no possibility of granting anything. And then as its inevitable consequence, at the
Lahore Congress held in December 1929 with Jawaharlal Nehru as President the much sought for resolution declaring *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence as the goal of India was passed. Subsequently, the Congress Working Committee met on 2 January 1930 and decided that 26 January should be observed as the day of *Purna Swaraj* (complete independence). Gandhiji carefully penned a declaration which was read out in different places all over India. This document, India's Declaration of Independence, begins with these words: "We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or abolish it. The British government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain *Purna Swaraj* or Complete Independence." 43 And then the red letter day came. On 30 January 1930, the Independence pledge was taken with great exhilaration. The civil disobedience movement started with much fan-fare, spreading like wild fire to every part of the country. Everybody looked at the distant horizon yearning for complete independence.

Complete independence was no doubt a sweet-sounding expression but Subhas felt that it had no real value until and unless concrete and adequate steps were taken to implement it. And for this drastic steps should be taken. With this end in view, with the backing of the Left-Wingers, Subhas moved a resolution to the effect that the Congress should aim at setting up a parallel government in the country. Very eloquently he put forward his arguments: "But I stand before you because I feel that this programme is not such a

43 Quoted in Peter Heehs, n. 7, p. 110.
programme as would carry us to the goal of complete independence. My amendment is a complete, whole and workable programme. My programme has two distinct parts, constructive as well as destructive. I cannot see how we can reach our goal except by setting up a parallel Government based on the goodwill of the people." 44

Subhas, no doubt, was prompted by a strong patriotic feeling in moving the resolution. He knew that Gandhiji's policy of non-violence would not take them far and so he advocated this drastic measure of setting up a parallel government. And it may be that is why he did not take into cognizance the hurdles that such a resolution might confront. The main point was that how far this scheme would be feasible because of various factors. The whole nation must be properly tuned to shoulder such a responsibility braving all opposition of the mighty British power.

Gandhiji, with his more mature brain, could realise it and in a very eloquent speech he voiced his own opinion. In fact, he stood as a rock against the resolution put forward by Subhas: "I ask you to reject the proposition of Sj. Subhas Chandra Bose..... his proposition is a good proposition but it is going far ahead .... you cannot have freedom by merely passing a resolution. Subhas Babu wants you to go a step further. But I cannot bring myself to believe that it is a possibility. A parallel government means immediate complete independence from today. That means whereever there are local courts we shall have our courts, and whereever there are schools we shall have our own schools." 45 After this Subhas' resolution was defeated by a huge majority. An unhappy Subhas' comment was: "This resolution was also defeated, with the result that though the Congress accepted the goal of complete independence as its objective, no plan was laid down for reaching

44 N. C. W., Vol. 6, n. 4, p. 94.
45 Ibid.
that goal nor was any programme of work adopted for the coming year. A more ridiculous state of affairs could not be imagined, but in public affairs, we are sometimes inclined to lose not only our sense of reality but our common sense as well." 46

Subhas, in fact, cogently analyses the reasons which prompted him to come forward with his counter resolution - Parallel Government and Total Boycott - at the Subjects Committee meeting on 31 December 1929. Subhas says that he does not want to emulate Ireland but the example of Sinn Feiners of Ireland is a case in point. Very emphatically he asserts: "All or none is my principle. Therefore, if boycott is to be restored it must be complete or there is no good in entering the courts and local bodies and boycotting the councils. In politics sometimes it is necessary to bow down to exigencies of circumstances as the Sinn Feiners did and entered parliament after taking the oath of allegiance ............ Complete boycott is essential at this stage." 47

But Subhas had to pay dearly for daring to stand openly against Gandhiji not only at the Calcutta Congress in 1928 December but also at Lahore Congress in December 1929. His name did not find a place in the list prepared by Gandhiji for electing members of the Congress Working Committee for the next year. But the movement that started after the historic Lahore Congress gradually gathered momentum and like wild fire swept the country. "So great was the response of the people to the call to action," says Subhas, "that even Mahatma Gandhi was taken by surprise and he stated that the movement could have been started two years earlier." 48 The Government being at a fix began to look for a face-saving device to contain the movement.

47 N. C. W, Vol. 6, n.4, p.95
48 Subhas Chandra Bose, "The Anti-Imperialist Struggle and Samayavada." Presidential Address at the Third Indian Political Conference, London, 10 June 1933, delivered in absentia. See Essential Writings n.12, p.131.
At this time the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 5 March 1931, came as a very convenient bait in the hands of the Government which was easily swallowed by Gandhiji. One of the terms of the Pact to which Gandhiji agreed was the suspension of the raging Civil Disobedience Movement which was going on in full swing. He also consented to participate in the deliberations of the forthcoming Round Table Conference for drafting a constitution for India.

