CHAPTER II

THE MAKING OF THE MAN
The Governor of Andhra Pradesh, paying a glorious tribute to the services of Padmashri Kalluru Subba Rao on the occasion of the latter's Septuageth said the following words.

"He (Subba Rao) is a genuine Patriot and took a memorable part in the Freedom Struggle. He has always been active in promoting the interests of the people, particularly, the Harijans. His thoughts and activities have always been characterised by extreme selflessness, noble principle of public life and a rare devotion to the service of the people." \(^1\)

Kalluru Subba Rao belonged to a rare class of workers and leaders who should be emulated by young men. He was one of the founders of nationalism in Rayalassemma and he cherished the dream of converting Rayalassemma, that is, the land of the Rayas into Ratnasalassemma, that is the land of gems. A versatile scholar, a writer and an orator, he ranks among the top Congress leaders of not merely Andhra desa, but all India.\(^2\). This ordinary man who achieved extraordinary things was not a born patriot, but was made into one. Various factors and forces shaped him.

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1. Message of Mr. Pattam Thanu Pillai, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, dated 16.11.1966.

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Era of Militant Nationalism

The times in which great men live and grew up and contemporary events seem to have a deep impact on the making of the men. It was during the stirring events of the French Revolution that Raja Ram Mohan Roy bloomed into a fiery young man. The Congress movement in India was maturing into a responsible body when Kalluru Subba Rao was born. When the Congress Moderates were continuing their agitation on constitutional lines, a new wave of nationalism was sweeping over Bengal and Maharashtra. The most significant feature of this nationalism was an intense love of the motherland, based on a conception of its past greatness and future potentialities. The life and precepts of Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) and his triumphant tour of the United States not only raised the prestige of India abroad, but also quickened the sense of national pride and patriotism among Indians.

The high priest of this new national fervour was Bankimchandra Chatterji (1838-1894). He wielded his mighty pen to ridicule the mendicant policy of the Congress. The cry was taken up by others. Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1930) wrote a series of articles against the Congress policies.

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Soon there appeared a great nationalist leader in Maharashtra, Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), who refused to give way. A great Scholar, Tilak, however, chose to become a politician and a man of action. His message had a special appeal to the people who had lost their independence. Tilak is rightly called the 'Father of Indian Unrest'. Tilak made it the great object of his life to diffuse the spirit of patriotism and nationalism among the masses.

In the Punjab, Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928), and in Bengal, Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) also expressed similar views. They set out before the nation, in a clear manner, the attainment of self-Government or Swaraj. These Stalwarts carried the gospel of self-help and political agitation to the masses. Meanwhile a severe famine struck the Deccan (1896-97) and 'people perished like flies'. The bubonic plague burst out in Poom in all its severity, further adding to the misery of the people. Tilak was arrested on a charge of sedition and sentenced to 18 months rigorous imprisonment. Tilak's arrest sent a wave of discontent and indignation throughout the country. In the Congress session of 1897, the year in which Subba Rao

was born, Surendranath Bannerjea described the feelings of popular sorrow, as 'a nation in tears'.\(^5\) We may say that by 1897, the 'Congress of petitioners had became the Congress of men and women determined to win their freedom'.\(^5\)

The repressive measures of Lord Curzon and his fateful partition of Bengal in 1905 fostered public political discontent. The Swadeshi movement and the boycott of foreign goods captured the imagination of the patriots. Subba Rao was growing into boyhood at this moment. The Punjab massacre and the advent of Gandhi in the political arena of India touched the youthful vigour of Subba Rao. Apart from these Mrs. Annie Besant's, Home Rule Movement, Gandhi's Satyagraha and later events produced a profound impact on the young patriot.\(^6\)

**Awakening of Andhra**

Political stirrings in Andhra region particularly in the Rayalaseema, were another factor which prepared the way for the political career of Subba Rao. When social reformers like Kandukuri Veerasingam were spreading progressive ideals and causing political awakening in Andhra, Subba Rao was an infant growing up in that

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atmosphere of radical changes. The period between 1898 and 1903, saw the rise of Telugu journalism. Early journals like Andhra Patrika, Andhra Patrika, Doshabhijan and Vyasa Varchini boldly criticised the Government for the failure in administration. They were instrumental in spreading new ideas of nationalism and democracy. The spread of education and the emergence of Telugu journalism accelerated the pace of public life and political awareness.

