

## CHAPTER VII

### A BLACK DECENNIUM

(1908—1917)

“ IF errors have occurred, the agents of my Government have spared no pains and no self-sacrifice to correct them ; if abuses have been proved, vigorous hands have laboured to apply a remedy.” In a short but very expressive review of fifty years’ government of India under the British Crown, Lord Morley, as Secretary of State for India, put the above words in the mouth of the Sovereign, Edward VII, in a Proclamation dated November 2nd, 1908.<sup>1</sup>

It is curious that while Lord Morley looked on the leading events of this period in India with a “ clear gaze and a good conscience ” it escaped his otherwise observant eyes that the people of India for their part had quite a different opinion about what the administration had done. In a previous chapter we saw how viceroy after viceroy blundered during these fifty years, how Indian sentiment was flouted and British interests maintained at the point of the bayonet. But apart from the historical inaccuracy and distorted judgement which an Indian finds in Lord Morley’s retrospect, what is more irritating is the repetition of the pious formula that “ divine protection and favour ” will “ strengthen the wisdom and mutual goodwill that are needed for the achievement of a task as glorious as was ever committed to rulers and subjects in any state or empire of recorded time ”.

In this chapter we shall see how this pious wish was repudiated at every turn from the year of the Proclamation almost down to the end of the war in 1918. That decade India found very black indeed, crowded with acts of repression and disappointments unparalleled even in the annals of our conquered race.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B.

Lord Minto instead of quelling the storm raised by the Anglo-Indian capitalists and merchants of Clive Street, fell a victim to their concerted effort to strangle the new-born consciousness of the Indian people, and John Morley, who had then been two years at the India Office, and was now at his own desire a peer, found himself compelled to agree to every proposal for repression emanating from Calcutta and Simla. As a result of their co-operation a number of penal and repressive laws were added to the Statute Book, while all the time high-sounding principles of democratic philosophy were being enunciated at the other end of the cable.

On June 8th, nearly six weeks after the Muzzaferpore outrage, under the guidance of Lord Minto, and certainly with the sanction of Lord Morley, the Newspapers Act, putting a new gag on the Press, and the Explosives Act, penalizing the handling of explosive substances, were passed in the Indian Legislative Council. In October, the Bengal Government issued a resolution extending the order of the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta and of the District Magistrate of the 24-Parganas (Alipur) prohibiting the holding of any public meeting in any place under their jurisdiction for a further period of six months.

On December 11th, a special Crimes Act for the summary trials of political prisoners, and proscribing certain associations and organizations, was passed into law at a single sitting of the Indian Legislative Council. While all repressive measures had a very easy passage in the Council, one recalls with no little surprise and wonder that Mr. Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill, the first attempt to introduce a system of free and compulsory system of education in India, was thrown out by the combined official and nominated *bloc* of the Council.

Nor was there any end to executive high-handedness and police oppression in both Eastern and Western Bengal and in other parts of India. About the end of 1906, Lord Minto, with the consent of Lord Morley, again used the old and rusty weapon (Bengal Regulation III. of 1818), and by virtue of the

powers invested by it in the Governor-General, sent into deportation nine of the principal leaders of the new nationalist and swadeshi movement. First, Babu Krishna Kumar Mitter, the editor of the vernacular newspaper the *Sanjibani*, and two others were arrested, and deported to an unknown destination. Two days later, Babu Aswini Kumar Dutt, the leader of Barisal, and six other prominent leaders of the boycott and physical culture movement were similarly arrested and deported. In the beginning of the new year (1909) several *samitis* (*gymnasiums*) in Eastern Bengal were proclaimed under the new Crimes Act. For some reason or other, Lord Minto spared Surendra Nath Banerjea and Bhupendra Nath Bose, who were the real leaders of the nationalist movement of those days. Lord Morley has pathetically described his feelings about this matter of deportation in a letter written to the viceroy of the time, and subsequently reproduced in the second volume of his *Recollections*. We read :

“ January 27th.—This brings me to Deportees. The question between us two upon this matter may, if we don't take care, become what the Americans call ugly. I won't repeat the general arguments about Deportation. I have fought against those here who regarded such a resort to the Regulation of 1818 as indefensible. So, per contra, I am ready just as stoutly to fight those who wish to make this arbitrary detention for indefinite periods a regular weapon of Government. Now your present position is beginning to approach this. You have nine men locked up a year ago by *lettre de cachet*, because you believed them to be criminally connected with criminal plots, and because you expected their effect to check these plots. For a certain time it looked as if the *coup* were effective, and were justified by the result. In all this, I think, we were perfectly right. Then you come by and by upon what you regard as a great anarchist conspiracy for sedition and murder, and you warn me that you may soon apply to me for sanction of further arbitrary arrest and detention on a large scale. I ask whether this process implies that through the nine *détenus* you have found out a

murder-plot contrived, not by them, but by other people. You say, ' We admit that being locked up they can have had no share in these new abominations ; but their continued detention will frighten evil-doers generally'. That's the Russian argument ; by packing off train-loads of suspects to Siberia, we'll terrify the anarchists out of their wits, and all will come out right. That policy did not work out brilliantly in Russia, and did not save the lives of the Trepoffs, nor did it save Russia from a Duma, the very thing that the Trepoffs and the rest of the ' offs ' ' deprecated and detested.' "

This new use of an old and unrepealed Bengal Regulation sent the entire country into wild fury, and the agitation over this matter went so far that Gopal Krishna Gokhale, perhaps the outstanding personality in Indian politics of that time, speaking at a Reform Club meeting in London, was obliged to appeal to the governing classes of the United Kingdom for the annulment of Lord Curzon's blunder. Though " honest " John saw the errors of his ways, he refused to budge or bend over the Bengal Partition, and from his place in the House of Commons as well as in the Lords, he time and again described the Partition as " settled " and " sacrosanct ".

The Government became so panicky at this time that they began to leave no stone unturned to suppress the nascent spirit of unrest in Bengal. Between criminal prosecutions for sedition, vexatious espionage, the operation of drastic legislation and deportations and internment, the governments of Sir Edward Baker (Bengal, Bihar and Orissa), and Sir Bamfylde Fuller (Eastern Bengal and Assam), tried every weapon in their armoury to suppress seditious thought and revolutionary activity in Bengal. But their attempts in this direction did not end there, nor were they crowned with the success that was expected of them. A novel course was, therefore, discovered to check the growing spirit of independence among the student community in these provinces. It was realized by the Secretariat in Calcutta and Dacca that at the bottom of the new spirit of Bengal was the very careful study of the history of England by young men in their teens ; and, under pressure of the official *bloc*, a new curriculum was

devised for the next Matriculation Examination in which the study of English history was tabooed. This did not prevent young Bengalis from knowing anything about Magna Carta or the Bill of Rights, or about the fight between Parliament and the Sovereign under the Stuart Kings of England, or about Hampden or Cromwell or Charles I. Young Bengal began to dip more closely into the pages of English and European history, with the result that the entire static atmosphere of an old Indian province was galvanized in a few short months with new dynamic ideas.

Young Bengal ceased at this time to worship at the old tabernacles and withdrew its homage from the recognized leaders and tribunes of the people. The new mentality of the younger generation found a most eloquent expression when nearly fifty thousand of them lined the streets of Kalighat to take the dust of the feet of the dead bodies of Kanai Lal Dutt and Satyendra Nath Bose as they were carried from the Central Jail of Calcutta to the cremation ground of Keoratala. These two men had been hanged that morning for the assassination of a police informer<sup>1</sup> within the compound of the same jail.

The funeral demonstration of these two political assassins proved such a staggering revelation to the Government that from that day forward, the cremation of political assassins outside the jail compound was no longer permitted. But whatever steps the Government were advised to take at this period for the suppression of the new seditious movement, there cannot be any manner of doubt as to the fact that the bulk of the student community in Calcutta and outside had got out of hand and could not be controlled either through university regulations or police operations.

At this time also, the collaboration between the Indian

<sup>1</sup> Narendra Nath Gossain, a member of the Revolutionary Party at Manicktolla, gave to the police all the clues necessary for the rounding up of his fellow conspirators on the very evening when Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose tried to kill Mr. Kingsford at Muzzaferpore. This man was living in the same jail with Kanai Lal Dutt and Satyendra Nath Bose until on August 31st, 1908, he was shot dead with a revolver within the jail compound by these two young men. How and where they found this revolver remains up to this day an unexplained mystery.

Viceroy and the Indian Secretary of State on a new scheme of reforms was nearing completion, and Lord Morley had prepared himself to put their joint ideas on the matter to the test of Parliament. But before this Bill had been shaped for introduction in Parliament, Lord Morley had taken courage to appoint an Indian Member to the Viceroy's cabinet. It must be mentioned here that he undertook the responsibility of this appointment against tremendous odds. The Viceroy's Council opposed the idea ; so also did the Council of India at Whitehall. Lord Kitchener offered a vehement opposition to the proposal ; and ex-viceroy's like Lansdowne, Elgin and Curzon swelled the chorus of disapproval. It is distressing to note that even such a friendly and sympathetic statesman as Lord Ripon refused to give his blessings to Morley's idea, and, on top of all this opposition, came Edward VII's remonstrance in the matter. It appears that the only reason for opposing this appointment was the conviction at the back of every white man's mind that no native of India could be trusted with all the secrets, both civil and military, which came before the Viceroy's cabinet for joint consultation and decision. But Lord Morley had set his mind on the matter, and nothing would shake his decision. He circumvented and outmanœuvred all opposition, and, taking the power invested in him by statute, appointed Mr. Sâtyendra Prasanna Sinha, then a leading barrister of the Calcutta High Court, to the position of Law Member of the Government of India. It must be admitted that this was a far-reaching move, and opened all positions of honour and dignity in the state to Indians of ability and integrity, giving effect after long delay to the high principles enunciated in the Charter Act of 1833, and in Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858, and paving the way for the constitutional move taken by Mr. Montagu ten years later. Only two years previously, Lord Morley had widened the door of the Council of India at Whitehall, to admit two Indian gentlemen as members, Krishna Govinda Gupta and Syed Hossain Bilgrammi, an event which had created almost as great a furore throughout Anglo-India as the appointment of Sinha to the Viceroy's cabinet.

The India Councils Act Amendment Bill of Lord Morley was introduced in the House of Lords in February, 1909, and passed through both Houses without much difficulty before Parliament rose for the Easter recess, though all the ex-viceroy's of India then alive, and ex-Secretaries of State like Fowler and Brodrick, were opposed to his new scheme of Reforms. With the main purport and provisions of this Bill, I shall deal in the chapter on Constitutional Development.

Perhaps as the price which Lord Minto demanded for his assent to Morley's Reforms, the Secretary of State sanctioned a special Press Law drafted by the Government of India to make an example of seditious writers and to make such writing expensive. It seems curious that while according his sanction to the new Press Bill, he wrote a very strong letter to Lord Minto against the wisdom of such a measure. Morley wrote to Lord Minto under date February 3rd, 1910.

"We worked hard at your Press Act, and I hope the result has reached you in plenty of time. I daresay it is as sensible in its way as other Press Acts, or as Press Acts can ever be. But nobody will be more ready than you to agree that the forces with which we are contending are far too subtle, deep, and diversified, to be abated by making seditious leading articles expensive. There are important sentences in your official telegram that show how much of the poison is entirely out of our reach. The 'veiled innuendo' of which you speak—the talk about Mazzini, Kossuth, etc.—it is seditious no doubt, and it may point to assassination plainly enough in the minds of excitable readers. But a Lt.-Governor will have to walk warily before putting too strong an interpretation upon the theoretic plausibilities of the newspaper scribe. Neither I nor my Council would have sanctioned it, if there had been no appeal in some due form to a court of law, and you tell me that you would have had sharp difficulties in your own Council."

Sir Herbert Risley, then the Home Member of the Government of India, had drafted this Bill in conformity with an Austrian law on the subject, and made it as drastic as possible under the circumstances. When this measure was

introduced in the Indian Legislative Council, a tremendous agitation was set on foot against it by the entire Press of the country, and Lord Sinha, then the Law Member of the Government of India, refused to pilot the Bill through, and informed the Viceroy that if certain provisions of the Bill were not radically amended, he would have nothing to do with it and would resign his office. Perhaps this strong attitude of Sinha is referred to by Lord Morley as "the sharp difficulties" in the Viceroy's Council. Even amended with the provision of an appeal to the High Court, the Bill had all the sting of outrageously repressive legislation, and one recalls with a little surprise that only two members of the Imperial Council were found to offer a stout and wholesale opposition against the passage of this Bill through the Council—Bhupendra Nath Basu and Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya. People were surprised to find even Gopal Krishna Gokhale giving his qualified support to this measure.

While the draconian provisions of the Press Act revealed the political mentality of the Government of India of the time, Lord Minto prevailed upon Lord Morley to accept a scheme of special communal representation to which he had given his blessing in 1906, in response to a desire expressed by a Mahomedan deputation inspired and arranged by an official clique at Simla. It is a pity that the leaders of the Mahomedan community of the time overlooked the very important fact that greater patronage to their community meant a wider cleavage between them and the Hindus, and an additional reason why Government should continue the old game of *divide et impera*. The game started by Lord Minto, as the head of the Government at Simla, was a sinister one, and its effects have gone so deep that the communal spirit in Simla now stands as the greatest bar to the development and fruition of a spirit of homogeneous nationhood.

It is perhaps not generally known that when Lord Minto's viceroyalty was coming to an end, a very influential movement was set on foot in England to get Lord Kitchener appointed as his successor. This idea was approved of by the King-Emperor also, but Lord Morley proved strong enough not to



set up a military dictatorship in India particularly at the time of a great national upheaval.

In October, 1910, Lord Minto, and in November of the same year, Lord Morley, resigned their offices. It is an irony of fate that the term of office of perhaps the most honest politician of the England of his day, and of so God-fearing a viceroy as Lord Minto, proved to be a very black period in modern Indian history. It is still more unfortunate that this happened, not when they were pulling against each other, but, as Lord Morley himself has stated, "when both of them tried to understand India in the same way and look at their business in the same spirit". Honest intentions perhaps have no place in the governance of a modern state. How curious that Lord Morley in a letter to Lord Minto, had anticipated the verdict of history on their joint labours in the government of India. He wrote: "It will be insupportable if you, who are a sound Whig, and I, who am an 'autoritaire' Radical (so they say) (?) go down to our graves (I first) as imitators of Eldon, Sidmouth, the Six Acts, and all the other men and policies which we were both of us brought up to abhor."

They were succeeded by Lord Hardinge and Lord Crewe as Viceroy and Secretary of State respectively. Between them, these two were secretly devising some measure to unsettle the Bengal Partition and wriggle out of the situation which Lord Curzon in a thoughtless moment had created. People knew scarcely anything about these negotiations, and could hardly suspect that the authorities were going to acknowledge the blunder after so many years and undo its effect. In the meantime, King Edward VII died, and George V came to India for his Coronation.

At the special Durbar held on December 12th, 1911, where the King was crowned Emperor of India, the annulment of the Partition of Bengal was announced through the lips of the Sovereign. The official scheme of this announcement involved according to Lord Hardinge's Government, two equally momentous changes. Assam was taken out of Bengal and reconverted into an independent province, with a Chief

Commissioner at its head. The districts of Eastern and Western Bengal were amalgamated and placed under one Governor and Executive Council. The districts of Bihar and Orissa, with Sambalpur and Chota Nagpur thrown in, were taken out of the old Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal and placed under a Governor and a Council with the title of Bihar and Orissa ; Calcutta retained its position as the capital of the diminished province of Bengal, but lost its dignity as the capital of the Empire. Lord Hardinge, to placate Mahomedan sentiment, reconverted Delhi into the headquarters of the Government of the Empire on the one side, and promised a new university at Dacca for the special development of Moslem culture, on the other.

In December, 1912, during the state entry of Lord Hardinge into the new Imperial capital at Delhi at the head of a strikingly spectacular procession, a bomb was thrown at him and Lady Hardinge, it is believed by a Bengali, which wounded both and killed the *mahaut* (driver) of the elephant they were riding. The Viceroy was at once taken to hospital, where his wounds were attended to and found not very serious. In the meantime Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, then the Finance Minister and the senior member of the Council, presided over the state functions in the absence of the Viceroy.

A mint of money has been thrown away (nearly ten crores of rupees already) to give Delhi the dignity and position of an Imperial capital, and yet Delhi remains a phantom city which has yet to be built and elevated to the position of the premier city of the Empire. It is quite apparent that Lord Hardinge wanted to make Delhi the new capital of the Empire without a correct appreciation of the tremendous difficulties that his Government would have to face in materializing his scheme—financial, physical and sanitary.