But Subhas knew all along that the greatest 'faux pas' on the part of Gandhiji and the Indian leaders was the joint manifesto - known as the Delhi Manifesto of November 1929 according to which the leaders gave their consent to participate in the Round Table Conference in London. According to Subhas the very term 'Round Table Conference' was a misnomer because, as he says, "... it was not a conference of plenipotentiaries representing the belligerent parties."

According to him it would be a conglomeration of some Indians nominated at random by the alien Government. The divergent views of such a hybrid gathering would not be congenial for India. In this case, Subhas opines, the sensible and befitting action on the part of the Indian leaders would have been to spurn the offer. Non-participation in the Round Table Conference would have been the best strategy. And Subhas urged that just as the Sinn Fein leaders repudiated the Irish Convention which was a brain-wave of Lloyd Geroge so also the Indian National Congress should follow suit. And so Subhas in his speech at the Lahore Session of the Congress on 31 December, 1929 did not mince words. He forcefully blurts out his strong conviction ".... are you prepared to accept the reference to the Round Table Conference? I would not call it 'a round table.' It is certainly not round. I could call it square. A Round Table Conference is a conference between two belligerent parties .... I ask you whether the people of India are invited to send

49 N.C. W., Vol. 8, p.245.
any of their representatives with full powers to negotiate with the representatives of the British Government?  

A desperate Subhas took the last chance to by-pass the machination of the rulers. Finding no other alternative he rushed to Bombay to meet Gandhiji and have a discussion with him. But nothing fruitful came out of this discussion. He came back to Delhi with Gandhiji. And there they got the shocking information about the decision of the Government to execute Sardar Bhagat Singh and two of his comrades who were involved in what was known as the Lahore Conspiracy Case. Subhas was of the opinion that this decision was against the spirit if not the letters of the Gandhi - Irwin Pact. Lord Irwin's evasive reply to the appeal for clemency was that he would "postpone their execution for the time being and give serious consideration to the matter." But on 24 March belying all expectations the shocking news spread like a wild fire that Sardar Bhagat Singh and his comrades had been hanged on the previous night. The execution was all the more tragic because Sardar Bhagat Singh was not only the symbol of the new awakening among the youth; he was also the progenitor of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha in the Punjab.

But Subhas did not get an opportunity to continue his practically lone battle. He had to leave the arena when he was arrested on 2 January 1932, soon after his return from the Lahore Session of the Congress and was incarcerated. But as the condition of his health deteriorated he was examined by several medical boards appointed by the Government. The recommendation of the boards was that he should either be released or allowed to go to Europe for treatment. Ultimately the Government took the decision to send him to

50 N.C.W. Vol.6,n.4,p.99.
51 Ibid., Vol.2, n.8, p.226.
52 Sardar Bhagat Singh hailed from a well-known patriotic family of Punjab. He was a leader of the youth movement there. He had been arrested along with Batukeshwar Dutt for throwing a bomb in the Assembly at Delhi during a sitting—an All India Conspiracy case started at Lahore in 1929.
Europe. And so "In February 1933, a seriously ill and emaciated prisoner was carried out of an ambulance on a stretcher and put on the ship S. S. Gange that was about to sail from Bombay to Europe." 53

From S. S. Gange, the Italian ship which was taking him to Europe, Subhas sent a "Parting Message to Bengalees" on 2 March 1935: "For over a year I have been exiled from my province...........Torn away from the realities of life, through those long and dark hours I sought refuge in contemplation. .....One of the dreams that have inspired me and given a purpose to my life is that of a great and undivided Bengal devoted to the service of India and humanity - a Bengal that is above all sects and groups and is the home alike of the Moslem, the Hindu, the Christian and the Buddhist". He gives a clarion call to his countrymen and continues ". Forget your petty quarrels, sink your personal differences - strive to make Bengal united and great - so that in her greatness may be our highest happiness and glory. After all, who dies if Bengal lives; who lives if Bengal dies." 54 This parting message amply illustrates the deepest feelings of a patriot leaving the shores of his motherland.

But the years of his enforced exile in Europe from March 1933 to March 1937 were not spent in vain. He fully utilised this period, as said by Sisir Kumar Bose, "as an unofficial ambassador of India." 55 Though in indifferent health after a gall bladder operation in Vienna, he travelled extensively across the Continent without respite. He visited Austria, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Poland, Rumania, Switzerland. For a brief period in 1934,

55 Sisir Kumar Bose in 'Introduction' to N. C. W., n.49, p.XV.
when his father Janaki Nath Bose was critically ill, he came to India (though he arrived too late to see him alive) and went back to Europe after the funeral.

