

CHAPTER ONE

**RESISTANCE  
AND  
RESURGENCE**

RESISTANCE  
(1757-1775)

***The Battle of Plassey and After***

Due to sanguinary squabbles for the possession of the throne of Delhi and the hard blows dealt by the Mahrattas and other war-lords of the South "the authority of the Great Moghul, though it might still continue to be formally recognised even in distant provinces, was fast ceasing to have any real existence" in the middle of the 18th century.

In Europe, war was declared between England and France on May 21, 1744, and their respective interests in India could be maintained by the servants of the Companies concerned "by making alliances with India's Princes, besieging each other's commercial settlements" and fighting their battles quite frequently to secure a firmer foothold on the soil of India for territorial domination and consolidation of commercial and diplomatic interests.

In the meantime, dame chance had been playing her pranks in arranging the political stage of Bengal for events of far-reaching consequences. On the death of Ali Verdi Khan, the Nawab of Bengal, on April 10, 1756, the inheritance fell on his young grandson Siraj-ud-daula, a boy of mere twenty. Siraj was badly equipped, both intellectually and morally, to cope with the

stratagem of the seasoned veterans, both Muslim and Hindu, most of whom were trying to gain upperhand in the affairs of the State and use him as a mere pawn in the game with a hand stretched towards the foreign traders for a warm grasp.

The servants of the Company did not hesitate to take full advantage of this troubled situation and started active participation in the faction and intrigue with those who were more susceptible to their overtures. Through bluff, bribery, treachery and fraud, they mustered sufficient courage to meet the Nawab's troops in an open encounter and gained a decisive victory in the Battle of Plassey on the fateful day of June 23, 1757.

Amongst the several hundreds of soldiers who died fighting for the Nawab was Mir Madan, one of the Generals. He was hit by a cannon ball and hurriedly removed to the camp just to expire in the presence of the Nawab himself. Mir Madan is the first sacrifice and therefore occupies the top place in the Roll of Honour in the battle for driving away the British from Bengal.

The next place goes to another General of the Nawab. Mohan Lal came to know "of the fatal order that had been issued in the name of the Nawab to retire within the camp." He was terribly suspicious of the motive "which dictated the advice and foresaw the inevitable consequences." He openly declared "that the very attempt to retire would spread a universal panic and throw the army into confusion." His remonstrances proved unavailing. As a great patriot and faithful soldier, he stood fighting with the enemy forces almost single-handed and gave up his life in upholding the highest honour of a warrior confronted with a powerful adversary.

The Nawab was brutally murdered on July 2, 1757.

The victors of Plassey played the game of king-making with consummate skill, not without great blemishes on honesty and decorum of human behaviour, and the plebians and patricians of conquered Bengal were reduced overnight to the position of mere serfs having no voice in the momentous changes that had been bringing a free country under foreign domination.

Those who could see through the veil of wiles and nasty political games realised very soon the ultimate aim of the foreigners. The battle of Wandiwash in the South fought between the English and the French on January 22, 1760, left the

former completely without any European rivals in India. It must be a bold conception of fighting the British when victory had been waiting to do their bidding. But courageous hearts, though not many, were not lacking who thought of resorting to force of arms for holding the growing influence of the foreigners in check.

The reverberations of the booming guns of Plassey had not completely died down when distant echo of military preparations became faintly audible in the air. Thus, the war with the British continued with occasional breaks by individuals and groups, big or small, at diverse localities from north to south and west to east, including Burma. Though not quite close to each other in point of time and place, the skirmishes went on right up to August 15, 1947, when India secured the status of an Independent State from the white man's domination roughly after two centuries of relentless fight for freedom.

A period of resistance soon started after the Battle of Plassey by the Rajas, Zemindars with large estates and big stakes in the country. The revolt was more against the economic exploitation, the ruin of traditional trade and industry and shrinkage of power and privileges hitherto enjoyed by them than political influence. The Rajas of Birbhum, Burdwan, Bishnupur, Ramgarh, Dacca, etc., individually tried to test the authority and military strength of the British usurpers from time to time, but never collectively and without much success.

### Mir Kasim

The first man who had the courage and stamina to rise in arms against a powerful enemy flushed with victory at Plassey was Mir Kasim, the Nawab of Bengal from September 27, 1760 to July 7, 1763. The dissension started with the claim on the part of Company's servants to internal trading duty free, a condition which the Nawab refused to accept. Matters took an ugly turn and Mir Kasim was bold enough to seize some arms meant for the Company's troops on February 19, 1763. He refused to deliver them up when demanded to do so.

The Rubicon was crossed and "the quarrel was now irreconcilable and nothing but the sword could decide it." War broke out and on July 19, 1763, the Nawab sustained a heavy

defeat between Calcutta and Murshidabad. The fight was continued and at Gheria (Murshidabad) on August 2, and Udhanala, six miles south of Rajmahal, on September 5, misfortune followed his track. On November 6, with his acquiescence about half a dozen prominent English residents and prisoners numbering about 125, were put to death at Patna where he had retired after his last reverse.

Mir Kasim was determined to drive out the feringhis lock, stock and barrel, from Bengal. History (Marshman, J. C.: *The History of India*, Vol. I, p. 297) records that he "observed the strictest economy by which he discharged all his obligations to the English." Then "he gave his entire attention to the great object of emancipating himself from the pressure of their authority, and restoring freedom to the soobah." Unfortunately he was finally defeated in the Battle of Buxar on October 23, 1764, and the one blazing light in the thickening gloom faded out.

#### **Army Revolt—Patna**

There was a terrible mutiny in the Indian Army stationed at Patna in May 1764. Munro on arrival from Bombay "found the troops, Europeans as well as Sepoys, extremely mutinous deserting to the enemy, threatening to carry off their officers, demanding higher pay." Munro noticed that "a whole battalion of Sepoys, with their arms and accoutrements, went to join the enemy." These deserters were pursued and some of them captured and brought back as prisoners.

Munro ordered a field court-martial to be immediately held. The prisoners were found guilty of mutiny and desertion, and sentenced to suffer death in any manner which the commander should direct. He ordered not a few of them to be forthwith tied to the guns and blown away. (Mill J. and Wilson H. H.: *The History of British India*, 1858, Vol. III, p. 246).

#### **Army Revolt—Bengal**

In 1765, the revolt of the 15th Battalion of the Bengal Army assumed serious proportions. They were ordered to proceed to Tamruk, Midnapore, to board a ship, which, as they were told,

would carry them to an unknown destination with the object of fighting the Dutch. A rumour gained currency that they were to fight the French. On September 3, 1765, the leaders with their men disobeyed the order with the result that Raghunath Singh, Umraogir and Yusuf Khan were tied to cannon mouth and blown away. The Army was completely disbanded.

### • Sannyasi Rebellion

The Sannyasi Rebellion (1762-1774) carried on by a combination of Sannyasis and Muslim Fakirs, who to Hastings were "the gipsies of Hindustan, . . . hardy, bold and enthusiastic to a degree passing credit." They were regarded at least for some time "the stoutest and most active men in India." They, according to official records, "inhabit or rather possess the country lying south of the hills of Tibet from Cabul to China."

In 1763, they infested the countryside round Backergunj and took possession of the English Factory at Dacca. In 1768, they had a sanguinary conflict with the British in the Saran District, Bihar. In 1770, they appeared in Dinajpur and then in Dacca and in the northern part of Rajshahi. They extended their depredations far and wide and were able to create serious trouble to the ruling authorities

"carrying incursions to Bengal near Purnea, Tirhut, and Dinajpur culminating in a remarkable victory in 1772 in Rangpur over the United British and Mussalman forces, a success which was not followed up."

The Sannyasis became a real menace and but for a change in the attitude, so it is alleged, in the leader or leaders, they would have been able to hold sway for long over a vast tract of territory then held by the British.

### The Mahrattas

The Mahrattas (1765-1818) engaged with powerful hostile neighbours, were not very much concerned with the growing strength of the foreigners. However, they encountered a fight with the British on May 3, 1765, with indecisive results.

They next attacked the British troops with some strength at Vadgaon on January 9, 1779. In the next year they marched on Dabhoi on January 1, and occupied Ankleswar and a few other

places of no great importance. They had to retreat from the place on April 19, 1780.

The camp at Khandala was attacked by the Mahrattas on February 8, 1781, and the British General had to beat a hasty retreat.

The Mahratta fleet captured a British General, Col. Macleod, and two other officers together with some men on April 7, 1783, at Vijaydrug and put all of them to death.

Reverses now visited the Mahratta Army at Koli, near Aligarh, on August 28, and Asai on September 23, 1803. The last battle was fought at Rampura on January 10, 1818.

There was not much left of the people of the Great Shivaji's territory to cause any headache to the British generals or administrators in India thereafter.

### Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan

Haider Ali became alert with the spread of influence and military strength of the British and came into open conflict with the forces under the British on June 11, 1760, at Tiyagar in South Arcot. In 1780 (October 31), Haider occupied Arcot. The English fleet attacked Haider's new shipping and destroyed it at Calicut and Mangalore in October 1781. Haider risked a general engagement with the English army at Porto Novo on July 1, 1781, and was completely defeated when he retired to Arcot. In May 1782, he carried Permakoil and on June 2, 1782, attacked the British General and forced him to retire.

War-weary Haider died in a camp near Chittoor on December 7, 1782.

Tipu carrying on the fight with the assistance of the French sustained defeat in November 1782, at Paniani. He was forced to evacuate Arcot and proceed towards Bednore which capitulated on February 16, 1783. He appeared before Bednore on April 19, and took three neighbouring places and invaded Mangalore on May 4.

In July 1789, Tipu was faced with a combination of the Nizam, the Peshwa and the English. He met a contingent of the forces in May 1790. In October, Tipu retook Erod and Dharampur but his generals were defeated near Calicut on December 10, 1790. The Malabar coast was freed of Tipu's troops on December 17. A siege was laid of Seringapatam, his stronghold, on April 5, 1799,

which surrendered on May 4. Tipu was wounded and finally shot dead by a grenadier.

### Cheit Singh

In the meantime Raja Cheit Singh of Benares, rather his people, rose against the administration of Warren Hastings. His ultimate refusal to pay "the increased tribute", to supply "three bodies of Sepoys" and alleged disrespect to British officers precipitated a military action against him.

The brief story has been narrated by British historians (Mill J. and Wilson H. H., Vol. III, p. 258 *et seq*) as it occurred in 1774. The Council of the Hon'ble Company made Cheit Singh independent in his Government at Benares, "under no condition but the payment of a fixed and invariable tribute" and "no more demands should be made upon him of any kind; nor on any pretence whatsoever, should any person be allowed to interfere with his authority."