Though the annulment of the Partition went a long way towards placating Bengali opinion, its effects were far-reaching and injurious both to Bengal and to the Central Government. It at once removed Bengal from its place as the premier province of the Empire, as it removed the Central

Government from contact with the most vocal and influential public opinion in the country. People who know anything of the matter believe that it would have been impossible for Lord Hardinge to carry his proposals through, if Lord Sinha had not then resigned his place in the Viceroy's cabinet, owing to some unfortunate difference with Lord Kitchener, who was still then at the head of His Majesty's Indian Army, and if Mr. Ali Imam (afterwards Sir) had not stepped into his shoes. Lord Sinha, it is confidently believed, if he had still remained at Simla, would have been the last person in the world to sign the Government of India Despatch of August, 1911, which adumbrated the scheme to rob Calcutta of her Imperial Crown and hide it among the ruins and tombs of the seven cities of Delhi. Sir Ali Imam found Lord Hardinge's proposals all that he could desire to promote the interest of his own province of Bihar, and jumped at the idea of it being raised to the position of an independent province, with a Governor and a Council, a University and a High Court. Sir Ali Imam, therefore, felt no hesitation whatever about lending his support to the Hardinge scheme. But what Calcutta lost as an Imperial City, Bengal gained as a compact province and the home of a homogeneous people. It has been truly observed that Bengal as now constituted "differs more from most other Indian provinces than they differ from one another. Economic, temperamental, and social causes account for this difference. Caste is less powerful; a common literary language unites over forty million Bengalis. Even the Moslem community, who form a narrow majority of the population, are indisputably less divided both socially and politically from their Hindu countrymen than they are in other parts of India. The Bengali temperament, at once calculating and emotional, critical and enthusiastic, baffles other Indians almost as much as it puzzles British administrators."<sup>1</sup>

Lord Carmichael, who came from Madras to Bengal as the first Governor under the new scheme, proved an exceedingly tactful head of the administration, but before he was well

<sup>1</sup> The *Times*.

planted in his new office, the European war broke out and put an end to all his ambitious schemes of domestic reform. Between that time and 1917, Indian progress on every side was checked, excepting in the matter which we have described in the chapter on constitutional development. Helping the Allies in the War became the principal pre-occupation of the upper classes of the Indian people, and it is a matter worth noting that, within four months of the declaration of the War, India had sent to one of the theatres of the war in France alone, 24,000 men. The number rose to 40,000 in August, 1915, and fell to 10,000 in March, 1916, at which figure it remained till the Armistice in November, 1918.

Bengal on her part organized at the initial stage of the War a hospital ship and an ambulance corps for Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf, thanks to the wonderful energy and enterprise of the late Dr. Suresh Prosad Sarvadhikari, of Calcutta. Unfortunately the ship foundered in the Bay of Bengal during a heavy cyclone, but the Bengali Corps rendered good account of itself in some of the western theatres of the war. This Corps was in itself not of great historical interest, but its foundation, establishment and organization was a matter of the greatest political and public interest in Bengal, inasmuch as it constituted the first attempt among the *bhadralog* (bourgeois) classes of Bengal to submit to military discipline for the development of physical culture and courage. It may also be noted that this was the beginning of the organization of the future University Corps and of the Territorial Force which developed into an Auxiliary Force in later days.

At a meeting of the Indian Legislative Council at Simla, held in the autumn of 1917, a vote for the contribution of 150 crores (£100,000,000) to the Allies was easily got through, in spite of the vehement opposition of Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya. In opposing this motion of Sir William Meyer, then Finance Member of the Government of India, the punditji from Allahabad made a vehement denunciation of the existing administration, which was translated in Germany

under instructions from its Government, and circulated all over the then German Empire, with a view to telling the Teutonic world what young India thought regarding British rule.

While India was abundantly manifesting her loyalty to the British Crown, the Government of India had not ceased to treat the intelligentsia with distrust and suspicion, and under the cover of the Defence of India Act, a special war enactment, hundreds of young men were interned.

At that time also, there was some gun-running between Japan, Batavia, and Bengal, under the concerted directorship of some Punjabis and Bengalis who had settled at Vancouver on the Pacific coast, and others who were serving at the head-quarters of the German army in Berlin. The enterprise of the *Komagata Maru* and the *Emden* was duly checked, and the other plans to send out some ships or steamers to the Sunderbunds with sufficient arms and ammunition to start an armed rebellion, were detected by the Government of India before the ships reached their destination. A detailed account of this movement is to be found in the Report of the Rowlatt Committee which was appointed in 1917, and published its report in 1918. It went very carefully into the question of revolutionary activities in India and revealed widespread disaffection within and without the borders of India.

In Bengal alone, from 1908-17, during the decennium under consideration, nearly twenty armed dacoities took place and twenty-one police officers were murdered, besides a public prosecutor, the headmasters of two schools, two witnesses who had given evidence against members of the revolutionary party, and fifteen other persons who were believed to have given information to Government. In England, in July, 1909, Major Curzon Wylie was murdered in cold blood almost at the door of the India Office by a young Punjabi student named Dhingra. In all eighty-two persons in Bengal lost their lives during the period, and one hundred and twenty-one were wounded, while attempts were made upon the lives of a number of high officials, including a lieutenant-governor, a district judge, and a district magistrate.

Apart from the story of repression and crime, the period

under review was occupied with the labours of two unfruitful commissions. The Government, both under Lord Morley's and under Lord Crewe's régime, were groping in the dark as to the best means of greasing the wheels of the administrative coach, and were seeking a method of doing this, without materially changing the policy and character of their rule.

A commission known as the Hobhouse Decentralization Commission, which presented its report in 1909, had caused great public disappointment, as it did not take a broad view of its task. Its report surveyed the relations between the Indian and the provincial governments, and also between the latter and the authorities subordinate to them, and recommended a series of measures having for their object the relaxation of control to higher authorities, and the simplification of administrative methods. Romesh Chandra Dutt, as a member of this Committee, submitted a very strong note of dissent in support of the further popularization of local self-governing institutions and the functions of district officers.

In September, 1912, about nine months after the King's visit to India, a Royal Commission was appointed to examine and report in various matters connected with the public services of India, including the consideration of such limitations as existed at that time on the employment of non-Europeans, and the working of the existing division of the services into Imperial and Provincial. This Commission with Lord Islington as its President, and Lord Ronaldshay, Sir Murray Hammick, Messrs. Ramsay Macdonald, F. G. Sly, W. C. Madge, G. K. Gokhale, Sir (then Mr.) Abdur Rahim, and Sir Mahadeo Chaubal as members, recorded an immense volume of evidence, official and non-official, in each province, in 1913 and 1914. The report was completed early in 1915, but, owing to preoccupations during the European War, it was not published until January, 1917. The Report was assailed from all quarters as soon as it was published, and in the language of the *Report on Constitutional Reforms*, "its effect was to irritate rather than to satisfy Indian opinion."

## CHAPTER VIII

### ENTER POLITICS

IN 1914, the European War broke out. Seventeen months after the outbreak of this war, Lord Sinha, presiding over the Thirtieth Session of the Indian National Congress at Bombay, insisted on a frank and open declaration of England's policy and purpose in India. From this time, India's national self-consciousness was growing stage by stage into a political individuality, and the older ideas of political agitation in this country were being thrown into the melting pot, one by one. The habit of looking to England for political concessions and approaching the government with sheaves of prayers for redressal of grievances or grants of new rights was being replaced by a more virile attitude. This attitude of dependence on England, or what was then known as "the mendicant policy", soon gave way to a mentality of self-assertion and demand. In the meantime, the Armageddon in Europe had shown to the world that there was a lamentable dearth of spiritual ideas in all European countries. While smaller and greater Powers of the Continent, and England thrown into the scale, were all fighting for a place in the sun, and trying to elbow one another out from acquiring any new position of influence and dignity, India tried to find a new consolation in her ancient dreams. At this time, the Bengal Provincial Conference was convened to meet in Calcutta, and Chitta Ranjan Das was asked to preside over it. The Conference met almost in the darkest day of the European war, and only a few weeks before the famous Declaration of August 20th, 1917. While he was preparing his address for this Conference in Bengali, he had commissioned a young friend of his to translate it into English. A day before the opening of the conference, this translator was sent for by the Police Commissioner of Calcutta—a procedure which disturbed

Chitta Ranjan to such an extent that he almost passed a sleepless night over the matter. But it appears that he was more concerned with the safety and security of this translation than with the text of his address. We have no doubt that this did not alter the final shape of the address, as Chitta Ranjan had already made up his mind not to follow the beaten track of controversial politics. When it was delivered before the Conference very little of controversial politics was found in it. Chitta Ranjan touched a chord of rhapsody and, instead of dealing with political questions and grievances which exercised the public mind at the time, he sang a new pastoral hymn. The European War had opened his eyes to the evils of a competition and industrialism which he denounced as the golden calf, symbolical of the ideals of Europe. He tried to call a halt to modern materialistic ideas, and appealed to the people to go back and find the soul of India in a new scheme of social and political economy. He wanted the people to go back to the land, improve the villages, develop a new faith and spread it to all the countries of the world. *Ex oriente lux*. He believed that from the days of the Upanishads and the Buddha, light had spread from the east to the other parts of the world, and he was now inoculated with the idea that history must repeat itself. In this belief he took advantage of the platform of the Bengal Provincial Conference to preach a new gospel and a new philosophy of life. The whole speech has been very beautifully summarized by Lord Ronaldshay in a passage in his *Heart of Aryavarta*, which we reproduce here.

“ The state of the country to-day stood in sombre contrast with the Bengal of old. This calamity had been brought about because, in the dust which had been raised by the clash of ideals of East and West, the people had lost sight of their own divinities, and had cast their offerings upon the altars of strange gods. He asked his audience to consider how it was that the people had been thus led astray, and having answered this question, he pointed to the signs which had been given that the scales were falling from their eyes, and while exhorting them to pay heed to these signs and



portents, he himself assumed the rôle of prophet, and pointed the road to the promised land. How was it that they had succumbed to this passion for alien culture and foreign ideals? It was because when the English came to Bengal the people of the land were decadent. They were a people whose vital spark had burned low, whose Religion of Power had become a mockery of its former self—had lost its soul of beneficence in the repetition of empty formulæ and the observance of meaningless mummeries. As with religion, so with knowledge; the traditions of Navadvîpa's ancient glory and scholarship had become a mere name and memory. And so it had happened to them as it happens to all the weak. From pure inanition they had accepted the English government, and with that the English race—their culture, their civilization and their luxury. But the time had come when they must cast off the spell which had lain upon them. Already prophets of the race had arisen who had kindled once again the fires on the ancient altars. Bankim had come and had set up the image of their Mother in the Motherland. He had called unto the whole people, and had said, 'Behold, this is our Mother, well-watered, well-fruited, cooled with the southern breeze, green with the growing corn; worship her and establish her in your homes'. Time had passed. The trumpet of Swadeshism had begun to sound in 1903. The Swadeshi movement had come like a tempest; it had rushed along impetuously like some mighty flood, submerging them, sweeping them off their feet, but revitalizing their lives. Under its reviving influence they had steeped themselves once again in that stream of culture and civilization which had been flowing perennially through the heart of Bengal. They had been enabled once more to catch glimpses of the true continuity of their national history. The main problem for their consideration, therefore, was this—how to develop fully and adequately the newly awakened life of Bengal? And assuming the rôle of priest and prophet, he pointed the road. In this critical period of nation building they must root out and cast aside the European ideal of indulgence, and must cleave fast to their native and ancient

ideal of sacrifice. Problems of education and culture, of agriculture and commerce, must be dealt with in the light of their treatment in the past. The connection of these things with their ancient social system must be considered. And not this alone. They must consider also the precise relation in which all their thoughts, endeavours and activities stood, and still stand, with reference to the question of religion, for they would misread and misknow all things unless they kept this point steadily in view. They must accept only what was consonant with the genius of their being, and must reject and utterly cast aside what was foreign to their soul. What they formerly possessed, the permanent and perennial source of their strength, was still theirs. The stately and majestic rivers of Bengal which rushed impetuously towards the sea and the strength and might of which it was impossible to resist—they still flowed onwards in all their ancient majesty and might of strength. The august Himâlaya, ancient of days, still stood lifting up its brow towards heaven. The great permanent features of earth upon which the life and soul of Bengal were founded—they were still there, permanent, immutable, majestic. Theirs the task to restore the life that had fled, to revivify the soul that was all but dead.”

Coming to details he formulated his views of life as a comprehensive whole in the following manner :

“ To look upon life not as a comprehensive whole but as divided among many compartments was no part of our national culture and civilization. We have borrowed this method from Europe and we have not understood what we have borrowed : and hence the failure of so much of our effort and endeavour. The thing that we are accustomed to describe as politics has in it no organic or intimate connection with the whole of Bengal or the whole of the Bengali people. Will anyone tell me that this portion of our national life is the subject of Politics, that other portion is the subject of Economics, while a third portion is the subject of Sociology ? Must we divide life bit by bit like this ? Must we raise insuperable barriers between these imaginary compartments of ours ? And must our political work be confined to an

imaginary compartment which we have thus enclosed with imaginary walls? Rather, must we not view our political discussions from the standpoint of the whole of our countrymen? And how shall we find truth unless we view life thus comprehensively and as a whole?"

He summed up his line of action as a remedy to the ills and distempers of our social organism in the following ten points :

1. We must give heed to the lessons of history.
2. We must abandon the path of European industrialism.
3. We must stop the decay of villages and the consequent congestion of cities.
4. To do this we shall have to rehabilitate our villages.
5. But our villages can only be rehabilitated if we make them sanitary, and thus enable the peasant to pursue his avocations free from disease.
6. We must train up the agriculturist in the ways of useful handicrafts.
7. We must enquire into the commercial and industrial products of Bengal in the past.
8. We must start small business concerns all over the country with a view to producing those articles for which our people have natural aptitude and skill.
9. We must stop importing foreign commercial products except such as are absolutely essential.
10. We must provide cheap capital for such industries as have a reasonable chance of being profitable, and with this end in view, we must start banking institutions in the different districts.

He further elaborated his scheme of national reconstruction in the following categorical manner :

“(1) You must make your education real; (2) your knowledge must be of things and not words; (3) your education must be in consonance and harmony with the genius of your national being, and its chief object must be the

development of that genius ; and (4) lastly, the chief medium of your education must be Bengali."

Nor did he forget to harp on the popular slogan of a golden age in India :

- " We had corn in our granaries ; our tanks supplied us with fish ; and the eye was soothed and refreshed by the limpid blue of the sky and the green foliage of the trees. All day long the peasant toiled in the fields ; and at eve, returning to his lamp-lit home he sang the song of his heart. But these things are no more. The granaries are empty of their golden wealth ; the kine are dry and give no milk, and the fields once so green are dry and parched with thirst. What remains is the dream of a former happiness and the languor and misery of insistent pain."

It is evident that the picture of a golden age flowing with milk and honey was drawn rather from imagination than from actual records of history. It appears that Chitta Ranjan had himself no time to make any close study of the economic conditions of ancient or mediæval India, and he swallowed all the cheap claptrap and the economic shibboleths of the writers of his time who had pictured to themselves an imaginary golden age for India, only to pit it as a contrast against the dark and dismal days of British rule in this country.<sup>1</sup> It may be that with war and pestilence ravaging the country now and again and preventing the growth of population, the Aryan settlers in India, particularly in Bengal, had always sufficient food at their command. Then, again, the fact must not be forgotten that civilized man in ancient and mediæval India always lived on the banks of large rivers, where plentiful golden harvests were not uncommon. But a mere sufficiency of food products does not make for plenty and prosperity. Three acres and a cow may have given to

<sup>1</sup> The theory of an ever-increasing poverty of India under British Rule has been dealt with at length, by Dadabhoy Naoroji in his *Poverty and un-British Administration in India*, by William Digby in his *Prosperous British India* and by Momesch Chandra Duft in *India in the Victorian Age and Economic History of British India*.

the Bengali cultivator or householder all that he wanted for himself and his family in those days, but could not give him a margin of wealth that might be called prosperity. Nor could there be any prosperity in a country where industries were confined to a few large towns only, and agricultural produce could not be transported outside, and where there was no paper currency, no credit with other nations, and money could only be coined by hand, out of the slender resources of precious metals in the country. Every modern economist would realize that, with a system of purchase by barter and payments made in kind, and all these backed up, not by any reserve of precious metals, but by conch-shells which passed as current coins, the idea of plenty and prosperity could not enter seriously into the economy of our national life. And the fact that famines were not unknown even in that golden age of India is corroborated by some of the Sikhs of the earliest Vedas and by Panini who describes in his lexicon what famine and drought were and how they could be prevented and controlled.

