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**Renaissance, Nationalism
and
Social Changes
in
MODERN INDIA**

K. K. DATTA

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Renaissance, Nationalism and Social Changes in Modern India

By

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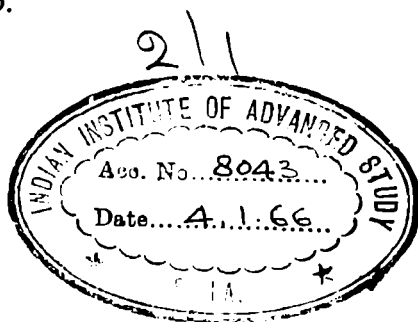
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Hallowed is my birth that
I have been born in this country.

Hallowed is my birth, mother,
in loving thee.

Rabindranath

PREFACE

Indian nationalism has not been a mere political phenomenon. It proved to be a dynamic force of gigantic magnitude influencing Indian life in various ways. Drawing inspiration from some of the liberal ideas of the West through the new system of education and also from internal cultural renaissance of profound significance, and highly inspiring literature of the country, it developed through various phases under the guidance of a number of selfless patriots, some of whom earned martyrdom at the altar of liberty, and through tears and toils of the teeming millions of India, particularly from 1920. It aimed not only at securing political freedom of the country from alien domination but also sought to effect a silent but potent socio-economic revolution by eradication of the grinding evils and abuses of an iniquitous economic system which turned man against man and by purification of the social life of the people according to humane principles. It was not militant in outlook, but emphasised world-fellowship, which was preached as a gospel and practised with faith by our poets, philosophers and statesmen throughout the creative years of the 19th century and in more recent days.

It is high time to understand the true nature and significance of our national awakening and national struggle, so that we can conserve the fruits of our hard won independence in the best possible ways and are not swayed away from the right path by the hallucination of some disintegrating exotic forces or overpowered by reactionary and obscurantist influences within this period of rapid transformation when new problems crop up frequently and when we are confronted with stupendous challenges.

In this volume, I have tried, in my own humble way, to present a short but critical account of our national movement, with its cultural background and social effects, on the basis of important published works, various contemporary documents, reports, relevant correspondence and speeches, writings in contemporary journals and magazines, contemporary literature, and biographies as well as autobiographies of some of our national leaders and British statesmen. I must crave the indulgence of my learned

readers for the shortcomings in this work and would most gratefully accept their constructive suggestions for its improvement in future.

My respectful thanks are due to Dr. Guy S. Metraux for his kind permission to include the last chapter in this volume. This material was originally prepared for the International Commission for a History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of mankind. It was published in the *Journal of World History*, VI, 2 (1960) ; it also appeared in Guy S. Metraux and Francois Crouzet, eds., *The New Asia : Readings in the History of Mankind* (New York, Mentor Books, 1965). I am thankful to an old pupil of mine, Professor Somnath Roy, and my friend, Shri Kamakhya Charan Banerji, for their kindness in going through the typescripts of this work.

PATNA
The 9th May, 1965

K. K. DATTA,
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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	SUBJECT	PAGE
I	Influence of Renaissance and Reformation	1
II	Genesis and Early History of the Indian National Congress	11
III	A New Turn	23
IV	Conciliation and Reforms	37
V	Growth of Popular Discontent	51
VI	Goal of Independence and the Civil Disobedience Movement	... 62
VII	World War II and Constitutional Deadlock	... 73
VIII	The Wavell Plans and the Cabinet Mission Plan	... 86
IX	The Constituent Assembly and the Final Phase of Independence	... 94
X	Changes in the Structure of Indian Society in the Twentieth Century	104
	Bibliography	136

CHAPTER I

INFLUENCE OF RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

The battle of Plassey (23 June, 1757) sowed the seeds of British political supremacy in Bengal, which was extended throughout India during the hundred years following it. The expansion of the British dominion in India, and the development of an Indo-British administrative system as a corollary to it, naturally conducted India through manifold process of transition,—political, economic and social. This, for diverse reasons, generated fumes of discontent among various sections of the people in different parts of India, which burst into flames in the movement of 1857-59.¹ The Movement of 1857-59 was no doubt suppressed by the Government. But it produced significant consequences for India and its memory recalled in the subsequent years certainly worked against British imperialism.

The post-1859 period was marked by the development of some new forces in India destined to effect transformation in the various phases of her life. Cultural renaissance and the Reformation movements in India during the second half of the nineteenth century were then producing a new awakening in Indian minds. The political development of modern India has been an aspect of a general renaissance pervading different spheres of life,—religion, society and culture—and producing momentous consequences in each. The inevitable penetration of its spirit into the field of politics generated there a commotion which gathered an irresistible momentum defying all the weapons of an aggressive imperialism.

It is true that growing acquaintance, through the medium of western education, with the progressive political thought of the West and the stirring achievements of the revolutions of modern Europe resulting in the triumphs of nationalism and democracy saturated the minds of some educated Indians with the ideas of liberalism, civic liberty and national freedom.

1. Sashi Bhusan Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India (1765-1857)* ; K. K. Datta, *The Santal Insurrection of 1855-57*.

But this by itself could not have produced and fostered a truly Indian national movement if there had not been at the same time a genuine urge from within, a spirit of renaissance aiming at the revival of what was noble and elevating in India's past and also at the redemption of her people from the crushing load of unreason, social abuses and political servitude.

Indeed, discovery of India's past through the honest endeavours of scholars, poets and social or religious reformers proved to be a highly fertile source of inspiration generating in the minds of many a feeling of regard for the motherland. Indian nationalism has been, remarks Ramsay Macdonald truly, "the revival of her historical tradition and the liberation of the soul of a people." "Indian Nationality is," in the words of Annie Besant, "not a plant of mushroom growth but a giant of the forest, with millennia behind it."²

The researches of many zealous antiquarians, Indian as well as European, revealed the majesty and glory of India's old civilization, which served to inspire generations of people in this land. No doubt the pioneer workers in this respect were a number of European scholars like Jones, Prinsep, Wilson, Colebrooke, Rosen, Roth, Burnouf, Schelegel, Bopp, Max Muller and some others. But it is highly gratifying to note how for this supremely important task of rediscovering and reinterpreting India's past we owe a heavy debt to our distinguished countrymen like Rammohan Roy, Radhakanta Dev, Rajendra Lal Mitra, Vishwanath Narayan Mandlik, Mani Shankar Jatashankar, Bhau Daji, Bhagwan Lal Indrajai, M. G. Ranade, B. G. Tilak, R. G. Bhandarkar, K. T. Telang, R. C. Dutt, Manamohan Chakravarty, Haraprasad Shastri and some others.

At first "the new wine of Western learning" went to the heads of young Bengal producing "denationalising tendencies"³ in the minds of many of those who tasted it. But the Indian religious and social reform movements did much to arrest the evil effects of the blind imitation of what was apparently glittering in an imposing exotic civilization and to maintain the dignity of our national culture. Rajnarain Bose, a progressive Bramho who had drunk deep of western education, stood undauntedly to

2. Annie Besant, *How India Wrought Her Freedom*, L.

3. Ronaldshay, *The Heart Aryavarta*, p. 47.

uphold the superiority of our culture at a time when some of our countrymen, receiving new education, were growing prejudiced against it. To check denationalisation Rajnarain started in 1861 a Society called the *Society for the Promotion of National Feeling among the Educated Natives of Bengal* and issued a prospectus for it in the form of a pamphlet containing its aims and objects.⁴ Bipin Chandra Pal writes that Rajnarain's lecture⁵ in Bengalee on *Hindu Dharmar Shresthata* or 'the superiority of Hinduism' was 'really first public protest of the age-long Nation-spirit of India against the threatened domination of our thought, and life by the aggressive and colour-proud civilization of Europe'⁵ This view was more emphatically and fruitfully expressed in subsequent years by men like Ranade and Vivekananda to nourish our early nationalism.

We should also note how a galaxy of inspired geniuses produced literature of a highly creative nature, marked by a marvelous fusion of the old and the new, a grand intermingling of the best literary traditions of old India with the good features of the culture of the modern world outside, by feelings of deep adoration for the motherland, and by profound emphasis on the virtue of patriotism. Influence of literature of this kind in stimulating dormant souls can hardly be over-estimated. R. W. Frazer very significantly observes: "Men such as Ram-mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Michael Madhusudan Datta, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Kashinath Trimbak Telang, are no bastard bantlings of a Western civilization; they were creative geniuses worthy to be reckoned in the history of India with such men of old as Kalidas, Chaitanya, Jayadeva, Tulsidas and Shankaracharya and destined in the future to shine clear as the first glowing sparks sent out in the fiery turmoil where old and new were fusing."⁶

In 1860, Dinabandhu Mitra produced in his work, entitled '*Nila-Darpan*' (*Mirrors of Indigo*), a scathing satire on the indigo-planters of Bengal, whose dealings with the local ryots form a tale of unspeakable tyrannies. Hem Chandra Banerjee (1838-1903) 'voiced in his national lyrics the sense of impotence of

4. For full text of it, vide *Modern Review*, January-June, 1944. ✓

5. Bipin Chandra Pal, *Memories of My Life and Times*, I. p. 262.

6. Frazer, *Literary History of India*, pp. 416-447.

his people to assert their legitimate rights and self-respect against their British master'⁷ Bipin Chandra Pal thus describes Hem Chandra Banerjee's influence upon him : "Hem Chandra, however, was our special favourite. The intense patriotic passion that breathed through his poems captured our youthful minds in a way which no other Bengalee poems had done. The new generation of English-educated Bengalees had already commenced to advance themselves to positions of trust and responsibility in the new Administration. In the learned professions of law and medicine also, they were gradually asserting themselves as against the British members. A new spirit of independence and self-assertion was increasingly manifesting itself in the conduct and conversations of the English-educated Bengalee. All these had already commenced to provoke a racial conflict in the country. Hem Chandra was, in a special sense, the poet of this new conflict and of the racial self-respect and sensitive patriotism, born of it."

Hem Chandra expressed in one stanza of his '*Bharat Sangeet*' or the 'Song of India' :

"Sing, O my clarionet ! Sing to these words :
Every one is free in this wide world.
Every one is awake in the glory of science,
India alone lieth asleep."

We read also in the same song :

"China and Burma, and uncivilised Japan,
Even they are independent, they are superior,
India alone knoweth no waking."

Another national song contained the following heart-rending note :

'O, India, weep, weep Thou,
As long as thy polluted atoms have not been washed
away into the waters of the ocean,
So long weep thou, so long weep.'

7. Bipin Chandra Pal, *Memories of My Life and Times*, 1, p. 252.

this facilitated the growth of our early nationalism. We read as follows in the Hindi drama 'Bharat-Durdasa' written by Harish Chandra in 1880 :

'O Brother Indians, come and let all of us weep ;
 Alas, alas, the misery of India is not to be witnessed.
 The one whom God granted first of all wealth and power,
 The one who was made civilised by the Creator first of all,
 The one who bathed first of all in beauty, colour of *rasa*
 And the one who first of all caught the fruits of learning,
 Is now seen last of all.
 Alas, alas, the misery of India is not to be witnessed.

* * * * *

The British Government has arranged all big comforts ;
 But that this wealth goes away to foreign lands is pricking,
 And even then dearness, famine and diseases are spreading.
 Oh, oh, God gives troubles doubly day by day :
 And over all the catastrophe of taxation is come.
 Alas, alas, the misery of India is not to be witnessed.

A powerful dramatic literature coming out of the pen of D. L. Roy and some others also contributed to stir national feeling. For about half a century Rabindranath's works interpreted in a unique way the true spirit of Indian culture and civilisation. "Tagore's Poetry," remarks Ramsay Macdonald significantly, "is India. It is the product of his devotion to Indian culture. It is the soul of a people, not merely the emotion of a man ; a systematic view of life, not merely a poetic mood ; a culture, not merely a tune".¹¹ A mighty stream of inspiration has flow out of the stirring speeches and writings of Sarojini Naidu, Sarala Devi, and some other highlygifted ladies of India.

Spiritual idealism has been also a highly potent factor in promoting the progress of nationalism in modern India. The Indian social and religious reform movements of this period have undoubtedly exercised much influence on the course of our national development. Referring to India's new awakening, Rev. C. F. Andrews wrote about 1912 : 'But this awakening would have been wholly insufficient to usher in a new era if it had not been combined with a second and even greater change.

11. Ramsay Macdonald, *Government of India*, p. 245.

A religious Reformation has been advancing side by side with the new renaissance.”¹² Rammohan Roy, Devendra Nath Tagore, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Dayananda Saraswati, M. G. Ranade, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Ram Krishna Paramahansa and his great disciple Vivekananda and Shri Aurobindo impressed on the minds of our countrymen the profoundness and sublimity of our ancient thought and created therein an indomitable urge for national regeneration on the basis of the best in Indian culture. Rammohan Roy was not only the “first earnest-minded investigator of comparative religion and truth” and the pioneer social reformer in modern India, but also an ardent champion of freedom. William Adam, a Baptist Missionary associated with him for some time, remarked : ‘He would be free or not be at all.....Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul.’ In his letter to Buckingham, dated the 11th August, 1821, Rammohan expressed his strong conviction in the following words : ‘Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been and will never be ultimately successful.’ Particularly significant in this respect was the influence of the reforming activities of India during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the present century. Famous Theosophists like Colonel Olcott and Mrs. Annie Besant who were themselves great admirers of India and helped the cause of Indian nationalism through their writings and speeches tell how Swami Dayanand exerted ‘great nationalising influence.’¹³ In his numerous speeches and writings Swami Vivekananda impressed upon his countrymen as well as upon some foreigners the capacity of India’s inborn spiritual genius, her rich cultural heritage, taught them self-confidence and trust, and thus immensely stimulated Indian nationalism. “The queen of his adoration,” says Sister Nivedita, his brilliantly gifted Irish disciple, “was his motherland.” “Oh India ! wouldst thou attain,” he exclaimed, by means of thy disgraceful cowardice, that freedom deserved only by the brave and the heroic ? Oh India ! forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, forget not that the

12. C. F. Andrews. *The Renaissance of India*, p. 11.

13. A. C. Mazumdar, *Indian National Evolution*, p. 23.

God thou worshipest is the great ascetic of ascetics, the all-renouncing Shankara, the Lord of Uma ; forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure, are not for thy individual personal happiness ; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar ; forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood ; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim : 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother'. Say : 'The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahman Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother'. Thou, too, clad with but a rag round thy loins proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice : The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God, India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age'. Say, brother : 'The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good', and repeat and pray day and night : , 'O Thou Lord of Gauri, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me. O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and make me a Man."

The thoughts and activities of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Shri Aurobindo and some others richly fed this current of inspiration. The conception of India as the 'Mother' originated with Bankim Chandra, who, in a moment of inspiration, first 'uttered' in his *Bande Mataram* the 'Mantra of an awakened nationalism.' To Shri Aurobindo India was the eternal and infinite Mother, and lover of her was a spiritual experience. 'Patriotism', he wrote, cannot be anything short of a desire to redeem one's country. It cannot bear to look upon the country as a sepulchre though it may seem so. It feels the immortality stirring beneath these ruins with which subjection has overspread the country. It feels the pulsations of the immense eternal life of the country through the artificial crust with which the great sleeper has been covered as with a shroud."¹⁴ He once wrote in the paper,

14. Quoted in *Sri Aurobindo and Indian Freedom* by Sishir Kumar Mitra, pp. 47-48,

Bande Mataram : "The work of national emancipation is a great and holy *yajna* of which boycott, Swadeshi, national education and every other activity, great and small, are only major and minor parts. Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice and Motherland the goddess to whom we offer it ; into the seven leaping tongues of the fire of the *yajna* we must offer all that we are and all that we have, feeding the fire even with our blood and lives and happiness of our nearest and dearest ; for the Motherland is the goddess who loves not a maimed and imperfect sacrifice, and freedom was never won from the Gods by a grudging giver."¹⁵ The new nationalism of the early years of present century was characterised by an intense religious conviction as Shri Aurobindo expressed in this passage. Another prominent Indian leader of the time, Shri Bipin Chandra Pal (one of the trio *Pal-Bal-Lal*), significantly refers to it in the following words : "All those old and traditional gods and goddesses who had lost their hold upon the modern mind have been reinstalled with a new historic and nationalistic interpretation in the mind and soul of the people. Hundreds of thousands of our people have commenced to hail their motherland today as Durga, Kalee, Jagadhatree. They are no longer mere mythological conceptions or legendary persons or even poetic symbols. They are different manifestations of the Mother. This Mother is the spirit of India."¹⁶ In an article, entitled *The Age of Gita again in India*, Barindra Kumar Ghose expounded the gospel of their movement by writing : "Shri Krishna has said in *Gita* that whenever there is a decline of righteousness and a rise in unrighteousness there shall be a reincarnation of God to rescue the good, to destroy the wrong-doer, and to establish righteousness. At the present moment righteousness is declining and unrighteousness is springing up in India. A handful of alien robbers are ruining the crores of the people of India by robbing the wealth of India. Through the hard grinding of their servitude, the ribs of their countless people are being broken to pieces . . . Fear not, oh Indians, God will not remain inactive . . . He will keep his word. Placing firm reliance on the promise of God, invoke His power . . . When the lightning of Heaven flashes in their hearts, men perform impossi-

15. *Ibid*, p. 49.

16. Bipin Chandra Pal, *The Soul of India* (1916), pp. 187-189.

ble deeds.”¹⁷ Mahatma Gandhi’s own conviction in this respect was thus expressed by him : ‘To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after this cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics ; and I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.’¹⁸

17. Quoted in Chitrol, *Indian Unrest*, pp. 90-91.

18. *Autobiography*, p. 615.

CHAPTER II

GENESIS AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Even before 1885 some Indian organisations sought to promote welfare of the Indians in various ways and helped the growth of patriotic feelings. The British Indian Association in Calcutta, formed on the 31st October, 1851, had advanced admirably reasoned political views as early as 1852 when it petitioned the British Parliament for constitutional and administrative reforms.¹ The British Indian Association was however, “essentially and by its creed an association of landholders”² and a more democratic organisation came into being within a few years. Inspired by a growing sense of duty towards the country Surendranath Banerjee soon entered into public life and with the co-operation of Ananda Mohan Bose and Dwarkanath Ganguly established the Indian Association in Calcutta on the 26th July, 1876. This organisation was intended “to be the centre of an all-India movement”.³ One of its ideals was the “creation of a strong body of public opinion in the country.”

An opportunity for this came in 1877 with the reduction of the maximum limit of age for Indian Civil Services examination from twentyone to nineteen years under orders of the Marquis of Salisbury, then Secretary of State for India. This “created a painful impression throughout India” and was “regarded as a deliberate attempt to blast the prospects of the Indian candidates for the Indian Civil Service.”⁴ A national protest against it was organised by the Indian Association and a public meeting for this object was held at the Calcutta Town Hall on the 24th March, 1877. To evoke all-India sentiments against this reactionary measure Surendranath conducted a whirlpool campaign holding similar meetings at Agra, Lahore, Amritsar, Meerut.

1. B. B. Mazumdar, *History of Political Thought from Ram Mohun to Dayanand*, pp. 177-181.
2. Surendranath Banerjee, *A Nation in Making* (old edition), p. 40.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid*, p. 44.

Allahabad, Delhi, Cawnpore, Lucknow, Aligarh and Banaras. Next year he undertook tours in Western and southern India. The object of these meetings has been thus described by Surendranath: "The agitation was the means; the raising of the maximum limit of age for the open competitive examination and the holding of simultaneous examinations were among the ends; but the underlying conception, and the true aim and purpose, of the Civil Service agitation was the opening of a spirit of unity and solidarity among the people of India."⁵ Surendranath's all-India tours undoubtedly promoted national consciousness. "For the first time under British rule," he observes, "India, with its varied races and religions, had been brought under the same platform for a common and united front. Thus it was demonstrated, by an object-lesson of impressive significance, that, whatever might be our differences 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."⁶ Shri Lalmohan Ghose, a famous Barrister in Calcutta, was sent to England as the representative of the Indian Association with a memorial to the House of Commons not to lower the limit of age for the open competitive examination for the Indian Civil Service and for holding simultaneous examinations in India and England. Lalmohan Ghose's eloquent speech in a public meeting in Wills' rooms, House of Commons, on the 23rd July, 1879, created much impression upon the audience there. On his return to India he was accorded a rousing reception at Bombay.

Some highhanded measures adopted during the reactionary regime of Lord Lytton (April 1876 to June 1880) stirred national sentiment to a great degree. "In the evolution of political progress," as Surendranath Banerjea has remarked, "bad rulers are often a blessing in disguise."⁷ The administrative measures of Lytton, which aggravated national discontent in India, were the Delhi assemblage of 1877 when "a terrible famine was committing havoc among millions of helpless population in Southern India whose dire effects were severely felt even in Bengal and the Punjab **the wanton invasion of Kabul** followed by the Second

5. *Ibid*,

6. *Ibid*, p. 51.

7. *Ibid*. p. 63.

Afghan War ; the large increase of the army under the hallucination of the Russian bugbear ; the costly establishment of a 'scientific frontier' ** the complete disarming of an inoffensive and helpless population, although the Eurasians were left untouched ; the gagging of the Vernacular Press as a means to stifle public voice against all these fads ** the sacrifice of the import cotton duties as a conservative sop to Lancashire, and the unmerited and undignified rebuff administered by the Viceroy personally to a leading association in the country."⁸

Various economic troubles among the masses and growing unemployment among the middle classes played their parts in fanning the flame of Indian national discontent. Some Indian statesmen came to believe in an exploitation of India by foreigners, and in a consequent economic slavery of India. The administrative apparatus in India, again, was excessively top-heavy and costly. Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt observed that "according to Indian opinion, the vice of Indian Finance lies in the fact that in India the Finance Minister looks principally to the interest not of India but of England. Two English interests have to be served first : the Anglo-Indian Administration and English Trade."⁹ The famous civilian Sir Henry J. S. Cotton remarked in 1885 : "There is no great harm in saying, that the land belongs to State, when the State is only another name for the people ; but it is very different, when the State is represented by a small minority of foreigners who disburse nearly one-third of the revenues received from the land on the remuneration of their own servants and who have no stake in the fortunes of the country."¹⁰ Dr. Macnicol, a Presbyterian missionary in India and a cautious critic, wrote ; "It is not that we have not won the hearts of this people ; we have not even satisfied their hunger. The one aim that Britain sets before herself in the Government of lands like India and Egypt is the bringing to them of a material content. If she has failed to accomplish that, she can boast of no success, and certainly in India she has not succeeded."¹¹

8. *A. C. Mazumdar, Indian National Evolution* (Second edition), pp. 28-29. The Vernacular Press, Act was passed in 1878 and this was followed in the same year by the Arms Act and the License Act.
9. *India Under Ripon* (London, 1909), p. 247.
10. *New India*, p. 53.
11. *The Making of Modern India*, (Oxford, 1924), p. 7.

Lytton's successor, Ripon (June 1880 to December 1884) with his liberal outlook, earned gratitude of the Indians by repealing the Vernacular Press Art. But Indian political aspirations soon received a rude shock through "the astonishing blunder of the Ilbert Bill".¹² To remove racial distinction and inequality in the sphere of justice, this Bill, drafted by Sri C. P. Ilbert, Law Member of the Viceroy's Council, in 1883, provided that Indian Magistrates and Judges should have jurisdiction over Englishmen in the country districts. But the Englishmen in India raised a furious protest against it in open defiance of Indian public opinion which supported it. At last a compromise was effected by which Europeans brought before District Magistrates or Sessions Judges, whether Indians or Europeans, could claim for a trial by a jury, half of whom were to be Europeans. This meant a sacrifice of the main principle of the Bill. But it proved to be a blessing in disguise for the cause of Indian nationalism. The fight over it, the bitter opposition of the Europeans and its defeat left "a rankling raise of humiliation in the mind of educated India"¹³ and convinced it of the need of organising an all-India body for national progress.

Another incident in the year 1883 also strengthened the desire of the Indians for starting an all-India political organisation. It was the incarceration of Surendra Nath Banerjea on a charge of contempt of court for some comments made by him on the conduct of the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, who had asked a Hindu to produce the image of his deity in the Court. This incident caused a wide-spread discontent and evoked strong protests from various sections of the people in Bengal and also in other part of India. The Annual Report of the Indian Association for the year 1883 contains the following significant observation by Ananda Mohan Bose: "That 'good cometh out of evil' was never more fully illustrated than in this notable event. It has now been demonstrated, by the universal outburst of grief and indignation which the event called forth, that the people of the different Indian provinces have learnt to feel for one another; and that a common bond of unity and fellow-feeling is rapidly being established among them."¹⁴

12. S. N. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, pp. 72, 79, 82, 85, 90.

13. *Ibid*, p. 86.

14. *Ibid*, pp. 74-84. Bagal, *A History of the Indian Association*, pp. 59-60.

This feeling was strengthened by the activities of some organisations in Bengal, Madras and Bombay. From December 28 to 30, in 1883 a National Conference was held in Calcutta at the instance of the Indian Association. It has been suggested by an ex-President of the Indian National Congress that the Calcutta National Conference "anticipated the Congress by two years and in a large measure prepared the ground for the great national assembly."¹⁵ In Madras a political association, called the Madras Mahajana Sabha, was established early in 1884 under the leadership of those enlightened persons who had started the *Hindu* in 1878. Also a Provincial Conference was held in Madras.¹⁶ In Bombay a meeting of its citizens was convened on the 31st January, 1885, under the presidentship of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and due to the zeal of that "distinguished triumvirate," Badruddin Tayabjee, Pherozeshah Mehta, K. T. Telang. One important result of this conference was the origin of the Bombay Presidency Association. All these events were undoubtedly fostering the growth of political consciousness in India.

It is true that there was dissatisfaction in India against British administration for certain reasons noted above and the ground for an all-India organisation had also been prepared. It was at such a time that Allan Octavian Hume, a retired member of the Indian Civil Service¹⁷ and worthy son of the founder of the Radical Party in England, with truly democratic instincts, with good knowledge of the trend of events in India and with motives of genuine sympathy for the Indians, felt the need of some action, "to counteract the growing unrest"¹⁸ for the interest of both the ruler and the ruled. Hume himself expressed: "A safety-value for the escape of great and growing forces, generated by our own action, was urgently needed, and no more efficacious safety-value than our Congress movement could

15. A. C. Mazumdar, *Indian National Evolution*, p. 40.

16. *Ibid*, p. 43.

17. He was Secretary to the Government of India in the Home Department in 1870 and then in its newly created Department of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce from 1871-79. He resigned from service in 1882.

18. A. C. Mazumdar, *Op. Cit.*, p. 46.

possibly be devised.”¹⁹ On the 1st of March, 1883, he addressed an *Open Letter* to the graduates of the Calcutta University, whom he described as “the picked men, the most highly educated of the nation,” making therein a stirring appeal to them to form an association “for the mental, moral, social and political regeneration of the people of India—a little army *sui generis* in discipline and equipment.”²⁰ This passionate appeal elicited good response and the “*Indian National Union*” was formed towards the end of 1884. Hume’s ideas were that the leading Indian politicians should meet together once a year “to discuss social matters and be upon friendly feeling with one another, and that the Governor of a Province, where such meeting was held, should preside over it so that thereby “greater cordiality” could be established between the official classes and the non-official Indian leaders. With these ideas he met the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, at Simla early in 1885.

The Viceroy 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. It would be very desirable in their interests as well as the interests of the ruled that Indian politicians should meet yearly and point out to the 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, 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 with Mr. Hume that his name should not be divulged, so long as he remained in the country.”

A modern writer²¹ has suggested that one of the objects of the British Government in helping the formation of such a body was to rally Indian public opinion against the apprehended

19. Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume*, p. 77.

20. Wedderburn, *Ibid.*, p. 52.

21. Dr. Nanda Lal Chatterjee, *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XXXVI, p. 172 ; *Modern Review*, October, 1950, p. 273.

Russian menace. Some educated Indians and sections of the Indian Press advocated the organisation of a volunteer corps against external danger. Considering this another writer has recently expressed the view²² that "Russophobia and 'the Volunteer Movement' worked as a lever to political activity in India. In the ferment of political ideas, the project of an all-India political organisation which was already in the air found an atmosphere very conducive to birth and growth. It was in March, 1885, when the Russian danger was at its optimum point, that A. O. Hume met the Viceroy, explained to him his proposal to organise the Indian National Congress and succeeded in securing the Viceroy's neutrality if not active support for his plan. Taken in this light, Russophobia did yield some dividends to the Indians."

The Second National Conference was held in Calcutta from the 25th to the 27th December, 1885. Meanwhile the Indian National Union, referred to above, decided in March, 1885, to hold a Conference at Poona from the 25th to the 31st December, 1885 and issued a circular letter for this. But due to the outbreak of cholera epidemic at Poona the venue of the Conference was shifted to Bombay. Its name was changed as Indian National Congress, the first session of which started on the 25th December, 1885, with Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee (Umesh Chandra Banerjee) as its elected President and with not less than 72 delegates representing different parts of India.

Early official attitude towards the Congress was friendly. Lord Dufferin in 1886 and Lord Connemara in 1887 invited the members of the Second and Third sessions of the Congress, held respectively in Calcutta and Madras, as "distinguished visitors" to garden parties at the Government House. But this attitude of friendliness soon disappeared and official attitude of opposition to the Congress was noticeable from its fourth session held at Allahabad in 1888. In 1888 Sir Auckland Colvin, Governor of the United Provinces, became hostile to the Congress. Lord Dufferin, hitherto well disposed towards the Congress, criticised its programme in his speech at the St. Andrews Day Dinner in Calcutta on the 30th November, 1888,²³ and referring

22. Mr. B. L. Grover, *Bengal : Past and Present, July-December, 1963.*, also *Journal of Indian History, Vol. XLI, p. 610.*

23. Quoted in *Indian Historical Quarterly, June, 1955, pp. 149-150.*

to the Congress he observed : "I would ask them, how any reasonable man could imagine that the British Government would be content to allow this microscopic minority to control their administration of that majestic and multiform empire for whose safety and welfare they are responsible in the eyes of God and before the face of civilisation"? The Government officially declared in 1890 that the Congress was that kind of conference which private individuals might attend, but from which "government officials are necessarily debarred" and that the government of India "definitely prohibit the presence of government officials at such meetings".²⁴ Lord George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, on the 24th June, 1897 ; "The more I see and hear of the National Congress Party the more I am impressed with the seditious and double-sided character of the prime-movers of the organisation." In May, 1899, Hamilton suggested to Lord Curzon certain means for curbing the influence of the Congress, *viz.*, to wean away the Princes and noblemen from the Congress, to prefer for honours and distinctions those who did not join the Congress and to exercise greater control over education. Curzon, an autocrat to the tip of his fingers, wrote to Hamilton in November, 1899, that "one of his greatest ambitions while in India is to assist it (Congress) to a peaceful demise." Lord Curzon treated the Indian Congress "with positive discourtesy"²⁵ by his refusal to receive a deputation which proposed to wait upon him under the leadership of Sir Henry Cotton with the resolutions of the Bombay session (1904) of the Congress.²⁶

Disappointed at the hostile attitude of the Government towards the Congress, its leaders tried to organise public opinion for it not only in India but also in England by pressing upon "the attention of the British public the political reforms which the Congress advocates." Mr. Bradlaugh, M. P., who had openly assumed the title of "Member for India,"²⁷ attended the fifth session of the Congress at Bombay in 1889 and its President, Sir William Wedderburn, described him as "one whose name is a synonym for independence, for strength and for success."