In Europe, wherever he went, Subhas addressed scores of public meetings and created an atmosphere of bilateral friendship. He tried all means - personal contacts, correspondence, meetings, lectures etc. - "to create in the people of Europe an interest in the Indian National Movement and to win their sympathy for the struggle for freedom carried on by the Indian National Congress and also for moral support against Great Britain."56 His main object was to study at first hand the condition of post-Versailles Europe. His approach was two-pronged: He wanted to meticulously observe the growth of the new alignments and the new forces that were ultimately to challenge the old order that had been set up by the Treaty of Versailles and at the same time he wanted to study the League of Nations which symbolised the old order.

With this object in view, Subhas spent a good part of his time in Geneva in 1933 and 1934. He wanted to study the set up - the organisation of League of Nations and at the same time he wanted to explore the possibility if the League could render any help in advancing the cause of India's freedom. During this time, in collaboration with the International Committee on India, he helped in the publication of a monthly bulletin on India. Published in three languages, French, German and English - it was circulated all over the world.

Unfortunately, the way the League of Nations worked disillusioned Subhas. As he himself says: "Towards the end of his stay in Geneva, the writer realised that the machinery of the League of Nations was controlled fully by Britain and France and that it was impossible to utilise the League for India's liberty, though India was an original member of that body. Thereupon,

he started an agitation to the effect that India was wasting her money by remaining a member of the League and that she would resign from that body as soon as possible." The verdict of a thoroughly disappointed Subhas was, "The League of Nations failed, because the sponsor nations were selfish and short-sighted." And from this Subhas realised that a full comprehension of the then world situation vis-à-vis a clear understanding of the role of the League of Nations was absolutely necessary to finalise the technic of the Indian movement for independence. And Subhas himself fully utilised the opportunity to study the course of events that were giving shape to international affairs.

Subhas ultimately got back his freedom on 17 March, 1937. In fact, the years 1933 to 1937 that Subhas spent in Europe witnessed the transformation of a radical leader into a statesman. As Subhas himself says, "I believe that the most valued treasure that I carry with me today is the insight I have gained into international affairs and the contacts I have made with some of the masterminds of modern Europe. As a result of this I feel that I can today view human affairs as well as India's problems from the current standpoint and in their proper perspective." Subhas found himself in a whirlpool of political imbroglio immediately after his return from his forced exile but ultimately this paved the way for his subsequent venture abroad in quest of independence. But prior to that an analysis of the political scenario of the country where he set his foot after a lapse of four years and the way he faced a concerted opposition from Gandhiji and his henchmen will make an interesting study.

58 Subhas Chandra Bose, "The Fundamental Problems of India", an address to the faculty and students of Tokyo University, November 1944, in *Essential Writings*, n.12, p.324
The main hurdle of Subhas at that time was that he had, as said by Nirod C. Chowdhury, "... nothing behind him beyond unorganised popular support. He never acquired, any strong or lasting hold on the party bosses in Bengal .... Thus he was never able to know his party enemies on the head (sic) and was paralysed all along by the factions squabbles in which he became enmeshed."60 But Subhas was well-aware of the political chicanery he would have to face on his return to India. Of course, Gandhiji's tactics were not unknown to him. And so he spared no pains to win the support of Jawaharlal. He fondly hoped that the latter would take his side and jointly they would outmanoeuvre Gandhiji and his devoted coterie. And, so, even before he set foot in India he wrote a letter to Jawaharlal from Bedgastein (Austriche) on 4 March 1936, "Among the front-rank leaders of today - you are the only one to whom we can look up for leading the Congress in a progressive direction. Moreover, your position is unique and I think that even Mahatma Gandhi will be more accommodating towards you than towards anybody else. I earnestly hope that you will fully utilise the strength of your public position to make decisions."61 Subhas, in fact, sincerely wanted that Jawaharlal should rise to the occasion and fully utilise his potential strength. And so he exhorts Jawaharlal, "Please do not consider your position weaker than it really is. Gandhiji will never take a stand that will alienate you".62

Subhas was absolutely correct in his assessment of the situation. Gandhiji was always apprehensive of Jawaharlal drifting to the Left. An easy

