THE GROWTH OF NATIONALISM IN INDIA

(1857-1905)

BY

Prof. HARIDAS MUKHERJEE

AND

Prof. UMA MUKHERJEE

CALCUTTA

1957

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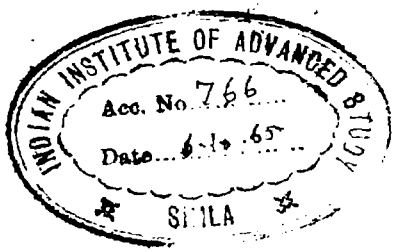

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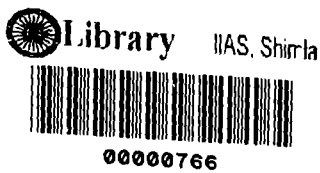

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To
The Memory
of
BRAJENDRA NATH SEAL,
BRAHMABANDHAB UPADHYAYA
AND
DINESH CHANDRA SEN,
This book
is
dedicated
By their devoted admirers—the Authors.

FOREWORD

Nationalism is devotion to one's nation. India with its mighty mountains, great rivers and vast plains was a continent rather than a country; divided into various provinces, inhabited by different peoples using diverse languages and sharing different cultures, it could not boast of a single nation. Consequently that common conception of collective duties and responsibilities which emanates from a common nationalism was absent in India. The attempt of Asoka to convert India's heterogeneous hordes into a homogeneous nation by establishing a vast empire on the basis of a common religion was—though an ideal devoutly to be wished—an idle dream. His attempt, therefore, failed and almost with his death his empire lapsed into provinces. Akbar's attempt to form an empire was based on alliances which snapped when his successors deviated from his shrewd policy.

Nationalism which was unknown in pre-British India was the creation of contact with the British and the influence of English literature which quickened the atrophied veins of India with the life-blood of new ideas and ideals. As Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitter said in his address as Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Calcutta Congress of 1886:—"Diverse we are in origin, in religion, in language, and in our manners and customs, but we are not the less members of the same nation. We live in the same country, we are subjects of the same Sovereign, and depend entirely on the state of the Government and the laws passed in this country. Whatever is beneficial to the Hindus is, equally beneficial to the Mahomedans, and whatever is injurious to the Hindus is equally injurious to the followers of Mahomed. Nations are not made of sects but of tribes bound together in one political bond. We are all bound by the same political bond, and therefore we constitute a nation".

This attempt on the part of the great *savant* was made because in the Congress he perceived the dawn of nationalism. Its ideal had been produced in India by contact with England, and factors of modern civilisation like the railway, the telegraph, the roads and bridges helped its rapid growth. No wonder the growth of nationalism in re-created India was like the luxuriant growth of tropical vegetation.

But if its growth was rapid it had in it its inherent weakness in communalism—a weakness of which advantage was taken by disappointed Englishmen eager to see British domination prolonged in India.

There were British politicians—both official and outside the charmed circle of officialdom—who early perceived the danger to their rule created by the growth of nationalism among the people of India. They disarmed the people, they introduced a system of education for creating a vast clerkly class and not for making the recepients fit for their work, they would not make primary education free and compulsory, they were against freedom of the Press because, as Munro put it, "a free Press and the dominion of strangers are things which are quite incompatible and which cannot long last together". His argument was—the first duty of a free Press was "to deliver the country from a foreign yoke, and to sacrifice to this one great object every meaner consideration".

Even the Indian National Congress was conceived as an effective safety-valve for the growing forces which threatened to overthrow British domination in India. But the British politicians who diagnosed the disease could not prescribe the proper remedy. They prescribed a quacks nostrum. The reason was not far to seek. That form of patriotism which stimulates a weak and poverty-stricken country to prefer to govern itself, however badly, rather than form an integral part of a powerful empire seemed irrational and impractical to the mind of the average Englishman, who was essentially utilitarian

and unemotional in his ideas of practical policy—especially because his own independence had hardly been assailed. The British, therefore, tried to set a limit to the Indians' political ambition!

The policy advocated by those who among the Britishers were more far-sighted than the rest was one of coercion-cum-co-operation. This policy was advocated by Rickards as far back as 1832:—

"The knowledge now diffused and diffusing, throughout India, will shortly constitute a power which three hundred thousand British bayonets will be unable to controul. That Government, which has been so often called a government of opinion, must have for the future some better support than the idea of its military superiority. ...The ground-work of the future fabric should be co-operation with the natives in the government of themselves, and for which, under due controul, they will be found far better qualified than those to whom it has hitherto been entrusted. But if you persevere in merciless exactions, and in enforcing the doctrine of passive obedience—if your domestic policy be a system of expedients, and the object of your foreign policy military supremacy, the day may not be far distant when you shall feel, in disappointment and disgrace, how feeble is physical compared with moral power".

But power debases and absolute power debases absolutely. The British failed to apply to India "the doctrines of human brotherhood" with the result that during the first decade of the twentieth century Bryan, the American Democrat, wrote as follows:—

"Let no one cite India as an argument in defence of colonialism. On the Ganges and the Indus, the Briton, inspite of his many noble qualities and his large contributions to the world's advancement, has demonstrated, as many have before, man's inability to exercise with wisdom and justice irresponsible power over helpless people. He has conferred some benefits upon India, but he has extorted a tremendous price for them.

"While he has boasted of bringing peace to the living, he had led millions to the peace of the grave, while he has dwelt upon order established between warring troops, he has impoverished the country by legalized pillage. Pillage is a strong word, but no refinement of language can purge the present system of its inequity".

To the constant drain due to exploitation which resulted in famines recurring with the periodicity of climatic changes was added other causes which Indians could not but consider to be humiliating to them and derogatory to the dignity of a people. Indians—specially servants were assaulted by Europeans and European officers practically condoned the offence of their countrymen. We would give only two instances:—

(1) "One Sunday morning (1870 A.D.) Mr. Fuller, an English pleader of Agra, was about to drive to church with his family. When the carriage was brought to the door, the syce failed to be in attendance, but made his appearance when sent for. For this cause Mr. Fuller struck the syce with his open hand on the head and face and pulled him by the hair, so as to cause him to fall down. Mr. Fuller and his family drove to church; the syce got up, went into an adjoining compound and then died almost immediately".

The Joint Magistrate of Agra (Mr. Leeds) found Mr. Fuller guilty of "voluntarily causing what distinctly amounts to hurt" and sentenced him to pay a fine of Rs. 30. The High Court did not consider the sentence open to objection. But the Governor-General considered the case a grave miscarriage of justice and in a Minute regretted the decision of the High Court and ordered that Mr. Leeds should be severely reprimanded for his great want of judgment and judicial capacity.

(2) In 1882 when Private William Hawkins was tried on a charge of having caused the death of an Indian by striking him with the butt-end of a gun, the jury brought in a verdict of not-guilty. But the *Pioneer*, a

newspaper which opposed the political aspirations of Indians, was constrained to comment on the case thus—"It is disgusting to find a jury, consisting almost entirely of Europeans, giving colour, by such a discreditable misperformance of their duty, to the wide-spread feeling in this country that in cases where Europeans and Natives are concerned, our Courts do not deal out even-handed justice...If the jurymen who have painfully contributed to cast discredit upon the name of British justice in India, do not feel ashamed of themselves, when they come to think over what they have done, they may rest assured, at all events, that the best of their countrymen will be ashamed of them".

Considerations of space preclude the possibility of our quoting more instances of such failure of justice.

How even respectable Indians were wantonly insulted by Europeans would be apparent from the account of an incident (1884 A.D.) given by Blunt in his *India under Ripon*. In this case because of Blunt's having brought the matter to the notice of the Viceroy (Lord Ripon) a "lame" and "rather tardy" apology was offered by the offending European, but Lord Ripon's Private Secretary, in forwarding to Mr. Blunt a copy of the apology, wrote: "The mere fact of a European addressing a formal apology to a native gentleman is worth something". The remarks are significant.

These and other causes contributed to the development of nationalism in India. And the Ilbert Bill agitation was the proverbial last straw that broke the camel's back. Cotton in his *Indian and Home Memories* has said that "a public meeting of protest by the European community was held at the Town Hall in Calcutta; members of the Bar abandoned the noble traditions of their profession". A fitting reply to their vituperative violence was given by Lalmohan Ghose who said at a meeting:—

"If the authors of these insults venture to appear in any public assembly, let their ears be greeted with one universal hiss of indignation, so that stung with shame

and remorse, they may fly far from the country whose air they have polluted with their pestilential breath".

The suggestion was taken by Indians. The immediate effect of the agitation was the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885. It was a representative political assembly—a sign and symbol of Indian nationalism for which the ground had been prepared by men like Rammohan Roy, Ram Gopal Ghose and Harish Chandra Mukherjee and which was diffused all over India by Surendra Nath Banerjea—the father of Indian nationalism who had not only been one of the founders of the Indian Association (1876 A.D.) but had also convened the Indian National Conference (1883 A.D.). And the Congress had its birth in the bosom of this Conference. Blunt has left a description of the Conference at Calcutta.

The meeting of the Congress was what the red rag is to the bull for John Bull. In England *The Times* thundered:—

"The educated classes may find fault with their exclusion from full political rights. Political privileges they can obtain in the degree in which they prove themselves deserving of them. But it was by force that India was won, and it is by force that India must be governed, in whatever hands the government of the country may be vested. If we were to withdraw, it would be in favour not of the most fluent tongue or of the most ready pen, but the strongest arm and the sharpest sword. It would, perhaps, be well for the members of the late Congress to reconsider their position from this practical point of view".

Time has proved that *The Times* indulged in vain-boasting—and the British had to leave India to the educated classes they had held in contempt because of their intoxication with physical power.

In India the "sun-dried Bureaucrats" combined to cripple the Congress by weaning away the landlords and the Moslems. Sir Auckland Colvin was their leader. Some of the landlords yielded to pressure put on them

and the rewards dangled before their eyes—a policy of kicks and kisses. The lead was taken, in the first case, by a landlord in the United Provinces—the Raja of Bhinga.

In the case of the Raja the veil was successfully removed by no less a person than Sir Charles Dilke who was, at one time, considered to be Gladstone's successor in the leadership of the Liberal Party and the Prime Ministership of England, in his *Problems of Greater Britain* :—

"By far the ablest work in the anti-Congress literature is a pamphlet which bears the name of Oday Pratap Singh, Rajah of Bhinga, a land-owner in the North-West Provinces, of Rajput race. I say 'bears the name' because while the native races produce men who, under immense difficulties, attain to a high standard, judged by our Western tests of scholarship, Indian landowners are seldom found in the ranks of writers of English. It is the first fashion throughout the Civil Service to declare as an article of faith that the Raja of Bhinga wrote the pamphlet with his own hand, but, as no declarations on this subject have been sufficient to remove my doubts, I think it better to state them. At all events the pamphlet is there, and forms the most able English essay against the Congress. The title is 'Democracy not suited to India'—a phrase which in itself seems to have the ring of a Lieutenant-Governor's study".

As a matter of fact it was written by Sir Auckland Colvin, the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces (modern Uttar Pradesh)—whose correspondence with Mr. Hume about the Congress was published in pamphlet form by the Congress—as *'Audi alteram partem"*.

Regarding the Moslems Sir John Strachey had said:— "In many parts of India, Mahomedans, especially those of the upper classes, have always been disinclined to accept the education offered in our schools and colleges, and frequent complaint has been made that they are consequently unable to compete on equal terms with Hindus for employment under Government. Feelings of

religious intolerance sometimes tend to make the Mahomedans refuse to admit the necessity of western knowledge". Sir Auckland Colvin and his colleagues were on the look-out for a Moslem stick to assault the Congress movement with. James Samuelson in his *India Past and Present* (1890 A.D.) wrote as follows:—

"He (Sir Auckland Colvin) and other officials patted on the back Sir Syed Ahmed, the Principal of the Mahomedan College, at Aligarh, who had started an opposition movement amongst the Mahomedans which called itself the 'Patriotic Association'. This gentleman, a man of high culture and education, was formerly an enthusiastic advocate of the very reforms and constitutional changes which the Congress was endeavouring to promote, but after making speeches in the cause of reform all over India, he (having in the interim been made a K. C. S. I.) was not above giving offensive public expressions to very unfriendly feelings towards the Hindoos, which the discretion of their English opponents led them to reserve for their private dinner-tables".

This was the beginning of that policy of divide and rule which culminated in that masterpiece of melancholy meanness exhibited by Sir Bampfylde Fuller in East Bengal when he used the somewhat coarse phrase of calling the Moslems "my favourite wife", and held out the hope that in East Bengal, after the partition, the Moslems would be invested with "a unity they had not enjoyed since the days of the old Mussulman viceroys and kings".

This policy was followed by Lord Minto and connived at by Lord Morley as Secretary of State for India. It created separate electorates and—to our misfortune—ended in the partition of the country vertically and horizontically on communal lines, dealing a stunning blow at Indian nationalism which had accepted as an article of faith—the ideal of India—free, one and indivisible. Of this ideal Aurobindo had said that it "is the divine realization to which we move,—emancipation our aim".

But Indian nationalism had taken root in the soil which martyrs to the cause of freedom had watered with their blood. The seeds sown have germinated in a fertile soil and congenial atmosphere. Its history is an important chapter in the history of freedom movements all over the world. Its pages are blotted with tears and blood. But it is a glorious record of achievements.

Srimati Uma Mukherjee and her husband Sriman Haridas Mukherjee, who are two brilliant scholars of the Calcutta University, have been working hard for a pretty long time to prepare an authentic history of India's Freedom Movement, particularly the Swadeshi Movement of 1905. They have been working in my library and with me since 1952. The present book which offers an interpretative account of Indian developments in the 19th century is merely their introductory study of the Swadeshi Movement on which a bigger volume they have laboriously compiled and which they intend to bring out soon. I have gone through the major portion of their manuscript and found it exceedingly interesting and illuminating. I am confident that, like their previous work on National Education, this work will be an important addition to the literature of India's Freedom Movement and provide a mine of useful information for future historians.

Calcutta,
12. 11. 57

Hemendra Prasad Ghose

PREFACE

As the very title suggests, the book seeks to analyse the diverse factors that contributed to the growth of Indian nationalism in course of the period from 1857 to 1905. Special attention has been, however, paid to the march of the Renaissance in Bengal in the last century, for Bengal, of all the Indian provinces, stood in the vanguard of national development during that period.

Materials for this work have been drawn both from primary and secondary sources, and authorities have been quoted at the appropriate points for the major statements made in this volume. In the execution of this work nobody has been of greater help to us than Srijut Hemendra Prasad Ghose, the *doyen* of the Calcutta Press, who has always offered us the proud privilege of reading in his library, full of precious documents bearing on India's Freedom Movement in general. He has also gone through some sections of our manuscript and has laid us under gratitude by writing a valuable *Foreword* to our study. Our deep obligations are also due to Srijut Uday Kumar Das of Srinath Das Estate, Calcutta, who has immensely facilitated our studies and researches by allowing us to read in his library and by making a gift of certain rare books to us from his personal collection. Incidentally it may be noted here that the whole of his personal library, built up through forty years' sustained efforts and comprising thousands of precious books, has been recently handed over to the Jadavpur University through our humble instrumentality.

Our sincere gratitude is also due to Prof. Tripurari Chakravarty, Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Dr. Narendra Krishna Sinha and Dr. Susil Kumar Datta who have stimulated our studies by their constructive comments and suggestions. We should also express our obligations to

Principal Haresh Chandra Bhattacharyya, Principal Chandika Prasad Banerjee, Prof. Tarit Kumar Mukherjee, Prof. Hedayet Ali as well as to Sj. Probhat Chandra Ganguli, Sj. Jyotish Chandra Ghose, Sj. Pulakesh DeSarkar and Sj. Kalidas Mukherjee for the encouragement we received from them in bringing out this book.

Finally, our thanks are due to Srimati Anuradha Ganguli who cheerfully undertook the tedious task of correcting the typescript.

104, Ballygunge Gardens,
Calcutta—19
15. 11. 1957

Haridas Mukherjée
and
Uma Mukherjee

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THE WESTERN IMPACT ON BENGAL

CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED

(1757-1905)

1757 Battle of Plassey. Bengal is brought into direct contact with European civilisation on account of territorial acquisition by the British East India Company. France also continues to have culture-contact with the Bengali people through Chandernagore.

1765 Death of Mir Jafar. The British acquire the *Diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

1773 The Regulating Act places Bengal (India) under the systematic administration of the British people.

1774 : Foundation of the Supreme Court of Calcutta with Sir Elizah Impey as the Chief Justice. Hindus of Bengal become eager to acquire a smattering of English.

Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General, gets the *Vivadarnavasetu* compiled by several Pandits (1773), translated into Persian, and then rendered from Persian into English as Halhed's *Gentoo Code* (1774), meant to be a code of laws for Company's Hindu subjects.

Rammohun Roy, the father and patriarch of modern India, is born.

1781 Foundation of the Calcutta Madrasa for Islamic studies by Warren Hastings (1772-1785) who encourages Pandits and Maulavis.

1784 : Asiatic Society of Bengal established by Sir William Jones (1746-1794) who, along with Charles Wilkins (1750-1836) and Colebrooke (1765-1837), gives the first stimulus to the revival of the Hindu "Classics".

Pitt's India Act establishes the Board of Control, made up of a Secretary of State, the Chancellor of Exchequer and four Privy Councillors, which is meant to exercise an effective supervision over the Board of Directors.

1785 The *Bhagavad-Gita* is first translated into English by Charles Wilkins and known as the *Song Celestial*. This is the first rendering of a Sanskrit work into English.

Steam engine in British Cotton Mill first employed. Formal beginning of the Industrial Revolution in England.

1786 Jones hits upon the hypothesis of a common source of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Gothic, Celtic and Persian in his Presidential Address to the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

1788-89: The Code of Manu, the greatest of the Hindu law-books, is Englished by Jones.

1789 Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* translated into English by Jones, and then rendered into German from the English version by Forster in 1791. The German translation at once draws the notice of Herder (1744-1803), the votary of world-culture, who introduces it to Goethe "on whom the effect was as tremendous as that of the discovery of America on geographers and of Neptune on students of astronomy" *(1). *Sakuntala* serves as a feeder of the German Romantic Movement in literature which is pioneered by Goethe (1750-1832).

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*(1) B. K. Sarkar: **Creative India** (Lahore, 1937, p. 108)

The French Revolution formally begins on May 5, 1789.

1791 : Publication of Colebrooke's *Digest of Hindu Law* and Hamilton's *Hedaya,* a text-book on Muhammedan Law.

1792 : Foundation of the Sanskrit College at Benares by Lord Cornwallis.

Downfall of the Bourbon Monarchy (Limited Monarchy) in France and the establishment of the first French Republic (August-September, 1792).

1793 The Permanent Settlement of land revenues establishes zamindari (land-holding) capitalism on firm and secure foundations. The Zamindars become the patrons of education, literature and culture.

The Permanent Settlement of 1793 limits State-demand from landlords as the Rent Acts of 1859 and 1885 limit the landlord's demand from tenants *(2).

1795-99: The ideas of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume and Bentham reach Bengali professors of Logic and *Smriti* (law and constitution) through British lawyers and linguists.

The effects of Revolutionary France become noticeable in Indian life. Many Frenchmen are also noticeable in Indian politics. Many of them are also appointed as commanders of the Native States, e.g., in the Nizam's State, at Mysore under Tipu Sultan, under Jaswant Rao Holkar, Daulat Rao Scindia. Tipu Sultan's embassies to France and his correspondence with Napoleon. A critical period in the history of British dominions in India. Lord Wellesley saves the situation by his strong arms.

*(2) R. C. Dutt: **The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age** (London, 1950, 7th Ed., p. 461)

1795 The Bengal Theatre or the New Theatre established at Calcutta by Gerasim Lebedeff, a Russian adventurer who, with the help of Golaknath Das, translates an English comedy, *Disguise,* into Bengali and stages it as *Chadmabesh* *(3).

1796 Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* published. It contains a vigorous attack on the religious dogmas of the 18th century. It has been a powerful factor in the revolution of religious thought. The work of Paine (1737-1809) is widely read by the Bengali scholars in the '20's and '30's of the 19th century when it created a stir in Calcutta for its revolutionary messages.

1800 The Fort William College established (May 4) with William Carey (1761-1834) as Principal and Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar (1762-1819) as Professor of Bengali. It drags on till 1854 when it is abolished by orders of the Government.

1808 The German poet and philosopher Schlegel publishes his book *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* in German on his discovery of Sanskrit through Alexander Hamilton, one of the East India Company's servants detained in Paris during the Napoleonic Wars. "This sudden discovery of a vast literature, which had remained unknown for centuries to the Western World, was the most important event of its kind since the rediscovery of the treasures of Classical Greek literature at the Renaissance, and luckily it coincided with the German Romantic Revival" *(4).

The Peninsular War (1808-13) starts as a national movement against Napoleon. In 1813 begins the

*(3) P. R. Sen: **Western Influence in Bengali Literature** (Cal., Second Ed., 1947, p. 146)

*(4) Rawlinson's **The Legacy of India** (Oxford, 1937, p. 32)

War of Liberation in Germany. Nationalism acquires a new significance in European thought.

1813 The British Parliament grants for the first time the sum of £10,000 a year from the revenue of India to be spent for the education of the people of the three provinces of Bengal, Bombay and Madras. Nothing tangible is, however, done for the next decade till 1823.

1814 Rammohun Roy settles down in Calcutta and takes up seriously his life's work which is country's all-round regeneration.

1816 : Foundation of the Science of Comparative Philology by Franz Bopp.

1817 Foundation of the Hindu College at Calcutta for the study of English and Indian languages as well as Eastern and Western arts and sciences through the initiative of David Hare, Radha Kanta Deb, Buddinath Mukherjee, Edward Hyde East and Rammohun Roy.

1818 *Dig-darshan,* the first literary journal in Bengali, is established by the Christian missionaries at Serampore (April), and a few months later an English edition of that monthly is also published simultaneously for each number.

1823 Committee of Public Instruction appointed in Bengal by the East India Company's government.

Six Oriental Colleges, including the Sanskrit College at Calcutta, founded out of the sanctioned amount £10,000 granted by the Parliament a decade before.

Rammohun Roy's "A Letter on English Education" (December 11, 1823) written to Lord Amherst, then acting as Governor-General. Rammohun powerfully pleads for the adoption of a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing "Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, and other useful

sciences" *(5). "To him", observes Benoy Kumar Sarkar, "Bacon was a veritable *Yugavatara* for Europe and mankind. It is the post-Baconian arts and sciences that he wanted to see introduced in India under British auspices" (*Creative India,* p. 449).

Rammohun makes appeal to the Church of Scotland Assembly to send out competent teachers to Bengal.

1821-31: Academic Association under the young Anglo-Indian Derozio (1809-1831) introduces the principles of the French Revolution as well as romanticism among the students of the Hindu College. The impact of Derozio's teachings effects a virtual revolution in manners, morals and sentiments in the youths of Bengal.

Some of the favourite foreign authors of the Bengalis are in this period Shakespeare, Scott, Burns, Byron, Bacon, Hume, Paine, Bentham and Voltaire.

1830 Alexander Duff, as a representative of the Church of Scotland Assembly, comes to Calcutta to inaugurate the Scottish educational mission in Bengal. He establishes a school called the General Assembly's Institution which addresses itself to the conversion of the Hindus to Christianity. Duff succeeds in converting only forty young Hindus during his stay, but this conversion creates a repugnance in Hindu mind.

Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* (1796) is devoured widely by the Hindu students and scholars about that time. Considering the book to be a great obstacle in the path of Christian conversions, Dr. Duff buys all the copies available in the market, piles them in the street and makes a

*(5) Vide: **English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy** (Allahabad, Panini Office, 1906, pp. 471-474)

bonfire out of them. But the Hindus reprint the book and distribute its copies among themselves*(6). Brahmo movement formally started by Rammohun the same year he leaves Calcutta for England. This marks the beginning of India's direct international contacts for the first time in modern history.

The July Revolution successfully accomplished in France which emerges finally as a constitutional monarchy. Revolutionary outbursts take place in different parts of Europe. The news of the July Revolution leaves a deep impression on the mind of Rammohun. The First Reform Act of England, passed in 1832, also creates a stir in his mind.

1829-32: R. Rickards publishes his celebrated work, *viz., India,* in which he sounds a note of warning to the people of England when he observes: "The schoolmaster is abroad with his primer, pursuing a course which no power of man can hereafter arrest. Through the medium of schools, literary meetings, and printed books, all the learning and sciences of Europe will be greedily imbibed, and securely domiciled by the Hindoos of India. The knowledge now diffused and diffusing throughout India will shortly constitute a power which three hundred thousand British bayonets will be unable to control".

1832 Goethe (1750-1832), the German poet, and Bentham (1748-1832), the British Utilitarian, pass away.

Humanitarian movement makes rapid strides in England since 1832. Its impact on Bengal, nay India, is powerful.

1833 Rammohun passes away in far-off Bristol (Great

*(6) Swami Abhedananda: **India and Her People** (New-york, 1906, pp. 196-197)

Britain). His Brahmo Samaj at home (Bengal) still remains an aspiration rather than an achievement. The Company's Charter is renewed. Company's trading rights abolished.

1833-35: Serious dispute takes place over the disposal of the annual grant of £ 10,000 between the Anglicists and the Orientalists into which the Committee of Public Instruction are divided. In 1835, Lord William Bentinck (1828-35) enlarges the Committee of Public Instruction by the addition of Raja Radha Kanto Deb, Rosomoy Dutt and Takawar Jung, the Nawab of Bengal, and appoints Macaulay as its President. Macaulay's *Minute on Education* helps to win an immediate victory for the Anglicists. In March, 1835, Bentinck passes resolutions by which English language is established as the official language of higher education in India. The decision thus taken in 1835 is a fulfilment of Rammohun's dream.

The Calcutta Medical College founded in 1835 by Lord William Bentinck.

1836 The Hooghly Mohsin College established.

1838 The Landholders' Society promotes political consciousness. Leaders: Dwarkanath Tagore, Prosonno Tagore and W. C. Harry, Editor of the *Englishman.*

Rosen publishes the first edition of some of the hymns of the *Rig-Veda.* The work is then carried on by Burnouf, Roth and Max Muller whose researches lay the foundations of Comparative Religion.

1839 Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905) establishes the *Tattva-bodhini Sabha* or Truth-Seeking Society which marks an epoch in the literary and religious history of Bengal. Again, under the patronage of Debendranath, the *Tattva-bodhini Patrika,* as an organ of that *Sabha* is published

(1843) with Akshoy Kumar Datta as the Editor. It seeks, among other things, to "Indianize European Science" and discusses Western philosophies, particularly, those of Carlyle, Fichte, Newman and Parker.

The Durham Report enunciates new principles of colonial government for Britain.

The British India Society established in London under the influence of George Thompson and others. The object is to promote the welfare of the natives of India. Bengal British India Society established in Calcutta four years later (1843).

1846 The Krishnagar College founded for the spread of Western education in Bengal.

England witnesses a battle of ideas round the question of the Repeal of the Corn Law which is effected at last by Peel in 1846.

1847 The *Tattva-bodhini Patrika* begins to publish a translation of the *Rig-Veda*. Max Muller also studies the same Veda at that time under the great French Sanskritist, E. Burnouf, in Paris.

1849 : The annexation of the Punjab takes place.

The Bethune College is established in Calcutta for girls' education on modern Western lines.

The Black Acts controversy takes place. Ramgopal Ghose emerges into light as the first political orator of modern India.

1850 The Caste Disabilities Removal Act passed.

The Wahabi Movement inspires interest in Islam.

1851-53: *Bahya-bastur Sahit Manav-Prakritir Sambandha-vichar* (Examination of the Relations between Nature and Man) published by Akshoy Datta (1821-1887).

1851 The British Indian Association is established in the wake of the 'Black Acts' dispute for the furtherance of Indian interests and defence of Indian rights. Debendranath Tagore as the

Secretary of the Assoication issues a circular letter to other towns of India to take up the work of organised agitation. This association is exclusively Indian in membership.

1852 Hara Chandra Ghosh translates the *Merchant of Venice* as *Bhanumati-Chittavilas.*

1853 Renewal of the East India Company's Charter and the appointment of a Lord's Committee which discusses, among other things, the subject of education of the people of India. On the recommendations of this Committee, the Education Despatch of 1854 is issued. The Despatch of 1854 becomes a veritable charter of Indian education. It suggests objects as well as ways and means for the rapid spread of secular education. On the basis of this Despatch three Universities are established in 1857, the Mutiny year, at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras to encourage higher education.

Vidyotsahini Sabha established with Kaliprasanna Sinha (1840-70), Kristodas Pal (1838-84), Peary Chand Mitra (1814-83) and Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya (1840-1932). The *Hindu Patriot,* founded in 1853, is edited by Hurish Chandra Mukherji from 1854 to 1861 and then by Kristo Das Pal for a long time. Hurish Chandra is the first journalist of any note in modern India*(7).

Railways first introduced in India—a step towards Indian administrative unification.

1854 : The Education Despatch issued by Charles Wood. The cultural conquest of India by the British really begins.

Ram Narayan Tarkaratna publishes *Kulina-Kula-Sarvasva* (All about the Kulins or Birth Aristocracy), first original drama in Bengali. The

*(7) G. P. Pillai: **Representative Indians** (London, 1897, pp. 44-45)

theme is against the evils of the birth-aristocracy.

1855-56: Vidyasagar publishes *Vidhava-Vivaha* in 1855. Widow Remarriage Act promoted by Vidyasagar and supported by *Vidyotsahini-Sabha* is passed in 1856.

The annexation of Oudh takes place.

1857 The Indian Mutiny breaks out on May 10 at Meerut.

University established in Calcutta. Among other celebrities Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Hem Chandra Banerjee, Satyendra Nath Tagore and Jogendra Chunder Ghosh (Comtist) matriculate. Universities also established in Bombay and Madras.

A Press Act, putting temporary restrictions on Indian Press, English and Vernacular, passed by Clemency Canning.

1858 Peary Chand Mitra (1814-83) publishes *Alaler Gharer Dulal.* Theme in favour of female education.

Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) is drawn into the Brahmo Samaj by chance study of *What is Brahmoism,* a tract by Rajnarayan Bose, and under the influence of Debendranath Tagore. With Keshab's entry, the Brahmo movement in Bengal enters upon a new phase marked by democratization and expansion.

The Act for the Better Government of India passed. Transfer of the Indian administration from the Company to the Crown. Queen's historic Proclamation on Nov. 1 becomes a charter of Indian constitutional rights.

1860 : The Indigo Agitation against the brutal oppression of European Planters takes the form of "first Satyagraha" in India. Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nil Darpan,* chronicling the woeful tales, is published in the same year.

1861 Keshab Chandra Sen organises a spiritual fraternity called the *Sangat Sabha.* Side by side with the Hindu Scriptures the works of Theodore Parker, Hamilton, Victor Cousin and Prof. Newman are studied here with great zeal. Keshab publishes "An Appeal to the British Nation" (for the promotion of mass education in India), which is circulated in England through Prof. Newman.

Monmohan Ghose starts with the financial backing of Debendra Nath Tagore the fortnightly magazine, the *Indian Mirror,* which soon changes into a weekly and afterwards into a daily.

Indian Councils Act passed.

1863 Keshab starts *Vama-bodhini,* the first journal for women.

1867 The *Prarthana Samaj* of Bombay is established by Ranade and Bhandarkar.

Schism takes place in the Brahmo Samaj. The old conservative party shrinks into the *Adi Brahmo Samaj* and the new party of youthful reformers led by Keshab Sen form the Brahmo Samaj of India.

The Hindu Mela (Hindu Fair) established by Nabagopal Mitra as a Conference of the Nationalists. It advocates the idea of a pan-Indian nationality and urges on the adoption of the cult of self-help as an instrument of national regeneration.

The English version of the *Gita* is published in New York.

John Stuart Mill publishes "Subjection of Women" which gives a tremendous fillip to the feministic movement all the world over.

The Second Reform Bill passed in England, leading to the extension of franchise to the lower middle class.

1865-90: Auguste Comte's (1798-1857) "positivism" i.e.

religion of humanity and social service becomes a great socio-cultural force among Bengali intellectuals, viz., Justice Dwaraka Nath Mitra, Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, Jogendra Chunder Ghosh and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. John Stuart Mill's work on *Comte and Positivism* is widely read by the intelligentia of Bengal. *Positivist Calendar* is first published in 1872 by Jogendra Chunder Ghosh, the second edition being published in 1884 *(8).

Bankim's *Bande Mataram,* a hymn incorporated in his *Ananda Math* published in 1882, as well as his *Dharma-Tattava* (1888) clearly betrays the powerful impact of Comtist ideologies on Bengali thought and consciousness.

1869 : Prof. Krishna Kamal Bhattacharyya (1840-1932) translates Bernardin's *Paul et Virginie* from French into Bengali and writes also a *Life of Napoleon* in Bengali.

1870 Keshabchandra's visit to England. Acclaimed as a great orator by John Stuart Mill and Louis Blanc. "His success in England raised the entire educated community in India in their own estimation and very considerably strengthened the new sense of conceit of their intellectual and moral equality with the members of the alien ruling race in their country" *(9).

