

## MY DAYS IN PRESIDENCY COLLEGE (1915-1918)

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I joined Presidency College in 1915, after having passed the Matric in the 1st Division from Krishnanagar Collegiate School, where I had the privilege of studying under two great Headmasters of the day, Shree Benimadhab Das and Shree Rajkumar Das.

In those days a 1st Division boy had no difficulty in getting admission to Presidency College. Besides, my father Satyendra Chandra Mallik was an Ex-Student of the College, having stood 2nd in 1st Class in M.A. (Physics). My subjects were Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics with Physiology as an additional subject. Baker Laboratory was a newly constructed building then and well-equipped, where Physiology was taught by Prof S. C. Mahalanobis. He was an excellent teacher and his drawings on the board, with coloured chalks, were superb.

I was a Boarder in Eden Hindu Hostel. I was in Ward II throughout. At the beginning, I was rather unhappy. My father would not let me wear a dhoti. Shorts, shirt, socks and shoes were, he considered, for a lad of my age; a sort of uniform generating discipline. But my co-boarders cracked jokes and even jeered at my costume.

The most exciting thing that took place in College during my days, was the Oaten incident. It was early afternoon; we were at Chemistry class and Prof. P.C. Ray was teaching. For some important work he had in hand, Prof. Ray dismissed the class before the period was over. We left the class in a relaxed mood and, passing along the verandah, began to make our way to the Common Room.

Professor Oaten happened to be taking a History class in a room adjoining the verandah as Kamala Bhusan Bose and I walked along arm in arm, talking loudly to each other. This annoyed Professor Oaten. He came out of the room and catching hold of Kamala's shirt collar asked for his Roll Number, which Kamala gave. Professor Oaten then threatened to report to the Principal. This little incident caused resentment amongst students and exaggerated accounts were spread out in the College. In the afternoon, I returned to the Hostel with an attack of fever. I suffered a lot from malaria during 1915-1918. In the evening a large number of boarders came back with the news that some students from Scottish Church College, with Subhas Chandra Bose as their leader, had come to our College and assaulted Prof. Oaten near the staircase. A few of our senior students had also joined the fray. I admit, I did not like it.

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Another incident I recall was an argument between our Principal James and Mr. Charles Teagart, then a Deputy Commissioner of Calcutta Police, during the first police raid in the Hindu Hostel in search of hidden fire-arms. Our Principal's contention was that he should have been informed beforehand, so that he could have been present from the beginning when the raid was conducted. He had rushed after being informed of the raid. He said he had to safeguard the interests of the students. He even implied in a remark, that planting of weapons by the Police was not unknown. There was one interesting point in the first raid (there were several to follow) when the search party headed by Mr. Teagart entered our 4-bedded room and questioned and searched the belongings of my three room mates. When it came to my turn, Mr. Teagart asked for my name and my father's. Then he asked for my father's vocation. When I said, he was a member of the Indian Civil Service and District & Sessions Judge of Nadia, he told the searchers not to open my steel trunk tucked under my bed (taktaposh). My room mates felt amazed ; little did they know, that Indian members of the Indian Civil Service were, even to the Britisher of those days, demi gods. The news spread round. In subsequent raids all the revolvers were put in my trunk and the trunk remained untouched. I was afraid no doubt, but I dared not protest.

Now I felt, my co-boarders were showing some signs of friendship to me. Then came the Annual Social Function of our Ward before the Puja Holidays. Debates, Music, Recitation, Comic sketches were the usual items and I recited "Kumar Sambham" in Sanskrit and was much applauded.

From then onwards, I became a pet of Ward II but unfortunately I became a victim of malaria with repeated bouts. I got an admission in Birmingham University for B. Com. and left India.