Coming to Mahomedan times, the first great famine we read of occurred about 1022 A.D. After that, there was a famine in Ghor in 1055, one about Delhi and its neighbourhood in 1291, in the reign of Feroz-Shah, another in the same region in 1327, again in 1342 under Sultan Mohamed Tughlak ; one in the Deccan in 1344, one in the Ganges and Jumma Doab in 1413, one in Orissa in 1471, one in Sindh in 1521, another in the same region in 1541<sup>2</sup>; two in Delhi and neighbourhood in the first and forty-first years of Akbar's reign, two very general and terrible ones in 1631 and 1661, one in the N.W. Province in 1733, and one again in Delhi and its neighbourhood in 1739, and two again in Sindh in 1733 and 1745.

That the distress in some of these famines was very acute can easily be gathered from authentic contemporary accounts. Of one of these famines, we read that "it drove the men of Sindh to eat their own kind", and an instance is quoted of two brothers making "a meal of their mother's flesh",<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Tarikh-i-Tahiri.

Of the severity of another, it is recorded that " man devoured man and that the Hindus came into Delhi with their families, twenty and thirty of them together, and, in the extremity of hunger, drowned themselves in the Jumna ".<sup>1</sup> The same story of " man eating man " is repeated in the account of another, and that " the dead found neither coffin nor grave " and that the common people lived upon the seeds of the (babul) thorny acacia, upon dry herbage of the forest and on the hides of cattle. In another we are told " men were driven to the extremity of eating one another and some formed themselves into parties to carry off lone individuals for their food ". Ibn Batuta, a celebrated traveller of the fourteenth century, was a personal witness of some of the ravages caused by the famine of 1327, and saw " women eating the skin of horses dead some days before and skins cooked and sold in the markets and crowds fighting for blood at the slaughter house ".<sup>2</sup> Of the great famine of 1661, Muhammed Amin Razwiny writes :

" Life was offered for a loaf, but none would buy ; rank was sold for a cake, but none cared for it. For a long time dog's flesh was sold for goats' flesh and the pounded bones of the dead were mixed with flour and sold. Destitution at length reached such a pitch that men began to devour one another and the flesh of a son was preferred to his love. The numbers of the dying caused obstruction in the roads. "<sup>3</sup>

As for famines in Bengal, every student of Indian history who has read Sir William Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*, knows the devastating effect of the famine of 1793, which created a sect of bandits, around which Bankim Chandra Chatterji has woven his inspiring story of the " Ananda Math ". Of famine of an earlier period, a glowing account is given, in the Ballads of Mymensingh,<sup>4</sup> in the story of Kenoram the famous robber chief. At this time (about the close of the sixteenth century), states Chandravati, the village

<sup>1</sup> Tarikh-i-Feroz Shah.

<sup>2</sup> Elliot's History of India, Vol. III, page 19.

<sup>3</sup> Badshah Nama.

<sup>4</sup> Collected and published by Rai Bahadur Dinesh Chandra Sen.

poetess, the district of Mymensingh was visited by one of the most cruel famines that had ever come upon Bengal. She describes its horrors in graphic details. "The homes of many families became scenes of terrible suffering, and men and women die by hundreds: husbands sold their wives, and wives their children. All conventions, all affections and feeling were gone, and men became like lower animals seeking the whole day long for something to live upon."

If Chitta Ranjan meant peace by his golden age, certainly there was enough of it in those days, for men had very few wants, and these were easily met. But he unfortunately fell into a serious error when he confounded this peace with plenty and prosperity. With enormous reserves of paper and metallic currency, with millions of money absorbed as precious metals, with a stable currency, with unlimited credit established all over the world in consequence of an ever-increasing trade and commerce, with infinite expansion and development of industries, with increasingly high prices for agricultural produce in all the markets of the world, and with life and property made secure, India must be considered much more rich and prosperous to-day than she was even in the golden age of Ram Chandra of Ayodhya. In an age when society develops with multiplicity of wants, and every man casts his eyes on the world abroad, it is difficult for people to make both ends meet, and if to-day India is poor compared with more advanced nations of the West, and India is unhappy compared with a bygone age, no one would like to return to the placid contentment of the good old days, when three acres and a cow were considered good enough for all the practical purposes of life. Chitta Ranjan evidently put on his colours rather too thickly, and through having done so, he unfortunately failed to win the active co-operation of his people to his view of village and rural reconstruction. This part of his speech at Bhowanipur, though it tickled the fancy of his audience, was not considered practical politics, but the rest of it lingered in the heart of Bengal.

There was nothing new about this rhapsody of Chitta Ranjan. Thirteen years before, in 1904, Rabindra Nath

Tagore, at a public meeting held in the Albert Hall in Calcutta, had painted to a Bengali audience the picture of a golden age before the advent of the British in India, and suggested that the reconstruction of Indian society was only possible on old and orthodox lines. As a first step, Rabindra Nath wanted to set up a dictator, whose word should be law unto the people of Bengal in all domestic, social and political matters. But as in 1904 so in 1917, nothing came of the dreamer's rhapsody.<sup>1</sup>

The Bengal Provincial Conference of 1917 happily proved to be the starting-point of Chitta Ranjan's public and political career. At this time, Parliament made its declaration regarding British policy and purpose in India. The older school of Indian public opinion jumped at the idea of a new chapter in Indian constitutional development, while the new and the extremist school, with Bal Gangadhar Tilak as its principal leader, looked upon it with cold disdain. When Mr. Montagu came out on his political mission to India, as a result of this declaration and at the invitation of Lord Chelmsford, then Viceroy, of the older leaders of the Moderate Party few were left. Pheroze Shah Mehta, perhaps the most talented and constructive statesman of his day, and Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the most sagacious and long-headed politician of this time, had both passed away. Bhupendra Nath Basu and Sir Satyendra Prasanna Sinha had been absorbed in the service of His Majesty—one at Whitehall, and the other in the Government of Bengal. The Moderate Party had, therefore, no alternative but to follow the lead of Surendra Nath Banerjea, whose outlook in politics did not come into line with his powers of oratory. If he and his followers had not been captivated by the lure of the Montagu Mission, perhaps the Government of India Act of 1919 would have taken a different shape. But Surendra Nath lacked

<sup>1</sup> As soon as Rabindra Nath had read his paper, his position was controverted by the present writer in an article contributed to the pages of the *Prabasi*, then the best-known and most widely circulated periodical in Bengal. Sir Gooroodas Banerjea, who presided at Rabindra Nath's meeting, soon came forward with a disclaimer of any idea of setting up a Dictatorship in Bengal, and thereupon the whole movement fizzled out.



political insight and the courage of his convictions and toed the line with pro-Indian European thought in the matter. While Surendra Nath Banerjea and the Moderate Party missed their opportunity Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Chitta Ranjan Das forged ahead as the zealous advocates of the country's new demands. When Chitta Ranjan Das appeared before the Montagu Mission as witness, he formulated a demand on behalf of his country which almost took away the breath of Mr. Montagu and his colleagues. In this evidence, he demanded complete control of the purse, as well as control over all services in the country. Of course, he left the Army, the Navy and the railways alone for the time being. This proved to be the time when the articulate opinion of the country began to accuse Surendra Nath of having feet of clay; the people displaced him from their hearts, and transferred their homage and allegiance to Chitta Ranjan Das and Bal Gangadhar Tilak for their definite stand against the Montagu Declaration. A few months after this Declaration, Chitta Ranjan availed himself of the opportunity of the long vacation of the High Court to go out on an extensive tour in the eastern districts of Bengal, giving to the people his new philosophy and preaching his new gospel. In course of this itinerary, he delivered a speech at Chittagong; in which he ferociously attacked the Moderates, and denounced them with indiscriminating bitterness, describing their leader, Surendra Nath Banerjea, as an impostor.

Hitherto, before 1917, Chitta Ranjan had been a mere spectator of the game of Indian politics, and a dweller on the hill-top; he had spoken little and had mixed with men of the street; but from this year he began to attend the Congress annually and take a leading part in its deliberations. He was elected to all the important Committees of the Congress, and his services, particularly his purse and his tongue, were requisitioned in all parts of India. It fell principally on him at this time to formulate the new aspirations in the country and give a lead and orientation to the political thought of the new school, as the saint of Sarbarmati had not then emerged from his Ashram and

entered into Indian politics. Indian politics became an exceedingly complex and absorbing business, and Nationalist Indian opinion for the first time became clamant and demonstrative.

When Chitta Ranjan Das seriously entered politics in 1917, two different streams of political ideas had commingled and joined their waters to create a surging tide of national sentiment. At this converging point India began to formulate her demands for Swaraj. Of these two main currents, one had its source in the time and world-forces for the self-determination of nations, and had flowed into a purely academic and intellectual channel; the other current was the outcome of an anxiety to remove the grievances of the passing hour and the defects of the short-sided administration. The question, therefore, has to be considered from two different and independent points of view—one purely academic—and the other, practical—and in the next two chapters we shall discuss both aspects at some length.

## CHAPTER IX

### INDIA'S DEMAND FOR SWARAJ

MAN, according to Aristotle, is a social animal. This social trait is the foundation of a community of interest and the genesis of states and governments. We had in the dim morning of history the family-state developing into a city-state in Greece, and the patriarchal system developing into a republic in ancient Rome, and groups of families developing into a caste or tribal state in India. The city-state was the last word of Hellenic Greece in politics ; the forum and the Senate, of the eternal city on the seven hills ; but in India we passed through various forms of it until we came to territorial states in the days of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata,<sup>1</sup> the two great epics of the Hindus. The idea of the territorial state was firmly established in India from the earliest historical times down to the beginning of the tenth century, when, with the Mahomedan invasion of India, a process of disintegration set in all over Upper or Northern India, resulting in the complete collapse of the powers that then held sway. While ancient Greece and Rome were the happy hunting-grounds of all sorts of crude essays and experiments in government, no particular form remained in vogue for any length of time. Aristocracy, timocracy, oligarchy or plutocracy, democracy and tyranny, all had a fair trial in the ancient polity of Greece and Rome, though the ideal city—governed by philosopher-statesmen with no special desire to promote their personal interests or take any advantage of the opportunities of position, and devoting all their attention and energy to the best interest of the state—remained confined to the Dialogues of Plato.

In ancient India, democratic ideas had permeated deeply into local institutions, but they found little favour in the

<sup>1</sup> See K. P. Jaswala's *Hindu Polity*, and U. N. Ghosal's *Hindu Political Theories*.

constitution of states. In ancient India, therefore, we do not meet with a large variety of forms of government. Though some of the monarchies and empires had nearly materialized the platonic ideal of a city "whose maker and builder is God," republics and democracies never came much into vogue at any time in our history. The Indian aspiration of good government was generally satisfied by the Rajah who, in early times, meant "the man who pleased his people". The ancient Indian states, such as founded by Chandragupta and Asoka were therefore a combination of temporal and spiritual powers and resembled to some extent the Holy Roman Empire and the Court of the Vatican. This central idea of Hindu government continued till the seventh century, when Hieun Thsang came into India and left a glowing account of the principalities of his day.

Government has been defined by competent jurists as organized force—a force to rule and dominate. In well-developed states, behind this organized force lies the authority and the sanction of the people. In less-developed states and conquered countries, this authority is the dread of the mailed fist and the consequent acquiescence of the people in government by superior force.

When India lost her independence and passed into the hands of her Mahomedan conquerors, the authority of the government in this country came to depend, not on the willing consent of the people, but on a spirit of resignation to circumstances. Under British rule, no material change has taken place in the fundamental character of government, and the authority that the British possess to-day for the governance of India is not unlike the power with which the Great Mogul ruled this country in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.

The British, having taken up the threads of government and administration from the Mahomedans, have worked steadily to broaden the basis of their rule in India. Modern states have two different functions to discharge: the constituent part is the usual category of Governmental function—the protection of life, liberty and property, together with all

other functions that are necessary to the civic organization and preservation of society. So far as the satisfactory discharge of this function goes, the British administration in India can stand all tests fairly well. The other functions of the state consist of ministrant work which is undertaken not by way of governing but by way of advancing the general interest of society and assisting every social organization intended to promote the welfare of the body politic. In the modern world, a wide latitude of opinion prevails as to what exactly should constitute the ministrant functions of the state. There is little difference of opinion, however, in the civilized world, regarding the inclusion of education, sanitation, care of the poor and incapable, and the regulation of trade and industry and labour under this category. Some modern states, for example Germany, Switzerland, the United States and Japan, are pushing these ministrant functions to their widest limits in order to raise the condition of the people in all ways, from the satisfaction of their spiritual needs down to attention to all their individual and corporate requirements.

In trying to broaden the basis of their rule in India, the English have discharged the constituent functions of the state very satisfactorily, and to-day the Pax Britannica is more firmly established in this country than perhaps in any other part of the British Empire. The maintenance of peace and the security of the life and property of the people are indispensable to the maintenance of law and order, but in their anxiety to discharge the policeman's work efficiently, the English have very much over-estimated one part and neglected the other, and evidently the more important function. It must be confessed we are somewhat over-governed in many matters.

Of all the ministrant functions of the state, the fight with ignorance and poverty, disease and death, and the uplifting of the condition of the masses are now regarded in every part of the civilized world as the most urgent and pressing. In India, however, the existing government has not so far succeeded in achieving any notable progress either in spreading the light of knowledge or in reducing to any

appreciable extent the havoc and misery caused by plague and malaria, famine and poverty. In education, which Plato considered " the sure basis of a well-ordered state " and which every modern country is putting to-day in the forefront of all its activities, India has made such unconscionably slow progress, that a few years ago the late William Jennings Bryan, a great figure in American politics of his time, found himself compelled to lament over it in very strong terms. What a pity that the Anglo-Indian administration should spend only 2 as. per head for education, while the United States spends over Rs. 16 per head, England more than Rs. 9, and Japan Rs. 8 for the education of their people. After this niggardly expenditure on education no one should be surprised to find that only 5 per cent. of the people in all India can be described as literates, and only 9 per cent. in Bengal. Against this the figures of literacy stand at 98 per cent. in Japan, 95 per cent. in the United States, and 93 per cent. in England. This appalling disparity of national expenditure on education between some of the civilized countries of the world and India, and the wide divergence of the figures of literacy in these countries leave no doubt in anyone's mind as to how this great nation-building department has been neglected by our rulers. In sanitation also, we have made very little progress ; and so on to the end of the chapter. The sum total of Indian prosperity may have advanced under British rule but large classes have gone down before unequal competition. India still continues mainly to be an agricultural country. A race that sticks like a limpet to the soil may be happy and even self-satisfied, but can never be great and prosperous. And as for the literate classes, though so scanty in number, they have few avenues of life open to them, and hardly any considerable share in the industrial and commercial exploitation of the resources and raw materials of the country. The lack of multiplicity of occupation has converted our middle classes into practically a nation of clerks. As Treitschke, the great German apostle of blood and iron, said a few years back with a sneer : " clerks of good family are found only in India, if at all " .

Our existing government has not always cared to conquer the vagaries of Nature and harness her forces for the benefit of our people, though its work in bringing scientific knowledge to the use and benefit of man has not been negligible. We remain condemned before the civilized world as an "unprogressive" people, because our government have not found it wise to accelerate the pace of reforms as we would have it. It appears very natural, however, and modern history corroborates the fact, that no foreign power can discharge the ministrant functions of the state adequately and satisfactorily so long as it does not enlist the active co-operation and is thoroughly identified with all the interests, of the governed.

The chief ideal of C. R. Das and other advanced Indian Nationalists was therefore to convert the Indian State into a principal instrument for the discharge of its ministrant functions properly and in healthy competition with all civilized countries, and to enable it to march side by side with the proudest nations of the world.

His second reason for demanding full-blooded self-government was our anxiety, in the interest both of England and of India, to see the end of a system of benevolent despotism carried on through a self-willed bureaucracy. In the history of this world, this system of government has not been always an unredeemed chapter of misery and oppression. Cincinnatus and Marcus Aurelius, Augustus and Hadrian in the West, and Sree Krishna and Ram Chandra, Asoka and Akbar in the East, have been benevolent despots whose rule would be welcome in any clime and under any circumstance. But, unfortunately for the world, despots of such a type are not easy to find in every generation. The Great Mogul has been nearly as great a curse in India as the House of Bourbon in France. With a different education and under the influence of a different civilization, India no longer wants her governors to fill the rôle of benevolent despots. India has suffered too long under restrictions of personal and public liberty, and her forbearance has been strained to breaking-point.