The Franco-Prussian War. Unification of Germany and Italy complete. Bismarck, Cavour and Garibaldi become heroes in Indian estimation.

1872 : The Civil Marriage Act passed and inter-caste marriages legalised, partly through Keshab Sen's endeavour.

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*(8) Indira Sarkar: **Social Thought in Bengal** (Calcutta, 1940, pp. 10-13)

*(9) B. C. Pal: **Memories of My Life and Times**, Vol. II (Cal., 1951, pp. XXIX-XXX)

Banga-darshan, a Bengali monthly, established by Bankim Chatterjee (1838-94). Collaborators: Romesh Dutt (1848-1909), Umesh Batabyal (1852-98), Haraprosad Sastri (1853-1931), Chandra Nath Bose, Akshoy Sarkar (1846-1917). Bengali readers are aquainted through this journal with the ideas and ideologies of the West in a continuous stream.

Banga-darshan revived and edited by Rabindranath (1901) and then revived and edited by Mohitlal Majumdar (1947).

1875 Keshab Sen meets Ramkrishna (1836-86), the Saint of Dakshineswar (probable date being March 15) who leaves a profound impression in his mind.

Arya Samaj founded (April 10) at Bombay by Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883) who takes his theoretical stand on the bed-rock of the Vedas. Hinduism enters on its "aggressive" phase.

Nabin Sen (1847-1909) publishes *Palasir Juddha* (in verse).

Publication of the first of the great series of the *Sacred Books of the East* under the editorship of Max Muller. This renders the Hindu Scriptures available for the first time to the general reader.

Dwarka Nath Ganguli compiles *Jatiya Sangit* (National Songs).

1875 The Students' Association of Calcutta is organised by Ananda Mohan Bose, with himself as the President and Surendra Nath Banerjea as its most active member. Surendranath seeks "to make student life instinct with a new spirit in Calcutta" and delivers lectures in Calcutta, Uttarpara, Kidderpore and other places on such subjects as Indian Unity, the Study of History, the Life of Mazzini, and the Life of Chaitanya. Amongst those who regularly attend the

meetings in those days the names of Byomkesh Chakrabarty and Narendra Nath Datta (Swami Vivekananda of later days) may be mentioned.

1876 : Indian Association for political purposes established by Surendranath Banerjea (1848-1825), Ananda Mohan Bose, Shibnath Sastri and Dwarka Nath Ganguli. Reverend Krishna Mohan Banerjee chosen as the President of the Association.

1869-76: Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science established by Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar (1833-1904) to stimulate scientific studies, researches and investigations.

1878 The second schism in the *Brahmo Samaj* on account of the democratic revolt of the younger generation against the autocracy of Keshab Chandra Sen. The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj organised by Anandamohon Bose, Shibnath Sastri, Bejoy Krishna Goswami and others.

The Arms Act and the Vernacular Press Act passed by Lytton.

1879 The Anglo-Oriental College established at Aligarh by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. It becomes the nucleus of the Muslim University there.

1881 : First Factory Act in India.

First Census in India.

1882 Repeal of the Vernacular Press Act by Ripon.

1883 The Ilbert Bill Agitation stirs the country and presents for the first time the picture of a united India.

The First National Conference is held in Calcutta in December of the same year.

1885 : The first meeting of the Indian National Congress summoned by Allan Octavian Hume at Bombay with W. C. Bonnerjee as the President. Simultaneously the second National Conference is held in Calcutta by Surendranath and others.

1891 Mohabodi Society founded at Calcutta by

Anagarika Dhammapala (1864-1933) of Ceylon. In the next year (1892) *Mohabodhi* Journal founded by him with a view to conducting Buddhist movement on an international scale.

The Indian Factories Act regulates women's labour for the first time.

1892 : Indian Councils Act introduces the principle of election.

1893 Vivekananda (1863-1902), as the cultural ambassador of India, lectures at Chicago before the historic Parliament of Religions. He is at once recognised as a world conqueror. At a single bound India's prestige in foreign countries rises to great heights.

Aurobindo Ghose contributes several articles to the *Indu Prakash* of Bombay on "The New Lamps for Old" and seven articles on Bankim Chandra Chatterjee during 1893-94 criticising the prevailing Congress policy of prayers and petitions.

Annie Besant comes to India and adopts her as her new home.

1894 The Bengal Academy of Literature founded (April 29). Its name afterwards changes into the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad.*

Prabuddha Bharat, an English journal, is established by Vivekananda's colleagues as an organ of the Ramkrishna movement. In one of the early issues of the journal, Abhedananda sets forth clearly the objects and purposes of the Ramkrishna movement in an article on "The Hindu Preacher" (1895).

1895 The Shivaji festival is organised in Maharashtra by B. G. Tilak who appears as the leader of a party of action in the Congress.

The eleventh session of the Indian National Congress is held at Poona under the Presidentship of Surendra Nath Banerjea. W. C. Bonnerjee,

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, G. K. Gokhale and others participate.

1897 : Bombay in the grip of a plague and a famine. Two English officers murdered in the streets of Poona. The murderer executed after trial, and Tilak on account of his inflammatory writings subjected to a rigorous imprisonment which is the second divine seal upon his career.

Vivekananda lectures in India from Colombo to Alomora on the messages delivered by him in the U.S.A. and establishes Ramkrishna Math at Belur in 1899 with the special object of training workers of the Ramkrishna Order. Abhedananda (1866-1939), Vivekananda's worthy comrade-in-arms, goes to Newyork *via* London and propagates Vedanta. With his entry into the field of propaganda, Vedanta movement in the U.S.A. gathers strength and momentum.

Satis Chandra Mukherjee founds the *Dawn,* an English monthly, to disseminate India's moral and spiritual values to the modern world.

1898 *Udbodhan,* Bengali journal, is established by Vivekananda's colleagues to foster the Ramkrishna-Vivekananda movement in Bengal.

Fourteenth session of the Indian National Congress held at Madras, with Ananda Mohon Bose as the President who makes a fervent appeal to the youths for services to Mother India in course of his speech.

Lord Curzon comes to India as the new Viceroy.

1899 Vivekananda undertakes his second tour in the West and observes the remarkable progress of the Vedanta movement in the U.S.A. as carried on by his colleagues there, particularly Abhedananda.

Brajendra Nath Seal (1864-1938) participates in the International Congress of Orientalists, Rome, where he reads papers on *Vaishnavism*

and Christianity, Test of Truth and *Hindus as Founders of Social Sciences.*

The 15th session of the Congress held at Lucknow with Romesh Chandra Dutt as the President.

1900 : Terrible famine sweeps over the Punjab, Rajputana, Central Province and Bombay According to official reports, in Bombay alone in famine camps people "died like flies."

1901 Indu Madhab Mallik publishes his *Cheen. Bhraman. New India* founded by B. C. Pal.

Ramananda Chatterjee founds his famous Bengali monthly, *Probashi.*

William Digby's *Prosperous British India* published from London. It creates a sensation throughout the world.

1902 : Vivekananda passes away at the age of thirty-nine (July 4).

The Dawn Society is founded at Calcutta by Satis Chandra Mukherjee for the proper training of the youths (July).

Youngmen with revolutionary trends also begin to organise themselves in Bengal at the same time under the influence of Aurobindo Ghose.

Romesh Chandra Dutt's *Economic History of India, Vol. I. India under Early British Rule* is published. Vol. II. *India in the Victorian Age* published in 1904. It exerts great influence on the Swadeshi Movement. Prafulla Chandra Roy (1861-1944) publishes his *History of Hindu Chemistry,* Vol. I. The second volume published in 1907.

Jagadish Chandra Bose makes communication on plant response to the *Academie des Sciences* of Paris.

1904 Gooroo Dass Banerjee (1844-1918) publishes *A Few Thoughts on Education* which is widely read in those days.

The Association for the Scientific and Industrial Education of Indians established by Advocate Jogen Ghosh.

Rabindranath publishes his *Swadeshi Samaj* (Indigenous Society) and reads it twice in Calcutta meetings. Here he outlines his scheme of a non-political Bengali republic, conceives the Samaj as separate from the State and advocates the cult of self-development through self-help for national regeneration *(10).

The Indian Universities Act introduces a new era in India. The Act provokes opposition from Indian quarters and is in part thwarted.

1905 The Swadeshi Movement formally declares itself on August 7. The whole country feels the thrill of a new life, undreamt of in the past. Anti-Partition Agitation takes the form of Boycott of British goods by the Bengali people. Surendra Nath Banerjea functions as the leader of the movement which is strengthened in the next year (1906) by the energism and radicalism of Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghose and others of Calcutta and mofussil towns.

Japan's victory over Russia at Portsmouth cries halt in an effective manner to the white man's chauvinistic cult of racial superiority. Japan serves as a mighty feeder of freedom movements throughout Asia,—in China, India and Persia.

Revolution takes place in Russia.

In China Dr. Sun Yat-sen enunciates his *San Min Chu I* and holds forth before China the ideals she is to strive for.

The Chinese boycott of American goods that

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*(10) B. K. Sarkar: **The Political Philosophies since 1905**, Vol. I (Madras, 1928, p. 70)

is going on at that time exerts great influence on Indian public life and culture.

Kakasu Okakura, the celebrated Japanese artist, visits India and preaches in his *Ideals of the East* the unity of Asia on the strength of Buddhism.

The Servants of India Society is founded by Gopal Krishna Gokhale in Poona to promote the national interests of the Indian people by all constitutional means. "The object of the Society", writes Henry Nevinson, "is to train the Servants as national missionaries, ready to visit any part of India at the order of the First Member and Council, in the hope of creating a deep and passionate love of the country, organizing political teaching, promoting goodwill among the different races, assisting education, especially of women, and raising the people who live below even the lowest caste" *(11).

*(11) **The New Spirit in India** (London, 1908, p. 38)

CHAPTER II

THE GROWTH OF NATIONALISM IN INDIA

(1857—1905)

WESTERN CHALLENGE

From the battle of Plassey (1757) down to the "Glorious Bengali Revolution of 1905" modern Eur-America had been challenging Asia, and of course, Bengal and India. It was, however, not possible for Young Asia to accept that challenge until the year 1905. The outbreak of the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal and Japan's victory over Russia at Portsmouth (1905) represented the first terms, as it were, in the series of Young Asia's continuous and steady resistance to aggressive Eur-America. But throughout the 19th century, the maritime nations of the West had assumed the offensive in their drive for colonial and imperial expansion all the world over. The Asian regions, including India, stood paralysed before the onrush of the modern West. It is no time for sentimentalising over an objective reality.

As Bengal was the first province in India to come within the British politico-economic orbit, it was here that the earliest Western impact became visible *(1). Military

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*(1). "Bengal", says Bipin Chandra Pal, "was moved far more powerfully than the other Indian provinces by the new ideals of freedom and equality of the 18th century European Illumination, which the British brought with them, because of the original genius and age-long individuality of the Bengalee people. And Bengal, owing to her original spirit of personal

and political onslaughts were accompanied and followed by cultural attacks on the existing ideas, practices and institutions. The introduction of English education served as the greatest single factor in the revolution of the old order in Bengal as well as in the "transvaluation of values".

RAMMOHUN AND RICKARDS ON ENGLISH EDUCATION

Throughout the 19th century Bengal, nay India, witnessed dose-by-dose or stage-by-stage expansion of British rule, British economy and British culture. With the loss of political freedom to the West, the old economic order of the country also came under challenge from the more powerful Occident. The medieval feudalistic economic pattern was fast breaking down before the onslaughts of the Western nations. Equally mentionable was the invasion of the new spirit in the realm of our culture. The ideals and values that were sanctified by age and accepted as valid for generations were challenged and changing. In fact, India was thrown on the defensive. But such was the innate vitality and strength of the nation that out of its womb came forth a series of first-rate leaders and intellectuals whose supreme task in the early 19th century was the defence of the Hindu society and culture from the challenging West. Out of the keen desire to defend the

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liberty and social freedom, more readily accepted the new gospel of Equality, Fraternity and Liberty of modern European culture. This is the real explanation of the fact that while English education was almost simultaneously introduced into the three Presidencies of Bombay, Madras and Bengal by the incorporation of the three older Universities, Bengal was far more profoundly affected by the Rationalism and Individualism of 19th century European culture. This was why Bengal practically led the great Freedom Movement in modern India" (Vide: B. C. Pal's **Memories of My Life and Times**, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1951, pp. iv-viii).

old social tradition and cultural values were born endeavours and strivings which led in quick stages to great intellectual and religious ferment in the land. There were produced among us certain men who, as hard-headed realists, were quick to realise that the safety of the land did not lie in turning their back against the modern movement. They were convinced that the modern West with its dynamicism and intellectual creativity has got to be accepted and assimilated as integral parts in our scheme of life. But at the same time they were keenly anxious to preserve and develop what was best in the old Hindu heritage. Out of such double moorings and peculiar psycho-social interaction, the Renaissance was generated in Bengal which held forth the light to the rest of India. It is not for nothing that Aurobindo said in 1894: "What Bengal thinks tomorrow, India will be thinking tomorrow week". And in the Swadeshi days Gokhale and Lalaji were not slow to acknowledge India's indebtedness to Bengal. The Renaissance was, in fact, the most outsanding development of the Bengal history in the 19th century. It expressed itself, first, in the intellectual sphere, then in the religious field, and latterly in political aspirations. On the whole, it marked Bengal's transition from medievalism to modernism.

The first historical name that flashes across our mind at the dawn of the new birth is the great Raja Rammohun Roy (1774-1833) who is justly called the pioneer of modernism in Bengal. As in every other sphere, he was also a pioneer in the matter of introduction of English education in this land, which was the most decisive and palpably creative factor in the history of our national awakening in the 19th century. The Western education brought Indian minds in lively contacts with the dynamic thoughts and influences radiating from the West, broadened their outlook and gave them the visions of a new heaven and a new earth. It was destined to give them a power and consciousness which "three hundred thousand British bayonets" were in future "unable to control", as

Rickards warned in 1832 *(2). Rickards observed further: "The school-master is abroad with his primer, pursuing a course which no power of man can hereafter arrest. Through the medium of schools, literary meetings, and printed books all the learning and sciences of Europe will be greedily imbibed, and securely domiciled by the Hindoos of India...the day may not be distant when you shall feel, in disappointment and disgrace, how feeble is physical compared with moral power and may add one more page to the proofs given by history that fleshly arms and the instruments of war are but a fragile tenure." The Englishman's warning proved a prophecy *(3).

Even decades before Rickards' warning to the English people, the East India Company felt hesitant in imparting liberal Western education to the people of Indian subcontinent. When, in 1792, Wilberforce proposed to add two clauses to the Charter Act of the year for sending out school masters to India, the Directors of the East India Company raised vehement protest against the proposal. "On that occasion one of the Directors stated that we had just lost America from our folly in having allowed the establishment of schools and colleges, and that it would not do for us to repeat the same act of folly in regard to India; if the natives required anything in the way of education they must come to England for it"*(4). But circumstances and practical necessities of the alien masters did lead to the introduction of Western education in India, and inspite of Macaulay's desire to create a vast clerkly caste in the subject country, English education proved

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*(2) R. Rickards: **India**, Vol. II, Part III. (London, 1832, pp. 389-90).

*(3) Vide: H. P. Ghose's paper in the **Calcutta Municipal Gazette**, Independence Commemoration Number, 1947, p. 62.

*(4) Vide: J. C. Marshman's Evidence, Lords' Second Report, 1853 as quoted in Swami Abhedananda's **India and Her People** (Newyork, 1906, p. 190).

an event of revolutionary significance and unconsciously became the harbinger of a new dawn in Indian history.

The years following 1835 witnessed a steady development of English education in Bengal and for that matter in India also. The foundation of the three Universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857 was a memorable landmark in that direction. The growth of an enlightened and educated class of Indians, armed with modern knowledge and inspired by the European illumination of the 18th century, was the inevitable consequence of the British educational policy in India. The constructive work pioneered by this early band of English-trained Indians like Tara Chand Chakravarty, Ramtanu Lahiri, Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Kishori Chand Mitra, Russick Krishna Mullick, Ram Gopal Ghose, Rev. K. M. Banerjee, Peary Chand Mitra and Harish Chandra Mukherjee was of inestimable significance to posterity. On them the influence of Derozio (1809-31), that Anglo-Indian heretical thinker who has won for himself a permanent place in Bengal history, was too palpable to be ignored. They were the heralders of a new age in Bengal's reawakening. In 1838 they formed the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge and used it as a suitable platform for discussing general subjects including politics. Richardson's reaction to the political discussions of this circle, later known as the Chakravarty Faction, is well known in history. When George Thompson came to India, accompanied by Dwarkanath Tagore, at the end of 1842, these young intellectuals soon became his devoted admirers and followers. It is the members of this band that were responsible for the first organised political agitation in the country. Ramgopal Ghose, the first political orator of modern India, played a leading role both in the 'Black Acts' controversy of 1849 and in the formation of the British Indian Association in October, 1851. This Association after its formation soon became the leading political organisation of Indians and rendered valuable services to the country for decades to come.

THE RISING OF 1857

The next important episode is the rising of 1857. Hot controversies still rage round the question of its real nature and character. Numerous people are now-a-days inclined to believe that "in 1857 an organised attempt was made by the natural leaders of India to combine themselves into a single command with the sole object of driving out the British power from India in order that a single, unified, politically free and sovereign State may be established. That attempt was conscious and deliberate" *(5). This view was perhaps for the first time advocated by V. D. Savarkar in his book on *The Indian War of Independence 1857*, published from London as early as 1909. Eminent scholars like Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Bhupendra Nath Datta also maintain that the rising of 1857 was the first stage in India's War of Independence (Vide: *Mandira*, Ashar 1364 B.S. or July, 1957). While this view had its origin in the days of our grim struggle against the alien rule, it has acquired after our attainment of political independence a new sanctity. On this time-honoured theory a bomb-shell has been recently thrown by Dr. R. C. Majumdar in his scholarly and documented work *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*. Without allowing his vision to be blurred by old dogmas, he has made a dispassionate study of the relevant source-materials and has come to an independent conclusion of his own. "It would appear," says Dr. Majumdar, "from what has been said above that the great outbreak of 1857 assumed different aspects in different areas. In some places it was purely a mutiny of the sepoys, joined at a later stage by some discontented elements as well as the riff-raff and other disturbing elements of society who are always eager to take advantage of anarchy and confusion to serve their own ends. In

*(5) Vide: R. C. Majumdar's **The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857** (Cal., 1957, p. vi).

other areas the Mutiny was succeeded by a general revolt in which, in addition to the above elements, other classes of people, particularly dispossessed chiefs, ejected landlords and tenants, and other persons nourishing personal grievances joined in the fray in the hope of regaining their power and possessions. In addition to these two we may note a third area in which we can trace a sullen discontent against the British and passive, even active, sympathy with the mutineers among the civil population or certain sections of it, but no overt acts of rebellion by them" (pp. 223-224). To put the whole matter in a nutshell, Dr. Majumdar's view is that the rising of 1857 was "primarily a mutiny gradually developing into a general revolt in certain areas" (p. 221).

And that is also exactly the conclusion drawn independently by Dr. Surendra Nath Sen in his well-documented study entitled *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* (Delhi, 1957). "The movement", writes Dr. Sen, "began as a military mutiny but it was not everywhere confined to the army...Outside Oudh and Shahabad there is no evidence of that general sympathy which would invest the Mutiny with the dignity of a national war. At the same time it would be wrong to dismiss it as a mere military rising. The Mutiny became a revolt and assumed a political character when the mutineers of Meerut placed themselves under the King of Delhi and a section of the landed aristocracy and civil population declared in his favour" (pp. 405-411). In the same author's view, the Mutiny was not the product of a "pre-concerted plan" nor did it assume the dimension of a real national movement. Even in Oudh the plotting mutineers and rebels "were not champions of freedom" and they "had no conception of individual liberty" *(6). "On the

*(6) Dr. Sen's statement that the patriots of Oudh "were not champions of freedom, for they had no conception of individual liberty" (p. 412) does not seem to be logically a valid proposition. Even without a concep-

contrary they would", writes Dr. Sen, "if they could, revive the old order and perpetuate everything it stood for. The English Government had imperceptibly effected a social revolution. They had removed some of the disabilities of women, they had tried to establish the equality of men in the eye of law, they had attempted to improve the lot of the peasant and the serf. The Mutiny leaders would have set the clock back, they would have done away with the new reforms, with the new order, and gone back to the good old days when a commoner could not expect equal justice with the noble, when the tenants were at the mercy of the talukdars, and when theft was punished with mutilation. In short, they wanted a counter-revolution" (pp. 412-413). Dr. Majumdar also observes: "The miseries and bloodshed of 1857-58 were not the birth-pang of a freedom movement in India, but the dying groans of an obsolete aristocracy and centrifugal fendalism of the medieval age" (p. 241).

The London *Times* was perhaps the first English journal to speak out on the military character of the revolt and "attributed the salvation of the Indian Empire as a dependency of Great Britain to the fidelity, aid, and advice of the people of the country during the insurrection." "From all sides", wrote the *Times* as early as July, 1857, "we are assured that the general population has exhibited rather good will than hostility towards us, and in many cases effectual protection has been afforded to fugitives from Delhi and other scenes of mutiny" *(7). Again, the *Edinburgh Review* (No. 218,

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tion of individual freedom it is possible for a people to be champions of country's freedom. Individual freedom is a modern concept, but the passion for group or territorial freedom is much older.

*(7) Vide: **The Mutinies and The People or Statements of Native Fidelity Exhibited During The Outbreak of 1857-58** By A Hindu (pp. 1-2). Originally the book was published just after the amnesty was announced, and reprinted again by the Bangabasi Office in 1905.

April, 1858) observed: "Nothing has been more remarkable than the fact that, throughout its whole progress it has faithfully retained the character of a military revolt. It has involved the whole Native Bengal army; it has spread to the Northern contingents; it has reached some Bombay regiments; it has touched the Nizam's army; it has threatened the Madras army, but except in the newly annexed State of Oude, it has not been taken up by the population. Now it is this circumstance which has saved India to England...It was the general good will of the population which rendered the suppression of the military mutiny both practicable and beneficial." The *Times* also had earlier expressed the same sentiment. In that remarkable book entitled *Native Fidelity,* which is at present a rare possession, the eminent Indian journalist Kristo Das Pal has recorded for posterity plenty of instances, "quoting chapter and verse from official gazettes that the civil population never lagged in their fidelity to quell the great insurrection". According to the writer of the *Native Fidelity,* the feeling of revolt or disloyalty was not shared in by the masses of the Indian people; on the contrary they "did not only observe a peaceful neutrality by standing unmoved amidst the tide of insurrectionary feeling which then overflooded Hindoostan proper, but also, at the risk of their property, lives and family-safety, proved such ready and effectual instruments of salvation to many utterly helpless European fugitives, and acted as protectors and conservators of order at so unruly and perilous an occasion. The struggle was a sore trial of the nation's fidelity" (pp. 2-4).

The English educated classes who were the product

According to Srijut Hemendra Prosad Ghose the annonymous writer of this work was no other than Kristo Das Pal. Both Dr. S. N. Sen and Dr. S. B. Chaudhury are entirely mistaken in ascribing the authorship of this work to Sambhu Chandra Mukherjee.

of the new regime ranged themselves, generally speaking, on the side of law and order and had nothing but condemnation for the insurrectionary movement, for they considered the rising directed as much against their own interests as against the general interests of the country. Both Dr. Sen and Dr. Majumdar in their works have stressed this aspect of the situation. Mr. Raikes, the contemporary English Officer, whom Dr. Majumdar quotes with approval on this point (pp. 225-226), has also recorded how during the days of the Mutiny the English educated classes were treated as enemies by the sepoys. "A Bengalee Baboo at Furuckabad or Cawnpore", writes Raikes, "was almost in as great peril as a Christian, so long as those cities were in the hands of the rebels. Not that the Baboo had personally any taste for the honours of martyrdom; for to tell the truth, he was the veriest coward under the sun, but simply because the Sepoy instinctively hated the English scholars, as part and parcel of the English community." Excepting the parenthetical clause—"*he was the veriest coward under the sun*"—the picture drawn by Raikes correctly reflects the reality of the situation. The tribute which Mr. R. N. Cust, that eminent English civilian who served in the North-Western Province and Punjab, who took part in the settlement of the Punjab after the Mutiny (1858) and who was the Home Secretary to the Government of India (1864-65), paid to the 'Fighting Moonsiff'—a Bengalee Baboo—is worth quoting at this point: "In one remarkable instance the native civil judge—a Bengalee Baboo by capacity and valour—brought himself so conspicuously forward, as to be known as the 'Fighting Moonsiff.' He not only held his own defiantly, but he planned attacks, he burnt villages, he wrote English despatches thanking his subordinates, and displayed a capacity for rule and a fertility of resource very remarkable for one of his nation" whom Mr. Cust branded as "timid and pusillanimous" (Vide: "A District During A Rebellion" in the *Calcutta Review*, Vol. XXXI, Septem-

ber, 1858, p. 69). The *Friend of India* of that time characterised the last two lines of Mr. Cust as the outcome of a "laughable prejudice" and commented: "We are not slow to scold Bengalees when required, but if in India there is a race to whom God has given capacity, real clearness of brain, it is the Bengalee. Take the most timid, quaking wretch of a kayust you can find, put him in any district in India with a shadow of authority, and if he does not make Punjabee and Sikh, Marhatta and Hindostanee, work themselves to death for his benefit, and think all the while it is for their own, he is no true Bengalee" (Vide: *Native Fidelity,* Calcutta, 1905, p. 252, footnote). The 'Fighting Moonsiff' of whom much was heard in the Mutiny days was Baboo Peary Mohon Banerjee of the Uttarpara Bannerjees, and was the Moonsiff at Allahabad during the Mutiny.

In fine, it is relevant to observe that the Mutiny, whatever be the scope of its operations or the area of its influence, was not a nationalist movement in its origin or intention, for the spirit of nationalism was not then awakened. The country had not yet been unified and linked up by railway lines. English education had not yet proceeded far enough to foster a new spirit among the educated classes and to give them a common medium of communication among them. There was no such thing as Indian nationalism in these circumstances. An analysis of the motives of the different classes participating in the upsurge of 1857 reveals unmistakably that the cult of the common country had not as yet taken possession of the people's mind. "The lofty sentiments of patriotism and nationalism, with which they (the Mutiny leaders) are credited," observes Dr. Majumdar, "do not appear to have any basis in fact. As a matter of fact, such ideas were not yet familiar to Indian minds. A strong disaffection and hatred towards the English, and hopes of material gain to be accrued by driving them out, were the principal motives which inspired and sustained the movement" (p. 275). The idea of a pan-Indian

nationality was first voiced forth in the meetings of the Hindu Mela, the conference of the nationalists, which made its mark during 1867-80. It is not before the summoning of the first National Conference (1883), or even before the foundation of the Indian National Congress (1885), or at any rate not before the Ilbert Bill agitation (1883) that one can speak with propriety and precision of the birth of Indian nationalism. Even in 1885 the sentiment of nationalism was more a pious dream than a concrete reality. While welcoming the delegates to the Calcutta Congress of 1886, Dr. Rajendralal Mitter feelingly observed: "For long, our fathers lived and we have lived as individuals only or as families, but hence-forward I hope we shall be living as a nation, united one and all to promote our welfare and the welfare of our mother-country...It has been the dream of my life that the scattered units of my race may some day coalesce and come together; that instead of living merely as individuals, we may some day so combine as to be able to live as a nation." His exhortation reflected a clear shadowing forth of a national ideal—the cult of the country—which was to develop into a mighty force at the turn of the twentieth century. It was only in that background of awakened national feelings which normally resent foreign encroachment that the cry for *Swaraj* or independence was first raised in the country. "Our political agitation in the 19th century", wrote Aurobindo in 1907, "was entirely confined to the smaller and narrower objects. To replace an oppressive land revenue system by the security of a Permanent Settlement, to mitigate executive tyranny by the separation of judicial from executive functions, to diminish the drain on the country naturally resulting from foreign rule by more liberal employment of Indians in the services—to these half-way houses our wise men and political seers directed our steps,—with this limited ideal they confined the rising hopes and imaginations of a mighty people reawakening after a great downfall." It is a realistic summing up of

the 19th century political agitation of Indians. It was only with the Boycott-Swadeshi Movement of 1905 that we enter upon a new phase of organised national upsurge against the British in India, characterised by the demand for "unqualified Swaraj" for the country, as adumbrated by the new school of politics led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo Ghose.

Throughout the 19th century the Indian belief in the native generosity and liberalism of the English people was a persistent reality. The sense of the pangs of foreign slavery had not yet been roused. Redress of particular grievances was certainly sought from time to time, but always within the fundamental framework of British rule in India. Readers will find a verification of this contention in Mr. J. K. Mazumdar's carefully collected *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule :1821 - 1918* (Calcutta, 1937). Even Surendra Nath Banerjea, the Father of Indian Nationalism, could not envisage an ideal of autonomy for India in the 19th century and when at last at the opening of the present century he expressed his fidelity to the ideal of *Swaraj*, it was only to stand for Dadabhai Naoroji's colonial Self-government and not the Extremist gospel of "unqualified Swaraj". If the Ilbert Bill agitation (1883) offered the first occasion of an organised national upheaval in India, the Swadeshi Movement (1905-06) represented the first stage in Indian struggle for independence. This revolutionary change in the whole mental attitude of Indians came about at that time with such a bewildering rapidity as to take the British nation by surprise. Sir Alfred Lyall and Valentine Chirol—both noticed this change, and Lord Minto cried out in the Imperial Assembly: "The Government of India would be blind indeed to shut its eyes to the awakening wave which is sweeping over the Eastern world, overwhelming old traditions, and bearing on its crest a flood of new ideas" (Vide: Minto's Speech in connection with the "Seditious Meetings Bill", Nov. 2, 1907).

This revolutionary change in Indian attitude, which was the product of the Swadeshi days, cannot be traced back by any amount of intellectual ingenuity to half-a-century before. As every law-breaker is not a patriot, similarly every war that is fought in history is not a nationalist war or a war of independence. It is a fatal temptation to read modern developments into the past and to write history on a pre-conceived notion by a careful selection of certain facts and careful elimination of certain others. Such work may become a good piece of propagandist literature and may well serve certain ends for a time; but it is not by any means sober history. A historian may sometimes be under the painful necessity of speaking out unreservedly the most unpleasant truths. It may injure the vested interests of a class and provoke the frowns of the bureaucracy, but this unpleasant task has to be done in the sheer honour of Truth. Dr. Majumdar's statement that the leaders and organisers of the mighty outburst of 1857 hardly deserve the glorified title of patriots and martyrs for the country's cause will perhaps appear shocking to a certain class of minds. The chief argument in favour of his centention is that none of the actors in that drama—Nana Sahib (with his associates, Tantia Topi and Azimulla), the Rani of Jhansi, and Kunwar Singh—were inspired by any motives other than personal grievances. Positive evidences proving their loyalty to an overriding impersonal ideal—the ideal of a free and regenerated India—are still conspicuous by their absence. The foundations of a real nationalist movement with the cult of the common country enshrined before it were first laid by Surendra Nath Banerjea in the late 'seventies of the last century, and not earlier than that. It is only an idealistic misinterpretation of history by a later generation that endowed the events and memories of the year 1857 with the dignity of a national war of independence. Even such idealistic misinterpretation of history has its pragmatic significance in the march of mankind. It is not an uncommon knowledge

how misreading of history can often work miracles and can impart an impetus to a political movement. Readers of English history are aware how the misreading of the 13th century political glories of England immensely aided the constitutional agitation of the 17th century Parliamentarians. "The memory of the Revolt of 1857, distorted but hallowed with sanctity", writes Dr. Majumdar, "perhaps did more damage to the cause of the British rule in India than the Revolt itself." This comparative valuation of the importance of the event of 1857 by the historian of *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857* (p. 278) may not be found acceptable to all.