24. A. C. Mazumdar, *op. cit.* pp. 80-87.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

26. *Ibid.*

27. S. N. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

As decided by this Congress a deputation was sent to England. It was composed of George Yule, A. O. Hume, J. Adam, Eardley Norton, J. E. Howard, Pherozezshah Mehta, Surendranath Banerjea, Monomohan Ghose, Sharfuddin, R. N. Mudholkar and W. C. Bonnerjee. It did valuable work by creating an impression upon some enlightened persons (including Gladstone) in England. True to his promise Bradlaugh introduced a Bill in the House of Commons in 1890 for amending the Indian Councils Act of 1861. But this did not bear fruit and to counteract this measure a Government Bill was passed under the title of the Indian Councils Act of 1892. In 1904 another Congress deputation consisting of G. K. Gokhale and Lala Lajpat Rai was sent to England. The next deputation sent by the Congress, according to the decision of the Karachi session of the Congress of 1913, was composed of Bhupendra Nath Basu (Bengal), Sharma (Madras), M. A. Jinnah and N. M. Samarth (Bombay), S. Sinha and Mazharul Haque (United Provinces and Bihar) and Lala Lajpat Rai (Punjab).

To carry on Congress propaganda in England, a paid agency was started in 1888 under W. Digby with a regular office. A British Committee of the Indian National Congress was started in July, 1889, with W. Wedderburn as Chairman, W. Digby as Secretary and several distinguished Englishmen and two Indians (W. C. Banerjee and Dadabhai Naoroji) as members. Constitution of this Committee was confirmed by the Indian National Congress of 1889. From 1890 it published a Journal called *India* to propagate its views and aims among the British public. Some liberal Englishmen and eminent Indians like Surendranath Banerjea and G. K. Gokhale delivered lectures at several public meetings.

The Congress, in its earlier stages, did not aim at complete severance of India's connection with England. In those days its aim was to establish responsible self-government for India within the British Empire. "All that they deserved," observed W. C. Bonnerjee in his Presidential Address at the first session of the Congress, "was, that the basis of the Government should be widened and that the people should have their proper and legitimate share in it."²⁸ During the first twenty years of its

28. *The Indian National Congress* (Second Edition, Natesan & Co., Madras), p. 4.

history, the Congress passed various resolutions for constitutional and administrative reforms. At its first meeting it demanded "the reform and expansion of the supreme and the existing local legislative councils by the admission of a considerable proportion of elected members," "the creation of similar councils for the N. W. Provinces and Oudh, and also for the Punjab," and the right of discussing the budget and questioning "the Executive in regard to all branches of the administration." It further demanded, besides other things, the abolition of the Council of India as being the "necessary preliminary to all other reforms," and "the holding of simultaneous examinations in England and India for admission into the Indian Civil Service." It also proposed the appointment of a Royal Commission in order to ascertain means for the introduction of representative institutions in India.

The Congress made persistent demands for expansion of both the Supreme and Provincial Legislative Councils and for the increase of popular element in them by election of non-official members. When the Indian Councils Act of 1892 was passed the Congress expressed its regret that "it did not, in terms, concede to the people the right of electing their own representatives to the Council." How the Congress wanted reforms in the various branches of Indian administration would be clear from the following Resolution adopted in 1891: "That this Congress, concurring in the views set forth in previous Congresses, affirms—that fully fifty millions of the population, a number yearly increasing, are dragging out a miserable existence on the verge of starvation, and that, in every decade, several millions actually perish by starvation. That this unhappy condition is largely due to

(a) The exclusion of the people of India from a due participation in the administration and all control over the finances of their own country.

(b) The extravagant cost of the present administration, military and civil, but specially the former ; and to

(c) A short-sighted system of Land Revenue Administration, whereby not only is all improvement in the agriculture of the country, on which nine-tenths of the population depend for subsistence, rendered impossible, but the gradual deterioration of that agriculture assured.

“That hence it has become imperatively necessary—

That the cost of the administration be greatly reduced in the military branch, by a substantial reduction of the Standing Army, by the substitution of long-termed local European troops like those of the Hon. E. I. Company for the present short-termed Imperial Regiments with their heavy cost of recruitment in England, in transport and of the excessive mortality amongst non-acclimatized youths ; by the cessation of the gigantic waste of money that has gone on now for several years, on so-called Frontier Defences and by a strict economy in the Commissariat, Ordnance and Store Departments ; and in the Civil Branch by the wide substitution of a cheaper indigenous agency for the extremely costly imported Staff ; and that measures be at once taken to give, as was promised by the British Government thirty years ago, fixity and permanence to the Land Revenue demand and thus permit capital and labour to combine to develop the agriculture of the country, which, under the existing system of Temporary Settlements in recent times often lasting for short periods, in some cases only extending to 10 and 12 years, is found to be impossible ; and to establish agricultural banks.”

The Congress sought to guard the interests of the Indian people against some measures of the Government which adversely affected these. Thus in its Madras session, held in 1894 under the Presidentship of Mr. Alfred Webb, M. P., it protested against the “injustice and impolicy of imposing excise duty on cottons manufactured in British India, as such excise is calculated to cripple seriously the infant Mill industry in this country” and recorded its strong conviction that “in proposing this excise the interests of India have been sacrificed to those of Lancashire.”

Attitude of majority of the Muslim leaders towards the Congress in its early days was not co-operative and friendly. Sir Syed Ahmad, an eminent reformer and leader of the Muslim community in India, who rendered immense services for its progress on modern lines through the Aligarh Movement and the establishment of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, was of the view that the reforms advocated by the Congress would be prejudicial to the interests of the Muslims who formed a minority. “The Congress,” he observed, “is in reality a civil war without arms.” “The ultimate object of the Congress was to rule the country ; and although they wished

to do it in the name of all people of India, the Muslims would be helpless as they would be in a minority." He therefore advised his community to remain aloof from the Congress from its very beginning and as a counterblast to this body started the '*Patriotic Association*' at Aligarh in 1888. This was followed by the establishment of the '*Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association of 'upper India*' in 1893, at the instance of Mr. Beck, Principal of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. In pursuance of the policy of divide and rule, Beck, Principal of this College till his death in 1899 and his successor, Morrison, who held this office till 1905, did much to aggravate Hindu-Muslim estrangement. It cannot be, however, said that the entire Muslim community was opposed to the Congress. Some belonging to it associated themselves with it from its birth. Justice Badruddin Tayabji of Bombay presided at the annual session of the Congress in 1887. Rahamatullah Muhammad Sayani, another prominent Moslem of Bombay, who presided over its Calcutta session in 1896, observed : It is imagined by some persons that all, or almost all, the Moslems in India are against the Congress movement ; this is not true." Some other famous Moslems, who played leading roles in the Congress, were Mazharul Haque and Hasan Iman in Bihar, A. Rasul in Bengal and Nawab Syed Mahomed Bahadur in Madras.

CHAPTER III

A NEW TURN

While the Congress was trying for attainment of self-Government through a moderate policy and constitutional means, there appeared another section of Indian nationalists among the members of the Congress from the closing years of the nineteenth century, whose aim was complete freedom of India from alien rule, ideas radical and methods revolutionary. The latter considered the mild methods of "moderation and loyalty" to be insufficient for liberation of the motherland. This extreme section of the nationalists first found a field for their activities at Poona under the leadership of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a Chitpavan Brahman of Poona, an eminent scholar of versatile talents with command over Sanskrit, Marathi and English, an influential journalist and above all a man of high moral character. Chirol described him "as one of the most dangerous pioneers of disaffection" and "truly the father of Indian unrest."¹ The ideal of the Indian nationalists of radical thought was thus expounded by Tilak : "The New Party's conclusion was that it was impossible to gain any concessions by petitions and prayers. This was the first difference between the Moderate and Progressive parties. He did not believe in the philanthropy of British politics. There was no instance in history of a foreign nation ruling another for the benefit of the other and not for its own profit. The rule of the nation by another was itself unnatural. He granted the efficiency of the British Government and the excellence of its methods for its own purpose, but these methods and that efficiency did not work for the interests of the people of the country."²

Tilak sought to stir up national sentiments of the Indians by holding before them the old inspiring religious ideals and glories and the heroic exploits of some of their great men of the past. Thus he inaugurated the celebration of the Ganapati festival in 1893 and of the Shivaji festival in March, 1895. In

1. Valentine Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, pp. 10-41.
2. *Tilak's Address to the students in College Square, Calcutta*, on January 4, 1906.

his article published in the issues of the *Keshari* of the 1st September and 8th September, 1896, Tilak "established the necessity of such national festivals by referring to similar institutions in Greece and Rome. The great unifying and rousing effect of the Olympian and Pythian festivals and also of the circus was emphasised with convincing force."³ He suggested to the intellectual classes the necessity of discontinuing "some of the older objectionable festivals and substitute others more useful." "Such festivals," he pointed out, "provided ample opportunities for the tutored classes to come into close contact with the untutored, to enter into their very spirit, to understand their needs and grievances and lastly, to make them co-sharers in the benefits of education and all other new notions of patriotism which education usually carried with it."⁴ The Shivaji festival proved to be "national hero-worship" and "round his name rallied all the newly aroused national pride and enthusiasm of the Maharastrian people."

The dire consequences of some dreadful national calamities and lack of sympathetic and effective relief measures on the part of the Government increased the latter's unpopularity and indirectly helped Tilak's work. Referring to such outbreaks Blunt significantly remarked: "Agricultural distress is the major premise of revolution in India, and political education, unaccompanied by political power, its minor premise"⁵

Thus when a terrible famine broke out in Bombay in 1896 Tilak started something like a no-rent campaign amongst the Deccan peasantry⁶ and asked them to demand benefits provided by the Famine Relief Code by standing on their rights. In 1896 famine was followed by another severe disaster in the shape of plague epidemic in the western parts of the Bombay Presidency. To combat this calamity the Bombay government took certain steps which did not prove to be effectual and made them unpopular. The District Magistrates were "invested with military power and for offenders against the act severe punishments were laid down."⁷ In Poona, British soldiers were employed to see

3. N. C. Kelkar, *Life of Lokamanya Tilak* (1928), p. 285.

4. *Ibid*, pp. 285-86.

5. Blunt, *Life of Lord Ripon*, p. 255.

6. Athalye, *The Life of Lokamanya Tilak*, pp. 84-85.

7. N. C. Kelkar, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

that the orders were strictly followed. They were guilty of excesses⁸ and harrassed the people in various ways. These inflamed the public mind of which there was a violent outburst in the murder of Mr. Rand, the Collector and Plague Officer of Poona and his associate Lt. Ayerst of the British Regiment on duty, in the night of the 22nd June, 1897, by two Chitpavan Brahman brothers, Damodar and Balkrishna Chaplekar who were subsequently tried and executed. The Anglo-Indian Press held Tilak indirectly responsible for this act and demanded his prosecution. He was arrested and sentenced to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment. The editors of the *Poona Vaibhab*, the *Moda Vritta* and the *Pratoda* were also arrested, and two *Sardars* or landlords (the Natu brothers) were, on suspicion being connected with political movements, deported under Regulation XXV of the Bombay Regulations.

Tilak's selfless patriotism, unflinching determination, indomitable courage and imprisonment made him a martyr for a great cause. Surendranath Banerjea expressed in the Congress session of 1897 : "For Tilak my heart is full of sympathy. My feelings go forth to him in prison. A nation is in tears."

From now commenced what can be called the era of new Indian nationalism, characterised by a deep spiritual fervour and a spirit of dedication of its people to the service of the motherland. It has been justly said that Tilak brought "political philosophy in India from heaven to earth, from the Council Hall or the Congress *mandap* to the street and the market. Politics so far was comparatively a feeble affair,—it lacked life. It is the great merit of Tilak that he put a new self-confidence, a new self-assertiveness into his people.....It was reserved for Tilak to make both the Government and professional politicians look for a new power, *viz.*, the people. It was one of the standing arguments of the official party that the Congress did not represent the people. Tilak cleverly turned the tables on the Government by boldly identifying himself with masses. Tilak's attempt to democratise the political movement and bring it home vividly into the consciousness of the average man, infused a new life and vigour into the movement and gave it a very different character."⁹

8. Lovett, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

9. M. A. Buch, *Rise and Growth of Indian Militant Nationalism*, p. 25.

The new turn in the history of Indian nationalism was due to the working of several forces during the years 1899 to 1905 in the history not only of India but of Asia as a whole. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, which was an almost inevitable clash between the long treasured imperialistic ambitions of Russia in the East and the rising power of Japan, resulted in the victory of the latter and ushered in new forces in world diplomacy. Japan's victory was hailed as a glorious triumph of an Asiatic power against white imperialism and generated new enthusiasm and hopes of liberation in different quarters of this continent. Rev. C. F. Andrews, then in India, thus refers to this widespread aspiration for freedom in Asiatic minds : "At the close of the year 1904 it was clear to those who were watching the political horizon that great changes were impending in the East. Storm clouds had been gathering thick and fast. The air was full of electricity. The war between Russia and Japan had kept the surrounding people on the tiptoe of expectation. A stir of excitement passed over the North of India. Even the remote villagers talked over the victories of Japan as they sat in their circles and passed round the *hugqa* (pipe) at night. One of the older men said to me, 'There has been nothing like it since the Mutiny.' A Turkish consul of long experience in Western Asia told me that in the interior you could see everywhere the most ignorant peasants 'tingling' with the news. Asia was moved from one end to the other, and the sleep of the centuries was finally broken. It was a time when it was good to be alive, for a new chapter was being written in the book of the world's history. My own work at Delhi was at singular point of advantage. It was a meeting point of Hindus and Mussalmans, where their opinions could be noted and recorded. The Aligarh movement among Muhammadans was close at hand, and I was in touch with it. I was also in sympathy with Hindu leaders of the modern school of Indian thought and shared many of their views. Each party spoke freely to me of their hopes and aims. The Musalmans, as one expected, regarded the reverses of Russia chiefly from the territorial standpoint. These reverses seemed to mark the limit of the expansion of the Christian nations over the world's surface. The Hindus regarded more the inner significance of the event. The old-time glory and greatness of Asia seemed destined to return. The material aggrandisement

of the European races at the expense of the East seemed at least to be checked. The whole of Budhaland from Ceylon to Japan might again become one in thought and life. Hinduism might once more bring forth its old treasures of spiritual culture for the benefit of mankind. Behind these dreams and visions was the one exulting hope that the days of servitude to the West were over and the days of independence had dawned. Much had gone before to prepare the way for such a dawn of hope : the Japanese victories made it, for the first time, shining and radiant."¹⁰ Lord Minto spoke in January, 1910 : "When I took up the reins of Government in the late autumn of 1905, all Asia was marvelling at the victories of Japan over a European power ; there were indications of popular demands in China, Persia, and in Turkey ; there was an awakening of the Eastern world, and though to outward appearances India was quiet in the sense that there was at that moment no visible acute political agitation, she had not escaped the general infection, and before I had been in the country a year, I shared the view of my colleagues that beneath a seemingly calm surface there existed a mass of smothered political discontent, much of which was thoroughly justifiable and due to causes which we were called upon to examine."¹¹ Explaining the "*Awakening of Asia*," Mrs. Annie Besant observed in her Presidential Address at the Session of the Indian National Congress in 1917, "In a conversation I had with Lord Minto, soon after his arrival as Viceroy, he discussed the so-called 'unrest in India,' and recognised it as the inevitable result of English education, of English ideals of Democracy, of the Japanese victory over Russia and of the changing conditions in the outer world. I was therefore not surprised to read his remark that he recognised 'frankly and publicly' that new aspirations were stirring in the hearts of the people, that they were part of a larger movement common to the whole East, and that it is necessary to satisfy them to a reasonable extent by giving them a larger share in the administration."

The spirit of enthusiasm mentioned above was no doubt one contributory factor for the rise of India's new nationalism. But Lord Curzon's autocratic administrative measures and his ill-conceived step of Bengal partition added impetus to extremism

10. C. F. Andrews, *The Renaissance in India*, pp. 46.

11. Lady Minto, *India : Morley and Minto*, p. 371.

in India politics.¹² Even the advocates of constitutional methods felt immensely shocked by Curzon's rigorous policy.¹³

The partition scheme of 1903 suggesting the transfer of the whole of the Chittagong Division and the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh to Assam caused widespread indignation throughout Bengal and protest meetings were held in large numbers. Lord Curzon undertook a tour in East Bengal in February, 1904, ostensibly with the object of ascertaining public opinion, but in reality to overawe it.¹⁴ A modified plan of partition was being hatched secretly. It provided that Assam, Dacca Division, Chittagong Division, Hill Tipperah and Rajshahi Division minus Darjeeling would constitute a new Province under a Lieutenant-Governor and West Bengal with Bihar and Orissa was to form the Province of Bengal. When this plan was communicated by the Government of India on the 17th July it raised a storm of protests from various quarters in Bengal. The people of this Province, both Hindus and Muslims, national leaders, members of the territorial aristocracy and other rich magnates, many enlightened members of the public, masses and the student community condemned it universally.

A leading article under the caption, "*A Grave National Disaster*" was published in the issue of the *Bengalee*, edited by Surendranath Banerjea, on the 7th July. It "forewarned the Government of an impending national struggle of the greatest magnitude in case the Government did not reverse their decision." "We are not guilty of the smallest exaggeration," it was further observed in that article "when we say that we are on the threshold of an agitation which, for its intensity and its universality, will be unrivalled in the annals of this province."¹⁵ The Government Resolution embodying the new plan of partition was announced at Simla on the 19th July and next day it appeared in the Calcutta Press. "The announcement," observes Surendranath, "fell like a bomb-shell upon an astonished public***** We felt that we had been insulted, humiliated and tricked."¹⁶

12. *Report of the Seditious Committee, 1918, Chapter II.*

13. S. N. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, p. 187.

14. *Ibid*, p. 186.

15. Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, *India's Fight for Freedom or the Swadeshi Movement (1905-1906)*, pp. 29-30.

16. Surendranath Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, p. 187.

The ostensible plea of the Government for this measure was administrative efficiency. But in reality it was a subtle move to disintegrate Bengal and a deliberate blow to destroy growing political consciousness among the people of Bengal. That is why it gave a terrible shock to public feeling. But bureaucracy remained obdurate and this only served to fan the flame of national disaffection resulting in a wide-spread anti-partition agitation. To voice genuine feelings of protest against this mischievous step, the leaders of Bengal of all shades of opinion, many of the public and large numbers of the students mustered strong in a meeting held in the Town Hall of Calcutta on the 7th of August, 1905, under the Presidentship of Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandi of Cassimbazar, who expressed the view that partition was "the greatest calamity which has befallen the Bengali-speaking race since the commencement of British rule" and described this measure of the Government as "a political blunder of the gravest magnitude."

In total disregard of Bengal's public opinion, the partition was made a "settled fact" by the Government and the new Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam came into existence with Dacca as its capital and Sir Bamfylde Fuller as its Lieutenant-Governor. Universal condemnation of this act was expressed in a specially prepared programme on the 16th October and a special function was arranged in Calcutta in which many of the prominent leaders delivered inspiring speeches. Undaunted in the least by governmental repression of all kinds, the people of Bengal presented a determined opposition to partition. The leaders and youths of Bengal, fired with new feelings of patriotism, had already inaugurated the Swadeshi and Boycott movements which formed a landmark in the history of our nationalism. The sentiment for Swadeshi, in fact, soon assumed a "religious hue" that is, for use of indigenous goods and boycott of foreign goods, the youths of Bengal accepted the following vow : "Invoking God Almighty to be our Witness, and standing in the presence of after generations, we take this solemn vow that, so far as practicable, we shall use home-made articles and abstain from the use of foreign articles. So help us God."¹⁷

Rabindranath Tagore inspired the Swadeshi movement by

17. *Ibid*, p. 229.

his patriotic writings and speeches during this period. Already in 1904 he had outlined a scheme of national reconstruction in his *Swadeshi Samaj* in which the Indians could develop organically without depending on a foreign government, by working for the spread of education and for the development of industries and agriculture.¹⁸

To save the country from the evil effects of the prevailing system of education, the prominent national leaders of Bengal also arranged for imparting national education, pioneering activities about which had been already sponsored by the *Dawn Society*, established in July, 1902, by Satish Chandra Mukherjee, a selfless patriot of inspired zeal. The National Council of Education, officially registered on the 1st June, 1906, set up the Bengal National College and School on the 14th August, 1906. All these were significant steps for promotion of national education. Shri Aurobindo resigning his post at Baroda, for which he got a monthly salary of Rs. 750/-, became Principal of the Calcutta National College on a salary of Rs. 75/- a month, and held this post till he resigned from it on the 2nd August, 1907, apprehending that his association with the College might prejudice its interests because the government had become deeply suspicious of his political activities. Noble idealism inspired Aurobindo and in his reply to the farewell address given to him by the students of the Calcutta National College he observed : "There are times in a nation's history when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else, however high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has arrived for our Motherland when nothing is dearer than her service, when every thing else is to be directed to that end. If you will study for her sake, train yourselves body and mind and soul for her service. Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. All is contained in that one single advice."¹⁹ The idea of national education like the idea of *Swadeshi* soon influenced the whole of India.

Shri Aurobindo also advocated the theory of *Passive Resistance*, which he elucidated in his '*Open Letter to my Countrymen*'²⁰ :

18. J. C. Bagal, *History of the Indian Association (1876-1951)*, p. 149.

19. *Speeches of Shri Aurobindo* p. 4.

20. *Ibid*, Appendix, pp. 176-78.

“Our methods are those of self-help and Passive Resistance. ***The policy of Passive Resistance was evolved partly as the necessary complement of self-help, partly as a means of putting pressure on Government. The essence of this policy is the refusal of co-operation so long as we are not admitted to a substantial share and an effective control in legislation, finance and administration. Just as ‘No representation, no taxation,’ was the watchword of American constitutional agitation in the eighteenth century, so ‘No control, no co-operation’, should be the watchword of our lawful agitation—for constitution we have none,—in the twentieth. We sum up this refusal of co-operation in the convenient word ‘Boycott,’ refusal of co-operation in the industrial exploitation of our country, in education, in government, in judicial administration, in the details of official intercourse.”

Indian nationalism of the post-1905 years was profoundly influenced by religious idealism with Shri Aurobindo as its prophet and with its cult of worship of Mother India, of which the remarkable song *Bande Mataram*, taken from Bankim Chandra's *Anandamath*, became the sacred *mantra*. “The new nationalism which *Bande Mataram* reveals,” says Bipin Chandra Pal, “is not a mere civic or economic or political ideal. It is a religion.²¹ In one of his speeches, Aurobindo clearly expressed : “What is Nationalism? Nationalism is not a mere political programme ; nationalism is a religion that has come from God. Nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live.”²² Besides advocating passive resistance, he preached the gospels of “unqualified *Swaraj* or absolute autonomy free from foreign control” and selfless dedication to the service of the Motherland. ‘Love has a place in politics, but it is the love of one’s country, for one’s countrymen, for the glory, greatness and happiness of the race, the divine *ananda* of self-immolation for one’s fellows, the ecstasy of relieving their sufferings, the joy of seeing one’s blood flow for country and freedom, the bliss of union in death with the fathers of the race. The feeling of almost physical delight in the touch of the mother-soil, of the winds that blow from Indian seas, of the rivers that stream from Indian hills,

21. Bipin Chandra Pal, *Swadeshi and Swaraj*, p. 291.

22. *Speeches of Shri Aurobindo*, p. 7.

in the hearing of Indian speech, music, poetry, in the familiar sights, sounds, habits, dress, manners of our Indian life, this is the physical root of that love. The pride in our past, the pain of our present, the passion for the future are its trunk and branches. Self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, great service, high endurance for the country are its fruit. And the sap which keeps it alive is the realization of the Motherhood of God in the country, the vision of the Mother, the perpetual contemplation, adoration and service of the Mother."²³

The radical nationalists soon expressed open disavowal of the Moderate nationalists' idea of self-government within the Empire. The ideal of the former was thus expressed in an issue of the *Bande Mataram*: "The time has come when in the interest of truth and civic advancement and the freedom of the people, our British friends should be distinctly told that while we are thankful to them for all the kind things they have done to make our lot easy and their yoke light, we cannot any longer suffer to be guided by them in our attempts for political progress and emancipation. Their view-point is not ours; they desire to make the Government of India popular without ceasing in any sense to be essentially British. We desire to make it autonomous absolutely free of the British control."

At the Banares session of the Congress, held in December 1905, the radical nationalists under the leadership of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal almost raised the standard of revolt against the moderate ideal of 'colonial form of self-government.' Victory of the Liberals in Britain in the General Election of 1906 raised new hopes in the minds of the Moderates, who expected some boon from the new Secretary of State for India, John Morley, "the reverent student of Burke, the disciple of Mill, the friend and biographer of Gladstone." But the radicals were not reconciled to this. The Indian National Congress met at Calcutta on the 26th December in a tense atmosphere but an open rupture between the Moderates and the Radicals was prevented by the influence and tact of the President, Dadabhai Naoroji, 'India's Grand Old Man,' then

23. Sri Aurobindo, *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, pp. 83-84. (This passage is from an article meant for the paper *Bande Mataram* but it was seized by the Police and produced as an exhibit in the Alipore Conspiracy case.)

82 years old, who declared *Swaraj* or "self-government, as in the United Kingdom or the colonies" to be the goal of India. But in the Surat Session of the Indian National Congress, held on the 27th December, 1907, there was an open split between the Moderates and the Radicals.

Besides the Radical Nationalists who worked from within the Congress, there were the extremists, who aimed at the salvation of the motherland from alien control by following revolutionary methods through secret organisations and activities such as preparation of bombs and intimidation or killing of oppressive officials. Secret revolutionary societies had been started even in the pre-1905 period.²⁴ But it was during the years marked by a strong wave of agitation and discontent against Bengal partition that revolutionary activities increased in Bengal under the leadership of Barindra Kumar Ghosh, brother of Sri Aurobindo, and Bhupendra Nath Datta, brother of Swami Vivekananda, and Abinash Bhattacharya. Inspired by the inner urge for emancipation of the Motherland from political bondage, they emphasised the need for proper physical development and moral improvement for which they started revolutionary societies called *Anusilan Samities*, the first of which was organised in Calcutta in 1901 by Pramatha Mitra better known as P. Mitra.

To preach the gospel of revolution its leaders in Bengal published books and periodicals. The first book, called *Bhavani Mandir*, bearing unmistakable influence of Bankim Chandra's *Ananda Math*, was published in 1905. It contained a detailed plan for the establishment of a religious sanctuary far from human dwellings, for the training of selfless patriots. Though this book praised *Sakti* or physical ability, it did not contain any reference to crime or violence. This, however, was mentioned in another book, entitled *Bartaman Rajniti* which was published by Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya. This group of nationalists further started from March 1906 publication of a periodical

24. Bhupendra Nath Datta, *Dvitiya Svadhinata Sangram*, p. 8 & p. 92. Two foreigners, but friends of Indian nationalists, were associated with these. They were (Margaret Noble) Sister Nivedita, the famous Irish disciple of Swami Vivekananda and Okakura, a Japanese. *Ibid*, pp. 93-94. Shri Aurobindo refers to Sister Nivedita's collaboration with him in the secret revolutionary field. *Shri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother*, pp. 16-17.

named *Yugantar*, which openly propagated the cult of revolution against the foreign government. Some articles, selected from the *Yugantar*, were published in the form of a booklet known as *Mukti Kon Pathe*.²⁵ The *Bengali Daily* called the *Sandhya*, edited by Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, in a humorous style understood by all, fanned disaffection against the government.

The ideas and activities of these revolutionaries influenced the other parts of India. Centres of work grew up even outside India, as in London under Shri Shyamji Krishna Varma, who brought out a paper called *The Indian Sociologist*, as an organ of the "Indian Home Rule Society", which was founded there in February, 1905, Shri Vinayak Savarkar and Shri Madan Lal Dingra. Lot of "revolutionary literature" came to India from outside.²⁶

Besides collecting arms to help them in their activities, the revolutionaries manufactured bombs to use these against oppressive Government officers. The first bomb was manufactured to kill Bomfylde Fuller, the Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal. A train in which the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal was travelling was bombed near Midnapur on the 6th December, 1907, but there was no casualty. The most sensational bomb explosion was at Muzaffarpur in Bihar by two young men, Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki. The bomb was meant for Mr. Kingsford, then District Judge of Muzaffarpur, who as Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, had made himself highly unpopular by inflicting heavy sentences on some political workers in Bengal. But through mistake the bomb was thrown on the 30th April, 1908, into the carriage of the wife and daughter of Pringle Kennedy, a leading pleader of the Muzaffarpur Bar. Prafulla Chaki shot himself dead when he was about to be arrested. Khudiram was tried and hanged. But there were reverberations of the Muzaffarpur incident in other parts of India and both Khudiram and Prafulla were remembered as national heroes.

The Government used stringent measures of repression to stamp out what has been described as "terrorism" or "anarchism." They were determined, as Lord Minto said, "to rule with a strong hand"²⁷ and to curb what they considered to be sedition "with

25. *Report of the Sedition Committee*, pp. 24-25.

26. Valentine Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, pp. 147-152.

27. Lady Minto, *India : Minto and Morley*, p. 373.

all the weapons"²⁸ at their disposal. Educational institutions were placed under rigorous restrictions, the Press was gagged by an Act of 1910 and some of the prominent leaders were arrested and imprisoned. They were Sardar Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai deported to Mandalay under Regulation III of 1818, Tilak imprisoned at Mandalay and some other leading patriots and men of high character like Shri Aswini Kumar Dutt, Shri Krishna Kumar Mitra, Shri Satish Chandra Chatterjee, Shri Sachindra Prasad Bose and Shri Subodh Mullick, all of whom were "strongly wedded to constitutional methods."²⁹ Thirty four persons, with Shri Aurobindo and Barindra, were arrested on 4th March, 1908 on a charge of conspiracy. After their trial in the famous Alipur Conspiracy Case, Shri Aurobindo was acquitted but fifteen were declared guilty and some of them, including Barindra, were transported for life. As we shall note later, militant nationalism could not be effectively suppressed by the Government by these strong measures.

But one impediment to the solidarity of Indian nationalism had already appeared due to the attitude of separatism on the part of some of the leaders of the Muslim community, which was fanned by British officials in pursuance of their policy of *Divide et Impera*.³⁰ These leaders of the Muslim community had the feeling that as minority the Muslims would suffer if representative institutions were introduced in India, in which they apprehended dominance of the Hindus. Thus a deputation of the Muslims under the leadership of Aga Khan, "engineered" by British officials, was received by Lord Minto at Simla on the 1st October, 1906. The diary of Lady Minto, under date, October 1, 1906, contains the following entry, "This evening I have received the following letter from an Official : I must send Your Excellency a line to say that a very, very big thing has happened to-day. A work of statesmanship that will affect India and Indian history for many a long year. It is nothing less than the pulling back of sixty-two millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition."³¹ Buchan, the biographer of Minto, also observes that Minto's reply to the

28. *Ibid*, p. 377.