Despotism, however benevolent and self-sacrificing it may be, has generally been found everywhere in the world to be helpless, nervous, irresponsible, capricious and weak. It is more often than not inspired by panic, because it is not always sure of the mind of the governed, and panic inevitably brings cruelty and repression in its train. The State under such a rule is bound to be a weak one, and the weak state cannot afford to be tolerant any more than the poor can afford to be generous. Even in England, so long as the State was under foreign influence and was consequently weak, it was much more cruel than the present Government of India is, and distinguished historians have told us that the hideous treason-laws of Tudor and Stuart times were due more to unfounded fear and panic than to any real necessity. To all intents and purposes, our State is weak, and it is weak because it does not carry the community with it. Chitta Ranjan Das as the spokesman of the new school, desires the end of benevolent despotism and the bureaucracy that supports it, because, in the first instance, as pointed out by John Stuart Mill, consciousness of responsibility to no one but oneself is always a precarious guarantee of right action, and in the second, we want to give to our State the colour and complexion which would agree with the genius and temperament of our race. We would rather be governed by a cold, soulless, representative machinery than be fantastically treated to fits of concession and oppression by the best-meaning bureaucracy in the world.

Almost every educated Indian of to-day wants his people to be the real state in the country. "The State? I am the State", said Louis XIV; and this presumptuous assumption of the functions of the State by a crowned head made a travesty of government in France in the eighteenth century, and in Russia in the nineteenth. It is impossible for a foreign bureaucracy to get into the skin of an alien people, across 7,000 miles of deep sea, and then be closely identified with the interests and aspirations of the people. If the object of the State is to become virtually identified with the thought and aspiration of the people and if it is to be the centre of the



civic affection and civic virtue of the people, surely the present Government can never pretend to fill that place.

England could never understand India even if she wished to. Monsieur Georges Bourdon, a distinguished Frenchman, after having conducted an enquiry among Germans for a long number of years as to what they think, what they want, what they can do, writes : " In spite of all our excellent and just estimates of her, we know nothing of Germany ; neither does she know anything of us ".<sup>1</sup> If this be true of two European countries which have lived for centuries as neighbours and derived their inspiration of life from a common civilization, how abysmal must be the ignorance of England with regard to the life and thought of the Indian people ! It is not difficult to maintain, with Lords Morley and Cromer, that no democracy can maintain an Empire, particularly with such an imperfect knowledge of its affairs. This ignorance may prove fatal both to England and India, and the only remedy is to take the whole people of India into the confidence of the rulers, as was the heart's desire of Das, by introducing a full measure of self-government into the constitution of this country.

India to-day grumbles at being governed by a foreign bureaucracy because she has now reached a definite standard of political individuality. The rule of the Indian Civil Service has become abhorrent to the cultivated intelligence and the sense of self-respect of the educated Indian of the twentieth century. He would have very little of it if he could have his way, though one must admit that many members of this service have given the best of their lives in ameliorating the conditions of our people in various ways. " Officials ", justly remarks Mr. Nevinson, " usually govern badly, because they naturally magnify their office and routine above life, regarding the intrusion of reality as an unwarrantable disturbance to their habitual toil or leisure. But that is not the worst of it. Even under the most efficient officialdom, the governed suffer a degrading loss of personality." If this be true of an indigenous officialdom, how bitter and

<sup>1</sup> *The German Enigma.*

galling it must be when the officialdom is alien, as in India ? Mr. Nevinson continues : " It is disastrous to maintain order, however mechanically perfect, or to organize virtue and comfort, however judiciously proportionate, if personality and variety are gone. Self-government is better than good government and self-government implies the right to go wrong. It is nobler for a nation, as for a man, to struggle towards excellence with its own natural force and vitality, however blindly and vainly, than to live in irreproachable decency under expert guidance from without ". That is just what Das had striven, struggled, lived and died for.

India, fortunately or unfortunately, no longer looks upon the problem of government with the self-satisfied complacency of the middle ages. She has now been thrown into the vortex of world-politics and she cannot, therefore, live in an atmosphere of detachment from the currents and forces of modern life. She realizes to-day what very little progress she has made under the heel of despotic and bureaucratic rule for over a thousand years, and looks abroad and is amazed by the giant strides that some of the European countries have made during the last three or four centuries, and Japan in less than a hundred years of striving after progress.

In Europe, the seventeenth century was marked by the overthrow of absolutism through the efforts of the English ; the eighteenth century saw the overthrow of oligarchy, thanks to France ; and the nineteenth the birth of nationalism, due chiefly to Germany, and some wholesome advance towards democracy. Democratic rule is now practically established all over Europe and America, and in Japan and China and Persia, Turkey and Egypt. India refuses to lag behind and to be deprived of the heritage of the modern world.

The sort of democracy that was accepted as the gospel of ancient Greece and Rome has been supplanted in the course of evolution by a system of government which is representative of the people. Plato and Aristotle conceived the State as an unit, and human beings as fractions of this unit. Representative government, as conceived by De Tocqueville, Rousseau or Comte in France, or by Bentham, Mill, Grote

and Bain in England, makes the individual the unit of the State and makes "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" its principal concern. It is not necessary for our purpose to define this happiness. We may, however, in passing, mention that Aristotle defined this happiness, in his *Ethics*, as lying "in the active exercise of a man's vital powers along the lines of excellence, in a life affording full scope for their development." India desires that her people should also claim the greatest happiness of the greatest number, a thing, which is only possible by the establishment of Swaraj.

But a more potent reason for our demand of self-government is the insistent anxiety of India to develop a political personality. As Treitschke observes: "The ideal of one State containing all mankind is no ideal at all. The whole content of civilization cannot be realized in a single State. All people, just like individual men, are one-sided, but in the very fulness of oneness the richness of the human race is seen. The rays of the divine light only appear in individual nations infinitely broken; each one exhibits a different picture and a different conception of the divinity. Every people has, therefore, the right to believe that certain powers of the divine reason display themselves in it at their highest. Without overrating itself, a people does not arrive at knowledge of itself at all. . . . Such a feeling is necessary in order that the people may preserve and maintain itself". India has very often in the past contributed very materially to the civilization of man and carried the light of the East to the Western world. Why, why should she not again be asked, or allowed the opportunity, to come to the front of the nations and give her best to the service of God and Man?

And then, above everything, we desire self-government because that seems to be the natural condition of all people and communities. Locke says: "Men being by nature all free, equal and independent, no one can be put out of this estate and subjected to the political power of another without his consent. The only way whereby anyone divests himself of his natural liberty and puts on the bonds of civil society is

by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community". Rousseau had similarly laid down the proposition in his *Social Contract* that man is born free, and that his primitive nature was not anger or strife, but liberty and equality. Or as Swift says: "All government without the consent of the governed is the very definition of slavery". We want, therefore, to stand upon the natural rights of man. Like the sleeping lion in the story, India has now awakened to a consciousness of her power and position, thanks to her contact with England, and she will have no rest or peace till she has become a free, organic, self-conscious and self-directing nation, with her great organs of popular representation and all constitutional guarantees of personal and public liberty,—the great lever of social morality organized to enforce the collective and co-ordinating conscience of her whole people.

The question of India's fitness for self-government appeared to Das, unlike Lord Sinha's idea of Swaraj, to be a merely academic question. Every nation has a right to govern itself, no matter whether she is fitted for it or no. As self-government varies from very crude systems of representative government to the most complicated popular control culminating in the "referendum", so there can be no particular or definite standard of fitness for it. As soon as a nation comes into this heritage, it begins to grow into freedom and work out its destiny to the best of its light, however feeble that light may be. There is no special qualification, no specified time, no particular condition of development by which a nation deserves its natural heritage of self-government. The history of every independent state will show that it has developed its peculiar and distinctive form of self-government, independently of any parallel or precedent and without condition of heredity or environment. It is the equal privilege of savage tribes in the Pacific Islands as of highly-developed social organisms on the continent of Europe. It does not even depend upon any measure of social or intellectual freedom. To ignore, therefore, the famous principle of political philosophy enunciated by the late Sir

Henry Campbell-Bannerman, that self-government is better than good government, is the prime offence of all benevolent despots, who seek to benefit by their rule either the people of their own country or the subject races of an Empire. Englishmen and Indians who raise the question of our fitness really do not comprehend the right issue and only fill the atmosphere with fog in order to avoid the realities of life. Mr. Lionel Curtis very rightly observes : " The exercise of responsibility tends to increase fitness for exercising it. As everyone finds in his own experience, it is in having to do things that a man learns how to do them and develops a sense of duty in regard to them. And that is why political power is and ought to be extended to whole classes of citizens, even when their knowledge and sense of responsibility is still imperfectly developed ".<sup>1</sup> Fit or not fit, let us have the right to look into our own affairs as best we may. Let us have the right to govern ourselves, even if it be to muddle our affairs, for that surely is much better than leaving things to be muddled by others. An English writer has put the idea very clearly : " Only by development out of unfitness, obviously, is fitness attainable ".<sup>2</sup>

There remains another question for our consideration. It has been suggested in some quarters that we have forfeited our claim to self-rule by being a conquered and a divided people. England herself has, at different periods, been conquered and held under subjection by the Romans, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes and Normans, not to speak of the successful inroads by the Picts and Scots from the North. Not long before Simon de Montfort laid the foundation of representative government in England, Anglo-Saxon patriotism never transcended provincial bounds. Foreigners ruled and owned the land, and the term " native " became synonymous with " serf ". The great mass of the population were always at the beck and call of their lords, were like their goods and chattels, and could not leave their land, nor marry, nor enter the Church, nor go to school without their

<sup>1</sup> *The Problem of the Commonwealth.*

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Robertson in *Rationale of Autonomy.*

leave. Even so late as the seventeenth century, under James I, Parliamentary and popular privileges in England existed by royal grace and could not be claimed as rights. And not till the Long Parliament, which met in the reign of Charles I, did the English people demand that the ministers of the State should have the confidence of Parliament, for they now realized that sovereignty could not be divided and it was impossible to keep peace between a sovereign legislature and a sovereign executive while each was anxious to stand on its own rights and authority. And, lastly, it was not till the middle of the eighteenth century that Walpole became the first Prime Minister of England, when the responsibility of government was really transferred from the head of the monarchy and laid on the head of the Parliament. And as for education, England has not made any decisive or satisfactory advance till the passing of the Elementary Education Act in 1870. If full and free responsible government has developed in England in such circumstances, India has no need to despair of her future.

The examples of French Canada, of the South African Union, of Ireland, of the Phillipine Islands, of Egypt and of Italy about the middle of the nineteenth century also preclude us from considering the question that submission to superior physical force involves the forfeiture of the right to self-government. Nor is it any good discussing the fact that several countries in the world, together with some of our own native states, enjoy this privilege under very discouraging circumstances and unfavourable conditions of life. Nor, with the cases of Persia, China, Japan, Egypt and Turkey before us, can it any longer be maintained that self-government is the privilege of only the West, and that in the East it is like the desire of the moth for the star.

• Buckle and Seeley have both held, of course from different points of view, that we are unfit and disqualified for self-government for reasons over which we have no control. Buckle has maintained that our climate, our conditions of social life, principally the caste system, and our staple food, rice, keep us out of the zone of the civilized world. Seeley,

on the other hand, has laid down the proposition that a people which has no community of interest in religion, speech and blood, must necessarily lack the solidarity which can make of it a nation. Though the theories of Buckle and Seeley have not yet been completely exploded by modern historical and political investigations, not much weight is attached to their opinions in these days, in view of the great development of representative institutions in countries like Russia and Germany, in Persia and China and also in some parts of South America.<sup>1</sup> Nor must the fact be overlooked that the definition of nationality has in recent years undergone a substantial modification: as modern historians and political philosophers consider nationality a psychological concept rather than a material formula.

England has placed to her credit many humanitarian efforts in her administration of India, but in nothing has she met with greater success than in welding the heterogeneous masses of our population into one nation. We may not yet be one nation, but there can be no doubt that we are in a fair way of becoming one. India no longer represents a mere geographical expression as it used to in the days of Sir George Chesney and the Strachey brothers, and the throbbing of an Indian nationality is now distinctly felt in every part of this great Empire. As the Norman, coming from outside and exempt from all local prejudice, applied at one time the same methods of government and exploitation to all parts of England, so the Englishman has brought common ideas and common laws to bear upon all parts of India. And as in England in Norman times, so in India to-day, the steady pressure of a super-imposed civilization has tended to obliterate local and class distinctions and the differences of religions and languages. We read in Mr. Pollard's *History of England*, "unwittingly Norman and

<sup>1</sup> The late Mr. William Archer restarted the theory that India could not be regarded as a civilized country. To this charge, Mr. J. T. (now Sir John) Woodroffe, for sometime a judge of the Calcutta High Court, replied, a few years ago, in a book entitled *Is India Civilized?* This book, with Professor Max Müller's *India, What Can She Teach Us?* ought to be read by every Englishman who comes out to India for business, service, or pleasure.

Angevin despotism made an English nation out of Anglo-Saxon tribes, as English despotism has made a nation out of Irish septs and will make another out of the hundred races and religions of our Indian Empire". Mr. Pollard has elaborated this theory at length, and I find it impossible to resist making one further extract from this portion of his book as a reply to Buckle and Seeley. "The difficulties of despotic rule", says Mr. Pollard, "were mitigated in the past by the utter absence of any common sentiments and ideas among the many races, religions and castes which constituted India, and a Machiavellian perpetuation of these divisions might have eased the labours of its governors. But a government suffers for its virtues, and the steady efforts of Great Britain to civilize and educate its Eastern subjects have tended to destroy the divisions which made common action, common aspirations, public opinion and self-government impossible in India. . . . They have built railways and canals, which made communications and contact unavoidable ; they have imposed common measures of health, common legal principles, and a common education in English culture and methods of administration. The result has been to foster a consciousness of nationality, the growth of a public opinion, and a demand for a greater share in the management of affairs. The more efficient a despotism, the more certain is its suppression ; and the problem for the Indian government is how to adjust and adapt the political emancipation of the natives of India to the slow growth of their education and sense of moral responsibility."

This is just the problem for us and our administrators to tackle to-day, and, as self-government is not only the end but also the means to the end, India will not be satisfied until her hunger for self-rule is appeased and she is given a free hand to manage her own affairs according to the light that is in her.



## CHAPTER X

### EVOLUTION OF THE DEMAND FOR "SWARAJ"

It is one thing to formulate a vague demand for Swaraj ; it is quite another to understand and appreciate correctly the various implications underlying the term. Of course, no one has hitherto defined the word Swaraj in a quite precise and scientific manner, but some idea can be formed of what the Indian mind understands by the term to-day by following the historical evolution of the various interpretations put on the term from time to time by the leaders of the Nationalist movement. The word " swaraj " was first used in Indian political literature by Dadabhoy Naoroji in his Presidential Address at the Calcutta Congress in 1906. We give below the portion of his speech in which he discussed our claim to Swaraj :

" All our sufferings and evils of the past centuries demand before God and man a reparation, which we may fairly expect from the present revival of the old noble British instincts of liberty and self-government. . . .

" The British people would not allow themselves to be subjected for a single day to such an unnatural system of government as the one which has been imposed upon India for nearly a century and a half. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman once made a happy quotation from Mr. Bright : ' I remember John Bright quoting in the House of Commons on one occasion two lines of a poet with reference to political matters :

There is on earth a yet diviner thing,  
Veiled though it be, than Parliament or King.

" Then Sir Henry asks : ' What is that diviner thing ? It is the human conscience inspiring human opinion and human sympathy '. I [Mr. Dadabhoy Naoroji] ask them to

extend that human conscience, ' the diviner thing ', to India. In the words of Mr. Morley :

“ ‘ It will be a bad day indeed if we have one conscience for the Mother Country and another conscience for all that vast territory over which your eye does not extend ’ .”

Mr. Dadabhoy Naoroji proceeded to observe : “ And now the next question is : What are the British rights which we have a right to claim ?

“ This is not the occasion to enter into any details or argument. I keep to broad lines.

“ (1) Just as the administration of the United Kingdom in all services, departments, and details is in the hands of the people themselves of that country, so should we in India claim that the administration in all services, departments, and details should be in the hands of the people themselves of India.

“ This is not only a matter of right and matter of the aspirations of the educated—important enough as these matters are—but it is far more an absolute necessity as the only remedy for the great inevitable economic evil which Sir John Shore pointed out a hundred and twenty years ago, and which is the fundamental cause of the present drain and poverty. The remedy is absolutely necessary for the material, moral, intellectual, political, social, industrial and every possible progress and welfare of the people of India.