62 Ibid.
solution to the problem was to 'crown' him Congress President and thus to retain his loyalty as his chief henchman. And his expectations were not belied. But Gandhiji knew that Subhas was not Jawaharlal and it would not be an easy task for him to tackle him properly. And so he played his cards again in his usual way. He shrewdly guessed that what was necessary at that juncture was to evolve a long-term plan to contain the main opponent - Subhas. And so he dared to take chances by offering him the mantle of Presidentship of the Indian National Congress. But even the sagacity of Gandhiji failed to gauge, at least in this case, the force of the principles that guided Subhas all along. Subhas was made of a different mettle. Later, in a letter to Gandhiji on 6 April, 1939, Subhas without mincing words, frankly said; "You know very well that I do not follow you bluntly in all that you say or believe as so many of my countrymen do." Subhas, in fact, was not afraid of calling a spade a spade. Some of the slings he hurled at Jawaharlal in his letter of 28 March, 1939 when subsequently he was sorely disappointed by the hostile stand of the latter is worth quoting in this context; "To be brutally frank, you sometimes behaved in Working Committee as a spoilt child and often lost your temper." "I cannot help admiring your 'naivete" "Regarding Bengal, I am afraid you know practically nothing to the public you appear as if you are riding two horses."

Before donning the mantle of the President of the Indian National Congress, Subhas paid a visit to England. This time he got a 'royal' reception. He was conducted personally by the Station Master to a car waiting for him flying the Congress flag. His stay was most fruitful there. Subhas fully utilized the opportunity to speak to many dignitaries there and give a clear idea of the views he held about the emancipation of India. He returned to India on 24

64 Essential Writings, n.12, p.247.
65 Ibid, p.255.
January 1938, and started for Haripua in Gujrat to attend the Congress Session. The historic session at Haripua presided over by Subhas was a landmark in the political career of Subhas. In fact, the fifty-first Congress Session at Haripua marked Bose's political coronation.

Here the political acumen of Subhas was at full play. He took a bird's-eye-view of the entire panorama of human history and delineated upon the main points. He pointed out the chicanery of Great Britain in pursuing the policy of divide and rule. "I doubt if any empire in the world," he said, "has practised this policy so skilfully, systematically and ruthlessly as Great Britain." But the main thrust of Subhas' speech was on the intricate problems facing the country and also on planning and economic reconstruction. "Though it may be somewhat premature to give a detailed plan of reconstruction, we might as well consider some of the principles according to which our future social reconstruction should take place," he says. He feels that the chief national problems like eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease and also scientific production and distribution can very well be tackled by adhering to socialistic lines. And he further said: "The very first thing which our future national government will have to do would be to set up a commission for drawing up a comprehensive plant of reconstruction. This plan will have two parts - an immediate programme and a long-period programme. Subhas wanted to entrust Jawaharlal with the Chairmanship of the Planning Committee. On 19 October, he wrote to Jawaharlal: "I hope you will accept the Chairmanship of the Planning Committee. You must be if it is to be a success." Jawaharlal accepted the proposal and later commented in his *The Discovery of India* : "I accepted the Chairmanship of the committee

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67 *The Essential Writings*, n. 12, p. 199.
68 *Essential Writings*, p. 205.
not without hesitation and misgiving."71 But Subhas accomplished his object in the teeth of bitter opposition of Gandhiji.

As Congress president Subhas took upon himself the onerous task of stiffening the opposition of the Congress Party to any compromise with Britain though this caused annoyance in Gandhian circles who were then looking forward to an understanding with the British Government. Gandhiji had no faith in the principles held so dearly by Subhas. In a letter written to Subhas on 22 December 1938, Gandhiji clearly gave vent to his feelings: "I do not like your constant threats about Federation, and ultimatum is in my opinion premature."72 But Subhas was all along apprehensive of a compromise on the Federal Scheme between the Right-Wing of the Congress and the British Government in the near future. Gandhiji realised that his ploy to bring Subhas had gone in vain. He decided that next time Subhas should not be given any chance and the Congress presidency should go to somebody else. Ultimately in mid-January 1939 Gandhiji and his followers decided to set up Pattabhi Sitaramayya as their choice. In spite of requests from interested quarters Subhas refused to budge an inch from his decision to stand for re-election.

In the election on 29, Jaunary 1939, Subhas came out with flying colours defeating Gandhiji's candidate by 1580 votes against 1377. Gandhiji had to publicly acknowledge his defeat - "Sitaramayya's defeat was my defeat." But the smouldering fire of discontent and anger against Subhas flared up at the annual session of the Congress. At this session in March 1939, Subhas proposed that an ultimatum should immediately be sent to the British Government demanding independence within six months. But a piquant situation arose when the proposal sponsored by Subhas as President was

rejected. The 'modus operandi' of Gandhiji and the Right Wing was to stop Subhas from functioning as President by taking recourse to every conceivable political chicanery. But the unkindest out of all was the acceptance by the Subject Committee at the open session of a resolution.\(^73\) Sponsored by G.B. Pant, which reaffirmed the unflinching faith of the delegates in the fundamental policies and programme of Gandhiji. The resolution also affirmed that the President should abide by the wishes of Gandhiji in the formation of the Working Committee. The ultimate result was that a complete deadlock ensued.