29. S. N. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, pp. 249-251.

30. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided*, pp. 87.

31. Lady Minto, *India : Minto and Morley*, pp. 47-48.

Muslim Deputation "undoubtedly prevented the ranks of sedition being swollen by Moslem recruits, an inestimable advantage in the day of trouble which was dawning."³² The Whitehall expressed very much the same opinion as is clear from Morley's letter, dated 26th October, 1906 : "All that you tell me of your Mohammedans is full of interest, and I only regret, that I could not have moved about unseen at your garden party. The whole thing has been as good as it could be, and it stamps your position and personal authority decisively. Among other good effects of your deliverance is this, that it has completely deranged the plans and tactics of the critical faction here, that is to say it has prevented them from any longer representing the Indian Government as the ordinary case of bureaucracy versus the people. I hope that even my stoutest Radical friends will now see that the problem is not quite so simple as this."

One immediate effect of the deputation of Muslim leaders was the establishment of the Muslim League in December, 1906. Aga Khan remained as the permanent President of the Muslim League till 1913 and its objects were thus defined in its constitution : "(1) to promote among Indian Moslems feelings of loyalty towards the British Government, and to remove any misconception that may arise, as to the intentions of the Government with regard to any of its measures, (2) to protect the political and other rights of Indian Moslems and to place their needs and aspirations before the Government in temperate language ; (3) so far as possible, without prejudice to the objects mentioned under (1) and (2), to promote friendly feelings between Moslems and other communities of India."³³ Branches of the League sprang up in different Provinces and also a branch of its was started in London under the Presidentship of Sir Syed Ameer Ali. At its annual session in 1908 the Muslim League passed resolutions demanding extension of the principles of communal representation to local bodies, appointment of a Hindu and a Muslim on the Privy Council and a due share of the Muslims in all services of the State.

32. *Buchan, Lord Minto*, p. 244.

33. *Hindustan Review*, April, 1909, pp. 346-47.

CHAPTER IV

CONCILIATION AND REFORMS

To “really the Moderates” the British Government granted the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909. Besides introducing some changes in the composition and functions of the Legislative Councils, the Act of 1909 recognised indirect election and the principle of separate communal representation which, as the Indian Statutory Commission observed in 1929, became “a cardinal problem and a ground of controversy at every electoral system.” In fact, the Morley-Minto Reforms did not introduce anything like a representative Parliamentary Government in India. Lord Morley himself observed in the House of Lords on the 17th December, 1908 : “If it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or necessarily to the establishment of Parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with it.” Lord Hardinge, Viceroy and Governor-General of India from November 1910 to April 1916, tried to conciliate the Moderates in various ways. He received a Congress deputation “in friendly personal recognition,” as Sir William Wedderburn (President of the 25th session of the Indian National Congress held at Allahabad in December, 1910) observed. The new King George V and the Queen held a Durbar at Delhi in December, 1911, in which His Majesty announced the decisions for the “transfer of the seat of the Government of India from Calcutta to Delhi, and simultaneously as a consequence of that transfer, the creation at as early a date as possible of a Governorship-in-Council for the Presidency of Bengal, of a new Lieutenant-Governorship in Council administering the areas of Bihar, Chota Nagpur and Orissa and of a Chief Commissionership of Assam** ** **.”

But even the Moderates did not fail to realise soon that Government’s policy of ‘divide and rule’ and the introduction of separate electorate for the Muslims were prejudicial to India’s national interests. The Extremists were furiously opposed to the position created by the Morley-Minto Reforms. In spite of terrible repression on the part of the Government, the Revolutionary nationalists carried on secret activities in Bengal and

had their fellow-workers in other parts of India.¹ An attempt was even made on the life of Lord Hardinge by throwing a bomb at the time of the State Entry into the new Capital on the 23rd December, 1912.² Some of the Indian Revolutionaries sought to strive for the freedom of their motherland even from outside India, particularly the members of the Ghadr party organised in America by Shri Hardayal and some prominent Revolutionaries in Bengal. During World War I some of the Indian Revolutionaries desired to form alliance with Germany against England and Germany also wanted to utilise them against the Allies.³ A Young Tamil named Chempakaraman Pillai, President of a body in Zurich called the International Pro-India Committee, proceeded to Berlin to employ himself under the German Foreign Office. He started there "*The Indian National Party*" attached to the German General Staff. It had as its members Hardayal, Taraknath Das, Barkatullah, Chandra Kanta Chakravarty and Heramba Lal Gupta. There was much excitement in the Punjab, which was aggravated by what is known as the *Komagata Maru* incident. The *Komagata M cru*, a Japanese steamer, was chartered by Gurudit Singh, a public-spirited Sikh who had settled in the Far East, along with some other Sikhs, by circumventing Canadian immigration laws, and it left Hongkong on the 4th April, 1914. But when it had touched Vancouver the local authorities did not allow landing "except in a few cases as the immigrants had not complied with the requirements of the law." After resisting for some time the *Komagata Maru* passengers had to agree to start on return journey on the 23rd July. But during the return journey War broke out and under certain circumstances the vessel had to come to India where it moored at Buz Buz near Calcutta on the 29th September. The passengers were to be carried to the Punjab on a special train. But "the Sikhs refused to enter the train and tried to march on Calcutta in a body. They were forcibly turned back and a riot ensued with loss of life on both sides."⁴ Both in "the Punjab and in Bengal the situation was rapidly deepening in gravity." The Government

1. *Report of the Sediton Committee*, 1918, Chapters VIII-XII.

2. Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, *My Indian Years*, pp. 79-82.

3. *Sediton Enquiry Committee Report*, paras, 126-127.

4. *Ibid.*, para 133.

of India soon passed the Defence of India Act in March, 1915, which authorised the appointment of Special Tribunals "for the trial of revolutionary crimes" and highly repressive measures were adopted by the Government against the revolutionaries.

In the meanwhile some other factors like the indignified treatment meted out to the Indians in South Africa by the Union Government there, against which Gandhiji had launched a *Satyagraha*, humiliatory condition of the Indians in the other British colonies and question of Indian immigration into the Crown Colonies had begun to influence the Indian political atmosphere. Another significant factor was the emergence of new consciousness among the educated Indian Muslims whose attitude was very much moulded by international events like the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 about Persia, the national movements in Turkey and Persia, the war between Italy and Turkey (1911), and the Balkan Wars (1912-13). This new consciousness fostered Hindu-Muslim amity. The All-India Muslim League discarded its policy of exclusiveness from 1913, when at its annual session, held at Lucknow on the 22nd March of that year, it declared its aim to be "the attainment of self-government for India along with the other communities." While presiding at the session of the All-India Muslim League, held at Bombay in 1914, Shri Mazharul Haque, one of the most adorable patriots of Bihar, delivered a highly stimulating speech, characterised, as a contemporary Bihar paper⁵ observed, "by the same breadth of views, the same fearless independence, the same undaunted courage of conviction, and the same unselfish patriotism that have ever been the distinguishing features of his public life." He strongly pleaded that cordial relation between the Hindus and the Muslims was essential for the growth of Indian nationalism. Both the Congress and the Muslim League held their annual sessions at Lucknow in December, 1916, and concluded the "*Lucknow Pact*" according to which the Congress agreed to separate electorates and both the organisations jointly formulated a scheme of reforms known as the "*Congress-League Scheme*." In the Resolution for self-government, moved at the Lucknow session of the Congress by Surendra Nath Banerjea on the 29th December 1916, it was demanded that India should be made

5. *The Express*, 5th January, 1916.

“an equal partner in the Empire with the self-governing dominions.” Surendranath observed on this occasion : “To day is a red letter day in our history. To-day Hindus and Mahomedans and all ranks of the National Party are united on this common platform, inspired by a common resolve and a common purpose.”

The year 1916 is significant in the history of Indian nationalism also for two other reasons. The Indian National Congress was under the influence of the Moderates from 1908. Two great Moderate leaders, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Pherozeshah Mehta, passed away from this world in February and November, 1915, respectively. But in 1916 the Moderates and the Radicals agreed to work together under the Indian National Congress. Further, Mrs. Annie Besant, who had been working for some years for the moral and cultural regeneration of India, and had adopted India as her motherland, joined the Indian national movement from 1914. She started a daily, *New India* and a weekly the *Commonweal*, and inaugurated a Home Rule League at Madras in September, 1916. After his release from prison in June, 1914, Lokamanya Tilak had established another Home Rule League at Poona in April, 1916 and was carrying on vigorous propaganda with his two papers, the daily *Keshari* and the weekly *Maratha*. After the Lucknow session of the Congress, both the Home Rule Leagues co-operated to facilitate the Congress-League scheme and their prominent members toured in different parts of India. Influence of the Home Rule Movement was felt in other parts of India.

Repressive measures of the Government against the movements and activities of Lokamanya Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant only served to aggravate national discontent and there was a widespread demand throughout the country for the release of Mrs. Annie Besant and her two co-workers, Mr. G. S. Arundale and Mr. B. P. Wachia. Being released in September, 1917, Mrs. Besant presided at the next session of the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta in December, 1917. India's growing urge for national independence was thus expressed by her in her presidential address : “After a history of Millennia, stretching far back out of the ken of mortal eyes ; having lived with but not died with, the mighty civilisation of the past ; having seen them rise and flourish and decay, until only their sepulchres

remained, deep buried in earth's crust ; having wrought, and triumphed, and suffered, and having survived all changes unbroken ; India who has been verily the Crucified among Nations, now stands on this her Resurrection morning, the Immortal, the Glorious, the Ever-Young ; and India shall soon be seen proud and self-reliant, strong and free, the radiant Splendour of Asia, as the Light and the Blessing of World."

In the meanwhile, with the outbreak of World War I (1914-1918) humanity had to face the severe ordeals of a volcanic cataclysm, which had tremendous repercussions on India. India rendered highly valuable services to the Allies in men, money and munitions. Lord Birkenhead acknowledged these in the following words : "Without India, the War would have been immensely prolonged, if indeed without her help it could have been brought to a victorious conclusion * * * India is an incalculable asset to the mother country (Britain)." Speaking on the 9th September, 1914. Lord Haldane, the then Lord Chancellor of England, remarked : "The Indian soldiers were fighting for the liberties of humanity, as much as we ourselves. India had freely given her lives and treasure in humanity's great cause ; hence things could not be left as they were."⁶ Lord Chelmsford rightly pointed out : "The army in India has thus proved a great Imperial asset, and in weighing the value of India's contribution to the War, it should be remembered that India's forces were no hasty improvisation, but were an army in being fully equipped and supplied, which has cost India annually a large sum to maintain." Mr. Lloyd George spoke in the House of Commons : "And then there is India. How bravely, how loyally, she has supported the British Armies ! The memory of the powerful aid which she willingly accorded in the hour of our trouble will not be forgotten after the war is over, and when the affairs of India come up for examination and for action."⁷

At the same time the War "induced in India a new psychology"⁸ among her people. Referring to it Mahatma Gandhi spoke in a speech, delivered at Karachi on the 29th

6. Quoted in A. C. Mazumdar, *Indian National Evolution* (Second Edition), p. 416.
7. Quoted in the *Presidential Address of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya*, Delhi, 1918.
8. Graham Poic, *India in Transition*, p. 22.

February, 1916 : "A new hope has filled the hearts of the people, a hope that something is going to happen which will raise the Motherland to a higher status."⁹ At this critical hour the British Government sagaciously felt the need of enlisting further support of India, and Mr. E. S. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, made the following significant announcement on the 20th August, 1917 : "The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of the Indians in every branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."^{9a}

India relied on the promises of the British Government and the Indian National Congress in its session of 1917 passed the following resolution on Self-Government : "This Congress expresses its grateful satisfaction over the pronouncement made by His Majesty's Secretary of State for India on behalf of the Imperial Government that its object is the establishment of responsible Government in India.

"This Congress strongly urges the necessity for immediate enactment of a Parliamentary Statute providing for the establishment of Responsible Government in India, the full measure to be attained within a time-limit to be fixed in the Statute itself at an early date.

"This Congress is emphatically of opinion that the Congress-League Scheme of reforms ought to be immediately introduced by the Statute as the first step in the process."

An event of great significance had taken place in Bihar. With Mahatma Gandhi's advent here in 1917, in response to the earnest appeals of the oppressed ryots of Champaran, this historic area got tremendous inspiration to march forward undaunted in the country's fight for freedom and for removal of the manifold evils from which its people had been long suffering. Indeed, Champaran proved to be the veritable nursery of India's

9. *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (Fourth Edition), p. 327.

9a. "It is one of the ironies of history that the announcement was drafted by Curzon," who with his autocratic ideas disliked the word 'Self-Government' for India. Waley, *Edwin Montagu*, p. 136.

new nationalism, characterised by its emphasis on Truth and Non-violence for victory in a noble cause and its programme of socio-economic reforms to ameliorate the condition of the down-trodden masses by complete eradication of accumulated anomalies which turn man against man. "It is no exaggeration, but the literal truth to say," writes Mahatma Gandhi in his *Autobiography*, "that in this meeting with the peasants I was face to face with God, Ahimsa and Truth."

The unsophisticated, simple but poor peasants of North Bihar had been subjected to all the rigours of the highly iniquitous systems of indigo cultivation carried on there by the European indigo planters. While these served the maximum interests of the indigo planters, the peasants groaned under the weight of oppression and misery. Coercion on them for converting their lands into indigo-producing fields, exaction of forced labour from them under various kinds of threat, extremely meagre payments and often no payment at all, and forcible realisation of heavy fines were some of the most objectionable features of the grinding systems. The earlier efforts of the peasants to save themselves from the oppressions of the planters had proved fruitless due to the influence of the latter. Their protests and cries for protection mingled with the air. Their relief came at last through a moral force, generated by the mission of Mahatma Gandhi, in the fulfilment of which he received unstinted and zealous co-operation from Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Acharya J. B. Kripalani (then a Professor at the G. B. B. College, Muzaffarpur), Dr. Anugraha Narayan Sinha, Shri Sambhu Saran Varma, Shri Gorakh Prasad, Shri Ramnavami Prasad, Shri Janakdhari Prasad, Shri Vindiyabani Prasad and some others.

It was from now that Dr. Rajendra Prasad was converted into Gandhian faith which he treasured throughout his life. There had been dawn of political consciousness in the mind of Dr. Rajendra Prasad even when he was a student in Calcutta. Thus he joined the *Dawn Society*, established in 1902 by Shri Satish Chandra Mukherjee, a selfless patriot and educationist of Bengal, to train the youths in imbibing genuine culture and implant in their minds the spirit of love for the country. "Association with the Society," he writes, "stirred my thoughts. Examination no longer held my attention and my imagination was caught

by public and social affairs.”¹⁰ He used to attend the meetings organised to protest against the Bengal partition and he had begun the use of Indian-made goods.¹¹ He took the initiative in organising the Behari Students’ Conference, which was opened for the first time in 1906 in the hall of the Patna College under the Presidentship of the famous barrister, Sharfuddin. This Conference, presided over in its annual sessions by eminent personalities like Sharfuddin, Hasan Imam, Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Parmashewar Lal, Deep Narain Sinha, Braj Kishore Prasad, Shri Mazharul Haque and Prof. Jadunath Sarkar from Bihar, and Mahatma Gandhi, Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, Rev. C. F. Andrews, Shrimati Sarala Devi and Dr. Ganesh Prasad from outside, played a prominent role in the history of Bihar until the beginning of the Non-co-operation movement “when its activities slackened because all its front rank workers joined the bigger agitation.”¹²

Dr. Rajendra Prasad served as a volunteer in the annual session of the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta in December, 1906. Since then he felt gradually drawn towards the Congress and joined it formally when again the annual session met in Calcutta in 1911 and was then elected a member of the All-India Congress Committee. When he was an articled clerk in Calcutta, he and Shri Krishna Prasad of Monghyr met Shri Gokale, who wanted some youngmen of Bihar to join the Servants of India Society which he had started in 1905 to train “national missionaries for the service of India, and to promote, by all means, the true interests of the Indian people.” He felt inclined to join the Servants of India Society and after some days’ ‘serious thought’ wrote a letter to his brother in March, 1910, seeking his permission for this. He was persuaded by his brother and some other members of his family not to join this Society. But a spirit of noble idealism and love of humanity had already penetrated into his soul. That is why he proved to be one of the most devoted co-workers of Mahatma Gandhi in his humanitarian mission in Champaran.

Mahatma Gandhi’s attention to the genuine grievances of

10. Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography* (English edition), p. 42.

11. *Ibid*, p. 45.

12. *Ibid*, p. 50.

the Bihar peasants was drawn by the brave peasant-leader Shri Rajkumar Shukla during the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress in December, 1916. At this Congress, Shri Braj Kishore Prasad, the veteran leader of Bihar, whom Mahatma Gandhi described as the 'soul of public life in the Province', moved a resolution for urging upon the Government the "desirability of appointing a mixed Committee of officials and non-officials to enquire into the agrarian trouble and the strained relations between the indigo ryots and the European planters and to suggest remedies therefor." The resolution was seconded by Shri Arikshan Singh, a pleader of Muzaffarpur, and supported enthusiastically by Shri Raj Kumar Shukla.

After this resolution had been unanimously accepted by the Congress, the Bihar delegates, and Shri Raj Kumar Shukla in particular, appealed to Mahatma Gandhi to come to Champaran and to see with his own eyes the miseries of the ryots there. Mahatma Gandhi promised to tour Champaran in March or April next. On the 3rd April, Mahatma Gandhi sent a wire to Shri Raj Kumar Shukla for meeting him at the residence of Shri Bhupendra Nath Basu in Calcutta, where he was going soon. So Shri Raj Kumar Shukla proceeded to Calcutta and met Mahatma Gandhi there. Leaving Calcutta on the 9th April, 1917, Mahatma Gandhi reached Patna next morning in the company of Shri Raj Kumar Shukla. The same night both of them started for Muzaffarpur. From Muzaffarpur, Mahatma Gandhi moved to Motihari and some other localities, including several villages, to enquire personally into the conditions of the ryots. Attracted by his magnetic personality, large number of ryots came to him in batches and he recorded their statements with the help of his co-workers, though the Government officials sought to restrain him through all means at their disposal. The apostolic personality of Mahatma Gandhi had a miraculous influence on administration. The rigours of the bureaucratic steel-frame vanished before his fearless and unflinching regard for truth, in obedience to what he significantly called "the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience," and his peaceful methods, free from any spectacularism, produced marvellous effects. On the 21st April, 1917, Mr. W. B. Heycock, the Magistrate of Motihari, informed him in a written message that the Government had withdrawn the case against him.

Invited by Sir Edward Gait, Lt. Governor of Bihar, Mahatma Gandhi met him at Ranchi on the 4th June, 1917. The result of this interview was the appointment of a Committee of Enquiry to investigate into and a report on the agrarian conditions in Champaran. Mahatma Gandhi agreed to be a member of this Committee on the conditions that as such he did not cease to be the ryots' advocate, that he should be free to consult his co-workers during the enquiry, and that in case the outcome of the enquiry was not satisfactory he "should be free to guide and advise the ryots as to what line of action they should take" On the recommendations of this Committee, the Champaran Agrarian Bill was passed. It mitigated the long-standing woes of a vast body of men in Bihar and was a "moral victory of the ryots".

The Champaran mission of Mahatma Gandhi is an event of the utmost significance in the history of our country. It was a humanitarian crusade which effected emancipation of a vast body of afflicted members of the community of man from the enormities of a notorious economic system and removed a grave social injustice. It infused into the minds of the poor ryots spirit of fearlessness and regard for honesty, which enabled them to brave the numerous ordeals in the successive periods of our fight for freedom. The general social condition for rural masses was not satisfactory. To bring about an improvement in it became also a programme of Mahatma Gandhi's mission. Two serious maladies, which afflicted the common man, were their colossal ignorance and their pitiable existence under unhealthy conditions. To remove the curse of ignorance, Mahatma Gandhi planned village education through "right type of teachers." He wanted "never to entrust children to commonplace teachers. Their literary qualification was not so essential as their moral fibre."¹³

In response to his "public appeal" for teachers, willing to undertake voluntary teaching work, and for grown up and reliable volunteers for social work, a band of cultured ladies and gentlemen from Gujrat and Maharastra with previous experience of social service works came to Bihar. Schools were opened at several places, viz., at Barharwa, situated at a distance of twenty miles to the east of Motihari, at Bhitharwa in the Nepal Tarai

13. Autobiography, p. 513.

about 40 miles north-west of Bettiah, at Madhuban and some other places. Besides the volunteers from outside, Babu Dharanidhar of Bihar served at the Madhuban school by staying there for six months. About 100 boys were imparted education at the Madhuban school, and about forty girls read in a Girls' school, which was started there. Weaving was introduced at the Barharwa school. By working with the self-less zeal of missionaries, these volunteers turned the schools into veritable *ashrams*, which created salutary impression on the minds of the people.

Medical relief and sanitary improvement works were carried on by some volunteers under the leadership of Dr. Dev of the Servants of India Society.¹⁴ They devoted themselves heart and soul to this "difficult affair" and succeeded to a large extent in educating the village-folk to shake off their old attitude of indifference to such matters and their un-hygienic habits.

Primarily humanitarian in its aim, the Champaran mission also helped the cause of nationalism. It infused into the minds of the down-trodden peasants of Champaran a spirit of awakening, which is an indispensable pre-requisite for the growth of nationalism. "The Champaran struggle was a proof of the fact," writes Mahatma Gandhi, "that disinterested service of the people in any sphere ultimately helps the country politically."¹⁵ The efficacy of non-violent *satyagraha* for success in a noble cause was also brilliantly illustrated here.

In return for her sacrifices during World War I India had naturally high expectations from the British Government. At critical moments during the course of the war the British Government appealed to Indian feelings to rally support in their favour. Apprehending extension of the German menace to Asia, on the 2nd April, 1918, the Prime Minister addressed to the Viceroy of India a telegram, wherein he remarked: "I have no doubt that India will add to the laurels it has already won, and will equip itself on an even greater scale than at present to be the bulwark which will save Asia from the tide of oppression and disorder which it is the object of the enemy to achieve."¹⁶ In his reply, dated the 5th April, the Viceroy wrote: "Your message

14. *Ibid*, p. 515.

15. *Ibid*, p. 508.

16. *India in 1917-18*, p. 6.

comes at a time when all India is stirred to the depths by the noble sacrifices now being made by the British people in the cause of world's freedom and by the stern, unalterable resolution which those sacrifices evince. India, anxious yet confident, realises to the full the great issues at stake in this desperate conflict, and your trumpet call at this crisis will not fall upon deaf ears."¹⁷ To utilise India's resources for assistance to the Empire, the Viceroy convened a War Conference at Delhi from the 27th April to the 29th April, 1918.¹⁸ This Conference expressed strongly in favour of India's war efforts. Mahatma Gandhi, who attended this Conference by invitation, made it perfectly clear to the British Government that India by offering so much help to them in various ways had the natural expectation that she would be granted self-government soon.

Besides making his famous declaration of August, 1917 Mr. Montagu had also announced that the British Government had decided to depute him to India "to consider with the Viceroy the views of local Government, and to receive with him suggestions of representative bodies and others." The Montagu Mission reached India on the 10th November, 1917. It produced a joint scheme of reforms, called Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, which being published on the 8th July, 1918, was ultimately embodied in the Government of India Act, 1919. On the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report there was a strong protest against it from the radical nationalists like Lokamanya Tilak and some others and from Mrs. Annie Besant. Mrs. Besant observed in the *New India* ; "The scheme is unworthy to be offered by England or to be accepted by India." Tilak declared that the "Montagu scheme is entirely unacceptable." A special session of the Indian National Congress, held at Bombay on the 29th, 30th, 31st and 1st September, 1918, under the Presidency of Mr. Hasan Iman of Bihar, condemned its recommendations as "disappointing and unsatisfactory" and suggested some changes in them "as absolutely necessary to constitute a substantive step towards responsible Government." As regards Self-Government, it reaffirmed "the principles of reform contained

17. *Ibid*, p. 7

18. Lokamanya Tilak, Mrs. Besant and the Ali Brothers were not invited to this Conference. Mahatma Gandhi pointed out to the Government that it was a blunder on their part.

in the Resolutions relating to Self-Government adopted in the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League held at Lucknow in December, 1916 and at Calcutta in December, 1917," and declared that "nothing less than self-government within the Empire can satisfy the Indian people and by enabling it to take its rightful place as a free and self-governing nation in the British Commonwealth strengthen the connection between Great Britain and India." It also held that "the people of India are fit for Responsible Government," repudiated "the assumption to the contrary contained in the Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms," and expressed the view that as regards the progressive realisation of Responsible Government "simultaneous advance is indispensable both in the Provinces and the Government of India." It was also decided to send a Congress Deputation to England "to press the Congress views on the British democracy." The next annual session of the Congress held at Delhi in December, 1918, almost ratified the Bombay decision.

The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms proved acceptable to the Moderates, who formed an organisation distinct from the Congress, known as the Indian National Liberal Federation. This marked the final exit of the Moderates from the Congress. Tilak was, as Montagu rightly said, "the biggest leader of India at this moment."

About the Montford Reforms, Gandhiji's views were at first "in consonance with those of the Moderates"¹⁹ and he was in favour of making these work. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was also "in agreement, in essentials, with the views of the Moderates."²⁰ About these reforms the views of the Indian nationalists were divided at the Amritsar session of the Congress (1919). Gandhiji and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya wanted to work the Reforms "on the basis of offering co-operation in the measure in which Government co-operated with the people." Advocating complete rejection of the reforms C. R. Das moved the main Resolution of that Congress to the following effect :—

"1. That this Congress reiterates its declaration of last year that India is fit for full Responsible Government and repudiates all assumptions and assertions to the contrary.

19. Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, p. 102.

R. G. Pradhan, *India's Struggle for Swaraj*, p. 135.

20. Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, p. 102.

2. That this Congress adheres to the Resolution passed at the Delhi Congress regarding Constitutional Reforms and is of opinion that the Reforms Act is inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing.

3. That this Congress further urges that Parliament should take early steps to establish full Responsible Government in India in accordance with the principle of Self-determination."

Gandhiji moved an amendment removing the word 'disappointing' and adding the following in a fourth paragraph :

"4. Pending such introduction, this Congress begs loyally to respond to the sentiments in the Royal Proclamation, namely, 'Let the new era begin with a common determination among my people and my officers to work together for a common purpose,' and trusts that both the authorities and the people will co-operate so to work the Reforms as to secure the early establishment of full Responsible Government.

"And this Congress offers its warmest thanks to the Rt. Hon. E. S. Montagu for his labours in connection with them."

The Congress finally accepted a Resolution embodying the original Resolution moved by C. R. Das with the removal of Gandhiji's additional paragraph by the following :—

"Pending such introduction, this Congress trusts that, so far as may be possible, the people will so work the Reforms as to secure an early establishment of full Responsible Government, and this Congress offers its thanks to the Rt. Hon. E. S. Montagu for his labours in connection with the Reforms."²¹

21. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Congress* (1935 edition), I, pp. 304-305.

CHAPTER V

GROWTH OF POPULAR DISCONTENT :

Non-Co-operation and Khilafat Movements

Certain factors, economic and political, soon caused a tremendous excitement throughout India. Economic factors are no less potent than political ones in generating or facilitating revolutions. In India the adverse economic effects of World War I, such as excessive taxation and high prices of the articles of prime necessity, subjected the masses to acute hardships¹ and accentuated their discontent against the Government. Sentiments of the Muslims in India were deeply agitated over the Khilafat question, that is the question of the dismemberment of Turkey on the close of World War I for which Britain was held to be very much responsible. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and the two brothers, Shaukat Ali and Muhammad Ali, organised the Khilafat movement.

Popular discontent mounted high also because of unmitigated Governmental repression. The drastic provisions of the Rowcatt Bill, based on the recommendations of the Indian Seditious Committee presided over by Sir Sidney Rowlatt, a Judge of the London High Court, and calculated to arm the Government with the same emergency powers for suppressing political activities as it had enjoyed during the war period, was a rude shock to the country. Gandhiji's appeal to the Viceroy to drop the Bill and the protests against it from different quarters remained unheeded, and on the 21st March, 1919, the Government passed the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, which was a challenge to conscience and self-respect of the people of India.

At this critical juncture in the history of our nationalism, Gandhiji advised launching of a nationwide peaceful *satyagraha* by observance of hartal, fasting, prayer and by taking out processions and holding meetings as a protest against 'The Black Act'. The 6th of April next was fixed as the date for starting this *satyagraha* and there was a phenomenal response to Gandhiji's call.

1. *India in 1919*, p. 57.

„The whole of India from one end to the other, towns as well as villages, observed a complete hartal on that day. It was a most wonderful spectacle.”²

But unable to read the symptoms of the time and with a strong determination to crush popular movements, the Government inaugurated a “reign of repression” at Delhi (10th March) and at Amritsar and Lahore (April 1919). On the 15th April, Gandhiji was arrested at Palwal, a wayside railway station in the Punjab, and was taken to Bombay where he was released. There was also the balckest act committed by the Government in connection with a meeting of the citizens of Amritsar held in an enclosed area, called the Jallianwala Bagh, in the afternoon of the 13th April, 1919. Under orders of General O’ Dwyer the troops mercilessly fired 1,600 rounds of ammunition on the unarmed people who had no way for exit. Even according to official figures, wrung out of the Government some months later, 379 persons were killed, and 1,200 were left wounded on the field, about whom, to express in Dwyer’s own words, he “did not consider it his job to take the slightest thought.” Under a heavy mental agitation, Gandhiji suspended *satyagraha*.

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre was in itself a big tragedy. Even after this the Government had no scruple about using other methods of torture and repression. Martial Law was proclaimed in the Punjab within a few days and the people there were subjected to all sorts of excesses under it. Special tribunals were set up which served as veritable engines of tyranny “to carry out the arbitrary will of the autocrat” ; confiscations of property, indiscriminate arrests, floggings and whippings were rampant. There were shootings, hangings and aerial bombardments and at Amritsar “innocent men and women were made to crawl like worms on their bellies.”³

The people of the Punjab braved these outrages, in which Herod was out-Heroded, but as a natural sequel to these there was soon a strong wave of discontent throughout the country. As a protest against “the enormity of the measures taken by the Government of the Punjab”, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood. At this juncture the country suffered a great

2. *Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 563.

3. *Ibid*, p. 578.

loss in the death of Lokamanya Tilak on the 1st August, 1920. But the Indian National movement soon took a new turn under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi who transformed it into a countrywide movement of the masses for liberty. As Rev. C. F. Andrews puts it : “* * * Mahatma Gandhi spoke to the heart of India the *mantram* ‘Be free, Be slaves no more’ and the heart of India responded.” The idea of civil disobedience was gradually growing in the country. The principle of non-co-operation was accepted at the meetings of the Gujrat Provincial Political Conference and at the Bihar Provincial Political Conference held at Bhagalpur in August, 1920. With Mahatma Gandhi’s wholehearted support for the Khilafat cause, there was a splendid fraternisation between the Hindus and the Muslims both being determined to fight shoulder to shoulder for the country’s freedom from alien control. At a special session of the Congress, held in Calcutta in September, 1920, under the Presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai, the following momentous resolution on Non-co-operation was passed by overwhelming majority : “This Congress is of opinion that there can be no contentment in India without redress of the two aforementioned wrongs (Khilafat and Punjab atrocities) and that the only effectual means to vindicate national honour and to prevent a repetition of similar wrongs in future is the establishment of *Swarajya*. This Congress is further of opinion that there is no course left open for the people of India but to approve of and adopt the progressive, non-violent non-co-operation inaugurated by Mr. Gandhi until the said wrongs are righted and *Swarajya* is established.” This resolution of the Calcutta session of the Congress was confirmed almost unanimously at its Nagpur session held in December, 1920.

