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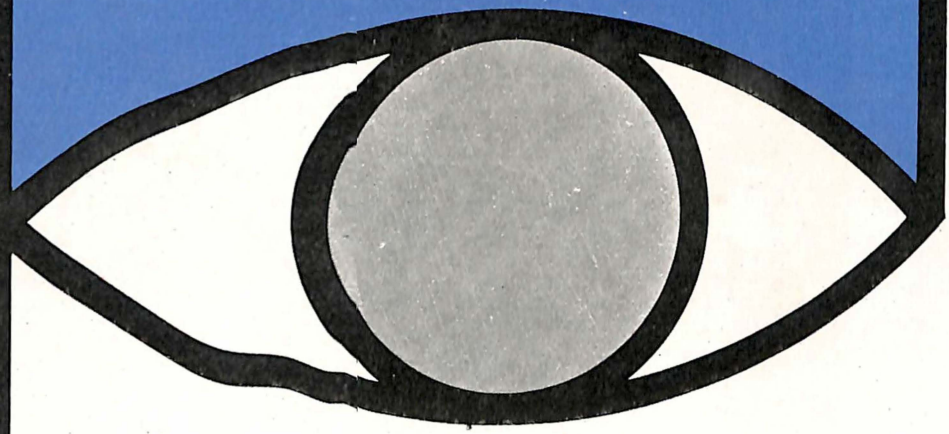

THE PIONEERS OF EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED IN INDIA

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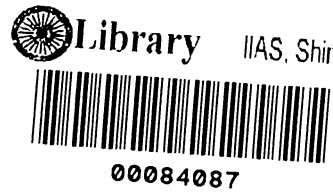

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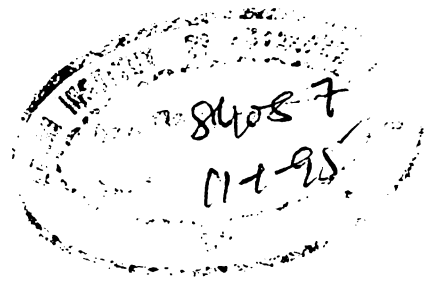

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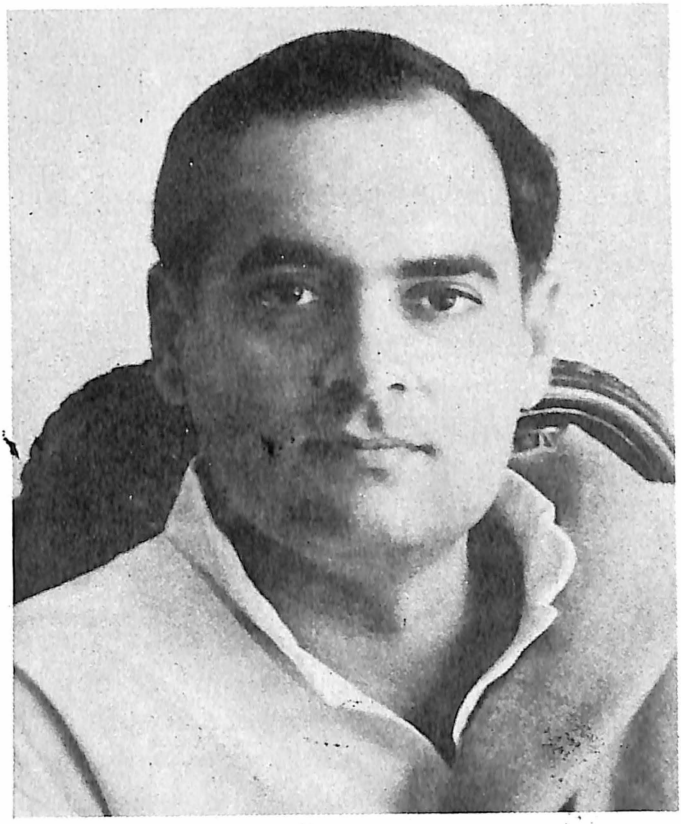

Dedicated to the memory of
RAJIV GANDHI
whose life represented the triumph
of the human spirit in all it's aspects

Foreword

I am very happy to find that the author, who is himself visually handicapped and has significantly contributed to education of the blind in this country, has written sensitive biographies of five pioneers in the education of the blind in the country. These people were the torchbearers of education of the blind at a time when blindness was synonymous with complete helplessness and those who had lost their vision were considered incapable of receiving education. It is the spirit of adventure and pioneering that has today led to the development of almost 250 schools for the blind in the country, an integrated education programme and a common Braille code for Indian languages. We owe a debt of deep gratitude to the pioneers and also to the author for diligently collecting authentic material for the benefit of posterity.

I have no doubt that the beginning made by the author will inspire other students to delve deeply into obscure archives and bring to light the most valuable contributions made by anonymous workers to foster educational programmes for the visually handicapped. Today this area stands on crossroads of history, poised

to make a powerful lunge towards new and widening horizons.

Indian Association for Special Education and Rehabilitation
A-70 DDA Flats, Saket,
New Delhi
7 March 1994

LAL ADVANI
President

Acknowledgements

I convey my thanks to Shri Lal Advani, former Director, National Institute of Visually Handicapped, Dehradun and President, Indian Association of Special Education and Rehabilitation, New Delhi for his information about the style of functioning of Sir Clutha Mackenzie.

I am grateful to Shri I.K. Gujral, former Minister for Foreign Affairs and his wife, Smt. Sheila Gujral, also for their valuable information about some aspects of life and works of P.M. Advani and I acknowledge their contribution thankfully.

My thanks are due and are extended to Ms. Anne Advani, the daughter of P.M. Advani, for providing me a lot of useful information on the life and works of her father.

The Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, New Delhi has been a rich source of motivation for me in publishing this book. The support and guidance given by the Foundation will enhance the value of the book. Shri Wajahat Habibullah, former Secretary and Shri Pulok Chatterji, present Secretary of the Foundation have been a continued source of inspiration and encouragement in coming out with this book. Shri Javed Abidi Programme Officer, Disabled Persons' Welfare Cell,

has also taken special interest in advancing the publication of the book. I convey my heartfelt thanks to the Foundation and these gentlemen.

Shri David A. Castleton, Public Relations Officer, St. Dunstan's, London; Shri Ashok Chowdhry, Principal, Calcutta School for the Blind, Calcutta; Shri Samuel, Superintendent, Sharp Memorial School for the Blind, Dehradun; Shri S.S. Duggal, former Superintendent, Training Centre for the Adult Blind, NIVH, Dehradun; Ms. Hena Basu of Society for the Visually Handicapped, Calcutta, also extended their cooperation in one way or the other. I convey my sincere thanks to all of them for their contribution.

Shri Chandra Prakash, one of my friends has extended his cooperation in collecting and arranging information as well as in checking the typewritten material for the book. I am deeply thankful to him.

I went through a number of disheartening experiences during the preparation of this book. I would have abandoned my plan without consistent encouragement and cooperation from my wife Durgeshnandini. I record my grateful thanks to her also.

R.S. CHAUHAN

Preface

INDIA has witnessed a slow but steady growth of services for the visually handicapped after Independence. The foundations for this purpose were laid by a few energetic, dedicated and motivated pioneers during the pre-Independence era. It was almost a century after such services came into being in European countries.

The total number of facilities for the visually handicapped of this vast country was a mere 32 in 1944. Only a few of them could claim to be adequately equipped in the modern sense. But they certainly were like rays of hope on the otherwise dark horizons.

Compulsions of World War II coupled with some other social factors motivated the Government of India to enter this field in 1942. It added fresh dimensions to the blind welfare and accelerated the pace of its development. The International Year for Disabled Persons (IYDP), 1981, injected fresh vitality and vigour into this process. It galvanised the entire welfare process in our country. Consequently, there was a rapid growth of a variety of educational and rehabilitation programmes.

The idea of this book was born in 1989 when I could not get even ordinary details like dates of birth and

death of Annie Sharp, the founder of the first ever educational facility for the blind in our country. Neither the available literature nor the learned people in the field were able to help. Ultimately, I decided to locate her grave with a view to finding some information. After a few attempts, I was able to locate her grave. The epitaph on it yielded some significant details for a chapter on her. Eventually, I decided to write a book on the pioneers in the field of the blind welfare in India. Another motivating factor to write this book has been to provide students and professionals in the field with information about them and their contributions to the cause before it becomes more difficult for researchers to do so.