In 1778, a requisition was made on Cheit Singh "for the maintenance of three battalions of sepoy, estimated at five lacs of rupees per annum." Secret presents were also demanded and received by Hastings from the Raja through confidential agents. His greed was for bigger amounts of hard cash and Hastings, in his own words, "had determined to make him pay largely for his pardon, or to exact a severe vengeance for his past delinquency," which according to impartial historians "consisted, exclusively, in a reluctance to submit to the imposition of a very heavy burthen, from which the Raja considered that he ought to be free."

Cheit Singh tried various ways, but nothing would satisfy the Governor General. Hastings started for Benares on July 7, 1781, from Calcutta "with the intention of inflicting a severe vengeance on the Raja." He arrived in Benares on August 14, 1781, declined to see the Raja, sent his demands and a formal accusation to Cheit Singh and almost forthwith put him under arrest on August 15, 1781, in his own palace under a military guard.

The arrest was regarded as the "deepest disgrace and injury" and it was taken as "an excess of punishment to a very considerable degree beyond the line of justice and humanity."

The confinement of their prince was viewed by his men as

an "outrage of the most atrocious description." The two companies of sepoy's who were placed on guard were overwhelmed in no time. Two additional companies were ordered to their support. A furious engagement between the people and the troops ensued in which the sepoy's and their officers were all destroyed.

Further troops were sent to suppress the rebellious people of Benares and a large number proceeded to Ramnagar to attack the palace. In a fierce counter-attack the Commanding Officer, Popham, was killed; considerable loss was inflicted on the Company's forces.

Cheit Singh, when released by his people, crossed the river to the other bank to safety. The whole people of the country was highly infuriated against the English. "The contagion of revolt and hostility flew with unusual rapidity and strength." Not only Cheit Singh's territory, "but one half of the province of Oudh was in a state of as complete a rebellion as Benares."

Hastings reckoned the situation as extremely grave and made good his escape secretly after it became dark to Chunar, leaving the wounded sepoy's behind completely unattended.

Cheit Singh's men fought the Company's sepoy's at different places but luck ultimately favoured Hastings and the rising was quelled with unusual ferocity in the course of the next three months.

### **Malabar Ferment**

The Malabar was in a state of ferment and Pyche Raja (Kerala Verma Raja) raised the banner of revolt in 1792 which was solely aimed against the British.

### **Wazir Ali**

In Oudh, Wazir Ali adopted a desperate course (January 14, 1799) murderously attacking Mr. Cherry, the British Resident, in Benares. He entered Oudh at the head of a strong force supplied by a group of disaffected zemindars.

### **Dhundia Wagh**

Dhundia Wagh, Chief of Bednore, Mysore, a Mahratta by birth, rallied a strong force, mainly drawn from Tipu's forces, around him and successfully ravaged the Karnatak under both



the British and the Mahratta troops and killed Dhondu Pant Gokhale. He remained a real terror to the British forces for a fairly long time but was defeated in the battle fought on the right bank of Malprabha. Ultimately he was overcome and killed on September 9, 1800, at Kongal.

### **Army Revolts**

Two other Army revolts, viz., Madras (Vellore) in 1806 eclipsed by the mutinous attitude of the 47th Bengal Native Infantry which refused to proceed to Burma, show the degree of discontent prevailing in sections of the army men. The spirit had not died down and the last in the series before 1857, the great upheaval, was the outbreak in the Bengal Army when seven battalions rose in open revolt over the question of allowance for men in garrisons in newly acquired territories.

### **Wahabi Movement**

The great Wahabi Movement was started by one Syed Ahmad of Rae Bareilly with the principal object of re-establishing Mahomedan domination. Gradually its operations were directed against foreigners and later towards Hindus and the Sikhs when it lost much of its national character. The Wahabis began to organise secretly from Patna, with its headquarters at Sittana (North Western Frontier Province) with centres distributed far and wide. In 1863, they met in great strength the British forces in Swat country and suffered a serious setback though seldom relaxing their activities.

In the course of hearing of the case against Amir Khan, one of the accredited leaders detained under Regulation III of 1818, the Chief Justice J. P. Norman of the Calcutta High Court was stabbed to death on September 20, 1871, by a Wahabi named Abdulla. The assassination of Lord Mayo, the Viceroy of India, in the Andamans by Sher Ali, a Wahabi, on February 8, 1872, is alleged to have been taken as a revenge against the adverse decision in Amir Khan's case. The communal character of the movement overshadowed their actions against the British with whom they had principally to contend for political power.

### Titu Mir

Amongst those who had the courage to rise against the ruling authorities, Titu Mir occupies a distinct place. Possessed of great physical strength, he collected a large number of insurgents around him and with their help he exercised undisputed sway (1831-32) over a very large tract north and east of Calcutta together with nearly the whole of 24-Parganas, Nadia and Faridpur. Narkelbaria in 24-Parganas was turned into a 'fort' whence he would carry out his depredations far and wide.

### Tribal and other Insurrections

Stray uprisings of more or less serious nature were rather frequent. Tribal revolts were many, of which the Chuar (inhabitants of a territory between Ghatsila and Barabhum) in 1770 and 1779, Khasis (1783), Ganjam Rising (1798), Nair Battalion (1804), Faradi Movement (1804-1838), Khandesh Tribals under Velu Tampi, Dewan of Travancore (1808), the Jats (1809), Gujar Revolt of Shaharanpur (1813), Bhils of Khandesh (1818), Bundelkhand Clan under Gopal Singh and Divakar Dixit (1824), Kittur (Belgaum) Rising (1824), Kols (1831-32), Bhumij of Manbhum (1832), the leaders of Vizianagram (1794-1834), Naga Revolt (1839), Kohlapur under Anna Sahcb (1844), Khonds of Orissa (1846), the most troublesome of all, the Sonthals under Sindhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairab (1855), and the Mundas (1857) deserve distinct mention amongst many others of a minor nature.

Amongst other less known individuals who rose against the British were: the Raja of Dhalbhum (1766-67), Poligars of the Ceded Districts of Bellary, etc. (1802), Narasingha Dattatreya of Nizam's territory, Raja of Vizianagram (1794), a Singpoh Chief of Assam (1839), Talukdar of Bareilly (1866) etc., etc.

### *For Whom Death had no Terror*

While memories of more recent events have been slipping out into haziness, the case of Maharaja Nanda Kumar ('Nuncomar' in foreign records) after a lapse of nearly two centuries still stirs up a poignant remembrance in the minds of millions of

Indians of the present age to whom the pages of history 'did ne'r unroll' their precious contents for illumination of the dark corners of their unlettered mind.

The Maharaja (a title conferred upon him by the Emperor Shah Alam in May 1764) brought certain charges of corruption against Warren Hastings before the Board of Directors for investigation. "Instead of choosing to confront his accuser," as Mill J. and Wilson, H. H. (*The History of British India*, 1858, Vol. III, p. 446 *et seq*) say, "and to avail himself of the advantage of innocence, in hearing and challenging the pretences of a false accusation," Hastings with immaculate shrewdness evaded and blocked all enquiries against him.

To save countenance, Hastings "took the extra-ordinary resolution of prosecuting, with all the might of his authority, the man by whom he was accused." The charge was that Nanda Kumar was a party to a conspiracy of forcing a man "to write a petition" against Hastings and his henchmen in March 1770. Subsequent enquiry proved this to be a base lie. The Maharaja was held to bail on a charge of forgery.

The accused was arrested on May 6, 1775, and thrown into the common jail. In a trial lasting from June 6 to June 18, the outcome of which was a foregone conclusion, Nanda Kumar was sentenced to be hanged on August 5, 1775.

The country was aghast. Wilson wrote in 1858:

"No transaction, perhaps, of this whole administration more deeply tainted the reputation of Hastings, than the tragedy of Nuncomar. At the moment when he stood forth as an accuser of the Governor-General, he was charged with a crime, alleged to have been committed five years before; tried, and executed; a proceeding which could not fail to generate the suspicion of guilt, and of an inability to encounter the weight of his testimony.... The very fact that Hastings fully knew the sinister interpretation which the destruction of an accuser of Nuncomar's eminence would expose him, and still from which he would not desist, leads to a fair inference that from the accusations he dreaded something worse than those suspicions.

"The crime for which Nuncomar was made to suffer, was not a capital offence, by the laws of Hindustan. It was affirmed that this atrocious condemnation and execution were upon an *ex-postfacto* law, as the Statute which created the Supreme Court and its powers was not published till 1774, and the date of the supposed forgery was in 1770;.. that the evidence adduced was not sufficient to warrant condemnation."

It is remarkable that the most salutary provision of staying execution till the Privy Council had given its verdict was blatantly ignored in this case.

With the removal of Nanda Kumar from his way, Hastings secured comparative peace from public accusations. Francis said before the House of Commons that

“it impressed a general terror on the natives with respect to preferring accusations against men in great power, . . . they (the accusers and their co-adjutors) were unwilling to expose themselves to what appeared to them a manifest danger.”

In spite of some involvement in inescapable state intrigues of the day, Maharaja Nanda Kumar at the time of the prosecution enjoyed a unique social standing and financial position in Bengal. According to Busted:

“Though his life had not been free from some adverse vicissitudes, his talents and experience gained him wealth, and his services to the Government at Murshidabad, and to that of the Company at Calcutta, raised him to the position of a very influential and conspicuous personage in Bengal.”

For his many qualities of head and heart he was held in high esteem by all classes of his countrymen enjoying confidence of friends, and at times, even of some of his detractors who had to grapple with him in many other fronts. His great attachment to social customs and conventions, his devotion to religious faith and on the top of everything, his complete resignation to the Will of God secured for him a unique position not attained by many people coming before or after him. Moreover, he was about seventy when the evil eye of Hastings and Impey fell upon him and consecrated him to an unmerited death and perennial sympathy of the millions of his contemporaries and of generations of his countrymen to come.

If, in life Nanda Kumar was great, in death he left a legacy of name that will never tarnish, never vanish. He proved the strength of his inner self ignoring the stings and horror of death raising himself to a higher level of human existence.

Placed under circumstances prevailing at the time, he fought his way as best as he could ultimately ascending the steps to the gallows in a manner that astonished the whole world. His soul might find some comfort over the events that were enacted after

the lapse of a little over a century within the boundaries of his Motherland.

His followers to the gallows have even surpassed him in certain respects. The Maharaja had crossed the nature's span of life—the proverbial three score and ten—and was not aware that his endeavours would end so disastrously for him. His example of facing death with exemplary fortitude and complete resignation has been copied or even surpassed with a spirit of banter towards death by much younger men of after-age.

His was a case of diabolical, calculated political and judicial murder, perpetrated in the name of the State. Almost unto the last days of British rule in India, his fellow countrymen had been victims of worse conspiracy on the part of the executive, may also be of the judiciary, without any impeachments as those of Hastings and Impey, with more easy convictions resulting in death or incarceration in the distant Indian 'Bastille', the Andamans, and elsewhere. His spirit infused the future generations with fortitude worthy of the cause. About these intrepid fighters and the way they looked at the gallows, Beveridge (*Ibid*, p. 383) wrote, "The stoicism which existed only in theory among the Greeks has been reduced to practice by the Hindoos." In the face of danger,

"when they are convinced that the inevitable hour is come they often seem as if a new soul had been breathed into them and view death in its most terrific forms with an apparent unconcern, which if not apathy, is heroism."