The programme of the Non-co-operation movement included (a) surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in the local bodies, (b) boycott of Government educational institutions, law-courts and the Legislatures, (c) boycott of foreign goods, (d) “adoption of Swadeshi in piece-goods on a vast scale” and revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving, (e) propaganda for prohibition of alcoholic drinks and (f) non-payment of taxes at a later date to be fixed by the Indian National Congress or the All-India Congress Committee. The object of the Congress was declared to be the “attainment

of *Swarajya* by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means." The terms "constitutional means" were replaced by the last phrase and *Swarajya* was considered to be "self-rule within the Empire, if possible, without, if necessary". "Discipline and self-sacrifice, without which no nation can make real progress," were emphasised as essential conditions of the movement and non-violence was declared to be its "integral part".

Under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership the Non-co-operation Movement made a remarkable progress as a mass struggle. The students were animated by a new spirit of awakening and boycotted colleges and schools in large numbers. Many lawyers gave up practices, the most distinguished among them being Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, Ballabhbai Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and C. Rajagopalachari, and about two-thirds of the voters did not participate in the elections held in November, 1920. *Panchayats* were set up for settlement of disputes. National educational institutions were started at different places, e.g., the National College at Allahabad, Aligarh, Banaras, Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Patna, the Jamia Millia Islamia or the National Muslim University at Delhi and the Bihar Vidyapith at Patna. Subhas Chandra Bose made a great sacrifice by resigning from the Indian Civil Service at a very young age and accepted Principalship of the National College in Calcutta. Mazharul Haque became Chancellor and Braja Kishore Prasad Vice-Chancellor of the Bihar Vidyapith and Dr. Rajendra Prasad became Principal of the National College at the Sadaqat Ashram, Patna.

Besides prescribing the above mentioned items in the programme of the Non-co-operation Movement the Congress laid emphasis on constructive activities also. According to a resolution of the All India Congress Committee, passed at its meeting held at Bezwada in the Madras Presidency on the 31st March and 1st April, 1921, the people were asked to concentrate on the following three items chiefly with a view to completing these by the 30th June :—(1) raising the *All-India Tilak Swaraj Fund* to one crore of rupees, (2) enlisting one crore of members for the Congress and (3) introducing twenty lakhs of *Charkhas* (spinning wheels) in the cities and villages. Again meeting at Bombay on the 28th, 29th and 30th July, 1921, the Congress passed a resolution for concentrating attention "upon

attaining complete boycott of foreign cloth by the 30th of September next and on manufacture of *Khaddar* by stimulating hand-spinning and hand-weaving." One important feature of the movement was the burning of foreign cloth. On the 31st July, 1921, Mahatma Gandhi performed a bonfire of foreign cloth at Bombay and its example was soon followed in other parts of the country.

As a gesture to conciliate the Indians, the British Government sent the Prince of Wales to India and he landed at Bombay on the 17th November, 1921. But India refused to "welcome a representative of a system" of which she was "sick unto death". As a mark of discontent against the Government, *hartals* were observed all over the country on this date and when the Prince visited the capitals of the Provinces the streets were almost deserted.

Events were moving fast accelerating the growth of a spirit of passive resistance and civil disobedience in the country. The All-India Khilafat Conference, meeting at Karachi on the 8th July, 1921, had already passed a very strong resolution to the following effect :—"The meeting proclaims that it is in every way religiously unlawful for the Muslims at the present moment to continue in the British Army or to induce others to join the army and it is the duty of all the Mussalmans in general and *Ulema* in particular to see that these religious commandments are brought home to every Muslim in the army and if no settlement is arrived at before Christmas regarding our campaign, Indian republic will be declared at the Ahmadabad session of the Congress."

Still Mahatma Gandhi's advice was : "Hasten slowly." He asked the people to produce a proper atmosphere for Civil Disobedience. But growing repression on the part of the government, and imprisonment of some leaders including the Ali Brothers gave a fillip to the Non-Co-Operation Movement, as persecution always adds fervour to a faith. Meeting at Delhi on the 4th and 5th November, 1921, the All India Congress Committee authorised "every province, on its own responsibility, to undertake Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes." The conditions were that in the "event of individual Civil Disobedience the individual must know hand-spinning and must have completely fulfilled that part of the programme which is applicable to

him or her, *e.g.*, he or she must have entirely discarded the use of foreign cloth and adopted only hand-spun and hand-woven garments, must be a believer in Hindu-Muslim unity and in unity among all the communities professing different religions in India as an article of faith, must believe in Non-violence as absolutely essential for the redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs and the attainment of Swaraj, and if a Hindu, must by his personal conduct show that he regards untouchability as a blot upon Nationalism." It was also made clear that the civil registers and their families should not expect any pecuniary aid from the Congress. In fact, sufferings, utmost sacrifice and peace were to be the three mottoes of the movement.

The main resolution of the Ahmadabad session of the Congress, held on the 27th and 28th December, 1921, placed "on record the fixed determination of the Congress to continue the programme of non-violent Non-Co-Operation with greater vigour than hitherto, in such manner as each province may determine, till the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs are redressed and Swaraj is established, and the control of the Government of India passes into the hands of the people from that of an irresponsible corporation." In view of the repressive measures of the Government, it called upon all "quietly and without any demonstration, to offer themselves for arrest by belonging to the volunteer Organizations," and it further advised the holding of Committee meetings and even of public meetings in spite of Government prohibition, with necessary precautions to avoid violence of any kind. It affirmed that "Civil Disobedience is the only civilised and effective substitute for an armed rebellion" and so advised all Congress workers and others who believed in peaceful methods, "to organise Individual Civil Disobedience and Mass Civil Disobedience, when the mass of the people have been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-violence." Considering that the arrests of the Congress workers were impending the Congress appointed Mahatma Gandhi its sole "executive authority," and invested him with the full authority of the All-India Congress Committee, including the power to appoint a successor in case of emergency, save that he or his successor could not "conclude any term of peace with the Government of India or the British Government" nor could he change the national creed without the previous sanction of the Congress.

Instead of at once launching a country-wide mass movement Mahatma Gandhi decided to try it first at Bardoli, a small Tehsil in the Surat District of the Bombay Presidency having a population of about 87,000. But even this was suspended by him after an unfortunate incident at Chauri Chaura, a small village near Gorakhpur in the U. P., on the 5th February, 1922, where an angry mob had burnt the police station and killed several police constables. As a penance for "the crime of Chauri Chaura," Mahatma Gandhi began fasting for five days from the 12th February. He observed in an article published in the *Young India* of the 16th February : "God has been abundantly kind to me. He has warned me the third time that there is not as yet in India that non-violent and truthful atmosphere which alone can justify mass civil disobedience, which can be at all described as civil which means gentle, truthful, humble, knowing, wilful yet loving, never criminal and hateful." Mahatma Gandhi's Bardoli decision for suspending *satyagraha* shocked the Congress leaders and other workers and even leaders like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Lala Lajpat Rai, all of whom were in prison. But it was endorsed by the Congress in February, 1922. The All-India Congress Committee, meeting at Delhi on the 24th February, 1922, further resolved that "individual civil disobedience, whether of a defensive or aggressive character may be commenced in respect of particular places or particular laws at the instance of, and on permission being granted therefor, by the respective Provincial Congress Committees."

It was at Bardoli that Mahatma Gandhi enunciated the following programme of constructive work :—

(I) To enlist at least one crore of members of the Congress.

*Note (i) :—*Since peace (non-violence) and legitimacy (truth) are the essence of the Congress creed, no person should be enlisted who does not believe in non-violence and truth as indispensable for the attainment of *Swaraj*. The creed of the Congress must therefore be carefully explained to each person who is appealed to, to join the Congress.

*Note (ii) :—*The workers should note that no one who does not pay the annual subscription can be regarded as a qualified

Congress man ; all the old members are therefore to be advised to register their names.

(2) To popularise the spinning wheel and to organise the manufacture of hand-spun and hand-woven *khaddar*.

Note (i) :—To this end all workers and office-bearers should be dressed in *khaddar* and it is recommended that, with a view to encourage others, they should themselves learn handspinning.

(3) To organise national schools.

Note : No picketing of the Government schools should be resorted to, but reliance should be placed upon the superiority of national schools in all vital matters to command attendance.

(4) To organise the Depressed Classes for a better life, to improve their social, mental and moral condition, to induce them to send their children to national schools and to provide for them the ordinary facilities which the other citizens enjoy.

Note :—Whilst therefore where the prejudice against the untouchables is still strong in places, separate schools and separate wells must be maintained out of Congress funds, every effort should be made to draw such children to national schools and to persuade the people to allow the untouchables to use the common wells.

(5) To organise the temperance campaign amongst the people addicted to the drink habit by house to house visits and to rely more upon appeal to the drinker in his home than upon picketing.

(6) To organise village and town *panchayats* for the private settlement of all disputes, reliance being placed solely upon force of public opinion and the truthfulness of *panchayat* decisions to ensure obedience to them.

Note :—In order to avoid even the appearance of coercion no social boycott should be resorted to against those who will not obey the *panchayat* decisions.

(7) In order to promote and emphasize unity among all classes and races and mutual goodwill, the establishment of which is the aim of the movement of non-co-operation, to organise a social service department that will render help to all, irrespective of differences, in times of illness or accident.

Note :—A Non-Co-Operator, whilst firmly adhering to his creed, will deem it a privilege to render personal service in case of illness or accident to every person whether English or Indian.

(8) To continue the *Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund* collections and call upon every Congressman or Congress sympathiser to pay at least onehundredth part of his annual income for 1921. Every province to send every month twenty five percent of its income from the *Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund* to the All-India Congress Committee."

When the atmosphere in the country was so tense Government arrested Mahatma Gandhi on the 10th March, 1922, and did not mitigate their repression in the least. The 37th annual session of the Indian National Congress was held at Gaya in December, 1922, and there was a new development here in the Congress. Some Congress leaders including Deshabandhu C. R. Das, President of that session, and Pandit Motilal Nehru, advocated 'Council Entry' to follow a plan of "uniform, consistent and continuous obstruction for mending or ending" the new constitution by entering the legislative Assembly and the Provincial Councils. But the majority were opposed to this policy. The pro-Council group, however, formed the *Swarajya Party* early in 1923 with Deshabandhu Das as its President and Pandit Motilal Nehru as its Secretary and contested the next elections. The other leaders of the Party were Hakim Ajmal Khan, Vitalbhai Patel and N. C. Kelkar. The Swarajists had at first some success but their main objective was not fulfilled. The premature death of Deshabandhu Das on the 16th June, 1925, was a severe blow to the *Swarajya Party*. Meeting at Patna on the 22nd and 23rd September, 1925, the All-India Congress Committee invested the *Swarajya Party* with authority of the Congress to deal with the political affairs of the country. The *Swarajya Party* maintained its influence on Indian politics till 1928.

Mahatma Gandhi was released from Jail on the 5th February, 1924. Due to the appearance of some disquieting factors he decided to retire from active politics. Dr. Rajendra Prasad opened the All-India Swadeshi exhibition at the thirty-ninth session of the Congress held at Belgaum on the 20th December, 1924. Presiding over this session of the Congress, Mahatma Gandhi observed : "We are face to face with a situation that compels us

to cry halt." Thus the Non-Co-Operation Movement was suspended. But Gandhiji's own faith in Non-Co-Operation was still strong. In concluding his address he observed :—"As a Congressman wishing to keep the Congress intact, I advise suspension of non-co-operation, for I see that the nation is not ready for it. But as an individual, I cannot and will not do so, as long as the Government remains what it is. It is not merely policy with me, it is an article of faith. Non-co-operation and civil disobedience are but different branches of the same tree called *satyagraha*. It is my *Kalpadrum, jam-i-jam*, the Universal Provider. *Satyagraha* is search for Truth ; and God is Truth. *Ahimsa* or non-violence is the light that reveals that Truth to me. *Swaraj* for me is part of the Truth."

The year 1923-24 marked the beginning of a critical phase in the history of Indian nationalism. Solidarity of the Congress movement was affected by the widening of the dividing lines among the different parties and groups. After the Kanpur session of the Congress, held from the 26th to 28th December, 1925, some prominent leaders like Jayakar, Kelkar and Moonjee left the *Swarajya Party* and meeting in a conference at Akola on the 14th February, 1926, formed the *Responsivist Party* with Jayakar as its President. On the 3rd April, 1926, the *Responsivists* joined hands with the *Independents* at Bombay, and formed the *National Party* with the object of preparing the country "for the establishment of *swaraj* of the Dominion type." Even Lala Lajpat Rai resigned from the *Swarajya Party* on the 24th August, 1926 and helped Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in the formation of a new party called the *Independent Congress Party*.

Much more ominous than party differences was the canker of communalism, which most unfortunately impaired cordiality between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Khilafat question had ceased to be an inspiring force for unity between the two because it had no *raison d'etre* after the proclamation of Turkey as a Republic on the 24th October, 1923, with Mustafa Kamal as its President, abolition of the institution of the Caliphate and declaration of Turkey as a secular state in March, 1924. The Muslim League again became active in the political sphere with enhanced power and rise in communal tension caused riots at some places from 1923. Deeply pained at this communal frenzy, Mahatma Gandhi took to fasting for twenty-one days as

a 'penance for unity'. Some Unity Conferences were held to solve the communal problem. The most important of these were the one summoned in Calcutta by Muhammad Ali, then President of the Indian National Congress, with Pandit Motilal Nehru as President and the other which met in Calcutta in October, 1927. But the resolutions passed at these conferences proved to be ineffective in solving the deep-rooted malady.

It was indeed a period of trial for our nationalism. But Mahatma Gandhi remained undaunted in the midst of these disintegrating forces, and, with an unshaken faith in the efficacy of constructive work of the right type for eradication of the acute internal maladies in the country and elimination of alien rule, he undertook tours in different parts of the country. "I travel," he said, "because I fancy that the masses want to meet me. I certainly want to meet them. I deliver my simple message to them in a few words and they and I are satisfied. It penetrates the mass mind slowly but surely."⁴ Dr. Rajendra Prasad also devoted himself enthusiastically to further the programme of constructive works, including popularisation of *khadi*.

4. Mahadev Desai, *Gandhiji in Indian Villages*, p. 232.

CHAPTER VI

GOAL OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

By 1928 there was a turn in the tide. "There seemed to be a new impulse moving the people forward, a new stir that was equally present in the most varied groups."¹ The Conservative Government of Stanley Baldwin announced in November, 1927, the appointment of a Commission of seven members, earlier than provided in the Act of 1919, under the Chairmanship of Sir John Simon, to report on the working of the constitutional reforms in India. Exclusion of Indians from the personnel of this Commission evoked a strong protest against it in the Congress and by most of the Liberals. A public meeting, convened by Sri T. B. Sapru at Allahabad on the 11th December, 1927, considered "the exclusion of Indians a deliberate insult to the people of India, as not only does it definitely assign to them a position of inferiority, but what is worse, it denies them the right to participate in the determination of the constitution of their country." The Legislative Assembly passed a resolution on the 18th February, 1928 "that the present constitution and scheme of the Statutory Commission are wholly unacceptable to this House and that this House will therefore have nothing to do with the Commission at any state or in any form." It was boycotted with the cry of "Go back, Simon" by the Congressmen, the Liberals and important sections of the Muslim community when it reached Bombay on the 3rd February, 1928, and visited other parts of India.

The Indians did not merely boycott the Simon Commission but they also proceeded to take steps for formulating an Indian scheme of constitution. The All-Parties Conference held at Bombay on the 19th May, 1928, appointed a Committee for this purpose with Pandit Motilal Nehru as its Chairman. The report of the Nehru Committee published in August, 1928, recommended 'Dominion Status' as the basis of the Indian constitution. It

1. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 170.

was not in favour of separate electorates but recommended joint or mixed electorates with one communal safeguard, that is, reservation of seats only for the Muslims where they were in a minority. The All-Parties Conference, held at Lucknow in August, 1928, accepted the recommendations of the Nehru Report with certain amendments. But the Muslim League rejected it. A Muslim All-Parties Conference meeting at Delhi on the 1st January, 1929, passed a resolution embodying Muslim claims, which formed the basis of the fourteen demands formulated by Mr. M. A. Jinnah in the month of March of that year.

In the Indian National Congress a section represented by Shri S. Srinivas Iyengar, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru and Shri Subhas Chandra Bose stood for "complete independence" as against the "Dominion Status" of the Nehru Report and formed the Independence of India League in November, 1928, to further its cause. In spite of this difference of opinion, there was no split in the Congress and at its Calcutta session held in December, 1928, with Pandit Motilal Nehru as President, the Congress passed a compromise resolution which, while "adhering to the resolution relating to complete independence passed at the Madras Congress (1927)," approved of acceptance of the constitution recommended in the Nehru Report if it was accepted "in its entirety" by the British Parliament before the 31st December, 1929. In the event of its non-acceptance by that date or its earlier rejection, the Congress was to "organise a campaign of non-violent non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon."

In certain other ways also there was a new impulse in India in 1929. The peasants of the Bardoli Taluq in the Surat district had organised a *satyagraha* movement and a no-rent campaign under the leadership of Shri Ballabhbhai Patel. Further, the influence of some complex socio-economic forces caused labour disputes and strikes in the industrial centres. There had been also recrudescence of revolutionary activities in the post-1924 period, and members of a new revolutionary party, called the *Hindustan Socialist Republican Army*, were active at different places. Two of its leading members, Shri Bhagat Singh and Shri Batukeshwar Dutt, threw two bombs from the visitors' gallery on the floor of the house of the Assembly on the 8th April, 1929,

“to make a noise and create a stir, and not to injure² as the accused stated later. Many other young men were also arrested all over India and an All-India conspiracy case was started from the middle of the year 1929. The accused persons, headed by Bhagat Singh, went on hunger strike as a protest against the treatment meted out to them in prison. While the other strikers ultimately took food after a prolonged hunger strike, Jatindra Nath Das, one of the accused, stuck to the last and after sixty days’ fasting died on the 13th September, 1929. At this a wave of grief and commotion swept the country and it added impetus to the youth movement.

There was tremendous excitement and ‘unmistakable’ awakening throughout India. The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, was wise enough to realise that these were “critical days” when “matters by which men are duly touched” were “at issue”.³ So he went to England in 1929 and after consultation with the Labour Cabinet, of which Ramsay Macdonald was the Prime Minister and Wedgewood Benn, Secretary of State for India, the Viceroy made an announcement on the 31st October, 1929, to the effect that “the natural issue of India’s constitutional progress,” implicit in the declaration of 1917, was “the attainment of Dominion Status”. He also mentioned in the announcement that after the Reports of the Simon Commission and the Indian Central Committee had been published a Round Table Conference of British statesmen and representatives of the different parties in India as also of the Indian States would be held in London to consider the future constitution of India. A Conference of leaders of different groups, which met at Delhi on the 1st November, 1929, issued a manifesto expressing the hope “to be able to tender co-operation to His Majesty’s Government in their effort to evolve a Dominion Constitution suitable for India’s needs” on the fulfilment of some vital conditions by the Government, such as a general amnesty for political prisoners and a “predominant representation” of the Indian National Congress at the Conference along with representation of other progressive political organisations. But this optimism was blasted by the hostile attitude of a section of the Press and of many statesmen in England against

2. *Ibid*, p. 193.

3. The Viceroy’s statement of 31st October, 1929.

the Viceroy's announcement. After an interview of Mahatma Gandhi and Motilal Nehru with the Viceroy at Delhi on the 23rd December, it became clear that the Dominion Status was still far off. The Viceroy did not commit himself to it. It was stated in a Government official communique that it was impossible for the Viceroy or His Majesty's Government "in any way to prejudice the action of the Conference or to restrict the liberty of Parliament."

At this uncertain situation the Congress felt compelled to take a bolder step. At its Lahore session, held on 29th and 31st December, 1929, with Shri Jawaharlal Nehru as its President, it unanimously passed a momentous resolution adopting complete independence as its goal. It decided for a complete boycott of the Central and Provincial Legislatures and the Round Table Conference and authorised the All-India Congress Committee, whenever it deemed fit, "to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary." At midnight on the 31st December, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru unfurled the Tricolour, the flag of Indian independence, amidst shouts of '*Inqulab Zindabad*', '*Long Live Revolution*'. The 26th of January, 1930, was celebrated as the Independence Day, and this solemn ceremony has been observed since then, year after year.

At a meeting held at Ahmadabad the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution on the 15th February, 1930, to start Civil Disobedience for attaining the goal of independence and authorised Mahatma Gandhi and others, who upheld non-violence as an article of faith, to commence it as and when they decided to do so. Mahatma Gandhi thought of launching *satyagraha* by violating the monopoly on salt, a commodity of prime necessity for all. He decided to start it on the 6th April at Dandi, a seaside village in Surat district, about two hundred miles from the Sabarmati Ashram. But before doing so he sent a letter to the Viceroy through Reginald Reynolds, an Englishman who was then in Sabarmati Ashram, enunciating in it the evils of British imperialism for India, and expounding the true meaning of independence for her teeming millions and the details of the plan of his contemplated movement.

On the appointed day Mahatma Gandhi reached the beach of Dandi and commenced the violation of salt laws. This was a signal for the nation to begin the *satyagraha* through "the war against the Salt Law". On the 9th April, Mahatma Gandhi gave the following message to the nation which has an abiding significance for us : "Swaraj won without sacrifice cannot last long. I would, therefore, like our people to get ready to make the highest sacrifice that they are capable of. In true sacrifice all the suffering is on one side—one is required to master the art of getting killed without killing, or gaining life by losing it." Immediately there was an outburst of a mass movement on a large scale in all parts of the country in which the women folk participated in large numbers. Strikes, hartals, boycott of British goods and liquor shops were resorted to and even violent actions like the Chittagong armoury raid took place.

The Government adopted highly repressive measures to suppress the movement. It promulgated a series of Ordinances by which the normal laws were suspended and stringent restrictions were imposed on the Press. Referring to Government's policy of ruthless repression, Mahatma Gandhi observed : "Even Dyerism pales into insignificance."

Mahatma Gandhi was arrested on the 5th May, almost all the other leaders of the movement were thrown into prison and the arrest of Dr. Rajendra Prasad on the 5th July "created a stir in the Province" of Bihar. Police brutality assumed various forms and terrorism was rampant in all its nakedness. Men and women were lathi-charged and mercilessly beaten. But nothing daunted by these atrocities the people continued the movement with unflinching determination. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Shri M. R. Jayakar made some efforts to effect a compromise but to no effect. The report of the Delegation sent to India by the India League, London, in 1932 to study the Indian situation on the spot contains a graphic description of the acts of repression on the part of the Government. "The sufferings of the common people," the Report states, "have been great, but they have borne them with a courage and endurance which has stood the test of savage repression."⁴

4. R. C. Majumdar, *History of Freedom Movement in India, III*, pp. 414-422.

While the Government was making use of all the stringest methods of repression again for crushing the Civil Disobedience Movement in India, the first Round Table Conference met on the 12th November, 1930, without any representative of the Congress, but it was adjourned *sine die* on the 19th January, 1931, though its work was not over. On that date the British Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald made an announcement in which he observed : "The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon Legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such provisions as may be necessary to guarantee, during period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances and also with guarantees as are required by minorities to protect their political liberties and rights. In such statutory safeguards as may be made for meeting the needs of transitional period, it will be a primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the reserved powers are so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new constitution to full responsibility for her own government.

* * * *

His Majesty's Government, in view of the character of the Conference and of the limited scope at its disposal in London, had deemed it advisable to suspend its work at this point so that the Indian opinion may be consulted upon the work done and the expedient considered for overcoming the difficulties which have been raised. His Majesty's Government will consider, without delay, a plan by which our co-operations may be continued so that the results of our contemplated work may be seen in a new Indian constitution. If, in the meantime, there is a response to the Viceroy's appeal to those engaged at present in Civil Disobedience, and others wish to co-operate on the general lines of this declaration, steps will be taken to enlist their services."

The Working Committee of the Congress meeting at Allahabad on the 21st January, with Dr. Rajendra Prasad in the chair, expressed the view that this declaration of the British Prime Minister "was too vague and general to justify any change in the policy of the Congress." The Independence day was celebrated with much gusto on the 26th January.

Soon there was a change of Government policy in India. On the 26th January, 1931, the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, released Mahatma Gandhi unconditionally and also the members of the Congress Working Committee "to give an opportunity for them to consider the Premier's statement at the Round Table Conference." This was followed by the signing of an agreement between Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Irwin at Delhi on the 5th March, 1931. Though the atmosphere in the country was tense due to the hanging of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukdev, the Congress endorsed this "provisional settlement" at its next annual session, held at Karachi on the 29th, 30th and 31st March, 1931, and thus "embarked," as Mahatma Gandhi said, "deliberately, though provisionally, on a career of co-operation," but it was made clear that "the Congress goal of *Swaraj* still remains intact." It appointed Mahatma its sole representative at the Second Round Table Conference which was held from the 7th September to 1st December, 1931. After discussions on various problems the Round Table Conference formulated a draft constitution for India. But it did not consider the fundamental questions and its work was far from satisfactory from the point of view of Indian national demand. The Round Table Conference caused greater disappointment and frustration in Indian minds.

Mahatma Gandhi landed in Bombay on the 28th December, 1931, to find that the country was under severe repressive measures of the Government like arrests, ordinances and proscriptions for smashing the Civil Disobedience Movement. Lord Willingdon had succeeded Lord Irwin as the Viceroy in April, 1931, and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact had become extinct. Mahatma Gandhi sought an interview with Lord Willingdon but it was not granted. So on the 1st January, 1932, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution for resuming the Civil Disobedience Movement, including non-payment of taxes, in the event of a "satisfactory response not coming from the Government." Government remained adamant and the country was again astir, particularly after the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi on the 4th January, 1932. The Congress and its Committees and allied or sympathetic bodies like the *Kishan Sabhas* and Peasant unions, Youth Leagues, Students' Associations, Seva Dals and National Educational institutions were declared unlawful by the Government. In their zeal for freedom the people had shaken off fear for jail

and thousands courted it so that new camp jails were erected by the Government. Determined to hold strong their iron grip the Government used all sorts of coercive measures and Ordinances⁵ were multiplied. But the people met the challenge boldly and passed through the ordeal by risking all things dear to them.

Unfortunately the question of the position of the so-called Depressed Classes had produced some complication in the situation. The publication of Ramsay Macdonald's Communal Award in August, 1932, providing separate electorates for those called the Depressed Classes, greatly shocked Mahatma Gandhi. As a mark of disapproval of it he began a "fast unto death" from the 20th September. This caused intense agony throughout the land and on the 24th September was signed the Poona pact, which almost doubled the number of seats reserved for the Depressed Classes, to be filled by joint electorates out of the panel of names originally chosen by them alone. On acceptance of this Pact by the British Prime Minister, Mahatma Gandhi broke fast. This fast of Mahatma Gandhi served to create a new consciousness in the country about its duty for the removal of untouchability and uplift of the Harijans.

For certain reasons the Civil Disobedience Movement was gradually slackening from the middle of 1933. Under Mahatma Gandhi's advice the Congress decided in July, 1933, to suspend mass Civil Disobedience but permitted individual Civil Disobedience. Before Mahatma Gandhi could give the lead to individual Civil Disobedience he was arrested on the 1st August, 1933. On the refusal of the Government to grant him similar facilities as before for carrying on *Harijan* uplift work inside the prison, he started another fast "unto death" on the 16th August. But due to growing seriousness in his condition he was released unconditionally on the 23rd August.

In the afternoon of the 15th January, 1934, occurred an unprecedented natural calamity in Bihar in the shape of a terrible earthquake, which devastated vast areas, destroyed thousands of human lives, and caused terrible damages to land, buildings, railways and telegraph lines. To help Government in relief

5. Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, said in the House of Commons on the 24th March, 1932. "I admit that the Ordinances that we have approved are very drastic and severe. They cover almost every activity of Indian life."

work for afflicted humanity Dr. Rajendra Prasad and some other leaders were released. Shri Jawaharlal Nehru undertook a strenuous tour for ten days through "torn and ruined territories" and Mahatma Gandhi commenced his tour in desolate Bihar from 11th March, 1934.

It was now at Patna that the Congress leaders, being outside the Jails, effected a reorientation of Congress policy and decided future line of action. On the 7th April, Mahatma Gandhi issued the following statement (drafted at Saharsa on the 2nd April) suspending Civil Disobedience Movement : "The introspection prompted by the conversation with the *Ashram* inmates had led me to the conclusion that I must advise all Congressmen to suspend civil resistance for *Swaraj*, as distinguished from specific grievances. They should leave it to me alone. It should be resumed by others in my life time only under my direction, unless one arises claiming to know the science better than I do and inspires confidence. I give this opinion as the author and the initiator of *Satyagraha*. Henceforth, therefore, all who have been impelled to civil resistance for *Swaraj* under my advice, directly given or indirectly inferred, will please desist from civil resistance."

The Working Committee and the All-India Congress Committee met at Patna from the 18th to 20th May and suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Congress now agreed to enter Legislature and passed the following resolution : "In as much as there exists in the Congress a large body of members who believe in the necessity of entry into the Legislatures as a step in the Country's progress towards its goal, the All-India Congress Committee hereby appoints Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dr. M. A. Ansari to form a Board with Dr. M. A. Ansari as President, called the Congress Parliamentary Board consisting of not more than twenty-five Congressmen.

The Board shall run and control elections of members to the Legislatures on behalf of the Congress and shall have power to raise, possess and administer funds for carrying out its duties.

The Board shall be subject to the control of the All-India Congress Committee and shall have power to frame its constitution and make rules and regulations from time to time for the management of its affairs. The constitution and the rules and regulations shall be placed before the Working Committee for

approval but shall be in force pending the approval or otherwise of the Working Committee.

The Board shall select only such Congressmen as candidates who will be pledged to carry out in the Legislatures the Congress policy as it will be determined from time to time."

Meanwhile complex economic factors and agrarian troubles in India had begun to influence the minds of some leading members of the Congress, of which the resolution on '*Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme*,' moved at the Karachi session of the Congress in December, 1931, was an index. These also helped the rise of the Kishan Movement and gave an impetus to the creed of socialism. In May 1934, the Socialists organised a separate party within the fold of the Congress known as the Congress Socialist Party.