The early pioneers who initiated services for the visually handicapped in India included some blind individuals also. They succeeded not only in their own emancipation but also made positive contributions to free many others from the shackles of ignorance, self-pity and social deprivations. It should therefore convince planners, top administrators and middle-level executives about the role and importance of the blind in the field of education and rehabilitation of the visually handicapped.

I encountered several difficulties while working on this book. But, the most painful experience has been the tendency on the part of some people not to part with information. It was keen, for example, to include a profile of Miss Askwith, a pioneer in the field during the early period, but could not do so due to this undesirable tendency.

The photograph of Dr. Chhatrapati whose profile is included in this book could not be obtained in spite of my best efforts.

It is hoped that the book will be received well. However, it is for the readers to judge its real worth. I will be very grateful to them for their valuable comments.

Dehradun
February 11, 1994.

R.S. CHAUHAN

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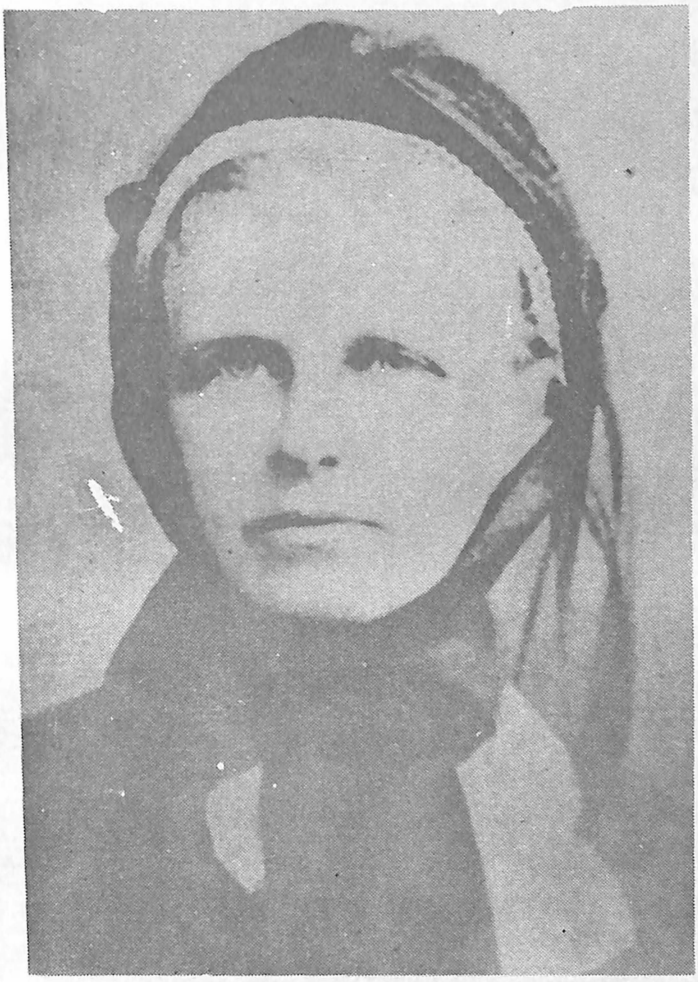

Miss Annie Sharp

1. Miss Annie Sharp : The First Educator of the Blind in India

THE first school for the blind in this country was established by Miss Annie Sharp, a Christian Missionary, at Amritsar in 1887. Being in the field of special education, I was keen to have some information on her life and work. I therefore studied the relevant literature and contacted learned people in the field of blind welfare. But surprisingly, I was unable to get any significant information. Consequently, I embarked on an informal project.

I approached the authorities of the Sharp Memorial School for the Blind, Dehradun, but, unfortunately, even they could not furnish any substantial information. The old records were either destroyed or taken away, I was told. However, the superintendent of the school was willing to extend his cooperation in my endeavour as far as possible. He asked me to contact certain persons. Correspondence with them also failed to yield any interesting information.

The problem is that Annie and her three sisters and a brother remained unmarried. Consequently, there is no surviving member in the family who could furnish the requisite details. "The place where Miss Sharp was born has been pulled down and there is no one to give

any information about her now," wrote Miss J. Short, who served at the Sharp Memorial School for some time, in reply to one of my letters from England.

Ultimately, I approached the church authorities to locate the grave of Annie. They agreed and we located her grave on 19 November 1989. The epitaph on her grave tells that Annie was born on 23 October 1858 at Tangleymere, Guildford, England. And, from the epitaph on the grave of her sister, Maria Sharp, we came to know that their father was Samuel Sharp who came from Chilworth, Surrey, in England.

During the centenary year of the services for the blind in India in 1987, one organisation tried to publish a photograph of Annie, but they published someone else's by mistake. The accompanying photograph was certified by the Superintendent of the Sharp Memorial School for the Blind as that of Annie only.

This study eventually yielded a lot of information about Annie. Miss Hewlitt, a missionary, played an important role in bringing Annie to India and helping her in embarking upon the historic venture of commencing educational facilities for the blind of this country. Quoting from a pamphlet about the work for the blind, written in 1902, Margaret E. Ross, former Superintendent of the Sharp Memorial School, writes in her 1976 pamphlet, "The work amongst the blind in Northern India was initiated by Miss Hewlitt and commenced by Miss Annie Sharp. . . ." Hewlitt lost her sight in childhood due to measles and was blind for over a year. After recovering her sight, she vowed to serve the blind whenever an opportunity presented itself. She came to India in 1879. Ross writes, "On beginning her work in India in 1879 she soon realised the need of this great land, and rejoiced when, in 1886,

she was joined by Miss Annie Sharp who, at Miss Hewlitt's request, had taken special training for this work." Thus, it is evident that Miss Hewlitt played a significant role in initiating educational services for the blind in India.

Annie's contribution to the education of the blind in this country is of historic significance. In fact, she deserves the title of "The Mother of the Education for the Blind in India". To quote Ross again, "It was in 1887 that the school was officially founded by Miss Annie Sharp in the compound of St. Catherine's Hospital, Amritsar, and became known as the North India Industrial Home for Christian Blind." The name suggests clearly that the school aimed at providing the blind with shelter—in most cases, lifelong shelter—and elements of basic religious training—naturally, Christianity as education in the first place. Some training in handicrafts and Braille script was also included. The school still follows almost the same aims.

It is noteworthy here that many schools for the blind in Europe and America had already gone beyond the culture of "homes for the blind" when Annie founded her school. The first school for the blind in the world established at Paris had about 103 years of history behind it. By 1887, it was following sound pedagogical principles in imparting education to its pupils. So was the case for some schools in England. Sharp's school seems to have lacked sound and secular principles of education for its inmates. Probably, it is one of the reasons that it could not reach the heights of excellence during its one century of existence.

Annie ran the school for about sixteen and a half year. During this period, she inspired Dr. Chhatrapati, well known for his contributions in the field of blind

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welfare, to start a school for the blind at Ahmedabad in 1895.

There is a reference to his visit to Amritsar after he started losing his vision.

Annie was considering for a long time to move the school to a more peaceful, healthier and climatically better place. Her long-cherished dream was fulfilled when she was able to procure a plot at Dehradun. She moved the school from Amritsar to Dehradun on 9 April 1903. Hewlitt must have felt tremendously happy. So she left for Amritsar after a few days. But, unfortunately, it turned out to be her last meeting with Annie. She contracted cholera on 24 April 1903 and within hours she died. She was 44 then. After Annie's death, her younger sisters Emily and Frances served the school for some time. They had to return to England to arrange "money and material" for the school in collaboration with their brother. Annie's third sister, Dr. Maria Sharp, reached Dehradun on 2 June 1918 for the same purpose but within a week she also contracted cholera and died on 10 June 1918.

According to Ross, the decision to hand over the school to Zenana Bible and Medical Mission was taken by Frances. Thereafter, it came to be known as the North India Industrial School for the Blind.

In recognition of the services rendered by Annie, her three sisters and a brother, it was later renamed as the Sharp Memorial School for the Blind.