The national movement in India acquired a new vigour and momentum when Bal Gangadhar Tilak began to voice a spirit of unrest and discontent. The Vande Mataram Movement in Andhra proved to be the harbringer of the freedom struggle in Andhra. Bapu Chandra Pal's tour in Andhra led to the formation of 'Youngmen's Swaraj Samithi'. In this political climate surcharged with feelings of nationalism and Swaraj, the young Subba Rao grew up. He was definitely influenced by these exciting events of the day. The birth of the Andhra Mahasabha, the Home Rule Movement, the advent of Gandhi, the Khilafat and the Non-Violent Satyagraha Movements were contemporary events in which Subba Rao participated in his youthful days.

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Active role of Anantapur

Anantapur district from which Subba Rao hailed had much to contribute to the national struggle for freedom. Delegates from Anantapur like Gooti Kesava Pillai represented the district in the first session of the Indian National Congress itself. Nationalist leaders like Kapalli Hanumatha Rao, toured the district to collect funds for the Swadeshi Movement. The Home Rule Movement of Mrs. Annie Besant had a tremendous impact on Anantapur district. Gandhiji's tour of the district evoked spontaneous support for his progressive non-violent non-cooperation movement. Students and young men plunged into the struggle. Teddy shops were picketed. Congressmen resigned from provincial and central legislatures. During these momentous events Subba Rao was captivated by the call of Gandhiji and responded to it by becoming a humble Congress worker.

Impact of Environment

The environment in which Subba Rao grew up in his home town has much to do in shaping him. Subba Rao was born on 25th May 1897 at Kalluru, Hindupur Taluq in Anantapur District. Kalluru is an obscure village with a

9. Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteer, Anantapur
population of just 675 souls in 1970. This village known as Kalluru R.S. or Kalluru Agrahara to distinguish it from other villages of the same name in the district, is located on the banks of the Pennar amidst a predominantly groundnut growing area and is 8 miles from Anantapur on the Bengaluru-Mysore road. It is a Railway station on the Bengaluru-Secunderabad metre gauge line. Its importance is mainly due to its large number of oil mills. Though Subba Rao was born in Kalluru he spent his youth in Hindupur and Bengaluru. These two places considerably influenced his formative years.

Hindupur is an important commercial centre in the district. It is also the taluk head quarters and a municipality since 1930. As an important commercial centre, Hindupur has a number of whole-sale merchants. A good number of jewellers and textile merchants constitute the economic backbone of the town. Hindupur can be proud of quite few good educational Institutions, libraries and cultural clubs. Similarly Bengaluru, where our young hero had his early education, could not but influence the cultural frame of Subba Rao. While at Bengaluru he enjoyed the

generous charity of one Mr. K.T. Appana, Proprietor, Modern Hindu Hotel, who provided free boarding and lodging to Subba Rao. Madamapalle Theosophical School, where he had a short stay for his early studies brought him closer to the ideals of Dr. Annie Besant.11

Family Background

Subba Rao's parents were Surappa and Puttamma. His father was the Karna of Kalluru. Theirs was a middle class Brahmin family. He belonged to the rural clite of Rayalaseema and had his roots in a peasant stock. The family enjoyed the reputation of being a liberal and broadminded one in those days. It was a daily custom of the Karna family to feed a few people in their house who came from distant places. Being the only son, Subba Rao was brought up with great care, love and affection. Another member of the family who wielded deep influence on Subba Rao was his wife Srimathi Lakshamma. She was in every respect an ideal wife for this broadminded nationalist. She never created any problems to her husband but carried on the family burden facing the poverty boldly and helping him in his political activity. Once when Subba Rao and

Mr. Tengeturi Prakasam had no money to undertake a political tour. Lakshamma came forward voluntarily to give her gold Nagaram to her husband for this purpose. It was pledged for a meagre amount and the task was accomplished.

**Early Education**

Coming from a traditional Brahmin family, Subba Rao was initiated into the study of Sanskrit and Telugu under eminent scholars at Kalluru. He had his early education at the Edward Coronation School at Hindupur in 1909. It was here that he met Lepakshi Venkata Narayanappa who was his classmate and later a political follower. While at Hindupur he resided in the house of Sri D. Kesava Rao, who was then a teacher in the local school. He spent a couple of years in the Theosophical High School at Madanapalle. This institution was originally intended to form the nucleus of a national University. The staff included persons keenly interested in the Home Rule Movement of Mrs. Annie Besant. No wonder that Subba Rao even as a student was inspired by the speeches and writings of Besant. During his school days,

at Bangalore he was much attracted by Tilak. He used the Seshadri Memorial Library at Bangalore fully and published two pamphlets in English and Telugu in the 'Youngmen Service' and the 'Nivasa Chandrika' respectively.