Such was the spirit displayed by Nanda Kumar and his countrymen starting with the Chapekar brothers in 1897 and ending with Udham Singh in London in 1940. Let their troubled spirits enjoy eternal peace in the thought that India attained independence over their scattered skeletons strewn all along the way to the ultimate goal.

## APPENDIX

The following is the account (Busteed, H. E.: *Echoes from Old Calcutta* 1888, p. 87) of the execution written by Alexander Macrabie, the Sheriff, whose distasteful duty it was to see it carried out:

Friday evening the 4th August. After we were both seated, he spoke with great ease and such seeming unconcern that I really doubted whether he was sensible of his approaching fate. I therefore bade the interpreter inform him that I was come to show him this last mark of respect, and to assure him that every attention should be given the next morning which could afford him comfort on so melancholy an occasion.....

He said that fate was not to be resisted, and put his finger to his forehead.... God's will must be done.... His composure was wonderful, not a sigh escaped him, nor the smallest alteration of voice or countenance, though I understood he had not many hours before taken a solemn leave of his son-in-law, Roy Radicum. I found myself so much second to him in firmness, that I could stay no longer. Going downstairs, the jailer informed me that, since the departure of his friends he had been writing notes and looking at accounts in his usual way. I began now to apprehend that he had taken his resolution and fully expected that he would be found dead in the morning; but on Saturday, the 5th, at seven, I was informed that everything was in readiness at the jail for the execution. I came here about half an hour past seven. The howlings and lamentations of the poor wretched people who were taking their last leave of him are not to be described. I have hardly recovered the first shock while I write this about three hours afterwards....

There was no lingering about him, no affected delay. He came cheerfully into the room.... Seeing somebody look at a watch, he got up and said he was ready, and immediately turning to three Brahmins who were to attend and take care of his body, he embraced them all closely but without the least mark of melancholy or depression on his part, while they were in agonies of grief and despair.... Upon it being recommended to him, that at the place of execution he would give some signal when he had done with the world, he said he would speak.

We sat about an hour longer during which he addressed himself more than once to me;...but without any seeming anxiety; the rest of the time, I believe, he passed in prayer, his lips and tongue moving and his beads hanging upon his hand. He then looked to me and arose,...then walked cheerfully to the gate and seated himself in his palanquin, looking around him with perfect unconcern....The Rajah sat in his palanquin upon the bearers' shoulders and looked around at first with some attention. I did

not observe the smallest decomposure in his countenance or manner at the sight of the gallows or any of the ceremonies passing about it. . . . He was in no way desirous of protracting the business, but repeatedly told me that he was ready. . . . When he was not engaged in conversation he lay back in the palanquin, moving his lips and tongue as before.

I then caused him to be asked about the signal he was to make, which could not be done by speaking, on account of the noise of the crowd. He said he would make a motion with his hand; and when it was represented to him that it would be necessary for his hands to be tied in order to prevent any involuntary motion, and I recommended his making motion with his foot, he said he would. Nothing now remained except the last painful ceremony. I ordered his palanquin to be brought close under the gallows, but he chose to walk, which he did more erect than I have generally seen him. At the foot of the steps which led to the stage he put his hands behind him to be tied with handkerchief, looking around at the same time with the utmost unconcern. Some difficulties arising about the cloth which should be tied over his face, he told the people that it must not be done by one of us. . . . The Rajah pointed to a servant of his own, who was lying prostrate at his feet, and beckoned him to do it. He had some weakness in his feet, which, added to the confinement of his hands, made him mount the steps with difficulty; but he showed not the least reluctance, scrambling forward to get up. He then stood erect on the stage, while I endeavoured. . . . to see if I could observe the smallest symptom of fear or alarm; but there was no trace of it. My own spirits sank, and I stepped into my palanquin; but before I was seated he had given the signal, and the stage was removed. I could observe, when I was little recovered, that his arms lay back in the same position in which I found them first tied, nor could I see any contortion on that side of his mouth and face which was visible.

In a word, his steadiness, composure, and resolution throughout the whole of this melancholy transaction were equal to any examples of fortitude I have ever read or heard of.

## ***Later Ventures***

(1857-1900)

### **The Great Upheaval**

British power had been proceeding apace towards consolidation but not without a solemn warning. In a letter written on August 11, 1825, Ram Mohan Ray wrote to J. S. Buckingham that

“Enemies to liberty, and friends of despotism have never been and never will be successful.”

It was<sup>a</sup> a lone voice to which no serious thought was lent. With the cessation of Burmese and Sikh wars, no other power within or outside India having had the courage to get involved in hostilities, the British Imperialists expected a quiet rule over the whole of the sub-continent. But the most serious threat to British occupation in India came in the shape of Sepoy War in 1857, “to oust the foreign devil”. To say that it was simply a mutiny of Indian sepoys is to present a portion of the whole picture. “It was a combination of military grievance, national hatred and religious fanaticism against the English occupation in India” and all these combined “converted a military mutiny into a national religious war.”

The first shot was discharged by Sepoy No. 1446, Mangal Pande, belonging to the 5th Company of the 34th Regiment, Bengal Native Infantry, on March 29, 1857, at Barrackpore. The discontent manifested in the act of Pande spread like wild fire amongst the sepoys of widely separated areas. From the nature and trend of events it does not take much time to notice that the object of the conflagration was not simply to protest against the use of greased cartridges and for their withdrawal but it was something more. It was a desperate violent outburst of the discontent that had accumulated in the minds of the people due to divergent reasons which might individually be political, economic, social and religious, or a combination of two or more of them. The situation was nicely put by Justice Macarthy when he said that it was a War of Independence with at least some of the leaders who either directly took part in the outbreak or actively supported



the insurgents with resources of every kind. With at least a few the aim was the overthrow of the British, first and foremost; on the same plane met diverse forces that had never occurred before with the common object of putting an end to a political domination that had been spreading its tentacles on the very existence of Indian nationhood.

Ordinarily in a fight for freedom, a few, just a very small percentage of the whole populace, get prepared for any sacrifice; a larger number extend their support openly or in secret; a still larger number take sympathetic interest; and the main bulk remain idle spectators. Of the last group, the majority is afraid of any change, the prevailing administration being always accepted by them as tolerable if not good.

The man who throws the first stone at any object representing foreign authority, with a patriotic motive, inspires the contemporary or the future generation of his country to send a bullet or a bomb along its course. Undoubtedly he sows the initial seed of armed revolution.

The essence of waging war against the Government consists in the intention with which any of the offensive components of the crime is applied. The Mutiny of 1857 forthwith affected a large section of the military personnel all over the country because of a common grievance entertained individually or collectively by all of them. The discontent amongst the civil population for reasons characteristic of each class was widespread and the spark started by the mutinous troops touched off the heaps of gunpowder of discontent dumped all over the land.

The 19th Bengal infantry mutinied at Berhampore on February 26, 1857, which was promptly suppressed. The 3rd Bengal Cavalry stationed at Meerut on April 24, and the 7th Infantry at Lucknow on May 3, refused to obey their respective officers.

On May 10, the Meerut prisoners were released by their comrades; the European officers and a large number of civilians were murdered. Flushed with apparent success a large section of the rebels marched off to Delhi. The next day the bulk of the soldiers reached Delhi and attacked the Europeans killing a large number of them. The troops at Delhi rose in revolt on May 11, and murdered the European Officer proclaiming Bahadur Shah the Emperor of Hindustan.

On May 16, about fifty Europeans, so far held captive, were murdered.

Now things began to assume serious proportions. On May 13, the 47th and the 57th Infantry stationed at Ferozepore mutinied and their attempt to rifle the magazine was timely frustrated. The men of the 45th Infantry were pursued for twelve miles some of whom were mercilessly killed and a large number was imprisoned.

Sepoys at Aligarh, Jullundur, Philawar, Lahore, Nowshera, Hansi, Hissar, Harina, Bareilly, Moradabad, Shahjahanpur, Neemuch, Aurangabad, Fyzabad, Hamirpur, Jubbulpore, Peshawar and other places rebelled on different dates close to one another with considerable damage to most of these places and loss of lives of many Europeans. In some places the mutiny was suppressed before long with shooting of a large number of the mutineers and hundreds taken as prisoners.

A few of the Native Chiefs such as Patiala, Nabha, Jhind, and Kapurthala pledged their support to the Britishers which was tested to the extreme.

On May 29, two regiments of Nasirabad started for Delhi with their arms. On the same day troops at Lucknow rose in revolt. On May 30, a rebel force was attacked by British troops at Ghaziuddinagar and was badly defeated.

Delhi became the centre where the mutineers converged from different parts of the country. The sepoy at Muttra killed some of their European Officers and marched towards Delhi.

The 37th Infantry was disarmed at Benares on June 4.

The activities of Nana Saheb now came to the fore. On June 4, he captured about 130 Europeans fleeing from Fatehgarh and as a reprisal for European atrocities committed on disarmed sepoy, put all of them to death. The treasury at Cawnpore was completely plundered.

The Rani Lakshmbai of Jhansi took the lead in her territory and the 12th Infantry attacked the European Officers and killed almost all of them on June 5. Mutiny soon spread to areas hitherto free from contagion. At Allahabad mutiny broke out on June 6, and several European Officers were attacked in a mess and all of whom were killed.

Two infantry and cavalry divisions revolted at Jullundur on

June 7, ransacked Ludhiana and started for Delhi. In a fight at the same place the rebels lost several guns on June 8, where the first serious reverse took place.

On June 12, the 5th Irregular Cavalry stationed at Rohini, Deogarh, turned recalcitrant and had to be handled roughly.

The Gwalior Contingent joined the mutiny and slaughtered several Englishmen on June 14. The sepoy of the 10th Native Infantry mutinied on June 18, at Furakkabad. Between June 17 and June 30, the British troops successfully attacked many important strongholds of the mutineers with significant success.

At Cawnpore the English residents experienced the severest ordeal. There was a serious loss of life between June 6 and June 27. The Lucknow Residency was attacked on July 1, and the defending British General was killed.

Mutiny spread to Holkar's Army on July 1, and a number of British troops and civilians were killed at Indore. The Mhow soldiers joined the band of rebels.

It was now a conflagration that scattered its ravages to distant zones. Agra, Bijnor, Ambala, Azingunge, Bara Banki, Budaun, Muttra, Banda, Begungunge, Najafgarh, Maharajpur, Dhar, Mandisore, Sehora, Rahtgarh Fort, Gurrukota Fort, Malthoor, etc., were severally attacked. The Kotah Contingent mutinied on July 4; the cantonment was attacked and the city thoroughly ransacked. On the same day the Rohilkhand rebels attacked the British forces at Delhi with very little success.