2. Dr Neelkanthrai D. Chhatrapati and His Contributions to Blind Welfare

BLINDNESS at any age affects adversely the victim. In the case of adventitiously blinded persons the effects are even worse. It means the virtual end of their socially active and economically productive life. However, some persons have shown extraordinary courage to face the situation. They succeeded in finding alternative ways to engage themselves in socially acceptable and economically rewarding activities. Neelkanthrai Dahyabhai Chhatrapati was one such rare person. In fact, he went a step further. He helped the blind. His contribution to the education of blind children is immense. He also formulated principles for the universalisation of Braille code which turned out to be extremely valuable to his country.

Chhatrapati was born in 1854. He was sent to Baroda for early education. Later on, he was shifted to Ahmedabad. He did his matriculation from the Mission High School there. He then joined the Grant Medical College and completed his L.M. and S. He started his own clinic after completing his medical education. He showed promise from the beginning as a private doctor. Impressed by his performance, he was asked in 1879 to start a small dispensary by

Bahadur Ranchhodlal Chhotalal, CIE. He therefore set up a dispensary near the railway station in Dariyapur area. It soon became very popular. The success and popularity of the venture attracted the attention of bureaucracy. Consequently, grants began to flow in from the government. Later on, the dispensary blossomed into a hospital, called Ranchhod Hospital. This naturally enhanced Chhatrapati's prestige as a physician and surgeon.

Chhatrapati joined the local civil hospital afterwards as an assistant surgeon. He soon became very popular among students because of his devotion and congenial disposition. He was considered specially good at teaching anatomy and physiology. Dr. John Robb, civil surgeon at the hospital, was his boss at the time. He too became his admirer. This acquaintance proved very useful later on for him.

Chhatrapati was an articulate writer. He contributed articles regularly to a medical journal named *The Lancet*. Aware of the need for scientific and medical literature in Indian languages, he wrote a number of small books in Gujarati for the benefit of common people. One of his books was entitled *Stri Mitra* (Friend of Women). It dealt with the do's and dont's during menstruation and pregnancy. His other books were *Arogyata Na Mul Tatavo, Gharghatu Rasayana* and *Mada Ni Mavajat*.

While playing tennis at a club with his friends in 1892, he was observed committing mistakes which were not expected from a tennis player of his calibre. It was in fact an indication of some eye ailment. Worried by this development, he visited Bombay for an examination of his eyes by an ophthalmologist. He prescribed spectacles but they proved inadequate. His

sight began to deteriorate rapidly. He was compelled to leave his govt. job and say good-bye to many of his activities including writing articles. Subsequently, his medical reports revealed that he was suffering from an incurable disease of the eyes called atrophy of the optic nerves.

It must have been a hard blow to him, but he was not to remain paralysed for a long time like many others. He approached the editor of *The Lancet* for consultation. He gave him some literature on the blind. It encouraged him for an active life. John Robb also sent him literature which helped him to reconcile with his blindness. He wrote him encouraging letters which were of immense value in terms of counselling. He also gave him the address of National Institute for the Blind (NIB), London which sent to him Braille alphabet and pamphlets on the Braille script. He took full advantage of this help and soon learned to read the tactile system. Consequently, he ordered more books in Braille and Braille journals like *Progress* which informed him about the work being done for the blind in the U.K. and other countries.

Aware of the adverse effects of inactivity and idleness, he was determined to lead an active and fruitful life. To keep himself abreast of what was happening around him and to scan the literature of his choice, he engaged a sighted person to read out printed material to him. Soon, he was able to contribute some articles to the Gujarati press. He used the same person as a guide for attending various social gatherings. This filled his time and saved him from a gnawing sense of worthlessness.

Having adjusted himself to his visual disability, Chhatrapati thought of helping the blind in a con-

structive manner. He was educated in the liberal tradition and was, therefore, aware of the benefits and importance of education. He thought of an educational facility for the blind. But, he required funds for this venture. So he sought an interview with the then ruler of Baroda, Sayajirao Gaikwar. He was not able to impress him. Perhaps, his idea of opening an educational facility for the blind was too drastic a step for him. However, he awarded a grant of Rs. 300 to "enable him to get all the information about what was being done for the blind in India and other countries".

It was probably this grant that encouraged him to pay a visit to Amritsar for obtaining first-hand knowledge about the methods of teaching at the Sharp School. On returning from Amritsar, he set up a school at his own residence in Ahmedabad in 1895-96. (In some documents like the *Manual of Bharati Braille*, published by the NIVH, the year of establishment of this school is stated to be 1895 while, according to an article by B.B. Kampani in *Visually Handicapped in India*, edited by R.M. Halder, the year was 1896.) The first pupils to join his school were from the Mahipatram Rupram Orphanage of the town. It is a coincidence that the first group of students at the school launched by Hauy at Paris in 1784 also came from an orphanage.

In about two years, the number of pupils started increasing. Chhatrapati therefore required more space. He approached the Gujarat Vernacular Society and succeeded in getting its permission to run the school at its premises in Bhadar. He also managed to get some financial assistance from the Ahmedabad Municipality. Public donations too started flowing in. The school consequently progressed. It was a day facility and not a residential school as was the case with other similar

facilities in India during the pre-independence era. Its another important feature was that it opened its doors to girls also. By 1901, it had about 20 pupils including four girls. In later years, Chhatrapati headed a residential school for a long time where he had adequate financial resources at his disposal.

The committee set up to manage the Victoria Memorial Fund decided to establish a school for the sightless in 1902. It invited Chhatrapati to take advantage of his rich experience in the field and asked him to launch a school for blind children at Bombay. Initially, he had some reservations but eventually agreed. He moved to Bombay that year along with his male pupils since the proposed school was meant for boys only. Thus, the city of Bombay witnessed the establishment of an educational institution for the blind which was named Victoria Memorial School for the Blind. It was first accommodated in a rented building at Bellasis Road and later transferred to Tardeo when sufficient funds were available.

Unfortunately, after finishing the course at the school, most of the students had no opportunity to earn a decent living. Only some students with the background of music were able to earn their living independently, others had to go home. Some were compelled to take to begging also. Chhatrapati therefore was eager to help them. He succeeded in establishing an industrial home for the blind at Lamington Road in 1916. This workshop provided an opportunity to the blind workers to earn their bread with their toil.

The year 1916 witnessed yet another development. The Government of Bombay at the instance of the Government of India set up a committee for the *Inquiry of Defectives*. Chhatrapati was included in the

committee as one of its members. He pleaded with the committee to establish four schools for the blind—one each at Karachi, Bhavnagar, Dharwar and Poona in the Presidency of Bombay. It agreed. It also recognised the Braille Code developed by him.

In 1918 an ICS officer with sufficient interest in blind welfare, met Chhatrapati at his school and discussed with him his plans for the blind welfare. Subsequently, a meeting of some leading citizens of Bombay took place the following year and an organisation named Blind Relief Association was established. It was aimed at functioning as an umbrella organisation with broader mandate of work encompassing more than one area.

Following the receipt of a bequeath by Narsingh S. Dharmaji in 1927, it took over the Industrial Home for the Blind started by Chhatrapati and renamed it as NSD Industrial Home for the Blind which was now provided with a kitchen also. The Blind Relief Association took over the administration of the Happy Home and School for the Blind as well as Dadar School for the Blind at Bombay and some more facilities at other places were provided.

Chhatrapati knew English and coincidentally his first exposure to Braille was through English only. He worked hard to adapt Braille script to Indian vernaculars. According to B.B. Kampani, "He thought it very necessary to prepare an adaptation of English Braille that would suit most of these vernaculars. He, therefore, with the help and cooperation of eminent educationists of Ahmedabad, late Raosaheb Madhavalal Harilal Desai, Principal, Premchand Raychand Training College for Teachers at Ahmedabad; late Harilal Kahandas, retired Head Master and his own brother Hariprasad Dahyabhai

Chhatrapati considered for months together the question of adapting English Braille to the vernaculars and they after full consideration devised an adaptation of English Braille to the vernaculars which is known as Dr. Neelkanthrai's Braille.

This Braille code was based on having similar Braille signs for similar or nearly similar sounds in English and Indian vernaculars. His code is referred to in the literature on Braille in India as the Indian Braille. Its importance lies in the fact that the Conference on the World Braille at Paris in 1950 accepted to some extent its principles.

Chhatrapati played an excellent innings in the development of educational and rehabilitation services for the blind in this country. His contribution to Braille development is of particular interest to the students of education of the blind. In view of his dedicated services in general and in recognition of his devoted work for over two decades at the Victoria Memorial School for the Blind in particular, it would be appropriate to rename that school after him.