The Gandhi Wing, in fact, wanted Subhas to be just a puppet President. And Subhas was not the man to accept this. But he couldn't find a way out of this labyrinth of political chicanery. The Left Wing or the radical elements of the Congress who had lent their support to him during his re-election as President in January could not render him much help. They were numerically in a majority but the handicap was that they were not as organised as the Gandhi Wing was. As Subhas himself says: "Though at that time the Congress Socialist Party was the most important party in the Left wing, its influence was limited. Moreover, when the fight between the Gandhi wing and the writer began, even the Congress Socialist Party began to vacillate. Thus, in the absence of an organised and disciplined Left Wing, it was impossible for the writer to fight the Gandhi Wing."\(^74\) Subhas did not want a split in the Congress. He wanted to don the mantle of the Congress President but he desired that all groups should collectively think in his lines.

\(^73\) "... the Congress regards it as imperative that the Congress executive should command his (Mahatma Gandhi's) explicit confidence, and requests the President to nominate the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Mahatma Gandhi." Quoted in Nanda Mookerjee, n. 20 p.62.

and solidly confront the government to achieve their cherished goal. But it was not to be. And Subhas had to bear the full brunt of the wrath of the uncrowned king of India all alone. Naturally, the price he had to pay was heavy.

Gandhi, at this juncture, with his characteristic wariness, apparently remained aloof and asked Subhas to form his own Committee. Subhas was now really in a labyrinth because the Pant resolution wanted to ensure that the new Working Committee was formed in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji. It was also scheduled at the same time that it should enjoy the full confidence of the A I C C. Subhas spared no pains to find out a plausible solution to the problem. He wrote to Gandhiji on 25 March 1939, "... What exactly is the position of the President? Article XV of the Congress Constitution confers certain powers on the President in the matter of appointing the Working Committee and that article in the Constitution stands unaltered to this day. At the same time Pant's resolution lays down that the Working Committee is to be constituted by me in accordance with your wishes.... The effect of this would be to nullify Article XV of the Congress Constitution without amending it." Subhas wanted to underline the fact that Pant's resolution was clearly unconstitutional and ultra vires. But all the arguments put forward by Subhas fell on deaf ears. At the same time Subhas did not deviate an inch from his avowed theory of giving a smashing blow to the British powers. He put forward his suggestions to Gandhiji in very clear terms: "Please resume the national struggle for independence as we have been demanding and begin by delivering the ultimatum to the British Government. In that event we shall all retire from our official position .... People like myself feel that today we have an opportunity which is rare in the life-time of a nation." But all his pleading and urging went in vain. So the only recourse

75 N.C.W., Vol.5, n.1, p.129.
76 N.C.W., Vol.9, n.70, p.154.
left to Subhas was to resign from the Presidentship of the Congress. And that he did at the meeting of of the A I C C in Calcutta on 29 April 1939.

But Subhas, who had been seriously ill during the Tripuri session of the Indian National Congress, was grievously hurt by the attitude of Jawaharlal, which he considered to be hostile towards him. Subhas, in fact was fondly banking on the help and support of Jawaharlal when inimical forces were working against him. To his dismay he found that Jawaharlal was in the opposite camp hurling invectives against him. But Subhas was not a person to take things lying down. His missiles were ready. In a long letter (27 pages) to Jawaharlal from Jealgora on 28 March 1939, in a caustic language he attacked Jawaharlal for his acts of omission and commission with the sole object of denouncing him. He wrote: "I find that for some time past you have developed tremendous dislike for me. I say this because I find that you take up enthusiastically every possible point against me; what could be said in my favour you ignore. ....The last Presidential election was followed by an acrimonious controversy in which many things were said - some for and some against me. In your utterances and statements every point was stretched against me. ... And in this connection I may tell you that since the Presidential election, you have done more to lower me in the estimation of the public than all the twelve ex-members of the Working Committee put together.... At a time when I am being unfairly attacked from several quarters - being hit below the belt - you do not utter one word of protest - you do not offer one word of sympathy."77 And taking up quite a different issue his taunting remark is, "You are in the habit of proclaiming that you stand by yourself and represent nobody else and that you are not attached to any party ... At the same time you call yourself a Socialist - sometimes, a full-blooded Socialist. How a Socialist can be an individualist as you regard youself, beats

me. The one is the anti-thesis of the other. How Socialism can ever come into existence through individualism of your type is also an enigma to me.\textsuperscript{78}