The 9th Native Cavalry and the 6th Infantry mutinied at Sialkot on July 9, but were put to flight before any great mischief could be done.

Nana's forces proved to be the most daring amongst the rebels attacking 3,500 British soldiers on July 12, with signal success. He was in turn defeated on July 16, and had to leave the field on July 19. His palace at Bithur was burnt to ashes.

Delhi became the centre of attack and counter-attack by July 14, and by the end of the month the mutineers' loss was remarkably heavy. More mutineers joined the fray from different quarters. Three regiments started for Delhi from Dinapore on July 25. The 12th Irregular Cavalry revolted at Segauli, Champaran. The treasury was stormed and the resisting British troops suffered heavily. The General was killed.

By July 31, 1857, the South showed signs of extreme unrest. Places like Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, etc., were severely affected, but the ravages were negligible compared with the North.

From July 29, the War took a bad turn for the mutineers. At Delhi, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Peshawar, Bundelkhand, Fatchpur, Arrah, Furakkabad and a few other places, the rebels greatly suffered by the death of the fighting units and loss of guns. Gaya was an exception where the British troops, had to surrender with great loss. The sepoy prisoners were released and the European residents somehow managed to escape with their lives. The soldiers stationed at Deogarh, Hazaribagh and Sonthal Parganas rebelled and refused to obey the orders of their respective officers.

Delhi was again stormed by the rebels on September 14. Severe loss was sustained by both sides, the mutineers' share being the larger. The Emperor's palace was overtaken. Bahadur Shah and his wife and a son were taken prisoners from Humayun's tomb on September 21. Two sons and a grandson of the old King were captured and mercilessly put to death.

Execution took place of Shankar Shah, a Gond Raja and his son on September 18, 1857, at Jubbulpore. Serious unrest that needed firm handling were noticeable at Chota Nagpur (July), Hazaribagh (30th July), Ramgarh (1st August), Lohardaga (2nd August), Palamau (21st October), Sambalpur and other places.

The rebellion was nearing its end by November though the dying embers would flare up into flame here and there. The 34th Infantry rose in revolt in Chittagong on November 18, which was followed by mutiny at Dacca on November 22. At both the places the rebels were defeated and a large section was forced to fly to Jalpaiguri.

The last fight which deserves a separate mention was between the forces of Muhammad Hussein, a rebel Talukdar of Majhauri, and the British troops on December 26, the latter coming out victorious. The end of the memorable year 1857 saw the post-war reprisals of the remnant rebels and their leaders of the most ferocious type till the government of Canning intervened and changed the course of events.

It must be admitted that the demand of the troops, at least of a very large section, was to find out an alternative authority that would be accepted as a challenge to the British administra-

tion of the country. The spirit of winning freedom at any cost was there. Bahadur Shah in his trial (January 27 to March 9, 1858) was found guilty of siding with and abetting the mutiny of troops; waging war against the British Government by encouraging and assisting various persons for the purpose of assuming sovereignty of Hindustan. He was found guilty of complicity in the Mutiny, and was transported *via* Calcutta to Rangoon in December 1858, where he died on November 7, 1862.

The credit for starting the mutiny goes to the Indian Sepoys no doubt. A considerable section of the Princes, landed aristocracies, Chieftains, Talukdars and peasants, etc., lent to the 'mutiny' another hue. Rani Lakshmi Bai (Jhansi), Kunwar Singh, Umer Singh (Shahabad), Reza Ali Khan, Hyder Ali Khan (Rajgir), Jeodhur Singh (Bihar), Peer Ali Khan, Ahsaf Hussein (Patna), Surendra Sahee (Sambulpur), Bishonath Sahee (Lohardaga), Arjoon Singh (Singhbhum), Neelmony Singh (Bankura), Bindabun Tewaree (Midnapore), Rao Bhopal Singh, Ahmad Khan (Multan), Mahtab Singh (Aligarh), Naniram Dutta (Assam), Man Singh (Shahagunge), Muhammad Bakht Khan (Rohtak), Muhammad Khan (Bijnor), Prince Feroze Shah (Delhi), Raja of Satasi, Begun Hazrat Nahal (Rohilkhand), Muhammad Sasan (Gorakhpur), Hyder Ali Khan (Gaya), Subadar Ali Baksh (Hamirpur), Raja of Banpur, Raja Sankar Shah (Jubbulpore), Waris Ali (Patna), Nilambar and Pitambar Sahee (Palamau), Maulvi Sarfaraz Ali (Shahjehanpur), Muhammad Ahmadulla (Lucknow), Narpat Singh (Ruyia), Khan Bahadur Khan (Bareilly), Raja of Mitauli, Raja of Sel (Sitapur, Oudh), Rajas of Beapur and Shahgarh (Saugor and Narbadda Territories), Nana Saheb, Tantia Tope (hanged on April 18, 1859), Bakhtwar Khan, Jwala Prasad, Azimullah (Cawnpore), etc., etc., were some of a large number of other influential men who had participated in the great upheaval.

### **Vasudeo Balvant Phadke**

The revolt of 1857 suppressed by ruthless reprisals was followed by a lull but the spirit of resistance did not die out completely. Extreme economic distress and recurrent famines kept the smouldering fire alive. People became desperate and began to think of adopting measures leading to violent action.

The Mahratta country, because of its undimmed recollection of independence, was simmering with discontent and in the language of Wedderburn, troubles

“began with sporadic gang robberies and attacks on the money-lenders until the bands of dacoits, combining together, became too strong for the police; and the whole military force at Poona, horse, foot and artillery, had to take the field against them. Roaming through the jungle tracts of the Western Ghats, these dispersed in the presence of military force, only to re-unite immediately at some convenient point”

The leadership of this band fell upon a young man, Vasudeo Balvant Phadke, who tried to “lead a national revolt upon the lines on which Mahratta power had originally been founded.” The miseries of the people became too much for him to bear and he thought of preparing the country with the help of the educated class, if possible and without them, if necessary, for an armed revolt. Failing in the former, he diverted his attention mostly towards the uneducated class, the Ramoshi tribe, which once formed a part of the Mahratta army and rose in revolt against the British in 1826. He was eminently successful in his efforts and was able to recruit a valiant band of comrades around him.

Assured of selfless, sacrificing and brave ‘soldiers’, he turned his mind towards organising a secret society of youth drawn from various quarters and enthused them with lectures and examples of suffering and sacrifice that he enjoined upon himself. Arrangements were made for military training in the neighbourhood of the Ferguson and Gultekdi Hills. He used to organise meeting and deliver fiery lectures to the masses whenever possible. He wrote in his diary: “From morning to night, bathing, eating, sleeping, I was brooding over this (ruining the British) and I could get no proper rest.” This paramount thought came out in language which could inflame the minds of his audience.

With the expansion of his organisation he was worried over paucity of funds.\* He approached the rich people and promised repayment of the loan on attainment of independence. He was looked upon as a crazy fellow gone off his head. He had to take resort to the methods of plundering properties not only of the people but also of the Government preferably of the latter.

His ‘army’ grew in size as well as in strength. In the matter of recruitment he secured the assistance of a most devoted friend

in Daulatrao Ramoshi who had boundless influence over the people of his own tribe. There was another, Govindrao Davare, who had been a great source of strength to his elbow. Amongst his followers, Davare was known as 'the General' and Phadke himself, "Shivaji II".

Phadke conceived the idea of attacking the enemy simultaneously at a large number of points so that people would gradually come to think that Phadke was irresistible as he had a big army at his command. He would strike at the system of communications, the post, telegraph and the railways, plunder Government treasuries and break open the jails and release the prisoners who would most gladly join his army. In the meantime he would try to engage the Rohillas and the Pathans from the Nizam's territory. If funds were available, he would think of raising a regular army. He is attributed to be the first Indian who conceived the idea of an Indian Republic.

He began his depredations far and wide and it was well nigh impossible to arrest him, even to get information of his whereabouts. He put a price of Rs. 500 on the head of Sir Richard Temple, the Governor of Bombay.

In 1879, he attacked the village Dhamari followed by such places as Valch, Palaspe, etc. The districts around Poona became the playground of the Ramoshi heroes and on May 10, 1879, Phadke's men, under Daulatrao Ramoshi after plundering Dirur, appeared at Neri near Panewal in the Konkan and disappeared with a large booty. They were more successful at Palaspe where the booty amounted to Rs. 60,000. Unfortunately, in one of these encounters, Daulatrao lost his life and the morale of the Ramoshis was severely shaken.

In 1879, Phadke himself was captured on July 3, in a temple of Kaladgi, a district in Hyderabad, and was charged under Sections 121, 124 and 395 I.P.C. and awarded a sentence of transportation for life. He was kept fettered in a prison in Aden, India including the Andamans not being deemed safe place for such a resourceful enemy. Even then, he managed to escape from prison but before long he was arrested again and kept under a more rigid watch. The bravest fighter for freedom of India, after some of the Mutiny martyrs, breathed his last in Aden on February 17, 1883.

### **Kuka Rising**

In 1879, Ram Singh, leader of the Kukas, raised an insurrection on January 11, at Malerkotla, near Ludhiana and came into open clash with the British forces on January 27, 1872. Ram Singh was defeated and deported to Burma where he died in 1885.

The followers of Ram Singh, between January 15 and 17 (1872), rushed Malod Fort at Sirhind and tried to take Malerkotla and seize the treasury there. Unfortunately, both the attempts proved abortive and forty-nine prisoners were ordered to be blown away from the mouth of the guns. A few others were executed and the movement was suppressed with the utmost severity.

### **Manipur Revolt**

With the ruthless massacre of 1857, the effects of which continued up to some later years, there were very few signs of organised revolt against the ruling authority.

The even tenor was badly affected by the revolt of the people of distant Manipur in the North-eastern corner of India under Senapati Tikendrajit Singh in September 1890. In March 1891, the British forces arrived at Manipur and demanded Senapati Tikendrajit to surrender which he peremptorily refused to do. On the other hand, the Senapati successfully contrived to induce three generals of the British army to meet him; and as a measure of reprisal against the killing of Manipur fighters, they were assassinated. The Manipur Fort was attacked by British forces which were repulsed.

A second attack on the fort at midnight failed and the Senapati was looked upon as the saviour of Manipur. Forces from Burma were requisitioned to meet the emergency but with no better result. With the help of heavy guns which were brought in later, serious damage was caused to the fort but the Senapati managed to escape. Unfortunately for him his most intimate associate General Thengal fell into the hands of the enemy (May 8, 1891). The success was followed up and within a fortnight of the storming of the Fort, Senapati Tikendrajit Singh was captured after a desperate fight.

The Senapati, a younger brother Agnes Sena and General Thengal were given the farce of a trial charged with the crime of



an attempt to free the homeland from the occupation of foreigners and were sentenced to death. On August 13, 1891, the three great defenders of the honour of Manipur were hanged on their own soil.