Chhatrapati developed some ailment during 1921. He died on 11 September 1922 at Ahmedabad.

Lalbihari Shah

3. Lalbihari Shah: His Vision of Education for the Blind

LALBIHARI Shah was born in an Indian family converted to Christianity. He received formal education for almost twenty years but could not earn a degree. He worked in a number of institutions for earning his livelihood. Though he suffered hardships he contributed to the uplift of a very backward segment of society in those days.

Lalbihari's father, Kalachand Shah, lived at a place called Hudalakshmi in the district of Nadia in West Bengal. After the death of his first wife he married Taramani who gave birth to two sons---Bipinbihari and Lalbihari. The economic condition of the Shahs was very poor.

Lalbihari was born on 1 December 1853. He was very young when his father died leaving the family in utter poverty and uncertainty. His elder brother Bipinbihari was eleven years old then. However, Taramani was determined to provide her sons with the best possible education. She sent her sons to a boarding school at Krishnanagar before leaving for Shrirampur in search of a job. After roaming for three years, she was able to find a job at Panihati. She called Lalbihari there. He studied at Panihati for five years

and then got admission at the Agrapara Mission School where he studied for a few months. Later on, his brother got him admitted at Shrirampur Mission School where he studied till 1873.

He decided to proceed to Ajmer in 1873 to receive medical education. On his way to Ajmer he developed some eye ailment leading to blindness. Fortunately, he regained his sight after treatment. He then decided to go back to Shrirampur Mission School. His first-hand experience of blindness must have played a vital role in his later decision to impart education to the blind.

Lalbihari had little interest in studies. He desired to busy himself in some adventurous task. But he did not have any clear perception of what he wanted to do. So, he continued his formal education for twenty years, but could not obtain a degree. However, he acquired substantial knowledge and educational experience during this period. He even composed poems.

Lalbihari changed a number of jobs during his career before his final decision to devote himself to the education of the blind. His first job was that of a teacher at the Mission School at Chitpur where he worked for one year followed by a job at the Intali Mission Institution where he served for three years before leaving for Santhal Pargana in 1881 to take up a teaching assignment at a school run by a Church Mission. He faced a hard and unpleasant life there, so he returned to Calcutta. Since he could not find a job for a long time, he had to resort to a number of part-time jobs to support his wife and two children. He worked as a gardener, published his songs, started a weekly called *Deepti Prakashika*, contributed articles to various Christian journals of the time and taught Hindi and Bangla to English women. After an arduous struggle

for about eight years in Calcutta for a regular source of income, he got a job at the Baptist Mission Press as a proof-reader in 1893. The work at the press turned out to be important in more than one respect.

While working at the press, he became friendly with Hemchandra Nag, personal assistant to the superintendent of the press. Impressed by Lalbihari's hard work, he wanted to provide him with some additional source of income in view of his poor economic condition. A missionary named Garthwaite used to visit the press in connection with the publication of his book. He knew the Braille script and was trying to adapt it to Indian languages.

He picked up a few persons from the press to teaching them the Braille script, but they showed no keenness to learn. Hemchandra seized this opportunity and introduced Lalbihari to Garthwaite who invited him to his hotel for a trial.

Lalbihari was at a loss to understand the script in the beginning, but with patience and determination he was able to grasp it fully.

Garthwaite remarked, "Now I see, I have found in you a man who will be able to learn the art." Lalbihari continued to practise the new art with zeal and devotion. It convinced Garthwaite about his dedication to master the science of reading and writing the Braille script. He therefore offered him economic incentive to further strengthen his resolve to learn Braille. After a few months, he thought it fit to institutionalise an arrangement capable of initiating concerted efforts for some kind of education for the sightless. Therefore, he motivated the local Christian missionaries to form a small committee for this purpose. They succeeded in forming a committee. It interviewed Lalbihari and

found him suitable for a job. He was offered Rs. 100 per month as salary and Rs. 20 per month as house rent allowance, if he agreed to work full time for the committee. He readily accepted the offer.

But bad luck intervened again. Calcutta witnessed an epidemic of spring-fever towards the end of 1894. It claimed the life of Lalbihari's wife and doctors advised him not to go out of his house because of the serious nature of the epidemic. Consequently, he was confined to his house for a period of three months. Garthwaite, his chief benefactor, left Calcutta soon after he came to know about the raging epidemic. As soon as Lalbihari was allowed to venture out of his house, he met the Secretary of the aforementioned committee, named Macdonald. He told him that he had to take the help of new people since Lalbihari was confined to his house. He however offered the same job to him, but on the conditions of working from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on a salary of Rs. 25 per month only. Lalbihari, however, insisted on the previously agreed deal which was not acceptable to Macdonald. So, he refused to work for the committee and went back to his proof-reading job at the press. But he was keen to find some opportunity of producing Braille books and starting a school for the blind.

As mentioned before, Lalbihari taught for some time Hindi and Bangla to European ladies. He would then often discuss with them his idea of starting a school for the sightless. One of them showed some interest in his idea and one day asked him to launch his proposed school with one student in the beginning. She promised to pay Rs. 5 per month for the boarding and lodging expenses of that child. Thus, he began his work with one blind girl who showed considerable

interest in the beginning but left after some time. This experiment however proved very important in the sense that many people came to know about Lalbihari's capability of running an educational facility for the blind.

Breakthrough came during the second half of 1897 when a blind boy named Shrinath, the son of a rich and influential resident of Bhawanipur, named Lakshminarayan, asked Lalbihari to teach him. He did not disclose in the beginning his rich family background because rich people in those days considered it a disgrace if their blind children ventured out of their houses. The concept of education for blind children in liberal tradition was yet to take roots in our country. Therefore, Shrinath must have had courage and zeal required to venture out of his home in pursuit of education. Lalbihari was naturally very happy to teach him. He was not only intelligent but also hard working.

Educating the blind was a novelty of unprecedented scale in those days. Therefore, the news of Lalbihari's venture spread fast despite the medieval means of communication. Blind children from far away places like Agra, Delhi, Assam and Deoghar joined his school during the following year. It was very encouraging for him. Therefore, he worked with additional zeal and dedication.

To accommodate new arrivals, Lalbihari moved his school to Lower Circular Road in Calcutta. His financial problems also eased a little as Kelson, a senior official of the Central Railways, extended liberal financial assistance to Lalbihari in his noble venture. At this time, Lalbihari realised that the school could not be managed on a part-time basis without damage to its future growth. Consequently, he quit the Baptist

Mission Press.

Lalbihari had to face many challenges during the following years. The first and foremost was, of course, to raise sufficient funds on a perennial basis to meet the growing requirements of the school. He therefore approached Kalicharan Bandhopadhyaya, an influential leader of the Bengal Christian Conference, for financial help. But his response was not encouraging. Lalbihari sought another interview with Kalicharan after some months. This time he met him along with some blind students of his school. Their performance influenced Kalicharan to take a different view this time. He asked Lalbihari to convene a public meeting and promised to address the gathering on behalf of the school.

Lalbihari therefore met the President of the General Assembly Institution, later renamed as the Scottish Church College, and asked him for permission to call a meeting in the hall of the college. He gave the permission and the meeting took place soon after. Kalicharan kept his word and addressed it on behalf of the school without making a direct appeal for funds which must have been a little discouraging for Lalbihari. However, his blind pupils showed their skills in solving mathematical problems with the help of tactile apparatus. Their performance was an eloquent testimony to the achievements and hard work of Lalbihari. The students of the college were so impressed with the performance that they enthusiastically raised even small collections including a few paisas and annas which amounted to a little over seven rupees! It was the first donation for the school raised in public.

The financial gains from the public meeting were not impressive by any standard but Lalbihari could

draw satisfaction because of its impact on Kalicharan Babu. He subsequently became a supporter and source of assistance to the school. He advised Lalbihari to prepare a report on the school which he did. Following the publication of the report, Kalicharan himself prepared an appeal for inclusion in the newspapers since he knew some editors. The idea was to motivate the public to come forward to extend financial support in view of the good work being done for blind children. The appeal read, "I have known Babu Lalbihari Shah for many days. He is an office-bearer in one of our churches and is held in esteem for his constant Christian character. He is a thoroughly reliable person. He has qualified himself for the teaching of the blind and has taken a few pupils in hand. He is a faithful worker and any help or encouragement given him is sure to be rightly used."