The Congress obtained sweeping victory at the polls for the general or predominantly Hindu seats. For about three months there was a sort of a deadlock on the question of the exercise of special power of interference by the Governor of a Province. The Viceroy issued a statement on the 21st June, 1937, clarifying the position, and the Congress Working Committee decided at its Wardha meeting, held on the 8th July, 1937, that "Congressmen be permitted to accept office where they may be invited thereto." The object of the Congress in accepting office was thus stated by the President of the Congress, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru : "Acceptance of office does not mean by an iota acceptance of the slave constitution. It means fighting against the coming of Federation by all means in our power, inside as well as outside the Legislatures." Congress Ministries were soon formed in several provinces, Bombay, Madras, Bihar, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Orissa and, after sometime, in the Frontier Province. In Sind the Ministers and majority of the members of the Legislative Assembly identified themselves with the policy of the Congress.

Unfortunately growth of communal discord proved to be a perplexing problem in Indian politics. Consistent with its own creed the Congress did not agree to the formula of a coalition Ministry in each Province. The Muslim League had developed considerable influence over the Muslims with Mr. Jinnah as its undisputed leader. In his Presidential Address at the Lucknow session of the Muslim League, Mr. Jinnah said : "The path

before the Mussalmans is, therefore, plain. They must realise that the time has come when they should concentrate and devote their energies to self-organisation and full development of their power to the exclusion of every other consideration." At the Patna session of the Muslim League, "there were many belicose speeches" from Mr. Jinnah, as a contemporary Government record noted. Mr. Jinnah, who had been previously an important member of the Congress and an advocate of the theory of one nation, now denounced the policies and activities of the Congress Ministries and declared that "the Muslims can expect neither justice nor fair play under Congress Government", although his allegations against the latter were never proved. The Muslim League claimed to be recognised as the "one authoritative and representative organisation of Mussalmans in India." Mr. Jinnah strongly urged that "the democratic system of Parliamentary Government on the conception of a homogeneous nation and the method of counting heads" was not possible in India, and under his advice the Muslim League observed a "Day of Deliverance" as a mark of relief after the resignation of the Congress Ministries in the Provinces.

CHAPTER VII
WORLD WAR II
AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEADLOCK

From 1939 humanity at large was confronted with a grave ordeal on the outbreak of World War II. This totalitarian and global war threw violent challenges to peace and democracy and raised highly complicated issues which could not but influence India in various ways. When England declared war against Germany on the 3rd September, 1939, Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, declared in a broadcast speech from Simla that India also was at war with Germany and asked her to "play a part worthy of her place among the great nations and the historic civilisations of the world." India strongly condemned Fascist and Nazi ideology and practices. But considering her grave responsibilities in relation to the War the Congress Working Committee soon protested against India being drawn into the belligerency "without the consent of the Indian people" and issued a statement on the 14th September asking the British Government "to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present." The Congress also required that "India must be declared an independent nation and present application should be given to this status to the largest possible extent"¹ and that "Indian freedom must be based on democracy and unity and the full recognition and protection of minorities to which the Congress has pledged itself." The attitude of the Muslim League was that it would extend co-operation to the Allies on certain conditions, such as recognition of the League as "the only organisation that can speak on behalf of Muslim India"² and an assurance that no declaration regarding the question of constitutional advance for India should be made without the consent and approval of the All-India Muslim League nor any constitution be framed and finally adopted by His Majesty's Government without such consent."

1. *Indian Annual Register*, 1939, II, p. 231.

2. *Ibid*, p. 70.

In order to unravel this tangle Lord Linlithgow after sounding more than fifty prominent Indian leaders made statements on 17th October and 5th November.

As regards war aims he repeated the British Prime Minister's announcement that their Government were "seeking no material advantage" for themselves and were "not aiming only at victory, but looking beyond it to laying the foundation of a better international system which will mean that war is not to be the inevitable lot of each succeeding generation."³ As regards India's constitutional position, he restated the old pledge as to the grant of Dominion Status and affirmed that he had been entrusted by His Majesty's Government to work in such a way "that the partnership between India and the United Kingdom within our Empire may be furthered to the end that India may attain its due place among our Dominions."⁴ To meet the immediate situation he suggested the expansion of the Governor-General's Executive Council and the formation of a War Advisory body "representative of all major political parties in British India and of the Indian States." Lord Linlithgow's suggestions were considered "entirely unsatisfactory" by the Indian National Congress and rejected by that body. The Muslim League demanded removal of certain doubts and "complete clarification of the Declaration" as conditions for co-operation. So the constitutional deadlock continued. The rapid successes of Germany in the summer of 1940 and her alliance with Italy in June evoked some perturbations in India, to avert which appeals were issued by Mahatma Gandhi, the Governor of Bengal and several other persons.⁵ In this extremity of the Allies, Mahatma Gandhi observed: "We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin." "England's difficulty is not India's opportunity," said Shri Jawaharlal Nehru. Though the Congress did not change its fundamental policy, yet most of its leaders could not then "go to the full length" with Mahatma Gandhi in support of his ideal of complete non-violence, taking into consideration the problem of the "defence of the country against possible external aggression and internal disorder" and also the "present

3. *Ibid*, p. 386.

4. *Ibid*, p. 387. He observed in January, 1940 that the objective was "full Dominion Status, Dominion Status too of the Westminster variety."

5. *Ibid*, p. 375.

imperfections and failings.....of the human elements they have to deal with and the possible dangers in a period of transition and dynamic change.”⁶ The Congress, however, thought that he should be “left free to pursue his great ideal in his own way,” and be absolved of all responsibility for its present programme and activity regarding national defence. In the first place the Congress now decided to recruit and train, through its own committees, “peaceful volunteers for national service”⁷ of defence, and for the maintenance of a “sense of public security in their respective areas.”⁸ Secondly, it came forward with a suggestion for an immediate settlement with the British Government and co-operation in the war effort by renewing the demand for unequivocal declaration “of India’s independence” and proposing that “a provisional National Government should be constituted at the centre which though formed as a transitory measure, should be such as to command the confidence of all the elected elements in the Central Legislature and secure the closest co-operation of the responsible Governments in the Provinces.”⁹

In the meanwhile, the War emergency had caused a change in the government of Great Britain. In May, 1940, Mr. Churchill succeeded Mr. Chamberlain as Prime Minister and Mr. L. S. Amery replaced Lord Zetland as Secretary of State for India. Whatever may have been their views about the Indian problem, there could be no doubt in any mind that to organise a country-wide war effort was a pressing need of the moment. On the 8th August there was published a statement (afterwards described as the ‘August Offer’) made by the Viceroy on behalf of the British Government. It reaffirmed the promise of Dominion Status and said that the framing of the new constitutional scheme “should be primarily the responsibility of Indians themselves and should originate from Indian conceptions of the social, economic and political structure of Indian life.” There were, however, two provisos. First, reaffirmation of the point regarding the consideration of minority opinion in changing the constitution. “It goes without saying,” the statement said, “that they (the British Government) could not contemplate the transfer

6. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a government." Suggesting that final solution of the constitutional issues could not be effected at "a moment when the Commonwealth is engaged in a struggle for existence," the statement held out the prospect of a representative Constituent Assembly after the war was over. In the meanwhile the British Government, it was observed, would welcome attempts of "representative Indians themselves to reach a basis of friendly agreement" and they trusted that immediate effect would be given to the enlargement of the Central Executive Council and the establishment of a War Advisory Council to promote a united war effort.

The "August Offer" was wholly rejected by the Indian National Congress. "It widens the gulf," observed Mahatma Gandhi, "between India as represented by the Congress and England." The idea of Dominion Status for India was, said Shri Nehru, "as dead as a doornail." On 22nd August, the Congress Working Committee considered that in the Viceroy's declaration "the issue of the minorities has been made into an insuperable barrier to India's progress."¹⁰

Indeed, communal separatism had become by now a perplexing factor in Indian politics. The Indian National Congress naturally claimed to represent the entire Indian nation and having a national outlook was opposed to communal organisations of all kinds. But various factors contributed to fan inter-communal bitterness, and to widen the "angle of differences" between the Congress and the Muslim League. The Muslim League under the undisputed leadership of Mr. M. A. Jinnah claimed to be recognised as the "one authoritative and representative organisation of Mussalmans in India," though the Congress had Muslim members within its fold and several Muslim organisations in India, like the Jamiatul-Ulema and the Ahrar, and the Momins, were not supporters of the League but continued to co-operate with the Congress. Mr. Jinnah declared that democracy based on majority rule would not be workable in

10. *Ibid*, p. 197.

India and he asked the League members to observe a "Day of Deliverance" as a mark of relief after the resignation of the Congress Governments in the Provinces. The Muslim League gradually strengthened its position and its members came to occupy in some provinces ministerial offices vacated by the Congress members. At its Lahore session, held in March, 1940, the League enunciated the theory that the Muslims are not a "minority" but "are a nation.....and they must have their homelands, their territory and their State" (Pakistan), that is, the "areas in which the Muslims are numerically in the majority, as in the North-Western and Eastern Zones of India, should be grouped to constitute independent States in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign." In his correspondence with Mr. Jinnah during the months of November and December 1940 Lord Linlithgow assured him that "His Majesty's Government are not under any misapprehension as to the importance of the contentment of the Muslim community to the stability and success of any constitutional development in India" and that he "need therefore, have no fear that the weight which" his "community's position in India necessarily gives their views will be underrated." Some thought that this gave Mr. Jinnah a right to veto any constitution that might be devised. The Muslim League considered "partition of India" to be the only solution and held that their co-operation in the prosecution of the war would be regulated by the "application of the two nations doctrine on the fifty-fifty principle."

The Indian National Congress did not deviate in the least from its ideal of a united India. To Mahatma Gandhi the communal question did not appear to be insoluble. What others described as the "unbridgeable gulf between the Congress and the Muslim League" was in his opinion a "domestic problem which would disappear if the British withdraw from India." In his presidential address at the Ramgarh session of the Congress (19th and 20th March, 1940) Maulana Abul Kalam Azad emphasised the heritage of common nationality between Hindus and Muslims in India and very significantly observed : "This thousand years of our joint life has moulded us into a common nationality. This cannot be done artificially. Nature does her fashioning through her hidden processes in the course of centuries. The cast has now been moulded and destiny has set her seal upon it.

Whether we like it or not, we have now become an Indian nation, united and indivisible." Proclaiming his watchword of "India first" in the course of a luncheon speech in London on the 12th December, 1940, Amery observed: "By India I mean India as a whole, India as nature and history have shaped her, India with her infinite diversity and underlying unity, India as she is to-day and as we wish her to be in the years to come."¹¹ He maintained in a subsequent speech that the minority problem could not be solved by partition. "It is a counsel of despair" he said, "and I believe of wholly unnecessary despair."

But this attitude was censured by the Muslim League which had accepted Pakistan as its definite political objective. An issue of the *Dawn*, its weekly organ, dated 8th February, 1942, contained the manifesto:—"Pakistan is our deliverance, defence and destiny...Pakistan is our only demand...and by God we will have it." Indeed, the Muslim League's influence on the Muslims had increased very much by then. When the provincial elections took place in 1937, out of a total of 482 Muslim seats in the eleven Provinces of British India, the Muslim League captured 110. In Bengal it captured 37 seats out of a total of 119, but in the Punjab none. In the course of five years, from the beginning of 1938 to September, 1942, in 56 Muslim by-elections that were contested 46 seats were captured by the Muslim League, 3 by the Congress and 7 by other parties. After the Viceroy had issued a communique on the 21st July, 1941, amounting to the reorganisation¹² of his Executive Council, "for administrative convenience" as he said, and also announcing the establishment of a National Defence Council with a numerical strength of 30 members including, as the Viceroy explained, "representatives of Indian States as well as of Provinces and other elements in the national life of British India in its relation to the war effort,"¹³ Mr. Jinnah strongly condemned it and asked the members of the Muslim League not to serve on either of these Councils. Under orders of the League, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, the Punjab Premier, Mr. A. K. Fazlul Huq, the Bengal Premier, and Sir Maulavi Saiyid Muhammad Saadullah, the Assam Premier,

11. *Ibid*, p. 395.

12. Out of thirteen members of the new Council including the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, eight were Indian.

13. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1941, II, pp. 300-302.

resigned their appointments on the Defence Council. Sir Sultan Ahmad, the new Law Member of the Executive Council, refused to resign his post for which he was expelled from the League for five years. Thus the constitutional deadlock was stiffened. The efforts made by prominent Indians of the Liberal party, including some Muslims, particularly through the organization of a non-party Conference which met under the presidentship of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru first at Bombay on 14th March, 1941, and again at Poona on 26th and 27th July, 1941, to secure communal agreement and to overcome the deadlock by temporary reconstruction of the Centre during the war period, ended in smoke.

One factor served to intensify distrust of the Indians in various circles towards sincerity of British promises to grant independence to India. The third clause of the Atlantic Charter contained the following significant principles to which the British and American Governments became committed: "They respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they will live, and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them." But to the great disappointment of the Indians, Mr. Churchill declared in the House of Commons on 9th September, 1941, that the Atlantic Charter was not applicable to India. Meanwhile the international situation had grown extremely grave. Japan's spectacular success in the Pacific War was indeed a terrible menace for British as well as Indian interests. On 7th December, 1941, Japan made a sudden air-attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbour and crippled the United States Pacific fleet. Three days later, the *Prince of Wales*, one of the newest British battleship, and the *Repulse*, an older battle-cruiser, were sunk by Japanese bombers off the coast of Malaya. Landing in Indo-China, the Japanese army proceeded through Siam into Malaya. On 15th February, 1942, Singapore surrendered, more than 75,000 British and Indian troops falling into the hands of the victorious Japanese. It was a great disaster for British arms. Burma was next invaded by the Japanese who brought Rangoon under their control on 7th March, 1942, and Mandalay was occupied by them on 29th April.

India was now in dire peril. Panic-struck refugees swarmed over India's eastern frontier from Burma. The devastating

results of Japanese victories proved how hollow was Japan's cry of "Asia for the Asiatics", how insincere her claim to be the leader of a "Co-prosperity sphere in Greater East Asia." China had maintained a heroic struggle against Japanese aggression for several years since July, 1937. But Japan's successes in the Pacific, Indo-China and Burma placed China too in an extremely critical situation. Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek and Madame Chiang Kai Shek visited India in the first week of February, 1942, with the object, of a "personal exchange of views" with the personnel of the Government of India and with "prominent men" in India to "secure more effective united efforts against aggression". The presence of the Chinese leaders at that "critical stage, and their manifest sympathy for India's freedom helped to bring India out of her national shell and increased her awareness of the international issues at stake."

The Indian national leaders, greatly troubled at the rapid approach of the war to India, thought that India's participation in the war should be preceded by recognition of India's freedom. In this emergency the veteran Sri Rajagopalachari, ex-Premier of Madras (the first Governor-General of free India), made an earnest attempt to soften communal discord and to end constitutional deadlock. He insisted on the necessity of organizing a united war front against Japanese menace in the best possible manner by transference of "full responsibility" to "a council of national leaders." The "only strategy that will outwit Japan" he wrote, "is the acknowledgement of India's indefeasible right to freedom."

In the midst of this excitement came another proposal of the British Government in relation to the Indian constitutional problem. On 11th March, 1942, Mr. Churchill announced that the War Cabinet had taken a unanimous decision as to Indian policy with a view to rallying "all the forces of Indian life to guard their land from the menace of the invader," and that Sir Stafford Cripps, who had lately joined the Government as Lord Privy Seal and became a member of the War Cabinet and Leader of the House of Commons, would soon proceed to India to have consultations with the representatives of all parties concerned. Sir Stafford Cripps arrived at Delhi on 22nd March with the

proposals embodied in a Draft Declaration, which may be summarized as follows :—

(1) “For the earliest realization of self-government in India” the British Government proposes to take steps for the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any respect of its domestic or external affairs.”

(2) “Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities,” a constitution-making body shall be set up with representatives both of British India and the Indian States.

(3) The British Government “undertake to accept and implement forthwith” the constitution framed by this body on two conditions :—

(a) Any Province which is not “prepared to accept the new constitution” shall have the right to frame by a similar process a “new constitution, giving them the same full status as the Indian Union.” An Indian State was also to be entitled to choose whether to adhere to the constitution or not. In either case “it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements.”

(b) “The signing of a Treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty’s Government and the constitution-making body,” and will cover “all matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands.”

(4) During the War period and until “the new constitution can be framed” the British Government shall “bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the Defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organizing to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the peoples of India.” For the latter object the British Government “desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations.”

While Sir Stafford Cripps was engaged in negotiations with the representatives of the various Indian parties and States the

War had taken such a turn by this time as to place India in imminent peril. The news of the Japanese occupation of the Andaman islands was heard on 25th March. The evacuation of Taungu by the British came to be known on 1st April, of Prome on 3rd April. Colombo had an air-raid on 5th April. Next day the Japanese dropped bombs at Vizagapatam and Cocanada, and on 9th April they raided Trincomalee. To add to all this was the presence of Japanese warships in the Bay of Bengal, to whose attack the whole of the eastern coast line of India now lay open.

All were anxious to organize an effective resistance to the rapid approach of the enemy. The Cripps mission nevertheless failed to remove the constitutional deadlock in India. Its proposals were rejected by "every single party or group" in India including some of her most moderate politicians. Mahatma Gandhi is reported to have described the pledge about future settlement of the constitution as "a post-dated cheque on a bank that was obviously failing." The Congress Working Committee expressed the opinion that "though future independence may be implicit in the proposals.....the accompanying provisions and restrictions are such that real freedom may well become an illusion." The principle of non-accession of the Indian Provinces and the States was justly considered to be "a severe blow to the conception of Indian unity." It opened out, remarked Shri Nehru significantly, "a vista of an indefinite number of partitions both of Provinces and States." The Congress was also opposed to another principle according to which "ninety millions of people in the Indian States" were to have no voice in framing the constitution, as it would mean "a negation of democracy and self-determination." The proposals relating to the immediate present were also considered to have some serious limitations. The Congress wanted an Indian Defence Member in the National Government, though the Commander-in-Chief would still continue to exercise complete authority over war operations and the armed forces. Its leaders explained to Sir Stafford that "it was not their intention to do anything to upset present arrangements, but what they wanted was, firstly, to make the Indian people feel that the Army was theirs. They wanted to give the national background, the psychological appeal necessary for

a popular war.”¹⁴ The Congress expressed its anxiety for a National Government which would function with full powers as a Cabinet with the Viceroy acting as constitutional head. But the only change offered was the transformation of the existing Council of the Viceroy by the appointment of additional Indians, which would mean, as Shri Nehru expressed it, that a few of them would “become his liveried camp-followers.....it was inconceivable and impossible for us to accept this position at any time and more specially at that time.”¹⁵ The Congress President, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, urged the “unanimous demand of the Indian people” for “a free National Government” to serve “the cause of India as well as the larger causes for which millions are suffering and dying today.” Sir Stafford pleaded that the minorities, particularly the Muslims, would not acquiesce in the Congress’s suggestion and that it would involve “constitutional changes of a most complicated character and on a very large scale,” which would not be effected in war-time. Sir Stafford’s negotiations with the Indian leaders therefore broke down abruptly and on 12th April he left Delhi for London.

The failure of the Cripps mission naturally produced feeling of frustration in Indian minds, which were already alarmed and excited at the menace of approaching Japanese invasion. The Congress at first advised the people not “to interfere in any way with the operations of the British or allied armed forces”¹⁶ but to adopt “the completest form of non-co-operation with the enemy” so that a “national spirit of resistance might be built up.” At this critical juncture when “catastrophe and disaster advanced with rapid strides towards India,” the Congress leaders felt that for organizing what would be “a people’s war” against the Japanese the complete transfer of power to Indian hands was necessary. On 14th July, 1942, the Congress Working Committee, which had met at Wardha in the presence of Mahatma Gandhi, published a resolution asking the British Government to withdraw and to transfer authority in India to “a provisional Government representative of all important sections of the people of India, which will later evolve a scheme by which a Constituent

14. *Statement of Shri Nehru at Press Conference, New Delli, 12th April, 1942.*

15. Nehru, *Discovery of India*, pp. 388-389.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 409.

Assembly can be convened in order to prepare a Constitution for the Government of India, acceptable to all sections of the people. Representatives of free India and representatives of Great Britain will confer together for the adjustment of future relations and for the co-operation of the two countries as allies in the common task of meeting aggression." "Should, however, this appeal (to the British) fail," ran the resolution, "the Congress cannot view without the gravest apprehension the continuation of the present state of affairs involving a progressive deterioration of the situation and the weakening of India's will and power to resist aggression. The Congress will then be reluctantly compelled to utilize all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920, when it adopted non-violence as part of its policy, for the vindication of political rights and liberty. Such a widespread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi." Meeting at Bombay on 8th August, 1942, the All-India Congress Committee approved of and endorsed the "Quit India" resolution and repeated "with all emphasis the demand for the withdrawal of the British power from India" on the idea that "only the glow of freedom now can release that energy and enthusiasm of millions which will immediately transform the nature of the war" for "the sake of India and for the success of the cause of the United Nations." The Congress sought to make it "clear to all concerned that by embarking on a mass struggle it has no intention of gaining power for the Congress. The power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of India."

Early on 9th August the British Government arrested Mahatma Gandhi, the members of the Congress Working Committee and some other leaders of the Congress and banned the All-India Congress Committee as well as the Provincial Congress Committees (except in the North West Frontier Province). This was immediately followed by countrywide mass upheavals and disorders which assumed the gravest forms in Bihar and the eastern districts of the United Provinces. Though Government suppressed the August 1942 movement by severe measures, yet the political situation in the country was still nowhere near a settlement. The Congress leaders remained in prison. The Muslim League insisted on partition. League ministries were formed in Bengal, Sind and the North-West Frontier

Province.¹⁷ In his unique way Mahatma Gandhi expressed a moral protest against the recent action of the Government, which he considered to be unjust, by undergoing an ordeal of fast from 10th February till 2nd March, 1943, at the age of seventy-three. On Government's refusal to listen to the widespread demand for his unconditional release, Mr. Aney, Mr. N. R. Sarkar and Sir Homi Mody, three members of the Governor-General's Executive Council (then consisting of 15 members besides the Viceroy—11 Indian and 4 British), resigned.

17. A Congress Ministry with Dr. Khan Saheb as Premier again took office in North-West Frontier Province in 1945.

CHAPTER VIII
THE WAVELL PLANS
AND THE CABINET MISSION PLAN

Lord Wavell, successor of Lord Linlithgow as Governor-General of India, reached India in mid-October, 1943, when affairs in this country were seriously complicated and in all respects depressing. Though the war in Europe had taken a favourable turn for the United Nations yet the eastern horizon was still full of clouds. Sri Rajagopalachari proposed a solution for constitutional settlement and communal accord through his doctrine of "back to Cripps". He wrote in a pamphlet¹ that there "should be no hesitation over accepting the Cripps plan for making the future constitution as the only practical plan for reconciling all the forces in play in India." He pleaded for concessions to the principle of self-determination for minorities and States "in a plan for a free and independent constitution" and "for accommodation to the Muslim League up to the farthest possible limit," while pointing out that "non-co-operation in the cause of national freedom" would be "at best a poor and ugly sanction" for the Muslim League. The Indian Liberals while demanding release of the Congress Leaders desired the formation of "national and composite Government in the Provinces and at the Centre."

Lord Wavell's pleading for the co-operation of all in the existing government during war-time did not meet with a favourable response. While addressing the Central Legislature on the 17th February, 1944, he stressed the fundamental unity of India in the following words "You cannot alter geography. From the point of view of defence, of relations with the outside and of many internal and external problems, India is a national unit." Whatever may have been the Viceroys' intention in making this abstract statement, in its practical effect it did not act as a healing balm, but rather stiffened the demand of the Muslim League for "Pakistan". At a session of the Muslim League, held at the

1. *The Way Out* (first published on 30th November, 1943, by O. U. P.).

end of 1943, Mr. Jinnah argued that transfer of power should be preceded by partition of India. With the Congress demand of "Quit India" was matched the League's new slogan, "Divide and quit."

But Mahatma Gandhi was unceasingly eager for communal amity which he regarded as "life mission". Even before his release on 6th May, 1944, he had written to Mr. Jinnah in 1943 : "Why should not both you and I approach the great question of communal unity as men determined on finding a common solution?" He met Mr. Jinnah at his house in Bombay on 9th September, 1944. The basis for terms of settlement suggested by Mahatma Gandhi to Mr. Jinnah was the Rajagopalachari formula (March, 1944). Its provisions were : (1) "Subject to the terms set out below as regards the constitution of Free India, the Muslim League endorses the Indian demand for independence and will co-operate with the Congress in the formation of a provisional Interim Government for the transitional period." (2) "After the termination of the war a commission shall be appointed for demarcating contiguous districts in the North-West and East of India wherein the Muslim population is in absolute majority. In the areas thus demarcated a plebiscite of all the inhabitants held on the basis of adult suffrage or other practicable franchise shall ultimately decide the issue of separation from Hindustan." (3) "In the event of separation, mutual agreement shall be entered into for safeguarding defence, and commerce and communications and for other essential purposes." (4) "Any transfer of population shall only be on an absolutely voluntary basis." (5) "These terms shall be binding only in case of transfer by Britain of full power and responsibility of the governance of India." But Mr. Jinnah rejected these propositions and the negotiations between the two leaders proved fruitless. Mr. Jinnah insisted on his two-nation theory though Mahatma Gandhi declared that he was "unable to accept the proposition that the Muslims of India are a nation distinct from the rest of the inhabitants of India." The former further argued that there "cannot be defence and similar matters of common concern, when it accepted that Pakistan and Hindustan will be two separate independent sovereign states." "Pakistan", observed Mr. Jinnah in March, 1945, "is our irrevocable and unalterable national demand.....We shall never accept any constitution

on the basis of a united India." The Non-party Conference Conciliation Committee, working under the leadership of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, recommended by the end of March, 1945, the immediate formation of a Central Executive Council consisting of Indians excepting the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief and the restoration of responsible Government in the "Section 93 Provinces" the Ministeries there being coalitions of major parties as far as possible. But Mr. Jinnah neither accepted these recommendations nor agreed to the scheme formulated by Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, then Congress leader in the Central Assembly, in consultation with Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, the Deputy Leader of the League. This scheme proposed the formation of an Indianized Council with its seats distributed 40 per cent to the Congress, 40 per cent to the League and 20 per cent to the other minority parties.

Another significant offer from the side of the British Government soon followed. On his visit to London towards the end of March, 1945, Lord Wavell had discussions with the Government there, not with a view to far-reaching constitutional changes or a final settlement in India (which must wait until Japan had been thoroughly defeated) but to break the political deadlock here by securing the consent of the leaders of the principal Indian parties to some interim arrangement for the "successful conclusion of the war against Japan as well as in the reconstruction in India which must follow the final victory." The British Government's proposals to the effect, containing the following points, were published on the 14th June : (1) The Central Executive Council should be so reconstituted that all its members, except the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief, should be "leaders of Indian political life," there being "a balanced representation of the main communities, including equal proportions of Moslems and Caste Hindus." (2) "In order to pursue this object, the Viceroy will call into conference a number of leading Indian politicians who are the leaders of the most important parties or who have had recent experience as Prime Ministers of Provinces, together with a few others of special experience and authority." (3) "External affairs (other than those of tribal and frontier matters which fall to be dealt with as part of the defence of India) should be placed in the charge of an Indian Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council so far as British India is concerned,

and fully accredited representatives shall be appointed for the representation of India abroad." (4) "Co-operation at the centre would make establishment of responsible government possible in the section 93 provinces based on the participation of the main parties." (5) "Nothing contained in any of these proposals will affect the relations of the Crown with the Indian States through the Viceroy as Crown Representative." (6) "None of the changes suggested will in any way prejudice or prejudice the essential form of the future permanent constitution or constitutions for India."

These proposals were explained by Lord Wavell in his broadcast from Delhi on the 14th June, 1945, and he soon issued invitations to twenty-two persons for a conference at Simla on 25th, June.² After a temporary adjournment the Simla Conference met again on 14th July, but despite earnest deliberations it ultimately failed, for no agreement could be reached as to the interim Government. Lord Wavell's selections for the composition of the Central Executive Council were not accepted by Mr. Jinnah.

After another visit to London for discussions with the British Government, Lord Wavell on returning to India promulgated an important announcement on 19th September, 1945. Expressing the hope that "ministerial responsibility will be accepted by political leaders in all Provinces" on the elections to the Central and Provincial Legislatures to be held during the cold season of 1945-46, he announced the "intention of His Majesty's Government to convene as soon as possible a constitution-making body," for which he had been authorised to hold "preparatory discussions with elected representatives of British India and with Indian States," immediately after the elections. He further stated that "His Majesty's Government are proceeding to the consideration of the content of the treaty which will require to be concluded between Great Britain and India" and that "as soon as the results of the elections are published, to take steps to bring into being an Executive Council which will have the support of the main Indian parties."

2. Orders were issued by the Government for the immediate release of the members of the Working Committee of the Congress who were still in confinement.

Certain factors expedited the solution of the Indian constitutional deadlock. Britain had before her the grave complicated legacies of the war, and the urge for national independence had become irresistible in India. The Labour Government which took office in England on 5th August, 1945, with Mr. Attlee as Prime Minister, realized the urgency of the problem³ and took quick steps for its solution. A parliamentary delegation, which came to India during the winter of 1945-46 with the object of gathering first hand information of the critical political situation, on their return to London impressed upon their Government the necessity of early action. An official announcement of Indian policy was made in Parliament on 19th February, 1946, to the effect that the British Government had decided to send to India a mission of three Cabinet Members who, in association with Lord Wavell, would confer with leaders of Indian opinion on the future constitution of the country, following the lines the Viceroy had already laid down as to the eventual transference of power to Indian hands. The Mission would consist of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, and Mr. A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty. It was to carry Cabinet authority and would be given certain specific instructions. It was not to "override the Viceroy" but "would be associated with him." In a speech delivered on 15th March, Mr. Attlee pointedly observed that in India they could not "allow a minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority," and added that India "will find great advantages" in remaining within the British Commonwealth; but that if she elected to go outside it Britain would "help to make the transition as smooth and early as possible."

The Cabinet Mission reached Karachi by air on 23rd March, 1946. After discussions with the Viceroy and the Provincial Governors and prolonged negotiations and interviews with leaders of all parties and groups, the Mission sat at Simla in tripartite conference with the Congress and the Muslim League delegates from 5th May, but by 12th May it was clear that the

3. "The temperature of 1946 is not the temperature of 1920 or of 1930 or even of 1942..... I am quite certain that at the present time the tide of nationalism is running very fast in India and, indeed, all over Asia." *Speech of Mr. Attlee on 15th March, 1946.*

Conference had failed to agree about the machinery of constitution-making and the formation of an interim Government. The Mission and the Viceroy thereupon issued a statement on 16th May promising "immediate arrangements whereby Indians may decide the future constitution of India and an interim Government may be set up at once to carry on the administration of British India until such time as a new constitution can be brought into being." The Mission stated that "there was an almost universal desire, outside the supporters of the Muslim League, for the unity of India" and that, considering the geographical and strategical implications and the numerical strength of the Muslims and the other communities in the respective areas "neither a larger nor a smaller sovereign state of Pakistan would provide an acceptable solution for the communal problem." They made the following recommendations for the "basic form" of the future constitutions :—

"(1) There should be a Union of India, embracing both British India and the States, which should deal with the following recommendations for the "basic form" of the future constitutions :

"(1a) There should be a Union of India, embracing both British India and the States, which should deal with the following subjects : Foreign affairs, Defence, and Commnuications ; and should have the powers necessary to raise the finances required for the above subjects.