### **Munda Insurrection**

The last concerted action of the century was that by the remnants of the heroic Mundas (1899-1900) who put up a great fight under their leader, Birsa. The grim fight with the British armed forces in and around Ranchi, Bihar, is still remembered by some who take pride in telling the story to the youngsters in their families.

## RESURGENCE

(1858-1902)

### *The Rumbings*

The closing years of the last century were marked by determined violent action against the British in the Western part of India. These were acts of political assassination as such with the fullest knowledge of its consequences by a few whose number could be counted on finger tips. The demands of time produced revolutionist who

“flinging himself against the solid mass presented by the society of his day, can scarcely fail to be shattered in the process, and whether or not his work survives, it is unlikely that he will himself escape destruction.”

Long before the outraged feeling manifested itself in physical action the seed of revolution was nurtured by the flow of patriotic sentimental ideas emanating from the pens of a band of writers in poetry or prose. In the fitness of things they should be recognised as showing the path of armed struggle. Since the middle of the 19th century these great men began to preach the idea of supreme sacrifice in the cause of freedom in the context of Moslem domination over India.

#### **Rangalal**

The first to open the broadside, as far as could be ascertained, was the poet Rangalal Bandopadhyaya who in 1858, almost coincidentally with “the Mutiny”, exhorted the people to realise that death was preferable to serfdom and asked:

“Is there any fool who would (like to) put the shackles of slavery around his own (neck) feet? Hellish it is to remain a bondsman for millenia; a moment's independence tantamounts to heavenly bliss (for eternity). Verily he has lived a life worth living and possessed bodily strength worth having (lived a worthy life) who liberates his Motherland from foreign domination through self-immolation. Onward! Onward! to the battlefield, post haste, dear Comrades! (because) nothing compares with him who lays down his life in the service of the Motherland.”

#### **Hem Chandra**

Before the idea had lost its warmth another poet gave the inspiring call to the nation in 1873. Hem Chandra Bandopadhyaya

exhorted the people to develop a martial spirit combined with matching physical fitness and mental vigour. Said he:

“Chanting of hymns, counting the beads, penance (*yoga*) and prayer, offerings to the gods, burning of sacrificial fire, worshipping of images—all these will be of no avail at the present moment; (instead) invoke strength; worship the arrow and the scimitar. Forge ahead towards the goal; be reckless, and explore the summits of mountains, minutely ransack the (secrets of) the planets in the firmament; brave the whirlwind, darts of the meteor, the flash of lightning. Then and then only you will be able to slay (exterminate) the enemies. Be a match for them just to adorn the head that now carries the boots (of the foreign masters) with the crowning glory of Independence.

“It is true that in the days of yore one would get his wishes fulfilled through penance and the gods would come down to take the battlefield and fight for their devotees.

“May not those days when prayers (and offerings) to the gods could bring about independence of India return. Unsheathe the sword (and fight yourself); these demons are very much unlike those of the old.

“Be skilled in acquiring strength from (fighting) weapons; get yourself intoxicated with the spirit of joy for the war; and these are the only prerogatives with the help of which you can preserve your very existence in this world. (India's) salvation knows no other way.”

In 1874, Jyotirindra Nath Tagore, in a drama entitled *Puru Bikram* gave expression to the same feeling that inspired Rangalal. Jyotirindra wrote in verse again that,

“Fie to him who entertains fear for his life in emancipating the Motherland from bondage. Let such man suffer eternal perdition of slavery. What is the use of life saved at the cost of Independence? Fie to him who desires to tolerate such a miserable existence.”

Needless to say that such forceful writings and occasional speeches produced tremendous effects on the youthful minds of Bengal, though overt acts were yet to come.

### Resentment in the Air

During this period, published literature, newspapers, books, etc., dealing with the economic and political situation of the country gradually tended towards more outspoken progressive national ideals. Seditious articles appeared here and there, in this paper or that and the Government was not slow to proceed against them for undermining respect and loyalty for the Government. But there were signs of further restiveness and a section of the

press with the growing tempo of the movement openly or under a thin mask introduced an element of support for violence in their writings.

There had been trenchant criticism on occasions and resentment expressed by the press against administrative measures found detrimental and obnoxious from the point of view of national interests, justice and fairplay. On one occasion, long before militant nationalism had taken definite shape, a newspaper editorial indirectly supported acts of retaliation involving death to the alleged culprit. As an instance the case of Gaekwad of Baroda may be cited.

An attempt, as the Government declared, was made to administer poison to Col. Phayre, Resident of Baroda, on November 9, 1874. It was suggested that this step was instigated by the Gaekwad Madhav Rao (Mulhar Rao). Phayre was allowed to go on leave and Sir Lewis Pelly was appointed Special Commissioner at Baroda on January 14, 1875, in succession to Phayre to investigate the conduct of Madhav Rao and to submit a report on his administration. Madhav Rao was removed to Calcutta for trial in the same month. On February 23, 1875, the indictment of the Gaekwad was started and the result of the secret enquiry was referred to the Home Government for necessary action. Lord Salisbury recommended "deposal of Madhav Rao on account of his notorious misconduct and previous maladministration."

On the fateful day of April 23, 1875, the Viceroy by proclamation deposed the Gaekwad and ordered his deportation to Madras forthwith. That hapless fellow lingered with a miserable existence till death relieved him of both humiliation and suffering in 1882.

There was a great commotion amongst the educated classes almost in every part of India over the deposal of a Ruling Chief of a vast territory associated with the glorious name of Shivaji and the valiant Mahrattas. At the appointment of Pelly *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* suspected annexation of Borada. It could scarcely conceal its disgust and criticised the contemplated measure in the most scathing terms. In its issue of January 14, 1875, it remarked that it would be evident to the future historian "that the Government itself in a manner compelled Mulharao to commit this atrocious crime. Proofs will be found in abundance that Col. Phayre was

constantly hostile to the Gaekwad, and wounded his feelings on every occasion. Not only did the Colonel tyrannise over the Gaekwad and placed obstacles in the way of good administration but his advice made the subjects rebellious; and when the Gaekwad wanted to punish them, the Resident reported him to the India Government as an oppressive chief. Possibly Baroda would never have come to such a crisis if Colonel Phayre had not been appointed."

The article continued: "It was impossible for human nature to be silent in such a position." It put a poser,—

"What would the English had done, if, for instance, the Russian Emperor had deputed an officer like Col. Phayre to England to keep an eye on the doings of the English Government, to interfere with all their acts, to teach people insubordination to the law and spread calumnies relating to the Queen?"

The people of England would have resorted to either of the two courses in such circumstances, declared the *Patrika* :

"It would either, if it had any confidence in its power, expel the Russian Officer from the country after subjecting him to all manner of insults, or alternatively, attempt to get rid of him by some such means as adopted by the Gaekwad."

In extending its open support to the action of the Gaekwad, it wrote that

"It is evident that he had no other than this atrocious way left to him to be freed from all oppressions of the Resident. If proper enquiry is conducted the performances of Phayre and the results were made public the common people of England would hang down their heads in shame."

It was amazing that there were not more cases like this :

"Considering the unnatural relation that subsisted at the time between England and its tributary Princes of India, it was rather strange that poisoning cases had been so few. The oppression of the Residents on Native Chiefs would have long made it impossible for Government to maintain peace in the country, if the natives had not been so signally patient, weak and helpless."

The remarks caused a great flutter in the dovecotes of the bureaucracy in India which wafted by the waves of the seven seas reached the shores of that distant seat of power in the United Kingdom. Some serious steps were suggested against the paper but better judgment advised the Government of India to keep a close watch on its tone and to swoop upon it if any such seditious sentiments were expressed in any of its future issues.

### The Sober Patriots

Bengal began to think in terms of secret organisation and underground activities for attainment of Independence rather early. From literature of autobiographical character it is discernible that such revered and sober men like Raj Narain Bose, Jyotirindra Nath Tagore, Siva Nath Shastri, Bepin Chandra Pal, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Sarala Bala Devi and others thought of launching a movement with pledge taken in the most solemn manner, some signing it with their blood, in the seventies of the last century.

Nobody had heard of any overt act being committed by any of the society's members but they helped by their action to pitch their demand for *Swaraj* through a dangerous path that could have but a few supporters at the time. Considering the period they seem to have displayed a good deal of commendable courage in initiating a movement that ideologically gave moral support to methods that in the next few years paved the way for the formation of organisations that broke the barrier of constitutional agitation.

The 'Secret Societies' that came into existence at the end of the century had nothing to do with any violent action in any way. The aim of these was to prepare the mind of the people for strong action in support of boycott of foreign goods, establishment of indigenous industries, demand for *Swaraj* (self-government), resistance to laws and orders militating against the country's interests or interfering with the efforts of propagating the idea of self-rule amongst a wider public; and at a later stage, not to recognise a foreign Government—that had robbed the country of its independence.

These were the steps which the Congress would not adopt as its policy even for years and the leaders of a fighting programme like Tilak and Aurobindo began to look upon the Congress as an organisation mainly concerned with futile petitions and protests. They tried to inculcate a spirit of self-help, non-cooperation and marshalling of all forces in the nation for coming into grips with the authorities.

### Vivekananda

The idea of revolutionary action, as has been mentioned before, took shape in Maharashtra in the mind of the Chitpavan

Brahmins. In Bengal the thought, circumscribed almost to himself, crossed the mind of Swami Vivekananda. He first tried to influence some of the Native Chiefs to form a combination and in his itinerary in the United Kingdom he even met Sir Hiram Maxim (Bhupendra Nath Dutt: *Swami Vivekananda—Patriot Prophet*, p. viii-ix) for the possibility of help in case of necessity. He was the first man to infuse the idea of having “men with strong biceps coming nearer, to God through football than the *Gita*”.

He wanted to organise throughout India groups of youngmen, strong physically and morally, who would willingly sacrifice comforts in the service of the suffering humanity, ready to undergo hardships for any noble cause and prepare the country for a higher civilization and spiritual greatness. His stirring appeal to the nations' youth reverberated throughout the land.

Vivekananda, in the footsteps of his Master, Paramhansa Ramakrishna, held before his countrymen the imagery of Kali, the Goddess of Strength, as well as of Destruction. Composed in 1898, he presented a picture of the brewing storm and proclaimed that

“Who dares misery love and hugs the form of Death,  
To him the Mother comes ”

His exhortations not only related to the social, intellectual and moral upliftment of his countrymen but also to the ‘disgraceful cowardice’ which prevented the Indians from attaining “freedom deserved only by the brave and the heroic.”

Swamiji's message influenced the minds of the young Bengalee with a spirit of burning patriotism and created in some a tendency for stern political activity. When the call came for joining the monastic order, there were not a few whose presence in the ‘Mission’ was looked upon with great suspicion by the secret police service. The situation became gradually so tense that the intervention of a sympathetic Governor of Bengal was deemed absolutely necessary to put matters right.