Following the publication of the appeal, more and more people came to know and appreciated the work being done by Lalbihari. Small donations also began to flow in. It eased many a tension of the pioneer and he could devote more time to improving the quality of his services.

The last year of the previous century brought a new and formidable challenge to Lalbihari. He was called by a London Missionary Society's pastor and asked to hand over the school to the society and accept their offer to serve the school as an employee. It was not acceptable to him. Consequently, the pastor launched a new school for the blind at Bhawanipur and took away three of his pupils. The society also exercised its influence in obtaining a financial grant from the Directorate of Education. Lalbihari's school was not considered suitable for the grant but the new school

was immediately sanctioned a monthly financial aid of Rs. 18.

Other pressures were also brought to bear on him. Edmund, the Secretary of the Bible Society, called him and asked who authorised him to collect funds from the common people for the school. He could obviously sense his dubious motive. Therefore, he declined to converse on the subject which enraged Edmund.

Fortunately, the new school lacked a competent teacher. Therefore, its authorities sent a person to Lalbihari for learning Braille. He took advantage of this situation and forwarded his own hard conditions for imparting any knowledge on the subject. He demanded Rs. 30 per month for teaching twice a week. When another person asked him to teach in the new school, he demanded Rs. 100 per month. None of the conditions was acceptable to the management of the new school. Ultimately, he was requested to send his son for teaching Braille on a monthly remuneration of Rs. 30. But, Lalbihari was a hard nut to break. He used his knowledge as a weapon for the advancement of his own school. Therefore, he refused this offer on the ground that it would have an adverse effect on his son's education.

People could easily understand that Lalbihari was using his knowledge of Braille as a weapon against his rival. They included some secular supporters of the blind. They, therefore, stopped financial assistance to Lalbihari's school. It meant further financial difficulties for him. But, he was determined to continue his struggle. This unpleasant tug-of-war persisted for a few years before Johnson, the Methodist Bishop of Calcutta and Chairman of the Committee on the Education of the Blind, intervened to bring it to an end. He

was in favour of enabling the locals to shoulder their responsibilities rather than rendering them dependent on the foreign missionary societies. It meant a clear support for Lalbihari in concrete terms. He asked the authorities of the new school to close it down.

The school was wound up following this order and the three students were returned to their former school. But the equipment gathered at that school was not given to Lalbihari's school; it was sent to the headquarters of the society. After some time, however, the equipment was also transferred to his school as a gift. Thus, Lalbihari won a major battle.

The year 1904 saw another shift by his school when he transferred it from the Circular Road building to 58, Elliot Road, the house of a benevolent college teacher. He allowed the school to utilise his house for a monthly rent of Rs. 5 and even this amount he donated to the school.

An exhibition was organised in Calcutta in 1905. Lalbihari was able to secure permission for exhibiting his system of educating the blind there. It enabled him to realize some funds. And he again shifted his school to 5, Dihi Shrirampur Road. He found a number of benefactors for his school there. It therefore registered rapid progress and expansion thereafter. Kelson, their old friend, continued to get supply orders for the school for its products like chiks and curtains, etc. Another powerful and trusted supporter of the school was found in Ashvini Kumar Bandhopadhyaya who was a member of the corporation from that area. He became a link between the school and the government. These contacts strengthened and expanded during the following years with considerable benefit to the school in various ways. When the financial condition was very

favourable, it was again shifted to a spacious bungalow at Lower Circular Road. The monthly rent of the building was Rs. 75 only which was reduced during the war years. The school came into limelight at this place and registered further success with rapidity. Many high-ranking govt. officials started extending their financial and psychological support to its activities. Lord Ronaldsay also showed keen interest and became instrumental in providing a plot at Behala for the school. An appeal for funds was issued during the tenure of Lord Litton in 1924. Subsequently, appropriate structures were raised to house the school. The new complex was formally inaugurated by Lord Litton on 31 March, 1925. It became the permanent abode of the school in the month of June that year.

An ailment during 1912 snatched away Lalbihari's sight and rendered him totally blind. He could not regain his vision this time, but faced life with courage. He continued to serve the school during his remaining years. He however handed over its day-to-day administration to his son and devoted himself to teaching the inmates and advising the young workers.

Lalbihari was drawn to the field of blind welfare through his exposure to Braille script. He did not confine himself to learning and practising the art but went a step ahead. Garthwaite had co-authored the Oriental Braille Code with Knowles. Lalbihari modified the Oriental Braille Code to meet the requirements of Bangla. The code prepared by him came to be known as the "Shah Code". It served the blind in that part of India for a number of years before the advent of Bharati Braille in 1951. The Shah Braille had many a good point but it assigned different symbols from the original Braille script to numerals.

The Calcutta School for the Blind, a model institution during the pre-independence era, can be considered a gift from Lalbihari to the blind children of this country. He continued to serve it despite his advancing age and blindness. By 1927, it had many attainments to its credit. It had found a permanent abode and acquired a standing as an educational institution for the blind children. In other words, the founder had realised his dream.

His soul freed itself from the bonds of mortal body on 1 July 1928.

P. M. Advani

4. P.M. Advani: A Multifaceted Educator

PARMANAND Mewaram Advani can be considered a true friend of the blind in this country. A selfless and dedicated worker in the field of blind welfare, he decided to educate the visually handicapped by choice after relinquishing a lucrative job as Principal of the Sindh National College, Hyderabad. Though not blind, he learned Braille to be able to teach effectively and with confidence. He made relentless efforts for developing a uniform code of Braille for different languages of India. When few could think of rehabilitating the blind in pre-independence days, he had the rare vision of applying some sound principles of pedagogy to educate them.

P.M., as he was called affectionately by his friends, belonged to a zamindar family of Sindh. He was the seventh direct descendant of Adumal, the founder of the Advani group of families. Some of his ancestors probably served as Diwans in a local principality.

Many Hindus of Sindh developed attraction for Islam during the nineteenth century. It was probably due to close interaction between Hindus and Muslims and the predominance of the latter community in that province. It led many Hindus into the fold of Islam. Morijmal Sukhramdas Advani, P.M.'s grandfather, also

converted to Islam.

P.M. was born on 24 October 1886 at Hyderabad, Sindh, now in Pakistan. He had three sisters. His mother, Mithibai, came from a devout Nanakpanthi Hindu background. She did not entertain any inclination towards Islam like his father, Mewaram M. Advani. Consequently, the conversion of the elder Advanis to Islam in 1891 became a source of tensions for P.M. "It left him practically an orphan", according to his daughter. The conversion turned out to be a virtual tug-of-war between his parents since each one of them wanted to take possession of the young child. The legal battle continued for three years before he was allowed to remain with his mother as a Hindu. The bitterness generated by religion explains P.M.'s lack of interest in the rituals of Sanatan Dharma or of Islam.

P.M.'s father later married a Muslim woman and raised a family of six sons and five daughters. Mithibai was naturally apprehensive about the safety of her only son. She thought that her former husband could steal her son any day. Consequently, P.M. spent his childhood and early adolescent years in virtual confinement within his house. It affected his health adversely. He grew to be six feet tall but could never develop physical strength to match his height. As a matter of fact, he was physically very weak at school. His schoolmates therefore nicknamed him "Pammi Khichni" (soft/weak Pammi).

P.M. was allowed to venture out of his house at the age of 14 for his matriculation examination. After success in this exam, he joined the Sindh National College at Hyderabad for his graduation. He completed his B.Sc. at the age of 18 in 1904. Two years later, he earned his master's degree from the University of

Bombay in mathematics.

P.M.'s first job was that of a lecturer at the Sindh National College. After obtaining his M.A. in 1906, he got some promotion and finally had the honour of serving as its Principal. He relinquished this job in 1923 and embarked upon a different mission. He wanted to work for the welfare of the blind.

P.M. could never forget, it seems, the bitterness generated by religion in his childhood. He disliked the religious rituals of Hindus as well as of Muslims. He considered religion a divisive force. Therefore, it was natural for him to turn to theosophy for solace and strength of his inner being. Though he had been attracted to the theosophical society in his late adolescent years, he formally joined it in 1908 having attained the age of 21. Subsequently, his association with it continued till his last days.