With due deference to Dr. R. C. Majumdar we beg to differ from him in another particular, and that is, regarding his concluding passage: "The outbreak of 1857 would surely go down in history as the first great and direct challenge to the British rule in India on an extensive scale. As such it inspired the genuine national movement for the freedom of India from British yoke which started half a century later" (p. 278). There is no disputing the fact that the upsurge of 1857 was an inter-provincial rising, perhaps the greatest and the most formidable explosion that the British had to encounter in India after their conquest of this country. This part of Dr. Majumdar's contention nobody perhaps will ever dispute, for it is an accomplished reality. But his proposition that "the genuine national movement" which "started half a century later" was "inspired" by the memory of the event of 1857 is not likely to be accepted without a challenge. The truth of this contention has not been objectively verified with reference to concrete facts and as such his contention still remains an open question. The "genuine national movement for the freedom of India" to which Dr. Majumdar has made a reference was the outcome of the heated Anti-Partition agitation of the Swadeshi Era (1905-06). It drew its impulse of inspiration not from a mere anti-British feeling but from historical glories and traditions of by-gone days, from the visions of a free

India of old, from the martial exploits and the passion for struggle of the Rajputs, the Sikhs and the Marhattas. Our pride in the past and pain in the present were an inspiring agency promoting the spirit of Indian nationalism. The freedom urge of the Swadeshi Movement was also due to a complete loss of faith in salvation through British generosity and to the rude awakening of the people to the grim reality of foreign exploitation by the powerful preachings and propaganda of a galaxy of talented writers like Naoroji, Digby and Dutt. Its spirit was also fed and strengthened by the thrilling stories of the Italian Carbonari, Russian Nihilist and Irish Physical Force movements of the 19th century. "The defeat of the Italians by the Abyssinians in 1896," writes a competent judge of Indian affairs like Sir Alfred Lyall, "may indeed be noted as the first decisive victory gained by troops that may be reckoned Oriental over a European army in the open field, for at least three centuries. The Japanese war, in which Russia lost battles not only by land, but also at sea, was even a more significant and striking warning that the era of facile victories in Asia had ended; since never before in all history had an Asiatic navy won a great sea-fight against European fleets. That the unquiet spirit, which from these general causes has been spreading over the Eastern Continent, should be particularly manifest in countries under European Governments is not unnatural; it inevitably roused the latent dislike of foreign rule, with which a whole people is never entirely content" (Vide Valentine Chirol's *Indian Unrest*, London, 1910, pp. IX—X). The grim struggle of the Boers against the British and the Chinese boycott of American goods had also an inspiring effect on our nationalist and patriotic sentiments. A close study of the facts and phenomena of the Indian Freedom Movement of the Swadeshi days tends to confirm the conviction that it is not so much from the memory of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 as from other sources and quarters that the national movement of that time had drawn its

real sustenance and vitality. The exact influence of the distorted but sanctified memory of the Mutiny as a feeder of India's Freedom Movement still remains to be factually demonstrated before one can honestly accept Dr. Majumdar's contention to the point as a valid proposition of sober history. But in other essential respects the major propositions expressed in his work on *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857* are substantially correct and, therefore, eminently acceptable. Dr. Sashi Bhusan Chaudhury's work on *The Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies,* howsoever meritorious on other grounds, is fundamentally defective as a criticism of Dr. Majumdar's major contentions on the rising of 1857 (Vide: *Itihas* quarterly, Vol. viii, No. I, Nov., 1957. Also see our paper on the rising of 1857 in the *Modern Review* for Sept., 1957).

THE INDIGO AGITATION OF 1860

The next landmark in the growth of our nascent nationalism was represented by the Indigo Agitation which deeply stirred the Eastern provinces of British India, particularly Bengal, in 1860. Prof. H. C. Chakladar records in an illuminating article that "three or four millions of our countrymen in Bengal were subjected by European Indigo-planters to a system of inhuman oppression which finds a parallel in the annals of Negro-slavery in America." At the end of the 18th century, the indigo industry was transported into India from the West Indies by the European planters. Dr. N. K. Sinha informs us that a Frenchman Louis Bonnard was perhaps the first indigo planter in India (1777), and Carel Blume, a British merchant, was "the first person to introduce into Bengal this new source of wealth to the Company" in the year 1778 (Vide: Sinha's *Economic History of Bengal,* Vol. I, Calcutta, 1956, p. 195). "Every form of oppression that unrestrained tyranny could devise or the inventive imagination of rapacity could contrive, were put into practice by the Indigo-planters. The criminal records of

Bengal from the time that indigo-cultivation was introduced into the province down to its final banishment, prove clearly and undeniably that murder, homicide, riot, arson, dacoity, plunder and kidnapping (Sir Ashley Eden) were some of the means by which the ryot was forced to take up the cultivation of indigo"*(8). In the 'fifties of the last century the tyranny of the planters became far worse and severer than ever. At last it provoked a wide-scale peasant upsurge,—the hunderds of thousands of peasants refusing to produce indigo any longer under the drillsergeant's cane of the European planters. What is more, thanks to the courageous exertions and self-sacrificing spirit of the Biswas brothers of Nadia, the ryots were almost on the point of breaking out into "open acts of resistance and violence". Speaking on that explosive situation of 1860, Lord Canning observed: "I assure you that for about a week it caused me more anxiety than I have had since the days of Delhi and from that day I felt that a shot fired in anger or fear by one foolish planter might put every factory in Lower Bengal in flames". But the people did not resort to violence and and revenge upon the planters. The educated middle class that stood indifferent or opposed to the rising of 1857 identified themselves wholly with the cause of the suffering peasantry in 1860. This shows that the educated middle class of Bengal did not lack in progressive political consciousness at that time. The popular agitation found its powerful champions in men like Monmohan Ghose and Sisir Kumar Ghose as well as in Hurish Chandra Mukherjee who waged a regular crusade against the oppression of the planters through the columns of his

*(8) H. C. Chakladar's paper on "Fifty Years Ago: The Woes of a Class of Bengal Peasantry under European Indigo-Planters" (**The Dawn Magazine**, July, 1905, Part I). Also see **Minutes of Evidence** taken before **The Indigo Commission** of 1860, as presented in J. Ghoshal's **Celebrated Trials in India**, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1902, pp. 7-58.

powerful weekly, the *Hindu Patriot*. The memory of the indigo-agitation still lives in Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nildarpan*, "which played the same part in the popular movement as did *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the movement against slave labour". According to Hemendra Prasad Ghose, the agitation against the oppression of the indigo planters "assumed the proportions of the first 'Satyagraha' in India." The agitation of 1860 mightily stimulated our patriotic and national self-consciousness and revealed the tyrannical system of the alien government in its grimmer aspects. (For a more elaborate discussion on this point readers' attention may be here drawn to the *Appendices*).

ACTIVITIES OF THE "HINDU MELA," 1867-1880

The next stage in the evolution of our national consciousness was reached in 1867 with the foundation of the *Hindu Mela* which was a conference of the nationalists. Its life and soul was Nabagopal Mitra, who was so much suffused with the national spirit that he earned the nickname of "National Nabagopal". Its annual session was held up till 1880, as Jogesh Chandra Bagal informs us *(9). Among its chief patrons and promoters the names of Rajnarayan Bose, Ganendra Nath Tagore, Satyendra Nath Tagore, Dwijendra Nath Tagore, Jyotirindra Nath Tagore, Monmohan Bose and Sisir Kumar Ghose deserve special mention. In fact, everybody who was anybody in Bengal at that time was connected with it either as a participant member or as an associate of the conference which marked a reaction against the Young Bengal Movement of the 'fifties of the last century. The ideological origin of this conference was in the imaginative vision of Rajnarayan Bose who, while working as the Headmaster in the

*(9) Vide: J. C. Bagal's work on **Jatiyater Nabamantra** or the History of the Hindu Mela (Cal., 1945).

Midnapore Government School, threw himself heart and soul into the Temperance Movement directed against the vices of drink among the educated youths—a moral movement initiated in the early 'sixties by Peary Charan Sircar. Surendra Nath Banerjea records in his autobiography that "a temperance movement for the protection of the young was a real necessity at that time" *(10). Rajnarayan Bose, a deep scholar with saintly character, was a constructive genius. He wanted to restore to our youngmen the confidence that they had lost in themselves and in their own heritage. He founded in 1866 the Society for the Promotion of National Feeling among the Educated Natives of Bengal in Midnapore and issued a manifesto in which he emphasised the urgent necessity of carrying on an organised movement for the fostering of the national spirit. In that manifesto he observed: "Now that European ideas have penetrated Bengal, the Bengalee mind has been moved from the sleep of ages. A restless fermentation is going on in Bengalee society. A desire for change and progress is everywhere visible. People discontented with old customs and institutions are panting for reform. Already a band of young men have expressed a desire to sever themselves at once from Hindu society and to renounce even the Hindu name. It is to be feared that the tide of revolution may sweep away whatever good we have inherited from our ancestors. To prevent this catastrophe and to give a national shape to reforms, it is proposed that a Society be established by the influential members of native society for the promotion of national feeling among the educated natives of Bengal. Without due cultivation of national feeling, no nation can be eventually great. This is a fact testified to by all history".

It is on the basis of this new ideology that the *Hindu Mela* was organised in Calcutta in 1867 by

*(10) S. N. Banerjea: **A Nation in Making** (London, 1925, p. 7).

Nabagopal Mitra. In its *milieu* were set up the national press, the national paper, the national gymnasium etc. The first great service that the *Hindu Mela* rendered to the country was to stimulate national consciousness in the countrymen, and by the expression "countrymen" the organisers of the conference meant Indians, not Bengalis alone. Perhaps for the first time the idea of one pan-Indian nation was boldly conceived and advocated by the leaders of the *Hindu Mela.* Thus ideologically speaking, the *Hindu Mela* was the precursor both of the Indian Association (founded in 1876) and the Indian National Congress (founded in 1885) in its constructive conception of a pan-Indian nation, which became a dynamic reality in the realm of action only many decades afterwards.

The second service rendered by the *Hindu Mela* was the advocacy of the cult of self-help as an instrument of national welfare and progress. All constructive work for the regeneration of the country was to be carried on by the people themselves, without constantly looking for governmental aid or support. Self-reliance and self-might were considered as essential factors which go to the making of the manhood of a nation. The cult of self-development through self-help or *Atma-Shakti* was to find later in Bankim, Vivekananda and Rabindranath some of its greatest exponents.

The third great service rendered by the *Hindu Mela* was to awaken an interest in the people of our country in favour of indigenous arts, crafts and industries. Home-made products were carefully collected from different regions and placed on exhibition annually. The importance of holding of the industrial exhibitions which were later to become an important part of the Congress sessions was thus anticipated by the leaders of the *Hindu Mela.* Be it noted here that Jogesh Chandra Chaudhury was the man "who first started an Industrial Exhibition of Swadeshi articles as an annexe to the Indian National Congress. That was in 1896, and a similar exhibition on a much larger scale was again held under his manage-

ment in 1906, in connexion with the Calcutta Congress of that year" *(11).

The fourth, and in a sense the greatest, contribution of the *Hindu Mela* was the impulse of inspiration lent by it to the growth of a distinct class of national literature in Bengal. When the *Hindu Mela* was held year by year, it served as a platform for the patriotically-minded people to come together and discuss matters of national interests together. At its annual session thronged together poets, authors, thinkers, artists, essayists and publicists in large numbers. National poems were read out, national songs were sung and speeches on national themes were delivered. It is to be borne in mind that in the background of the *Hindu Mela* national songs in modern India were first composed and set to music. The first national song was composed by Satyendra Nath Tagore for the Mela in 1868 and sung in chorus. Its opening lines were

"মিলে সব ভারত সন্তান
এক তান মনঃ প্রাণ ;
গাহ ভারতের যশোগান।"

or

"Sons of India sing the glory of the
land that gave you birth;
Sing with heart and soul accorded
of her greatness and her worth."

It was a very inspiring national song of those days and was followed in quick stages by the composition of many others which together powerfully fed and encouraged our patriotic sentiments. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94), the Prophet of Indian Nationalism, was moved to warmest feelings of admiration for this poem over which his ecstatic raptures are still living in the

*(11) **Vide: A Nation in Making**, p. 198.

pages of *Bangadarshan**(12). His epoch-making national song—*Bande Mataram*—was composed many years after Satyendranath's national poem of 1868. It may be recalled that some of the best national songs of Gaganendra Nath Tagore, Dwijendra Nath Tagore, Monmohan Bose were first composed and sung in the background of the *Hindu Mela.* Young Rabindranath, then in his teens, also read out two poems, composed by himself, before this conference of the nationalists, in 1875 and 1877 respectively. His first national poem was entitled "Hindu Melar Upahar". Thus the ideas and activities of the *Hindu Mela* worked as formative forces in Bengal during 1867-1880 and imparted a new tone of morality and intellectuality into our public life. About this movement which may be called "the National", Rabindranath in his essay on "The Religion of an Artist" has observed: "It was not fully political, but it began to give voice to the mind of our people trying to assert their own personality. It was a voice of impatience at the humiliation constantly heaped upon us by people who were not oriental, and who had, especially at that time, the habit of sharply dividing the human world into the good and the bad according to the hemispheres to which they belong. This contemptuous spirit of separatedness was perpetually hurting us and causing great damage to our own world of culture. It generated in our young men a distrust of all things that had come to them as an inheritance from their past. The national movement was started to proclaim that we must not be indiscriminate in our rejection of the past. This was not a reactionary movement but a revolutionary one, because it set out with a great courage to deny and to oppose all pride in mere borrowings"*(13).

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*(12) Vide: **Bangadarshan,** Chaitra, 1270: Review of Rajnarayan Bose's **Hindu Dharmer Shresthata** or the Superiority of the Hindu Religion.

*(13) Vide: **The Contemporary Indian Philosophy** edited by

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIAN PRESS, 1835-1882

A very important factor in the growth of Indian nationalism was the birth and development of the Indian Press. It was an important fruit of the progress of English education in India. "Under the Company," writes Prof. Dodwell, "the Anglo-Indian press alone was of importance; but in the fulness of time, an Indian press grew up, both English and vernacular, which set to work, as Munro had foreseen, to make the country uneasy under its foreign yoke. It uniformly attacked the Government, sometimes with great bitterness. At first this was in itself of small importance. The Indian journals were at the beginning for the most part unsuccessful experiments. The reading public were too small and poor to make journalism profitable; and the commercial value of the advertisement was as yet little recognised. Consequently the Indian journals were, with a few exceptions, short-lived and little read. But since the second half of the 19th century, Indian journalism was acquiring a power and a force"*(14). Hurish Chandra Mukherjee who was the editor of the *Hindu Patriot,* has been described by G. Paramaswaran Pillai, the famous journalist of Madras, as "the first native journalist of any note in India". "Hurish Chandra Mukherjee", observes Mr. Pillai, "was the father of native journalism in India. He was the first to make his countrymen feel the influence of a newspaper". It is commonly believed that Hurishchandra was the founder of this weekly, but this is not correct. In 1853 "three brothers, Srinath Ghose, Girish Chunder Ghose and Khetna Chunder Ghose, started a newspaper called the *Hindu Patriot,* which was issued under their joint editorship, at a press in the Bara Bazar,

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S. Radhakrishnan and J. H. Muirhead (London, 1936).

*(14) Vide: **A Sketch of the History of India,** 1858-1918 by Dodwell (London, 1925, pp. 246-259).

owned by Madhu Sudan Roy. They were assisted by Hurish Chunder Mukerji. The Ghose brothers gradually neglected their work, and the entire task of editing the paper fell on Hurish Chunder Mukerji"*(15). By 1854 Hurish Chandra "obtained complete possession of the paper", purchased a press of his own and called it the *Hindu Patriot Press,* and appointed his brother Haran Chunder Mukherji, as the "Manager and ostensible proprietor of it."

Hurish Chandra Mukherji as a journalist will ever be remembered as a shining example of independent journalism, regardless of the smiles and frowns of the alien bureaucracy. In 1856 when the widow-remarriage question was a burning topic of discussion, he unreservedly addressed himself to the cause of reform. Lord Dalhousie's policy of annexation was strongly criticised by him. In 1857, the Mutiny year, he "defended strenuously the policy of Lord Canning, and played the part of peace-maker between the native soldiers and the Government. The Anglo-Indian press and the European community counselled the Viceroy to dispossess all landowning classes of their lands and make them over to Europeans and avenge in other ways the organisers of the bloody rebellion. But Lord Canning, nicknamed 'Clemency Canning', stood all unmoved, and to no small extent did Hurish Chunder Mukerji contribute to that firm determination, by writing, week after week, a series of articles interpreting the true relation of the ruled with the rulers"*(16). But even a greater service was rendered by him in 1860—the year of the Indigo crisis. In that memorable struggle between the European planters and the native ryots, Hurishchandra, with the greatest devotion and courage, stood on the side of the peasants and gave utterance to their mute sufferings and exposed the grim oppression of the planters through the columns of his journal.

*(15) G. P. Pillai: **Representative Indians** (London, 1897. p. 44).

*(16) Vide: **Representative Indians,** p. 45.

During the hour of that historic crisis, he not only gave courage to their souls, and drafted on their behalf reasoned-out petitions and memorials, "but even fed, clothed and protected them". In 1860 the European planters filed both civil and criminal suits against him, and while the legal proceedings continued, he suddenly "died a pauper for the cause of his country".

Hurish Chandra Mukherji died very young at the age of thirty-six only. His death was mourned widely by the countrymen. His mantle in the editorial chair at the office of the *Hindu Patriot* devolved on the worthy shoulders of Kristo Das Pal under whom "native journalism developed into a power, and for the first time the British authorities consulted a native newspaper, with a view to ascertain the opinions of the people". Under his able editorship for long twenty three years the *Patriot* "assumed an importance which has seldom been attained by any newspaper in Bengal edited by a native of the country before or since". As a journalist he was well reputed for the "moderation of his views and the sobriety of his criticisms", but he came into "conflict" with the authorities on more than one occasion. In 1874 in a leading article in the *Patriot* viz, "Home Rule for India", he observed: "Our attention should, therefore, be directed to Home Rule for India, to the introduction of constitutional government for India in India...Most of the British colonies have been blessed with constitutional Government, but India is the only dependency which, despite the vastness of its area, its population and interests, is denied that privilege...If taxation and representation go hand in hand in all British colonies, why should this principle be ignored in British India?... Home Rule for India ought to be our cry, and it ought to be based upon the same constitutional basis that is recognised in the colonies"*(17). One should remember

*(17) Vide: H. P. Ghose's article in the **Calcutta Municipal Gazette**, Independence Number, 1947, p. 66.

that this Home Rule demand was raised by the *Hindu Patriot* of Kristo Das Pal, the organ of landholders, "ten years before the collective wisdom of the nation succeeded in founding the Indian National Congress after the controversy over the Ilbert Bill...It was not before 1906 —that with the bitter experience of the anti-partition agitation in Bengal with the Physical Force movement as its concomitant and the boycott as its weapon that this claim was put forward from the Congress platform"*(18). Thus under his able editorship, the *Patriot* became the leading native newspaper of the day. Mr. Ilbert, that famous member of the Viceroy's Council, once observed that Kristo Das Pal "by the readiness and versatility of his pen, by the patient industry which he displayed in mastering the details of the subjects with which he undertook to deal, by the fairness, breadth and moderation of his utterances", gradually and steadily advanced the reputation of the *Hindu Patriot* during his twenty three years of editorship and "raised it from a nearly moribund condition to the first place among native Indian journals". Kristodas was not only a powerful writer in English but also was an excellent debator and fluent speaker.

Next to the *Hindu Patriot* which was an English weekly, we are to mention the name of the *Indian Mirror* founded by Monmohan Ghose under the patronage of Debendra Nath Tagore in 1861. At first a fortnightly, then a weekly, this English journal afterwards changed into a daily paper. When Monmohan left for England, it came to be edited by Narendra Nath Sen under the influence of Keshab Chandra Sen. Although avowedly a paper for the propagation of the messages of Brahmoism which represented at that time advanced social and religious thought, yet it was often used as a vehicle for the discussion of other national problems, including politics.

*(18) H. P. Ghose: **The Newspaper in India**, Calcutta, 1952, p. 33.

The *Indian Mirror,* like the *Patriot,* served as the harbinger of social and political reform in the country. It remained for a long time "the only Indian-conducted English daily in Calcutta".

The next important native journal of Calcutta was the *Amrita Bazar Patrika,* founded in 1868 by Sisir Kumar Ghose, in order to carry on sustained political agitation in defence of Indian rights and liberties. At first it was a Bengali weekly. Then it became an Anglo-Bengali weekly and still later an English weekly. It was only on February 19, 1891 that it was converted into an English daily and has been functioning since then. In 1870, the *Patrika* made a passionate plea for the introduction of Western parliamentary institutions into India. Another journal of great importance was the *Bengalee* which was founded in 1861 as an English weekly. It was converted into Surendra Nath Banerjea's organ in 1879, which, under his able edtiorship, soon became the foremost exponent of Indian nationalism. The journalistic attacks on the British administration of India became prominent during the Viceroyalty of Lord Northbrooke (1872-76). That "theatrical personality", Lord Lytton (1876-1879), who was Northbrooke's successor in the office of the Viceroy determined to alter the Press law which had remained unchanged since the time of Metcalfe (1835). "Under Lord William Bentinck", writes Hemendra Prasad Ghose, "the Press was never seriously molested. Lord William was succeeded by Sir Charles Metcalfe who had always been an advocate of the freedom of the Press and instructed Macaulay, Legislative Member, to draft an Act to confer freedom on the Press in India". The result of this step was the Act No. XI of 1835 passed on the 3rd August, 1835*(19) in the teeth of indignant protests from the servants of the Company. Metcalfe's decree which amounted to a recognition of the freedom of the

*(19) Vide: H. P. Ghose's **Press and Press Laws in India** (Calcutta, 1930, pp. 15-19).

Press in India was strongly disapproved by the Directors of the Company, and the Governor-General was obliged to retire from the service to vindicate his prestige.

Notwithstanding the formal disapproval of Metcalfe's action with regard to the freedom of the Indian Press, "for twenty years and more it was not considered necessary to fetter it". Speaking of this intervening period, John Bruce Norton wrote the following lines: "As a whole, the Press of India is conducted wtih singular ability; and it is astonishing to mark the giant strides with which it has advanced within the last few years. It discusses all topics with an ability which, looking back a few years, was scarcely to be anticipated. The existence of a free Press is incompatible with a despotism, however paternal"*(20). As the growth of native Indian Press was becoming in the 'fifties an insistent reality, Lord Canning in the Mutiny year passed a Press Act—Act XV of 1857—which "temporarily placed the Indian Press very much in the position in which it had been before Sir Charles Metcalfe's Government in 1835 passed Act XI of that year". The Act made no distinction between the English and the Indian Press and the duration of that Act was confined to one year only. Mr. Norton sounded a note of warning to his fellow-countrymen in England in observing: "Let them depend upon it, that this attack upon the Press is in reality intended to screen the cowardice and incapacity of the real authors of the revolution. Lord Canning's arm may have dealt the blow, but there is a power behind which directed the arm. It is not that the crisis necessitated the measure; but that the crisis has been seized as the fittest moment for striking a long meditated blow at the Press, and gratifying a grudge of ancient standing. Political capital has been made out of the bloodshed in the North-West".

In spite of the restrictions imposed by law on the Press in India in general, the native Indian Press

*(20) Vide: **The Rebellion in India** (London, 1857).

acquired increasing strength in the period intervening between 1857 and 1878. The constant attacks of the native Press on Government's policy and action led Lord Lytton in 1878 to pass the Press Act of that year on the 14th of March. Its main purpose was to place vernacular newspapers of India under effective official control. Prof. Dodwell observes: "As the English-reading Indians were still few in number, and as the English violence of Indian journals might be more or less counteracted by the Anglo-Indian papers, some of which had a considerable Indian circulation, Lytton decided to leave them alone, but to impose restrictions on the papers published in the vernaculars, first, because their readers would probably be relatively uneducated and so specially liable to be deceived; secondly, because they would not have the Anglo-Indian papers as an antidote; and thirdly, because the vernacular papers appealed or threatened to appeal to the great mass of the people on whose consent rested the stability of Government. Accordingly, Lytton's Act—the Vernacular Press Act, passed in 1878—empowered a collector or a magistrate to require the editor of any paper written in an oriental language either to give a bond not to publish objectionable matter or to submit his proof-sheets before publication." The exemption of the Anglo-Indian papers from the operation of the press gagging law was not only political in motive, but was also a reflection of the inviduous racial distinction. Hemendra Prasad Ghose is right in stressing: "It was on a par with the racial discrimination which had been recognised in the law courts also where European accused were entitled to especial privileges" *(21). The *Amrita Bazar Patrika,* which was up till then, printed in both vernacular and English, practically evaded the new law by changing itself into an English weekly; and "the change", writes Mr. W. S. Caine, "was effected in a single day, with the help of borrowed type, a very

*(21) Vide: **Press and Press Laws in India,** p. 29-30.

remarkable feat of journalism". Evidently the reactionary character of the Indian Vernacular Press Act was viewed with strong disfavour and resentment by large sections of educated Indians, and the haste and secrecy with which the whole proceedings were conducted to a conclusion received condemnation from Gladstone in the British House of Commons (July 23, 1878). The passage of this Act, howsoever galling to Indian aspirations, signifies the deeper truth that the Indian Press had become in the 'seventies of the last century a great political force working in defence of Indian legitimate rights. Four years later the reactionary Press Act was repealed under Lord Ripon in 1882, a momentous step which led to the steady development of the independent Press in India. Hardly anything played a more valuable and creative role "in developing nationalism in the country, creating a common conception of collective responsibility and making a homogeneous nation from heterogeneous hordes"*(22).

GROWTH OF NATIONAL LITERATURE, 1858-1893

Side by side with the development of the independent Indian Press, there took place a simultaneous growth of what may be called 'national literature'. This feature was most prominently manifest in Bengal in the second half of the 19th century. If the first half is appraised as the period of rationalism and classicism in the domain of Bengali literature, the second half may be justly called the epoch of romanticism and nationalism in culture. The classical period (1815-57) was in the main universal in sentiments, but with the romanticists "humanity is more or less replaced by the nation, Bengali, Indian. The call of the motherland furnishes a new *elan de la vie*. Bengal becomes a reality. India becomes a reality and a living force. Nationalism is established as a religion, as a

*(22) Vide: **The Newspaper in India**, p. 1.

spiritual entity"*(23). The early pioneers of this new tradition included men like Rangalal, Madhusudan, Bankimchandra, Hemchandra and Nabinchandra. The wave of romanticism-*cum*-nationalism was then carried forward by Rabindranath and Vivekananda in the late nineteenth century and continued into the following one.

Iswar Chandra Gupta (1821-59) was essentially a poet of reason and realism, secularism and humanism, notwithstanding his occasional bias for theology, god-lore and religiosity. He stood in symbolic relations to the passions and tendencies of the age. He was the last of the old giants and the first of the new. After Iswar Gupta flourished Rangalal Banerjee (1827-1887) whose poetry broke away right from the old tradition in literary technique and breathed a spirit of romanticism. He was the first Bengali poet in whom the earliest traces of romanticism were noticeable. His *Padminir-Upakhyana* (1858) represented a marked deviation from classical influences and betrayed romantic trends. Again, Rangalal was the first Benagli poet who advocated conscious adoption, assimilation or even imitation of English poetic art and technique. On him the influence of Byron, Scott and Moore was prominent. In the fervour of patriotism, he was at one with the spirit of Iswar Gupta. But the special feature in Rangalal was his freedom-urge or love for the country's independence which acquired great prominence in his poetry. For all practical purposes, he laid the foundations of what may be called modern Bengali poetry and started an epoch of epic-writings which were continued by Madhusudan (1824-73), Hemchandra (1838-1903) and Nabinchandra (1847-1909).

Rangalal's successor was Madhusudan Datta who published his *Meghnad-vad Kavya* in 1861. In it he introduced the blank verse whose English pioneer was Milton and broke down the fetters of old rhyme and laid

*(23) Indira Sarkar: **Social Thought in Bengal**, 1757-1947 (Calcutta, 1949, p. 89).

the foundations of new poetic norms and technique. In Madhusudan's poetry we find the most powerful impact of Western ideologies since the time of Iswar Gupta. A rebel child of Bengal, he was at the same time a symbolic product of nationalism of the time. But the predominant note of his poetry was the spirit of individualism which invaded the literary field in a significant way.

Madhusudan was followed by Hemchandra Banerjee and Nabin Chandra Sen who were also creative poets of that age. When Madhusudan died in 1873, Bankimchandra feelingly expressed his consolation in the sheer fact that Bengal had still a great poet in Hemchandra to boast of. Among their contemporaries, both Hemchandra and Nabinchandra enjoyed as poets a kind of unique prestige and they together dominated the stage of Bengali poetry in the eighties and nineties of the last century. Hemchandra's *Vritrasanhar* (1875-77) is a dedication to Indian nationalism. The voice of patriotism or intense nationalism thus became louder in Hemchandra than in any of his great predecessors in poetry. His *Bharat Sangit, Bharat Vilap* and *Bharat-Bhiksha* also breathe the same spirit (Vide: *Sahitya-Sadhak Charitmala,* Vol. III).

A contemporary of Hemchandra, Nabin Sen emerged into prominence as the poet of *Palasir Juddha* (1875)—a historical drama of great national interest. It was calculated to kindle in his countrymen the spirit of nationalism with which was organically linked up the ideology of national freedom. Wielding a powerful pen, he was now writing on Jesus Christ, then translating the Gita and again turning to make a Bengali version of *Markandya Chandi.* One absorbing motive ran through all his works and that was to restore Hinduism in its pristine glory and to revive in the mind of his countrymen a lasting respect for national glory. He reinterpreted the story of the Mahabharata and that of the great war of Kurukshetra in his epic of three volumes, separately known as " রৈবতক " (1887), " কুরুক্ষেত্র " (1893) and " প্রভাস " (1896). The three volumes together formed a

masterly creation of Nabin's poetic genius,—the Mahabharata of the nineteenth century. In it we find a passionate yearning of Nabin for the reconciliation of the contending peoples of India and unifying them into one mighty nation under the banner of Krishna who was painted anew to satisfy modern requirements. His conception of Krishna was that of a superman, not as a divinity as traditionally conceived. His epic created a stir in the Bengali society and did much in restoring for Hinduism a respect in the country. But Nabin's mind was not out and out revivalist. In him one also encounters the impact of the ideologies of democracy, socialism and feminism of the Victorian Age in a most conspicuous manner.

The same theme, Krishna and his teachings, was endowed with a new orientation at the hands of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the poet of *Bande Mataram* and the Prophet of new Indian nationalism. His "কৃষ্ণচরিত্র" (1886) and "ধর্ম্মতত্ত্ব" (1888) were some of the masterpieces of the Bengali literature and in them Bankim propounded in modern garb the ideologies of the Gita and the Mahabharata in a palpably creative manner. His Krishna was his own creation, the superman or the ideal man of all ages. But it is a mistake to conceive of Bankim as merely an exponent of Hindu revivalism. Like Nabin or like every body who had been anybody in Bengali culture since Rammohun, Bankim was also a fine blend of East-West culture-systems. In him have met not merely the ideas of the Gita and the Mahabharata, but also the ideologies of social service, positivism, and anti-theocratic rationalism as generated by French Comte and popularised by British Mill.

Bankim was a hydra-headed genius of his times and his services to the national cause can hardly be exaggerated. His first great publication *Durgeshnandini* (1865) marked a genuine improvement in literary technique on the older prose-style of Vidyasagar. He revolutionised, as it were, the themes and technique of Bengali prose-

writing in a profoundly creative manner. He eschewed the middle path, avoiding at once the heavy chaste of Vidyasagar on the one hand and the vulgar colloquial forms of Tekchand Thakur on the other. The foundation of *Bangadarshan* in 1872 was an epoch-making event in the history of our national literature, and for that matter, in the history of Indian nationalism. He was not only the most powerful writer of his age, but was also the creator of a formidable literary tradition with which the names of Dinabandhu Mitra, Hemchandra Banerjee, Nabin Chandra Sen, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Akshay Chandra Sarkar, Chandrasekhar Mukherjee, Krishna Kamal Bhattacharyya, Jogendra Nath Vidyabhusan, Rajkrishna Mukherjee, Chandra Nath Bose, Sanjiv Chandra Chatterjee, Haraprasad Sastri, Rajani Kanta Gupta and Ramdas Sen were associated as creative factors. Bankim towered above them all as a literary genius and a nation-builder. His *Debi-Chaudhurani, Rajani* and *Sitaram* were ideologically wedded to Gitaism multiplied by Comtism. His *Anandamath* (1882), containing the soul-stirring patriotic song of *Bande Mataram,* breathes the spirit of the nationalism of Mazzini, the categorial imperative of the Gita and the social service or the positivism of Comte. With him patriotism was the supreme religion and the *Bande Mataram* anthem was surcharged with that spirit. He was perhaps the first of our countrymen who could properly see through the futility and hollowness of the prevailing method of political agitation and held it to ridicule in his *Lokarahashya* and *Kamalakanter Daptar.* He was styled "Rishi" in the Swadeshi days by Aurobindo (1907) who appraised Bankim's foremost contributions as consisting in the creation of "a language, a literature and a nation"*(24). Writing in the *Bande Mataram* in April 1907, Aurobindo observed: "No nation can grow without finding a fit and

*(24) Sri Aurobindo: **Bankim Chandra Chatterjee** (Pondichery, 1954, p. 50).

satisfying medium of expression for the new self into which it is developing—without a language which shall give permanent shape to its thoughts and feelings and carry every new impulse swiftly and triumphantly into the consciousness of all. It was Bankim's first great service to India that he gave the race which stood in its vanguard such a perfect and satisfying medium...As. he had divined the linguistic need of his country's future, so he divined also its political need. He, first of our great publicists, understood the hollowness and inutility of the method of political agitation which prevailed in his time and exposed it with merciless satire in his *Lokarahasya* and *Kamalakanter Dapter.* But he was not satisfied merely with destructive criticism,—he had a positive vision of what was needed for the salvation of the country. He saw that the force from above must be met by a mightier reacting force from below,—the strength of repression by an insurgent national strength. The religion of patriotism,—this is the master idea of Bankim's writings. This is the second great service of Bankim to this country that he pointed out to it the way of salvation and gave it the religion of patriotism. Of the new spirit which is leading the nation to resurgence and independence, he is the inspirer and political guru. The third and supreme service of Bankim to his nation was that he gave us the vision of our Mother. The mantra had been given and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism. A great nation which has had that vision can never again bend its neck in subjection to the yoke of a conqueror"*(25).