Before the demise of Vivekananda the country had become conscious of the value of organisations which would devote much attention to physical culture, athletics, sword, dagger and lathi play, social service, relief work on a mass scale, etc. Institutions like the *Anusilan Samiti* under Satish Mukherji and P. Mitra, who besides being a firebrand nationalist, “had a spiritual life and

aspiration and a strong religious feeling", sprang up by 1902. It had many branches particularly in East Bengal and had members on the list who had lent a halo to the revolutionary movement of Bengal, nay of India.

The Congress in another field had been drifting towards liberal politics till it passed through its baptismal of fire at Surat in 1907. In giving a picture of the transition period Romain Rolland (*The Prophets of New India*, p. 497) aptly says that "nationalist movement smouldered for a long time until Vivekananda's breath blew the ashes into flame, and erupted violently three years after his death."

The world knows to its advantage the part played by Swamiji in the régénération of India in general and Bengal in particular, and getting the soil eminently nurtured for Tilak, Aurobindo and others to sow the seed of revolution. In the fulness of time the young sapling grew into a vigorous tree that stretched its mighty branches far and wide and became a terror to the rulers of India, here and in their distant island home, with its weird fruits pregnant with bomb and bullets.

The flow tide in the struggle for freedom had set in full strength and as Rolland continues:

"another personality—the greatest after him—thrown into the limelight by the independence movement, was his young friend Aurobindo Ghose. He was the real intellectual heir of Vivekananda."



## ***"The Father of Indian Unrest"***

(1893-1908)

Independent of the movement that was taking place in Bengal, the Maharashtra region breathed a spirit of burning patriotism which assumed a shape most convenient for the time.

In the impenetrable darkness of foreign domination for nearly a century and a half, a streak of light emanated from the storehouse of ingenuity of one who had been variously called "one of the most dangerous pioneers of disaffection", "a notorious agitator", "truly the father of Indian unrest" and also a man "of considerable erudition, great ability and dynamic energy."

This man, a great seer, was no other than Bal Gangadhar Tilak, whose views were that in the attainment of independence the end justifies the means, and that every means that would lead to political emancipation of the Motherland was justified. His name said Aurobindo (*Bankim, Tilak, Dayananda*, p. 36) "to be remembered gratefully so long as the country has pride in its past and hope for its future." In relation to his suffering for the Motherland Aurobindo further remarked about Tilak's "readiness to sacrifice and face suffering, not needlessly or with a useless bravado, but with a grim courage when it comes, to bear it and to outlive returning to work with one's scars as if nothing had happened" (*ibid*, p. 38).

In speaking about Tilak, *The Bunde Mataram*, in its issue of December 26, 1906, under caption, *The Man of the Past and the Man of the Future*, wrote :

"Tilak is a giant of strength and courage, the one man who knows what has to be done and does it, what to be organised and organises it, what to be resisted and resists it. He is pre-eminently the man who acts and action is to be the note of our future political energies."

Tilak had Shivram Mahadev Paranjpe as the most trusted friend and collaborator and they jointly grasped the oar and the helm of a frail tiny bark for bringing it to the sunny shore of Independence beyond the uncharted sea of serfdom of centuries.

In the background of Hindu-Moslem riot in Bombay in 1893, some minds began to feel that what was wanted, having been

numerically stronger, was a feeling of oneness and a spirit lacking in "hitting back with the same ruthlessness as their counterparts in the riots".

It was, therefore, absolutely necessary that the people must organise themselves for getting out of the rut and assert themselves in bigger and bigger fields of activity. The first and foremost condition that had had to be fulfilled in this connection was to obliterate as much as possible the differences that separated man from man on the score of wealth, education, caste, religion, age and sex.

### Ganapati Festival

If the Mahomedans have their Mohurrum, the Hindus must have some festival of this nature and the genius of Tilak at once noticed the great force that might be generated through revival of the Ganapati Festival on a large scale—and for all classes (*sarva-janik*) of people. The movement gained a large measure of support from youthful elements and gradually percolated amongst all classes of society within a very short time. Very soon it assumed the character of a national movement. The elephant-headed God, Ganapati, slaying the Gajasura, became the emblem of victory over the oppressed.

The discerning did not fail to realise the possibility of such mass enthusiasm and openly desired it to assume a political character. It was to be turned into a meeting ground for national unification. Wrote the *Prabhakar* on July 31, 1896 :

"Is it not the duty of the Brahmins to turn these *melas* to some better account than they are at present? Why not utilize them for political purposes by organising a series of lectures during the Ganapati holidays? Why not compose songs on current political topics?"

*Slokas* or songs were chanted or sung in meetings and in processions which were pregnant with suggestions that covered the real meaning under a thin veil. One of these was :

"Alas! you are not ashamed to remain in servitude; try, therefore, to commit suicide. Alas, like butchers, the wicked in their monstrous atrocity kill calves and kine; free her from her trouble. Die, but kill the English."

Very plainly the *slokas* intended to draw pointed attention to the people's servitude and encouraged them to shake it off; they would 'die' and in doing so they should 'kill the English'. Here

was an open call to violence to the masses for the achievement of a political objective.

When the Ganapati Festival had played its part exceedingly well, attention of Tilak was drawn to the dilapidated condition of the tomb of Shivaji, who died on April 14, 1680, in the fort of Raigarh. He took it up as another potent instrument for adding zest to the movement and got into the work of repairs of the monument in right earnest. He presented the case with the sentimental appeal that the Maharaja had been crowned in this very fort in 1674, and his mortal remains had been laid at rest in the same fort after the campaign of Jajna. The public mind was not very slow to react and it helped to renew the people's respect for the memory of that great Hero of modern times and the founder of the mightiest Hindu Kingdom in the heart of the Mahomedan Empire. As a result the first celebration took place at Raigarh on March 15, 1895.

### Shivaji Utsab

Logically enough the idea of remembering Shivaji's memory in its proper glory led to celebrations in connection with the King, and Shivaji festivals were started spontaneously almost all over India creating enthusiasm that exceeded all expectations of its sponsors. The *Mumbai Vaibhab* wrote on April 9, 1896, that the "festival is spreading like contagion from place to place."

In the wake of this movement the youngmen of Maharashtra and to some extent of Bengal, took to physical culture through associations organised for the purpose and associations like *Mitra Mela* later changed to *Abhinav Bharat Society* came into being in Bombay.

While other events of Shivaji's life were pushed into shade, the bold venture of Shivaji to overpower Muslim authority and lay a solid foundation of an independent Hindu State came to the fore. A section of the people asked the question: 'Why not an independent India?' There was the model of the State and the method of attaining the goal, both of which were fully represented in the person of the Maharaja.

Enquired the *Sudhakar* on April 11, 1896, 'What can be the explanation of this singular phenomena,'—enthusiasm for the Shivaji festival? The explanation was:

"Obviously, the resemblance of the present epoch to the times of Shivaji. Shivaji flourished at a time when the Hindu religion was in grave danger from the intolerant sway of the Moslems and Shivaji's mission was to defend the national faith and to restore national independence. We are at the present moment sadly in need of a Second Shivaji. But his mission will have to be slightly different. Our present grievance is not the persecution of our national faith, but the daily increasing tyranny of the whimsical officers of Queen Victoria."

The *Poona Vaibhab* repeated the theme on April 19, 1896:

"The people are labouring under the same acute grievances."

A bitter controversy arose over the action of Shivaji in tackling Afzal Khan in the way he did. Was it sinful on the part of Shivaji, or not? It raged very strong and was renewed every year. Moreover, speeches delivered in meetings held in this connection breathed a spirit of aggressive nationalism expressing sorrow over foreign domination.

A summary of Tilak's speech as reported in the *Kesari* of June 15, 1897, was to the effect:

"Let us proceed on the assumption that Shivaji killed Afzal Khan by a preconceived plan. The question: 'Is that act of the Maharaja (lit. the Great King) good or bad' is to be faced not from the view point of the Penal Code, not from the view of the *smritis* of Manu and Yajnavalka, nor is to be met from the standpoint of moral principles enunciated by both occidental and oriental systems. Laws regarding the regulation of society are for the observance of us, common people. No one cared to investigate the family history of the 'Rishis', nor does any one attempt to stick crime to the person of the King. Great men are above common principles of (*shashtra*) law. The view of these principles falls short of the plane (level) in which great men stand.

"In killing Afzal Khan did he sin or what? The answer to the question is in the *Mahabharata* itself. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Shri Krishna has counselled the assassination of even one's elders (preceptors) and all blood relations. There is no blame when you do actions without wishing for their fruit. Shri Shivaji Maharaj did nothing to fill his own half-cubit long stomach (in order to further his own aim). He killed Afzal Khan with the righteous object of the public good. If thieves enter one's house and if one's wrists have no strength to drive them out, one may, without compunction, shut them in and burn them standing. God Almighty did not give a charter engraved on a copper sheet to the *mlechhas* to rule India.

"The Maharaja Shivaji strove to drive them out of his Fatherland and there is no sin of covetousness (wishing to possess what is not your own) in that. Do not contract the range of your vision like the proverbial frog in a well. To think of actions of great men, leave the Penal Code

below and enter the topmost height of the atmosphere of the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*."

Speeches were also delivered by others in these meetings to the effect that

"every Hindu, every Mahratha, to whatever party he may belong must rejoice at the Shivaji festival. We are striving to gain our lost independence, and this terrible load is to be lifted by us all in combination. It will never be proper to place obstacles in the way of any person, who, with a true mind, follows the path of uplifting this burden in the manner he deems fit. If any one be crushing the country from above, cut him off, but do not put impediments in the way of others. . . . ."

Another gentleman spoke almost in the same strain:

"The people who took part in the French Revolution denied that they had committed murder and asserted that they were only removing thorns from their paths. Why should not the same argument be applied to Maharashtra?"

The Shivaji *slokas* urged people into action in the following manner:

"Merely reciting Shivaji's story like a parrot does not secure independence; it is necessary to be prompt in engaging in desperate enterprises like Shivaji and Baji; knowing, you good people should take up swords and shields at all events now; we shall cut off countless heads of enemies. Listen! We shall risk our lives on the battlefield in a national war; we shall shed upon the earth the life-blood of the enemies who destroy our religion; we shall die after killing only."

The meetings usually started and ended with Shivaji *slokas*. Streets were paraded with such songs; and the enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds. Amongst all people of Maharashtra, the youngmen of the Chitpavan Brahmins seemed to feel most inspired.

The idea of national unification, so much necessary for joint action against the common enemy, was given proper importance. Wrote the *Kesari* on April 28, 1896:

"The process of national unification that we are going through at present will be materially forwarded by the celebration of Shivaji festivals in which all Indians can take part irrespective of caste or creed."

The *Maharashtra Mitra* echoed the same sentiment on June 25, 1896:

"All true born Mahratta should unite together if they wish to relieve their mother country from the grinding tyranny of the foreigners' yoke."