P.M. served the society at Karachi as its Secretary during the 1940s when its membership rose from a mere 100 to 400, according to his daughter. His elder daughter Savitri was made its member at the age of 6 and his younger daughter at 2. Savitri left Karachi much before her family members to join its headquarters at Adyar, Madras, for a job and lived there till her death in the late 1980s. After massacre of some Sikhs at Karachi and frequent threats to his own life, P.M. too left Karachi for Bombay where he stayed for about six months. He then went to Adyar to join the theosophical society as its part-time employee. He served it as a National Lecturer. He lived there till 1974 lecturing and devoting his leisure time to his first passion—development of a uniform Braille code.

"Though P.M. never joined any political party formally, he was a nationalist and a humanist", according

to Mr. I.K. Gujral, former Foreign Minister and a long-time friend of P.M. He was interested in understanding various political currents without involving himself in the political process. He was an anti-imperialist at heart but did not become an active member of any anti-imperialist group. In other words, he was active at the intellectual level only. He joined the Friends of the Soviet Union, a group formed during World War II. "He used to come to participate in discussions since he was interested in getting an insight into the prevailing political problems in the country and elsewhere," recalled Mr. Gujral. He was not in favour of partition of the country. When it did take place he could not come to grips with it easily. It is borne out by the fact that he did not leave Karachi until it became almost impossible for him to stay there. His participation in the Home Rule League in Sindh is yet another example of his nationalist character.

He was always sensitive to problems and difficulties faced by others. Mrs. Sheela Gujral related an incident with considerable feelings. It was when P.M. was bed-ridden after his hip-fracture and lived in Bombay with one of his relatives. "He greeted me with a smile when I entered his room. He did not talk of his ailment though I knew he was going through a very hard phase of his life. He insisted on my taking the apple lying on his table. I was in a fix whether to take the apple or refuse it since I knew it was his ration for the day. But, ultimately, I had to take." She related another incident. "Having once known my fascination for roses, he would send me roses on Sundays from his own garden. Whenever I see roses now, I am reminded of P.M."

According to Anne, P.M.'s younger daughter, he

had a good knowledge of homoeopathy. He had also obtained St. John's Ambulance Course in first-aid and kept the necessary medicines at home for treating his blind students and other inmates of the school at Karachi.

Though P.M. was born in a traditional family, his views on social customs were modern because of his liberal education. Purdah system was common in those days. But he was against it. His wife never wore a veil. He encouraged his Muslim sisters to come out of their *burkas*. He was also in favour of giving independence of decision-making to children once they attained adulthood. "He used to say every one has a right to commit his own mistakes," recalls Anne. According to Mrs. Gujral, he was interested in Sufi literature because of its simplicity and lack of faith in rituals. Perhaps, because of this interest and his liberal education he restored harmonious relations between his Hindu family and his father's Muslim family.

He married twice since his first wife was snatched away by death. She bore him a daughter before her death in 1917. He was in his early thirties only when she died, but he had no inclination for second marriage. However, during a long period as a widower, he was attracted to a girl who was younger than him by almost 20 years. He had known her from her childhood. She was called Rukki. The attraction soon became very strong. At one stage, Rukki told Mrs. Gujral later on, she used to receive letters from P.M. twice a day, some of them running into as many as forty-two pages! Finally, in 1935, they decided to marry. It turned out to be a long partnership of two souls full of dedication, affection and mutual trust in spite of many odds. They were blessed with a daughter in 1938 named

Anandmayi by P.M. She later changed her name to Anne. "P.M. was also a very devoted husband", according to Mr. Gujral.

P.M. was drawing an attractive salary of Rs. 900 at the Sindh National College as its Principal when he resigned the post in 1923 to join the Karachi School for the Blind as its Principal on a salary of Rs. 150 only. Evidently, it was the combined decision of his Sufi heart and intellectually trained mind. It is not known however as to how he got attracted to the field of education for the blind. But one thing can be said with some confidence that he started working for the blind before joining the field formally. A benevolent British officer, Mr. Rieu, the then Commissioner of Sindh, along with his wife Ida and some philanthropically minded residents of Karachi, formed an association in 1918 called Ida-Rieu Poor Welfare Association (IRPWA). Jamshed N.R. Mehta, the then Mayor of Karachi, must have been one of the moving forces behind this venture. The Committee on Sindhi Braille was established in June 1920. And P.M. was deputed to this committee in December 1921 by the IRPWA. It is known from documentary evidence that he devoted himself wholeheartedly to this cause from the beginning itself. It is worth mentioning here that one of his cousins, named Chatur Malkani, was blind and had learned Braille by personal endeavour.

The Karachi School for the Blind was established on 1 April 1923. It was started in rented quarters but was shifted later on to a spacious five-acre plot at Bundar Extension Road made available to it by army authorities and the municipality. To begin with, it reminded one of asylums and shelters for the blind in the 19th-century Europe catering to the minimal physi-

cal needs of their inmates. It was governed by the IRPWA. Therefore, it is not surprising to know that the school also sheltered infirms and old people with no one to care for them.

P.M. had however definite plan to base his educational venture on sound pedagogical principles within the limitations imposed on him. He had a "vision" of a good educational facility but had to face a number of "financial handicaps in carrying out his ideas into practice," according to Mr. Gujral who visited his school sometimes. Some of his innovative ideas are worth mentioning here. He firmly believed in making blind inmates of his school independent in moving about freely on their own. He encouraged them to venture out of the school for walks and shopping. Some of the members of the management committee objected to this practice, but he did not succumb to their pressure. It turned out to be fairly successful. There was no major accident in two decades except a minor mishap in which a student was injured, according to Mr. L.R. Motwani who stayed at the school from 1926 to 1947, first as a student and then as a teacher.

P.M. wanted, it seems, his blind students to have as many actual experiences as possible. He would insist on exploration by them. They would not be able to learn about the objective world without touch, he used to say. He would therefore take them out for excursions. One of the excursion spots that Mr. Motwani could recall was Manohara Island, some distance from the Karachi port. P.M. served the school to the best of his abilities for 25 years.

Braille is the tactile script used by the blind for reading and writing in different languages. This wonderful system was invented by a blind scholar of France

during the first half of the nineteenth century. Many other systems of reading by touch were devised before the advent of Braille, viz. reading with letters cut or carved out of wood, letters of alphabet represented by different sizes of knots and loops of rope set at different distance. Letters of tin as well as letters raised on paper in relief had also been tried to make the blind literate. However, they were plagued with serious limitations and, therefore, could not meet the requirements of the visually handicapped. The most serious limitation in all of them was that the users could not write independently. However, Braille turned out to be perfectly capable of being read and written tactually by the sightless.

The Braille script is based on different permutations and combinations of six dots arranged into two vertical lines of three dots each. The maximum number of symbols resulting from different combinations and permutations of these six dots is sixty-three. It is only a tactile script and not a language as many people consider it to be. This script was brought to India in the last decades of the nineteenth century by some Christian missionaries who also sowed in this country some feeble seeds of formal education for the blind.

When schools were started in India for the visually handicapped there were no uniform principles for adapting the Braille script to Indian languages. Its symbols were allotted to the letters of various alphabets in our country without using any scientific principle. It therefore generated a peculiar situation of different Braille codes being used at different schools for the blind even using the same language. Consequently, blind persons trained on one code could not communicate through written word with those trained

on other code/codes though speaking the same language.

P.M. was one of the first advocates of basing the Braille codes for Indian languages on some uniform principles. But there was a lot of opposition to his views. He had to fight tenaciously for three decades for the acceptance of his views on the subject of uniform code. It is evident from his paper entitled "On Uniform Braille System for Indian Vernaculars" presented before the second Oriental Conference at Calcutta in January 1922 and published in the two issues of the *Calcutta Review* (August and December 1922) that he had knowledge of the pre-Braille systems of reading for the blind and development of Braille codes in Britain, USA and other countries. He was also aware of the efforts being made for uniformity between British and American system of Braille. He had made enlightened references to Valentin Hauy and Charles Barbier for their contributions towards the education of the visually handicapped. He had made a comparative study of the Oriental Braille Code developed by Knowles and Garthwaite, the Shah Braille developed by Lalbihari Shah, the Sheriff Braille and the Indian Braille developed by Neelkanthrai Chhatrapati.