(2) The Union should have an Executive and a Legislature constituted from British Indian and States representatives. Any question raising a major communal issue in the Legislature should require for its decision a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities as well as a majority of all the members present and voting.

(3) All subjects other than the Union subjects, and all residuary powers, should vest in the Provinces.

(4) The States should retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded to the Union.

(5) Provinces should be free to form Groups⁴ with executives and legislatures, and each Group would determine the Provincial subjects to be taken in common.

4. Group A—The six Hindu-majority Provinces of Madras, Bombay, C.P., U. P., Bihar, Orissa.

(6) The constitution of the Union and of the Groups should contain a provision whereby any Province could, by a majority vote of its Legislative Assembly, call for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution after an initial period of ten years and 10 yearly intervals thereafter.

For the convening of a body to frame the new constitution, the Mission recommended a scheme which would "(a) allot to each Province a total number of seats proportional to its population, roughly in the ratio of one to a million, as the nearest substitute for representation by adult suffrage; (b) divide this provincial allocation of seats between the main communities (General, Muslim and Sikh, as the Mission noted) in each Province in proportion to their population; (c) provide that the representatives allotted to each community in a Province shall be elected by the members of that community in its Legislative Assembly."

Each part (General, Muslim, Sikh) of the Legislative Assembly in each Province was to elect its own representatives by the method of proportional representation with single transferable vote. The constitution-making body composed of representatives from the different units would be divided into three sections corresponding to the three groups, A. B. C. Each Section would "settle" the constitutions for the Provinces included in it and would also decide "whether any Group Constitution shall be set up for these Provinces and, if so, with what provincial subjects the Group should deal." The three Sections and the representatives of the Indian States were to meet for the purpose of settling the Union constitution.

To settle the representation of the States a negotiating committee was recommended for the preliminary stage and the selection of their representatives was to be "determined by consultation." The constitution-making body was to conclude a treaty with England to provide for certain matters arising out of the transfer of power.

No section of the Indian population considered the Cabinet

Group B—The Muslim-majority Provinces in the North-west—the Punjab, the N. W. F. P., Sind.

Group C—Bengal and Assam.

Of the Chief Commissioner's Provinces three—Delhi, Ajmere-Merwara and Coorg—would join Group A and Baluchistan would join Group B.

Mission plan satisfactory ; but the Muslim League Council accepted it "inasmuch as the basis and the foundation of Pakistan are inherent in the Mission's plan by virtue of the compulsory grouping of the six Muslim provinces in sections B and C." The Congress Working Committee came to the decision on 26th June to "join the proposed Constituent Assembly, with a view to framing the constitution of a free, united and democratic India." The Congress accepted the long-term plan but demurred to the short-term interim arrangement. The Sikhs, on getting some assurances from the Secretary of State and particularly from the Congress Working Committee, agreed to work the plan.

For the administration of India during the period of constitution-making, the Mission emphasised the immediate need of an interim government backed by the major political parties. As an "expedient to solve the present difficulty" the Viceroy announced on 16th June that invitations had been issued to some Indian leaders "to obtain the best available (interim) coalition Government" comprising five members of the Congress, five Muslim League nominees and four other representing various interests. Another significant note in this announcement was that "in the event of the two major parties or either of them proving unwilling to join in the setting up of a coalition Government on the above lines, it is the intention of the Viceroy to proceed with the formation of an interim Government which will be as representative as possible of those willing to accept the statement of May 16." Mr. Jinnah vehemently objected to certain features of this announcement and particularly reprehended the inclusion in the Congress panel of any Muslim who was not a Leaguer. The Congress rejected Lord Wavell's offer on the ground that there were grave limitations in it which would prejudice its position as a national body. The Congress view was that "the Provisional Government must have power and authority and responsibility and should function in fact, if not in law, as a *de facto* independent Government leading to the full independence to come. The members of such a Government can only hold themselves responsible to the people and not to any external authority." All negotiations for a provisional government were adjourned for the time being. The Cabinet Mission left India on 29th June and the Viceroy formed a care-taker Government of nine officials.

CHAPTER IX
THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY
AND THE FINAL PHASE OF INDEPENDENCE :

The elections to the Constituent Assembly, held in July, 1946, resulted in the return of an overwhelming majority of Congress members, which Mr. Jinnah characterised as a "brute majority". The changed situation led the Muslim League to take a new decision on the Cabinet Mission's plan. Alleging that the British Government had "committed a breach of faith" by changing the original formula for the formation of an interim Government and that Congress acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's plan was conditional "with reservations and interpretations of their own," the Council of the Muslim League passed resolutions on 29th July reversing their decision of June 6 to accept the long-term plan of the Cabinet Mission and to "participate in the proposed constitution-making," asking all Muslim title-holders to renounce their titles and expressing their determination to launch "direct action" as and when necessary to achieve Pakistan. These tactics aggravated communal tension which on 16th August manifested itself in what was fittingly described in the Statesman newspaper as the "Great Calcutta Killing".

The Viceroy had been busy bringing into existence a provisional Government. As disclosed in his announcement of 16th June, he had invited Shri Nehru, now President of the Congress, on 12th August, to make proposals for the immediate formation of an interim Government. The latter accepted this invitation in his capacity of President of the Congress and made a fruitless attempt to secure Mr. Jinnah's co-operation in forming "as representative a government as possible." On 24th June the Viceroy announced the resignation of the "Care-taker Government" and the formation of an interim Government. The new interim Government of 12 members,¹ with Shri Nehru as its

1. Caste Hindu—5 Congress.
Muslims—1 Congress and 2 Nationalist Muslims.
Scheduled Caste Hindu—1 Congress.
Sikh—1 Akali Party.
Indian Christian—1 not being a member of any party.
Parsi—1 not being a member of any party.

Vice-President, took office on 2nd September, 1946. Shri Nehru still declared that the "path of co-operation" was open and that the Congress would "go to the Constituent Assembly with the fixed determination of finding a common basis for agreement on all controversial issues." But no agreement was possible. The Muslim League even hinted that it might invoke Soviet help to obtain Pakistan. Communal frenzy was still at fever pitch and in many places its excesses were marked by most lamentable outrages which spared neither age nor sex. The people of a characteristically tolerant land seemed to be losing all restraint and moderation.

The Viceroy made another very subtle experiment in regard to the interim Government. After he had a talk with Mr. Jinnah, five League nominees entered into the interim Government on the 26th October, one of them being, strangely enough, Mr. J. N. Mandal, a scheduled caste Minister of Bengal. This was rather anomalous in view of the non-acceptance of the 16th May proposals by the Muslim League, their refusal to join the Constituent Assembly and Lord Wavell's announcement of June 16. Lord Wavell described the entry of the League representatives into the interim Government as a "great step forward". But the new Government was lacking in a spirit of co-operation and the League attitude tended to make it "bipartisan rather than a real coalition". Shri Nehru complained that the League members were in alliance with the British Government and were making an attempt to establish themselves as "the King's Party" and the Viceroy, he said, was not maintaining "the spirit in which the Government was formed". There is no doubt that the political situation in India was then extremely critical.

Towards the end of November the British Government invited Lord Wavell to proceed to London accompanied by two representatives of the Indian National Congress, two of the Muslim League and one of the Sikh Community, for discussions, for the purpose, as Lord Pethick-Lawrence stated, of reaching "a common understanding between the two major parties on the basis of which the work of the Assembly can proceed with the co-operation of all parties". The Viceroy with four Indian leaders—Shri Nehru as the sole representative of the Congress, Sardar Baldev Singh as representative of the Sikhs, and Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Liaquat Ali as representatives of the League,

reached London on the 3rd December, 1946. Four days of discussion proved entirely fruitless. No agreement was reached. Pandit Nehru and Sardar Baldev Singh returned to India on the 8th December. The League representatives came back later.

On the failure of the London talks, the British Government issued a statement on the 6th December, alleging that the Cabinet Mission had "throughout maintained the view that decisions of the Sections should, in the absence of an agreement to the contrary, be taken by a simple majority vote of the representatives in the Sections. This view has been accepted by the Muslim League, but the Congress have put forward a different view. They have asserted that the true meaning of the statement read as a whole is that the Provinces have the right to decide both as to Grouping and as to their own constitutions. His Majesty's Government have had legal advice which confirms that the Statement of May 16 means what the Cabinet Mission have always stated was their intention." It was further added in this statement that "there has never been any prospect of success for the Constituent Assembly except upon the basis of the agreed procedure. Should the constitution come to be framed by a Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the Indian population has not been represented, His Majesty's Government would not, of course, contemplate—as the Congress have stated they would not contemplate—forcing such a constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country." In the opinion of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress the British Government's interpretation of the method of voting in the Sections was "not in conformity with provincial autonomy" which was one of the "fundamental issues" in the proposal of May 16. The All-India Congress Committee in a session held at New Delhi on January 5-6, 1947, passed the following significant resolutions: "The A.I.C.C. is anxious that the Constituent Assembly should proceed with the work of framing a constitution for free India with goodwill of all parties concerned and, with a view to removing the difficulties that have arisen owing to varying interpretations, agree to advise action in accordance with the interpretation of the British Government in regard to the procedure to be followed in the Sections. It must be clearly understood, however, that this must not involve any compulsion of a Province and that the rights of the Sikhs in the Punjab should

not be jeopardised. In the event of any attempt at such compulsion, a Province or a part of a Province has the right to take such action as may be deemed necessary in order to give effect to the wishes of the people concerned”.

The first session of the Indian Constituent Assembly had met at New Delhi on 9th December, 1946, the elected Muslim League members being absent, though representatives of all Provinces and communities participated in its work. After some debates on procedure, Shri Nehru moved a resolution on 13th December declaring the intention to “proclaim India an independent sovereign republic”. The proceedings of the Constituent Assembly were adjourned till the third week of January, 1947, when it passed Shri Nehru’s resolution on the declaration of objectives and appointed some committees. An Advisory Committee on Minorities and Fundamental Rights was selected : but the Muslim League’s attitude towards the Assembly left no hope of co-operation. The door was kept open for its members, but the League’s Working Committee in its Resolution passed on the 31st January, 1947, emphatically expressed the opinion “that the elections to, and thereafter the summoning of, the Constituent Assembly, in spite of strong protests and most emphatic objections on the part of the League, were *ab initio* void, invalid and illegal as not only the major parties had not accepted the statement but even the Sikhs and the Scheduled castes had also not done so and that the continuation of the Constituent Assembly and its proceedings and decisions are *ultra vires*, invalid and illegal and it should be forthwith dissolved”.

This further entangled the complexity of the Indian constitutional problem. But at this period of extreme anomaly and uncertainty the British Government made a momentous statement on 20th February, 1947, expressing therein their definite intention “to take necessary steps to effect the transference of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June, 1948”. It added that in case an agreed constitution was not framed by a “fully representative Constituent Assembly” before June, 1948, the British Government “will have to consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over on the due date, whether as a whole to some form of Central Government for British India, or in some

areas to the existing Provincial Governments, or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people". It also said that "although the final transfer of authority may not take place until June, 1948, preparatory measures must be put in hand in advance."

The "wartime appointment" of Lord Wavell as Viceroy and Governor-General of India terminated and Lord Mountbatten succeeded him on 14th March, 1947. Gifted with uncommon intelligence and exceptional statesmanship the new Viceroy took quick steps to accelerate India's march to a new status. His plan of 3rd June, 1947, outlined the procedure to be followed for the transference of power into Indian hands under the prevailing circumstances, particularly in the face of the continued non-participation in the Constituent Assembly of the Muslim League members (whose quota included a majority of representatives from Bengal, the Punjab and Sind as also the representative of British Baluchistan), though majority of the representatives of this Assembly had already made progress in the work of evolving a new constitution. While it was not the intention of the British Government to interrupt the work of the existing Constituent Assembly, this plan pointed out that Government's conviction was that "any constitution framed by this Assembly cannot apply to those parts of the country which are unwilling to accept it." Accordingly it provided that the Provincial Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab (excluding the European members) will meet in two parts, one representing the Muslim-majority districts and the other the rest of the Province.² Members of the two parts of each Legislative Assembly sitting separately would have the power to vote on the question of partition, and if a simple majority of either part decided for partition, the Province would be divided. If partition was decided upon, each part of the Legislative Assembly would decide on behalf of the areas it represented, as to whether the constitution was to be framed in the existing Constituent Assembly or in a new and separate Constituent Assembly. The Legislative Assembly of Sind (excluding the European members) would decide this issue at a special meeting. The position of the North-West Frontier

2. Muslim majority districts were noted in an appendix according to 1941 census figures.

Province was considered to be "exceptional". Though two of its three representatives were already participating in the Constituent Assembly the British Government felt that "in view of its geographical position and other considerations," it would be necessary to ask it "to reconsider its position" and the issue would be decided by a referendum of the local people on the basis of the existing franchise, held under the "aegis of the Governor-General and in consultation with the Provincial Government." "In view of its geographical situation," British Baluchistan was also to be asked to "reconsider its position". Sylhet too was to decide by a similar referendum whether it would remain in Assam or would amalgamate with "the new province of Eastern Bengal, if that Province agrees." Lastly, it announced in this plan that in accordance with the repeatedly emphasised desire of the major political parties in India for the earliest transfer of power, the British Government were willing to "anticipate the date of June, 1948, for the handing over of power" and so proposed to introduce legislation during the current session of the British Parliament "for the transfer of power" that year "on a Dominion status basis to one or two successor authorities according to the decisions taken as a result of this announcement." The Indian Constituent Assemblies were to be free "to decide in due course whether or not the part of India in respect of which they have authority will remain within the British Commonwealth."

The plan of June 3, 1947, was not undoubtedly free from limitations. It definitely prescribed India's partition. It was indeed tragic that the unity of India which had been the cherished ideal of her poets, philosophers and statesmen age after age, and which renascent Indian nationalism of modern times had so justly emphasised, was shattered by the irresistible force of circumstances. It was a heavy price which India had to pay for her internal dissensions. Practical considerations, however, induced almost all Indian statesmen to consider the plan acceptable. "It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals to you" observed Shri Nehru, "though I have no doubt in my mind it is the right course.....The proposal to allow certain parts to secede if they so will is painful for any of us to contemplate. Nevertheless I am convinced that our present decision is the right one even from the larger viewpoint. The united India we have laboured for, was not one of compulsion and of coercion

but a free and willing association of a free people". To the Muslim League as a whole it meant the concession of its demand for Pakistan.

The Legislative Assemblies in Bengal and the Punjab decided for the partition of those Provinces. The Punjab and East Bengal joined Pakistan and East Punjab and West Bengal were included within the Indian Union. The boundaries of these Provinces were fixed by two Boundary Commissions, one set up for Bengal and the other for the Punjab under the common chairmanship of Sir Cyril Radcliffe. In Sylhet the referendum resulted in a verdict for joining with the new province of Eastern Bengal. Sind and Baluchistan decided to join Pakistan. In the North-West Frontier Province the Congress party decided not to contest the referendum on the issue of Pakistan versus Hindustan, but demanded an independent Pathanistan. The verdict of the referendum was in favour of Pakistan.

According to paragraph 20 of the statement of 3rd June, 1947, the Indian Independence Bill was introduced into the British Parliament and passed quickly in July, 1947. The Indian Independence Act, as it came to be called, did not, as Mr. Attlee explained, "lay down a new constitution for India providing for every detail." It was "far more," he said, "in the nature of an enabling bill, a bill to enable the representatives of India and Pakistan to draft their own constitutions." This Act provided that "from August 15, 1947, two independent Dominions shall be set up in India, to be known respectively as India and Pakistan." The territories of the two "new Dominions" were defined. The partition of Bengal and the Punjab and the amalgamation of Sylhet with the new Province of East Bengal were formally recognized and it was distinctly stated that the boundaries of the new Provinces would be fixed according to the awards of the respective Boundary Commissions. For each of the two Dominions there was to be a Governor-General appointed by His Majesty the King to "represent His Majesty for the purposes of the Government of the Dominion." Each of the Dominion Legislatures was to "have full power to make laws for that Dominion, including laws having extra-territorial operation." "No law and no provision of any law made by the Legislature of either of the new Dominions shall be void or inoperative on

the ground that it is repugnant to the law of England, or to the provisions of this or any existing or future Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom, or to any order, rule or regulation made under any such Act, and the powers of the Legislature of each Dominion include the power to repeal or amend any such Act, order, rule or regulation in so far as it is part of the law of the Dominion." From the "appointed day" (15th August, 1947) His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom was to "have no responsibility as respects the government of any of the territories which immediately before that day were included in British India." The Constituent Assembly of each Dominion was to perform the functions of framing a constitution and passing laws. Unless otherwise provided for by an Act of the Constituent Assembly of the Dominion, "each of the new Dominions and all Provinces and other parts thereof" were to be governed by the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935, with such modifications and adaptations in it as may be necessary during the transition period. The limitations on the powers of the Legislatures as provided by the Act of 1935, and the special powers and responsibilities which it gave to the Governor-General and the Provincial Governors, were to cease after the "appointed day". The Instruments of Instruction issued by His Majesty to the Governor-General and the Governors of Provinces were to lapse. The provisions of the Independence Act were to be brought into operation by the orders of the Governor-General. He was to make arrangement for a division between the two new Dominions and between the new Provinces to be constituted under this Act in regard to their powers, rights, property, duties, liabilities and various other matters. He was also to arrange for "the continued carrying on for the time being on behalf of the new Dominions, or on behalf of any two or more of the said new Provinces, of services and activities previously carried on behalf of British India as a whole or on behalf of the former Provinces which these new Provinces represent." He was to regulate such matters as railways and other communications, the Reserve Bank, monetary and financial systems and defence. The Governor-General was to have no authority to pass any order under this Act after the 31st March, 1948, and such earlier date as might be fixed by any law of the Legislature of either of the two Dominions.

The importance of the Indian Independence Act as a piece of constructive legislation marking the fulfilment of India's legitimate demand for self-Government can hardly be overestimated. It undoubtedly reflects great credit on the political sagacity of the British nation and on the moderation and wisdom of Indian statesmanship that such a wonderful transformation in India's political destiny was effected by mutual consent. This was also to a large extent due to the moral influence of Mahatma Gandhi "father of the Indian Nation". "It fills one with a feeling of gladness," observed Mr. Ernest Bevin, "to live in this generation and see the fate of 400 million people handled by discussion, by reason, by agreement and not by gun."

The 15th August will for ever remain a memorable day in the history of India. On this day British rule in India came to an end and the two Dominions known as India and Pakistan were established. Lord Mountbatten remained as Governor-General of India³ and Mr. Jinnah became the first Governor-General of Pakistan.

Attainment of independence by India is the fruit of unceasing toils and sufferings of her millions through Himalayan difficulties and severest trials, under the unique leadership of Mahatma Gandhi which had in it an unbending and purifying moral force. On the Independence Day, our great patriot, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, observed : "Let us on this historic occasion pay our homage to the maker of our modern history, Mahatma Gandhi, who has inspired us and guided through all those years of trial and travail and who in spite of the weight of years is still working in his own way to complete what is left yet unaccomplished." The Congress President, Acharya Kripalani, spoke then in his message to the nation : "This revolution which has ushered the birth of freedom for this land is a unique one in the history of the world. Never before was so great an event transforming the destiny of many millions of men and women consummated with such little bloodshed and violence. This is a triumph, not of one brute force over another, but of the spirit of freedom and humanity over the blinding greed of imperialism. That this has been possible is due to the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, who, if any man may be so called, is Father of our Nation.

3. The Governor-General was no longer to be called the Viceroy.

He has led us in the non-violent battle for freedom and he has shown us the way to make this freedom fruitful in the service of our people. To him we pay our homage.”

There were rejoicings all over the country on the Independence Day. But Mahatma Gandhi did not participate in these, nor did he give any message. He observed the day by spinning and fasting.⁴ It may be there was pain in his mind that India had been truncated.

4. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. VIII, pp. 95-96.

CHAPTER X

CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF INDIAN SOCIETY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The century in which we are living is a wonderfully stirring epoch in the annals of human civilisation. In India it has been marked not only by a splendid national awakening culminating in her independence from alien domination but also by the unfolding of the genius of her people in manifold petals and a remarkable transformation of their social life by the purging of accumulated ills and anomalies through varied significant changes. These changes have appeared with great rapidity due to various factors, exotic as well as indigenous.

In the first place, growing contact with the West and infiltration of new ideas through it into this country have been undoubtedly potent factors in generating forces of reform in society. The spread of education among the members of both the sexes belonging to different sections of the people has also exercised a fruitful influence in stimulating the process of social renovation. The Reformation Movements in modern India from the days of Raja Rammohan Roy, and particularly from about the middle of the nineteenth century, caused a wave of reforming activities throughout the country, which have continued to produce an indomitable inner urge for purification of the social life. Swami Vivekanand observed forcefully : "That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great nor will ever be in future. The principal reason why your race is so much degraded is that you have no respect for these living images of Sakti. If you do not raise the women who are the living embodiments of the Divine Mother, don't think that you have any other way to rise." In his Presidential Address at the Fourteenth Social Conference, held at Lahore in 1900, Dewan Sant Ram observed : "A country which has produced such illustrious reformers as Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshub Chandra Sen, and Dayananda Saraswati need not despair. Standing as we do, on the threshold of the twentieth century, let us carry on their work with faith and devotion, let us nourish with all our care the tree which they have

lovingly planted. And may the new century, which soon dawns upon us, bring the light of true life with it !” This optimism has been amply fulfilled. Indian nationalism has also been a supremely significant force accelerating social changes in all important spheres. Non-violent national revolution of India, with its ideals of service for the downtrodden and the despised, has accomplished almost a social revolution too. Further, there has been an immense mass of literature and very inspiring and useful literature—to help the cause of social regeneration. Impact of a new economic system has also an appreciable effect on social life.

The essence of social regeneration is uplift of women, which has been indeed one of the most fruitful contributions of new India and has been furthered by significant changes in the education and outlook of the women themselves. Our country has justly realized that “The woman’s cause, is man’s : they rise or sink together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free.” Mrs. Kamala Satthianadhan wrote an article on *the Position of Women in Ancient and Modern India* about half a century back, strongly advocating the extension of the privilege of modern education to the members of her sex. She rightly pointed out that the education of Indian women “will be a powerful instrument for the social reform of India,” and expressed the hope that “in India when the time of trial and work is past and our cause is won, our Indian sisters will compare favourably with our more favourably situated sisters in the West.” She concluded by quoting the following lines from Tennyson :

“Yet in the long years liker must they grow
 The man be more of woman, she of man ;
 Till at the last she set herself to man,
 Like perfect music unto noble words ;
 And so these twain upon the skirts of time,
 Let side by side, full-summed in all their powers,
 Dispensing harvest, showing the to-be,
 Self-reverent each, and reverencing each.
 Then comes the statelier Eden back to men ;
 Then reign the world’s great bridals, chaste and calm ;
 Then springs the growing race of mankind.
 May these things be.”

The cause of female education has revived considerable impetus from the modern Indian Reformation Movements. In addition to the pioneer work of Raja Rammohan Roy in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, for education and emancipation of women from social abuses and injustice, the Brahmo Samaj as a whole has a record of conspicuous services in these respects in our country. The Arya Samaj made excellent arrangements for women's education through institutions like the Mahakanya Vidyalaya at Jullander in the Punjab and some others started here and there. A number of secondary and primary schools have sprung up under its auspices in recent times.

Speeches strongly advocating extension of female education were delivered at the various sessions of the Indian National Social Conference. The following resolution was passed at the tenth session of this Conference, held at Calcutta in 1896 :—

“That in the opinion of the Conference the permanent progress of our society is not possible without a further spread of female education and that the best way is (1) to proceed on national lines by employing in female schools, female teachers of good character and descended from respectable Hindu families, (2) to establish training schools to secure a sufficient number of qualified female teachers, (3) to open home classes for grown up ladies who cannot attend regular schools with extra female teachers to visit and help, at stated intervals, such ladies as read at their homes, (4) to employ a Pundita versed in Sanskrit to read passages from Puranas, and impart religious and moral instruction to ladies, (5) to take steps to publish text-books suited to the requirements of female schools and (6) to impart instruction in needle works, hygiene, culinary art, domestic economy, and training of children in secondary schools.”

The Servants of India Society, started in 1905 by one of our illustrious personalities of renaissance India, Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale, has worked admirably to improve the cultural outlook of both men and women. The members of the Ram Krishna Mission have also made substantial contributions to this cause. The Visvabharati of Dr. Rabindranath has a unique record of work for the spread of education and culture amongst women. Good work has been done in this respect by such organisations as the Seva Sadan at Bombay, Poona and Madras through Night Schools, adult classes, home classes and domestic arts classes

for women. The Bharat Shri Mandal was organised by Sharala Devi Chaudhurani in 1910 as an important institution for women's service, having as one of its objects furtherance of female education. The Women's Indian Association, founded at Madras in 1917, also had the very object in view. The Karve's Women's University, started in 1916 by Dhonodo Keshav Karve with the famous Indian scholar Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar as its first Chancellor, has made important contributions towards the progress of female education in modern India. By 1931, mainly in Gujrat and Maharastra, twenty-four institutions including Arts Colleges, Training Colleges, High Schools and Middle Schools, came to be affiliated to this University. More than 2,500 girls were reading in its High and Middle Schools ; and about 125 girls were getting higher education in its colleges.

While all these forces have supplied considerable stimulus for the progress of female education in modern India, interest of the State in this vital matter has gradually increased and there has been a growing recognition in all circles about its importance for national development of the right type. The Hunter Commission on Education appointed by the Government of Lord Ripon in 1882 recommended that "female education should receive special encouragement and be treated with special liberality." Henceforth Government gradually shook of its policy of "wait and see" and began to make more frequent and liberal grants to subsidise female education and extended their control over institutions for this purpose more freely than before. Referring to Bengal, Mr. Mano Mohan Ghose spoke in a meeting of the National Indian Association in 1895 (Lord Hobhouse presiding) :—"At the present moment there are female schools in almost every village in the country, and in the city of Calcutta we have a college for Hindu Women supported by Government, where Hindu ladies are qualifying themselves for University Honours."¹ Yet, as it was rightly pointed out in the Education Resolution issued by the Government of Lord Curzon, "much remained to be done in the cause of female education."

There was some progress in the first twelve years of the present century. The number of girls under instruction rose from 446, 282 in 1901-02 to 954, 616 in 1911-12. Altogether almost 5 per

1. *Indian Social Reform, part I*, p. 233.

cent of the female population of school going age were receiving education in 1912, as compared with 2.5 per cent in 1902. Even then it was significantly noted in the Moral and Material Progress Report of 1911-12 :” The total number still remains insignificant in proportion to the female population. The Government of India believe, however, that in certain areas there are indications of a swiftly growing demand for more extensive education of girls.” His Excellency Lord Chemsford observed at the Conference of the Directors of Public Instruction, held at Delhi in 1917 : “It behoves us to do all in our power to improve women’s education so far as we can do so within the limits laid down for us by the social customs.”

In a voluminous report, submitted in 1919, the Calcutta University Commission expressed the view that “it cannot be right that the problem should be dealt with simply by the extension to girls and women, of the method, curricula and organisation thought appropriate for boys and men, even when they are greatly improved.” This Commission recommended special attention for women’s education and the constitution of a Board for this purpose. It laid emphasis on the training of women teachers and advocated the education of women in technical subjects.

The first meeting of the Bengal Women’s Education League was held in February, 1927. To implement the programme drawn up at this meeting, the League set up a Standing Committee. A conference of the gazetted women officers of the Education Department of Madras was held there in August, 1927, and as a result of its deliberations a report for the development of women’s education was submitted to Government in 1928. In Bombay, the first All-India Women’s Conference on educational reform was convened at Poona in January, 1927. Several resolutions regarding female education were passed at this Conference, The Government was requested by it to make primary education compulsory for girls and to provide suitable physical training and medical inspection. In a Resolution passed in February, 1928, the Punjab Government recognised “the urgent importance” of girls’ education. A committee of officials and non-officials, appointed in the Central Provinces, made various recommendations to the Government and expressed the general view that “the advancement of India is bound up with the education of girls and unless active measures are taken to further their educa-

tion and a public demand created, the general progress of the country must be impeded.”

But female illiteracy was still colossal, and the disparity in literacy between men and women was growing. “In 1921, less than one woman in fifty in British India could read and write and progress in literacy both for men and women had been very slow. In the ten years, 1911-1921, the increase in the percentage of those who could read and write was 1.7 for men ; but only 0.7 for women.”² By 1927 there was ‘a definite quantitative advance in female education’³ because of the increase in the number of girls under instruction. The Rani of Sangli observed at the All-India Women’s Conference, 1927 : “Female education has by now gone through all the stages—total apathy, ridicule, criticism and acceptance. It may now be safely stated that everywhere in India, the need for the education of girls as much as of boys is recognised as a cardinal need, the *sine qua non* of national progress.”

There were, however, still various handicaps in the development of women’s education on sound lines. Referring to these, the Hartog Committee stressed the need for affording ample support to the cause of this education. This Committee were of opinion that :

“The importance of the education of girls and women in India at the present moment cannot be overrated. It affects vitally the range and efficiency of all education. The education of the girl is the education of the mother, and through her of her children.”

“The education of women, specially in the higher stages, will make available to the country a wealth of capacity that is now largely wasted through lack of opportunity. It is only through education that Indian women will be able to contribute in increasing measure to the culture, the ideals and the activities of the country.”⁴

2. *Interim Report of the Indian Statutory Commission (on Education)*, September, 1929, p. 145.

3. *Ibid*, p. 150.

4. *Ibid*, pp. 150-151.

The Committee recommended that "in the interests of advance of Indian education as a whole, priority should now be given to the claims of girls' education in every scheme of expansion."⁵

The prospects of women's collegiate education were growing brighter. During 1927 and 1932, in Madras, the St. Theresa's College and the Maharajah's College for Women, Trivandrum, were raised to the Degree status. In Bombay, the number of girls reading in men's colleges rose from 382 in 1927 to 704 in 1932. In Bengal, various improvements were made in the position of the four Women's Colleges, including the Intermediate Department of the Eden High School for Girls, Dacca. The Vidyasagar College in Calcutta opened, in this period, a women's section, which enrolled 110 women students. Some other men's colleges made "special arrangements" for women students. In the United Provinces, Science teaching at the Isabella Thoburn College was improved. Women's departments were started in the Banaras and Aligarh Universities. In the Punjab, there was considerable increase in the number of students in the two women's colleges, the Lahore College for Women and the Kinnaird College, Lahore.

It is gratifying to note that colleges for women's education have been started at different places. Co-education in boy's institutions has also grown. But it was necessary to overcome some of the obstacles and difficulties in the path of progress of women's education to which the Hartog Committee referred. There were lingering social prejudices, poverty and disease, lack of efficiently trained and suitably qualified women teachers, inadequate financial support, inadequacy of pay of teachers in rural schools and absence of suitable communications to enable the girls to move to their schools easily. Due to various salutary influences, these have gradually disappeared to a large extent. Both the State and the Society have become more conscious of their duties in relation to women's education and have taken positive steps for its advancement. Indian nationalism has given a great impetus to it by due recognition of the women's position in all respects. The activities of the All-India Conferences of Women have also contributed to its development. Physical training of women has been furthered by the Girls Guide Movement. We read in a post-war (1944-45) publication of the

5. *Ibid*, p. 347.