“ (2) As, in the United Kingdom and the Colonies, all taxation and legislation and the power of spending the taxes are in the hands of the representatives of the people of those countries, so should also be the rights of the people of India.

“ (3) All financial relations between England and India must be just and on a footing of equality—i.e., whatever money India may find towards expenditure in any department, civil or military or naval, to the extent of that share should Indians share in all the

benefits of that expenditure in salaries, pensions, emoluments, materials, etc., as a partner in the Empire, as she is always declared to be. We do not ask any favours. We only want justice. Instead of going into any further divisions or details of our rights as British citizens, the whole matter can be comprised in one word—'self-government', or 'Swaraj', like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies''.

Evidently, what Dadabhoy Naoroji meant by "Swaraj" in 1906, was something quite different from what is understood by the term to-day. With Naoroji it meant some sort of responsible government, of course within the Empire. He asked for more personal rights, greater liberties, and the bulk of high offices in the State to be thrown open to the Indian people. Within the scope of his "Swaraj" might also be included a scheme of all-round retrenchment, including the reduction of the military budget, and less bureaucratic rule and more popular control in all administrative affairs.

The Hobhouse Commission of Decentralization, appointed in 1907, and the Public Services Commission of 1913, over which Lord Islington presided, to both of which we have referred in a previous chapter, were feeble attempts made by the Government to compromise with the objective Mr. Dadabhoy Naoroji had in view. The Reports of these commissions, instead of placating Indian feeling, tended to irritate it. Between Dadabhoy Naoroji's pronouncement of 1906, and the publication of the Islington Commission's Report in 1916, much water had flowed down the Ganges, and, with the great European War, quite a tidal wave of national self-consciousness flooded the Indian mind.

In the Congress of 1920, however, Mr. Gandhi gave a new meaning to the word "Swaraj". From the year 1908, when Bal Gangadhar Tilak stood up for "Swaraj" at Surat, till 1920, the Indian Nationalist mind had always understood by this word a form of responsible government within the British Empire. At any rate, this idea lay behind the creed of the Congress, which every delegate to it was required to sign,

and had willingly subscribed to for close upon twelve years. In the Congress of 1920, held at Nagpur, Mr. Gandhi got that body to accept an amendment to its constitution which pulverized the Indian attachment to the British connection, and carried the idea of "Swaraj" much beyond the original concept.

When Chitta Ranjan Das threw himself seriously into politics, he defined this word in various ways from time to time.

After the Congress of 1920, the non-co-operation movement began to make converts by the thousands, and the cry of Swaraj was echoed and re-echoed from every house-top. But hardly one in a hundred could ever explain what the word meant or what implications were hid behind it. Mr. Gandhi remained silent as the sphinx; so also did Chitta Ranjan. In the meantime, at the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Barisal in 1921, its President<sup>1</sup> made an attempt to point out that the Indian mind was heading for a democratic Swaraj. But with this, Chitta Ranjan, who was present at the Conference as a delegate, joined issue. Chitta Ranjan persisted in maintaining that the word admitted of no definition and that "Swaraj was Swaraj". At that time his idea of Swaraj, like Mr. Gandhi's, was rather a psychological or a subjective perception than a mere political objective.

In his last public utterance at Faridpur<sup>2</sup> six weeks before his death, Chitta Ranjan further developed his ideas in the matter and gave his support to a form of Dominion Home Rule as a form of Swaraj within the British Empire.

In his Gaya speech<sup>3</sup> (December, 1922), Chitta Ranjan thus outlines a scheme of Government consonant with his ideas of Swaraj. "A question has often been asked as to what is Swaraj. Swaraj is indefinable, and is not to be confused with any particular system of Government. There is all the difference in the world between *Swarajya* (self-rule) and *Samrajya* (rule of the country). Swaraj is the natural expression of the national mind. The full outward

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix D.

expression of that mind covers, and must necessarily cover, the whole life history of a nation. Yet it is true that Swaraj begins when the true development of a nation begins, because as I have said Swaraj is the expression of the national mind. The question of nationalism, therefore, looked at from another point of view, is the same question as that of Swaraj. The question of all questions in India to-day is the attainment of Swaraj. . . .

“ To me the organization of village life and the practical autonomy of small local centres are more important than either provincial autonomy or central responsibility ; and if the choice lay between the two, I would unhesitatingly accept the autonomy of the local centres. I must not be understood as implying that the village centres will be disconnected units. They must be held together by a system of co-operation and integration. For the present, there must be power in the hands of the provincial and the Indian Government ; but the ideal should be accepted once for all, that the proper function of the central authority, whether in the Provincial or in the Indian Government, should be to advise, having a residuary power of control only in the case of need and to be exercised under proper safeguards. I maintain that real Swaraj can only be attained by vesting the power of Government in these local centres, and I suggest that the Congress should appoint a Committee to draw up a scheme of Government which would be acceptable to the nation. . . .

“ To frame such a scheme of Government, regard must therefore be had to :

(1) The <sup>F</sup>formation of local centres more or less on the lines of the ancient village system of India.

(2) The growth of larger and larger groups out of the integration of these village centres.

(3) The unifying state should be the result of similar growth.

(4) The village centres and the larger groups as practically autonomous.

(5) The fact that the residuary power of control must remain in the central government, but the exercise of such power should be exceptional and for that purpose proper safeguards should be provided, so that the practical autonomy of the local centres may be maintained, and at the same time the growth of the central Government into a really unifying state may be possible. The ordinary work of such central Government should be mainly advisory."

After enunciating this general proposition, Chitta Ranjan proceeded to outline a scheme of Swaraj in the following manner: "No system of Government which is not for the people and by the people can ever be regarded as the true foundation of Swaraj. I am firmly convinced that a parliamentary Government is not a Government by the people and for the people. Many of us believe that the middle class must win Swaraj for the masses. I do not believe in the possibility of any class movement being ever converted into a movement for Swaraj. If to-day the British Parliament grants provincial autonomy in the provinces with responsibility in the central Government, I for one will protest against it, because that will inevitably lead to the concentration of power in the hands of the middle class. I do not believe that the middle class will then part with their power. How will it profit India, if in place of the white bureaucracy that now rules over her, there is substituted an Indian bureaucracy of the middle classes? Bureaucracy is bureaucracy, and I believe that the very idea of Swaraj is inconsistent with the existence of a bureaucracy. My ideal of Swaraj will never be satisfied unless the people co-operate with us in its attainment. Any other attempt will inevitably lead to what European Socialists call the 'bourgeois' government. In France and in England, and in other European countries, it is the middle-class who fought the battle of freedom, and the result is that power is still in the hands of this class. Having usurped the power, they are unwilling to part with it. If to-day the whole of Europe is

engaged in a battle of real freedom, it is because the nations of Europe are gathering their strength to wrest this power from the hands of the middle classes. I desire to avoid the repetition of that chapter of European history. It is for India to show the light to the world—Swaraj by non-violence and Swaraj by the people.”

Speaking in Calcutta in August, 1924, at the first general meeting of the Swaraj party, Chitta Ranjan gave another glimpse of his mind to his people in this matter in the following terms :

“ It is asked ‘ what is the kind of Swaraj that you are striving for ? ’ Some friends of mine are so anxious to have the details of Swaraj that in their attempt to define they lose sight of the real principle upon which the whole fight for Swaraj is based, and that is that we do not want any particular system of Government ; we want the right to establish our own system of government. That is the central idea of Swaraj. I have said elsewhere and repeat it to-day, that Swaraj—the right of Swaraj, is not to be confused with any particular system of Government. Systems of government come and go. Systems of government are established in one day, only to be broken another day, and another system is established upon the ashes of the old. What I want to-day is a clear declaration by the people of this country that we have got the right to establish our own system of government according to the temper and genius of our people. And we want that right to be recognized by our alien rulers.

“ Recently the question has, now and again, been raised within the Congress whether we should materialize our idea of Swaraj, within the Empire or without it. In answering this question one thing is certain. We often hear of questions as to the kind of Swaraj, whether it will be within the Empire or outside the Empire, and questions are put with regard to that. I have often been interviewed by representatives of English newspapers upon that question. When they put that question to me, I always thought they had doubt in their minds that we were creating difficulties. But my ways are perfectly clear. I want my liberty ; I want my freedom ;

I want my right to establish our own system of government. If that is consistent with our being within the Empire, I have no objection to being within the Empire."

In his last public utterance at Faridpur (May 2nd, 1925) he made the following unequivocal statement :

" Indeed, the Empire idea gives us a vivid sense of many advantages. Dominion status to-day is in no sense servitude. It is essentially an alliance by consent of those who form part of the Empire for material advantages in the real spirit of co-operation. Free alliance necessarily carries with it the right of separation. Before the war, a separatist tendency was growing up in several parts of the Empire, but after the war, it is generally believed that it is only as a great confederation that the Empire or its component parts can live."

With Chitta Ranjan all sane and sober publicists and politicians will feel inclined to agree. It is generally conceded that the status of Dominion Home Rule or our connection with England is not to be the last word on the subject of our remote future political evolution. British rule may be held responsible for many of the evils of our present-day life—the abandonment of plain living and high thinking, our lost arts and industries, our enfeebled physique and incapacity to resist the germs of plague, cholera, malaria and hook-worm, the growing habit of living beyond our means, and the keen struggle to keep up an exaggerated standard of appearances, our intellectual dead level, our revolting ideas of private, and public, morality, our Penal Code, Evidence Act, and " lawyer government ", and our divorce from the realities of an old-world life. But no one will deny that, working in so many different ways, and with such steadfast pertinacity, British rule has built up a nation here out of chaos and anarchy. It has dispelled the darkness, ignorance and superstition of centuries, and relaxed the galling conditions of domestic and social tyranny that had from the days of Manu onwards ground down the manhood of the race and weakened our social organism. It has taught us the inestimable blessings of liberty, freedom, social and political equality, and emancipated



our womenfolk and untouchable classes beyond recognition. It has turned vast arid tracts into fertile soil, waving with golden harvest, brought out untold treasures from the bosom of the earth for the service of men, and has connected one province with another with a network of railways, canals, and telegraph wires. It has, above everything, brought us into line with other civilized nations of the earth through the magic influence of a press, platform, and common laws and speech, and the widespread currency of common thoughts and aspirations. Whatever the character of the British Government be, and however culpable may have been its neglect of our interests, and whatever evils it may have wrought in India, it would be "satanic" to snap our connection with it.

And this must be recognized, that, if we keep our link with the British Empire, we are bound to march forward along with its future development, and to get to our goal with the least difficulty and within the shortest time. It is impossible to dip into a remote future and cast a long horoscope of India's political destiny. But, so far as our vision goes, we cannot think of a brighter, a more assured, and a more cheerful prospect for the Motherland than for her to march along with the other parts of the British Empire shoulder to shoulder to establish her position as an advanced modern State.

In this, and in the previous chapter, we have tried to place before our readers an accurate idea of the Indian demand for Sawraj, and the history of the genesis and inception of the mentality which has brought Indian political sentiments to a head. But before dealing with Chitta Ranjan's efforts to materialize his ideal of Swaraj it is necessary to take a bird's-eye view of the various attempts made by the Government from time to time to meet the political aspirations of the Indian intelligentsia.

CHAPTER XI  
CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

PUBLIC memory is very short in most matters, particularly in matters of political and constitutional interest. There are few men in India to-day who remember, stage by stage, the initiation of responsible government which has been set in operation in this country.

We find the earliest anticipations of a self-governing and autonomous India in the writings and despatches of such experienced administrators as Elphinstone, Munro, Bentinck, and Metcalfe. They peeped into the future and saw the vision of a time when India would no longer care to be "governed" by foreigners. They felt and realized that it would be impossible for the English to retain a permanent control over the affairs of a dependency so far away from their own country. Many years later, Macaulay saw this vision in a clearer light. He realized that, with the spread of education and with the development of a sense of patriotism, India would resent being tied down to the chariot wheel of the Empire.

Speaking to a motion of Mr. Charles Grant, President of the Board of Control of the East India Company, on the second reading of the Bill for effecting an arrangement with the East India Company for the better government of His Majesty's Indian territories, Lord Macaulay made use of the following prophetic and wise words, on the floor of the House of Commons in July, 1833 :

"It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown that system ; that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government ; that, having become instructed in European knowledge, they may, in some future age, demand

European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come I know not. But never will I attempt to avert or to retard it. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history."

On the assumption of the responsibilities of the governance of India by the British Crown, Queen Victoria made a royal proclamation in which she proclaimed equal justice and citizenship to all her Indian subjects irrespective of caste, creed or race.

In 1862, four years after the suppression of the Mutiny and Queen Victoria's assumption of the sovereignty of India, a system of government through Councils was established, and non-official members were admitted into the Councils in the headquarters of the Government of India and in the various provinces for the discussion of public affairs. We say discussion because members were nominated only by the heads of the administrations and could take no more part than talk on the motions initiated by the official members. The "additional members" as the extra nominated members were then called, had no power to interpellate the Government on any public question, move any resolution, introduce any bill or vote on the budget. Yet this was the humble foundation upon which the present Indian constitution is based.

Speaking at Manchester, on the 11th of December, 1877, John Bright, one of the truest friends India ever had in England, made the following prophetic observation:

"I believe that it is our duty not only to govern India well now for our sakes and to satisfy our own conscience, but so to arrange its government and so to administer it that we should look forward to the time when India will have to take up her own government and administer it in her own fashion. I say he is no statesman—he is no man actuated with a high moral sense with regard to our great and terrible moral responsibility—who is not willing thus to look ahead, and thus to prepare for circumstances which may come sooner than we think, and sooner than any of us hope for, but which must come at some not very distant date."

Unfortunately, these observations of John Bright were not rightly comprehended or appreciated by the leaders of English political thought of his day, or by the heads of the Anglo-Indian administration out in this country either. The machinery of the Indian administration in mid-Victorian days ground neither small nor fast.

A few years after John Bright uttered the words we have just quoted, W. E. Gladstone, as the Premier of England, conceived the novel idea of sending a Roman Catholic peer as the Viceroy of a Protestant Sovereign to set matters right out in this country where the confidence of the people in the Anglo-Indian administration had been greatly shaken by the jingoistic character of Lord Lytton's viceroyalty. Lord Ripon conceived the idea of taking the people into his confidence in regard to certain public questions of the day. His scheme of local self-government was no doubt conceived in a spirit of great statesmanship, but unhappily the spirit of the statesman was effectively scotched by the intrigues of the administrator, when the details of the scheme came to be evolved and worked out. Though local self-government got a new start in India under Lord Ripon, it did not make much headway till quite recent times.

The early throes of the making of a new nation in India, however, first manifested themselves during the early years of Lord Ripon's viceroyalty. After repealing the Vernacular Press Act of Lord Lytton, his successor set his heart on removing one of the many distinctions which vitiated the Criminal Procedure Code of Sir FitzJames Stephen. Sir Courtney Ilbert, the Law Member of the Government of India under Lord Ripon, introduced a Bill into the Viceroy's Council during the closing session of 1882, for the removal of the disqualification of Indian magistrates for trying European offenders in criminal cases. The educated Indians of the day leapt with joy at this attempt of the new Viceroy and looked upon it as only a small instalment of a large debt of justice due to them. A large number of European residents of Calcutta, on the other hand, took fright at this attempt to remove the special privilege, which they had enjoyed since

the foundation of the Empire, of being tried by magistrates of their own race out in this country. Under the leadership of an eminent Calcutta barrister of the time, Mr. Branson, and a leading Calcutta merchant by the name of Mr. Keswick, and an Anglo-Indian journalist, Mr. Furrell, the Europeans made a dead set against the passage of this Bill through the Council.

At a meeting of the Town Hall these people urged that while Ilbert and Ripon had set their minds on removing only a sentimental grievance which rankled in the breast of a few "blatant Bengali babus" the practical result of their efforts would be to place their women-folk at the mercy of unsympathetic Indian magistrates. They urged that, "unlike Indian women, their women were not used to the foul multitudes of the Court", and they would all do their best to protect their women folk from being tried by "native magistrates". A third suggestion was made that the passage of the bill "would enable the jackass to kick the lion". The contemptuous and insulting references to the blatancy of Bengali babus, the libel on the character of their women, and the provoking comparison of the Bengali people to a jackass stirred the very depths of Indian society to an extent hitherto unparalleled in the history of British India. Assailing the comparison of the Indian people with the jackass, Lal Mohan Ghose, the most brilliant orator of Bengal after Keshab Chandra Sen, gave a pointed reply at a public meeting in Dacca on March 29th, 1883. "If this, indeed, were the case nothing could be more presumptuous or ridiculous. But even the jackass is not foolish enough to insult the majesty of the lion. But if the pitiful cur chooses to cover his recreant limbs with the borrowed hide of the lion, then I think the kick of the jackass is his only fitting punishment".