In his opinion, the Oriental Braille was based on sound principles for meeting the requirements of Oriental languages. He considered Shah's code better than the Oriental Braille. Chhatrapati's code, according to him, was an attempt to have a closer relationship between English Braille and Indian Braille codes. He opposed it right from the beginning on the ground that it would cause more confusion. "Since Indian languages are more phonetic than European languages",

he said, "there should be one common system for all Indian vernaculars, framed in such a way as to accommodate within its general plan the few peculiarities of each alphabet, without disturbing the common stock. The present state of confusion has been allowed to go on, because no one has cared to look at the subject from the point of view of the good of the blind all over the country."

In addition to studying several codes for comparison, he consulted some philologists also to make his code scientific. One gathers from his writings that he availed himself of the expertise of R.L. Turner and I.J.S. Taraporewalla, two giants of philology at the B.H.U. and Calcutta University respectively. The latter "touched up" his code. The then Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University was also taken into confidence on the subject. He was clear in his mind about the importance of space-economy in writing Braille. He was also in favour of maintaining affinity with the original code as far as possible without compromising the maximum possible uniformity among Indian vernaculars. The major points of his code were as follows:

1. He retained the original seven-line symmetry but made certain improvements in the symmetry of symbols in some lines which, according to him, would make it easier to remember.

2. Symbols of the line No. 5 were reserved for meeting the special requirements of peculiar sounds in some languages.

3. The symbols for punctuation and numerals were retained as in the English Braille.

4. Long vowels were to be obtained from the short ones by adding dot No. 4 to them.

5. The line No. 7 was reserved for compound con-

tractions once the necessary uniformity was achieved.

It was the cumulative effect of discussions at various fora, representations from different quarters, appeals emanating from a variety of important personalities that bore fruit in 1941 in the form of the establishment of a 14-member committee for drawing a uniform Braille code for India under the chairmanship of the then Education Commissioner to the Govt. of India, Mr. John Sargent. An Expert Committee of five persons to draw the code was appointed the following year. P.M. was included in both the committees.

The Expert Committee drew a code and submitted its report in 1943. The Central Advisory Board of Education affixed its seal of approval on the code since the reports from the state governments and the various agencies for the blind were favourable. The code was called "Uniform Indian Braille". P.M. must have been pleased with the official acceptance of this code. But his happiness was short-lived.

During 1945, Sir Clutha Mackenzie established an informal group for drawing up a Braille code for India under his own chairmanship. It prepared a code and named it "Standard Indian Braille". Sir Mackenzie then challenged the official code. It resulted in a lot of controversy.

Consequently, the then Joint Educational Advisor to the Union Government, Humayun Kabir, requested the UNESCO in April 1949 to consider the issue of Braille codes from an international perspective. The UNESCO pondered over the question and searched for an appropriate person to undertake the assignment. Sir Mackenzie was free in those days having completed his tenure in India as Officer on Special Duty (Blindness) and Commandant of the St. Dunstan's

Hostel for the Indian War-blinded and some temporary assignment in China. In view of his wide experience, considerable influence in the international field and practical exposure to Braille due to his blindness, he was the natural choice of the international body. So, he was appointed Braille Consultant to UNESCO.

Sir Mackenzie submitted his report to UNESCO which was considered by an advisory committee in December 1949. It recommended a more representative body for taking a final decision. Therefore, an international conference on Braille was convened at Paris in March 1950. P.M. was unwilling to attend this conference in view of persistent opposition to his code in various quarters and the inability of the government to enforce it in schools. He however made another effort to explain to his opponents the merits of his code. It resulted in a pamphlet entitled "Braille: What It is and How It has been Used With Particular Reference to Uniform Braille Code for India" which was published in 1948. He tried to prove on the basis of his comparative studies of English, Greek, Polish, Hungarian, Russian, Arabic, Korean and Union Mandarin Braille codes that what he had been advocating was best for India. But the opposition continued relentlessly. He could not understand the real intentions of Sir Mackenzie as he had shown appreciation of his code earlier.

He accused him of using his position for advancement of the Standard Indian Braille drawn up by the informal group under his chairmanship. He however knew there was little possibility for the acceptance of his code at the Paris conference. But he eventually attended it. Its decisions and the follow-up measures

are too well known. Therefore, I would not like to discuss them here. What is remarkable, however, is that in spite of the clear rejection of his code, he continued to work for a universal Braille code on the basis of his previous system with the help of a European lady with a good background of linguistics.

P.M.'s struggle for a uniform Braille code for Indian languages, spread well over three decades, is of historical value by any standard. His active life slowed down in 1971 following a hip-fracture. He then shifted to Bombay along with his family in 1974. He died on 27 February 1979.

Sir Clutha Nantes Mackenzie

5. Sir Clutha Nantes Mackenzie

SIR Clutha Mackenzie was born on 11 February 1895 in Clutha, the parliamentary constituency of his father, Sir Thomas Mackenzie. Thomas and his wife Ida Henrietta Nantes Mackenzie had a deep emotional attachment for that place. Consequently, the child was named Clutha Nantes Mackenzie. Thomas was the Prime Minister of New Zealand. His political activities therefore must have influenced Clutha. But the vast expanses of New Zealand's countryside must have influenced him more since he looked after the cattle and sheep during his adolescence and loved to call himself a "shepherd" even in his later years.

Clutha joined the army in 1914 during World War I. He was a trooper with the Wellington Mounted Rifles in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. He served in Egypt and Turkey during his career as a soldier. While in action at the battlefields of Gallipolli in Turkey during 1915 he was blinded because of a blasting shell and compelled to join the rapidly growing band of blinded soldiers. "The blast of a bursting shell in front of my face settled, in a flash, any question as to whether I should see again," he told a gathering later in 1939. Though he retained his legal status as a soldier only upto 1918 he remained a soldier in spirits till his last days.

After the accident Clutha was sent to a war-hospital located in the beautiful countryside of the United Kingdom. There, fortunately, he came in contact with Sir Arthur Pearson who was blind himself. Arthur founded the now famous St. Dunstan's in London during the war to help the newly blinded defence personnel to "conquer blindness". He tried to understand Clutha's aptitude and power of visualisation and expression through conversations. He found that he had a particular liking for open countrysides. He also found that his imagery too was strong. One day, therefore, Arthur asked him to write an article and exhorted him to complete it within a week. It was not only completed within a week but also published in the *Evening Standard*. It fetched five guineas for Clutha. He blushed later at "the inaccuracies of my first attempt both grammatical and botanical", but it turned out to be a milestone in his life.

Having recovered sufficiently at the hospital, he was admitted to the St. Dunstan's and trained in Braille. During the training, he worked at the Middlesex Hospital for some time which, according to him, gave "that comfortable feeling of being able to do something for others." Another major confidence booster came to him in the form of Miss Dorris Sawyer, a senior V.A.D. at the St. Dunstan's, who married him in 1919. The marriage was fruitful and mutually rewarding. They were blessed with two sons and three daughters.

Clutha tried a number of professions with considerable success before he found the profession most suitable to his abilities. The New Zealand forces in Europe and Near East did not have any periodical to serve their requirements. Clutha therefore thought of

launching a journal for them. He discussed his idea with Arthur who found it "splendid!" Consequently, in 1917 he started publishing the *Chronicles of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force* and became its editor. Referring to this journal, Arthur later wrote in his book *Victory over Blindness*, "When he had re-equipped himself at the St. Dunstan's, he edited and published the *Chronicles of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.* This most interesting little bimonthly was looked for with the utmost eagerness by New Zealanders in the trenches, and by their friends and relatives twelve thousand miles away. It was in great part written by its editor, who contributed several series of graphic articles detailing his experiences in the war, and the visits he payed to the front and fleet after he had been blinded. I feel sure that its brilliant young editor will make himself a name in the world of journalism or literature." The venture continued till 1919 only since it was not commercially viable. But it gave Clutha a good amount of publicity and praise as well as courage to fight hardship.

In 1920 he published his first book entitled *The Tale of a Trooper*. Later on, he chose an entirely different field for the outlet of his energies, namely, active politics. He represented the Auckland East constituency in parliament during 1921-22.