It need be added that towards the close of the 19th century Rabindranath, although junior by a generation to Bankim as well as Hem and Nabin, was also leaping into prominence as a creator of "values" in Bengali literature. A product of the time of 'Hindu Mela', a son

*(25) Vide: **Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda** (Calcutta, 1947, pp. 9-13).

of the renowned Tagore family, a literary disciple of Bankim and Hemchandra, Rabindranath in his youth was naturally suffused with burning nationalism. Like Bankim, he was also an advocate of the cult of "Atma-Shakti" and a pronounced hater of begging concessions and reforms from the alien ruler. This attitude was clearly revealed in his essay on "The English and the Indians" (ইংরেজ ও ভারতবাসী) read out in a meeting held in the Chaitanya Library, Calcutta, in 1893, with Bankim Chatterjee in the chair. Among his numerous publications of the late 19th century, his *Europe-Pravasir Patra* (1881), *Sandhya-Sangit* (1882), *Probhat Sangit* (1883), *Europe-Jatrir Diary* (1891-93) not only opened up new world of ideas, but also served to heighten the patriotic consciousness of the Bengalees.

In the list of senior poets and artists of the late 19th century, the names of Dwijendralal Roy and Girish Chandra Ghosh can hardly be ignored. D. L. Roy's national songs and poems filled the Bengalees with immense patriotic pride. Girischandra shone in solitary greatness as the master of the Bengali stage. At his hands Bengali drama received its modern shape and character. At home with the Mahabharata, the Ramanaya and the Purans as well as with the art-ideals and technique of Shakespeare and Moliere, Girischandra could wield his pen as easily as conceivable. Although an artist above all, his literary creations made a stirring appeal to the national sentiments of the people. Thus a new class of literature, justly called national, was springing up in the country, chronicling our hopes and aspirations and directing our steps to national self-realization.

BRAHMO SAMAJ AND KESHABCHANDRA

While literature was reflecting our national aspirations, cultural and political associations also were making their contributions to our awakening. The Brahmo Samaj under Keshabchandra's leadership became an all-

India organisation and while making direct contributions of paramount importance to the socio-religious field, it also did indirectly contribute to the growth of our political consciousness. Keshab Chandra Sen "first made use of the platform for public addresses and revealed the power of oratory over the Indian mind". His addresses in the 'sixties created a profound impression on young minds. "They", observes Surendranath, "drew large audiences. There was a visible religious awakening. His marvellous oratory, set forth with all the accessories of a sonorous voice, a noble diction and a commanding presence, and inspired by the fervour of a deep and burning conviction, fascinated his hearers. I was often at his meetings and listened with breathless attention and ever-increasing admiration"*(26). His visit to England in 1870, although undertaken on a specific religious mission, made immense contributions to our political consciousness. His fame as the most articulate voice of Young India had already reached England where he was "literarlly lionised by every section of the British people" from the highest to the humblest classes. "Keshab's mission to England", writes Bipin Chandra Pal in his autobiography, "though it was not distinctly political, reacted very powerfully upon the awakening political consciousness of the Indian people. His success in England raised the entire educated community in India in their own estimation and very considerably strengthened the new sense of conceit of their intellectual and moral equality with the members of the alien ruling race in their country. The political freedom movement inaugurated by Ananda Mohan Bose and Surendra Nath Banerjee through the Indian Association owed its psychological origin to the ideal of freedom organised in the Brahmo Samaj and the new national self-confidence and self-consciousness quickened by the English visit of the Brahmo Minister"*(27).

*(26) **A Nation in Making**, p. 6.
*(27) **My Life and Times**, Vol. II, pp. xxix-xxx.

POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS OF THE EDUCATED INDIANS

This national consciousness was sure to produce a conflict with the alien government in due course. The English-educated middle class was steadily increasing in numbers and coming to its own in the 'seventies and 'eighties'. The passage of that Act in 1853 which recognised the principle of competitive examination as the basis of all appointments in the Covenanted Service of the Company was a significant step. Indian youths took advantage of this provision. Satyendra Nath Tagore was the first Indian Civilian; the second batch included Surendra Nath Banerjee, Romesh Chandra Dutt and Bihari Lal Gupta all of whom came out successfully in the Open Competitive Examination for the Indian Civil Service in 1869. "The simultaneous admission of three Bengalee youngmen into the Indian Civil Service was, therefore, something of a rude awakening to many members of this Service. It was really the inauguration of a new movement among us to enter Civil Service in increasing numbers and thereby gradually take charge of the administration of our country into our own hands. This was naturally viewed as an attack on British authority and prestige by many members of the Civil Service. This created, therefore, a new conflict between the Government and our educated middle class"*(28). This conflict between Indian aspirations and British prestige came out most glaringly in the trial and dismissal of Surendranath on utterly unjust grounds from Civil Service. It was viewed by Indian educated classes "as an attack upon their rights as equal subjects of the Britannic Majesty" and a flagrant violation of the declared policy of the Queen's Proclamation of November, 1858. Surendranath's case provoked strong feeling of resentment and indignation in the educated classes throughout India and was generally believed in this country that, if he were

*(28) **My Life and Times**, Vol. II, p. xviii-xix.

not an Indian, he would have been spared all the troubles and humiliation at the official doors. "This", observes Bipin Chandra Pal, "was the beginning of our political conflict under British rule, which was the parent of our new political freedom movement".

SURENDRANATH'S DISMISSAL FROM CIVIL SERVICE, 1875

Surendranath's dismissal from the Indian Civil Service was a great boon to the nation. His success in the departmental examinations, while posted at Sylhet, was the cause of his official ruin. "In the iron grip of ruin", says Surendranath, "I had already formed some forecast of the work that was awaiting me in life. I felt that I had suffered because I was an Indian, a member of a community that lay disorganised, had no public opinion, and no voice in the counsels of their Government. I felt with all the passionate warmth of youth that we were helots, hewers of wood and drawers of water in the land of our birth. The personal wrong done to me was an illustration of the helpless impotency of our people. In the midst of impending ruin and dark, frowning misfortune, I formed the determination of addressing myself to the task of helping our helpless people in this direction of redressing our wrongs and protecting our rights, both as individuals and as a nation" *(29). After futile attempts to redress his personal wrong in England, he came back home in June, 1875 and was at once appointed Professor of English in the Metropolitan Institution by Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar.

THE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION, 1875

Surendranath took advantage of this opportunity and sought by every possible means to rouse the patriotic

*(29) **A Nation in Making**, pp. 32-33.

consciousness among the students. The Students' Association had already been organised in Calcutta by Ananda Mohan Bose on his return from Cambridge in early 1875, of which he was the President. Surendranath now became its most active member. At Surendranath's hands, the Students' Association became before long a dynamic institution. He felt that the political progress of our country very largely depended upon our youths, upon the creation of a "genuine, sober and rational interest" in public affairs and movements. "The beginnings of public life must be implanted in them. They, must, on the one hand, be stirred out of their indifference to politics, which was the prevailing attitude of the student-mind in Bengal in 1875, and on the other, protected against extreme fanatical views, which, as all history shows, are fraught with peril in their pursuit". Surendranath was, therefore, determined to kindle in the young minds a new spirit and temper suitable to the new age. He delivered lectures in Calcutta, Uttarpara, Kidderpore and other places on such subjects as Indian Unity, the Study of History, the Life of Mazzini and the Life of Chaitanya. He was a passionate speaker and his lectures were greedily devoured by the student community. Amongst those who regularly or frequently attended his meetings in those days may be mentioned the names of Bipin Chandra Pal, Narendra Nath Datta and Byomkesh Chakravarti. In fact, the graduates and under-graduates of those days were drawn to the Students' Association under Surendranath's magnetic spell. Thanks to his idealism and the power of his flashing oratory, a veritable youth movement, wedded to the cult of freedom and nationalism, was organised in this province.

Surendranath's first lecture from the platform of the Students' Association was held in the Hindu School Theatre "On the Rise of the Sikh Power in the Punjab", and this lecture created a deep impression on his young listeners. Bipin Chandra Pal, a young man in his teens at that time, records in vivid language that "almost a

literal storm about the College Square was produced by Surendranath by a single lecture". "Our school text-books on Indian history," writes Bipinchandra, "did, no doubt, notice the story of the Sikhs in connection with Ranjit Singh. But these references had no inspiration for us. Surendranath for the first time presented the Sikh movement as really a movement of freedom, first, against the current ceremonialism and Brahminical domination of the Hindu community; second, against the oppression of the Moguls, who tried to crush a movement of religious and spiritual freedom by the organized brute force of an alien Government; and lastly, against British agression. Surendranath in his address exposed the unreliable character of British historians and painted in burning words the justice of the Sikh cause, the death-less devotion of the Sikh people to their *Khalsa* or Commonwealth and the signal defeats which they inflicted on the British at Chilianwala and Gujerat. This revelation of the history of the Sikhs made a very powerful appeal to our infant patriotism and lent new strength and even bitterness to the anti-British feeling that had already commenced to possess our youthful minds...Surendranath's position as the most powerful orator of his generation was at once established by this performance"*(30). His second lecture was on the life of Chaitanya at Bhowanipore and lent a mighty inspiration to the urge of freedom then growing in our youths. But the greatest and the most inspiring message was delivered by him through his lectures on Mazzini, the Prophet of the 19th century nationalism in Europe. Modern India owes its greatest debt of gratitude to Surendranath for his pioneering work among the students for the rousing of their political consciousness and kindling in them a fascination for public affairs. Since 1875 he remained the most articulate voice in Indian politics for decades to come.

*(30) **My Life and Times**, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1932, pp. 242-43).

FOUNDATION OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION, 1876

The next important step in the history of our national awakening was the Indian Association which functioned for many years as the voice and organ of the middle class aspirations. On his return from England in 1875, Surendranath felt the growing need for organising an association "to represent the views of the educated middle-class community and inspire them with a living interest in public affairs". The *Hindu Mela* which had been functioning since 1867 was certainly a nationalist conference, representing middle class aspirations. But it was not a permanent institution but a temporary conference, held annually, and even then its aspirations looked mild and modest in the changed and changing background. Its programme of work consisted mainly in the cultivation of patriotic sentiments and under its influence politics was very much mixed up with religion. Its composition also was all-too-Hindu in character, the Muslims being completely left out of account. To represent the rising political aspirations of the English-educated middle classes it was certainly a misfit. The Students' Association had mainly confined its work to the student community alone. True, there was the British Indian Association, which under Kristo Das Pal, "valiantly upheld the popular interests when necessary; but it was essentially and by its creed an Association of land-holders". Besides, active political agitation or the creation of public opinion by direct appeals to the people was no part of the British Indian Association's recognised programme. The foundation of a new institution on a popular and democratic basis was thus in high demand in the seventies of the last century. Even Kristo Das Pal, then working as Secretary of the British Indian Association, recognised the advisability of forming a new political body. Outside Bengal, there were the Bombay Presidency Association, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and the Madras Mahajana Sabha, but "these were

local bodies, representing more or less limited provincial or class interests. The growing educated middle class in the country, as much in Bengal as in the other provinces, who represented in a special sense and to a specially large degree the spirit of freedom and democracy inspired by the new education imparted through the Universities, were really without any organisation of their own before 1876. The Indian Association was the first to organise the political thoughts and sentiments of this growing educated middle-class directly in Bengal and indirectly outside this province also. The Indian Association was inspired from its very birth by the ideal of Indian Unity, and at once set to work to bring the educated intelligentia of the different Indian provinces upon one broad political platform" *(31).

SURENDRANATH AND CIVIL SERVICE AGITATION, 1876-78

The Indian Association was established on July 26, 1876 by Surendranath in collaboration with Ananda Mohon Bose and Dwaraka Nath Ganguli, with Ananda Mohon Bose as its Secretary and Akshay Chandra Sarkar as its Assistant Secretary, while Surendranath kept himself intentionally in the background in view of his recent removal from Government service. Surendranath Banerjea was, however, its moving spirit and he records in his autobiography that even at an early period of the Indian Association, it sought to realise certain well-defined ideals which embraced (1) "the creation of a strong body of public opinion in the country"; (2) "the unification of the Indian races and peoples upon the basis of common political interests and aspirations"; (3) "the promotion of friendly feeling between Hindus and Mohamedans", and (4) lastly, "the inclusion of the masses in the great public movements of the day" *(32). The

*(31) **My Life and Times**, Vol. I, pp. Viii-IX.
*(32) **A Nation in Making**, p. 42.

Association addressed itself from the very beginning to the realization of these ends, and Surendranath was the organ-voice of this institution. Within a year of its foundation an opportunity presented itself to the Indian Association for organising a country-wide movement. The occasion was the reduction of the maximum limit of age for the Open Competitive Examination for Indian Civil Service from twenty-one to nineteen years by the orders of the Marquis of Salisbury. The reduction was regarded "as a deliberate attempt to blast the prospects of Indian candidates for the Indian Civil Service". A great public meeting was held at the Calcutta Town Hall in March, 1877, attended by representatives from the whole of Bengal. Even Keshab Chandra Sen, "who had never in his life taken part in any political meeting", was persuaded to participate in the proceedings. The meeting was "one of the biggest public demonstrations" held in Calcutta and became "the forerunner of similar and even more crowded meetings" held all over India. Surendranath was appointed Special Delegate at this meeting to visit the different provinces and to organise public opinion against the measure, and thereby to awaken the spirit of unity and solidarity among the people of India. Accompanied by Nagendra Nath Chatterjee, Surendranath undertook his famous tour through Northern India in the summer of 1877. He visited the United Provinces and the Punjab where his fiery lectures instilled a new political consciousness into the people. Crowded public meetings were held at Agra, Lahore, Amritsar, Meerut, Allahabad, Delhi, Cawnpore, Lucknow, Aligarh and Benares, at which the Calcutta Resolutions and the Civil Service Memorial were adopted, and whereever possible branch Indian Associations were also started. "Thus a net of organisations was started, and the foundations were well and truly laid, as subsequent events fully proved, for united and concerted action among our representative men, over an area extending from Calcutta to Lahore". The movement for concerted action

received a further impetus in 1878 when Surendranath undertook his tour through Western and Southern India. He visited Bombay, Surat and Ahmedabad where Civil Service meetings were organised and the Calcutta Resolutions adopted. He then returned to Bombay, from Bombay he proceeded to Poona, from Poona to Madras. Crowded meetings were held wherever he went, except Madras where also at a conference of leading men the Calcutta Memorials and Resolutions were accepted. "For the first time under British rule, India, with its varied races and religions, had been brought upon the same platform for a common and united effort. Thus was it demonstrated, by an object-lesson of impressive significance, that, whatever might be our difference in respect of race and language, or social and religious institutions, the people of India could combine and unite for the attainment of their common political ends. The lesson thus learnt was to be confirmed and deepened by subsequent events, and it found its culminating expression in the Congress movement. The ground was thus prepared for this great national and unifying movement". This proud summary of Surendranath's missionary tour by himself has also been corroborated by Bipin Chandra Pal in his autobiography. Sir Henry Cotton also in his *New India* has not failed to notice the deep significance of Surendranath's planned campaign for united action. He observed: "The educated classes are the voice and brain of the country. The Bengalee Babus now rule public opinion from Peshwar to Chittagong; and, although the natives of North-Western India are immeasurably behind those of Bengal in education and in their sense of political independence, they are gradually becoming as amenable as their brethren of the lower provinces to intellectual control and guidance. A quarter of a century ago there was no trace of this; the idea of any Bengalee influence in the Punjab would have been a conception incredible to Lord Lawrence, to a Montgomery, or a Macleod; yet it is the case that during the past year the tour of a

Bengalee lecturer, lecturing in English in Upper India, assumed the character of triumphal progress; and at the present moment the name of Surendra Nath Banerjea excites as much enthusiasm among the rising generation of Multan as in Dacca" *(33).

DEPUTATION OF LALMOHON GHOSE TO ENGLAND, 1879-80

The All-India Memorial on the Civil Service question was addressed to the British House of Commons. It contained a powerful plea for the modification of the orders of the Secretary of State for India, by raising the maximum age-limit from 19 to 22. Lal Mohon Ghose, a member of the English Bar at Calcutta, was selected by the Indian Association *(34) to be its delegate to England and give a suitable expression to this the pressing grievance of his countrymen to British audiences. His was a most fortunate selection and his deputation to England on behalf of the wounded India under Lytton was "our first political deputation". He delivered an address on Lytton's Indian policy before an influential gathering of members of Parliament and others in Will's Room, St. James, London on the 3rd July, 1879, with John Bright, the greatest English orator of that time, in the chair. He took the British nation by surprise and his marvellous gifts of oratory were revealed in a manner and to an extent as to extort warmest tribute even from the President of that meeting. "The effect of that meeting", writes Surendranath, "was instantaneous. Within twenty-four hours of it, there were laid on the table of the House of Commons, the Rules creating what was subsequently known as the Statutory Civil Service. Under the Parliamentary Statute of 1870, the Government

*(33) Sir Henry Cotton: **New India.**

*(34) Surendranath Banerjea declined the initial offer of the Indian Association to be its delegate to England on that occasion mainly in view of his official antecedents.

of India were empowered, subject to rules that were to be framed, to make direct appointments of natives of India of proved merit and ability to the Covenanted Civil Service. For seven years the Government of India had slept over the matter. But so great was the impression created by the demonstration at Will's Room, having behind it the sentiment of united India, that the Rules, which were only four in number and had been delayed for seven years, were published within twenty-four hours of that meeting".

True, this Statutory Civil Service evaded the great moral issue involved in Indian grievance framed against the Secretary of State's regulations regarding Civil Service Examinations in England, as it did not touch at all the real question of raising the maximum age-limit of the open Competitive Examination in England from 19 to 22. Besides, the right of nomination given to the Indian Government "added a new instrument to their armoury for keeping their hold on the people, if not indeed, demoralising them". Notwithstanding these theoretical objections, the Statutory Civil Service opened up before Indians the posts of a District Magistrate or Judge and Sessions Judge even without passing the Civil Service Examination in England. But the real significance of Lal Mohon Ghose's deputation to England was "far more moral than political" in the words of Bipin Chandra Pal. "It", writes Mr. Pal, "added considerably to our pride and strengthened our conceit of intellectual equality with our foreign masters". His work opened a new chapter in Indian history and disclosed the immense importance of Indian deputations to England. Lalmohon Ghose, soon after his return to India, was again deputed to England, and it was during his second deputation that he stood as a candidate for Parliamentary election in the Liberal interest, Deptford being his constituency, in 1879. He was the first Indian to stand for English Parliamentary election; "and if it were not for the Irish vote that went against him, almost

at the last moment, he would have been entitled to the high distinction reserved for India's Grand Old Man, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, of being the first Indian Member of Parliament"*(35). Lalmohon was defeated, because the Irish voters turned the scale against him. Charles Stuart Parnell, as Hemendra Prasad Ghose informs us, "issued a manifesto to his party, four days before the election, calling upon them not to vote for the Liberal candidates". Although he was defeated, yet the fact that he secured as many as 3,560 votes expresses the deeper truth that his candidature attracted the attention of thousands of Englishmen at that time to his cause as well as to the cause of India. From a contemporary picture published in the London *Graphic*, it is clearly revealed how Gladstone was personally conducting the election campaign on behalf of the Indian delegate*(36). Long afterwards in 1890 when Surendranath visited Deptford, Lalmohon's constituency, he found that "there was a kindly remembrance of him, among his old friends and supporters". Bipin Chandra Pal records from personal experiences that "Lalmohan's Parliamentary candidature also reacted powerfully upon our infant nationalist politics", particularly in Bengal.

RAMKRISHNA AND NEO-HINDUISM, 1875-86

Thus the years of the 'seventies of the last century were pregnant with possibilities for Indians. That was the epoch of *Bangadarshan* in Bengali literature and that of the Indian Association in our politics. Although Bengal stood in the vanguard of this nationalist movement, yet the spirit of reform and reconstruction was also asserting itself during the same period in Western and Southern India. In

*(35) **A Nation in Making**, p. 54.

*(36) H. P. Ghose's paper as published in the **Calcutta Municipal Gazette**, Independence Number, 1947, pp. 68-69.

1875 Ramkrishna Paramhansa was publicised by Keshab Chandra Sen, who after meeting him, propagated his name in his organ, the *Indian Mirror*. Next to Keshab Chandra, we are to mention the name of Rev. Hestie, the Principal of the General Assembly's Institution, who told his students to go and see the saint of Dakshineswar who got 'trance'. He was also largely responsible for making Ramkrishna known to the students and the public*(37). His simplicity and catholicity began to cast great spell over his countrymen, young and old, since that time. He was neither unlettered nor traditionalist in his views. The visions of Universal Religion which Rammohun had caught many decades earlier became living in his personality. Pandit Shivnath Sastri has recorded in his autobiographical study that he had "greatly realized the universalism of religion by mixing with Ramkrishna". As early as 1879 Pratap Chandra Mazumdar forcefully expressed himself thus in the *Theistic Quarterly Review* (October-December): "What is there common between him and me? I, a Europeanised, civilised, self-centred, semi-sceptical so-called educated reasoner, and he, a poor, illiterate, shrunken, unpolished, diseased, half-dressed, half-idolatrous, friendless Hindu devotee? I who am an ardent disciple and follower of Christ, a friend and admirer of liberal-minded Christian missionaries and preachers, a devoted adherent and worker of the rationalistic Brahmo-Samaj—why should I be spell-bound to hear him? And it is not I only, but dozens like me who do the same...And what is his religion? It is Hinduism, but, Hinduism of a strange type. Ramkrishna Paramhansa is the worshipper of no particular Hindu God. He is not a Shivaite, he is not a Shakta, he is not a Vaishnava, he

*(37) B. N. Datta: **Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet** (Calcutta, 1954, pp. 155, 172) and **Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa** (Through Contemporary Eyes) edited by Brojen Banerjee and Sajani Das (Calcutta, 1952, pp. 3-7).

is not a Vedantist. Yet he is *all these*...His religion means ecstasy, his worship means transcedental perception, his whole nature burns day and night with the permanent fire and fever of a strange faith and feeling. His conversation is a ceaseless breaking forth of this inward fire, and lasts long hours...To him each of these deities is a force, an incarnated principle tending to reveal the supreme relation of the soul to that eternal and formless Being..." From his account it is further revealed that Ramkrishna was interviewed and examined by many of that time and crowds poured in to visit and talk with him*(38).

It is evident from contemporary records that since Kesabchandra's meeting with Ramkrishna in 1875, the latter began to function as the nucleus of neo-Hinduism which was triumphantly preached before the world by Vivekananda two decades afterwards. Ramkrishna's religion has been considered by some writers with myopic vision as lending moral sanction to traditionalism in those days, but this is an incorrect representation of reality. Most of his early followers were liberals and also rationalists. It is his liberalism, not orthodoxy or traditionalism, that drew these followers round him. Very aptly Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta has observed: "The members of the middle class, who according to the standard of the time were dubbed radicals, went to the reformers' camp; but those who were not reformers, yet were not hide-bound Sanatanists, used to frequent his place. The conservative members of vested interests calling themselves orthodox, have shunned every liberal movement since the days of Sri Chaitanya. It was the liberals who clustered round him as his latter-day disciples. The bourgeoisie of the latter part of the nineteenth century was floundering in the cross-currents of rationalism of the West and the madievalism of the East. The reformers were sweeping

*(38) Vide: **Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa** edited by Brojen Banerjee and Sajani Das, pp. 234-237.

the past overboard. But already the dialectical contradition has set in. Cry has been raised: 'Halt, don't let the Indian past be forgotten'. In between the currents stepped in Ramkrishna"*(39) whose life and messages began to draw the minds of many men respectfully to our past. His influence on the growth of our nationalism was palpable.

DAYANANDA AND ARYA SAMAJ, 1875

The year 1875 is also important on account of the foundation of the Arya Samaj in Bombay by Dayananda Saraswati who was a Gujrati by birth, but whose chief fieid of work was the Punjab. Taking his stand on the bed-rock of the Vedas, he initiated a social movement which mightily contributed to infant Indian nationalism. As a religious reformer he was the enemy of images, rituals, the *Purans* and the *Tantras*. In spite of his strong advocacy of the "back to the past" movement, he was modernist enough to appreciate properly the value of science and technocracy. In the propagation of Hindi language and literature, in the spread of interest in Sanskrit language and literature, in the organization of educational work (e.g. D.A.V. College, Lahore, 1886, Gurukul, Hardwar, 1902), he played a great role worthy of highest respect and recognition. "Although professedly he had his eyes pinned to the past", observes Benoy Kumar Sarkar, "nobody was thus a greater 'futurist' than this Gujrati remaker of the Punjab...The modernism or futurism of Dayananda has nowhere taken a more characteristic shape than in the movement for the re-conversion of such Hindus as for one reason or other have lost their Hindu moorings. This *suddhi*, purification or re-initiation is a modern counterpart of the *Vratyastoma* ceremony of the *Atharva Veda* by which such Aryans as

*(39) Vide: **Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet**, pp. 182-183.

had forsaken their Aryan *mores* could be taken back into the Aryan folds. The logic is or the instrument of Dayananda here is old, but he has shown the way towards a renewal of the Hindu society in flesh and blood" *(40). The Arya Samaj organised by him served as a powerful force in Northern India, especially in the Punjab, and it did much to restore our submerged self-consciousness, which was a desideratum for national awakening*(41). He was the pioneer in modern times of "aggressive Hinduism" which was later to find in Vivekananda an able exponent and protagonist. By calling our attention to the past history of the country and by rescuing us from our "inferiority complex" in the face of aggressive Christian challenge, Dayananda "rendered an immense service to the nationalist movement in India". Speaking of him and his teachings, Bipin Chandra Pal has even gone to the length of observing thus: "Whatever may be the philosophical value of these teachings (as contained in the *Satyarth Prakash*), and however much these may be discordant with some of the bedrock doctrines and ideals of Hindu Universalism, it cannot be denied that the movement of Dayananda Saraswati, as organised in the Arya Samaj, has contributed more than the ratoinal movement of the Raja's Brahmo Samaj to the development of a new national consciousness in the modern Hindu, particularly in the Punjab"*(42). To dubb the movement initiated by Dayananda as a revivalist movement is to betray gross ignorance of history and to distort truth. It was out and out a reform movement, like the earlier movement of the Brahmo Samaj and the later Ramkrishna-Vivekananda

*(40) B. K. Sarkar: **Creative India** (Lahore, 1937, pp. 461-464).

*(41) An authoritative account of the Arya Samaj will be found in Lajpat Rai's book on 'THE ARYA SAMAJ (London, 1915)

*(42) **My Life and Times**, Vol. II. p. XXXIX.

movement. Each one of them was revivalist or reformist in one way or the other *(43), and each had its great contributions, within the limitations of time and space, to our resurgence and reawakening.

THE THEOSOPHIST MOVEMENT, 1879-93

Another movement, with equal, if not greater force, contributing to our nationalist sentiments, came into being in the early eighties, and that was the Theosophist movement which was born out of Christian mysticism and Hindu spiritualism. Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott who came to this country in 1879, were the originators of this movement in India. They identified themselves with Hindu religion and lent support to its

*(43) "Those who watch the daily polemics, especially in their earlier phases, might perhaps be led to discribe the Brahmo Samaj movement as rather 'anti-national' and the Arya Samaj and the Ramkrishna movements as 'revivalist'. From the viewpoint of long-range societal planning, however, it should appear that the exponents of the Brahmo movement draw their inspiration as much from the old Hindu texts and ideals as the exponents of the other two. The Brahmo Samaj has to be sociologically interpreted as being as 'nationalistic' in cultural tradition as the other movements. It is certainly possible to fight, as propagandists or missionaries, over the individual items in the creed or the institution advocated by each. But neutral observers and students of science cannot overlook the great reality that the Brahmo Samaj is drawing inspiration from certain phases of ancient Hindu culture and **mores**, of which certain other phases are being drawn upon by the Arya Samaj and still others by the Ramkrishna Mission. If the last two are 'revivalists', the first one is not less so. Then, again, it is impossible to describe the Brahmo Samaj as being in social morphology more oriented to 'modern', i.e., Euro-American conditions and inspirations than the Arya Samaj and the Ramkrishna Mission."—Benoy Kumar Sarkar (**Creative India**, p. 523).

many orthodox and mystical beliefs and doctrines. It proclaimed in a confident language the greatness and superiority of the Ancient Indian Wisdom and offered an open apology in defence of Hindu faiths and practices. Notwithstanding its conservative or reactionary trends, Theosophy in India did an inestimable service to our nationalist cause. Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta has simply discovered in the Theosophist movement nothing but "counter-revolutionary trends", and has observed that Hindu "orthodoxy found an ally in European spiritualism to buttress its ancient superstitious beliefs"*(44). But that is not all. The Theosophists by calling our attention to the greatness of our past, strength and beauty of our religion "helped very materially to remove that 'inferiority complex' from our educated classes from which they had been so seriously suffering almost from the beginning of their initiation into modern European culture through English schools and universities"*(45). Starting its work first in Bombay, the Theosophical thoughts developed before long into a sort of an Indian movement, with a network of local branches and organisations spread all over the country. "By the beginning of the eighties, as these theosophical organisations were established in different parts of India, the theosophical leaders commenced to convene annual conventions of their members during Christmas recess. The success of these Conventions encouraged some of the leaders of our new political life, who were also associated with the Theosophical Movement, to make the experiment of an Indian political Congress which would meet like the Theosophical Convention by turns at the more important cities that had become recognised centres of our public life. The Congress was first convened during Christmas 1885 at Bombay"*(46).

*(44) **Swami Vivekananda the Patriot-Prophet**, pp. 66-67.
*(45) B. C. Pal: **My Life and Times**, Vol. II, p. Lvi.
*(46) **My Life and Times**, Vol. II, p. Lviii.

OTHER CURRENTS OF WESTERN INFLUENCE, 1870-90

Side by side with the Theosophist movement has to be mentioned the steady and continuous infiltration of Western thoughts into our life and consciousness through English education. The political struggles in England in the 17th century, the intellectual upheaval leading to the French Revolution in the 18th, the nationalist movements of Italy and Germany of the 19th, the Home-Rule movement of Parnell in Ireland became "favourite subjects of study and reflection". Mazzini, Cavour and Bismarck rapidly rose high in Indian imagination in the seventies and eighties of the last century. The growth of a historical literature in India of which Rajendra Lal Mitra and Romesh Chandra Dutt were great pioneers and the serial publication by Prof. Max Muller of the *Sacred Books of the East* since 1875 also powerfully aided in deepening our patriotic pride and nationalist sentiments. Max Muller's publication of *India: What can It Teach Us?* in 1883, howsoever defective in some respects, pointedly drew the world's attention to the immense superiority of Indian philosophy and metaphysics to other systems and greatly pandered to our veneration for the past which had already seized our minds. Thus by the early eighties of the last century powerful forces were abroad for effecting a mighty moral and intellectual revolution in our country in near future.

GROWING POVERTY OF INDIANS, 1857-95

In the history of Indian nationalism the role of British economy has always to be recognised as a strong aiding factor. The rapid destruction of Indian arts and industries, the steady impoverishment of the teeming millions of this vast sub-continent, the continuous bleeding of Indian resources through British exploitation and drainage were grim realities of economic India in the

19th century. Notwithstanding official interpretation to the contrary, the feeling became universal in the country that the native Indian population was "growing poorer". In a remarkable book on *The Poverty Problem in India* published in 1895, Prithwis Chandra Roy offered a keen analysis of the causes and remedies of Indian poverty. In that scholarly work, he forcibly demonstrated that the policy of Free Trade, howsoever beneficial to England in the 19th century, proved to be a great cause of India's economic ruination under the special circumstances of the case—India's political subjection to the aliens. Before the year 1860, Indian export and import trade tended in the main towards an equality. "But since 1860, our exports have been increasing by leaps and bounds, while the imports have not been able to keep pace with the former". Indian import and export statistics show that compared to the conditions prevailing in 1871, India formally and outwardly enjoyed a very favourable balance of trade during 1894-95. "Nothing could be more satisfactory, will cry out the Indian dabbler in the science of economics, for India has much more to sell to the foreign markets than she needs buy from them". "Yes", wrote Prithwis Chandra Roy, "satisfactory as far as abstract theories of political economy go. But when we remember that, in order to meet all those payments of our which are fixed in gold, we have now to send about 66 per cent. more produce to England than were required of us 30 years ago, that for this balance of trade no adequate return is made to India, that the home charges of an alien Government and the remittances of alien officials generally secure this ever-increasing excess over imports,—when we remember all these, we see the absurdity of the notion that 'an excess of exports over imports shows increasing wealth'. Far from it: for it means our impoverishment, means the drainage of so much of our wealth to England —and for what in return? In the language of no less an authority than the Marquis of Salisbury, 'much of the

revenue of India is exported without any equitable equivalent in return' "*(47).