Such bad blood was created between the two peoples, that the leading Bengali solicitors of the day refused to send their briefs to Mr. Branson any more, and in a few months' time he was obliged to retire from the country.

In the meantime, a conspiracy was hatched by some of

the white residents of Calcutta to deport Lord Ripon out of India. At the end of this bitter feud, Lord Ripon and Sir Courtney Ilbert were obliged to withdraw the bill and enter into a concordat with the European opposition. It was agreed that Indian magistrates should henceforward be empowered to try European offenders, but only with the help of European jurors. The bill, therefore, was practically shelved, but for the first time it brought large classes of people together, and make a common stand for the defence of their rights and liberties. When Lord Ripon resigned in December, 1884, a send-off and farewell demonstration was arranged for him at Belgachia Villa in the northern suburbs of Calcutta, which was attended by thousands, as a token of their respect and gratitude for the retiring Viceroy.<sup>1</sup>

An ex-Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces was so surprised at this new demonstration of the popular will that he sought the hospitality of an Anglo-Indian journal for his views of the changed horizon, publishing them under the significant title, "If it be real what does it mean?"

In fact this changed outlook led only a year after, through the kindly efforts of Allan Octavian Hume,<sup>2</sup> to the establishment of the Indian National Congress, which met in Bombay for the first time in December, 1885,<sup>3</sup> under the presidency of W. C. Bonnerjee. It is amusing to recall that W. C. Bonnerjee—who to all intents and purposes lived the life of an Englishman and whose full name many Bengalis of his day hardly knew—had all his life ridiculed all sorts of political agitation, until he became a convert to the Nationalist ideas of his day by the fact of his having been brushed aside by the Government

<sup>1</sup> With the surplus of the money raised on this occasion, and with additional subscriptions collected at a later date, a marble statue was erected of this great Indian Viceroy and placed at the end of the Red Road in Calcutta in 1915.

<sup>2</sup> The first impulse towards the Indian National Congress was given by the publication, by Allan Octavian Hume, of two brilliant pamphlets under the titles of *Old Man's Hope* and *The Star in the East*.

<sup>3</sup> The first Congress was convened to be held in Poona at the suggestion of the late Mahadeo Govind Ranade, for a long time a judge of the Bombay High Court, and the founder of the Indian Social Conference. But owing to the outbreak of an epidemic of cholera the venue had to be changed to Bombay.

for the crime of being a "native", when the appointment of the Standing Counsel of the High Court of Calcutta fell vacant.

At its inception and during its first two years, the Indian National Congress flourished under gubernatorial patronage and basked in official sunshine. At the end of the second Congress in Calcutta, a large number of the delegates were treated to an afternoon party at Government House. Next year, fortunately for the Congress, Lord Dufferin fell out with Allan Octavian Hume, the inspirer and founder of the movement, and India was treated to an exhibition of viceregal temper in a notorious after-dinner speech at the St. Andrew's Dinner, 1888, the memory of which lingers to this day.

In this speech among other things Lord Dufferin said :

" And some gentlemen—some intelligent, loyal, patriotic and well-meaning men are desirous of taking, I will not say a further step in advance, but a very big jump into the unknown—by the application to India of democratic methods of government and the adoption of a Parliamentary system which England herself has only reached by slow degrees and through the discipline of many centuries of preparations. The ideal authoritatively suggested, as I understand, is the creation of a representative body or bodies in which the official element shall be in a minority, who shall have what is called the power of the purse, and who, through this instrumentality, shall be able to bring the British Executive into subjection to their will. The organization of battalions of native militia and volunteers for the internal and external defence of a country is the next arrangement suggested, and the first practical result to be obtained would be the reduction of the British Army to one-half of its present number.

" Well, gentlemen, I am afraid that the people of England will not readily be brought to the acceptance of this programme, or to allow such an assembly or a number of such assemblies either to interfere with its armies or to fetter and circumscribe the liberty of action either of the provincial governments or of the supreme executive. In the first

place, the whole scheme is eminently unconstitutional, for the essence of constitutional government is that responsibility and power should remain in the same hands, and the idea of irresponsible Councils, whose members could never be called to account for their acts in the way in which an opposition can be called to account in a constitutional country, arresting the march of Indian legislation or nullifying the policy of the British executive, in India, would be regarded as an impracticable anomaly. . . .

“ Who and what are the persons who seek to assume such great powers—to tempt the fate of Phæthon, and to sit in the chariot of the sun ? Well, they are gentlemen of whom I desire to speak with the greatest courtesy and kindness, for they are most of them the product of the system of education which we ourselves have carried on during the last thirty years.

“ I would ask them how could any reasonable man imagine that the British Government would be content to allow this microscopic minority to control the 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 civilization ?

“ Well, gentlemen, as I have already observed, when the Congress was first started, it seemed to me that such a body, if they directed their attention with patriotic zeal to the consideration of these and cognate subjects (sanitation, emigration, establishment of manufacturing industries, social reform, etc.), as similar congresses do in England, might prove of assistance to the government and of great use to their fellow citizens. I cannot help expressing my regret that they should seem to consider such momentous subjects, concerning as they do the welfare of millions of their fellow subjects, as beneath their notice, and that they should have concerned themselves instead with matters in regard to which their assistance is likely to be less profitable to us.



“ It is still a greater matter of regret to me that the members of the Congress should have become answerable for the distribution, as their officials have boasted, among thousands and thousands of ignorant and credulous men, of publications animated by a very questionable spirit, and whose manifest intention is to excite the hatred of the people against the public servants of the Crown in the country. Such proceedings as these no Government could regard with indifference, nor can they fail to inspire it with misgivings, at all events of the wisdom of those who have so offended. Nor is the silly threat of one of the chief officers, the principal Secretary,<sup>2</sup> I believe, of the Congress, that he and his Congress friends hold in their hands keys not only of a popular insurrection but of a military revolt, calculated to restore our confidence in their discretion, even when accompanied by the assurance that they do not intend for the present to put these keys into the locks.”

This opened a new chapter in the history of the Congress, and from 1888 on to the beginning of the present century, no end of ridicule and banter was poured over it. In Parliament, long before the last century drew to an end, Mr. (afterwards Earl) Goschen went out of his way to throw out a very broad hint that the Congress was being fed and financed practically by Russian roubles, and in India, between Sir Auckland Colvin and the late Rajah of Benares, Sir Syed Ahmed of Aligarh, Odey Pretap Singh of Bhinga, Rajah Siva Prasad and their worthy lieutenants, an impression was widely created in the public and official mind that the Congress was a very disloyal and seditious movement, and an organ of Hindu public opinion only.

This attitude of distrust was reflected in the deliberations of the Congress itself and was followed by the secession from it of practically the whole of the Mahomedan community. As a result, the main attention of this body was for several years concentrated on no more serious work than protesting against legislative measures and animadverting upon

‡ Allan Octavian Hume.

bureaucratic rule and official high-handedness, thus turning the Congress into a weak opposition of Her Majesty's Government in the country. The Presidents of the Congress for this period seldom looked far ahead or concerned themselves with any constructive programme of work, far less had any thought to the real work of nation-building. They contented themselves with bitterly declaiming against the reactionary and repressive spirit of the administration, and with criticizing none too mildly all anti-popular legislative enactments. There were, however, exceptions to this, as George Yule (Allahabad, 1888), Ananda Mohan Bose (Madras, 1898), Sir Henry Cotton (Bombay, 1904) and Gopal Krishna Gokhale (Benares, 1905) who introduced into their speeches other matters which will be read with attention and respect by all students of Indian politics for a long time to come.<sup>1</sup> In reviewing the administration of Lords Dufferin, Lansdowne and Elgin, Ananda Mohan Bose pertinently asked the Government if they were moving "backwards or forwards", and speaking in a plaintive voice and with great apostolic fervour, he drew the attention of his audience to our failure to rise equal to the call of our Motherland. There was scarcely a dry eye in the hall when he made his concluding observations on love, sacrifice and service. The speech of Sir (then Mr.) Surendra Nath Banerjea at Poona on 1895, and of Sir (then Mr.) Sankaran Nair at Amraoti in 1897, were also very notable utterances, the first for its oratorical flourishes and brilliant delivery, and the latter for its quiet strength and incisive criticism.

This chapter in the history of the Congress was continued till December, 1906, when Dadabhoy Naoroji for the first time laid down Swaraj as the ideal of the Congress. Over this word "Swaraj", and the various interpretations that were sought to be put upon this ideal, Congressmen in India split themselves up into the moderate and the extremist wings and then came to blows at Surat in 1907. It is believed that a few months before the Congress met at Surat,

<sup>1</sup> In 1905, at Benares, a resolution supporting the boycott of British goods was first adopted by the Indian National Congress.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Chitta Ranjan Das were concerting measures between themselves to overthrow the domination of the Liberal Party in that national movement. Failing to devise any better way of gaining their objective, Tilak and his lieutenants at Surat took the unusual step of opposing the election of Rash Behary Ghose as its President. Hitherto the election of the President of the Congress was only a formal affair, the Congress being required to do nothing more than ratify the nominations of the majority of the provincial Congress Committees. Tilak wanted to depart from this procedure and asked the Congress to choose its own President and not to accept the nomination of the Provincial Congress Committees. It is stated that Tilak and his friends wanted to put Lala Lajput Rai into the chair, and in case of his refusal, either Surendra Nath Banerjea, or Aswini Kumar Dutt. To this a bitter opposition was at once raised, and Tilak's friends made a frantic effort to break up the Congress. Chairs were hurled from the platform to the auditorium, and a Mahratta slipper was hurled from the auditorium at Dr. Rash Behary Ghose in the chair. The police at once entered the Congress pavilion to restore order and dispersed the Congress. This was the beginning of a new chapter in the history of that movement, and the Liberal Party, by skilful manœuvres and by the adoption of new rules through a convention established by them, were able to keep the extremist section at arm's length for some years. The leaders of the congress up to this time had been such men as Feroze Shah Mehta, W. C. Bonnerjee, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Gopal Krishna Gokhale,<sup>1</sup> Ananda Mohan Bose, and for some time

<sup>1</sup> Gopal Krishna Gokhale joined the Congress early in the nineties as the most trusted lieutenant of M. G. Ranade. A very untoward event happened in 1897, when he was practically hounded out of the Congress for a time. In that year, the Plague Regulations were enforced in the city of Poona with great rigour and severity, and, in his first visit to England this year, where he had gone to give evidence before the Welby Commission he informed Sir William Wedderburn that in one or two cases the modesty of some Indian women had been outraged by an officer in charge of the Regulations. Sir William made use of this statement in the House of Commons, but the Secretary of State (Lord George Hamilton) at once challenged it, and Sir William had to tender an apology for having made an unfounded statement. When Gokhale returned to India about the end of the year, a high police official boarded his steamer in Bombay, and

Pundit Ayodhya Nath of Allahabad, Krishnaswamy Iyer of Madras, and Lala Buxi Ram of Lahore.

From 1908 to 1914, the Congress passed through a stage of great depression, the two wings of the Nationalist Party remaining separated all this time by internal dissensions. The address delivered by Pundit Bishen Narayan Dar, as the President of the twenty-sixth Congress in Calcutta (1911), reflected in a very able and pointed manner the disappointment and bitterness of the educated community in India over the halting character of the Morley-Minto Reforms and the unwisdom of the policy of repression-cum-conciliation started by Lord Morley.

At Bankipur and at Karachi (1912 and 1913), the Congress had very uneventful sessions and went on in a very humdrum way ; and when it met for the twenty-ninth session at Madras, the European war had broken out and the attitude of our people appeared to have dispelled English distrust of the loyalty of the Indians.

The late Bhupendra Nath Basu availed himself of this opportunity to introduce a very refreshing departure in the spirit of his Presidential Address at Madras in December, 1914, and raised for the first time a cry for self-government in this country and a satisfactory adjustment of the relation of India with the British Empire. For the first time in the history of the Congress, controversial politics and discussion of administrative and legislative measures were practically set aside in the inaugural Address of the President, and an altogether higher plane was reached— by mentioning India's

wanted him either to substantiate his statement or to tender an apology to Government. It appears that this unusual procedure quite put Gokhale out, and he felt compelled to tender the apology asked for. When a few days later, he appeared on the platform of the Amraoti Congress, which was then being held under the presidency of Mr. (now Sir) Sankaran Nair, he was hissed and hooted. After this disgrace he kept away from the Congress for a few years, until he became a member of the Indian Legislative Council and had made his mark as perhaps the most fearless and independent critic of the Government. By 1903, Gokhale had emerged as one of the most trusted leaders of the Indian people, and, in 1905, was called upon to preside over the Benares session of the Indian National Congress. A few months later, he founded the " Servants of India Society ", of which the Rt. Hon. Srinivasan Sastri was subsequently the head till his appointment as the Agent of the Government of India in South Africa.

participation in the world war and her contributions towards it in men and money. This also gave him an opportunity of declaiming against the anomaly of the position of the Indians remaining as equal subjects of the Sovereign, but unequal citizens of the State. At this Congress also, the proposals for a compromise between the right and the left wings of the Nationalist Party reached a definite stage and were referred to a Committee. Nor were signs wanting for a complete *rapprochement* between the two great communities of the Indian people—the Hindus and the Mahomedans. The session of 1914 was the end of the period of depression, and it was felt by most Congressmen who attended it, that a new chapter of its history would open with its thirtieth session in Bombay in December, 1915.

The expectations of Congressmen in 1914 were more than realized in the Congress of 1915. Not only were the two main wings of the Nationalist Party reconciled to each other by a happy compromise, but for the first time in the history of India the Hindus and Mahomedans met on a common political platform to work out their common destiny, thus giving the Congress a truly representative and national character. Truly was this Congress described by one of its ex-Presidents as “the first Congress of the New Era, of the New India—the India of the young, of the hopeful, of the energetic”. And to crown all, there was the unique message of its President which, for boldness and conception, courage of expression, and statesman-like wisdom, will remain for a long time as one of the most remarkable utterances of new India.

Sir Satyendra Prasanna Sinha (now Lord Sinha) summed up our political ideal in one word—self-government—but, unlike most of our public men, he kept us neither in the dark nor in doubt as to what exactly he understood by this word. While there had been a good deal of wobbling over “self-government”, Lord Sinha defined his own idea of it by quoting President Lincoln’s famous dictum—“government of the people, for the people, by the people”. By “government” again, Lord Sinha did not mean the civil administration



SATYENDRA PRASANNA SINHA  
(Lord Sinha of Raipur)

The first Indian member of the Viceroy's Executive Council  
and the first Indian peer of the British realm

Born 1864

*By permission of Messrs. Johnston and Hoffman, Calcutta*



and the legislative function of the State only, as is generally understood by the bulk of our people, but all its controlling agencies, "civil as well as military, executive as well as legislative, administrative as well as judicial". Into Lord Sinha's scheme of self-government, military control and "the nationalization of the army" entered as effectively as popular control over legislation and administration. The question of enlistment and commissions in the Army, with their logical corollaries of universal volunteering and the removal of the hard provisions of the Arms Act, were as much practical politics to Lord Sinha as the separation of the judicial and executive functions<sup>1</sup> which the Indian National Congress had insistently demanded for the better part of a generation. In the earlier periods of the Congress, we had prayed and agitated for the expansion of the Legislative Councils, for the establishment of simultaneous examination of the Indian Civil Service out in this country as well as in England, and for the repeal of this Act and that, and this was not very unjustly described by the more ardent spirits of the Congress as a "mendicant policy"; latterly, we pressed for the full and satisfactory development of local self-government and further control and share in the actual administration of the country. In the thirtieth session of the Congress, the President put forward no detached and isolated claim for this or that privilege, this or that right, the abrogation of this Act or that, but the all-inclusive claim of control, by the Indians themselves, "over civil as well as military, executive as well as legislative, administrative as well as judicial" branches of the Government.