The Ganapati and the Shivaji festivals were forerunners of

a new spirit that travelled to other parts of India, particularly to Bengal where the latter was observed with due solemnity in a monster meeting held in the Calcutta maidan on June 5, 1906. The coming years showed the magnitude of the influence that they exerted over the minds of even the common people who displayed remarkable power of organisation, spirit of resistance to foreign misrule and of selfless sacrifice in the cause of Freedom.

### ***The Poona Plague and After***

(1895-1897)\*

When the Ganapati and Shivaji festivals had been fulfilling their own purpose, the appearance of plague in December, 1896, in a virulent form gave the political situation a most unexpected turn in Bombay. The epidemic spread like wild fire from place to place and within a very short time a large part of Bombay became the playground of the scourge. The ordinary measures adopted by the Government in tackling other types of epidemics failed to check the progress of the monster and a vast area visited by the plague presented a picture of wanton devastation.

Failing miserably in their attempt the Government thought of adopting measures under special powers provided in the Epidemic Diseases Act passed on February 4, 1897. It was not by itself an objectionable measure and people under Tilak accepted it as concomitant to the wrath of the Almighty that had afflicted their land.

The first step that was intended for putting a check to the march of the disease was segregation; but the worst feature lay hidden in its application. It was done so ruthlessly and remorselessly that it was looked upon as more dangerous and dreadful than the disease itself. To add to the miseries of the people an officer, Rand by name, who had already acquired a bad reputation for heartlessness as Assistant Collector in Satara, was posted at Poona to enforce the provisions of the Act.

A word about the antecedents of Rand will not be out of place in the present context.

On September 27, 1894, thirteen leaders, all Brahmmins were

sent to Jail in *tehsil* Wai in the district of Satara where Rand was the District Magistrate. Of these thirteen gentlemen, three were bankers, one Chairman of the Municipal Committee, another Chairman of the Local Board. All of them were charged with playing upon musical instruments in violation of the order of the Magistrate, although there was no disturbance, nor were any heads or hands broken.

The order was by itself an illegal one and the judgment of Rand, the Magistrate, in this case portrays him in his true colour. In his own language:

“It is not less clear to me that as these men are all of respectable high caste families, they will feel more than others the degradation and inconvenience of imprisonment. I do not think, therefore, a fine adequate, and come to the conclusion that a short term of imprisonment will meet all requirements.”

The way in which the officer started his operations struck terror into the hearts of the residents of the affected localities. On February 22, 1897, the *Dnyan Prakash* complained against the “rigorous rules and the incomplete and unsatisfactory hospital arrangement at Poona” which naturally “created a feeling of unrest in the minds of the public.” It gave a picture of the hardship suffered by the people on March 15, 1897, saying, “the streets were blockaded; shops were broken open, in Rand’s presence, and the whole proceeding resembled the sacking of a conquered town.” Suspected or even apparently healthy persons “are carried away to the segregation camp under a grand military escort as if they were prisoners of war” wrote the same paper on April 12, 1897.

According to the *Desh Mitra*, (March 11, 1897), “one area Budhwar Peth and part of Sukhrawar” were “surrounded by 200 cavalry and 100 infantry.” The *Dnyan Saqar*, (March 15, 1897), wrote that “men and women and children are marched off to the camp with guards at the back and the front, bare-headed, bare-footed as if they were a pack of lawless banditti.” It was quite in the fitness of things that “men prefer death by drowning to removal to the plague hospital” (*ibid*).

The method of searching the persons, both male and female, was reprehensible to the extreme. “The men are completely stripped in the presence of others and made to wait in the position

for some time while the women are asked to undo their *cholis* (bodices) and to hold up their wearing apparel" (*ibid*).

There was protest from every quarter and a deputation waited on Rand (according to the *Dnyan Prakash*, April 12, 1897) and pointed out to him how seriously the proposed inspection of ladies in the public streets would offend native sentiment and native feeling.

With unexampled charity Rand told them that the rule will not be enforced in the case of purdah ladies by which he hastened to warn the deputation, he meant 'Mahomedan ladies only'. The inmates of the native houses must be inspected in 'broad day light', and therefore he declined to exempt the ladies of the Hindu and other communities from the operation of the rule, "on the ground that the houses other than those of the Moslems, had not sufficient light for efficient inspection."

*The Amrita Bazar Patrika* wrote on April 24, 1897:

"Several people are taken to the hospitals as suspected of secretly developing the plague symptoms, and their relations are at once sent to the segregation camp, their bedding and clothes burnt, their homes fumigated and white-washed and subjected to every kind of rigour that the law imposes, when suddenly after a confinement of a day or two, it is found that they were brought to the hospital without sufficient cause, and are discharged as 'cured', possibly of their evil stars, from the hospital; but their relatives cannot escape, you know they were taken from infected house"

In their enthusiasm to tackle a difficult situation the Government disregarded all representations, protests and alternative suggestions and derived satisfaction from the course it had adopted. The measures were described by Tilak and others as nothing but *zulum* of the worst sort (which, by the way, Rand said "was kindly meant") and they openly declared on May 4, 1897, that the execution of the orders relating to the control of plague had been considerably aggravated by the selection of "a suspicious, sullen and tyrannical officer like Rand."

To Tilak, the Non-hearted, the whole affair appeared as one of the greatest misfortunes to the people of the land. While attacking the Government policy and its application on the one hand, he accused his own countrymen, especially the rich and the self-chosen leaders of the community. "Was it not the duty of the leaders of the native society" asked *Kesari* on May 4, 1897,



“to find out some remedy against the unlawful conduct of the soldiers and their fellow citizens to overcome the double visitations of the plague and the house-to-house visitation by European troops? Did they at least remain at their posts to extend some practical help to their distressed brethren?”

The paper replied, “No; they sought refuge in a flight from the city and exhorted the citizens of Poona not to tolerate the oppression of soldiers” from a distance.

Tilak felt severely hurt that even “when the Government had become oppressive the people had not the ability to punish it.”

The Poona press began to urge the people to take steps to initiate “some movement at least to preserve your property and to save yourselves and your kindred from insult.” The *Sudharak*, on April 19 and again on May 3, 1897, bewailed: “... Shame... there is not a country on earth whose whole people are so effeminate as ours.” It openly urged to “teach the law to the lawless” and “not to hesitate to offer resistance” to the soldiers “as soon as they begin to commit a lawless act.” The Poonaites, it said, “ought to set a lesson to the Maharashtra in resisting oppression,” and the villagers

“ought to be prepared to take the risk of self-defence in protecting their women from insult and in preserving their property from misappropriation.”

While remembering with pride the exploits of the Mahrattas who founded a Hindu Empire in India in the heart of the Moghul, the *Maharashtra Mitra*, on April 29, 1897, expressed regret that

“their degenerate descendants are today flying in fright before the soldiers when they come to inspect the house without offering the least resistance to their tyranny.”

It was now plain that the moment had arrived in the revolutionary history of India when peace-loving Indians began to talk freely about self-defence, resistance and reprisal against the agents of the Government for their misdeeds.

The watchful eye of the foreign journalists were not very slow in detecting the turn which this suggestion was likely to give to the political agitation and openly proclaimed that Tilak's advice would lead to breach of the peace and breaking of heads. Tilak openly challenged such insinuations and said, “What I honestly believe” is that... “the unnecessary stringency of the plague

measures and not the writing of the native press are responsible for the feelings of dissatisfaction referred to."

The Commission appointed to go into the complaints of the people reported in their findings that

"the system of discovering plague cases by house-to-house visitation is absolutely intolerable to the people" who looked upon the "plague measures" as "more horrible than the plague itself."

They had another bad feature: "high and low were mingled indiscriminately in the same camp."

The young patriots of Bombay were not very slow to give vent to their feeling of indignation to the diabolical acts of Rand and punishment for the perpetrator was not very slow in coming. And it really came on June 22, 1897, the day for celebration at Poona of the 60th anniversary of the Coronation of Her Majesty the Queen Empress Victoria when Rand and another Englishman were killed by the assassins' bullets.

Rand's murder was received with a sense of relief and a feeling of smothered satisfaction by the people of India. The *Rast Goftar* on June 27, 1897, wrote that

"It is as clear as day light that the assassins sought the blood of those who, they thought, carried out the segregation operations in the city with oppressive severity."

The feeling of anger and may be of dismay of the Poona Englishmen on the murder of Rand was reflected in the remarks of the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, (July 1, 1897), that the

"Poona Englishmen have lost their heads...they have now experienced how one is wounded at heart when one's casteman's blood is shed."

It is to be particularly noted that these events taking place from the middle of 1897 upto the early part of 1899, ushered in an era of reprisals particularly against obnoxious officials and spies who had acted against those who had been out to sacrifice life to teach tyrants and traitors a lesson.

In 1899 the *Mitra Mela* adopted armed revolt and outright insurrection as the policy to be pursued for securing independence for India. In 1904 the name was changed to *Abhinav Bharat Society* with a broader outlook for extending its activities beyond the limits of not only Nasik but also of Bombay.

## ***Reprisal in Excelsis***

(1897-1899)

It is a story of grim reprisal for tyranny over an unarmed population in thorough disregard of all protests and warnings emanating from the public. The reprisal came from a quarter not quite unexpected but in a manner that was beyond the wildest dreams of the oppressors and the oppressed alike. It introduced a new technique which proved to be both quick and deadly effective. In point of fineness in execution, it may be unequivocally said that though first in India during the British rule it was one among the very best.

### **Damodar Chapekar**

Damodar Hari Chapekar, a Deccan Chitapavan Brahmin, was a resident of Poona. He was fond of athletics and through exercise and proper training he endowed himself with inexhaustible power of endurance. He had developed a genuine taste for military training and twice attempted to enter the army without effect. He was a nationalist to the core and about four years before the incident, he once delivered a speech in the Ferguson College grounds to young people to eschew football and cricket and take to fencing, stone-slugging and acquire proficiency in the use of arms. Students and other young men would meet him and engage themselves in drills and manoeuvres more or less of a military character under his supervision.

His heart bled over the miseries of the people under Rand. He felt exasperated with the failure of all measures for redress, and conceived the idea of murdering Rand during the plague operations. About the end of May 1895, he left Bombay for Poona.

He procured powder and shot from a licensed seller and he kept himself busy up till about May 25, in turning them into useful purpose. As if to suit his plan the regular *pujari* of the Mahadevi's temple of Laikdipul left the place out of fear of the plague and Damodar took up the job as a substitute. The 14th Bombay Native Infantry was stationed there for the protection

of the temple and during the absence of the guards due to their participation in a funeral ceremony he managed to walk off with two Martini-Henri rifles (Nos. 468 and 532) and a sword-bayonet. His endeavour to secure requisite cartridges failed and he turned his attention to the pistol and other weapons that he had secured from other sources.