Again, an analysis of India's export and import trade would reveal another dark and disquieting element—exchange of necessaries of life of our people for the luxuries of another. Sir John Strachey in his Financial Statement of 1880 remarked that "cotton-goods are the sole articles of foreign production which the people of India now largely consume." Except cotton-manufactures, most of Indian imports were "luxuries or things" that did not "answer to the primary needs of the natives of this country". And these articles of luxury were purchased "at the expense of the food of the millions". The unsoundness of this commercial policy was patent on the surface. "It is evident", writes Mr. Roy, "both from *a priori* reasoning and from experience that where such exchange obtains the prices of necessaries of life are increased, while those of luxuries are decreased. How much of India's misery and the starving condition of her people is owing to this simple fact!" *(48). These dismal features of Indian trade led an avowed and thoroughgoing Free Trader like Mr. Fawcett to admit that herein lay the strongest case against Free Trade. The principles of Free Trade for which Richard Cobden and the Anti-Corn-Law League passionately fought, led in the case of England to much beneficial result, but the same principles, applied to India by the alien masters, produced an exactly opposite result. The celebrated author of *The Poverty Problem in India* has recorded that the prices of rice and wheat and all other staple food-grains within forty years ending in 1895 had already run up to three or four times.

Another dismal fact in the economic situation of India was the gradual decline and death of the genuine Indian arts, crafts and industries in competition with machine-made goods with which the country was being

*(47) **The Poverty Problem in India** (Calcutta, 1895, pp. 6-7)
*(48) **The Poverty Problem in India**, pp. 17-18.

more and more flooded from decade to decade. The open economic competition alone will not explain this decline of India's age-old arts and crafts. The commercial apathy and the many obnoxious trade regulations of the ruling masters in the interest of British industrial expansion had been profoundly responsible for this economic catastrophe that was overtaking India in the 19th century. Even before this bewailing cry was raised from the Congress platform, this fatal problem drew the serious notice of Sir George Birdwood, than whom there was none in the 19th century a greater authority on the subject, who in his monograph on *The Industrial Arts of India,* conclusively demonstrated how greatly India had suffered from the destruction of her native arts and manufactures. This decay in most cases was not natural, but forced, speeded up by the unscrupulous commercial policy of the British, deliberately directed to kill India's industries in order to improve and safeguard their own. The decline started ever since the battle of Plassey and by the end of the 18th century, writes Hemendra Prasad Ghose with sufficient force of logic, that "the British had succeeded in reducing industrial Bengal into agricultural Bengal—replacing prosperity by poverty in the land" *(49). In the 19th century the picture was far worse still and this forced extinction of our native industries largely contributed to the growing Indian poverty under the enlightened British rule. Impartial authorities like Alexander Canningham, Fergusson, Harrington and Henry Cotton did not fail to notice this dark and dismal element in Indian situation*(50). In that celebrated work, viz., *Poverty and the Un-British Rule in India,* Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji has recorded for posterity a moving

*(49) Vide H. P. Ghose's serial articles on **Bengal (1750-1800)** as published in the Calcutta Review during October, 1955-June, 1956. Also see R. C. Dutt's **Economic History of India Under Early British Rule** (London, 3rd Ed. 1908, pp. vi-ix).

*(50) P. C. Roy: **The Poverty Problem in India,** pp. 80-85.

account of India's poverty under British rule. Although some scholars of later times (like Prof. Benoy Sarkar) could not see eye to eye with Naoroji, Digby and Dutt, yet there is no gain-saying the fact that their works on economic India under British rule had played a valuable role in our nationalist history. In his scholarly work on *Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency: 1793-1833* (1956) Dr. Amales Tripathi has fundamentally differed from Naoroji-Digby-Dutt tradition of thinking about economic conditions of British India. (pp. 252-55).

FAMINES IN BRITISH INDIA, 1860-1900

To the general causes of Indian poverty in the 19th century must be mentioned the periodical visitations of famine in British India. The reports of Indian Famine Commissions of 1880 and 1898 record that within four decades between 1860 and 1900, there took place ten widespread famines in India. They were the famines of 1860, 1866, 1869, 1874, 1877, 1878, 1889, 1892, 1897 and 1900. The famine of 1900 which swept over the Punjab, Rajputana, the Central Provinces, and Bombay was "the most widespread ever known in India". In Bombay, in the famine camps, according to official reports, people "died like flies"*(51). According to the authority of Mr. R. C. Dutt, the six famines alone between 1877 and 1900 "carried off fifteen millions of people"—a population equal to half of that of England within less than twenty-five years. To those who believe that such deaths in famines were more due to the growing over-population in India, the following observations of Romesh Chandra Dutt will be an eye-opener: "The results of the three famines within the last ten years (1891-1901), and of the increasing poverty of the people, are shown in the census taken in March, 1901. The population of India has remained

*(51) Swami Abhedananda: **India and Her People** (New-York, 1906, pp. 143-144).

stationary during the last ten years. There is a slight increase in Bengal, Madras, and Northern India, while there is an actual decrease of some millions in Bombay, the Central Provinces, and the Native States affected by recent famines. In other words, the population of India to-day is less by some thirty millions than it would have been if the nominal increase of one per cent per annum had taken place during these ten years"*(52). The same authority has elsewhere noted that although famines in India were "directly due to a deficiency in the annual rainfall", yet the intensity and severity of such famines and the loss of innumerable lives in that connection were "largely due to the chronic poverty of the people". "If the people were generally in a prosperous condition", wrote Mr. Dutt further, "they could make up for local failure of crops by purchases from neighbouring provinces, and there would have been no loss of life. But when the people are absolutely resourceless, they cannot buy from surrounding tracts, and they perish in hundreds of thousands, or in millions, whenever there is a local failure of crops"*(53).

DIGBY AND DUTT ON ECONOMIC INDIA, 1850-1900

The growing impoverishment of India under British administration was a persistent reality of Indian history in the 19th century. Adam Smith had long ago complained: "Great nations are never impoverished by private, though they sometimes are by public prodigality and misconduct". The impoverishment of India by 'public prodigality and misconduct' was the grievance and charge of awakened India against the Anglo-Indian administration. High taxation, the waste of large sums of money in unproductive works, the continuous drainage of resources

*(52) R. C. Dutt: **Indian Famines**, p. 2.
*(53) **The Economic History of India Under Early British Rule** (London, 3rd Ed., 1908, p. 51).

from India lent force to that contention*(54). On August 16, 1901 Lord Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, in his speech before the House of Commons (as reported in the *Times*), observed: "There is a small school in this country as well as in India who are perpetually asserting that our rule is bleeding India to death. Since I have been Secretary of State, I have taken great pains to collect and investigate any information or evidence I could obtain, no matter from what quarter it came, which by facts, figures, or other reliable information tended to support this allegation. I admit at once if it could be shown that India has retrograded in material prosperity under our rule we stand self-condemned, and we ought no longer to be entrusted with the control of that country"*(55). He asserted, however, at the same time that he had not been able to obtain 'facts, figures or evidence' to prove the retrogression of the 'material prosperity' of India, although he admitted in no uncertain terms that belief in this retrogression existed.

William Digby in his historic letter to Lord Hamilton as incorporated in his equally historic *'Prosperous' British India* ironically told the latter: "You need not remain in the unhappy condition of wanting data any longer. In what I send you there is abundance of figures, of facts, of economic data. I have nothing to do with 'syllogistic formula', whether 'plausible' or otherwise. I deal with economic data concerning the people of India; in doing so I simply employ your figures, your evidence, your facts" as furnished by the India Office. In that book which is ironically entitled *Prosperous British India*, 'in which the statistics overflow even on to the cover', Digby established "beyond all peradventure, the great, the dismal, the awful, retrogression, not only in material prosperity but

*(54) P. C. Ray: **The Poverty Problem in India,** pp. 241-242.
*(55) William Digby: **'Prosperous' British India** (London, 1901, p. xi) which is a revelation of grim economic realities of British India from official records.

also in other important respects, of the country" Hamilton governed. The concluding line of that memorable letter was worded thus: "I challenge your lordship to the disproof". In that documentary study Digby showed that the average income of a native in India was in 1850, 2 d. per head per day (non-official estimated income in 1850), in 1882, 1½ d. per head per day (officially estimated income in 1882) and in 1900, ¾ d. per head per day (estimate derived from an analytical examination of all sources of income in 1900). It was revealed further that "during his period of service at the India Office", Lord Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India in 1901, "has drawn as salary a sum which represents one year's average income of ninety thousand Indian people"*(56). He concluded his book by asserting that looking around India one "will gaze upon a sum of human misery, and will contemplate a mental and political degradation the like of which, among civilised and progressive countries, is nowhere else at this moment to be seen and, probably, was at no time, during recorded history, anywhere to be seen. God Save India"*(57). The gloomy picture of India's retrogression in material prosperity as drawn by Digby on a quantitative and statistical basis has also been confirmed by no less an authority than Romesh Chandra Dutt whose *Economic History of India in the Victorian Age* is even to this day considered as a landmark in the historical literature of modern India. In that book he observed: "Amidst signs of progress and prosperity from all parts of the Empire, India alone presented a scene of poverty and distress...The Indian Empire will be judged by History as the most superb of human institutions in modern times. But it would be a sad story for future historians to tell that the Empire gave the people of India peace but not prosperity; that the manufacturers lost their industries; that the cultivators were ground

*(56) **Prosperous British India,** p. 534.
*(57) **Prosperous British India,** p. 623.

down by a heavy and variable taxation which precluded any saving; that the revenues of the country were to a large extent diverted to England; and that recurring and desolating famines swept away millions of the population"*(58). Modern historians, however, find much exaggeration in these statements of the old generation of historians against whom the complaint has been raised that their views were to a large extent coloured by patriotic and nationalistic bias quite natural in the days of our anti-British struggle*(59). But the old belief in India's economic retrogression still holds the field in its mighty, majestic sway.

REPRESSIVE LAWS OF LORD LYTTON, 1876-79

This dismal background of economic retrogression was the congenial breeding-ground of discontent which furnished a great fillip to our political agitation and nationalist movement. In the 'seventies of the last century the rising ardour of nationalism and political consciousness unhappily coincided with a series of repressive laws of Lord Lytton—the Press Act and the Arms Act (1878)—which simply caused stronger irritation to the native minds. His lavish expenditure over the Delhi Assemblage at a time when the people in Madras were perishing in

*(58) **The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age** (London, Seventh Ed. 1950, pp. v, xviii-xix and 459).

*(59) In his **Villages and Towns As Social Patterns** (1941, pp. 367-402) and **Benoy Sarkarer Baithake**, Vol. I (1944, pp. 164-72), Prof. B. K. Sarkar argues against the popular theory of India's increasing poverty under British rule and stresses with great force that it is difficult to demonstrate that "India has become poorer than in 1850, 1800, 1700 or so forth." Dr. Amales Tripathi's **Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency: 1793-1833** (1956), an illuminating piece of research-work, will serve as an eye-opener to many scholars.

famine in large numbers as well as the diversion of the famine fund to the second Afghan War raised vehement protests in the country. Lytton's reactionary measures provoked strongest attacks on the Disraeli Government in the House of Commons. The Press Act of 1878 was condemned by Gladstone in flaming language in the Parliament. "Reactionary rulers", once observed Surendranath, "are often the creators of great public movements. They will no doubt deny the charge or repudiate the credit; but they certainly sow the seeds which, in the fulness of time, ensure the enthronement of popular opinion and the triumph of popular causes". Of Lytton and his master Disraeli this indictment may be said to be true in the largest sense. "The reactionary administration of Lord Lytton", records Surendranath, "had roused the public from its attitude of indifference and had given a stimulus to public life. In the evolution of political progress, bad rulers are often a blessing in disguise. They help to stir a community into life, a result that years of agitation would perhaps have failed to achieve"*(60). In the Liberal campaign of the General Election of 1880 the Administration in India became for the first time "openly a party question" in England. The defeat of Disraeli at the polls and the formation of Liberal Ministry headed by Gladstone "roused considerable hope and enthusiasm in India. These were strengthened by the appointment of Lord Ripon to the Indian Viceroyalty to succeed Lord Lytton"*(61).

Gladstone, the tough political opponent of Disraeli, came into office in 1880 with his pronounced Liberal creed and policy. As early as 1877 Gladstone told the British people: "Our title to be in India depends on a first condition, that our being there is profitable to the Indian nations; and on a second condition, that we can make them see and understand it to be profitable". His

*(60) **A Nation in Making**, p. 63.
*(61) B. C. Pal: **My Life and Times**, Vol. I, pp. 406-407.

predecessor's Indian policy had provided the different sections of the Indian community with grievances and discontents. In the words of Wilfrid Blunt: "It had been one of imperial expansion, of reckless finance, and of administrative coercion. It had resulted in a disastrous frontier war, in an immense financial deficit, and in the exasperation of the educated native community. There had been a terrible famine, the severest perhaps of the century...The forest laws, the salt tax, the ever increasing pressure of the revenue officers had driven some districts to the verge of revolt. The vernacular press, which would have denounced the Government as the cause of these evils, had been gagged in the towns...The unrest was becoming, it was thought, dangerous. It was to remedy these evils, and to put the government of India on a footing of sounder economy, less war, and a closer confidence between rulers and ruled, that Lord Ripon was sent to India in the summer of 1880" (Vide: *India Under Ripon*, London, 1909, pp. 1-2).

CONTEMPT CASE OF SURENDRANATH, 1883

The arrival of Lord Ripon to India as the Viceroy in 1880 was an encouraging event for Indians. A true Liberal of the Gladstonian Era, Ripon cherished warm feelings of respect for Indian legitimate aspirations. His Repeal of the vernacular Press Act, his Local Self-Government Act, introducing the principles of self-government in munical administration, his appointment of the Hunter Commission to improve primary and secondary education, his Factory Act and plan of Tenancy Bill.—these together gave a strong spur to Indian rising aspirations. The sympathetic attitude of many British officials like Sir Henry Cotton and Allan Octavian Hume to the Indian cause was also a factor to be reckoned with. Wilfrid Blunt is not far from truth when he characterises the rule of Ripon as "the awakening hour of the new movement towards liberty in India, the dawn of that day of

unrest which is the necessary prelude to full self-assertion in every subject land".

Just at this moment of awakened feelings took place two episodes of great significance for the nationalist movement of India which was rapidly crystalising itself into a definite shape. These were the Contempt Case in which Surendranath suffered imprisonment*(62) and the great Ilbert Bill controversy which violently raged in the country for a pretty long time (1883). The Contempt Case arose out of Surendranath's leaderette published in the *Bengalee* (April 2, 1883) condemning Mr. Justice Norris's outrageous act of "bringing of a *saligram,* a stone idol, into court for indentification" as reported in the *Brahmo Public Opinion* edited by Bhuban Mohan Das*(63). In course of that leaderette which was soon to become historical, Surendranath as the Editor of the *Bengalee* observed: "We have now amongst us a judge, who, if he does not actually recall to mind the days of Jeffreys and Scroggs, has certainly done enough, within the short time that he has filled the High Court Bench, to show how unworthy he is of his high office, and how by nature he is unfitted to maintain those traditions of dignity which are insepar-

*(62) Surendranath in his **A Nation in Making** (p. 74) has claimed "the honour of being the first Indian" of his generation "who suffered imprisonment in the discharge of a public duty." But he is slightly mistaken in this assertion. The first imprisonment by an Indian in modern times for an impersonal cause was that of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, his junior contemporary, in 1882. .....

*(63) Sj. Hemendra Nath Dasgupta in his book entitled **Indian National Congress** (p. 89) mistakenly assigns 28th April, 1883 to the publication of Surendranath's leaderette in the **Bengalee.**
Apart from Surendranath's own authority in the matter, there is also the corroboration on the point by Hemendra Prasad Ghose than whom there is none in our midst to speak with greater authority on the subject.

able from the office of the judge of the highest Court in the land"*(63). The leaderette, written in a moment of heat and indignation, at once brought forth a writ from the High Court to show cause why he should not be committed for Contempt of Court (May 2, 1883). On the day fixed for hearing (May 5) the premises and the surroundings "were swarming with a surging crowd," including thousands of students led by Ashutosh Mukherjee and others. His condemnation to imprisonment, inspite of the dissenting voice of Ramesh Chandra Mitter, produced a profound impression not only in Calcutta and in Bengal, but also throughout India. "In Calcutta on the day of my imprisonment," writes Surendranath in his autobiography, "the Indian shops were closed and business was suspended in the Indian part of the town, not by order, or by an organized effort, but under a spontaneous impulse which moved the whole community." The occasion marked the beginning of the practice of holding large "open-air meetings," and the demonstrations organized at that time were "not confined to the upper ten thousand or the educated classes: the masses joined them in their thousands" (Vide: *A Nation in Making,* pp. 78-79). Thus far Surendranath is right in his appraisal of the importance of his impersonal imprisonment, but certainly he exaggerates it when he records: "In the whole course of my public life, I have never witnessed, except in connection with the agitation for the modification of the Partition of Bengal, an upheaval of feeling so genuine and so widespread as that which swept through Bengal in 1883"*(64). Evidently he minimises the great significance of the Ilbert Bill controversy that violently convulsed India in the same year. But there is no gain-saying the fact that his imprisonment together with the spontaneous demonstrations "left an enduring impress on the public life of the province."

*(64) **A Nation in Making,** p. 79.

THE ILBERT BILL CONTROVERSY, 1883

The Civil Service agitation had clearly revealed the essential unity of Indian aims and aspirations. Our nationalist feelings were whetted further by the Contempt Case of Surendranath. The Ilbert Bill agitation coming as it did in this pecular psychological background, produced a greater commotion throughout the country, definitely overstepping the limits of Bengal. The Bill, supported by Ripon and introduced by Ilbert in the Viceregal Legislative Council in 1883, was the occasion of the most heated controversy in which angry passions were roused in both the communities, Indians and Europeans. It sought to abolish "judicial disqualifications based on race distinctions" and to invest the native Magistrates in the interior with "powers over European British subjects." The European community in India was at once mad with anger and indignation and embarked upon a "tearing agitation" against the authority of the Government "by law established in British India". The Viceroy was "insulted by some Europeans at the very gates of Government House and at a meeting in the Town Hall of Calcutta," as Hemendra Prasad Ghose informs us. A campaign of calumny against Indian culture and character was started with great force and passion by the Europeans who found in Mr. Branson of the Calcutta Bar a leader of their choice and interest*(65). The Indians were not sitting idle all the while. "The passionate claim of the Europeans to predominance," writes Dodwell, "was to be answered by an equally passionate claim of the Indians to equality." In fact, the agitation that was organized in favour of the Bill by Indians was a fitting and telling reply to the organized protest of Europeans against it on the occasion. While the European community found their leader in Branson, the Indian community

*(65) Vide H. P. Ghose's Bengali work on **Congress O Bangala** (Calcutta, 1935, pp. 109-114).

in Lal Mohon Ghose, the former's tough and formidable opponent in the battle of words. Bipin Chandra Pal records that Branson's speech at Dacca at that time against the proposed change contained "a most savage attack upon Indian culture and character, citing our medieval social institutions of caste, child-marriage, *zenana* seclusion and the prohibition of widow remarriage as conclusive evidences of our moral degeneration, that branded us with absolute disqualification to sit in judgment upon European criminals"*(66).

The challenge of Branson at Dacca was taken up at once by Lal Mohon Ghose who delivered at Dacca itself a fitting and telling reply. "Lal Mohon's refined oratory," writes a contemporary, "was more than equal, even in the strength of its vituperations, to the vulgar exhibitions of Mr. Branson." Lal Mohon in course of his Dacca speech observed: "'Verily and truly,' said this orator, 'the jackess kicketh at the lion.' If this, indeed, was the case, nothing could be more presumptuous or ridiculous. But even the jackess is not foolish enough to insult the majesty of the lion. But if the pitiful cur chooses to cover his recreant limbs with the borrowed hide of the lion then, I think, the kick of the jackess is the only fitting punishment. But the climax of impudence is reached in the next passage with a brutality unsurpassed, unequalled, and with a total absence of shame, he covered himself with lasting infamy by levelling his cowardly insults against the innocent and unoffending women of this country. He dared to tell his hearers that our ladies 'were used to the foul multitudes of the Courts.' Let the whole country throughout its length and breadth declare with one voice what it thinks of such conduct, and if the authors of these insults venture to appear in any public assembly, let their ears be greeted with the universal hiss of indignation, so that stung with shame and remorse they may fly far from the country whose

*(66) **My Life and Times**, Vol. I., pp. 410-411.

air they have polluted with their pestilential breath".*(67). The immediate and instantaneous effect of this fiery speech was the boycott of Branson by the Bengali solicitors with the result that "he had to 'fly far from the country.' Calcutta taught a lesson to impudent Europeans"*(68).

The Ilbert Bill controversy was a turning point in the history of India's Nationalism. It marked the beginning of a fierce struggle for equality between the Europeans and the Indians and produced results of far-reaching significance for both the communities. In itself a very poor instalment of that promised equality between Her Majesty's English and Indian subjects, the Ilbert Bill, as Wilfrid Blunt, an eye-witness to the scene, observes, "roused at once the anger of the class aimed at, and a press campaign was opened against Lord Ripon of unusual violence in the Anglo-Indian journals. The Ilbert Bill was described as a revolutionary measure which would put every Englishman and every Englishwoman at the mercy of native intrigue and native fanaticism. The attacks against Lord Ripon were certainly encouraged by the Anglo-Indian officials; and presently they were repeated in the press at home, and to the extent that the Bill became a question in which the whole battle of India's future was being fought over and embittered. The *Times* took up the attacks; the Cabinet was alarmed for its popularity, and the Queen was shaken in her opinion of her Viceroy's judgment. Lord Ripon was practically left alone to his fate"*(69). An Anglo-Indian Defence Association was hurriedly formed, with its branches spread in the different provinces of the country. English, European, Anglo-Indian

*(67) **Speeches By Lalmohun Ghose** (Cal., 1883, pp. 121-22).
*(68) H. P. Ghose's article in the **Calcutta Municipal Gazette**, Independence Number, 1947, p. 70.
*(69) W. S. Blunt: **India Under Ripon** (London, 1909, pp. 5-6).

and other vested interests in India in defence of their special privileges made strange bed-fellows as an historical necessity. Sarcastically an Indian writer on that occasion commented thus:

"A motley crew
Of each possible shade, of each possible hue,
White, grey, black and brown, red, yellow and blue,
The pucca-born Briton and Eight-anna Eu
—Russian and Greek, Armenian and Jew".*(70)

This "motley crew" raised before long over a lakh and a half rupees and carried on with a mad fire and fury their agitation in an organised manner, and the "educated community all over India watched the struggle with interest." But the agitation that they started was far less organised. "The agitation," writes Amvika Charan Mazumder, "stirred up the public mind only in Bengal and Bombay...produced little or no effect in Madras, while the N. W. provinces and the Punjab were perfectly silent."*(71).

Lord Ripon's honest and sincere attempt to wipe out a grievous wrong from the administration practically failed and a *Concordat* was concluded towards the end of 1883 "upon a bare recognition of the principle in the case of the District Magistrates and the Sessions Judge only." Wilfrid Blunt, who was then present in Calcutta, records from experiences: "I know the effect it produced on the native politicians. It was everywhere looked on as a surrender, and a disgraceful one, and there was a moment when it was doubtful whether popular indignation would not vent itself in more than words. But Lord Ripon's personal popularity saved the situation, and moderate counsel prevailed. It was recognised, even by

*(70) Vide: **Speeches By Lalmohun Ghose** (Cal. 1883, p. 117).
*(71) Vide: **Indian National Evolution** (Madras, 2nd Ed., 1917, p. 38.)

the most violent, that the pusillanimity of the Home Government not of the Viceroy, was in fault, and it was felt that, should popular indignation turn now upon Lord Ripon, no Viceroy would ever again dare befriend the people. The compromise, therefore, was accepted with what grace was possible, and bitter feelings were cancelled, and the day of indignation postponed"*(72).

The indignation of the educated classes found an empthatic utterance in the contemporary press, platform and literature. Hemchandra Banerjee who became a dominating personality on Madhusudan's death in the realm of Bengali poetry, gave expression to very strong feelings of indignation as well as of frustration. When the Anglo-Indian agitation against the proposed Ilbert Bill was afoot in the country, he composed his famous poem on "নেভার নেভার" in a sarcastic vein and told his countrymen:

"গেল রাজ্য, গেল মান, ডাকিল ইংলিশম্যান
ডাক ছাড়ে ব্রান্‌সন্ কেওয়িক মিলার—
"নেটিবের কাছে খাড়া নেভার—নেভার"।
"নেভার" সে অপমান— হতমান বিবিজান,
নেটিবে পাবে সন্ধান, আমাদের "জ্ঞান না" ?
বিবিজান ! দেহে প্রাণ কখনও তা হবে না ॥
হিপ্ হিপ্ হিপ্ হুরে হ্যাট কোট বুট প'রে,
সারা ভাবে জগতেরে—তাদের বিচার,
নেটিবের কাছে হবে ?—"নেভার নেভার" !
"নেভার"—সে অপমান হতমান বিবিজান,
নেটিবে পাবে সন্ধান আমাদের "জ্ঞান না" ?
দেহে প্রাণ বিবিজান কখনও তা হবে না ॥"

Again, at the passage of the Ilbert Bill, substantially modified in the interest of the Anglo-Indian community and retaining virtually the judical and racial inequality

*(72) Vide: **India Under Ripon**.

between Indians and Europeans, Hemchandra's indignation and frustration bodied forth, as it were, in his poem entitled " মন্ত্রসাধন" where he expressed himself thus:

"সেই দর্প তেজ নির্ভয় অন্তরে
দেখাইলে আজ জ্বলন্ত অক্ষরে,
রাজপ্রতিনিধি পদপিষ্ট ক'য়ে
শিখালে ভারতে গূঢ় সন্ধান ;
দিলে শিক্ষা দান ভারত-নন্দনে
দিব্যচক্ষু দিয়া—কি মন্ত্র সাধনে
পরাধীন জাতি, পরাধীন জনে
বাসনা সফল করিতে পায়।
* * * *
শেখরে এখন ভারত-সন্তান
শ্বেতাঙ্গ নিকটে তৃণের সমান
সমগ্র ভারত জাতিকুলমান
রাজস্তুতিগান সবই বিফল"।* (73)

Though the Ilbert Bill proved practically a failure for the Indians, yet the failure itself carried for them great lessons, of combination and organisation. "It was recognised that the failure", writes Amvika Charan Mazumdar, "was largely owing to the want of adequate, vigorous and united support throughout the country to counter-balance the spirited and well-organised opposition of the Anglo-Indian community, and it was further felt that if political advancement were to be achieved it could only be by the organisation of the national assembly wholly devoted to wider politics than hitherto pursued in the different provinces independently of each other...It also proved an eye-opener to those talanted and highly educated Indian gentlemen who having returned from England and adopted English habits and manners

*(73) H. P. Ghose's work on **Congress O Bangala**, pp. 112-113.

had lost nearly all touch with their countrymen and were apparently seeking to form a class by themselves in the vain hope of assimilating themselves as far as practicable with the Anglo-Indian community. Forces were thus at work driving the people from different points of the compass to a common fold"*(74). Exactly the same importance to the failure of the Ilbert Bill has been attached by Surendranath, the Father of Indian Nationalism, when he said: "It strengthened the forces that were speeding up the birth of the Congress movement"—the first step to which was the National Conference summoned before the end of the year, as if to offer "the reply of educated India to the Ilbert Bill agitation." Already the idea of a National Fund as supplying the sinews of political war had possessed our minds, and Tarapada Banerjee of Krishnagar was the first originator of that idea during Surendranath's imprisonment (May 5, 1883—July 4, 1883). The collection of huge sums by the Anglo-Indian Defence Association in course of the Ilbert Bill agitation was perhaps the inspiring factor for this National Fund of the Indians. Before long a sum of Rs. 20,000 was collected and placed at the disposal of the Indian Association, which formed the nucleus of a permanent National Fund. The National Fund movement was vigoriously taken up by Surendranath, on his release from prison-bar, who addressed on July 17, 1883 a mammoth assemblage of men in Calcutta on that mission. The Indian Association was getting thus more equipped with sinews of greater and more persistent political work in the country.

Inspired by the precedent of the Delhi Darbar of 1877, the Indian Association with a view to promoting unity between the different peoples and provinces, summoned the first National Conference which was held for three days, from December 28 to 30, 1883 in the historic Albert Hall of Calcutta. It was an all-India Conference

*(74) **Indian National Evolution**, p. 39.

in which not only the whole of Bengal, but other provinces of Upper India were represented. The two prominent political groups of Bengal, viz., the British Indian Association and the Indian Association, "one representing the landed aristrocracy of the province, and the other representating the growing power of the educated middle classes"—were united at this Conference. It was a Conference where "old men like the venerable Ramtanu Lahiri rubbed their shoulders with a much younger generation headed by Messrs Ananda Mohon Bose and Surendra Nath Banerjee," while the presence of Rev. Dr. K. M. Banerjee gave to the Conference a non-sectarian and cosmopolitan complexion*(75). The questions that were to form two years later the chief planks of the Congress platform such as "Representative Councils or Self-Government, Education, general and technical, the separation of Judicial from Executive functions in the administration of Criminal Justice, and the wider employment of our countrymen in the public service" were warmly taken up for discussion at the first National Conference. Wilfrid Blunt who was present in the Conference has left in his personal memoirs a pointed reference to it while recording: "I went to the first meeting of the National Conference, a really important occasion as there were delegates from most of the great towns—and, as Bose (A.M.) in his opening speech remarked, it was the first stage towards a National Parliament. The discussion began with a scheme for sending boys to

*(75) Vide: A. C. Mazumdar's **Indian National Evolution** (pp. 40-41), B. C. Pal's **My Life and Times** (Vol. I. p. 436) and S. N. Banerjea's **A Nation in Making** (p. 86). Also see J. C. Bagal's **History of the Indian Association** (Cal., 1953, pp. 63-65) for greater details. Mr. Bagal informs us that the first meeting of the First National Conference opened on 28th Dec., 1883, with Ramtanu Lahiri in the chair, while on the subsequent two days Kali Mohan Das and Annada Charan Khastagir (Dec. 29 and Dec. 30, 1883) were respectively the Presidents of the Conference.

France for industrial education, but the real feature of the meeting was an attack on the Covenanted Civil Service by Surendra Nath Banerjea. His speech was quite as good a one as ever I heard in my life, and entirely fell in with my own views on the matter...I was the only European there, and am very glad to have been present at so important an event"*(76). In a very real sense, the National Conference of 1883 was the precursor of the Indian National Congress which was ushered into being two years later (1885). Its second session could not, however, be organised in the following year when the great International Exhibition was held in Calcutta. But none the less the year 1884 has acquired significance in the history of Indian nationalism because of Surendranath's triumphant tour through Upper India, visiting Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Rawalpindi, Ambala, Delhi, Agra, Aligarh, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Allahabad, Benares and Bankipore, and addressing large meetings wherever he went and raising the-as-yet-unfulfilled demands on the Civil Service question. The underlying object was, however, to foster and deepen the spirit of Indian unity between the different peoples and provinces. And in both these objects, Surendranath's tour bore golden fruit. Before long a Public Service Commission was appointed, and on its recommendation the maximum age-limit for the Indian Civil Service was raised to 22.

RIPON'S RETIREMENT AND INDIAN DEMONSTRATIONS, 1884

The feeling of United India, first revealed in connection with the Civil Service agitation and later manifested on a larger scale in connection with the Ilbert Bill controversy, found a grand and impressive expression by people's spontaneous demonstrations on the occasion of Ripon's retirement from India. And these popular farewell demonstrations were unparalleled in Indian history

*(76) Vide: W. S. Blunt's **India Under Ripon**

and showed the symptoms of the birth of a national movement. "The Anglo-Indian official living in isolation and detachment from the people", observes Surendranath, "now began to realise the birth of a national movement, of which he had not the faintest conception. 'If it be real, what does it mean?' exclaimed Sir Auckland Colvin, the Indian Finance Minister, with passionate bewilderment, in a pamphlet of that name which at the time created quite a sensation and was largely read. The demonstrations were a revelation to the bureaucracy; and they extended from Calcutta to Bombay; and town after town through which the retiring Viceroy passed vied with the others in displaying its love and gratitude to their benefactor. The vivid and picturesque language of the scriptural text was put into requisition to describe this all-embracing movement. 'The dry bones in the open valley', said Sir Auckland Colvin, 'had become instinct with life' "*(77). Bipin Chandra Pal informs us further that on that occasion the *Pioneer,* the mouthpiece of the European community in India, asked in an article the question: "If It Be Real, What Does It Mean?" The article was annonymous, but was believed at that time to have been written by Mr. A. O. Hume, the retired Civilian, who was soon to be the founder of the Indian National Congress*(78).

DUFFERIN'S EARLY SYMPATHY FOR INDIANS

The arrival of Lord Dufferin as the Viceroy in India at this stage (December, 1884) was most fortunate for Indians. Political considerations and personal factors led him to espouse the Indian cause even from the very

*(77) **A Nation in Making,** p. 88

*(78) Bipin Chandra Pal is slightly mistaken in recording that A. O. Hume was in 1884 the Chief Secretary to the Government of India (Vide: **My Life and Times,** Vol. I, p. 418). Hume had retired two years earlier (1882)'.

beginning. Mr. Hemendra Prasad Ghose asserts on the strength of a precious document at his disposal that the impressive farewell demonstrations of Indians in honour of Lord Ripon "were the object of the envy of the next Viceroy—Lord Dufferin" who developed the silent and secret "desire to be accorded a send-off from Calcutta which should vie with the spectacular and splendid good-bye the Indians accorded Lord Ripon at Bombay"*(79).