We have so far taken a bird's-eye view of the history of the Congress from its start in 1885 to the end of its thirtieth

<sup>1</sup> Monomohan Ghose brought this question prominently before the public in and outside the Congress by his insistent demand for the separation of these two functions for the purity of administration of justice. He died of apoplexy in October, 1896, in his country house at Krishnagar while replying to a wild attack on him by an Anglo-Indian writer in the *Asiatic Quarterly Review*. The late Monomohan Ghose, the greatest criminal lawyer of his day in Calcutta, exposed, for the first time, by the publication of two pamphlets, several very notable cases of miscarriage of justice due to the combination of these two functions in civilian officers in British India.



session in Bombay in 1915. During all this period, the history of the Congress is linked up *pari passu* with the history of our constitutional development. The influence and pressure of the Congress acted and re-acted all this time on the policy of the Government. It will, therefore, be necessary to take a similar bird's-eye view of the various stages of policy initiated by the Government of this country to meet and counteract the demands of the people, uttered through the Congress.

While Lord Dufferin poured forth his anathemas on this nascent institution at the notorious St. Andrew's 'Dinner at Calcutta, he at the same time had written a very strong despatch to the Secretary of State for India conceding in a large measure the claims of the Congress for the enlargement of the constitution and powers of the various legislative Councils of India. Charles Bradlaugh, the great Parliamentary fighter of the last century, came out to India in 1889 to attend the Congress, and, in collaboration with some of the leaders, drew up an outline for the reconstitution of the Indian Councils which he enlarged into a bill and introduced on his return to England. Very soon after the introduction of this bill in the House of Commons, it had to be withdrawn, and a new bill, initiated by Lord Cross, then Secretary of State for India, was put in its place and got through the House of Commons with the blessings of Gladstone.

The Indian Councils Act of 1891 failed, however, to satisfy the aspirations of the Indian National Congress. The main change introduced by Lord Cross's Act was that for the first time the principle of election was introduced into the constitution of the provincial councils. The right of interpellation and moving resolutions and discussing the Budget also formed principal features of the new amendment. Similar advances were also made in regard to the Indian Legislative Council. —

When Lord Lansdowne's viceroyalty was coming to a close, an extraordinary event happened which indicated beyond doubt how seriously Indian public opinion was being taken by some Europeans at the time. Mr. Gladstone had nominated Sir Henry Norman, an officer with an established

military reputation, as Lansdowne's successor, but because of this very feature of his life the nomination of Norman to the viceroyalty of India was opposed in the columns of a leading Indian newspaper of Calcutta.<sup>1</sup> Norman took this as a hint that he was not wanted by the people of India, and immediately withdrew. Thereupon the choice of Gladstone fell on Lord Elgin, a Scotch peer of very mediocre reputation and talents. Lord Elgin's viceroyalty was sterile, but his successor's proved the beginning of a new chapter of viceregal stewardship. Lord Curzon came to India in 1899 as the prophet of a new policy which we have described at length in another chapter.

In November, 1805, Lord Minto had replaced Lord Curzon as Viceroy, and in December Lord Morley became the Secretary of State for India. Between these two, they appointed a Committee, consisting of Sir Denzil Ibbetson, Mr. Earle Richards, and Mr. Edward Baker, the Home Member, the Law Member and the Finance Member of the then Government of India respectively, to consider, among other matters, the increase in the representative element in the Indian and Provincial Legislative Councils. The result of their enquiry is writ large in what is now known as the Morley-Minto scheme.

We are not concerned in this brief resumé with the period of Indian history between 1891 and 1909, in which latter year Lord Morley, in concert with the Viceroy, Lord Minto, made a further advance towards the popularization of the various Indian Legislative Councils. In this advance, they were not aiming at responsible or parliamentary government in any way, as will appear from the following extract from a famous despatch of Lord Morley to the Indian Viceroy.

“ Your Excellency's disclaimer for your Government of being advocates of representative government for India in the Western sense of the term is not any more than was to be expected. Some of the most powerful advocates of the representative system in Europe have learned and taught from Indian experiences of their own that, in Your Excellency's

<sup>1</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, then edited by Mr. Narendra Nath Sen.

words, 'it could never be akin to the instincts of the many races comprising the population of the Indian Empire.' One reason among many is suggested by the statement in the portion of your despatch dealing with local Governments, that 'Indian gentlemen of position ordinarily refuse to offer themselves as candidates to a wide electorate, partly because they dislike canvassing, and partly by reason of their reluctance to risk the indignity of being defeated by a rival candidate of inferior social status'. While repudiating the intention of desire to attempt the transplantation of any European form of representative government on Indian soil, what is sought by Your Excellency in Council is to improve existing machinery, or to find new, for 'recognizing the natural aspirations of educated men to share in the government of their country'. I need not say that in this design you have the cordial concurrence of His Majesty's Government. One main standard and test for all who have a share in guiding Indian Policy, whether at Whitehall or Calcutta, is the effect of whatever new proposal may at any time be made upon the strength and steadiness of the paramount power. In Indian government there is no grace worth having in what is praised as a concession and no particular virtue in satisfying an aspiration, unless your measures at the same time fortify the basis of authority on which peace and order and all the elements of the public good in India depend. In the whole spirit of Your Excellency's despatch I read the conviction that every one of the proposals advanced in it is calculated by enlisting fresh support in common opinion on the one hand, and on the other by bringing government into closer touch with that opinion, and all the currents of need and feeling pervading it, to give new confidence and a wider range of knowledge, ideas, and sympathies, to the holders of executive power."

The Morley-Minto scheme only increased the size of the Councils and reinforced them with a larger leaven of elected members, and also introduced for the first time an Indian member in all the executive councils of the Empire. This new scheme, though it received the blessing of Gopal

Krishna Gokhale and the qualified support of the Indian National Congress of the time, also failed to meet popular demands, and criticisms again began to be freely and frequently levelled against the Reforms—again on the grounds of their inadequacy and insufficiency. It was not only the leaders of the Congress and the nationalist movement in this country that considered the Morley-Minto Reforms as inadequate and insufficient, but responsible statesmen at the helm of Indian affairs soon came to share this view.

The interesting position created by the Morley-Minto changes was excellently brought out in the following comments.<sup>1</sup>

“ We must make up our minds either to rule ourselves or to let the people rule : there is no half-way house, except of course on the highway of deliberate transition. At present, we are doing neither. We are trying to govern by concession, and each successive concession has the air of being wrung from us. We keep public business going by bargaining and negotiation : not, however, the healthy bargaining of the market place, but a steady yielding to assaults which always leave some bitterness behind on both sides. This is in no sense the fault of individuals; it follows inevitably from the influences at work. Up to Lord Curzon’s viceroyalty, there was a sturdy determination to do what was right for India, whether India altogether liked it or not. The reforms which followed his régime brought in a power of challenge and obstruction— influence without responsibility ; and, rather than fight, we have often to give way. We are shedding the rôle of benevolent despotism and the people specially those who are most friendly to us—cannot understand what rôle we mean to assume in its place. We are accordingly losing their confidence, and, with it, some of our power for good. If we returned to sheer despotism, we should carry many of the people with

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the *Report on Constitutional Reforms*, p. 66.

us, and should secure an ordered calm. But that being impossible, we must definitely show that we are moving from the Eastern to the Western ideal of rule. And, secondly, we must maintain the full weight and order of government while the move is going on. Otherwise, we cannot look for either internal peace or the co-operation of the people, or indeed for anything else except growing weakness with the fatal consequence that weakness involves in an Eastern country."

Addressing a large number of representative Europeans at the United Service Club of Simla in October, 1915, Lord Hardinge made the following notable pronouncement :

" England has instilled into this country the culture and civilization of the West with all its ideals of liberty and self-respect. It is not enough for her now to consider only the material outlook of India. It is necessary for her to cherish the aspirations, of which she has herself sown the seed, and English officials are gradually awakening to the fact that high as were the aims and remarkable the achievements of their predecessors, a still nobler task lies before them in the present and the future in guiding the uncertain and faltering steps of Indian development along sure and safe paths. The new rôle of guide, philosopher and friend is opening before you, and it is worthy of your greatest efforts. It requires in you gifts of imagination and sympathy, and imposes upon you self-sacrifice, for it means that slowly but surely you must divest yourselves of some of the power you have hitherto wielded. Let it be realized that great as has been England's mission in the past, she has a far more glorious task to fulfil in the future, in encouraging and guiding the political self-development of the people. The goal to which India may attain is still distant, and there may be many vicissitudes in her path, but I look forward with confidence to a time when strengthened by character and self-respect, and bound by ties of

- affection and gratitude, India may be regarded as a true friend of the Empire and not merely as a trusty dependent. The day for the complete fulfilment of this ideal is not yet, but it is to this distant vista that
- the British official should turn his eyes, and he must grasp the fact that it is by his future success in this direction that British prestige and efficiency will be judged."

Three months after this inspiring pronouncement was made by the head of the Government of India at Simla, the Viceroy was confronted with the notable utterance of Lord Sinha in Bombay, when he insisted on a declaration of the Government's policy and purpose.

For the first time, the address of a President of the Indian National Congress was taken quite seriously by the Government, and Lord Hardinge opened a long correspondence with the Secretary of State for India as to how far Lord Sinha's proposals could be given effect to, and in what direction a new scheme of Indian reforms might be canvassed. It is understood that the tentative proposals submitted by the Government of Lord Hardinge to his Majesty's Secretary of State at Whitehall in this connection were returned to Simla on the ground of their inadequacy and insufficiency and for full reconsideration. The Government of India were for a long time unable to make up their mind as to what form the new scheme should take, though they were not unwilling to set out in definite terms the purpose and goal of British rule in India as desired by Lord Sinha.

The European War at this time had taken a rather acute and anxious turn, and the fortunes of the Allies were still hanging in the balance, and India's help in men and money was brought under an ever-pressing requisition at every stage of this crisis. It was at this time that a representative of India was wanted by Mr. Asquith (now Lord Oxford), then the Premier of England, to help the Imperial Conference in London with advice and information, thus raising India at once from the position of a trusted dependency to the position

of almost an equal partnership. This step went a long way in winning people's confidence, but it did not mark any notable advance in the constitutional history of India. The Indian constitution remained to be reformed, in spite of India's almost equal partnership in the Imperial concern.

Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who succeeded Lord Crewe as the Secretary of State for India, had, by this time, made up his mind to risk some sort of declaration. When things had arrived at this stage, the newly-elected members of the Viceroy's Legislative Council met at Simla and drafted a Memorandum on the subject which was submitted to the new Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, early in October, 1916. The Memorandum is a historic document of considerable importance as being the basis of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform Scheme and deserves very careful perusal at the hands of every student of the question of our constitutional development. This document has now passed into contemporary historical literature as "The Nineteen Members' Memorandum."<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja of Kasimbazar, the most patriotic and generous nobleman of Bengal, headed the list of the signatories to this document, and among others who signed it were Sir Dinshaw Wacha, the late Bhupendra Nath Basu, Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Rt. Hon. Srinivasan Sastri, Dr. Tej B. Sapru Sir B. N. Sarma, and the late Rai Bahadur Krishna Sahai of Bihar.

Three months after this the Indian National Congress met at Lucknow and gave most of its attention to this question of Indian devolution. After two days of anxious deliberation, the Congress adopted a very lengthy resolution, closely following the suggestions made in the "Nineteen Members' Memorandum", and drawing up a scheme of Council representation to suit the aspiration of the two leading communities of India, the Hindus and the Mahomedans. This very scheme was adopted almost bodily at the annual meeting of the Indian Moslem League which also met at Lucknow in the same month.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix E.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix F.

In February, 1917, Mr. Lionel Curtis, who was travelling in India at the time as a representative of the "Round Table" group of political students, arrived in Delhi and conferred with several members of the Indian Legislative Council as to the merits of the Congress-League scheme and suggested some alternative propositions. Mr. Lionel Curtis was one of the earliest critics to detect in the Congress-League scheme potentialities of administrative deadlocks and insurmountable friction, and developed the idea of government which subsequently came to be called by the late Sir William Meyer "Dyarchy". It may be mentioned here that this new scheme was not very kindly received by Indian politicians as Mr. Lionel Curtis was a "suspect" in the Nationalist camp at that time because a letter of his in connection with the idea of a federal commonwealth for the British Empire had been mercilessly misinterpreted and criticized in the Congress at Lucknow. Exception was also taken to the fact that no such experiment had ever been tried in any part of the world before, and was altogether a novel idea in the sphere of government.

About the beginning of the year 1917, Mrs. Annie Besant started a new propaganda under the cry of "Home Rule". She started in Madras a Home Rule League with the late Dr. Subramaniya Iyer, a retired Judge of the High Court, as President, and in the course of a few weeks all the theosophical organizations controlled by Mrs. Besant took up the idea very warmly and helped to establish branches of this League all over the country. Mrs. Besant went to such extremes that the Government of Lord Chelmsford was obliged to yield to the pressure of the local Government of Madras, and interned her with two of her associates<sup>1</sup>. As soon as Mrs. Besant was interned, a violent agitation was set on foot to get her out of her internment, on the one hand, and convert the Home Rule propaganda into a bitter anti-British agitation, on the other. Public indignation rose so high in the matter that it was arranged to elect her as the President of the Indian National Congress, which was to meet

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. G. S. Arundel and B. P. Wadia.



that year in Calcutta, and, in view of her internment, it was seriously proposed to keep the presidential chair of the Congress vacant, and to get the business of the Session done through a Deputy-President. Over the election of the President of this session, Congressmen in Bengal fell out amongst themselves, thus making a second and a very serious cleavage and schism in the ranks of the Congress. Chitta Ranjan Das now openly came out and joined the extreme party to widen the gulf. In the meantime Mrs. Besant was released and was elected President by the unanimous vote of all the provincial Congress Committees. This was the starting point of the creation of a new party in India, which very soon developed as the Moderate and, later, as the Liberal Party, and this was also the first Congress at which the elder statesmen of the country lost their control over deliberations.

Nothing, however, of much importance happened, until the 20th of August, 1917, when the late E. S. Montagu, His Majesty's new Secretary of State for India, made the following announcement in Parliament :

“ The policy of His Majesty's Government with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of 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. They have decided that substantial steps in this direction shall be taken as soon as possible, and that it is of the highest importance as a preliminary to considering what these steps should be that there should be a free and informal exchange of opinion between those in authority at home and in India. His Majesty's Government have accordingly decided, with His Majesty's approval, that I should accept the Viceroy's invitation to proceed to India and to discuss these matters with the Viceroy and the Government of India, to consider with the

- Viceroy the views of local Governments, and to receive with him the suggestions of representative bodies and others. . . . I would add that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The
- British Government and the Government of India, on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples, must be judges of the time and measure of each advance, and they must be guided by the co-operation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred, and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility. . . . Ample opportunity will be afforded for discussion of the proposals, which will be submitted in due course to Parliament."

In pursuance of this authoritative declaration from Parliament, a mission came out to India with Mr. Montagu at its head, to draw up a scheme of constitutional changes to meet the requirements of the Indian political situation. This mission arrived in India in November, 1917, and began work at Delhi, visiting in turn Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, and receiving deputations at each of these places, of all schools of political thought, and giving interviews to men representing all shades of opinion. This mission, which consisted, besides the late Mr. Montagu, of Lord Donoughmore, the late Sir William Duke, the late Bupendra Nath Basu and Mr. Charles Roberts, was in constant consultation throughout the enquiry with the members of the Government of India, and, on its return to Delhi, a continuous series of conferences began ; there were meetings of the Secretary of State and those associated with him and the Government of India, meetings with all the heads of provinces ; meetings with a Committee of the Ruling Princes ; meetings of committees to consider details and frequent private interviews and informal discussions. When the mission came to Calcutta, Chitta Ranjan Das went up as a witness before it, and adumbrated an advanced scheme of national self-rule. After six months

of hard work, the Report was signed at Simla by the Viceroy and the Secretary of State on April 22nd, 1918, and was published in June with the assent of His Majesty's Government in England.

The first part of the Report consisted of an exhaustive survey of the situation which had demanded the new order of things in India, and the second part of proposals for the reconstruction of the government of the Country based on the co-operation of the people to meet the needs of the more spacious days to come. The first part is euphemistically described in the Report as the "Material", and sets forth the case for Reforms at very considerable length.

The "Material" portion of the Report is couched in very high and dignified language and contains political sentiments which would do credit to an Edmund Burke. Outside some well-known despatches of Munro, Bentinck, Elphinstone, James Mill and Macaulay, one could hardly meet with such lofty sentiments as the following :

" We believe profoundly that the time has now come when the sheltered existence which we have given India cannot be prolonged without damage to her national life; that we have a richer inheritance for her people than any that we have yet bestowed on them; that nationhood within the Empire represents something better than anything India has hitherto attained; that the placid, pathetic contentment of the masses is not the soil on which such Indian nationhood will grow and that in deliberately disturbing it we are working for her highest good."