Clutha's ultimate aim however was to work for the welfare of the blind. He had already been partly responsible for the after-care of the blinded soldiers in New Zealand as he was the St. Dunstan's representative in New Zealand for the Hostel of the War-Blinded. His experience in the field of blind welfare, his growing self-confidence and lack of a good establishment for the blind in his country brought him closer to the

field of blind welfare. New Zealand did have a small nineteenth-century facility for the blind, named the Jubilee Institute for the Blind, in Auckland, but it was rather limited in its scope of work. Clutha joined it in 1923 and guided its destiny as its Director till 1938. It was at this Institute that he supplemented his plans for the welfare of the blind and refined the techniques of work. It was later on known as the New Zealand National Institute for the Blind. For his services at this Institute in particular and for his work for the rehabilitation of blinded soldiers in general, he was knighted in 1935 when he became Sir Clutha N. Mackenzie.

A lot of prejudices against the blind exist even today. Their intensity and magnitude must have been much more during the first half of this century. Clutha was therefore clear in his mind that generating public awareness about the blind was absolutely necessary. So he delivered speeches at various gatherings, contributed articles to journals and made broadcasts over radio to create awareness about the needs and capacities of the blind.

He wanted them to be independent even if it meant great inconvenience and hardship. Lord Fraser, a longtime friend of Clutha, tells in his book that he was a skilful horserider and made use of horses for travelling long distances in New Zealand. He once said, "My horse could see the way even if I couldn't." And he preferred to walk alone with the help of his cane as far as possible. In his report on blindness in China, he emphasised the creation of proper conditions to facilitate the blinded soldiers to move about independently right from the beginning.

He made maximum use of his typing skills. He always typed letters and other papers himself. "He

used to keep his portable typewriter near his bed even at night," I was told by one of his secretaries during an interview.

Clutha came to India on a private visit in September 1939, the fateful month which saw the commencement of World War II. His experiences during this visit made him realise the dire need of establishing some rehabilitation services for the Indian servicemen blinded during World War I on the pattern of St. Dunstan's in London. It is a recorded fact of history that they received nothing except an insignificant amount by way of a special allowance in addition to their pension. The special allowance was made possible by a lumpsum given to the Indian Soldiers Board by the St. Dunstan's. It was however a challenging as well as a tempting task. It was challenging since Indians happened to be fatalists to a large extent and accepted even their handicap as a consequence of their own misdeeds in their previous life. It was tempting since the entire field was open to him and there could be no opposition to his enterprise because of his British background. Eventually, Clutha stayed in India for nearly a decade. His love affair from 1940 to 1948 with the country proved to be mutually fruitful. It resulted in the establishment of rehabilitation services for the blind of different age-groups based on sound principles. And it catapulted him to an expert on blind welfare. His stature became truly international.

In 1942 when the country was galvanizing on the political front after the Quit India Movement, a silent revolution was taking shape in the field of rehabilitation for the blind, partly because of the compulsions generated by World War II. At that time Clutha was busy in giving some shape to his work in India. He

had established a good rapport with a number of persons in the Government and outside. It was against this background that a cable was sent by the Government of India to Lord Fraser of the St. Dunstan's in London with a request to spare half of Clutha's time for looking into the problems of Indian blind and formulating plans for their rehabilitation during the war as well as in the post-war era. The request was readily granted. The following year he was appointed as a Special Officer by the Department of Education, Health and Lands of the Government of India to ". . . investigate the extent of blindness in India and its cause and to carry out a survey of the existing societies for the education of the blind children and of the means of employing trained blind men and women in sheltered industries and prepare a scheme for the creation of a National Organisation for the Blind of India." He embarked upon the gigantic task assigned to him with his usual zeal and might and submitted his interim report in April. He held this position up to 1947.

(It would be appropriate to make it clear at this stage that during all these years he was playing a dual role since he was also representing the St. Dunstan's as its sole representative. The temporary rank of Lt. Colonel was conferred on him to add to his stature. He retained it till 1948.)

In view of its proximity to the national capital, comparatively pleasant climate and assurance of giving old quarters and some land by the military authorities to the St. Dunstan's, Dehradun was selected as the headquarters by Clutha for his work. St. Dunstan's Hostel for the Indian servicemen came into existence on 9 June 1943. It received its first trainee the following day. It was Havildar Abdul Karim. It first

functioned in a bungalow at 54, Rajpur Road and was later transferred to 116, Rajpur Road, a place which was earlier used as a POW internment camp. Its strength rose to 20 trainees within two months and to over 70 inmates by the end of the second year. It was taken over by the Government of India in 1950 and it blossomed into a National Institute for the Visually Handicapped in 1979.

Clutha received generous support from people in the Government and outside. Lord Archibald Percival Wavell, then Viceroy of India, was particularly kind to him. He not only gave him moral support but also the place he wanted for his activities. He was perhaps keen to extend his support to this noble cause, because of his resounding failures in Middle East and Far East as commander-in-chief and in view of his own visual impairment. Clutha received the Kaisar-i-Hind Gold Medal in 1947 for his commendable services in India.

Clutha left active politics after a short span in the early 1920s. He was an excellent worker and a true friend of the sightless. Yet, he did manifest certain traits which revealed that he suffered from racial superiority to some extent. Mr. Lal Advani, the first instructor at the St. Dunstan's Hostel for the Indian War-Blinded at Dehradun who later rose to the position of Director, National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, thinks that he was "highly racial". Mr. Advani was given a "dungeon" while a British instructor of the same status was provided with a much superior accommodation. It shows he discriminated against the non-whites. In his report on blindness in China he recommended that a foreigner should head the commission on rehabilitation services for the blind in China. One wonders why he considered a Chinese

incapable of heading such a commission. Obviously, he suffered from racial superiority. And he was perhaps also trying to promote himself since his assignment in India was about to end.

A number of Braille codes were being used in different schools in India before Independence. It generated a great deal of hardship for the blind. The Central Advisory Board of Education therefore appointed a committee in 1941 to consider this incongruous situation. It met in November the same year to decide upon the basic guidelines for a uniform Braille code and thought it fit to appoint a smaller committee of experts for drawing up the actual code. The expert committee, consisting of five persons, was appointed in 1942. It drew a code and submitted its report in 1943 which was approved in 1945 by the CABE. A uniform Indian Braille code thus came into existence.

The same year, an informal group under the leadership of Clutha finalised the Standard Indian Braille code and challenged the official Uniform Indian Braille. So, in April 1946, a meeting was arranged between the informal group and the members of the Expert Committee to resolve the differences. But it could not reach an agreement acceptable to both the parties.

Consequently, the Government of India decided to request the UNESCO to consider the issue in a dispassionate and scientific manner. Clutha was appointed by the UNESCO as its consultant in 1949. It was through his untiring efforts that an international conference on Braille was organised at Paris in March 1950 to enunciate the broad principles for drawing up the Braille codes in different languages. He played a significant role in subsequent regional conferences on Braille also.

He became the Chairman of the World Braille Council in 1952 which was established to serve as a "clearing house" for the "interpretation and application of Braille principles".

Thus, it can be said that Clutha contributed immensely to the drawing up of Braille codes in different languages based on certain uniform principles although there are still many problems to be solved in this vital field.

Clutha left the field of journalism in 1919 but he continued to nurture a passion for writing. In addition to his book *The Tale of a Trooper*, which has already been referred to, in December 1965, barely three months before his departure from the mortal world, he completed the biography of his father. And he was already working on his own autobiography. One of his letters written on 31 December 1965 to a former colleague at Dehradun, however, gives the impression that he was doubtful about completing it. But he was happy to report in the same letter that "life goes quietly and pleasantly on our farm here in the country." He was happy to have his daughter, Elizabeth, near him.

Clutha suffered a stroke during the third week of March 1966, but he continued to attend to his work. He died on 27 March the same year.

Sir Clutha Mackenzie, a prolific writer, a tenacious fighter, a reputed expert on blind welfare and a towering intellectual, received a number of awards and honours. He has been a source of inspiration for many and will continue to be so in future.

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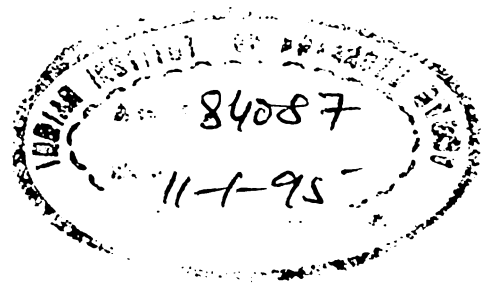

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