It is commonly believed that Allan Octavian Hume was the first to conceive the idea of the Indian National Congress and made Lord Dufferin awake to the necessity of having for the Indians a proper and appropriate channel of constitutional agitation "for the escape of great and growing forces" generated by British policy and action. But the truth is almost exactly the reverse. W. C. Bonnerjee, the first President of the Indian National Congress, "than whom no other Indian perhaps ever enjoyed a closer touch and greater intimacy with Mr. Hume", wrote thus in the *Indian Politics*, Madras, in 1898: "It will probably be news to many that the Indian National Congress as it was originally started and as it has since been carried on, is in reality the work of the

*(79) Black's **Marquess of Dufferin and Ava** (London, 1903) with a note by Eardley Norton in his own handwriting as preserved in the personal library of Sj. Hemendra Prasad Ghose. On going through Black's biography of Dufferin, Norton thus commented: "The biographer says nothing—does he know nothing—of Lord Dufferin's desire to be accorded a send-off from Calcutta which should vie with the spectacular and splendid good-bye the Indians accorded Lord Ripon at Bombay—of the covert approach to Bonnerji and Manomohan Ghose—of the bitterness engendered by their refusal that they would not manufacture the native applause—of his vituperative attack upon dear old Allan Hume and the Indian National Congress at a banquet in Calcutta". These comments, written by Norton on March 27, 1904, reveal at long last why Dufferin fell foul of the Congress before his retirement from India.

Marquess of Dufferin and Ava when that nobleman was the Governor-General of India. Mr. A. O. Hume had in 1884 conceived the idea that it would be of great advantage to the country if leading Indian politicians could be brought together once a year to discuss social matters and be upon friendly footing with one another. He did not desire that politics should form part of their discussions, for there were recognised political bodies in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and other parts of the country, and he thought that these bodies might suffer in importance if, when Indian politicians from different parts of the country came together, they discussed politics. His idea further was that the Governor of the Province where the politicians met should be asked to preside over them and that thereby greater cordiality should be established between the official classes and the non-official Indian politicians. Full of these ideas, he saw the noble Marquess when he went to Simla early in 1885...Lord Dufferin took great interest in the matter and after considering over it for some time sent for Mr. Hume and told him that in his opinion Mr. Hume's project would not be of much use. He said there was no body of persons in this country who performed the functions which Her Majesty's Opposition did in England. The newspapers even if they really represented the views of the people were not reliable, and as the English were necessarily ignorant of what was thought of them and their policy in native circles, it would be very desirable in the interests as well of the rulers as of the ruled that Indian politicians should meet yearly and point out to Government in what respects the administration was defective and how it could be improved; and he added that an assembly such as he proposed should not be presided over by the local Governor, for in his presence the people might not like to speak out their minds. Mr. Hume was convinced by Lord Dufferin's arguments, and when he placed the two schemes, his own and Lord Dufferin's, before leading politicians in

Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and other parts of the country, the latter unanimously accepted Lord Dufferin's scheme and proceeded to give effect to it. Lord Dufferin had made it a condition that his name in connection with the scheme of the Congress should not be divulged so long as he remained in the country and this condition was faithfully maintained, and none but the men consulted by Mr. Hume knew anything about the matter"*(80). Again, Sir William Wedderburn, basing his authority on Hume's own notes, informs us that "where as he (Mr. Hume) was himself disposed to begin his reform propaganda on the social side, it was apparently by Lord Dufferin's advice that he took up the work of political organisation as the matter first to be dealt with"*(81).

BIRTH OF THE CONGRESS, 1885

It is then evident that during 1884-85 the material background of India became a suitable soil and the moment was opportune for the inauguration of the national movement for the arduous adventure of her self-realization. Various factors and personalities had been contributing for a decade or more than a decade to the emergence of the national movement; but it is to Hume that posterity is indebted for giving it a final shape in the birth of the Congress in 1885. To disarm all possible misapprehension or opposition at home or official quarters, he himself went to England and assured his friends over there and members of Parliament of the constitutional character of the new organisation contemplated for the Indians, while here in India his work as a unifying factor among the different political associations of the country deserves highest record and recognition. On his return to India in November, 1885 he strenuously exerted himself

*(80) Quoted in A. C. Mazumdar's **Indian National Evolution**, pp. 51-52.

*(81) W. Wedderburn—**Allan Octavian Hume.**

to give a finishing touch to the remaining preliminary preparations, and the first session of the Indian National Congress met in Bombay in the last week of December, 1885, with W. C. Bonnerjee as the President. The grateful Indians have paid their respectful homage and recognition to Hume by honouring him with the coveted title of "the Father of the Congress", though actually their national leader Surendra Nath Banerjea had no less, if not greater, claims to that proud recognition. Unbiased students of history will perhaps in future be reasonable enough to bracket Surendranath's name along with that of Hume as the spiritual fathers of the National Congress.

The month of December, 1885 is memorable in Indian history, apart from the momentous Congress session at Bombay, also for the second National Conference held simultaneously but independently in Calcutta. And out of the fusion of these two separate movements emerged in 1886 the truly representative Indian National Congress. The second National Conference was even more representative than the first one held in 1883. This time the Conference was summoned not by the Indian Association alone, but by three prominent organisations of Calcutta, viz, the British Indian Association representing the landed interest, the Indian Association representing the middle classes, and the Central Mohamedan Association (of which Mr. Ameer Ali was the Secretary) representing Muslim interests. Like its predecessor it was also an all-India Conference. Not only the important towns and villages of Bengal were represented at the Conference, but also delegates from Assam and Behar, Meerut and Benares, Allahabad and Bombay joined it. The Conference held its three-day session (25th—27th Dec., 1885) in the spacious hall of the British Indian Association with Durga Charan Law as the President on the first day. There were nearly 200 delegates to the Conference while the number of visitors crowding the corridor and the passages and the back swelled to over a thousand. Sir Henry Cotton was also present in the meeting not as a

representative of any Association, but being invited by the Secretaries of the three Associations which had convened this Conference. The urgency of the reform of the Legislative Councils was seriously discussed, and six resolutions were altogether passed on the reconstitution of Legislative Councils, modification of the Arms Act, retrenchment of public expenditure, Civil Service question, separation of the Judicial from the Executive functions and reorganisation of the Police. Among the important speakers at this Conference were Surendra Nath Banerjea, Henry Cotton, Gooroo Dass Banerjee, Kali Mohan Das, Rai Jatindra Nath Chaudhuri (delegate from Taki), Heramba Chandra Maitra and others*(82).

"While we were having our National Conference in Calcutta," writes Surendranath in his autobiography, "the Indian National Congress, conceived on the same lines and having the same programme, was holding its first sittings at Bombay. The movements were simultaneous; the preliminary arrangements were made independently, neither party knowing what the other was doing until on the eve of the sittings of the Conference and of the Congress"*(83). With just seventy-two representatives—18 from Bombay, 8 from Madras, 8 from Poona, 6 from Surat, 3 from Calcutta and the rest from other parts of the country—the Congress held its first session at Bombay. The numerical weakness of the Bengal contingent was, according to the President, chiefly due to the engagement of the Bengal leaders in the second National Conference held simultaneously at Calcutta in December, 1885. But there was perhaps something deeper behind it than what meets the eye. Nevertheless it is hardly acceptable as a historical truth that "Surendranath and the 'sedition-mongers' were not even invited" to

*(82) A. C. Mazumdar: **Indian National Evolution**, p. 54. Also see H. P. Ghose's **Congress O Bangla** (pp. 116-119) for details. Also see the **Report of the Second National Conference.**

*(83) **A Nation in Making**, p. 98

the first Congress*(84); for, Surendranath himself has recorded in his *A Nation in Making* (pp. 98-99): "Mr. W. C. Bonnerjea, who presided over the Bombay Congress, invited me to attend it. I told him that it was too late to suspend the Conference, and that as I had a large share in its organisation it would not be possible for me to leave Calcutta and attend the Bombay Congress." Bengal was represented, besides W. C. Bonnerjee, the *doyen* of the Calcutta Bar, by Narendra Nath Sen, the brave editor of the *Indian Mirror*, and Girija Bhusan Mukherjee, the gifted editor of the *Naba-Vibhakar*. "It seems worthy of note", writes Amvika Charan Mazumdar, "that Mr. Hume although coming from Simla appears to have sat as a representative for Bengal probably as it would seem to make up considerably for the weakness of her numerical strength"*(85). The first Congress session opened at 12 noon, on December 28, 1885 in the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College. Mr. Hume, after referring in course of his opening speech to the representative and weighty character of the Congress, laid down the four-fold objects of the Congress such as the (1) "promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in the country's cause," (2) the "eradication by direct friendly personal intercourse of all possible race, creed, or provincial prejudices" amongst all lovers of the country, and the "fuller development and consolidation" of the "sentiments of national unity", (3) the "authoritative record of the matured opinions of the educated classes in India on some of the more important and pressing of the social questions of the day", and (4) the "determination of the lines upon and methods by which during

*(84) Amit Sen's statement to the effect that "Surendranath and the 'sedition-mongers' were not even invited" to the Congress of 1885 (as recorded in his **Notes on Bengal Renaissance**) is an inaccurate piece of information.

*(85) **Indian National Evolution**, p. 59.

the next twelve months" the native politicians were to labour "in the public interests"*(86). Nine resolutions were passed suggesting enquiry into the working of the Indian Administration by a Royal Commission, the abolition of the Council of the Secretary of State, reform and expansion of the Imperial and Local Legislative Councils, the holding of simultaneous Civil Service Examinations in England and India, the reduction of Military Expenditure and so on. Thus ended the first session of the Congress, which, though initially not a very impressive show, laid the foundations of a mighty organisation that was to develop into a serious menace to the British Government in future and achieve India's liberation from thraldom. At the birth of the Congress the Bengal leaders of the Conference "went into a rapturous acclamation" and their prudence and patriotism, according to a contemporary authority, "merged their movement in that of the one inaugurated at Bombay, as it had no necessity for separate existence except to the detriment of the other, or possibly of both".

EARLY YEARS OF THE CONGRESS, 1885-89

In its first session the Congress was not a representative body but a gathering of some leading men of the country. None of the 72 members that attended it were elected; they were self-chosen representatives. Moreover, politics in it was intentionally kept in the background. But in its second session at Calcutta with Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India, in the chair that the political baptism of the Congress took place. Official records of the Congress have not failed to notice this change in character, for it points out that while the first

*(86) Annie Besant: **How India Wrought For Freedom** (Madras, 1915, pp. 6-7). Also see the **Proceedings of the First Indian National Congress** held at Bombay in 1885 for greater details.

Congress consisted of "Volunteers", the second of "Delegates". And Mrs. Annie Besant observes that "in those two words lies the essential difference, and they mark the immense progress in the country which lay between the two"*(87). According to Mr. Hemendra Prasad Ghose, "It was at its next meeting in Calcutta that the Congress established its claim to be regarded as the representative political organisation. It was held with 436 delegates elected from different provinces, which proves its representative character, while the resolutions discussed and adopted prove its political character." On December 28, its session commenced in the Town Hall packed to its utmost capacity. Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitra as the Chairman of the Reception Committee, who was then the President of the British Indian Association, observed in course of his opening address that at present the Indians were living "not under a National Government, but under a foreign bureaucracy" and that representatives of the people should be elected to the Legislative Councils, for the foreign bureaucracy, so different and dissimilar from us by birth, religion and language, could not possibly dive into our hearts and had failed to ascertain Indian feelings and wants. He laid great stress on the necessity and importance of our living not merely as "individuals", but as a "nation" and thus described the aims of the Congress in the following words: "For long, our fathers lived and we have lived as individuals only, or as families, but henceforward I hope we shall be living as a nation, united one and all to promote our welfare and the welfare of our mother-country" (*Vide* the *Report of the Second Indian National Congress*, pp. 47-48). The call for Indian unity and service to the country was thus conspicuous in his welcome address. Young Rabindranath sang from the Congress platform his self-composed song " আমরা মিলেছি আজ মায়ের ডাকে " while his

*(87) **How India Wrought For Freedom**, p. 15. Also see Appendix III to the present work.

brother Jyotirindra Nath Tagore played on the organ*(88). Dadabhai Naoroji in his Presidential Speech urged upon the delegates to work upon the Congress as a purely political body and Congress platform as a political platform, and to discuss such questions as affected the whole Nation, leaving social questions for others to decide. The Congress ever since then continued its work on the line as suggested by the President*(89). Altogether fifteen resolutions were passed. Raja Rampal Singh, on December 29, 1886, while moving the resolution asking the Government to authorise a system of volunteering for the Indian people, made a remarkable speech in a voice full of passion, and observed: "We are deeply grateful to Government for all the good that it has done us, but we cannot be grateful to it when it is, no matter with what best of intentions, doing us a terrible and irreparable injury...We cannot be grateful to it for degrading our natures, for systematically crushing out of us all martial spirit, for converting a race of soldiers and heroes into a timid flock of quill-driving sheep"*(90).

Evidently in Calcutta the Congress in its second session took a progressive and political turn. "Anglo-India," writes Hemendra Prasad Ghose, "regarded the rapid progress of the Congress towards Nationalism with anxiety akin to alarm. And Lord Dufferin who had helped Mr. Hume to establish the Congress ran away appalled, like the Arab fisher, at the apparition of the genie; characterised the Congress as 'a big jump into the unknown' and called Congressmen a microscopic minority'. It was from Calcutta that Eardley Norton gave a crushing reply to Lord Dufferin. But Lord

*(88) H. P. Ghose's paper in the **Calcutta Municipal Gazette**, Independence Number, 1947, p. 71.

*(89) Annie Besant: **How India Wrought For Freedom**, p. 18.

*(90) Annie Besant: **India: Bond or Free?** (London, 1926, p. 3) and **How India Wrought For Freedom**, pp. 23-25.

Dufferin had the shrewd instinct to discover that at Calcutta the prosperous elders had succumbed to the influence of progressive public opinion." At the third session of the Congress held at Madras "the curtain dropped over sympathies for the Congress", and the fourth session at Allahabad witnessed a complete change in the official attitude towards the movement*(91).

In the official Record of the fourth Congress there is a pointed reference to "a tumultuous outbreak of opposition" of the Anglo-Indian community which found its leader in Sir Auckland Colvin whose enmity to India had already begun to alienate the Muslims from the Congress. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan of Aligarh, who in his *Causes of the Indian Revolt* (1858) had pleaded for the admission of Indians into the Legislative Councils, now turned into "a strong opponent of the Congress" under official influences let loose against that national assembly (Vide: James Samuelson's *India Past and Present*, London, 1890, pp. 319-20). Even Lord Dufferin, writes Annie Besant, "had the bad taste to attack it and brand it as seditious in a banquet given him on his leaving office." Mr. Eardley Norton in his speech before the Allahabad Congress (Dec., 1888) said that as an Englishman he felt ashamed of England's unfulfilled promises and broken pledges to India. It was Norton who in an open letter to Dufferin delivered "a most caustic rejoinder to the Viceroy's after-dinner speech" held on November 30, 1888*(92).

Thus every year witnessed an enlargement and expansion of the scope of activities of the Congress. Starting its career with 72 members, the fifth session of the Congress at Bombay was attended by 1889 delegates, a number strangely coinciding with the year 1889, a figure remaining highest on record for many years to come. "Glancing

*(91) A. C. Mazumdar: **Indian National Evolution**, p. 72.
*(92) A. C. Mazumdar's **Indian National Evolution**, pp. 75-77, and Mrs. Annie Besant's **How India Wrought For Freedom**, pp. 54-56, 61-62 and 64.

over the register", writes Annie Besant, "we find people of all professions and trades from all parts of the country —princes, landlords, peasants, merchants, contractors, barristers, vakils, pleaders, solicitors, attorneys, principals, headmasters, professors, teachers, editors, money-lenders, bankers, brokers, manufacturers, traders, shopkeepers, artisans, doctors, sardars, printers, authors, reises, taluqdars, a judge, a munsiff, nine clergymen and missionaries, and ten ladies, seven of whom were Indians"*(93). The nationalising tendency powerfully leavening New India was emphasised by Pherozeshah Mehta in his welcome address to the delegates as the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Sir William Wedderburn was elected President to this Congress which accorded an extraordinary welcome on behalf of India to Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, M.P., who was one of the sincerest friends of Indians. His presence in the Congress stimulated so unusual an enthusiasm in the country that this session was even called the "Bradlaugh Session" of the Congress.

IMPACT OF WORLD-FORCES

Thus the Congress soon after its birth rapidly tended to be a real representative body of the country and to become the articulate voice of Indian national hopes and aspirations, stimulated and strengthened not only by the unity of language that English education had given to the Indians and by the removal of social anarchy and disorder that had invaded India on the break-up of the Moghul power, but also by the establishment of centralised and settled government, ensuring personal liberty and freedom of movement, by the introduction of railways unifying the country by a net-work of lines, by the destruction of our old society by aggressive onslaughts, by the subjection of Indians to the painful bondage of common alien masters and by the pursuit of an

*(93) **How India Wrought For Freedom**, pp. 75-76.

economic policy that "India must be bled"*(94). Unintentionally the English rulers became by their policy and action the spiritual fathers and promoters of Indian unity and nationalism, recalling to memory the self-same role of Napoleon in Europe from Spain to Poland, particularly in Italy and Germany, at the beginning of the 19th century. Again, the nationalist movement that was slowly but steadily gathering strength, point and purpose in this country was not exclusively the creation either of the pioneering Bengalis or even of the Indians themselves. It owes substantially its impulse of growth and development to the impact of world-forces,—ideas, institutions and movements,—which India had been experiencing all the while throughout the 19th century. The impact of the American War of Independence and French Revolutionary ideologies, the British doctrines of Liberalism, the cult of Nationalism of Mazzini and the Young Italy, the rise and fall of States in Europe, the formation of the unified Kingdom of Italy and the growth of the German Empire, the Home Rule struggle of Ireland and the Nihilist movement of Russia, the awakening of Japan and the resurgence of China and Persia was palpable and creative in Indian history of the 19th century. The constructive role of Viceroys like Ripon and Dufferin as well as sympathetic Westerners like Hume and Cotton, Wedderburn and Norton, Bradlaugh and Besant has also to be duly appraised in the making of modern India. Under a variety of such forces and factors India in the closing

*(94) The expression "India must be bled" was first used in 1875 by the Marquis of Salisbury, then Secretary of State for India and later Prime Minister of England. He said that "as India must be bled, the bleeding should be done judiciously". This policy of bleeding India was bitterly criticised by Dadabhai Naoroji in course of a speech delivered on July 1, 1900 (**Indian Nation Builders**: Part II, Fifth Ed., pp. 42-50, published by Ganesh and Co., Madras, without any date of publication). Digby's **Prosperous British India** (London, 1901, p. XII) may also be consulted.

years of the last century was fast awaking to her self-consciousness and was getting ready for an open conflict with the Government at the turn of the century.

VIVEKANANDA AS A WORLD-CONQUEROR, 1893

In the meantime took place certain events of paramount importance for Indians, each powerfully pandering to their racial and national pride as well as fostering and feeding the forces of the new life or *vita nuova* that were surging in their breasts. The year 1893 is an epoch-making landmark in Indian history mainly because of Vivekananda's historic Chicago Address, the return of Aurobindo Ghose from England and his joining the State Service at Baroda, and the arrival of Mrs. Annie Besant in India which she adopted permanently as her new home*(95). With Ramkrishna as the prophet and Vivekananda as the exponent, Hinduism was virtually reborn as a dynamic spiritual force, destined to carry forward the old Hindu tradition of *Charaiveti* (*i.e.* march on and conquer) not only at home but also abroad. Superficial observers and people with sectarian bias or vested interests have often branded Vivekananda as "an orthodox Hindu" and dogmatically propagated the myth that the Ramkrishna-Vivekananda movement merely assured and stimulated "Hindu revivalist sentiment," and have thereby hopelessly misinterpreted the spirit of the new movement.

For the first time in modern history the voice of Young India became audible in the international forum through the trumpet tongue of Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893*(96).

*(95) Annie Besant's **India Bond or Free?** (London, 1926, p. 26)

*(96) For a detailed report of the proceedings and history of the Parliament of Religions see **The World's Parliament of Religions**, Vols. I & II, edited by J. H. Barrows and published from London in 1893.

Down to 1893 the international relations of the world were marked by a palpable inequality between the Eastern and Western peoples, the latter constantly making arrogant claims to racial superiority over the former on the untenable ground of their superior fitness. This *status quo* was challenged for the first time by an Indian, a Hindu Sannyasin of a strange type, who threw a spiritual bombshell before the educated world assembled at Chicago. It burst before long and took the entire world by surprise. India's pride in the past, pain in the present and passion for the future became most articulate in Vivekananda who challenged for the first time in an effective voice the dehumanising *status quo* of international relations and inaugurated the historic struggle for equality between the East and the West. He was thus a pioneer of a new revolution in the realm of relations of nations*(97). "Vivekananda's lecture at Chicago (1893)," writes Benoy Kumar Sarkar, "is a profound masterpiece of modern philosophy. Before the Parliament of Religions, this young Bengali of thirty stood as an intellectual facing intellectuals, or rather as a whole personality face to face with the combined intelligence of the entire world. There he shone not as the propagator of *Vedanta* or Hinduism, or any other "ism" but as a creative thinker whose thoughts were bound to prevail. What, then, is Vivekananda's self? What is the personality that he expressed in this speech? The kernel can be discovered in just five words. With five words he conquered the world, so to say, when he addressed men and women as 'Ye divinities on earth,—Sinners?' The first four words thundered into being the new gospel of joy, hope, virility, energy and freedom for the races of men. And with the last word, embodying as it did a sarcastic question, he demolished the whole structure of soul-degenerating, cowardice-promoting,

*(97) Haridas Mukherjee's papers on **Swami Abhedananda** as published in the **Amrita Bazar Patrika** (Oct. 1, 1947) and the **Hindusthan Standard** (Oct. 1, 1953.)

negative, pessimistic thoughts. On the astonished world the little five-word formula fell like a bomb-shell. The first four words he brought from the East, and the last word he brought from the West. All these were oft-repeated expressions, copy-book phrases both in the East and the West. And yet never in the annals of human thought was the juxtaposition accomplished before Vivekananda did it in this dynamic manner and obtained instantaneous recognition as a world's champion"*(98). The key to Vivekananda's life and message is to be found in his *Sakti-Yoga* or the cult of strength, manhood, virility and freedom. Since the middle of the 19th century the West was trying to work out a solution just along these lines. A very powerful protagonist of this new spirit was the German philosopher Nietzche who told the Christians "Close the Bible, open thy Code of Manu" and awakened them to the need "of a more positive, human and joyous life's philosophy than that of the New Testament." "This joy of life for which the religious, philosophical and social thought of the West was anxiously waiting", writes Benoy Kumar Sarkar, "came suddenly from an unexpected quarter, from this unknown young man of India. And Vivekananda was acclaimed as a tremendous creative power, a profound remaker of man, as the pioneer of a revolution,—the positive and constructive counterpart to the destructive criticism of Nietzche". His historic success at Chicago produced a tremendous impact on India. It electrified our hearts and minds with the

*(98) B. K. Sarkar's **Political Philosophies Since 1905.** (Lahore, 1942, Vol. II, Part III, pp. 214-215) and Dr. Basu Kumar Bagchi's Introduction to Swami Abhedananda's life in America entitled **An Apostle of Monism** written by Mrs. Mary Le Page (Calcutta, 1947, pp. 7-22). Also see Girijasankar Roychowdhury's Bengali work on **Swami Vivekananda and the Nineteenth Century in Bengal** (2nd Ed., 1956) for an objective presentation of Vivekananda's role in the making of modern Bengal, nay, India.

restlessness of a new life, the pulse of which now began to beat faster than ever. And when he spoke to the West that "I have gone forth to the world to preach a religion of which Buddhism is a rebel child and Christianity a distant echo," he simply gave utterance to the voice of India's militant nationalism. His doctrine of creative manhood and the cult of *Sakti* that he adumbrated throughout India in course of his *Lectures from Colombo to Almora* (1897) found a concrete expression in the Swadeshi Movement of 1905 which was India's first battle for Freedom. "He," further observes Benoy Kumar Sarkar, "paved the way for the ideas of 1905 and was thus in a general manner a Rousseau of the Bengali revolution"*(99).

Those who have cared to study the works of Vivekananda and the authentic literature of the Ramkrishna movement will not fail to notice that this movement, although based upon ancient Vedantic doctrines, represented at the same time the fruition and fulfilment of all religious articles and faiths. It did not merely copy from the past; it also created new values and propagated new messages suitable to modern men and modern times. "The teachings of Ramkrishna are pregnant with catholicity and the spirit of universal freedom. 'As you rest firmly on your own faith and opinion,' runs his advice, 'so allow others also equal liberty to stand by theirs.' Here we have the doctrine of a self-conscious pluralism such as would afford 'the other fellow' also an opportunity for self-assertion and create chances for an open-air intellectual tug-of-war at mutual convenience. The respect for the 'other fellow's' individuality is in Ramkrishna's social ethics a cause as well as an effect of his 'appreciation' of other faiths. *Yata mat tata path* (as many faiths, so many paths) is perpetually on his lips. The diversity of paths in the moral world does

*(99) B. K. Sarkar's **Political Philosophies Since 1905.** Vol. II, Part II, p. 216.

not frighten him. As a true servant of man he is profoundly convinced of the dignity of individual manhood and personality...Ramkrishna's faith in the dignity of man enables him thus to welcome the exponents of every faith as the builders of and travellers on roads to reality, light and immortality...Ramkrishna is a believer in the equality of faiths. He has established the democracy of religions...Nobody in the world's culture-history and philosophical annals has been a more pronounced architect of the republic of religions than Ramkrishna"*(100). Taking its stand on the bedrock of a democratic and pluralistic philosophy of life, the Ramkrishna-Vivekananda movement was pregnant with the possibilities of a dynamic religious creed into which it began to develop ever since the closing years of the last century. At Vivekananda's hands the old Brahmo attitude of defensive character as well as the apologistic temper of Keshab Chandra Sen *vis-a-vis* Christianity was changed into an aggressive and dynamic outlook. The success that Vivekananda achieved in foreign countries mightily reacted on the Indian nationalist movement, and the greater this success was organised and consolidated in the West, its impact on the homeland became greater and greater still. It will be perhaps a news to many people of this generation, particularly its younger section, that the history of the work of Vedantic propaganda in the U.S.A. is a cent per cent misnomer without Swami Abhedananda who was Vivekananda's worthy comrade-in-arms—the man who really gave his whole life to the organisation and consolidation of that movement on the American soil. Dr. Windel Thomas, an American scholar, has observed:

*(100) B. K. Sarkar's **Creative India** (Lahore, 1937, pp. 466-468). Also see Mahendra Gupta's serial articles on "The Gospel of Sri Ramkrishna" (as published in the **Dawn** during 1897-98) and Abhedananda's **Memoirs of Ramkrishna** (New York, 1905) for an authentic record of Ramkrishna's messages.

"Paying more attention to history and his field of operation, Swami Abhedananda did more than his leader to adjust Vedanta to Western culture. Rather than overpower by flashing oratory, he seeks to convince by sweet reasonableness and a vast array of new and picturesque facts"*(101). Abhedananda's splendid work in the West and the recognition he received there from all quarters was also a factor stimulating our national movement. Partisan narratives may not recognise it, but contemporary records and literature, both Eastern and Western, sufficiently bear it out. Many Indian scholars who later on visited America have also expressed their keen appreciation of Abhedananda's great role in the propagation of Indian culture in that distant land. Sir S. Radhakrishnan in course of his two letters to one of the authors of this work observed in 1941: "And his (Abhedananda's) presentation of our cultural aspirations and religious truth to western audiences elicited great praise from his varied audiences...His work in America was quite impressive." This is also corroborated by Sir C. V. Raman who also wrote of Abhedananda thus: "His services to India in popularising her culture and religion abroad were undoubtedly of a memorable character" (*Vide : Navayuger Manush,* Cal., 1941, p. 7 and *Mukti-Andolane Abhedananda,* Cal., 1948, pp. 56-60, two Bengali

*(101) W. Thomas: **Hinduism Invades America** (Newyork, 1930, p. 111). Also see Rajendralal Acharya's serial articles on **Swami Abhedananda in America** (**Viswabani,** 1941) and Haridas Mukherjee's paper on **Abhedananda** as published in the **Hindusthan Standard** on October 1, 1953. In the authoritative **Life of the Swami Vivekananda** (Mayabati Ed., 1915, Vols. 4) readers will find a correct appraisal of Abhedananda's role in the Ramkrishna movement in the U.S.A., but unfortunately in the subsequent editions of that work significant references to Abhedananda's work in America as a colleague of Vivekananda have been left out.

works from the pen of Haridas and Kalidas Mukherjee. Also see *Benoy Sarkarer Baithake,* Cal., 1942).

ADVENT OF ANNIE BESANT IN INDIA, 1893

The year 1893 is also important in the history of our country on account of Mrs. Annie Besant's arrival in India with a mission and a message. She had already joined the Theosophical Society of Bombay in 1889—the Society which aimed at "the rescue of India from the materialism by the revival of ancient philosophical and scientific religions, and, by the placing of India as an equal partner in a great Indo-British Commonwealth, would avert a war of colour, and bind East and West together in a Brotherhood which should usher in an Era of Co-operation and Peace". Immediately on her advent in India, she set herself, "showing the insufficiency of materialism as an answer to the problems of life, and the immense superiority of Hinduism as a philosophy encasing an all-embracing religion and a science of yoga, which was an open road to the worlds invisible, to the ancient Rishis of India and the East, to the Saints of Christendom, to the Wisdom which included all religions, excluded none"*(102). This note had been struck by Colonell Olcott even in his first lecture in India on March 23, 1879 when he talked of the "majesty and sufficiency of Eastern Scriptures" and made an "appeal to the sentiment of patriotic loyalty to the memory of their forefathers to stand by their old religions".

THE REFORMISTIC BRAHMO SAMAJ *vs.* THE NATIONALISTIC MOVEMENT

It is a common experience that patriotism or nationalism draws a people closer to the soil and its spirit

*(102) Annie Besant: **India: Bond or Free?** (pp. 26-27.)

is generally kept up by an appeal to the pride in the past. No movement can ever be of a lasting significance or durable in character if it happens to be divorced from the traditions of the soil, with which tender memories and loyalties of generations entwine themselves. The basic reason for the gradual decline of the Brahmo Samaj movement in India at the end of the 19th century is to be sought, not in the so-called revivalism of Hinduism as effected by Bankim, Dayananda, Ramkrishna, Bejoykrishna, Vivekananda, Tilak and the Theosophists, but in the more fundamental fact that it was not sufficiently rooted in the soil. By denying a good deal of the country's past, by exhibiting Christian leanings and by ridiculing too much the religion of the common man representing the genius of the nation, the Brahmo Samaj movement in its later phases became largely divorced from the native soil and like a flower in a metal vase began to wither away for the lack of nutriment from the subsoil*(103). On the contrary, the movement with nationalistic bias, of which Bankim, Surendranath, Tilak and Vivekananda were some of the greatest protagonists, showed the promise and potency of the future. That the Brahmo Samaj began to decline from the 'seventies and 'eighties of the last century before the rising tide of nationalism which was a more progressive and a more revolutionary force, has been noticed by contemporaries like Bipin Chandra Pal, himself an ardent Brahmo at one time*(104). Pandit Shivnath Sastri also may be cited as a corroborating authority on the point (*Vide: Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Banga-Samaj*, 3rd Ed.,

*(103) Vide: B. N. Datta's **Swami Vivekananda - Patriot - Prophet** (pp. 167-169) which is a scholarly and documentary study of the Swamiji's life and varied activities in the light of the materialistic interpretation of history. Also see the **Bande Mataram** editorial on "The Brahmo Samaj" as incorporated in the **Appendices**.

*(104) **My Life and Times**, Vol. I, pp. 233-237.

pp. 300-307). Aurobindo Ghose, another great contemporary authority, observed during 1894 that the future of the country lay with the generation whose outlook was being moulded by men like Bankim. "Already we see", wrote Aurobindo in the *Indu Prakash* of Bombay (August 27, 1894), "the embryo of a new generation soon to be with us, whose imagination Bankim has caught and who care not for Keshab Chandra Sen and Kristo Das Pal, a generation national to a fault, loving Bengal and her new glories, and if not Hindus themselves, yet zealous for the honour of the ancient religion and hating all that makes war on it. With that generation the future lies and not with Indian Unnational Congress or the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj"*(105). In course of a leading editorial, the *Bande Mataram* lamented in 1907 that the "Sadharan Brahmo Samaj is daily drifting further and further away from the moorings of the national faith...And that is exactly why inspite of its immense potentialities the Brahmo Samaj has achieved but little success, gained but little popularity. Today it claims only 4050 members compared with 3051 ten years earlier and out of a total population of 294,361,056 persons"*(106). It is no wonder then that the followers of the Brahmo Samaj who came to represent vested interests in leadership and in their programme of national regeneration towards the close of the 19th century, would be startled very much at the birth of a more powerful and progressive movement which they, being put on the defensive, almost instinctively rationalised as a "reaction" and branded Vivekananda as a "revivalist" with an air of superiority. But subsequent history has amply shown that Aurobindo's prediction in this respect proved true within less than a decade and a half. The Swadeshi Movement

*(105) Vide: Sri Aurobindo's **Bankim Chandra Chatterji**, pp. 45-46.