Again :

" Self-Government for India within the Empire is the highest aim which her people can set before themselves or which, as trustees for her, we can help her to attain. Without it, there can be no fullness of civic life, no satisfaction of the natural aspirations which fill the soul of every self-respecting man. The vision is one that may well lift men up to resolve on things that seemed impossible before."

The second part, entitled "The Proposals", practically left the Government of India very much where it was, and recommended for the provincial Governments a system of advance based on the principle of "Dyarchy", rejecting altogether, as unworkable, the Congress-League Scheme.<sup>1</sup>

The Report lays down four main formulæ which run thus :

(i.) There should be, as far as possible, complete popular control in local bodies, and the largest possible independence for them of outside control.

(ii.) The provinces are the domain in which the earliest steps towards the progressive realization of responsible government should be taken. Some measure of responsibility should be given at once, and our aim is to give complete responsibility as soon as conditions permit. This involves at once giving the provinces the largest measure of independence—legislative, administrative and financial—of the Government of India, which is compatible with the due discharge by the latter of its own responsibilities.

(iii.) The Government of India must remain wholly responsible to Parliament, and saving such responsibility its authority in essential matters must remain indisputable pending experience of the effect of the changes now to be introduced in the provinces. In the meantime, the Indian Legislative Council should be enlarged and made more representative and its opportunities of influencing Government increased.

(iv.) In proportion as the foregoing changes take effect, the control of Parliament and the Secretary of State over the Government of India and Provincial Government must be relaxed.

In accordance with the spirit of these formulæ, definite proposals were laid down for starting the provinces of India on the road to responsible government with the prospect of

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix F.

winning their way to the ultimate goal, their prospect hindered, it may be, "at times by hills and rough places, but finding the road nowhere swept away by floods or landslides."

The Report sincerely wanted a foreign bureaucracy to change its heart and the Indian Civil Service to step aside from its position as the executive arm of the State, and assume for the future the rôle of "onlooker and friendly adviser". It was also anxious to invest the local Councils with a certain degree of responsibility, a savour that the Morley-Minto Councils wholly lacked. It was further proposed in the Report to free the Provincial Legislative Councils to a very large extent from their irksome bondage to the Central Government, and to confer upon them some amount of financial, administrative, and executive independence, and make them in some measure the sole and ultimate arbiters of their own destinies. As a measure of devolution based on dyarchy some of the functions of the provincial governments were proposed to be reserved for administration by the Governors-in-Council and some transferred to the charge of ministers who would be appointed by the Governors and responsible to the local Councils. The Legislative Councils it was proposed to enlarge with a very considerable leaven of elected members, and the proposals of the Congress-League Scheme, regarding the proportion of Hindu and Mahomedan members in the various Councils of the Empire, were accepted. The provincial legislatures were to consist of unicameral houses with a complicated and involved suggestion for Grand Committees to meet emergent situations. The Government of India was left wholly responsible to the Secretary of State and Parliament, while a suggestion was put forward to enlarge the Councils at Simla and Delhi and to introduce a greater Indian element into the Viceroy's Executive Council. It was definitely held in this Report that the time had not yet come when the Central Government might undergo much change without inviting danger and loss of efficiency, and its liberalization might be left at a stage where it could only be responsive "to a succession of stimuli from outside". In the matter

of the Imperial Legislature, the Report wanted to divide it into two houses, but not exactly after the fashion of bi-cameral legislatures in other parts of the world.

When the Report was published, it was received in various moods by the politically-minded classes in India. While a section of Indian Nationalists gave a warm-hearted reception to the broad principles and recommendations laid down in the Report, another section considered it wholly unsatisfactory and disappointing. Mrs. Besant, then an outstanding personality and a recognized leader among Indian Nationalists, considered the proposals "ungenerous for England to offer and unworthy for India to accept". The Anglo-Indian Press were fairly startled and up in arms against what they considered to be nothing short of revolutionary changes. An acute controversy arose over the proposals of the Report in all parts of India, and a special session of the Indian National Congress was convened for August, 1918, in Bombay, to discuss them in detail. In this special session as well as in the annual one held at Delhi at the close of the year, the Nationalist Party condemned unequivocally the whole range of the Montford Scheme. On this occasion the Moderates frankly broke away from the extreme wing of the Nationalist Party and organized themselves into a distinct Party as they could not see their way to condemn the proposed reforms lock, stock and barrel. The Anglo-Indians also had awakened to their peculiar position and were anxious to have their place in the new order of things duly recognized.

The Congress having now passed its verdict on the Viceroy's and the Secretary of State's report on constitutional development, Mr. Montagu waited for the considered opinion of the Indian Legislative Council to enable him to gauge correctly how far India was prepared to accept their scheme. On the 6th of September, 1918, Surendra Nath Banerjea moved the following resolution on Constitutional Reforms in the Indian Legislative Council. "This Council, while thanking His Excellency the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India for the Reform proposals, and recognizing

them as a genuine effort and a definite advance towards the progressive realization of responsible government in India, recommends to the Governor-General in Council that a Committee consisting of all the non-official members of this Council be appointed to consider the Reforms Report and make recommendations to the Government of India." Surendra Nath Banerjea wanted a non-official Committee to enable the elected and nominated members of the Council to discuss the Reform proposals with an open mind and without being prejudiced by official frowns or favour, and unaided by official advice and guidance. Mr. V. J. Patel,<sup>1</sup> member for Bombay, objected to the whole of this motion being put to the vote in a lump, as the first portion was difficult for the Extremist party to support, and the second they could not object to. On Sir William Vincent, then the Home Member of the Government of India, approving of the idea, Lord Chelmsford, who was presiding over the meeting, divided Surendra Nath Banerjea's resolutions into two parts to accommodate Mr. Patel and his friends, and put each part separately to the vote of the Council. In the first part forty-six voted for and two against, the two being Mr. Patel and a Member from Madras. On the second portion there were forty-eight "Ayes" and two "Noes", the noes being the European representatives of the Bengal and Bombay mercantile communities. When the Reform Schemes were considered by the Committee of Surendra Nath Banerjea they came out practically unscathed, thus putting heart into Mr. Montagu to go on with his scheme. It is evident that if the Council like the Congress had gone against the Montford Scheme, it would have been impossible for Mr. Montagu to go to Parliament with any Bill at all, and the whole of the Reform Scheme would have been hung up for many a long day. But emboldened by the strong support of the Indian Legislative Council and subsequently reassured by the first session of the Liberal Federation in Bombay in November under the presidency of Surendra Nath Banerjea, Mr. Montagu put his proposals on the parliamentary anvil.

<sup>1</sup> Now the President of the Indian Legislative Assembly.

In accordance with the wishes conveyed in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, two committees were appointed in 1918 to go into the question of the electorates for the different provincial and imperial legislatures, and of the division of the administrative portfolios of the Government into "reserved" and "transferred" departments. Lord Southborough came out from England to preside over the first Committee, and Mr. Feetham, with a great South African reputation, presided over the other. Among Indian members who served on Lord Southborough's Committee were Surendra Nath Banerjea and the Rt. Hon. Srinivasan Sastri, and those who served with Mr. Feetham were Dr. (now Sir) Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. (now Sir) Chimanlal Setalvad.

Before these Committees had begun their task, a general election took place in England, and Mr. Lloyd George's followers came out with a tremendous majority at the polls. In the new cabinet of Mr. Lloyd George, the late Edwin Samuel Montagu was again appointed Secretary of State for India and Sir Satyendra Prasanna Sinha his Under-secretary. This, of course, necessitated the raising of Sir S. P. Sinha to the British Peerage—a fact which, at the time being, created a great sensation all over India. For the first time in the history of India was an Indian raised to the British Peerage—and this against opposition from very high quarters—and given an office in the Government of the United Kingdom. The old angle of vision was fast being changed.

A few months after the Montagu-Chelmsford Report was published, the Government of India awoke to the revolutionary character of some of the proposals in that Report, and invited the opinion of all the provincial Governments upon these recommendations. In the course of a few months, when the provincial reports began to arrive in Simla, the Government of India, under very reactionary influences, had decided to go back upon the main recommendations of the Montford scheme, though Lord Chelmsford's Government still maintained allegiance to the principle of dyarchy, to which the Report had pinned its faith. In the meantime,



all the provincial Governments, excepting Bengal and Bihar and Orissa, had turned their back upon this principle, and wanted an advance of constitutional development on the old unitary structure of Government. The famous despatch of the Government of India of March 5th, 1919, contained the considered views of the central as well as the provincial Governments on the provisions of the proposed bill, together with many valuable notes from very many responsible officers of the State. The Reforms Committee of the India Council and the Secretary of State for India did not fall in with the principal changes suggested in this despatch, and went very much ahead of them.

At this time there was sitting in London a committee, under the presidency of Lord Crewe, previously Secretary of State for India, with Mr. Charles Roberts, and the late Sir George Brunyate and Bhupendra Nath Basu, as some of its members, for the reconstruction of the India Office. This committee, euphemistically described in official language as "Lord Crewe's Committee on the Home Administration of India Affairs", recommended some drastic changes in the character and constitution and the working of the India Office, and wanted all its expenditure to be placed under the British estimates in conformity with an old and insistent demand of the Indian National Congress, and with the usage of the Colonial Office.

Soon after Parliament had re-opened in 1919, Mr. Montagu introduced into the House of Commons his India Bill; and after Mr. Montagu's Bill had been read a second time in the House of Commons early in June, a select committee was appointed from both Houses of Parliament to examine its provisions and hear evidence. The Committee consisted of the following gentlemen: Lord Selborne (Chairman), the Duke of Northumberland, Lord Crewe, Viscount Midleton, Lord Sydenham, Lord Islington, Lord Sinha, Mr. Montagu, Sir John Rees, Mr. Ben Spoor, Mr. Acland, Mr. Ormsby-Gore, Sir Henry Craik, and Sir Thomas Bennett.

A large number of deputations went from India to

England for propagandist work in connection with Mr. Montagu's Government of India Bill. The Liberal Party was represented, by, among others, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Rt. Hon. Srinivasan Sastri, Messrs. C. Y. Chintamani, Ram Chandra Rao, N. M. Samarth, and the author of this book, all of whom appeared before the Joint Parliamentary Committee as witnesses on behalf of their party. The writer was the only witness who sounded a discordant note against the general chorus of approval of the new scheme of dyarchy. The Congress party was represented by Mr. V. J. Patel and Mr. Madhav Rao; Mr. Tilak gave his evidence before the Committee on behalf of his own section of the Home Rule League; while Mrs. Besant and Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer represented the other section of this League; Messrs. Jinnah, Yakub Hossain, and the late Mr. Bhruguri gave their evidence on behalf of the Indian Moslem League, while Mr. A. J. Pugh and Sir John Hewett gave expression to Anglo-Indian opinion on the Bill. A large number of official members, including Lord Meston (then Sir James Meston), Sir Claude Hill, Sir Frank Sly, Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu and Sir Atul C. Chatterji were called upon to place their views before this Committee in camera. Among other gentlemen who appeared as witnesses before this Committee were Lord Southborough, Lord Carmichael, Sir Michael Sadler, Mr. Lionel Curtis, Sir Stanley Reed, and His Highness the Aga Khan. Opportunities were also provided for spokesmen of the depressed classes and the Indian Christian communities to acquaint the parliamentary committee with their views on the Indian Reforms. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the President of the Cawnpore session of the Indian National Congress (1925), also gave evidence before this Committee on the question of women's franchise. If there was any point on which the bulk of the witnesses appeared to agree in a more or less general way, it was in support of the Curtis brand of dyarchy, on which Mr. Montagu as Secretary of State for India had inflexibly set his heart.

After the recess, the committee met again in October, and their report was submitted to Parliament about the

middle of November. As soon as the Report of this committee was received by Parliament, the House of Commons read Mr. Montagu's bill for the third time, and it was rushed through the Lower House without much opposition. In the House of Lords, there was a slight difficulty in getting the bill through, though Lord Sinha, with the help of Lords Curzon and Selborne, piloted the Bill with great tact, ability and diligence. Some slight amendments were adopted in the Upper House, which Mr. Montagu had no hesitation in accepting in the Lower on behalf of the Government. The bill, however, got through the Houses of Parliament about the middle of December, and received royal assent on the 23rd of the same month. A Royal Proclamation<sup>1</sup> was issued along with His Majesty's assent, and paved the way for what then appeared to be to a smooth working of the transitional mechanism introduced by the Government of India Act of 1919.

“ I rely on the leaders of the people, the Ministers of the future, to face responsibility and endure misrepresentation, to sacrifice much for the common interest of the State, remembering that true patriotism transcends party and communal boundaries ; and, while retaining the confidence of the Legislatures, to co-operate with My Officers for the common good in sinking unessential differences and in maintaining the essential standards of a just and generous Government. Equally do I rely upon My Officers to respect their new colleagues and to work with them in harmony and kindness ; to assist the people and their representatives in an orderly advance towards free institutions ; and to find in these new tasks a fresh opportunity to fulfil as in the past their highest purpose of faithful service to My people.”

The Government of India Act, like the Morley-Minto Reforms Act of 1909, was placed on the statute book as a mere skeleton outline of the principles on which the future Government of India and the Provincial Governments would be based, and left much of the details to be filled in

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix G.

by rules of devolution. Immediately after Mr. Montagu's Bill had been placed on the statute book, the Government of India was busy in framing rules in connection with this Act for examination by the Joint Select Committee and for acceptance by Parliament. This informal Advisory Committee discussed and settled the rules in the winter of 1920, at Simla and Delhi. At the same time Lord Meston was examining, as President of a Committee, the financial position of the various provinces and their relation with the Central Government. Lord Meston's Committee's awards, in the matter of financial adjustments, unfortunately did not give satisfaction in Bengal, Madras and Bombay, and the Rules framed by the Delhi Committee similarly fell short of the demands made by the non-Brahmins of Madras, the Sikhs of the Punjab, and the landlords of Bengal. The Sikhs and the Bengal Zemindars sent two deputations to England in 1920 to represent their grievances in the matter of electoral representations in the local and imperial legislature before Lord Selborne's Committee. Unfortunately for these two bodies, their deputations reached England two weeks too late, and already the Government of India were pressing the India Office to get the rules through Parliament, in order to enable them to arrange for the first general election in autumn. The Sikh claim for more adequate representation of their community, in the Councils was practically vetoed in a hurry, both by the India Office and by the Joint Select Committee, while the claims of the Bengal Zemindars were not so summarily dismissed. "

The rules framed by the Government of India were ultimately passed by Parliament in July, 1920, at the instance, and with the recommendations of Lord Selborne's Committee. Only certain details regarding financial readjustments had not then reached the stage of finality.

One of the earliest steps taken towards the inauguration of the new scheme of reforms was the appointment in the Viceroy's Executive Councils of Mr. (now Sir) B. N. Sarma and Dr. (now Sir) Tej Bahadur Sapru, in succession to Sir Claude Hill and Sir George Lowndes—thus raising the number

of the Indian members of this Council from one to three<sup>1</sup>. The next most notable advance in this line was the appointment of Lord Sinha as Governor of Bihar and Orissa and the transfer of the cost of the India Office from the Indian Budget to the British estimates. As a sequel to the latter change, a High Commissioner was appointed for India, with headquarters at Grosvenor Gardens, to look after the purchase of stores for the Government of India, and the welfare of Indian students in England. Sir William Meyer, once the Finance Member of the Government of India, was the first occupant of this office, and since his death this post has been filled by two distinguished Indian Civilians—Mr. Bhore and Sir A. C. Chatterji, and by a non-official Indian, Sir D. Dalal.

The general elections under the new scheme were fixed for November and December, 1920, and a special session of the Congress held in Calcutta in September wanted the Extremist leader to boycott them in pursuance of a campaign of non-co-operation initiated and conducted by Mr. Gandhi. With this new movement the Khilafat Committee joined hands with vehemence. But so far as the first general election under the new Act was concerned, the efforts of non-co-operation failed to ensure their object, and all the seats in all the Councils were filled up. The new Councils in Madras, Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi were inaugurated by His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught in the months of January and February, 1921, and with their inauguration, the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme of Constitutional Reforms came fully into operation.

Before, however, the new Scheme of Reforms could be given a fair trial, India was overtaken by a new crisis and by a new movement, the history of which has to be recounted in order that we may appreciate the future development of Indian nationalism.

<sup>1</sup> The other Indian member at this time was Sir Sankaran Nair who resigned his seat in the Viceroy's Cabinet on account of his acute differences with his colleagues over the administration of martial law in the Punjab. Sir Sankaran Nair is now an elected non-official member of the Council of State.