Inspiration of Personas and Principles

Subba Rao grew up in the atmosphere of national ferment and political consciousness. Great personalities struck the nation like colossus. Ideas of freedom, self-determination and democracy were taking deep roots in the soil. Nationalists, politicians, social reformers, writers, orators, poets and journalists were creating a romantic revival in the country. Subba Rao, being a keen student of political ideas and cast in the mould of an ardent nationalist, could not escape the powerful influence of certain personalities and principles.

Subba Rao's family background, early teachers and knowledge of Sanskrit created in him a love and reverence for the great Indian Epics the Ramayana and Mahabharata. He was drawn particularly towards the central message in the Bhagwat Gita, namely, the insistence on doing one's duty irrespective of its consequences. Probably as a student...


in the Wesleyan Mission School at Bangalore that he admired the writings of Bishop Arundale. One of the most venerable personalities in his school days who had an enduring effect on Subba Rao was Swami Abhedananda. While still a student in the Theosophical High School at Madiaspale he happened to read a small pamphlet of the Swamiji on the duties and responsibilities of Indian students. Abhedananda’s view that all human beings are one as all are children of God made such an indelible impression upon his mind that he moulded his life and his spiritual and moral ideals accordingly and served the country for the attainment of Swaraj and he had been labouring for the unity of one and all, irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

Among the political leaders of the country in the early part of the present country, B.G. Tilak won the heart of the young Subba Rao. He held Tilak in high esteem, and ranked him as a great patriot who had dedicated his life for the winning of Swaraj. While still a student at Hindupur, Subba Rao served as a volunteer during the visit of Dr. Annie Besant to the city in 1913. Besant’s dynamism and her zeal to popularise the doctrine of self-Government attracted Subba Rao very intensely. Mahatma Gandhi and

Ali Brothers inspired Subba Rao deeply. He was greatly impressed by the speeches and writings of Gandhiji. It may not be wrong to point out here that he considered Gandhiji as his political hero and guru. The exemplary sacrifices and dedicated services of these leaders of national standing had such an unmistakable impression on the budding patriot that he decided to give up his studies spontaneously and dedicate his life to the service of the nation. Since then he became a Gandhian Pilgrim.

The Force of his own character

Subba Rao was a leader of uncommon physical and moral calibre. *Sri Subba Rao is not an individual, but is an institution: He is one who is cast in the heroic mould*. As a boy he was much more stronger and courageous than many of his companions in the village. He had an athletic body. Once while on a picnic to Penukonda, one of the students in the party fell accidentally into the Narasimha Swamy lake. Immediately Subba Rao jumped into the lake and saved the boy. He was a man of robust common sense and presence of mind. He had no vices as drinking or smoking. He was a voracious reader and

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his hobby was buying books. He was poor but always generous to others. Because of his forgiving nature he had practically no enemies.

Subba Rao was a man of action purged of every atom of selfishness. He is one of the 'resistance-heroes' who stands out with a beautiful simplicity of heart and boyish zest. In Telugu, he was the unchallenged master of chaste rhetoric. His mind was fresh and seething with its prime with a robust nationalism. He was a journalist and a writer of great force. He was a social reformer and an unfailing friend of the poor peasants. 'Adventure was his desirable companion. It renewed his ideals.'

From the foregoing, it is clear that many factors and forces shaped the future patriot from his very early days. Subba Rao was not a nationalist by accident. He was thoroughly a self-made man. His education did not go beyond the matriculation level, but he learnt a lot in the school of adversity. The time in which he lived, the place where he was born, the family that brought him up, the schools where he gathered knowledge, the leaders he met in life, the ideals which he cherished from boyhood days —

all these and above all his own character and temperament, his iron will and indomitable courage, his self-effacing service role and intense passion for nationalism - made him what he was. As one of his contemporaries pointed out, 'he has none of the fashionable make-up of a popular leader, except perhaps a brusque manner, and a little anecdote. He is one of the many, who ought but never get into text-books on history.' 21.