*(106) The **Bande Mataram**: the leader on "The Brahmo Samaj" as published in its issue of January 23, 1907.

which swept over Bengal in 1905 and produced stirring reactions in India and abroad was the outcome of a staunch nationalism, the spirit of which was whetted by many men of culture, talent and genius during the last three decades of the last century. Annie Besant was one of the foremost leaders of that band. She identified herself wholly with India and rendered inestimable services through educatoin and politics to her awakening and assertion. Very indignantly Valentine Chirol, the renowned London *Times'* correspondent in India, has written of her that "certainly no Hindu has done so much to organise and consolidate the movement as Mrs. Annie Basant, who, in her Central Hindu College at Benares and her Theosophical Institution at Adyar, near Madras, has openly proclaimed her faith in the superiority of the whole Hindu system to the vaunted civilization of the West"*(107).

AUROBINDO'S MESSAGES IN THE *Induprakash,* 1893-94

The year 1893 is again important not only in the personal life of Aurobindo Ghose, but also in the history of our nationalist movement. Aurobindo returned in that year from England and joined the State Service at Baroda wherefrom he watched with keen interest the developments of the nationalist movement and was getting prepared for an eventual role in it at the appropriate moment. Already in the early 'nineties leftist trend was discernible in the Congress, and its officially accepted policy of prayer and petition or what was called the mendicant policy, came up for criticism and contempt. The writings of Aurobindo Ghose of the period of 1893-94 embodied this spirit of protest against the Congress. In his very first of the serial articles on "New Lamps for Old,"

*(107) Valentine Chirol's **Indian Unrest** (London, 1910, pp. 28-29)

published in the *Induprakash,* he wrote thus on August 7, 1893: "If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into a ditch? Certainly I myself *two years* ago would not have admitted that it can be truthfully applied to the National Congress". In course of another article (Aug: 28, 1893) he said, "A body like the Congress, which represents not the mass of the population, but a single and very limited class could not honestly be called national...It is not a popular body and has not in any way attempted to become a popular body"*(108). In these articles Aurobindo not only laid bare the hollowness and futility of the prevailing Congress policy of prayers and petitions for the redress of national grievances, but also suggested a constructive line of action—the salvation of the country through "purification by blood and fire". The policy of the British Government, said Aurobindo, had led to the creation in India of a bourgeois class or middle class which forms the "political nucleus" of the Congress. "Yet the proletariate is, as I have striven to show, the real key of the situation. Torpid he is and immobile; he is nothing of an actual force, and whoever succeeds in understanding and eliciting his strength, becomes by the very fact master of the future". This he wrote as early as December 5, 1894 in connection with his criticism of Hume. Even earlier than that he frankly expressed himself thus: "The proletariate among us is sunk in ignorance and overwhelmed with distress. But with that distressed and ignorant proletariate,—now that the middle-class is proved deficient in sincerity, power and judgment—with that proletariate resides, whether we like it or not, our sole assurance of hope, our sole chance in the future" (Dec. 4, 1893). These writings from the pen of Aurobindo did not go unnoticed. Hemendra Prasad Ghose informs us that

*(108) See Girija Sankar Roychowdhury's **Sri Aurobindo and the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal** (Calcutta, 1956, pp. 64-84) which is the best work of its kind up till now, although bristling with certain mistakes here and there.

these articles "enthralled the admiration of Mahadeo Govind Ranade, the astute Marhathi who was the power behind the throne of the Congress, who considered them with anxiety akin to alarm as likely to strike a deadly blow to the organisation, such was the cogency of their reasoning and their manner of expression. He persuaded the editor to refrain from publishing more articles of the type"*(109).

TILAK AND THE EXTREMIST PRESSURE UPON THE CONGRESS, 1895-98

Even more important than Aurobindo's writings was the line of policy and action that was developing in Southern India in the 'nineties with Bal Gangadhar Tilak as the leader and Poona as the focus. Against the moderatist trend of the early Congress leaders, there set in in the 'nineties a reaction in favour of the forward march and a party of action began to emerge. Tilak was the first Indian politician to organise it in his province, which later on influenced very profoundly the course of political developments in Bengal and the Punjab. Tilak did not believe that mere talk alone or the fiery speeches from the Congress platform alone would lead us very far. He saw with a prophetic purity of vision that the Congress movement was too much "occidental in its mind, character and methods, confined to English educated few, founded on the political rights and interests of the people read in the light of English history and European ideals, but with no roots either in the past of the country or in the inner spirit in the nation". Tilak wanted to rouse "not only the political mind, but the soul of the people by linking its future to its past" and his organization of the Shivaji and Ganapati festivals in the 'nineties (perhaps in 1895) was an expression of this new

*(109) H. P. Ghose's **Aurobindo—The Prophet of Patriotism** (Calcutta, 1949, pp. 6-7.)

political outlook. "Mr. Tilak", wrote Aurobindo in 1918, "was the first political leader to break through the routine of its somewhat academical methods, to bridge the gulf between the present and the past and to restore continuity to the political life of the nation. He developed a language and a spirit and he used methods which indianised the movement and brought into it the masses... What was done then by Mr. Tilak in Maharashtra has been initiated for all India by the Swadeshi movement"*(110). Apart from this pioneering work in politics, Tilak is also important in our history as a man of genius in culture. His educational work in Maharashtra through the *Mahrathi* and the *Kesari* (both being founded by him in the early 'eighties) and his scholarly publications,—*Orion* and *Arctic Home*,—left indelible mark in our cultural annals. Tilak's contributions both as an educationist and a politician were those of a pioneer, and in both these respects he gave a new direction to our nationalist movement and infused a new spirit into it.

ARRIVAL OF LORD CURZON IN INDIA, 1898

While Tilak was striving his best to broaden and deepen the basis of our movement along truly national lines by the new language he spoke and by the new technique he developed, Bombay was caught in the grip of a plague and a famine devastating in their result (1896-98). The ineffectual and extremely unpopular measures adopted by the Bombay Government to relieve popular sufferings, intense and terrific, led to the assassination of two English officers in the streets of Poona. The outbreak of riots in Bombay were responded with repression by the Government. The murderer was

*(110) Vide: Aurobindo's **Bankim - Tilak - Dayananda** (Calcutta, 2nd Ed., 1947, pp. 19-20) or **Speeches and Writings of Tilak.**

arrested and executed after trial, and Tilak, being held, although wrongly, responsible for the calamity owing to his incendiary writings, was subjected to a rigorous imprisonment (1897). The governmental prosecution of the the Press continued with utmost severity, and even persons of influence and distinction came to be arrested without trial. "Among the people of India, the terrible year 1897-98 left other bitter memories than those of famine, war and pestilence"*(111). These were the legacies with which closed the 19th century and which called upon the redoubtable Lord Curzon (the Viceroy of India during 1898-1905) for an appropriate solution. The future course of the country was to be determined by the measure the Government would succeed in offering solution to the problem and pacifying discontent. But Curzon's six-year administration, instead of solving, worsened the Indian problem, and precipitated by his policy and action the revolutionary outburst of 1905.

CURZON'S FIRST AUTOCRATIC DEAL, 1899

Received in India in the midst of universal enthusiasm in 1898, Lord Curzon soon disillusioned popular expectations by his rigorous imperialism, bureaucratic administration and systematic denial of all principles of popular government. "An autocratic rule", says Mr. R. C. Dutt, "was his ideal". One of his first acts of autocracy was the passage of the Municipality Act of 1899 by which the Government placed restriction on the freedom of work of the elected Commissioners in the Municipality of Calcutta, and reduced the numerical superiority of the elected members (50) to the nominated ones (25) to a status of parity (25 elected and 25 nominated under the new arrangement). The nominated members, forming a pro-government party, became the controlling factor in the

*(111) R. C. Dutt: **The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age**, pp. 455-456.

Municipality with the support of the official Chairman. The step was absolutely uncalled for at that moment, for the Calcutta Municipality dominated by the popular representatives, had been doing "excellent work for the town", notwithstanding occasional blunders. The true cause of this retrograde step was the rising ardour of autocracy in the Government, of which Curzon was a personified incarnation.

STORM OVER THE INDIAN UNIVERSITIES ACT, 1904

The second act of Curzon's highhandedness and autocracy was the passage, against the universal protest and indignation of Indians, of what is known as the Indian Universities Act of 1904. To check the growing ardour of nationalism which Western education was increasingly fostering in the educated classes, the Viceroy sought to cripple it by means of an effective control over education. The English system of education as introduced and developed in this country under the auspices of the ruling race increasingly came up for criticism at the hands of many a thinking man. Even Sir William Wilson Hunter noticed its grave shortcomings and observed in the early 'eighties: "Your State education is producing a revolt against three principles which, although they were pushed too far in ancient India, represent the deepest wants of human nature—the principle of discipline, the principle of religion, the principle of contentment". He further observed that the Government's educational policy was producing in India an overgrown clerkly race whose ambition even all the offices of the Government would fail to satisfy*(112). Moreover, the State education was never intended to develop the manhood of the nation nor the material resources of the country in the best interests

*(112) Vide: H. P. Ghose's Foreword to our work on **A Phase of the Swadeshi Movement: National Education** (Cal., 1953, p. 5).

of the native population. Gooroo Dass Banerjee, the first Indian Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, was emphatic in his views on the shortcomings of the University education in course of his Convocation Addresses (1890-92). He suggested very strongly the urgency of higher scientific and technical education for Indians and the introduction of the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction. The criticism which Rabindra Nath Tagore offered at that time is to be seen in his paper on *Shikshar Her-Fer* published in December, 1892, drawing an instantaneous recognition for his well-reasoned views from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Gooroo Dass Banerjee and Ananda Mohan Bose*(113). In an article published in 1898, Satis Chandra Mukherjee, the founder-editor of the now-defunct *Dawn,* complained that the University education had failed to satisfy everyone of the parties concerned, and showed with sufficient force of logic how the University education had failed both culturally and commercially. He observed: "From the commercial point of view, it is looked upon with disfavour by the large majority of graduates and undergraduates who with a smattering of literary or semi-scientific instruction find it hard even to earn a bare pittance to keep body and soul together". The bread-problem became keener and keener every year and even higher University education provided no guarantee for livelihood to the youth—who even after he had "sweated himself and his family through the whole course of higher education"—frequently looked in vain for "employment at Rs. 30 (£ 2) or even at Rs. 20 a month"*(114). But the more fundamental defects which came to be complained of in stronger and stronger terms as days rolled on, were that it was a foreign product, divorced from the living realities of Indian life and culture, and that it was unnational or denational in out-

*(113) **The Sadhana** (**Paush,** 1299 B.S. and **Chaitra,** 1299 B.S.) .....

*(114) Valentine Chirol: **Indian Unrest,** pp. 224-225.

look, character and consequences. In the inimitable language of Aurobindo, the whole case of Indian grievance in this respect may be summed up thus: "We are dissatisfied with the conditions under which education is imparted in this country, its calculated poverty and insufficiency, its anti-national character, its subordination to the Government and the use made of that subordination for the discouragement of patriotism and the inculcation of loyalty"*(115). Out of this keen awareness of the grave shortcomings of English education sprang up the cry for National Education of which Mrs. Annie Besant had been a formidable exponent and protagonist towards the end of the 19th century. Another redoubtable, though less known, champion of National Education was Satis Chandra Mukherjee who would play a most valuable and creative role in the Swadeshi Movement. [*Vide* our recent work on *The Origins of the National Education Movement (1905-1910)*, published by the Jadavpur University, for further elucidation of this point].

FORMAL BEGINNING OF THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT, 1905

When in this psychological background of Indians, the Report of the Universities Commission, constituted in January 1902, was published in June of the same year, it naturally raised storm of protest and indignation in the country at the proposed effective official control over education. Satis Chandra Mukherjee offered "the most uncompromising criticism" to the Commission's Report published together with the "Note of Dissent" by Gooroo Dass Banerjee. He not merely offered criticism, but also took a practical step for the proper training of the youths and founded a special institution aptly named the Dawn Society (July, 1902). It soon became a nursery of patriotism and functioned as a dynamic centre of culture and

*(115) Sri Aurobindo's **The Doctrine of Passive Resistance**, p. 37

nationalism for a number of years (1902-07). It holds a unique place in the history of our national awakening*(116). The criticism of the Government's educational policy continued unabated all the while. And when the Indian Universities Act was passed on March 21, 1904*(117), it was greeted with a violent outburst of Indian indignation, and the demand for an independent system of National Education became louder than before. Curzon's educational measure was widely, and not without justification, interpreted by the educated classes as an outrageous attempt of the Government at throttling higher education in this country. Mrs. Annie Besant opposed the Act from the beginning to the end. Thus Curzon by his repeated autocratic deals caused deep frustration and resentment in the people and created an explosive situation in the country, which would soon take a violent turn in 1905 in connection with the Partition of Bengal, the last and worst act of Curzonian autocracy. His Partition scheme served as the spark that ignites powder into an explosion. The Boycott-Swadeshi Movement which declared itself formally on August 7, 1905, convulsed the country with such an intensity of force as was never witnessed before. It marked a turning point in our nationalist history. It raised the demand for unqualified Swaraj for India. It revolutionised

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*(116) Vide: Rajendra Prasad's letter to the Editor, the **Dawn**, as published in its issue of Nov., 1905, Part III, pp. 24-25. For greater details see our articles in the **Modern Review**, (May, 1953) and **Ananda Bazar Patrika** (April 19, 1953) as well as **Benoy Sarkerer Baithake** (1st Ed., 1942) and the **Dawn** for Dec., 1902.

*(117) Vide: Lovat Fraser: **India Under Curzon and After** (London, 1911, pp. 175-189) and Ronaldshay's **The Life of Lord Curzon,** (Vol. II. London, 1928, pp. 185-194) for official version of the case. See our book entitled **A Phase of the Swadeshi Movement** (Cal. 1953, pp. 20-23) for the nationalist reaction to the Curzonian reforms.

our old political ideals and the line of action. It was India's first battle for Freedom. In the words of Srijut Hemendra Prasad Ghose, "It was not a mere boycott of British or even foreign goods, not a mere protest against the partition of Bengal. It was a cyclone, tearing up by the roots many ornamental plants of society and wrecking some of the flimsy trestle-bridges of foreign introduction; an earthquake; one of those seismic disturbances in which nations leap forward or fall backward by generations in a single bound"*(118).

*(118) Vide: H. P. Ghose's Foreword to our book entitled **A Phase of the Swadeshi Movement** (Cal., 1953). Also see our Bengali pamphlet on **Swadeshi Andolan** (Cal., 1953) for a synoptic account of the genesis and character of that movement.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

FIFTY YEARS AGO:
THE WOES OF A CLASS OF BENGAL PEASANTRY UNDER EUROPEAN INDIGO-PLANTERS*

By

Haran Chandra Chakladar

Only fifty years ago, three or four millions of our countrymen in Bengal were subjected by European Indigo-planters to a system of inhuman oppression which only finds a parallel in the annals of negro-slavery in America. Indigo was an industry of the West Indies, and when, at the end of the eighteenth century, it was transported into India, it was with the instincts of a slave-owner that the European planter came to raise indigo in our land. Every form of oppression that unrestrained tyranny could devise or the inventive imagination of rapacity could contrive, was put into practice by the Indigo-planters. The criminal records of Bengal, from the time that Indigo-cultivation was introduced into the province down to its final banishment, prove clearly and undeniably that 'murder, homicide, riot, arson, dacoity, plunder and kidnapping'*(1) (Sir Ashley Eden), were some of the means by which the ryot was forced to take up the cultivation of indigo.

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* Originally published in the **Dawn Magazine** in July, 1905.

*(1) The Hon'ble (afterwards) Sir Ashley Eden handed in to the Indigo Commission an abstract of 49 serious cases and a file of heinous cases in connection with the cultivation of Indigo. Vide **Report of the Indigo Commission**, Answer 3575.

It is strange that the immense fortunes which the European planters realised*(2) by the manufacture of indigo, did not incline them to redress the grievances of the people upon whose labour the success of the industry was solely dependent.

Indigo had been one of the most flourishing concerns carried on by Europeans in India, and the East India Company which directly supported the indigo industry for 22 years (1780-1802), placed India in the foremost rank among the indigo-producing countries of the world. The cultivation was carried on from Dacca to Delhi and the exportation was nine million pounds; but Bengal indigo was the best of its kind and superseded all other indigo, and from 1815-16 Bengal supplied all the indigo required for the consumption of the world. But from the very first, the indigo system in Lower Bengal was a blot on the British Administration in India. So early as 1810, the licenses granted to four planters to reside in the interior of the country were withdrawn, on account of the severe

*(2) One of the most remarkable instances of the immense wealth realised by the indigo-nabobs and of the vicissitudes of fortune, was Mr. Williams of the Bengal Civil Service, for a long time the commerical Resident of the East India Company at Coomerkhali. Almost all the indigo-factories in the neighbourhood were built or owned by him, and so rich did he grow that he would not condescend to go home in any ordinary ship, but built one of the finest vessels of her day, the Zenobia, to convey to England, himself, his family, and his fortune—in the shape of as many chests of indigo as she would carry. Before she was launched, it was whispered that he had used his master's money in the production of his indigo. An inquiry was ordered—the verdict was against him—he was dimissed from the service, and died long afterwards a poor, old, broken-hearted man at Dacca. The Zenobia, however, plied her trade, and for a long time carried cargos of the ill-fated dye to London, regardless of him who first drove a copper-nail into her keel.—Vide **Indigo and its Enemies**, by Delta, p. 7.

ill-usage towards the natives proved against them, and all the cruelties and oppressions unearthed by the Indigo Commission fifty years later were committed then as afterwards. The defective and partial administration of the law allowed this vicious state of things to exist and continue until half a century later, in 1860, the poor innocent sufferers, the martyrs of avarice and extortion, could bear it no longer and rose in a body to shake off the vampire which had been sucking their life-blood for eighty years. The wonder is that they could submit to this inhuman oppression so long. Since 1860, one by one the indigo factories in Jessore, Nadiya and Krishnagore have been disappearing, and the thousands of ruined factories now met with in many parts of the country bear testimony to the natural punishment that befell those who either could not, or would not, correct or reform their system of treatment of the ryots. Indigo crop is still grown over considerable areas in Lower Bengal but not under the old conditions, and is still the best in the world but the total output is very small. During the past decade, the indigo industry in India has been steadily on the decline, owing to the great and steadily increasing development of the manufacture of artificial indigo, brought about by the application, chiefly in Germany, of scientific processes, and this once important Indian industry is in danger of perishing altogether.

UNPROFITABLENESS OF THE INDIGO CONTRACT

We shall now show how the cultivation of indigo was utterly unprofitable to the raiyat and meant starvation to himself and his family. The object of the planters was to secure the maximum profit at the minimum or no cost; he wanted the indigo plant without paying nearly the cost of its production to the raiyat and at a nominal price which, even if fully paid, would be ruinously unprofitable. But the deductions from the nominal price were

so heavy, the unfairness of weighing so great, the extortions of the factory *amla* (officials) so excessive, that the nominal price dwindled to little or nothing, so that if they realised from the whole produce of their indigo land, in cash, what paid the rent of the land, they were lucky; wherefore they lost the whole value of that land to themselves besides all the cost of cultivating it for the planter. Then again, when the prices of all agricultural produce doubled or nearly doubled, the price paid or nominally paid for indigo was not raised by a single anna and until the raiyats had, as it were, declared open war, not a single planter had ever entertained thought of any increase of price. Whilst in all other trades, the world over, all parties concerned have been bound together by the usual commercial ties of mutual interest, in this one trade, in this one province, the indigo manufacture has always been a remarkable exception to this natural and healthy state of things*(3).

As no free cultivator in his senses would take up the cultivation of indigo under such conditions, the planters at first acquired land in permanent tenure at even losing rents and exorbitant prices, from the Zemindars who, when averse to granting land to them in lease or permanency, were obliged against their will to do so, from the fear of consequences of disputes with the planters and from the fear of the Magistrates who threatened them with penal consequences if they refused*(4); then, after the land was secured, the raiyats were coerced, the whole unhappy race of little farmers and tillers of the soil were compelled by force and deception—by imprisonment, by fetters, by cruel whippings—to enter into

*(3) Minute by Sir J. P. Grant, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, on the Report of the Indigo Commission—Paras—7, 66, 67, 20 and 1.

*(4) Report of the Indigo Commission, Paras—43, 45 and 115.

unprofitable contracts, and take advances which but once touched continued to gall them from generation to generation. 'The peasant assented to disadvantageous terms from fear of bludgeon men or was tricked into signing some paper which he did not understand'*(5). And these enforced 'contracts were supposed to descend from father to son, but of course, such an idea would not be allowed in any Court. The planter held such inheritance of liability *in terrorem* over the ryot'*(6). Yearly, the raiyat was made to affix his name to a *carte blanche,* a blank stamp paper which was not filled up at that date but might be used subsequently, filled up in any way that the planter liked. The planter never sought for an adjustment of the accounts but perpetuated the obligation of the cultivator to sow. The Indigo Commission endeavoured to find out how, exactly, advances were first taken by the raiyat but without success, because no one could be found who had taken, or remembered to have taken an advance himself; the raiyats whom they examined, maintained that the original advances were first taken by their fathers or grandfathers, or were given many years ago, in their youth*(7).

OPPRESSIONS PRACTISED BY THE PLANTERS AND THE RAIYATS' DISLIKE TO CULTIVATE INDIGO

To carry out this system of compulsion, troops of extortionate servants and overseers were retained, licentious clubmen were hired, the police were heavily bribed and gagged*(8), the magistrates, the protectors of the people, were frequently wheedled into sacrificing

*(5) Ibid, Appendix, no. 14; Minute by Lord Macaulay in 1835.

*(6) Evidence of Mr. F. L. Beaufort, C.S., Legal Remambrancer. Answers, 302, 303.

*(7) Report of the Indigo Commission, paras—49, 52 and 57.

*(8) Sir J. P. Grant's Minute, paras—56 and 47.

justice to favour the planters*(9), some of the leading Anglo-Indian papers were persuaded, and perhaps subsidised, to fight for them in the metropolis, and special, one-sided laws were carried through the Legislative Council of the Governor*(10). It was said, 'Not a chest of indigo reached England without being stained with human blood'. The ryots disinclined to plant indigo were shot down, speared through*(11), and kidnapped and confined in large numbers in low, filthy, narrow godowns or out-offices of the factories. It was not simple confinement in one godown that was practised, but poor ryots, substantial farmers and even respectable men, were seized and sent about from one factory to another, to escape discovery, and in some cases, they were not always heard of again*(12). Even women were abducted to the factories and confined*(13). Seizure of cattle was of as common occurrence as kidnapping. Sir Ashley Eden "released from one of the outfactories about two or three hundred heads of cattle which even when brought to his own house, the ryots, through fear of the planter, were afraid for several days to come forward and claim"*(14). Not content with the usual instruments of torture and punishment, one of the planters invented a novel form of whip or cat-o'-nine-tails, christened *Sham Chand* or *Ram Kant**(15), for beat-

*(9) Answer 3602; Evidence of Sir Ashley Eden.

*(10) Grant's Minute, paras—11-16 and **Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors,** page 187, Vol. I.

*(11) Answer 3918, Evidence of Mr. E. De Latour, Magistrate of Faridpur.

*(12) Grant's Minute, para—43.

*(13) Answer 3135. Rev. J. Long wrote in the **Harkaru,** "Certain planters can make use of **Black Holes** as well as Serajdowla did; while the violation of their daughters will teach ryots, how they complain of the Indigo Saheb."

*(14) Answer 3576.

*(15) The authorship of this was ascribed to Mr. Larmour, the leading planter in Bengal.

ing out of the ryots any lurking disinclination against the cultivation of the plant. Date-gardens which abound in the district of Jessore were up-rooted to make room for indigo and extensive areas of the ryots' cultivation were forcibly ploughed up and indigo sown on the land. Respectable men who had eighty, hundred or more families of raiyats under them were driven from their homesteads, with their families whom they had to hide in the houses of relatives, while they themselves lived the life of exiles. Their houses were plundered of all furniture and then razed to the ground. Whole villages and bazars were demolished and burnt down, and sometimes fights between the adherents of Zemindar and planter carried desolation, terror and demoralisation into a dozen villages at a time. The hand of the planter was constantly lifted up against the life and property of the ryot and he recognized neither the existence of a magistrate on earth, nor a God in Heaven*(16).

How intense a dislike to the cultivation of indigo had been bred in the minds of the ryots by ages of such terrible oppression until they abhorred the very name of indigo, is evidenced by some of the answers given by the ryots to the Indigo Commission.—"But if my throat is cut, I won't sow indigo." "I will die sooner than cultivate indigo"—"I would rather go to a country where the indigo plant was never seen or sown."—"Rather than sow indigo I will go to another country; I would rather beg than sow indigo."—"I would sow indigo for nobody, not even for my father and mother."—"No, I would be rather killed with bullets."—"Let the government cut our throats and send soldiers to kill us with bullets. but we will not sow

*(16) Vide Sir J. P. Grant's Minute, para—42. **Report of the Indigo Commission**, paras—86-94, 103, 104 and answers 870 (Rev. J. H. Anderson), 780 (Rev. F. Schurr), 849 (Rev. J. G. Lincke), 3576 (Ashley Eden), 1200-2 (Dukhi Sheikh), 3917 (Mr. E. De Latour), etc.

indigo"*(17). Revd. S. J. Hill, a missionary of the L. M. S. Mission repeated before the Indigo Commission, a verse of a popular song in the Murshidabad district—'The enemy of the soil is indigo; the enemy of work is idleness; so the enemy of caste is Padre Hill'*(18).

THE EXECUTIVE FAVOUR THE PLANTERS

One might exclaim how could such a state of anarchy, a veritable reign of terror, be possible under the British Raj. Were there no law and no magistrates to bring the despotic planters to reason? Law there was, but it did not reach the people, and the Lieutenant-Governor was forced to admit, 'a country where these offences are committed habitually, and for the most part with impunity, is a country in which the law affords the weak no protection. The fact is a disgrace to the administration.' The police were an organized gang of extortioners and the magistrates were few and far between, and even the few that there were, did not accord the ryot a due share of protection and support but often pandered to the interest of the planters, and the magistrate of Baraset frankly admitted, "As an young assistant, I confess I have favoured my own countrymen in several instances." The Indigo Commission rightly observed, 'It is not too much to say, that had all magistrates held the scales in even balance, a cultivation of the character which we have clearly shown indigo to be, would not have gone on for such a length of time. The bias of the English magistrate has been unconsciously towards his countrymen, whom he has asked to his own table or met in the hunting-field, or whose houses he has personally visited'*(19). When the magistrate was right-minded and disposed to do justice between man and man,

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*(17) **Vide** Answers 1156, 1165, 1180, 1216, 1249, 3214, 782

*(18) Answer 1693. জমিনের শত্রু নীল, কর্ম্মের শত্রু ঢিল, তেম্‌নি জাতের শত্রু পাদরী হিল।

*(19) Ibid, para—119.

he was interfered with, censured or removed by Government for alleged bias against planters. There was a gross dereliction of duty on the part of Government and a failure of justice due to the strong bias which was too frequently displayed by men in all positions from the highest officers of Government down to the lowest, in favour of those engaged in this particular cultivation*(20). The planters obtained the support of the executive, from the police constable to the head of the province, in their acts of spoliation and oppression.

On the 1st of August, 1895, Sir Frederick Halliday's Government appointed some of the leading planters in the districts of Krishnagore and Murshidabad, to be Honorary Magistrates, and the ryots declared, ' যে রক্ষক সেই ভক্ষক ' —a Bengali proverb which may be translated,—'Now they have made the wolf the shepherd of the flock.' Was it any wonder that the ignorant ryots who had been hood-winked by the planters with the idea that indigo-cultivation was a quasi-government institution, believed that even the Lieutenant-Governor had a share in some of the concerns*(21).

RAIYATS DECLARED FREE AGENTS: EDEN'S CIRCULAR

The Magistrate of Baraset (the Hon'ble Ashley Eden) had been censured by the Divisional Commissioner

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*(20) Ibid, answers 3607, 3608, 3579, 3598.

*(21) Questioned by the President of the Indigo Commission why he did not complain to the magistrate, a ryot said, 'Because the planter tells us that whoever goes to the magistrate will have his house pulled down, and be turned out of the village. This year the **amin** and **takidgir** (factory officers) told me that there was a new law passed, called মুগুরের আইন or the law of the mallet, that unless I dug indigo lands sufficiently deep, I should have my head beaten with a mallet and indigo sown in it. They said they had got two

for ordering the police not to allow planters to forcibly plough up the ryots' land against their wish. But in 1859, he issued a vernacular circular stating that it was optional with the ryots to enter into contracts. This time, Sir J. P. Grant was Lieutenant-Governor, and when the difference of opinion between the Magistrate and the Commissioner was referred to Government, the Lieutenant-Governor held that Eden was right. To these two impartial, sympathetic and broad-minded officers, Bengalis will ever remain thankful for banishing this intolerable pest of slavery from their midst. Eden communicated the Government order to his Deputy Magistrate who circulated a Bengali *perwanna* on the terms of the order, and this noble example was followed by the Magistrate of Krishnagar, Mr. W. J. Herschel, grandson of the great astronomer.

RAIYATS SHOW A DISPOSITION TO REVOLT: TWO PATRIOTIC BENGALEES

At last the raiyats were roused from their bondmen's slumber and it loomed on their misty minds that they were free agents, and the feelings of discontent which had so long been bottled up, were now ripe and ready to break out into open acts of resistance and violence. Eden's *perwanna* was the immediate occasion of tapping the reservoir of accumulated discontent—the sudden and unpremeditated stroke of Wat Tyler's hammer.

While the feelings of the raiyats were in a state of the greatest tension, two villagers, Vishnu Charan Biswas and Digumber Biswas, of Chowgacha in the Nadiya district, raised the banner of rebellion against the planters. They were formerly, *Dewans* of indigo concerns, but resigned their offices, in bitterness of mind at the oppres-

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laws out of the Company; the other law was for the breach of contract; both laws are now in force'. Answer 1247.

sions of the planters. They made up their mind to throw off the yoke of freedom, and roused the ryots to take up arms against their sworn enemies. They sent the "fiery cross" of revenge from village to village, and even indented club-men from the district of Backergunge, at their own cost, for any outbreak that might happen. They also financed the raiyats in their law-suits with the planters and infused new hopes in them. The raiyats now began to gather round their standard and break out in open revolt. The Biswases made immense sacrifice for the cause they took up. Their money losses were about seventeen thousand rupees*(22). Thousands of indigo raiyats and other Bengalees shewed a degree of patriotism, self-sacrifice and a power of combined and united action as had scarcely been witnessed in the annals of the country before.

APPOINTMENT OF A COMMISSION TO PACIFY THE RAIYATS

When the ryots, in the spring of 1860, showed a disposition to revolt in a body, and their complaints and alleged grievances attracted the notice of district officers, a Commission was appointed to take evidence and report on the whole practice of contract, cultivation and delivery. The Commission was composed of five members. Two belonged to the Civil Service; one was a prominent merchant of Calcutta; a fourth was a baptist missionary; and the fifth, an Indian gentleman of high caste and position. After a sitting of four months, and the consideration of a vast mass of oral and documentary evidence, the Commission reported that the system on which indigo had been cultivated was a coercive system of an unrelaxing character and had broken down, because it was, in the

*(22) Vide "A Story of Patriotism in Bengal" in "**Indian Sketches**" by Babu Sisirkumar Ghose, pp. 102-7, and "**History of Indigo Disturbance in Bengal,**" by Babu Lalit Chandra Mitra, M.A., p. 36

long run, unremunerative to the cultivator. He bore all the burden and he reaped few of the advantages. The report of the Commission forms very painful reading, and rare is the man who can help shedding tears, reading the harrowing tales of misery and wretchedness of which the Report is full. "They have ruined me of wealth, life, lands and houses and have made me an outcast from my country"—such is the evidence of almost all the raiyats examined by the Commission. Sir J. P. Grant, in a Minute, explained the whole situation and exposed the entire system of coercion.

A TEMPORARY EXPEDIENT TO PACIFY THE PLANTERS

Simultaneously with the appointment of the Commission, a Bill had been passed, to endure for six months, by which neglect on the raiyat's part to complete his civil contract was to be treated as a criminal offence, punishable with fine or imprisonment in the Magistrate's Court. But the report naturally raised the question whether this temporary exceptional and one-sided enactment should take its place among the permanent statutes of Government.

A fierce controversy arose over the Bill. The claims of the planters and of great mercantile houses in Calcutta were urged with much force in high and influential quarters; but Sir J. P. Grant stated the objections to the Bill with such force and clearness that Sir Charles Wood, the Secretary of State for India, refused to turn the temporary Land Act into a permanent statute. At the end of six months it was allowed to expire. By his action in this controversy, Grant incurred great unpopularity with the unofficial European public, both in India and England, but he received the hearty support and approval of Sir Charles Wood and Lord Canning*(23).

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*(23) Vide "Grant of Rothiemarchus" by W. S. Seton Karr, pp. 81-83.