Subhas wrote that in March 1939 in a fit of resentment and anger. But, it is interesting to note in this connection that long before this, in November 1937, Jawaharlal himself wrote an anonymous article in the \textit{Modern Review}. Here he made a sort of self-assessment and admits the presence of these two contradictory trends - socialism and individualism - in his nature. "Men like Jawaharlal with all their capacity for great and good work are unsafe in a democracy. He calls himself a democrat and a socialist, and no doubt he does so in all earnestness, but every psychologist knows that the mind is ultimately a slave to the heart and that logic can always be made to fit in with the desires and irrepressible urges of man. A little twist and Jawaharlal might turn a dictator sweeping aside the paraphernalia of a slow-moving democracy ... Jawaharlal is certainly not a fascist either by conviction or by temperament. He is far too much of an aristocrat for the crudity and vulgarity of fascism ... And yet he has all the makings of a dictator in him ... His overmastering desire to get things done, to sweep away what he dislikes and build anew, will hardly brook for long the slow process of democracy ... In normal times he would just be an efficient and successful executive, but in this revolutionary Caesarism is always at the door, and is it not possible that Jawaharlal might fancy himself as a Caesar."\textsuperscript{79}

Subhas, though he was sorely disappointed and shocked by the belligerent stand of Jawaharlal and his compatriots during the Tripuri Congress, got a much-needed mental succour and stimulation from the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore who came forward at this critical juncture of his life.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Modern Review}, Calcutta, November 1937, pp. 546 - 47.
with his words of hope, encouragement and appreciation. In an essay entitled "Deshnayaka" (Leader of the Nation) Tagore eulogised Subhas and conveyed to him his accolade for the grim determination with which Subhas was undauntingly facing an extreme inclement situation. He wrote: "As Bengal's poet I today acknowledge you as the honoured leader of the people of Bengal. The Gita tells us that from time to time the eternal principle of good arises to strangle the reign of evil .... Bengal is passing through a period of dark despair ... At such a juncture of nation-wide crisis, we require the service of a forceful personality, the invincible faith of a natural leader who can defy the adverse fate that threatens our progress." 80

Subhas resigned on 29 April 1939 and subsequently formed, what he called, a radical and progressive party with a view to rallying the entire Left Wing under one banner. Subhas was the first President of this party - The All India Forward Bloc. But the fangs of the Right-Wing supporters of Gandhiji were not idle. So when Subhas called for country-wide demonstrations to protest against a particular Congress move to strengthen its hold on its provincial organisation, prompt action was taken against him. Subhas was not only removed from the Presidentship of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee but was also debarred from holding any Congress office for three years. But in spite of all these, as has been aptly said by Hugh Toy "there was no compromise in Bose' make up, no middle way, no shades between light and dark, no toleration of any opinion, but his own." 81

Subhas in his 'thesis' - "Forward Bloc - Its Justification" - written in Kabul in Feb-March 1941 during his secret sojourn there en route to Europe cogently enumerates the reasons which created a bad blood with the Right Wingers. The first item in the Gandhian charge-sheet, according to Subhas,

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was his uncompromising attitude towards Federation when there was a strong
rumour that the Gandhites were carrying on scurrilous negotiation for evolving
a compromise formula with the British. The second item was that the
Gandhites looked askance at the friendly leaning of Subhas towards the
Leftists. It may be mentioned, in this connection, that Subhas had founded the
Forward Bloc with the idea of developing it as a mouthpiece of the broad Left
Front. But at first the Leftists had declined the offer to join the Forward Bloc.

"However, the C.P.I. suggested to Subhas Chandra that if a Left Consolidation
Committee (L.C.C) was formed within the Indian National Congress they
would be willing to join it. Subhas Chandra responded positively and in May
1939 was formed the L.C.C with Subhas Chandra Bose as its President and
with three members each from the C.P.I, the C.S.P, the Royists and the
Forward Bloc.\(^{82}\) The third item was that Gandhiji never savoured the idea of
the National Planning Committee which was the brain-child of Subhas. He
was afraid that small village industries - an important item in the Gandhian
programme would be crushed under the burden of the flourishing large-scale
industries. The next charge was that at the Tripuri Session of the Congress in
March 1939 he had presented a resolution, much against the wish of Gandhiji,
that an ultimatum should be given to the British government and if no
response is received within a certain time-limit then mass civil disobedience
should be resorted to. Though this resolution was defeated at the insistence of
Gandhites the scar remained as it was considered to be a deterrent to the
Gandhi Movement.