Government of India, entitled *Recent Social and Economic Trends in India*, that "actually the most interesting feature of recent educational statistics has been the relative quickness of intellectual awakening among women as illustrated by the trebling of girl scholars in schools and colleges between 1921 as compared with a mere doubling in the number of boys during the same period."

After a careful survey of the state of women's education, the Radhakrishnan Commission made the following recommendations about it :

1. That the ordinary amenities and decencies of life should be provided for women in colleges originally planned for men, but to which women are being admitted in increasing numbers ;
2. That there should be no curtailment in educational opportunities for women, but rather a great increase ;
3. That there should be intelligent educational guidance, by qualified men and women, to help women to get a clearer view of their real educational interests, to the end that they shall not try to imitate men, but shall desire as good education as women as men get as men. Women's and men's education should have many elements in common but should not in general be identical in all respects as is usually the case to-day ;
4. That women students in general should be helped to see their normal places in a normal society, both as citizens and as women, and to prepare for it, and college programmes should be so designed that it will be possible for them to do so ;
5. That through educational counsel and by example the prevailing prejudice against study of home economics and home management should be overcome ;
6. That standards of courtesy and social responsibility should be emphasized on the part of men in mixed colleges ;
7. That where new colleges are established to serve both men and women students, they should be truly co-educational institutions, with as much thought and consideration given to the life needs of women as to those of men. Except as such colleges come into existence there are no valid criteria for comparing segregated education with co-education ;

8. That women teachers should be paid the same salaries as men teachers for equal work.”⁶

In Free India all possible steps are being taken for implementing most of these recommendations to facilitate improvement in the condition of women's education as a result of which women in larger numbers are participating in varied cultural activities aiming at the harmonious development of our national life.

Isolationism or seclusion serves as an impediment for real progress of education and culture. It is highly significant that in the present century this obstacle for women has almost disappeared. Our women have succeeded in tearing off the veil of seclusion or *purdah* and have come forward to play worthy roles in the different spheres of life. Writing in the late nineteenth century a paper on *The Hindu Joint Family System*, Shri G. Subramania Iyer (late Editor of the Hindu, Madras) observed : “.....to say that the *purdah* is necessary to protect the moral purity of women within the four walls of the home is as absurd in theory as it is a gross libel on Hindu women.”⁷

Spread of education and liberal ideas among the people, and the influence of various other forces, which became more irresistible in the twentieth century, have helped the women to discard the veil gradually. The most potent of these has been the force of Indian nationalism with its programme of inner purification of Indian social life. Ladies have also marched forward in freedom's battle securing laurels, no less glorious than those of men. As in several other matters relating to the social life, so in regard to *purdah* also, a significant experiment was made in Bihar under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. While on his Champaran mission in April, 1917, he discussed the *purdah* system in Bihar and said : “It is not my desire that our women should adopt the western mode of living ; but we must realize what harm this pernicious system does to their health and in how many ways they are deprived of the privilege of helping their husbands.”⁸ A few years later, while performing the function of laying the foundation stone of an orphanage at Drbhanga

6. Page 402.

7. *Indian Social Reform, part I*, p. 139.

8. Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Vol. I*, p. 248.

in Bihar, Mahatma Gandhi saw before him women behind the screen. "The sight of the screen," he observed, "behind which my audience, whose numbers I did not know, was seated made me sad. It pained and humiliated me deeply.Chastity is not a hothouse growth. It cannot be superimposed. It cannot be protected by the surrounding wall of the *purdah*. It must grow from within, and to be worth anything it must be capable of withstanding every unsought temptation. It must be as defiant as Sita's. It must be a very poor thing that cannot stand the gaze of men. Men, to be men, must be able to trust their women folk, even as the latter are compelled to trust them. Let us not live with one limb completely or partially paralysed. Rama would be nowhere without Sita, free and independent even as he was himself. But for robust independence Draupadi is perhaps a better example. Sita was gentleness incarnate. She was a delicate flower. Draupadi was a giant oak. She bent mighty Bhima himself to her imperious will. Bhima was terrible to every one, but he was a lamb before Draupadi. She stood in no need of protection from any one of the Pandavas. By seeking to-day to interfere with the free growth of the womanhood of India we are interfering with the growth of free and independent-spirited women. What we are doing to our women and what we are doing to the 'untouchables' recoils upon our heads with a force thousand times multiplied. It partly accounts for our own weakness, indecision, narrowness and helplessness. Let us tear down the *purdah* with one mighty effort."⁹

About the year 1927 an anti-*purdah* movement began in Bihar. Shri Ramanand Mishra of Darbhanga had started a campaign against it and went to Mahatma Gandhi's *ashram* at Sabarmati with his wife to seek his blessings for it. Mahatma Gandhi deputed with them to Bihar for this work Radhabahen, daughter of Shri Maganlal Gandhi, and Durgadevi, daughter of late Dalbahadur Giri. On coming to see his daughter Maganlal fell ill in the village, where she was working, and died at Patna on the 23rd April, 1928.¹⁰ This gave an impetus to the anti-*purdah* movement in Bihar. Many influential men of Bihar and fifty women, "not of the anglicised type but orthodox Hindus," issued the following

9. *Young India*, 3rd February, 1927.

10. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, *Atmakatha* (in Hindi), p. 333.

reasoned appeal in this respect :—“We want that the women of our Province should be as free to move about and take their legitimate part in the life of the country in all particulars as their sisters in Karnatak, Maharastra and Madras, and in an essentially Indian way, avoiding all attempts at Europeanisation, for while we hold that a change from enforced seclusion to complete anglicisation would be like dropping from the frying pan into the fire, we feel that *purdah* must go, if we want our women to develop along Indian ideals. If we want them to add grace and beauty to our social life and raise its moral tone, if we want them to be excellent managers at home, helpful companions of their husbands and useful members of the community, then the *purdah*, as it now exists, must go. In fact no serious step for their welfare can be taken unless the veil is torn down, and it is our conviction that if once the energy of half of our population, that has been imprisoned artificially, is released it will create a force which, if properly guided, will be of immeasurable good to our province.”

As a mark of tribute to the memory of late Shri Maganlal Gandhi and to inaugurate an intensive campaign against the *purdah* system on a provincial basis, a conference was held on the 8th July, 1928, under the presidentship of Shri Braj Kishore Prasad, whom Mahatma Gandhi described as the “seasoned soldier of Bihar, the hero of many battles.” Demonstrations were organized against the *purdah* and simultaneous meetings were held on the same date at other places in Bihar.

The Searchlight, a Bihar daily, reported about the Patna meeting thus : “A unique spectacle was witnessed at the mixed meeting of ladies and gentlemen of the 8th July, held at Patna, in the Radhika Sinha Institute on Sunday last. In spite of heavy rains that fortunately stopped just as the time of the meeting, the gathering was unexpectedly large. In fact half of the spacious hall of the Radhika Sinha Institute was crowded with ladies, three-fourths of whom were such as had been observing *purdah* a day before, nay, an hour before.” The following resolution was adopted at this meeting : “We, the men and women of Patna assembled, hereby declare that we have today abolished the pernicious practice of the *purdah*, which has done and is doing incalculable harm to the country, and particularly to women, and we appeal to the other women of the Province, who are still

wavering, to banish this system as early as they can and thereby advance their education and health."¹¹ One important result of the anti-*purdah* movement was the starting of an *Ashram*, called the *Magan Ashram*, at Majhoulia in the district of Darbhanga, its chief aim being to work for the abolition of *purdah*.

Leading Indian women of the present century have strongly voiced their feelings against the practice of *purdah*. H. H. The Maharani of Baroda observed at the All-India Women's Conference, 1927 : "If women are to take their part in the raising of the tone of social life, if they are to understand the duties and responsibilities for which their sons must be trained, the *purdah* must go." In fact, *purdah* has disappeared to a large extent.

Child marriage has been one of the most pernicious evils from which our women have suffered long. Steps have been taken against this evil also in modern times. In the mid-nineteenth century, Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a great scholar and a social reformer of our country, raised his voice against it, as a result of which was passed the Act of 1860 raising the age of consent for unmarried and married girls to ten. Keshab Chandra Sen, a great leader of the Brahma Samaj, also exerted to remove this evil. As President of the Indian Reform Association he issued in April, 1871, a circular letter to the leading medical men in the country asking for their opinion on the subject. "The majority of these gentlemen declared sixteen to be the minimum marriage age of our girls." In 1872 was passed an Act, which "abolished early marriages, made polygamy penal, sanctioned widow marriages and intercaste marriages."¹² In 1877 some young members of the Brahma Samaj started in Calcutta something like a secret League and took several vows, one of which "pledged them never to encourage marriage between young men below twenty-one and girls below sixteen."¹³

The Arya Samaj has also tried much to abolish early marriages, Further, Mr. B. M. Malabari, the great Parsi reformer, started from 1884 an agitation against infant marriage and through earnest efforts stimulated public opinion on this matter.¹⁴ The

11. *Harijan*, 16th November, 1935.

12. Shivnath Shastri, *History of the Brahma Samaj*, Vol. I., p. 251.

13. *Ibid*, p. 273.

14. R. P. Karkaria, *Forty years of Progress and Reform* (1896), pp. 125-130.

fourth session of the All-India National Social Conference, meeting at Calcutta in 1890, adopted the following resolution : "That this Conference is of opinion that the wellbeing of the community demands that the practice of child-marriage be discouraged by public sentiment, and that within the sphere of the various castes and communities, strenuous efforts be made to postpone the celebration of marriage rites till 12 in the case of girls and 18 in the case of boys, and the consummation of the marriage till after they attain the age of 14 and 20, respectively, and that the members of the various social Reform Associations in the country should pledge themselves to see that these limits of age are realised in actual practice, and public opinion educated to advance these limits still higher."

The Government of Lord Lansdowne passed the Age of Consent Act of 1891 by which the age of consummation was raised from ten to twelve in the teeth of strong opposition from the conservative sections of the people. Child marriage was still an appalling phenomenon. In 1891 there were among the Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists 89,051 married boys below the age of 4 and 223560 married girls of the same age. The number of married boys between 5 and 9 years of age was nearly six lakhs and two thousand and that of girls over 18½ lakhs. The total number of married males below the age of 14 was 2,725,124 and that of girls was 6,871,999. According to the Census Report of 1911, in the whole of India there were "2½ million wives under 10, and 9 million under 15, years of age."

By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, public conscience had been aroused more strongly than before against the harmful effects of early marriage. We read in the Census Report¹⁵ of 1911 :—"The practice has been denounced by many social reformers since Mr. Malabari opened the campaign a quarter of a century ago ; and the Social Conference which holds its meetings annually in connection with the National Congress has made the abolition of child marriage one of the leading planks in its platform. It is.....strongly discouraged by the Brahmos in Bengal and the Aryas in Northern India. The more enlightened members of the higher castes, who do not allow widows to remarry, are beginning to realize how wrong it

15. *Part I*, p. 271.

is to expose their daughters to the risk of life-long widowhood, and a feeling against infant marriage is thus springing up amongst them." The Report further quotes as follows :—"The Maithil Brahmins of Bihar are endeavouring to fix the minimum age for marriage at 12 in the case of females and 16 in the case of males. In various parts of India numerous castes have passed similar resolutions at their conferences. The Muhiyal Brahmins of the Punjab have declared 13 and 18 to be the minimum age limit for girls and boys respectively, and in some parts even the lower castes are beginning to discourage the practice. The Goalas of Bihar, who have recently shown much activity in trying to raise themselves, are endeavouring to put a stop to infant marriage in their community. So also are the Namasudras of Bengal." The Rajputs of Rajputana took some steps to discourage it and the Rajput Hitkarini Sabha did much in this respect.¹⁶

Bold action against early marriage was taken in two Native States. In Mysore an Act was passed in 1894 "forbidding the marriage of girls under eight altogether, and that of girls under fourteen, with men over fifty years of age." In 1901 the Gaikwar of Baroda passed the Infant Marriage Prevention Act, by which the minimum marriageable age in the State was fixed for boys at sixteen and for girls at twelve.

In 1925 was introduced in the Legislative Assembly an Age of Consent Bill, whose object was to raise the age of consent at least to fourteen.¹⁷ In this connection Mrs. Dorothy Jinarajadasa issued a circular letter, which was as follows : "I am writing to ask you if you can use your influence to obtain support for the Children's Protection Act that is coming up in the Legislative Assembly during the next session. I think very strongly that, if India is to be a great nation, honoured and respected among the nations of the world, the blot of child motherhood must be removed from her."

"Last time the Bill came up, it received a very great deal of support in the country and in the Assembly, and I think during the next sessions there will not be much difficulty in passing it, if only we get a certain amount of expression of public opinion from the people. To my certain knowledge, there are quite

16. *Indian Social Reform*, part I, p. 52.

17. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1925, Vol. II, pp. 170-173.

a large number of meetings being held all over the country, especially by women, supporting this Bill, and I am sure that it is in line with the wishes of the majority of women that the age for the consummation of marriage for the little girls should be raised to at least 14."

"I am sure that it would be a considerable help to the passage of the Bill, if you could express your opinion strongly in support of it, and also urge on men and women the importance of both supporting the Bill and living up to its principles in daily practice,"

A copy of this circular letter was sent to Mahatma Gandhi, who expressed that though he was ignorant of the Bill, he was "strongly in favour of rising the age of consent not merely to 14, but even to 16." His advice was to enlist greater public opinion in its favour.¹⁸ The All-India Social Conference, which met at Calcutta on the 31st December, 1925, under the Presidentship of a distinguished Indian lady, Shrijukta Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, while "recording with satisfaction the rise in the age of marriage" emphasised "the need for further raising the age both for boys and girls in view of physical degeneration and other evils resulting from early marriage."

Next year, when Mrs. Margaret E. Cousins sent to Mahatma Gandhi notes of a tragic case of girl suicide at Madras, he reiterated his views thus : "Thus custom of child marriage is both a moral as well as a physical evil. For it undermines our morals and induces physical degeneration. By countenancing such customs we recede from God as well as Swaraj. A man who has no thought of the tender age of a girl has none of God. And undergrown men have no capacity for fighting battles of freedom or, having gained it, of retaining it. Fight for Swaraj means not mere political awakening, but an allround awakening—social, educational, moral, economic and political."

"Legislation is being promoted to raise the age of consent. It may be good for bringing a minority to book. But it is not legislation that will cure a popular evil ; it is enlightened public opinion that can do it. I am not opposed to legislation in such matters, but I do lay greater stress on cultivation of public opinion."¹⁹

18. *Young India*, 27th August, 1925.

19. *Young India*, 26th August, 1926.

Referring to one Andhra speech of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. S. S. Muthulakshmi, a medical woman and well-known social worker of Madras, wrote a long letter to him in 1929 drawing his attention to the various disabilities of the women. "Does not," she noted, "early marriage strike at the root of all development—physical, intellectual and even spiritual?"

"Do not the pangs of child-wives and child-mothers, and unmitigated sorrows of our widows and deserted wives demand an immediate remedy?"

Dr. Muthulakshmi expected Congressmen to shoulder responsibility for reform. Mahatma Gandhi pointed out: "Before, therefore, reform on a large scale takes place, the mentality of the educated class has to undergo transformation. And may I suggest to Dr. Muthulakshmi that the few educated women we have in India will have descend from their Western heights and come down to Indian plains? Men are undoubtedly to blame for their neglect, nay their ill use of women, and they have to do adequate penance; but those women who have shed superstition and have become conscious of the wrong have to do the constructive work of reform."²⁰

The first All-India Conference of Women, which was opened at Poona on the 5th January and sat till the 18th January, 1927, under the presidentship of the Maharani of Baroda, adopted the following resolution:—"This Conference deplors the effect of early marriage on education and urges the Government to pass legislation to make marriage below the age of 16 a penal offence. It demands that the age of consent be raised to sixteen."

The Age of Consent Committee, which met at Simla in June, 1928, to enquire into the problem of marriage reform, estimated that "something like half the girls of India" were "married before the completion of their fifteenth year."²¹ After its report was out, Shri Harbilas Sarada's Child Marriage Bill was passed in the Central Legislature in 1929. The object of this Act was "to discourage the solemnization of marriages between boys of under 18 or girls of under 14 years."²² Though this Act evoked much opposition and protest from the orthodox people in all

20. *Young India*, 23rd May, 1929.

21. *India in 1929-30*, p. 7.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

communities, it remained binding in statute. But it did not prove to be very effectual in actual practice, particularly in the lower strata of the society.

The Anti-Child-Marriage Committee published a bulletin on child marriage mentioning the following facts :

“The Census Report for India of 1931 gave the following figures of the number of girls who are married under the age of 15 by age groups :

Age Group	Percentage married
0 to 1	.8
1 to 2	1.2
2 to 3	2.0
3 to 4	4.2
4 to 5	6.6
5 to 10	19.3
10 to 15	38.1

“Thus nearly one girl in 100 girls of less than one year of age is married and the same horrible fact is repeated in all the other age groups under 15.

“One consequence of this is the almost unbelievable number of child widows in the country.

The figures are :

Age group	Actual number of widows
0 to 1	1,515
1 to 2	1,785
2 to 3	3,485
3 to 4	9,076
4 to 5	15,019
5 to 10	105,482
10 to 15	185,339

“The evil of child marriage is often said to be quantitatively small and the custom not universal ; but even if the number of child widows revealed in these figures is one hundredth of the actual figures, no humanitarian public or Government will wait a moment before preventing the source of this misery. In this connection let us also remember that for most of these children remarriage is impossible.”

“Another consequence of child marriage is the number of young mothers who die in child-birth. 200,000 deaths is the yearly average for India. This comes up to 20 deaths per hour, and a vast number of these deaths occur to girls in their teens. According to Sir John Megaw, ‘of every 1,000 young mothers 100 are destined to die in child birth before they cease having babies.’ We have no accurate figures for maternal mortality. It is estimated at 24.5 per thousand for India whereas it is only 4.5 for England.”

“Lastly child marriage affects not merely the mother but the child and, therefore, the race. In India out of every 1,000 children born, 181 die. This is the average ; there are places in India where the average goes up to 400 per 1000. The very backward condition of India in this respect is evident by a comparison of figures for infant mortality in England and Japan which are 60 and 124 per mille respectively. The horror is indeed great when we remember that the evil is a preventible one, and that it is the lack of an educated social conscience which has allowed the evil to flourish unchecked.”

“The most regrettable fact of all is that in all these respects progress is so slow even if it is existent. For example, in 1921 there were 9,066 wives under the age of 1, in 1931 there were 44,082—an increase of nearly 5 times while the population increased only by one-tenth. Again in 1921 there were 759 widows under 1, and in 1931 the corresponding number was 1,515. The successive figures show the most microscopic improvement. The population is increasing far more rapidly than the progress in measures to check these evils. The call for active steps to educate them is, therefore, most urgent than ever, and the women’s movement in India can have no higher or more urgent task than the rousing of the conscience of the public and the Government in this matter.”²³

Progress of education and changing conditions of life, particularly the complex economic factors, have automatically raised the marriageable age of girls beyond the expectations of legislators and reformers. Men and women leaders of public thought, of culture and reason, have immensely helped this process by their writings, speeches and efforts of other kinds. Further,

23. *Harijan*, 16th November, 1935,

the average middle class of the country, economically hard pressed, have sometimes been forced to defer marriages of their daughters because of their incapacity to meet their heavy expenses.

Due to growing consciousness on the part of Indian women of their status in the political and social spheres, there has been for several years a demand to revise and codify the law governing Hindu home, especially as it relates to marriage, divorce, succession to property, etc. In 1937 the Indian Legislature passed the Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act, which for the first time gave to Hindu widows the right to claim a share in the husband's property and demand partition. The Hindu Succession Act of June, 1956, has declared "property of a Hindu female to be her absolute property," and has laid down general rules of succession in the case of female Hindus.

Another new feature in Indian social life of the twentieth century has been the formation of inter-caste marriages. Circumstances, very much similar to those which have been previously analysed to explain the other reforms and changes, have operated to produce this change also. Some prominent leaders of modern Indian Reformation Movements strongly advocated it from the closing years of the last century. The Honourable Mr. Justice M. G. Ranade in the course of his address on Revival and Social Reform at the Seventh Social Conference, held at Amraoti in 1897, mentioned that "in regard to the question of inter-marriage the Bengal papers announced an inter-marriage in high life between two subdivisions of the Kayastha community, which hitherto kept aloof. In the Punjab there was a betrothal between two sub-castes of the Serin community. This was the first instance of an inter-marriage between these two sub-divisions. Many of the widow-marriages have also been instances of inter-marriages, and for the first time last year two instances of inter-marriage between Madrassie and Bengalee gentlemen and ladies occurred. The North West Provinces reports show instances of similar fusion between sub-divisions of the Kayastha caste there, and in Guzerat there is a similar tendency manifest in some of the castes to amalgamate together."²⁴ Lala Baij Nath observed in his Presidential Address at the Thirteenth Social Conference, held at Lucknow in 1899 : "Broaden the basis of

24. *The Indian Social Reform, part I*, pp. 84-85.

caste by having those sub-sections of a caste which inter-dine also to inter-marry, and vice versa, and you widen the choice of husbands and wives and effect some reform in the system of unequal marriages, and sales of boys and girls ; you would also thereby promote brotherly feeling among the members of the caste, and make them less exclusive and more devoted to public good.”²⁵ Already the eighth session of the Social Conference, held at Madras in 1894, had passed the following resolution : “The Conference re-affirms the necessity of further steps being taken by societies for social reform in all parts of the country to remove all hindrance in the way of inter-dinning of members of the different sub-sections of the same caste, and to promote inter-marriages between persons who can dine together under existing rules.”²⁶

The National Social Conference reiterated the need for a change like this in the present century. Presiding at one of its sessions, held at Lahore on the 26th and 27th December, 1929, Rai Sahib Harbilas Sarda, author of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, expressed : “So long as the caste system exists we must permit and, at times, encourage inter-caste marriages. Some communities are so small that it is not possible to find within their fold suitable matches for boys and girls. Inter-caste marriages up to a certain extent are sanctioned by Shastras and they are now recognised by law. With such marriages becoming more frequent, the evils of prices being paid sometimes for bridegrooms and sometimes for brides will disappear. This pernicious practice has ruined many homes and has occasioned many suicides. Reform in this direction is urgently called for.”

Inter-caste marriage has been caused by several other factors, one of these being economic. Mahatma Gandhi advised guardians, who were hard pressed by economic wants, to solve the problem of their daughter’s marriages by extending the field of choice. He quoted in the *Harijan*, dated the 25th July, 1936, a passage from a correspondent’s “letter of wail,”²⁷ and observed :

25. *Ibid*, p. 215.

26. *Ibid*, p. 371.

27. “I am a school master (aged 67) with lifelong service (46 years) in the educational line, born of a poor but highly respectable Kayastha family in Bengal which knew better days but is now reduced to poverty. I am blessed? with seven daughters and two sons ; the eldest son aged

“In a case like the Bengali father’s the best help that can be rendered is not a loan or a gift of the required sum, but it should consist in persuading and strengthening the parents to refuse to purchase a match for his daughter but choose or let his daughter choose one who would marry her for love, not for money. This means a voluntary extension of the field of choice. There must be a breach in the double wall of caste and province. If India is one and indivisible, surely there should be no artificial divisions creating innumerable little groups which would neither interdine nor intermarry. There is no religion in this cruel custom. It would not do to plead that individuals cannot make the commencement, and that they must wait till the whole society is ripe for the change. No reform has ever been brought about except through intrepid individuals breaking down inhuman customs or usages. And after all what hardships can the schoolmaster suffer, if he and his daughters refuse to treat marriage as a marketable transaction instead of a status or a sacrament which it undoubtedly is? I would, therefore, advise my correspondent courageously to give up the idea of borrowing or begging, and to save the four hundred rupees he can get on his life policy by choosing in consultation with his daughter a suitable husband, no matter to what caste or province he belongs.”

The Hindu Marriage Validating Act of 1949 removed the inter-caste barriers from the sphere of marriages. The Special Marriage Act of October, 1954, revised and replaced the Special Marriage Act of 1872, permitting a special form of marriage to a person in India and to Indian nationals in foreign countries

20 died in October last leaving behind him his miserable and helpless parents to mourn his loss. He was a promising youth—the only hope my life. Of my 7 daughters 5 have already been given in marriage. My sixth and seventh daughters (aged 18 and 16) are yet unmarried. My younger son is a minor aged 11 years. My pay is Rs. 60/-. It hardly allows me to make the two ends meet. I have no savings. I have less than nothing, being in debt. The match of my sixth daughter has been settled. The cost of the marriage will be not less than Rs. 900 in ornaments and dowry (Rs. 300). I have a life policy in the Sun Life Assurance of Canada for Rs. 2000. The policy was issued in 1914. The Company has agreed to give me a loan of Rs. 400 only. It is only half the amount required. I am absolutely helpless in respect of the other half. Could you not help this poor father with the other half?”

*The interrogation was by the correspondent.

irrespective of the faith which either party to the marriage might profess. It also permitted those who had already married under other forms of marriage, to register their marriages under this Act. The Hindu Marriage Act of March, 1955, provided for inter-caste marriages, registration of Hindu marriages, divorces and payments of maintenance allowance by both husband and wife and made bigamy punishable. An eminent Indian lady (Mrs. Susama Sen, for sometime an M.P.) describes it as "a historic social measure carrying within it the germ of great social reformation, and creating a healthy atmosphere for the future generation of our great country."²⁸

The ancient institution of the caste has been in a process of rapid disintegration under the influence of the changing socio-economic conditions of our days. In the first place it has to be noted that modern education has been responsible to a large extent in undermining the influence of the caste. The reform movements have also carried on a crusade against the rigours of the caste system and thus contributed much to its dissolution. The Brahmo Samaj, which stood for perfect social equality, denounced the caste system thus : "when will those pernicious distinctions which are sapping the very life-blood of our nation be at an end and India rise as a strong united nation to fulfil the high destiny which Providence has ordained for her? There cannot be a surer truth than this, my friends, that high destiny cannot be fulfilled without the utter destruction of the supreme root of all our social evils—the caste system."²⁹ The Prarthana Samaj in Maharastra also attacked the restrictions and iniquities of the caste system. While the Arya Samaj has stood for revival of the ancient Vedic Society, based on the original fourfold division, it "repudiates caste by birth ; it condemns the numerous subdivisions into which Hindu society has been split up by reason of castes and sub-castes ; it considers the artificial barriers which caste in India has created to divide men from their fellow men as pernicious and harmful....."³⁰ Further, Malagri, Poet Narmad and some others and the Satya Shodhak Samaj, started in 1873, strongly attacked the caste system. The Self-Respect Movement,

28. *Modern Review*, August, 1955.

29. Sitanath Tattabhusan, *Philosophy of Brahmoism* (1909), p. 33.

30. Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, p. 137.

organised in the south against the most humiliating restrictions to which the non-Brahmins were subject, also exerted its influence against the caste system.

The All-India National Social Conference, which met at Calcutta on the 25th and 26th December, 1928, passed the following resolution on caste moved by Acharya P. C. Ray : "This Conference is of opinion that the present caste system is a great obstacle to the unification of the Hindu Society, and therefore resolves that its abolition should be expedited (a) by encouraging true inter-dining, (b) promoting inter-caste marriages ; and (c) by removing untouchability and all disabilities arising therefrom wherever they exist."

Indian national movement has also fostered feelings against the caste barriers. Conception of a democratic state has naturally been associated with the idea of social equality. Persons of all castes and creeds have joined together in a fight against imperialism to secure freedom of the country, and common national consciousness has prevailed over caste obligations and prejudices greatly weakening caste consciousness. In 1920 Mahatma Gandhi considered "the four divisions alone to be fundamental, natural and essential. The innumerable sub-castes are sometimes a convenience, often a hindrance. The sooner there is fusion the better." "The spirit of democracy, which is fast spreading throughout India and the rest of the world, will without a shadow of doubt," he observed, "purge the institution (of caste) of the idea of predominance and subordination."³¹ In his advice for true social reform to accelerate national progress of the right type, he often expressed himself against the "artificial caste barriers."³² Article 15 of the new constitution of free India provides that the "State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them."

The new forces in the economic condition of our country in modern times have also affected the caste system. "The destruction of the village autarchy, the creation of private property in land, the steady industrialisation of the country which evolved new vocations and created modern cities which were

31. *Young India*, 8th December, 1920.

32. *Harijan*, 26th January, 1947.

the solvents of a number of caste taboos and restrictions, the spread of a network of railways and buses which made possible mass travelling, resulting in willing or unwilling mass contact—these were some of the principal factors which undermined the vocational basis of the castes and exclusive habits of their members.”³³ Under the impact of modern industrialism people of different castes have flocked together in big cities. Not only have they worked together, but they have also shared common hotels, restaurants, theatres, cinemas and means of transport with the result that the caste restrictions about eating or about other matters have been gradually weakened, though these have not disappeared completely. The British Government by disposing the caste communities of their penal powers to punish or chastise their members made it easier for members of the different castes to transgress the caste rules.

Another factor, which has undermined the caste, is the regrouping of the people in the economic sphere, based on functional lines different from the caste grouping. “The Indian people became differentiated into such categories as capitalists, workers, peasant-proprietors, merchants, tenants, land labourers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, technicians, each category being composed of individuals belonging to various castes and communities, but having identical material and political interests. This horizontal division on new lines increasingly weakened the old vertical caste lines.”³⁴

Growing contact with the outside world, and the great political and socio-economic movements of the modern age in the different countries, have also exercised much influence in removing the social barriers of different kinds, including the caste barriers. The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* observed³⁵ in December, 1936: “The champions of caste privilege are already in retreat, and the retreat look like becoming a rout. If untouchability is doomed, can caste distinction survive? The Hindu joint family, the chief bulwark of caste, is being undermined by the education of women and the facilities for travel and contact with the outside world.”

33. A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Second Revised Edition), pp. 216-217.

34. *Ibid*, p. 219.

35. Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 229.

Late in the nineteenth century Mr. G. Subramania Iyer pronounced the "Hindu Joint Family System to be a doomed institution."³⁶ His observation has been justified, and under the stress of the similar forces, which have weakened the caste restrictions, the joint family system is on the path of extinction.

One of the most revolutionary phenomenon in our social history in the present century is the removal of untouchability. Spread of education, contact with liberal world forces, efforts of social reformers of different groups, and creative literature of modern times, have undoubtedly stirred the conscience of men to realise the injustice of removing the touch of man at a distance. But nationalism has proved to be the most effective force for the gradual elimination of untouchability and amelioration of the condition of those, who have been described as the Depressed Classes (also as 'suppressed classes' and 'submerged humanity'), and whose number in the whole of India was estimated by the Census of 1931 at 50,192,000. To improve the lot of such people and to remove untouchability were the two most important items in the programme of our national movement, which carried on a successful crusade against the 'curse of untouchability' under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

While travelling in South India, after his return to India in 1915, Mahatma Gandhi expressed in a sensational speech, delivered a Mayavaram : "In so far as I have been able to study Hinduism outside India, I have felt that it is no part of real Hinduism to have in its fold a mass of people whom I would call untouchables." Within a few months after the Satyagraha Ashram had been started on the 25th May, 1915, at Kochrab, a village near Ahmedabad, Mahatma Gandhi received a letter from Shri Amrita Lal Thakkar alias Thakkar Bapa intimating to him the desire of a family of untouchables to join the Ashram. This family was permitted by him to enter the Ashram on its members agreeing to abide by its rules. In the 32nd Session of the Indian National Congress, held at Calcutta in December, 1917, the following resolution was adopted : "This Congress urges upon the people of India the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities imposed by custom upon the depressed classes." The Nagpur session of the Congress, held in December,

36. *The Indian Social Reform, part I*, p. 143.