RESULTS OF THE COMMISSION: THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAW RENDERED MORE EFFECTIVE

The simplicity of the measures that were adopted by Government on the recommendations of the Commission very conspicuously illustrates how unlawfully the system had so long been kept up. No new legislation was found necessary. Only notifications were issued declaring that Government was neither for nor against the cultivation of indigo; the raiyats were assured that they were free agents and all parties were warned against recourse to violent or unlawful proceedings; the hand of the law was strengthened to secure its good and effective execution as it then stood. Strong Magistrates were placed in charge of the indigo districts; new subdivisions were created, measures were adopted for an improved system of police, and Courts of Small Causes were established at the most important places in the indigo districts. The establishment of sub-divisions in the vicinity of their plantations had been violently opposed by the planters on the ground that "an indigo factory and a station cannot exist on the same spot"*(24), that is, indigo cultivation and law cannot go together. The truth of this statement was verified when the just and equitable distribution of the law to the raiyat and the planter sufficed to banish from Bengal one of the most thriving industries carried on by Europeans in India.

HUGE AGITATION STARTED BY THE PLANTERS

But the strong body of indigo planters who had defied the law so long were not to be foiled with impunity. Baffled in their attempts to continue the unnatural despotism they had so long exercised, they raised a howl, both in this country and in England,

*(24) Selections from the Records of the Govt. of Bengal, No. xxxiii, Pt. I, p. 114-132.

against "Messrs. Grant, Eden, Herschel and Seton Karr" or "Messrs. Grant, Eden & Co." under which names these benefactors of the ryots were parodied. They gave vent to their animus in what was at the time, known as the "Factory Press"; they slandered Grant*(25), calumniated Eden*(26), they abused the whole people of India, Hindu and Mussulman*(27), they petitioned Lord Canning, agitated in Parliament, and we shall now relate, how under the shadow of the Supreme Court, they had the Lieutenant-Governor himself prosecuted and fined, how they troubled the ghost of Harish Chandra Mukherjee, the indefatigable editor of the *Hindu Patriot*, and how they used the celebrated Bengali Drama, the Nil Darpan as a handle to wreak their vengeance on the President of the Indigo-Commission, Mr. Seton Karr, and on a representative of the body of missionaries who had rendered great help in bringing their abuses to light.

PLANTERS' PROSECUTION OF REV. J. LONG UNDER WHOSE SUPERINTENDENCE NIL DARPAN WAS TRANSLATED

An English translation of Nil Darpan with a preface by the author, Roy Dinabandhu Mitra Bahadur, having

*(25) Vide "Brahmins and Pariahs—An appeal by the Indigo Manufacturers of Bengal to the British Govt., Parliament & People, for protection against the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal." Sir J. P. Grant was spoken of as "the present high priest of the civil service Juggernaut" (p. 26), as "a man who combined in himself every mischievous quality that a man in power can have" (p. 162), a man who "has arrested industry, banished capital, shut up trade, aroused evil passions, excited the populace, and threatened the magistrates, and who has assumed an absolute dominion alike over the commercial dealings of his subjects and over the decisions of their disputes."

*(26) Ibid, p. 81, **et seq** & "Indigo and its Enemies" by Delta (London 1861, pp. 1-6).

*(27) "Brahmins and Pariahs", p. 7.

been circulated by the Government of Bengal*(28), the planters, who had been waiting for an opportunity to 'feed fat their grudge' against the Bengal Government, denounced the drama as infamously obscene and grossly libellous, and demanded the names of the parties who had circulated "a foul and malicious libel on indigo planters tending to excite sedition and breaches of the peace." But failing to get any names from the Bengal Government, they prosecuted the printer, Mr. C. H. Manuel, who gave out the name of Rev. James Long at his own request but was nevertheless fined ten rupees. Propping up Mr. Walter Brett, the Editor of the *Englishman,* who was alleged to have been libelled in the preface as the plaintiff, they instituted proceedings against Mr. Long for libelling the Editor of the *Englishman,* and libelling the indigo planters of Lower Bengal in Nil Darpan. The trial that followed roused the greatest interest among both Europeans and Indians. Merchants, traders, bankers, everybody, rich and poor, high and low, flocked to the Courts, so that it was remarked "there could be nobody left to carry on the business of Calcutta." The richer among the Bengalis were there ready to unloose their purse-strings if money could have saved the reverend gentleman, and the author of Nil Darpan was there ready to exchange places with

*(28) The English translation was made under the superintendence of Rev. James Long, the noble missionary who laid the Bengalis under a lasting debt of gratitude by his labours for the improvement of the vernacular press of Bengal. The actual translation was made by the celebrated author of **Meghanadbadh,** Michael Madhusudan Dutt, and was hurried through in a single night. The translation with an introduction by Mr. Long was published anonymously, and about 202 copies were circulated under the sanction of Mr. Seton Karr, the former President of the Indigo Commission, and under the official frank of the Govt. of Bengal of which he was the Secretary.

Mr. Long if that had been possible*(29). On the 24th July, 1861, Sir Mordaunt Wells, the Chief Justice, after making vile, 'indiscriminate attacks on the character of the natives with an intemperance inconsistent with the calm dignity of the bench'*(30), sentenced Mr. Long to pay a fine of Rs. 1000 and to suffer imprisonment in the common jail for one month. Immediately on hearing the verdict, Mr. Long was heard to say, 'What I have done now, I will do again' and the fine was paid, then and there, by Babu Kali Prasanna Singha, the publisher of the Bengali translation of the Mahabharata.

DEPARTMENTAL PUNISHMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE INDIGO COMMISSION

Mr. Seton Karr was punished departmentally for patronising the publication and helping in the circulation of Nil Darpan. He was censured by the India Government, he had to make lengthy apologies for his share in the work, and had to resign, at the bidding of the Secretary of State, his posts as Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal and as Legislative Member for Bengal in the Governor-General's Council. In consideration of his able and distinguished services, however, he was afterwards made a Judge of the High Court, and subsequently, Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department.

PROSECUTION OF THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF BENGAL

About ten months after the trial of Mr. Long, the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir J. P. Grant, was prosecuted in the Supreme Court for having authorised the publication in a Blue Book containing papers on the indigo cultivation

*(29) "English Rule and Native Opinion in India", by James Routledge, p. 292.

*(30) From the Resolution passed at a meeting for the recall of Sir Mordaunt Wells.

in Bengal,*(31) of a letter from the Commissioner of the Nadiya Division which was alleged to contain a libel against one John Mac Arthur, the Superintendent of a factory in Jessore, and the damages were laid at Rs. 10,000. Sir Barnes Peacock who was now the Chief Justice, assigned to the plaintiff nominal damages of one rupee.

PROSECUTION OF THE EDITOR OF THE HINDOO PATRIOT

While the case against the Lieutenant-Governor was pending, the planters aimed a shot against another sworn enemy of theirs, the Editor of the *Hindoo Patriot,* Harish Chandra Mukherjee, who had waged a regular crusade against the oppression of the planters, and had helped the ryots both with his pen and purse. A suit for damages valued at Rs. 10,000 was filed against him by one Mr. Archibald Hills, manager of the Katchikata indigo concern in Nadiya, for having given currency to a story charging Mr. Hills with outraging a peasant girl. Harish Chandra died while the case was still pending, but the vindictiveness of the planter continued and the proceedings went on against his widow who had been left in a state of helpless poverty, Harish Chandra having died a pauper for the cause of his country. The widow was compelled to compromise the case, the final decision being to the effect that the claim for damages was dismissed and only Rs. 1000 awarded to the plaintiff as his costs in the suit. In execution of that decree, the dwelling house of Harish Chandra was attached, but the decretal amount was paid off by subscription raised by the British Indian Association.

Thus ended one of the most troublous periods in the history of Bengal. Subsequently, Government enacted measures to help the indigo-planters, but the indigo interest had long been doomed and could never recover its former position in the districts of Lower Bengal.

*(31) Selections from the Records of the Govt. of Bengal, No. XXXIII, Part III.

APPENDIX II

THE BRAHMO SAMAJ

(*Bande Mataram,* January 23, 1907)

The anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj which comes off on the 25th makes one's thoughts turn to a chapter in the chequered history of religious activity in India. The Brahmo Samaj is the result of the yearning of the Indian mind after religious truth. And its history made by Ram Mohan, Debendra Nath, Keshub Chander, Protap Chandra and by many another *clarum et venerabile nomen* illustrates pretty clearly how reform movements fail in their effect by being conducted if not conceived in a spirit of opposition to the national bent. And if the Brahmo Samaj is still a movement only, an emotion, an aspiration—but not a settlement, a sect, or a church it is because of the gradual drifting off of the ideal from Indian to foreign.

The Adi Brahmo Samaj was established in Calcutta in January, 1830, by Ram Mohan Roy, a man of commending genius whose life work was the restoration of the old religion of India, as contained in the Vedas. Here it should be noted that when Ram Mohan speaks of the Vedas and of the monotheism taught by them, he almost invariably means the Upanishads, not the Brahmanas, not the Mantras or hymns of the Vedas. Both the Brahmanas and the hymns—as Max Muller said—teach a polytheistic, or, more accurately, a henotheistic, but not a monotheistic religion. Brought up in the belief that the Veda was the word of God, that it contained a primeval revelation, that it was free from the defects of human authorship Ram Mohan sought in it the true religion purified of all mere miracles and relieved of all theological rust and dust

and found it there. Ram Mohan gave up idolatry, and preached the pure monotheism of the Hindu faith.

Ram Mohan's mantle fell on Debendra Nath, the son of Dwarka Nath Tagore. Debendra Nath first tried to make Brahmoism popular and sought to shape it so as to touch the imagination of the people by not denuding it of the customs which make the withered sticks of theology blossom forth into national faith.

Keshab entered the Samaj headed by Debendra Nath and sat at his feet to learn the divine truths of the faith. But the two soon differed. The young aspirant wanted to proceed further than the old leader. At last Debendra Nath became frightened. He and his friends were prepared to give up all that was idolatrous and pernicious, but "they would not part with all their ancient national customs, they would not have their religion denationalised". They found all, they wanted, in their own ancient literature, and in the book of nature, open before their eyes, while Keshab was looking more and more beyond the frontiers of India, and seeking for spiritual food in the Christian Bible, and also though in a less degree, in the Koran and other religious books. A conservative by instinct the suggestion of the break-up of the Zenana wounded the susceptibilities of Debendra Nath. He preferred to make ministers of Brahmans—descendants of the noblest intellectual aristocracy the world has ever seen. And his Brahman blood revolted at the idea of inter-marriage. The divergence of principles in the two men began to accentuate themselves. Keshab insisted on reforms, Debendra Nath discouraged them. Keshab wanted that the affairs of the Samaj should be administered by the public voice. Debendra Nath had no faith in the public. It was a fight between the democratic spirit and the aristocratic. For some time the struggle went on till the fatal final step was taken. It came about thus. Says Keshub's biographer—"in the great cyclone of October 1865, the old building of the Adi Samaj at Jorasanko was so far damaged that the weekly Divine

service had to be removed thence to the house of Debendra Nath Tagore. While there, one Wednesday in November it was so arranged that before the newly elected Upacharyas (assistant ministers, who had renounced their Brahminical thread) arrived, the two former Upacharyas who had been deposed for retaining their sacred thread by the authority of Debendra Nath himself were installed into the pulpit again. In order that this might be done without hindrance, the devotional proceedings were begun a few minutes earlier than the appointed time. When on arrival at the place of worship Keshub and his friends witnessed this irregularity they left the service and warmly protested. Debendra Nath replied that as the service was being held in his private house he had the right to make what arrangement he liked. But Keshub's party insisted that it was the public worship of the Brahmo Samaj, only transferred for a little interval to his house by the consent of the congregation, and if he chose to violate the rules of the ministry laid down under his own presidency, they must decline to join such service in future. Thus began the act of secession from the parent Samaj at Jorasanko". Keshub signalized the commencement of an independent career in the establishment of the Brahmo Samaj of India on the 11th November, 1866.

For some time all went well, and Keshub stood out head and shoulders above his contemporaries. His singular command over the English and Bengalee languages, his enchanting eloquence, his captivating manners and his clear exposition of religious truths marked him out for a leader of men. But persistent popular applause told on him—till in reply to the question if he was an inspired prophet he called himself a "singular man", and his government seemed despotic to his followers and friends. His frequent appeal to what he called *Adesha* or Divine Command did not tend to conciliate the feelings of his adversaries. While this discontent grew stronger and stronger Keshub suddenly announced the betrothal of his

daughter to the Raja of Coochbehar. "This was the spark that made the mine explode." His daughter was nearly but not quite fourteen, and the young Raja not yet sixteen. Therefore Keshub was accused of having broken the Brahmo Marriage Law which he had been chiefly instrumental in getting carried. He was declared by some to be unfit to be the Minister of the Samaj. But he would not listen to any remonstrance. A meeting was called to consider the question of his despotism on the 21st March, 1878. The proceedings were violent, disorderly, almost riotous. "The Sunday following witnessed another disgraceful scene. Under the impression that they had deposed the present minister and Secretary Keshab's opponents thought they had a right to take possession of the building of the Brahmo Mandir. They therefore concerted a plan of going in a body on Sunday morning, and of making themselves the masters of the premises. Keshub and his friends, however, had got an intimation of these wishes beforehand, and stationed a number of their adherents on the Brahmo Mandir building, who, as soon as the protesting party appeared in view, sent for the assistance of the Police who drove away the assailants. The whole day, and up to late in the night these obnoxious tactics had to be kept up on both sides till the protestors, tired out by the persistent opposition, left the field in despair and disgust." The protesting section established a rival prayer meeting and organised a new Samaj "with an impersonal constitution, in which no single individual should have any supreme ascendancy." This was the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj established on the 15th May, 1878.

Keshub went on working with the shadow of death hovering over him and his death premature, painful and pathetic in 1884 was the end of a career which under altered circumstances would have been a landmark in the progress of the world. The inner tragedy of this career becomes apparent when one understands that Keshub was snatched away only when after having

dreamed of the impossible—after having tested the tormenting delights of the ideal, he saw before him the modest reality—when he was coming to realise that reforms to be generally acceptable must not at once attempt a revolutionary divorce from the manners, the customs, the traditions, the tendencies of the people—they must, moreover, grow from within, for the fragile blossom of an exotic ideal can never be accepted by the people at large. And Keshub's experience was lost upon those after him.

It is painful to dwell on the regrettable actions which followed Keshub's death and which culminated in turning out Protap Chandra—Keshub's "other self" insulted and assaulted from the Mandir.

The apotheosis of Keshub Chandra Sen was an act of folly which made the Samaj lose public sympathy. And when in 1905 an attempt was made to reconstruct the Samaj, Protap Chandra too ill to get out of the bed which proved to be his death bed protested against the reconstruction being made "on the ground that the pulpit of the 'church' must be kept everlastingly vacant in Keshub's honour, and that not a jot or little is to be altered or affected in the service or ritual as laid down by him." "From the very beginning", he said, "the claim of the Brahmo Samaj was its 'universality', all theists of whatever race or clime, were to look upon it as their own church. The present reconstruction, however, for ever falsifies that claim. Theists of all climes and races will not look upon that place of worship as their *own* which keeps its pulpit everlastingly vacant in honour of one individual, however great". Hushed now is the controversy over purely personal matters which made Keshab's death-bed a bed of thorns. But from the stillness of the grave he speaks trumpet tongued of the truths of religion, the yearning of the spirit after emancipation,—the one increasing purpose that runs through the ages. His triumphs should help his followers in their onward march, while his failures should, like a beacon light, warn

them against the existence of that rock ahead on which their endeavours are likely to suffer ship-wreck. If the endeavours of a man of Keshub's ability to popularise the Brahmo faith were not crowned with success it was because he left the treasure-house at home unexamined while he travelled long in search of riches. He lost all touch with what he strove to reform. Both Ram Mohan and Keshab yearned after emancipation. And who will dare deny either the laurel crown of glory which should be given to those who can tear asunder all ties of blood and friendship if they interfere with their search after truth? But while the former sought and found it in his own religion, the latter went after foreign ideas and ideals. Ram Mohan went to England but took Brahman cooks with him. Keshab cared not for such formalities and ran the risk of unnecessarily wounding the susceptibilities of his less advanced countrymen. His ideal he found in Christianity free from the froth and false glitter of miracles, clear of those fat maggots and creeping parasites that breed in the warm comfort of a national creed. He rejected those symbolisms which touch the imagination of the people and act upon their sentiments. He even declined to exercise that charitable imagination which makes European scholars explain away as concealed allegories the love of Radha and Krishna that exquisite woodland pastoral redolent of as ethereal beauty as the wild flower aroma which breathes in the legend of Psyche and Cupid. Hence he failed.

And it is unfortunate that Keshub's experience has not taught his followers the lesson it ought to have impressed on them. The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj is daily drifting further and further away from the moorings of the national faith. No wonder it encourages the creation of a set of replicas of an alien type. And that is exactly why inspite of its immense potentialities the Brahmo Samaj has achieved but little success, gained but little popularity. To-day it claims only 4,050 members compared

with 3,051 ten years earlier and out of a total population of 294,361,056 persons.

Though judged by its achievements the success of the Brahmo Samaj has not been much—its influence on society and literature has been considerable, and its indirect achievements immense. It is when we consider these that we cannot help regretting that in customs as in costumes it is the West that the Samaj is imitating, in ideas and ideals it is to the West that the Samaj is persistently drifting. To secure a permanent hold on people a new form of faith must adapt itself to the requirements of the people; it must be understood by them; it must not shun them as the common herd which cannot appreciate new truths. If the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj would yet understand this they would be able to do an immense amount of good while their refusal to understand it would end in converting the form of faith they love into one confined to a coterie.

In these days of national activity we once more draw the attention of the educated Indian public to the moral the movement points and the tale it adorns. A religious institution like the organisms cannot afford to be an epiphyte but must draw its sustenance from the soil on which it grows and flourishes. Ram Mohan and Debendra Nath with the true insight of genius saw this and was not driven by a cosmopolitan instinct to ignore a nation's individuality in guiding and counselling them in the supreme concerns of life. Evils and abuses there always are—like dirt and dust everywhere in their particular form. And in the heroic attempt at cleansing the basis of good is sometimes knocked out of many a movement big with promises and potentialities. Even a reformer must beware of that charity which puffeth up but edifieth not. The reform that springs out of sympathy for weakness endures while that out of vanity and distrust of one's own people is only sound and fury signifying nothing.

APPENDIX III

The Calcutta Congress of 1886*

The leading characteristic of the Congress of 1886 was, that it was the whole country's Congress. The Congress of 1885 had been got together with some difficulty by the exertions of a few leading reformers, and included less than one hundred of the more advanced thinkers belonging to the most prominent centres of political activity. The Congress of 1886 may be said to have grown, almost spontaneously, out of the unanimous resolve of the educated and semi-educated classes, throughout the Empire, to take a decisive step towards the attainment of that political enfranchisement to which they have come, of late years, to attach so much importance.

The delegates or representatives who attended the first Congress, though representatives of the highest culture of the land, and fully qualified to speak as to the wants and wishes of the nation, yet appeared as volunteers in the good cause, uncommissioned, as a rule, by any constituencies, local or general, to appear on their behalf. Very early it seems to have occurred, simultaneously, to all those most interested in the renewed movement, that something more than this was requisite, and that the gentlemen who were to take part in the second Congress ought to receive some public authorization from the bodies and communities (or leading members of these latter) whom they were to represent. Accordingly, as the time of the Congress drew near, the leading Associations at all the more important towns and cities proceeded to elect delegates, and great public

* Taken from the **Report of the Second Indian National Congress** held at Calcutta in December, 1886, pp. 1-10.

meetings, embracing all classes of the community, who were in any way interested in the matter, were also held, almost throughout the country, at which representatives were designated.

Another point, that grew to be generally insisted on, was that the representatives ought to be made aware, beforehand, of the principal subjects likely to come under discussion at the Congress, and so be in a position to ascertain, in advance, the views thereon of their constituencies.

Accordingly, printed suggestions as to subjects for the consideration of the Congress were issued from several of the provinces and circulated to all the others. The first was issued from Calcutta (where the general feeling on the subject first took a tangible form)...Still, although not as fully circulated as they should have been, a majority of the delegates came 'forewarned and forearmed', and even this was a great advance on the procedure of the previous year.

But the greatest advance lay, perhaps, in the total change in the character of the Congress. In the previous year people had to be pressed and entreated to come; to the late Congress everybody *wanted* to come of his own accord. The first Congress was created by the labour of a few who had to nurse carefully the young plant; the second Congress burst into vigorous growth on its own account, with a luxuriance that demanded careful pruning. From some provinces double, or more than double, the numbers actually delegated would have been sent, but for inter-provincial communications as to the numbers other provinces contemplated sending, and remonstrances against one province swarmping the others.

For the first Congress there was no enthusiasm until after it was over and its results had been announced (though then indeed the entire country endorsed those results and warmly approved the new departure); but, in regard to the second Congress, the greatest enthusiasm

prevailed, especially throughout Bengal. Bengal alone could have furnished a thousand delegates, and not only did a great many more people desire to attend than could possibly have been admitted, but hundreds, certainly, of persons (some say over a thousand) came down from distant parts of the country merely to see the Assemblage; and when at the close of the first meeting at the Town Hall, where the delegates were almost stifled in a crowd of from 2,000 to 3,000 lookers-on, it was decided to hold subsequent meetings elsewhere, where real business might be possible, the gravest dissatisfaction was expressed by the Indian public and the proposed arrangements had to be subsequently modified.

Nor was this all: at many places, large crowds accompanied the delegates to the ships or railway stations on their departure for the Congress, giving them ovations, as if they were great conquerors returning laden with the spoils of victory, rather than humble soldiers, departing to share in one of the little preliminary skirmishes of Freedom's great battle.

Altogether about 500 gentlemen were elected either at public meetings, or by Societies, Associations and Sabhas (Literary, Political, Agricultural and the like) representing each of them considerable (and some of them *very* large) bodies of intelligent, if not, according to European notions, fully educated, persons. Deaths—deaths of near relatives—sickness, urgent private affairs or professional calls, and accidents of travel, somewhat thinned the numbers, and only about 440 actually attended the Meetings of the Congress*.

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* In the Appendix I to the **Report of the Second Indian National Congress** held at Calcutta in Dec., 1886, there is a list of delegates, in which 436 names were finally recorded, because a few gentlemen, it was believed, says the **Report**, "left Calcutta without recording their names, or depositing any credentials of their delegateship, whose

Taking, however, the list as it stands, the geographical completeness of the representation will be apparent at a glance. Not only were all the presidencies, provinces and natural sub-divisions of the country, Madras, the Deccan, the Konkan, Guzerat, Sindh, the Panjab, Oudh, the N. W. Provinces, Rohilkhand, the Central Provinces, Behar, Assam, Lower Bengal, Chota Nagpur and Orissa, represented by natives of these territorial divisions, but most of the smaller sub-divisions included in these provinces were equally represented by people belonging to *them.*

But in order to realize how fairly catholic, on the whole, the representation was, and on the other hand to distinguish clearly the points in which it was defective, it is necessary to analyse more closely the composition of the Assemblage.

The first thing that strikes one, in going through the list, is the entire absence of the old aristocracy, the so-called natural leaders of the people, and who, were they capable of understanding their own interests, would have been foremost in this movement. Several more or less distinguished gentlemen, like Sirdar Uttam Singh, Nawab Reza Ali Khan, Raja Rampal Singh, Maharajah Sir Jotendra Mohun Tagore, Rajah Rajendra Narain Deb, Maharaj Kumar Nilkrishna, Nawab Golam Rubbani and others, graced the Congress with their presence; but of the hundreds of the old hereditary aristocracy, who are still to be found scattered over the whole country, not one leading member was to be found amongst the delegates. The reason is obvious; the policy of the Government has excluded these gentlemen persistently from all positions worthy of their rank, whether in the army or in the civil administration of the country, and they have consequently, as a rule, entirely lost the desire, if

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names, for want of the necessary particulars, have consequently been omitted"—**Authors.**

not the capacity, for personally exerting themselves or taking any direct active interest in public affairs.

The next point that attracts attention is the absence of the shop-keeping class. The British rule has been called the Bunya's Raj. Shop-keepers by millions swarm over the every part of the country, many of them rich, most of them fairly well-to-do, yet only one single man of this class was to be found in the ranks of the delegates. The higher commercial classes, bankers, merchants, were fairly represented; but petty money-lenders and shop-keepers were conspicuous by their absence. In the first place, these classes are, broadly speaking, grossly ignorant and entirely immersed in their own personal concerns; and in the second place they, naturally enough, do not care for any change in a form of Government, which, while it prevents others from robbing *them,* furnishes, in its system of civil jurisprudence, ample facilities to *them,* for enriching *themselves!*

Lastly, the ryots and cultivating classes were insufficiently represented; five ryots came as representatives, and six other gentlemen came as the elected representatives of different Ryots' Associations, and over and above this from several parts of the country, the Deccan, Madras and Lower Bengal, came as representatives, known as champions of the ryot, and, in their own parts of the country, trusted and looked up to by these; but for all this, considering the vast magnitude of the class and of the aggregate interests involved, it cannot be denied that the cultivating classes were inadequately represented.

For this of course there were two obvious reasons: The first is that the great bulk of the ryots, intelligent worthy men as so many of them are, have as yet but a very imperfect knowledge of political matters. A great number of them realize that the times are somehow out of joint, but they have not learnt to rise from particular instances to generalizations, and they neither understand exactly what is wrong nor have they, as a class, any clear

and definite ideas as to what could, or ought, to be done to lighten somewhat their lot in life. To educate the intelligent members of the cultivating classes in all such matters, is one of our most pressing duties. In some comparatively limited tracts the work has already been undertaken, but it has to be extended to all *parts* of the country, and persevered in for years, before we can hope to see this, the most important of all classes, fitly and fairly represented in our Councils.

The second reason is the comparative poverty of the class, which must always debar all, but a very few, of them from themselves making long journeys to attend such gatherings, though not, of course, from electing others, more favoured by fortune, to represent their views and wishes at these.

Excluding then the old aristocracy and the shop-keepers and petty money-lenders, who were in no way represented, and the cultivating classes who were inadequately represented, all other important classes and interests were satisfactorily represented*.

We have said nothing yet of religious distinctions, because we consider that it is a community of temporal interests and not of spiritual convictions that qualify men to represent each other in the vast majority of political questions. We hold that, their general interests in this country being identical, Hindus, Christians, Mahomedans and Parsees may, as fitly as members of their respective communities, represent each other in the discussion of public secular affairs. We contend that, as regards the universal feeling that the people of India are not altogether getting fair play under the existing form of the administration, and as regards the equally universal desire for a reform in this latter, the aspirations of every

* About 130 of the delegates, representing the higher landed interests, about 166 delegates representing the legal profession, about 40 delegates representing the Indian Press attended, among others, the Congress of 1886 —**Authors.**

loyal, honest and educated man, no matter what his creed, so long as he be an Indian, *must* be identical on all general principles. There will be differences of opinion as to details, but these differences will hinge, not on differences of creed, but on differences in social position, profession, occupation, and the like. As regards the great general outlines of the leading reforms at which these Congresses aim, and with which alone they pretend to deal, there can be no difference of opinion between good and capable Indians (be their creed what it may) arising out of, or in any way dependent on, religious differences.

Therefore we utterly deprecate the introduction of any religious sentiment, or any reference to gentlemen's religious beliefs into political movements of the nature of these Congresses, and on the present occasion should have considered it sufficient merely to record that Hindus, Mahomedans, Sikhs, Christians, Brahmos and Parsees, took part in the Conference.

But unfortunately an effort has been made to detract from the national character of the late assemblage, by pointing out that numerically, according to the proportion observable in the population, the Mahomedans were inadequately represented; which is just as if the nationality of the House of Commons in England were denied, because it contained a smaller proportion than the population of Great Britain as a whole, of Methodists or Roman Catholics. Of course as every one knows, even in Ireland, where the religious antagonism of Protestants and Roman Catholics far exceeds that anywhere existing in India between Mahomedans and Hindus, a Protestant like Mr. Parnell represents a Catholic constituency.

The objection raised is of course frivolous in the extreme, but let us see what it amounts to. In the population of India as a whole, the Mahomedans constitute less than one-fifth*(1), but out of our 196 millions, 44 millions,

*(1) Plowden says 1,974 in every 10,000.

or exactly 11 / 49ths are Mahomedans, so that if the exact arithmetical proportion were maintained, a thing no sane man could ever dream of in an assemblage constituted to deal with secular matters only, 97 (and a fraction) of our 431 delegates should have been Mahomedans, whereas as a fact only 33 of the representatives were Mussalmen. Now, considering how very backward as regards education the great bulk of the Mahomedans are in the present day, and the consequent apathy to all large political questions that characterizes them, this comparatively small number of Mahomedan delegates might have been accepted as the natural result of the present lack of higher education amongst our Mahomedan brethren*(2). But in reality a special cause operated to restrain the Mahomedans of Calcutta and its neighbourhood, whence many representatives were expected, from joining the Congress.

Three prominent Calcutta Mahomedans, two of them the leaders of the only local Mahomedan Associations of any note, under some misapprehension, into which it is too late now to enquire, saw fit at the last moment to declare publicly against the Congress, to which they were pleased to prefer what one of them styled 'a policy of confidence in the Government,' and no time being left for threshing out the question, the Mahomedans of Calcutta and its neighbourhood, not knowing what might lie behind these manifestos, almost as a body abstained from taking part in the movement.

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*(2) Bengal alone contains 22 out of the 44 millions of Mahomedans inhabiting the Provinces which the Congress was supposed to represent. In Bengal, of males of 10 years and upwards only 0.6 per cent. ; in the case of Mahomedans are 'persons engaged in the learned professions and in literature, art and science,' while in the came of the Hindus no less than 1.78 per cent. were so engaged. Unfortunately these details were not worked out at the Census in any other Province Vide **Indian Empire, Census,** 1881, I. pp. 374, 375).

This short-sighted action has not commended itself to the Mahomedans of India as a body*. Mahomedan speakers at the Congress, one after the other, from Dacca, Patna, Lucknow and other centres, denounced it as unjustifiable and unpatriotic, and declared that where they came from Mahomedans and Hindus ever worked, in all such matters, shoulder to shoulder, and were too wise not to understand that their interests, where the political enfranchisement of the country was concerned, were identical. Even in Calcutta itself, a certain reaction has taken place, and some, at any rate, of the Mahomedans feel and admit that a mistake has been made.

The matter was of no importance and need not have been noticed but for the absurd prominence given to it by some of the Anglo-Indian journals, who vainly sought

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* Take, for instance, the speech of Sheikh Reza Hossain (a gentleman who is not to be confounded with Nawab Reza Ali Khan), the President of the Rifa-i-am (the most important Association in Upper India), on the occasion of the visit, on their tour through the N. W. Provinces, of certain of the Madras delegates, a few days after the close of the Congress.

"Gentlemen,—I thank you heartily for having taken the trouble to come to this city after your recent deliberations at Calcutta...Gentlemen, I have read in the papers that, some, apparently very narrow minded men, call this Congress a Hindu Congress. But I will not resume my seat today without denying this unfounded allegation. I do not think that the Mahomedans, who have kept aloof, are all absolutely devoid of reason, but it seems to me that their actions have rather been the result of prejudice and selfishness than of principle and reason. It is a calumny to say that Mahomedans have no sympathy with this great national movement. In every community there are some gentlemen of fault-finding tendencies, and when these gentlemen found that they had no other way of justifying their conduct, they took upon themselves to misrepresent the objects of the Congress...We may differ in religious views, but in our aspirations I hold that we are one. We have a common goal before us; and in every other respect, we are, in reality, one nation."

to attach to it a grave politilal significance. Having, however, noticed it, it may be well, before dismissing the subject, to quote from his annual address to the Positivists, what Mr. H. J. S. Cotton, one of the clearest-sighted of the European officials in India, has felt constrained to say on the subject. He says (not being of course aware of the real circumstances, and judging only as a spectator):—

'The National Congresses, the second of which has just concluded its session in Calcutta, are visible symbols of this unmistakable tendency towards nationality. The meetings of this Congress, while they are distinctly political in character, have been marked by order and sobriety, by firmness and persistence. The meetings at the Town Hall, of which I was myself an eye-witness, are among the most remarkable assemblages ever gathered together in this or any country. The ablest and most competent representatives from all the provinces in India have taken part in the discussions. The prospect opened out to us is in the highest degree satisfactory. The only incident that clouds our hopes is the unwise reluctance which the Mahomedans of Bengal have shown in co-operating with their Hindu brethren in the movement. It appears, indeed, to be limited to the Mahomedans of Bengal, and not to be shared in by their co-religionists of North-Western, Western, Central and Southern India. But in any case it is unwise on their part to stand aloof, and I can only hope that their reluctance, which under all the circumstances of the case, historic and otherwise, is perhaps not unnatural. may yield to time. Hindus and Mahomedans, Parsees and Sikhs, Armenians and Eurasians, are all Indians alike with their home in India, and it is both their interest and their duty, suppressing as far as possible all differences and personal jealousies, to combine and work together in the same fold, and in the same direction, and with the one object of their own national advancement'.