It is interesting to note how Subhas, a keen student of history and
philosophy, makes an in-depth study of the Gandhian Movement, \textit{vis-a-vis} the
Leftist Movement and says : "This process of evolution - called the dialectical
process - if properly comprehended, can give a new meaning and significance

\(^{82}\) I. Gautam Chattopadhyay, 
Subhas Chandra Bose and the Leftists Movement of India", in
Radharaman Chakraborti (ed.) \textit{Netaji and India's Freedom ; A Centenary Tribute. Netaji
to the developments that have taken place within the Indian National Congress during the last few decades." Subhas says that the evolution of a Movement is analogous to that of a tree. Just like a tree it draws its sustenance from the soil from which it springs and grows and becomes a living Movement. This may be called, according to Subhas, the 'thesis'. But a time comes when the main stream of this particular Movement starts withering. At this juncture, to stimulate progress, a Left Wing appears. This is the 'anti-thesis'. But there is inevitably a conflict between this Left Wing and the existing main stream which becomes the Right Wing. Through this conflict a higher stage is reached. And when the conflict is resolved by an agreement or adjustment the Left Wing becomes the dominant Movement and becomes the main stream of the Movement. This is the synthesis. And Subhas says: "This process of evolution - called the dialectical process - if properly comprehended can give a new meaning and significance to the developments that have taken place within the Indian National Congress during the last few decades."

Subhas never considers conflicts within a Movement to be detrimental to the interest of the country. He says: "It would indeed be more correct to say that conflicts which arise from the logic of history are essential to progress........" A close study of the Gandhi Movement illustrates this. New problems cropped up and a new situation was created after the end of the Great War. By that time the official Indian National Congress had lost its vitality and was unable to squarely face the situation. At this juncture the \textit{Gandhian Movement} made its appearance as a Left Wing to meet the situation. After a period of conflict with the old guards a 'synthesis' took place. The Congress accepted the tenets of Mahatma Gandhi and the Left Wing took over as the official Congress.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[83] Essential Writings., n.12, p.269.
\item[84] Ibid., p.263.
\item[85] Ibid., p.270.
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For two decades since 1920 Gandhism held its sway over the Indian National Congress - one of the reasons being the charismatic personality of Gandhiji and his capacity to imbibe new ideas and policies. As an example, Subhas points out that Gandhiji advocated Dominion Status in the Calcutta Congress (20 December) though he (Subhas) and his followers had brought in a resolution of independence. A year later Gandhiji himself declared that the Independence was to be the goal of the Indian National Congress. But, according to Subhas, the decline of the Gandhian Movement set in when the new Left Wing raised its head through the medium of the Congress Socialist Party. Congress Socialists were even offered seats in the Congress Working Committee in 1936, 1937 and 1938. (though they did not accept the offer in 1938). Moreover, in 1938 Gandhiji himself sponsored the candidature of Subhas as Congress President.

But after this Gandhism started becoming static and inflexible and in 1939 Gandhiji himself strongly stood in the path of the election of Subhas as Congress President. Subsequently, charge-sheet after charge-sheet were brought against Subhas and an open rupture between the Gandhites and the Leftists occurred. In this way Gandhism began to stagnate and a powerful Left Wing came out in the open. Subhas himself tries to answer the question: "What exactly is meant by Leftism? When different individuals and organisations claim to be Leftists how are we to decide who are - who are not genuine Leftists?" 86 According to Subhas, Leftism means anti-imperialism. And an anti-imperialist is one who abhors imperialism and wants to have complete independence and is prepared for an uncompromising national struggle for achieving his goal. And so Subhas argues: "Philosophically speaking, Right consolidation is the 'thesis' which demands its 'anti-thesis' in Left - Consolidation. Without this anti-thesis and the conflict following in its wake, no further progress in possible. "For bringing about Left-Consolidation,

86 Ibid., p.282.
the Forward Bloc was born in May 1939", Subhas asserts. "The Forward Block," he says, "is a revolutionary and dynamic organisation. As such it does not swear by copy-book maxims or by text-books of Politics or Economics. It is anxious to assimilate all the knowledge that the outside world can give and to profit by the experience of other progressive nations. It regards progress or evolution as an eternal process to which India also has a contribution to make."  