1920, passed a resolution stating that the removal of untouchability was necessary for the attainment of freedom. In the issue of *Young India*, dated 19th January, 1921, Mahatma Gandhi wrote a strong note against what he described as the 'sin of untouchability'. Presiding at the *Suppressed Classes Conference*, held at Ahmedabad on the 13th and 14th April, 1921, he observed : "I regard untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism.....untouchability must be extinct in this very year. Two of the strongest desires that keep me in flesh and bone are the emancipation of the untouchables and the protection of the cow. When these two desires are fulfilled, there is Swaraj, and therein lies my Moksha."³⁷ Times without number he declared against untouchability and in his Presidential Address at the Belgaum Session of the Congress in December, 1924, he expressed : "Untouchability is another hindrance to Swaraj. Its removal is just as essential for Swaraj as the attainment of Hindu-Muslim unity."

All this was producing effect. Writing on the 10th March, 1927, Mahatma Gandhi noted : "No statistics are needed to demonstrate the vast strides that the movement for the removal of untouchability has made. The barrier is breaking down everywhere. The higher classes are to be met with in every province ministering to the wants of the suppressed classes in the shape of conducting schools and boarding houses for their children." But much was yet to be done to fulfil the desired object. "Untouchability poisons Hinduism," said Mahatma Gandhi in October, 1927, and he made an appeal to the 'Caste Hindus' "to destroy the poison."³⁸

The Working Committee of the Indian National Congress at its sitting at Delhi on the 29th March, 1929, appointed an *Anti-Untouchability Sub-Committee*, consisting of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Shri Jamnalal Bajaj, the latter working as Secretary. The Committee commenced work from April next with its office at 395 Kalbadevi, Bombay, and with a programme for (1) getting temples, schools and wells, freely opened to untouchables, and (2) instructing them in sanitary living. Through the efforts of the Committee meetings and Conferences

37. *Young India*, 27th April, 1921.

38. *Young India*, 20th October, 1927.

were held at several places in which resolutions were passed to further the cause of reform in these respects. The Secretary during his tours in the Madras Presidency, C. P., Rajputana, Sindh, Kashmir, the Punjab and the Frontier Province "found the atmosphere favourable everywhere and an eagerness on the part of the caste Hindu workers and leaders in charge of public organisations or local bodies to do their duty for alleviating the lot of the untouchables."³⁹ Under the auspices of the Committee, or through the efforts of its members, workers and sympathisers, fifteen temples were declared open to the untouchables, and five more temples were declared open to them through the efforts of other individuals or organisations working in similar lines. A number of wells were thrown open to them at various places. Shri M. K. Jayakar and Shri B. G. Kher rendered valuable assistance to the Committee "in the most delicate and trying task of negotiating with the trustees of various Bombay temples." The Bombay Provincial Congress Committee held a Conference of prominent Hindus and sympathisers of the Anti-untouchability movement, which was attended by Shri Jamnalal Bajaj and representatives of different organisations including those of the Depressed Classes as also by several Temple Trustees. "Suggestions were invited and made for effectively carrying on the Anti-untouchability propaganda in various spheres and a sub-committee was appointed to execute the programme of work laid down."⁴⁰

Soon after the termination of the historic fast of Mahatma Gandhi and the Poona Pact, and following the public meeting at Bombay on the 30th September, 1932, the *Harijan Sevak Sangh* came into existence in October, 1932, with branches at different places. Untouchability abolition week was observed, throughout India, from 27th September to 2nd October, 1932. Activities of the *Harijan Sevak Sangh*, calculated to promote educational and other interests of the Harijans, increased considerably. For example, the educational expenditure for 1933-34 was Rs. 1,63,954, and in the period from October, 1934, to September, 1935, it was Rs. 275,420. Total welfare expenditure in 1933-34 was Rs. 204,526 and in the next year it rose to 337,055. To remove untouchability remained with Mahatma Gandhi

39. *Report of the Anti-Untouchability Committee.*

40. *Ibid.*

“a deeply religious and moral issue.”⁴¹ The Congress also made continuous efforts to improve the lot of the Harijans. The Congress Governments, functioning for some years in the different Provinces, did some useful work in this respect. The Bihar and C. P. Congress Governments provided for free education of the Harijans from the primary to the University stage. The Congress Government in Bombay passed the Bombay Harijan Temple Worship (Removal of Disabilities) Act permitting the Trustees, if they wanted, to open the temples to the Harijans, even if the Trust or prevailing custom was opposed to it.

Some of the Indian States followed a progressive policy regarding the Harijans. The Indore, Gwalior and Bhopal branches of the *Harijan Sevak Sangh* succeeded in securing various facilities for the Harijans by 1945. Maharaja Yeshwantrao Holkar of Indore, Maharaja Jivajirao Sindhia of Gwalior and Maharaja Gulab Singh of Rewa “issued proclamations making a declaration of Harijan Rights.”⁴² In Kathiawad the State made such an announcement only in Lathi. Badwani State declared the public schools and wells open to Harijans. In Tikamgadh “there was an inter-dinner attended by Savarna Hindus and Harijans.”⁴³

It has to be noted that there has been awakening among the Harijans themselves. Some of them received good education, and a man like Dr. Ambedkar came forward as their leader and spokesman to secure rights, and privileges for them. The *All-India Depressed Classes Association* and the *All-India Depressed Classes Federation* have been the chief organisations. Dr. Ambedkar demanded special political rights for them and succeeded in securing their special representation in the Constitution of 1935.

The country as a whole, however, has been moved by humanitarian and national considerations to embrace the Harijans in arms of cordiality and to work for their progress. Free India is offering best possible facilities to them for their education and social welfare. According to Article 17 of the New Constitution of India : “Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any

41. *His statement, dated Wardhaganj, 17th September, 1934.*

42. *Harijan, 10th November, 1946.*

43. *Ibid.*

form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of 'untouchability' shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law."

Significant changes have taken place in the social structure of India, during the recent years, as a result of the rise of new social classes, the Labour Movement, the Kisan (Peasants) Movement, and abolition of landlordism.

New social classes grew in India gradually under the influence of capitalistic economy, which appeared in the wake of the growth of the British Empire in India and penetration of new economic forces generated by the industrialisation of the modern West. In the agrarian sphere, the new social classes have been enumerated as (1) zamindars of British creation, (2) absentee landlords, (3) tenants of both of these, (4) peasant-proprietors of three grades, upper, middle and lower, (5) agricultural labourers, (6) new class of merchants and (7) new class of money-lenders. In the urban areas, these have been classified as "(1) the modern class of capitalists, industrial, commercial and financial, (2) the modern working class engaged in industrial, transport, mining, and such other enterprises, (3) the class of petty traders and shopkeepers bound up with modern capitalist economy, (4) the professional classes such as technicians, doctors, lawyers, professors, journalists, managers, clerks and others, comprising the intelligentsia and the educated middle class."⁴⁴ One new social class, that is, the commercial, industrial and financial bourgeoisie, has occupied an important position in the economic sphere in modern India. To protect their own interests against the privileged position of the British commercialists, the Indian commercial bourgeoisie formed their own Chambers of Commerce at several centres from 1887 onwards. From the early years of the present century the industrial bourgeoisie joined the national movement of the country and some of them became intimately associated with the Congress. The two World Wars helped the development of industries in India, as the belligerents had to divert their own goods for war purposes and for strategic reasons the British Government favoured the growth of steel and allied industries. This increased the influence of the industrial bourgeoisie in own country. But the middle class were hard hit by

44. A. R. DESAI, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-153.

the adverse effects of the war, particularly inflation and high prices of articles needed for their common use.

The growth of industries led to the growth of another new class, the modern Indian proletariat. Their condition continued to be extremely miserable in all respects. The several Factory Acts and some other legislation, passed by the Government to protect them, proved to be utterly inadequate to alleviate them appalling miseries.

A new consciousness appeared in the labour world in India immediately after World War I largely as a result of the economic crisis following it. The Whitley Commission on Labour (1931) analysed the situation thus : "The end of the war saw an immediate change. There were some important strikes in the cold weather of 1918-19 ; they were more numerous in the following winter, and in the winter of 1920-21, industrial strikes became almost general in organized industry. The main cause was the realization of the potentialities of the strike in the existing situation, and this was assisted by emergence of the trade union organizers, by the education which the war had given to the masses, and by the scarcity of labour arising from the expansion of industry and aggravated by the great epidemics of influenza." The Versailles Treaty and its creation of the International Labour Organisation at Geneva had some influence in the Indian labour world. Mr. R. R. Bakhale (an able co-worker of Mr. N. M. Joshi) observed : "The working classes in India did not fail to realise the importance of the right that was bestowed on them and the harm that would be done, if they did not organise themselves in order to exercise their right."⁴⁵

At a moment like this, Mr. Narayan Malhar Joshi created in 1920 the All-India Trade Union Congress "to further the interests of the Indian labour in matters, economic, social and political." The Trade Union Movement expanded rapidly. In 1929 there was a split among its members due to the attempts of the leftists, like the Socialists and the Communists, to bring it fully under their influence. Moderate Trade Unionists, under the leadership of Mr. Joshi, seceded from the Trade Union Congress and started a new body called the Indian Trade Union Federation. The two sections, however, united by 1938. A

45. Quoted in ZACHARIAS, *Renascent India*, p. 57.

combined All-India Trade Union Congress began to work enthusiastically for the labour cause, and there was a rapid growth of trade unions in the country which have fought for rights and privileges of the labourers. There was again a split in the All-India Trade Union Congress in 1942 on certain issues raised by the War. In the post-War period, three groups dominated the labour world, *viz.*, the Indian National Trade Union Congress, sponsored by the Indian National Congress, the Hind Majdoor Sabha, sponsored by the Socialists (later the P. S. P.), and the All-India Trade Union Congress, controlled by the Communists.

The Indian Kisans, whose lot was very hard in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have been roused into a new life from about the year 1917 when Mahatma Gandhi led a successful crusade on behalf of the peasants of Champaran against tyranny of the indigo planters. Due to the influence of Mahatma Gandhi's movement, the Government appointed an Inquiry Committee with himself as a member. On the basis of this Committee's report, an Act was passed giving some relief to the peasants. In March, 1918, the peasants of Kheda district sought suspension of land revenue payment for that year because of widespread failure of crops. On the refusal of the Government to listen to this demand, Mahatma Gandhi organized a Satyagraha movement with the Kisans. The Kisans were gradually imbued with political consciousness, and participated zealously in the Non-co-operation movement facilitating very much its no-rent campaign. Two successful struggles of the peasants of the Bardoli district in Gujrat,—one in 1928-29 and the other in 1930-31, added stimulus to the peasant movement. The world economic crisis for a few years from 1929, which affected the Indian peasants adversely, added to the ferment in their ranks. Already between 1927 and 1928, Kisan Sabhas had come into being in Bengal, Bihar, U. P. and the Punjab, and the Andhra Provincial Ryots' Association was started in 1928. The Bihar Kisan Sabha, started in 1927, developed into an effective organisation from 1934 under the leadership of Swami Sahajananda. These Kisan Sabhas began to fight hard for improving the condition of the peasants.

In 1935, the first All-Indian Kisan Congress met at Lucknow, and it marked indeed a turning-point in the history of the peasant movement in India. Henceforth this organisation carried on

activities on an all-India basis to educate the Kisans and to ameliorate their lot. On the eve of the elections after the Act of 1935, the Indian National Congress issued a manifesto promising therein various improvements and facilities for the Kisans. The Congress Governments, formed in several Provinces from 1937, did much to alleviate their miseries. But this did not satisfy the Kisans and there was thus a clash between the two. Our national Government in free India is taking important steps to facilitate the rise of the Kisans to higher levels of existence in all respects.

Landlordism or the Zamindari system, which sapped the initiative and enterprise of the Indian peasants, has been liquidated as a result of some Acts passed in different parts of the country. The State Governments claim that about 2.25 intermediaries have been divested of their rights over more than 160 million acres of land. Of the territorial magnates, dispossessed of their zamindaries, many have invested capital in industrial and commercial concerns. Some of them of lower rank have been reduced to the status of middle class. Of the displaced staff and dependants of the zamindars, some have been unemployed and the rest have taken to new professions, mostly in the urban areas. There has been some controversy regarding the equitable distribution of land to the entire community. The Planning Commission has accepted, in principle, the policy of 'fixing a ceiling and floor' on the amount of land that one may hold.

We may also note in this connection the *Bhoodan* (land-gift) movement of one of our saint-patriot, Acharya Vinobaji. In 1951 was offered the first land-gift in a small village in the Nalgonda district of the Telangana area of the Hyderabad State. It has developed into an all-India movement in the course of these years. "By the beginning of April, 1956, 43 lakh acres of land were collected, 370,355 acres distributed, the total land of 1,037 villages were obtained." It is a revolutionary process, indeed a movement, expected "to bring about," as Vinobaji once said, "a silent ideological revolution in our social outlook by asking the rich to donate lands to the poor."

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INDEX

A

Adam, J, 19
 Adam, William, 7
Advisory Committee on Minorities, and Fundamental Rights, 97
 Afgan War, 13
Age of Consent Committee, 119
 Agricultural Distress, 24
 Ahmad, Sultan, 79
 Ahmad Syed, 21
 Alexander, A. V., 90
 Ali Liaquat, 88, 95
 Ali Muhammad, 51, 61
 Ali, Shaukat, 51
 Ali, Syed Ameer, 36
 Aligarh Movement, 21
 Alipore Conspiracy, 35
All Parties Conference, 62, 63
 All-India Conspiracy, 63
All-India Depressed Classes Association, 131
 All-India Despressed Classes Federation, 131
All-India Khilafat Conference, 55
All-India Kisan Congress, 134
All-India Kisan Sabha, 134
All-India National Social Conference, 116
All-India Social Conference, 119, 126
All-India Swadeshi Exhibition, 59
All-India Tilak Swaraj Fund, 54
All-India Trade Union Congress, 133, 134
All-India Women's Conference, 108, 109; 110, 112, 115, 119
 Ambedkar, 131
 Ameri, L. S., Lord, 75, 78
Ananda math, 5, 33
 Andhra Provincial Ryots Association, 134
 Andrews, C.F., 6, 26, 44, 53
 Andrews Day, 17
 Aney, M. S., 85

Anglo-Oriental College, 21, 22
 Anglo-Russion Agreement (1907), 39
 Ansari, M. A.; 70
 Anti-child Marriage committee, 120
 Anti-Purdah Movement, 115
Anti-Untouchability Sub-Committee, 129
Anusilan Samities, 33
 Arundale, G. S.; 40
 Arya Samaj, 106, 115, 125
Ashrams, 47
 Asia for Asians, 80
Atlantic Charter, 79
 Attlee, C, 90
 Auckland Colvin, 17
 August offer, 76
Awakening of Asia, 27
 Ayerst (Lt), 25
 Azad, Abul Kalam, 51, 77, 83

B

Bahadur, Syed Mohamed, 22
 Bajaj, Jamanlal, 129
 Baldwin, Stanley, 62
 Balkan Wars, 39
Bande Mataram, 5, 8, 9, 31, 32
Banga durshan, 5
 Banerjee, Hem Chandra 3, 4
 Banerjee, Surendra Nath, 11, 12, 14, 25, 39
 Banerjee, W. C, 19
 Bapa, Thakkar, 128
 Bardoli Programme, 57
Bartaman Rajniti, 33
 Basu, Bhupendra Nath, 19, 45
 Beck, 22
 Behari Students Conference, 44
Bengal Women's Education League, 108
Bengalee, 28
 Benn, Hedgewood, 62, 69
 Bevan, Ernest, 102
 Bakhale, R. R. 133
 Besant, Annie, 7,40,48

Bhandarkar, R. G., 2, 107
Bharat Durdasa, 6
Bharat Sangeet, 4
Bharat Shri Mandal, 107
 Bhattacharya, Abinash Chandra, 33
Bhavani Mandir, 33
Bhoodan, 135
Bihar Kisan Sabha, 134
 Birkenhead (Lord), 41
 Black Act, 51
 Blunt, Wilfrid Scawen, 13
Bombay Presidency Association, 15
 Bose, Ananda Mohan, 11, 14
 Bose, Khudiram, 34
 Bose, Sachindra Prasad, 35
 Bose, Subhas Chandra, 54, 63
 Bose, Rajnarayan, 2, 3
 Boundary Commission, 100
 Bradlaugh (M.P.), 18, 19
Brahmo Samaj, 106, 115
 British Commonwealth, 49, 81, 99
British Indian Association, 11

C

Cabinet Mission, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 96
 Calcutta killing, 94
 Calcutta University Commission, 108
 Caretaker Government, 94
 Census Report, 116, 120
 Chakravorty, Chandrakanta, 38
 Chakravorty, Monmohan, 2
 Chaki, Prafulla, 34
 Chambers of Commerce, 132
 Chamberlain, 75
 Champaran, 42, 44, 46, 47
 Champaran Agrarian Bill, 46
 Chandra, Harish, 6
 Chatterjee, Bankimchandra, 3, 5, 8
 Chatterjee, Satish Chandra, 35
 Chaudhurani, Sarada Devi, 107, 118
 Chauri Chaura, 57
 Chelmsford, Lord, 41, 108
 Child Marriage, 116
Child Marriage Bill, 119
Child Marriage Restraint Act, 123
Children's Protection Act, 117

Churchill, W., 75, 79, 80
 Civil Disobedience, 55, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70
 Civil Service Agitation, 12
 Communal Award, 69
Commonwealth (Weckly), 40
 Congress-League Scheme, 39, 40, 42
 Congress Socialist Party, 71
 Connemara (Lord), 17
 Constituent Assembly, 84, 96, 97, 99
 Co-prosperity sphere in Greater East Asia, 80
Cotton, Henry J. S. 13, 18
 Cousins, Margaret E, 118
 Cripps Mission, 82
 Cripps Offer, 81
 Cripps, Stafford, 80, 81, 90
 Curzon, Lord, 18, 27, 28, 107

D

Daji, Bhau, 2
 Das, C. R., 49, 50, 54, 59
 Das, Jatindra Nath, 64
 Das, Taraknath, 38
 Datta, Bhupendranath, 33
 Datta, M. Madhusudan, 3
Dawn, 30
 Dawn Society, 30, 43
 Day of Deliverance, 72, 77
Defence of India Act, 39
 Delhi Durbar, 37
 Depressed class, 58, 69
 Desai, Bhulabhai, 88
 Dev, Radha Kanta, 2
 Devi, Sarada, 6, 4.4
 Digby, W., 19
 Dingra, Madanlal, 34
 Dominions, 100, 101, 102
 Dominion Status, 62, 63, 64, 65, 74, 76
 Dufferin, Lord, 16, 17
 Dutt, Aswini Kumar, 35
 Dutt, Batukeswar, 63
 Dutt, R. C., 2

E

East India Company, 21

Elgin, Lord, 18

F

Factory Acts, 133
Famine Relief Code, 24
 Frazer, W., 3
 Fuller Bomfylde, 29, 34
Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme, 71

G

Gadr Party, 38
 Gait, Edward (Sir), 46
 Gandhi, Maganlal, 113, 114
 Gandhi, M. K. (Mahatma), 10, 39
 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50,
 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60,
 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 74, 76, 77, 83,
 84, 85, 102, 103, 112, 113, 114,
 118, 119, 123, 126, 129, 130, 134
Gandhi-Irwin Pact, 68
 Ganguli, Dwarknath, 11
 George, Lloyd, 41
 Ghose, Arabinda, 5, 8, 9, 34, 35,
 Ghose, Barindra Kumar, 9, 33, 35
 Ghose, Lalmohan, 12
 Ghose, Monmohan, 19, 107
 Giri, Dalbahadur, 113
Girl's Guide Movement, 110
Gita, 9
 Gokhale, G. K., 19, 40, 44, 106
Government of India Act, 1935, 101,
 Gupta, Heramba Lal, 38

H

Haldane, Lord, 41
 Haque, Mazharul, 19, 22, 39, 44, 54
 Hardayal, 38
 Hardinge, Lord, 37, 38
 Hamilton, George, 18
Harijan Sevak Sangha, 130, 131
 Hartog Committee, 109, 110
 Heycock, W. B., 45
 Hind Majdoor Sabha, 134
Hindu (Daily), 15
Hindu Dharmer Sheshthata, 3
Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, 125
Hindu Marriage Validating Act, 124

Hindu-Muslim entanglement, 22
Hindusthan Socialist Republican Army,
 63
Home-Rule League, 40
 Howard, J. E. 19
 Hume, Allan Octavian, 15, 16, 17, 19
 Hunter Commission on Education,
 107
 Huq, A. K. Fazlul, 78

I

Ilbert Bill, 14
 Ilbert C.P., 14
 Iman, Hassan, 44, 48
 Independence, Complete, 63
 Independent Congress Party, 60
 India League, 66
 Indrajai, Bhagwanlal, 2
 Indian Association, 12, 14, 15
 Indian Civil Service, 11, 15, 20, 54
Indian Councils Act 1861, 19
Indian Councils Act 1892, 20
Indian Councils Act, 1909, 37
Indian Home Rule Society, 34
Indian National Congress, 18, 19, 23,
 27, 33, 40, 42, 49, 63, 64, 76, 77, 84
 90, 95, 96, 135
 Ahmedabad, Session (Meeting), 56
 Allahabad, 37
 Amritsar 37, 39
 Belgaum, 59, 129
 Benares, 32
 Bezwarda, 54
 Bombay, 49
 Calcutta, 32, 40, 44, 61,
 Delhi, 49, 57
 Gaya, 59
 Kanpur, 60
 Karachi, 63
 Lahore, 65
 Lucknow, 40, 44
 Madras, 63
 Nagpur, 53
 New Delhi, 96
 Patna, 70
 Surat, 33
Indian National Party, 38

- Indian National Union*, 16
Indian National Social Conference, 106
Indian Reform Association, 115
Indian Reformation Movement, 122
 Indian Sedition Committee, 51
 Indian Statutory Commission, 37
Indian Sociologist, 34
Indian Trade Union Federation, 132
Infant Marriage Prevention Act, 117
 Inter-caste Marriages, 123
 Interim Govt., 87
 International Labour Organisation,
 133
 Instruments of Instruction, 101
 Irwin, Lord, 64, 68
 Iyenger, S. S., 63
 Iyer, G. S., 112, 128
- J**
- Jallianwalla Bag Massacre*, 52
Jamia Millia Islamia, 54, 76
 Jatashankar, Mani Shankar, 2
 Jayakar, M. R., 60, 66, 130
 Jejeebhoy, Jamsetjee, 15
 Jinarajadssa, Dorothy, 117
 Jinnah, M. A. 63, 71, 72, 76, 77, 78,
 87, 88, 89, 93, 94, 95, 102
 Joshi, R. M. 133
- K**
- Karve, D. K. 107
 Kelkar, N. C., 59, 60
 Kennedy, Pringle, 34
Keshari, 24, 40
 Khan Aga, 35, 36
 Khan, Sikandar Hayat, 78
 Kher, B. G., 130
Khilafat Movement, 51, 56, 60
 Kingsford, 34
Kisan Movement, 71, 132
Kisan Sabha, 68
Komagata Maru, 38
 Kripalani, Acharya, 43, 102
- L**
- Labour Movement, 132
 Lal, Parmasheswar, 44
- Landsdowne, Lord, 116
 Lawrence, Pethick, 90
 Linlithgow, 73, 74, 86
 Lucknow Pact, 39
 Lytton, Lord, 12
- M**
- Macdonald, Ramsay, 2, 64, 67, 69
 Macnicol (Dr.) 13
 Madras Mahajana Sabha, 15
Magan Ashram, 115
 Malabari, B. M. 115, 116, 125
 Malaviya, Madan Mohan, 49, 60, 70,
 129
 Mandal, J. N. 95
 Mandik, Viswanath Narayan, 2
 Megaw John, 121
 Mehta, Pheroz shah, 15, 40
 Minto, Lord, 34, 35, 27
 Mishra, Ramand, 113
 Mitra, Dinabandhu, 3
 Mitra, Rajendralal, 2
Mode Vritta, 25
 Moderate Nationalists, 32
 Moderate Trade Unionists, 133
 Mody, Homy, 85
 Montagu, E. S. 42, 48, 49, 50
Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, 48,
 49
Montford Reforms, 49
 Mother, conception of, 8
 Moonjee, 60
 Morley, J, 32
Morley-Minto Reforms, 36
 Mountbatten, Lord, 98, 102
 Mukherjee, Satischandra, 43
Mukti Kon Pathe, 34
 Mullick, Subodh, 35
 Mustafa, Kamal, 60
Muslim League, 36, 39, 49, 63, 71,
 72, 73, 76, 77, 78, 84, 86, 88, 90,
 91, 93, 94, 95, 97, 100.
 Muthulakshmi, S. S. 119
- N**
- Naidu, Sarojini, 6
 Nandi, Manindra Chandra, 29

- Naoraji, Dadabhai, 32
 Nath, Lala Baij, 122
National Conference, 1883, 15, 17
National College, Cal, 30
National Council of Education, 30
National Defence Council, 78
 Naional Government, 83
National Indian Association, 107
National Liberal Federation, 49
Nehru Committee, 62, 63
 Nehru, J., 63, 65, 70, 71, 74, 76, 82, 83, 95, 96, 97, 99
 Nehru, Motilal, 54, 57, 59, 61, 65
New India (Daily), 40, 48
Nil-Darpan, 3
 Nivedita (Sister), 7
 Non-Cooperation, 53, 54, 55, 56, 60, 62, 133
- O**
- O'Dwyer, M, General, 52
- P**
- Pakistan, 78, 86, 87, 100, 102
Pal-Bal-Lal, 9
 Pal, B. C. 3, 4, 9, 31, 32
 Panchayat Discipline, 54, 58
 Paramahansa, Ramkrishna, 7
 Partition scheme, 28, 98
 Passive Resistance, 30, 31
 Patel, Ballavbhai, 54, 63
 Patel, Vitalbhai, 59
 Pillai, C, 38
 Plan of June 3, 19, 47, 99
 Plassey, battle of, 1
Poona Vaibhab, 25
 Prasad, Brij Kishore, 44, 45, 54
 Prasad, Ganesh, 44
 Prasad, Gorakh, 43
 Prasad, Janakdhari, 43
 Prasad, Krishna, 44
 Prasad, Rajendra, 43, 44, 49, 54, 57, 59, 60, 67, 70
 Prasad, Ramnarain, 43
 Prasad, Vidyabasani, 43
Prarthan Samaj, 125
Pratoda, 25
- Press Act of 1910, 35
Purdda, 112-113
- Q**
- Quit India*, 84, 87
- R**
- Radhakrishnan Commission*, 111
Radhika Singha Institute, 114
 Radical Nationalists, 33
 Rai, Lala Lajpat, 32, 35, 63, 57, 60
 Rajagopalachari C, 54, 86, 87
 Rajguru, 68
Rajput Hitakarini Sabha, 117
 Ram Sant, 104
Ramkrishna Mission, 106
 Ranade, N. G. 2, 3, 7, 122
 Rand, 25
 Rani of Sangli, 109
 Ray, Acharya P. C. 126
 Re-formation Movements, 104, 106
 Regulation III of 1918, 35
 Religious Reformation, 7
 Renaissance and Reformation, influence of, 1-10
Revolutionary Crimes Act, 51
 Reynolds, Reginald, 65
 Ripon, Lord, 14, 107
Round Table Conference, 64, 67
 Rowlat, Sidney (Sir), 57
 Roy, D.L. 6
 Roy, Govinda Chandra, 5
 Roy, Ram mohan, 2, 3, 7, 104, 106
Russo-Japanese War, 26
- S**
- Sabarmati Ashram*, 113
Sadaqat Ashram, 54
 Salisbury, Marquis of, 11
Sandhya, 34
 Sarda, Haribilas, 123
 Saraswati, Dayanand, 7, 104
 Sarkar, Jadunath, 44
 Sarkar, N. R. 85
 Sapru, Tej Bahadur, 62, 66, 79, 88
 Salt Satyagraha, 66
 Sastri, Haraprasad, 2

- Sathia nadhan, Kamala, 105
Satyagraha, 39, 47
Satyagraha Ashram, 128
Satyashodhak Samaj, 125
 Savarkar, Vinayak, 34
 Saadullah, Saiyid Muhamad, 78
Swadeshi, 30
Swadeshi Samaj, 30
Swaraj, 33, 68, 70, 129
Swarajya, 53, 54
Swarajya Party, 59, 60
 Secret Revolutionary Societies, 33
 Sen, Keshab Chandra, 3, 7, 104
 Sen, Susama, 125
Servants of India Society, 44, 47, 106
 Sharfuddin, 44, 80
 Shek Chiang Kai, 80
 Simla Conference, 89
 Simon Commission, 64
 Singh, Ajit Sardar, 35
 Singh, Arikshan, 45
 Singh, Baldev, 95, 96
 Singh, Bhagat, 63, 68
 Singh, Gurudut, 38
 Singha, Anugraha Narayan, 43
 Singha, Deep Narain, 44
 Singha, Sachchidanand, 44
Sivaji Festival, 23, 24
*Society for the Promotion of National
 Feeling among the Educated Natives
 of Bengal*, 3
Special Marriage Act, 124
 Sukdev, 68
- T**
- Tagore, Devendranath, 7
 Tagore, Rabindranath, 6, 29, 52, 106
 Tayabjee, Badruddin, 15
 Telang, K. T. 2, 3, 15
 Thakkar, Amrita Lal, 128
 Tilak, B. G. 2, 7, 8, 23, 25, 32, 35, 40,
 48, 53
- Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund*, 59
Trade Union Congress, 133
- U**
- United Nations, 8, 84, 86
Untouchability, 129, 131
 Upadhay, Brahmabandhab, 34
- V**
- Varma, Sambhu Saran, 43
 Varma, Shyamji Krishna, 34
Vedic Society, 125
Vernacular Press Act, 14
 Versailles Treaty, 133
 Vidyasagar, Iswar Chandra, 7, 104,
 115
 Vinobaji, Acharya, 135
Visvabharati, 106
 Vivekananda, Swami, 3, 7, 104
- W**
- Wachia, B. P. 40
 War Advisory Council, 76
 War Cabinet, 80
 War Conference, 1918, 48
 Wavel, Lord, 86, 88, 95, 98
 Webb, Alfred, 21
 Wedderburn, William (Sir), 18, 37
Whitley Commission, 133
 Willingdon, Lord, 68
Women's Indian Association, 107
 Women's Right to Property, 122
 Women University, 107
 World War I, 41, 51, 133
- Y**
- Yugantar*, 34
- Z**
- Zetland, Lord, 75