Subhas got an opportunity to give vent to his anti-compromise feelings at the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference at Ramgarh (Bihar) on 19 March 1940 where he was invited to preside. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, the Chairman of the reception Committee, took a leading part in it. Subhas, in this conference, severely castigated Gandhiji by pointing out that "as soon as the war began, Mahatma Gandhi proceeded to Simla without caring to consult the Congress Working Committee and informed his Excellency the Viceroy that he was in favour of rendering unconditional help to Great Britain in the prosecution of the War" Subhas points out that crises constitute the supreme test of a nation's leadership. The crises that the country confronts have put the leadership to the test and they have miserably failed. Subhas recollects and reminds the audience how similar crises in other countries had far-reaching effects. He refers to the October Revolution which broke out in Russia in 1917. Nobody at that time had any idea how the revolution should be directed. The Bolsheviks, at least the majority of them, were in favour of coalition with other parties. At that crucial moment Lenin made his appearance. He gave a call to throw to the winds all thoughts of coalition. 'All Power to the Soviet' was his clarion call. And Russia was saved from an impending disaster. Subhas also cites a contrary case - the case of Italy. Italy happened at the time to be a fertile ground for socialism. But at that opportune moment none came

87 Ibid., p.282
88 Ibid., p.286.
to hold the reins. The opportunity was seized by Benito Mussolini, the Fascist leader. And the history of Italy took quite a different turn - Italy, as Subhas says, went Fascist instead of going Socialist. Subhas' main thesis is that: "The age of Imperialism is drawing to a close and the era of freedom, democracy and Socialism looms ahead of us."  

After this Subhas launched what may be called his last campaign in India. He demanded the removal of the Holwell Monument. Subhas was bent upon the demolition of this monument which he considered to be a witness of a glaring falsehood. The fictitious story of the 'Blackhole Tragedy' of 20 June 1756 was circulated by General Holwell. It was alleged that 146 English soldiers were kept confined in a small room which was no bigger than a hole and many of them were suffocated to death. The main intention of this portrayal was to vilify Nawab Sirajudulla. Subhas, in an article published in Forward Bloc on 29 June 1940 pointed out that the Holwell Monument was an unwanted stain on the memory of the Nawab. In his Crossroads he gave a call to start the campaign and observe the third of July 1940 as Sirajudulla Day in honour of the last independent King of Bengal. The Holwell Monument was not only a stain on the memory of the Nawab - it was the badge of slavery and humiliation of the Indians. Subhas decided to march with the first batch of volunteers on the 3 July, the first day of the commencement of the campaign. The British Government did not delay to take prompt action. He was arrested on 2 July 1940 under the Defence of India Act and was confined in the Presidency Jail for an indefinite period. Bengal was agog with resentment. "The Bengal Provincial Students' Federation, led by the Communists called a students' strike, supported by the leader of the Muslim Students' League. There was total students general strike, not only in Calcutta, but throughout Bengal. The police lathicharged inside the Islamia College

89 Ibid. p. 261.
(Now Maulana Azad College) Calcutta, arresting many student leaders and seriously injuring Wasseque, leader of the M S L. It may incidentally be mentioned that Sheikh Mujibar Rahman was a rank and file participant in this movement as a student of the Islamia College, as also was the writer of this article, then a first year student of Vidyasagar College, Calcutta.  

But Subhas was determined to go out of jail; he might have other plans. And he took recourse to 'the last weapon in the hands of a prisoner i.e. hunger-strike or fast.' On 26 November 1940 he addressed a letter to H.E. the Governor of Bengal and others in which he bluntly said; "Release me or I shall refuse to live - and it is for me to decide whether I choose to live or to die." He called this letter his 'political testament' as it contained his message to his countrymen: "To my countrymen I say, Forget not that the greatest curse for a man is to remain a slave. Forget not that the grossest crime is to compromise with injustice and wrong. Remember the eternal law - you must give life, if you want to get it. And remember that the highest virtue is to battle against iniquity, no matter what the cost may be."  

Ultimately a decision was taken by the Government to release him from detention and on 5 December 1940 he was released. It was stipulated that his residence would be closely watched round the clock. Subhas returned to his home at Elgin Road. And now he started the plan for what is known as the 'Great Escape' - escape from India in quest of independence. 17 January 1941, 1-30 a.m., was the fixed date and time when a smartly dressed Pathan in a closed-collar brown long-coat, broad pyjamas and black fez silently left his house, boarded a car driven by his nephew, Sisir K. Bose, and was on the way to create another history more thrilling than anybody could contemplate. But

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91 Gautam Chattopadhaba, n. 82, p 63.
92 Essential Writings, n.12, p. 267.
93 Ibid., p. 268.
before studying the next phase of his startling career it might be worthwhile to review the political and socio-economic thoughts of Subhas.