After Rand's arrival at Poona Damodar and his associates set about to fix his identity and for this purpose one or other of the party closely followed Rand for about three months from place to place. Wasudeo, Damodar's youngest brother, watched Rand's habits and the places he used to frequent. Four or five weeks before the incident Damodar approached the coachman of Rand with the object of securing an interview with him and to submit a petition for some employment. This was repeated two or three times. He twice enquired of the postmen of the locality to be cock-sure about Rand's residence and after being fully satisfied the party under Damodar thought out the details to give effect to their plan. On the Jubilee Day Rand received a letter to the effect that "you will be killed today" to which he gave scant attention.

The programme of the Jubilee Day Celebration was published in the newspapers. Every man of the party was placed in charge of his respective share of the business. The movement of Rand on the night previous was very closely watched. On June 22, 1897, the fateful day, the party went to the Council Hall in the afternoon to look in vain for Rand's carriage among those that had brought people to the levee. Then they went to the St. Mary's Church and saw Rand there. As there was a big crowd and other circumstances not being propitious, no action was taken at that moment.

The men came in the vicinity of the Government House at Ganeshkhind at about 7-30 in the evening and saw Rand driving in but the strong glare of the light was against their convenience.

It was about 11-30 p.m. Damodar planted himself at the main gate of the Government House. Balkrishna was stationed a little way down the road. The arms they carried were the pistols and swords that Damodar and Mahadev Vinayak Ranade had procured. They were carefully concealed under their clothes, the swords being wrapped round with part of an old *pugree*.

Damodar scanned the face of every European that was coming out. Rand was allowed to proceed a few yards along the road followed at a short distance by Ayerst's carriage. When Rand's carriage had proceeded ten paces ahead of Damodar, he commenced running to keep that distance behind the carriage. He was on the right and followed up until he came near a place opposite the yellow painted house of Jamsetjee Jeejebhoy. Balkrishna gave the signal by shouting, "Narya! Narya!". Damodar then dashed on the roadway and made up the ten paces separating him from the carriage. The hood was up and the flap at the back fastened down. He ran with the carriage, climbed at the back of it, managed to undo the flap, put in his pistol until it almost touched the back of his victim and fired.

The Ayersts, husband and wife, had driven for nearly quarter of a mile down the road when they heard the shot just in front of them. A plucky man was seen climbing down from the back of Rand's carriage and then run away towards the right. Mrs. Ayerst was just mentioning the matter to her husband when a shot from Ranade's pistol rang behind her carriage and Ayerst was dead in her arms.

The men discarded their swords and threw them into a culvert near at hand. They cleared off at the top of their speed across the fields and got into the city unobserved and dropped all the arms they had in a well close by.

Vigorous searches for apprehension of the culprits started immediately. Damodar was arrested on August 9. In the course of a statement he said that he had taken steps to curb the enthusiasm of some prominent members of the Reforms party, particularly (i) of Gadgil, (ii) assaulted the Editor of *Soudarak*, a vernacular daily, that wrote against Tilak, (iii) Kulkarni, another Editor, for abusing Tilak. He admitted having (iv) besmeared the statue of Queen Victoria with tar and placing a garland of shoes round the neck; (v) of having destroyed the *mandap* erected by the Bombay University near Wodehouse Bridge for holding the Matriculation Examination by fire, and (vi) another *mandap* at Poona erected at Government expenses for some entertainment of Government officials.

Rand expired on July 3, 1897, at 3-18 a.m. while Ayerst's death was instantaneous.

On August 9, 1897, two other persons were arrested in connection with the double murder at Poona on suspicion and were safely deposited in 'the lockup. Damodar was placed before a Magistrate on October 14, 1897.

His arrest led to the search of several places which disclosed their preparation for the occasion and the extent of their collection. The search produced two Martini-Henri rifles, a sword bayonet, a five-barrelled revolver, two spear-heads, a pistol barrel, two brass cartridges, four silver gilt, two gold gilt swords also a long knife and four sword-sticks.

After a preliminary judicial inquiry, Damodar was committed to the Poona Criminal Sessions under Secs. 302, 309 I.P.C. and 314 Cr. P.C. which commenced its sittings on January 24, 1898.

On January 31, 1898, Balkrishna who had been arrested in the meantime was ordered to be charge-sheeted with his brother as an accused.

On February 3, 1898, after the Judge had delivered his charge, the Jury retired and after the usual deliberation returned a verdict of "not guilty of murder, but guilty of abetment."

Then followed an unusual procedure (*The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, February 4, 1898). The Court cross-examined the Jury which revised the opinion and said "the accused was possibly present on the scene of murder." After some further delay (and possibly further cross-examination too) they returned a verdict of 'guilty of murder'.

Damodar was sentenced to death; while being led away to the prison he asked if there was a higher punishment. The High Court confirmed the sentence on appeal on March 2, 1898.

On his way to the scaffold he chanted *Narain Jai*, *Gopal Hari* and recited the names of other gods. He had obtained through a request from jail, a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* from Tilak which he carried in his hand.

Damodar was now standing before death. As it was getting somewhat late in the morning and as the Magistrate failed to appear in time, he said that he had all along carried the impression that punctuality was always observed by the British raj; its officers were paid to be punctual.

During all the time the prisoner was found to be in a jovial mood and his remarks on 'punctuality' of the European are very

significant. He boldly mounted the scaffold. Being asked if he had anything to say, his only reply was that he had none. Regarding death itself he said that Rand died from pistol shot, others die from a fall off the horses, and it was his fate to be hanged.

His died joyfully, befitting the first martyr for the revolutionary cause in India after giving a message to his family.

The shock of death could not loosen Damodar's hold on the book he was allowed to carry with him to the gallows. He held the book fast in his grip which was carried with his body to the burning *ghat*.

Earlier the prisoner said that he had slept soundly the previous night and that he wished "to die in peace to a<sup>ll</sup> men."

Damodar (Hari) Chapekar was hanged at 6-40 a.m. in the Yerrowda Central Jail on April 18, 1898—a day to be remembered with gratitude by the whole nation, but which is not.

### Balkrishna

After the incident at Ganeshkhind, Balkrishna slipped out of Poona and went into hiding.

A reward of Rs. 20,000 was declared for the arrest of the associates of Damodar Chapekar who were suspected to be some fellows other than Balkrishna.

Balkrishna was arrested in Hyderabad during the Christmas and there was some difficulty in bringing him within the jurisdiction of the British courts. The Nizam's Government relying on Article 5 of the Extradition Treaty of 1867, contended that the evidence furnished in support of the application of surrender (to British authorities) consisted merely of the confession of an accomplice uncorroborated by other testimony and, therefore, not sufficient to justify extradition.

The matter was officially submitted to the Nizam and the (all-powerful) Resident spoke to His Highness pointing out the urgency of the affairs; and considering the special circumstances the Nizam's Government yielded (there being no other course open to it).

The Resident applied to the Bombay Government for the reward of Rs. 10,000 half of the declared amount, for distribution among the Nizam's police.

The case against Balkrishna commenced on February 10, 1899,

on a charge of murdering Rand and Ayerst on the night of June 22, before the City Magistrate and was adjourned to February 22. He found his brother Wasudeo (Hari) Chapekar present in the court premises. He was visibly moved and tried to put his arms round him, which he was prevented from doing.

On March 8, 1899, the judge passed sentence of death on Balkrishna, who reacted with two simple words: "Very well."

### Wasudeo and Ranade

It took a comparatively long time for the police to establish connection of Wasudeo and Ranade with the murder of Rand and Ayerst. Wasudeo was from time to time asked to appear at *farashkhana* (Police Station) to be interrogated for information regarding the murders. Gradually it came to be known to him that he would have to tender evidence against the second brother. It was a severe blow to his feeling of attachment to his brother who had been a friend, philosopher and guide combined in one.

He came to know that two informers, the Dravid brothers, had been instrumental in leading to the arrest and conviction of the eldest brother, Damodar. Wasudeo, though very young, took upon himself the task of wreaking his vengeance on those who had brought ruin on him. He set upon his task with determination and threw all caution to the winds in reaching his goal.

One Rama Pandoo, a Head Constable, showed extraordinary zeal in investigating the case and had a great hand in the arrest of Damodar. Wasudeo's attention was directed on Rama with a view to removing him from his field of action. It should be remembered that Balkrishna's fate had been trembling in the balance and the Constable was an important factor in that case.

On February 3, 1899, the Constable while going home was fired upon by Wasudeo but the bullet having accidentally fallen out before he pulled the trigger, the Constable escaped unhurt.

Wasudeo told one of his near relations that as he would have to give evidence the next day against his brother he was determined to kill some one that night. They were not satisfied at what had been done. They went out in search of Rama with a view to put an end to his life.



### **Informers' Due**

As on many previous nights, it was the same on February 8, 1899, when the Dravids were murdered. Wasutleo with his friend lay in waiting for long for Ramjee to pass by his usual way but they failed to notice him and the plan had had to be abandoned.

Then they took into their heads to see if they could tackle the Dravid brothers. When they reached the Dravids' house between 9 and 10 at night, the Dravids had been playing at cards. They were approached by two persons dressed as Punjabis who said that the Superintendent of Police wanted to speak to Ganpatrao (Ganesh) and Ramchandra on certain weighty and urgent matters. Ganesh asking these people to go ahead assured them that they would come up as soon as they had finished the game.

The two men wore masks and kept on waiting behind the shadow of a well. The brothers eventually went downstairs to the men waiting for them. They had not proceeded far when reports of pistol shots were heard.

The Dravid mother who had been harbouring great suspicion and fear in her mind shouted at the top of her voice that her sons had been murdered. Dravid's two younger brothers came almost immediately to the spot and found Ganesh and Ramchandra very seriously wounded.

Ganesh died on the spot and Ramchandra, the next day.

Ganesh Shankar Dravid, the mainstay of the Government in respect of the apprehension, conviction and execution of the Chapekar brothers had a chequered career of crime and criminality.

Ganesh, at the age of 20, found employment in the office of the I. G. of Police, Poona. For breach of some discipline his salary was reduced by Rs. 10 per month. To recoup his loss and out of revenge he forged the superior officer's signature on a pay bill and cashed it successfully at the office of Accountant-General, Bombay.

It was not very long before the forgery was traced and the culprit sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment. He ingratiated himself with the prison officials and secured the position of the clerk to fill up the prisoners' body tickets. He within a short time forged an order for his own release and that of a fellow prisoner.

They were, however, released all right. He was again tracked and placed before the High Court Sessions, which declared him as "an audacious criminal" and awarded two years' rigorous imprisonment. In between the period Ganesh proved himself as the best aid in the arrest of Damodar and received his pardon on July 24, 1899.

He secured a moiety of the 'reward', quarrelled with the police over his share trying to discredit them publicly. Unfortunately he had a few weeks to enjoy only a small portion of what he had 'earned' and was prevented from further pressing his demand of reward on the Government.

On the strength of information supplied by the Dravid brothers the police suspected that the crime was the work of the members of the Club which had been founded by Damodar. Ranade, Wasudeo and another were called to the *farashkhana* on February 10, and Ranade was told by Wasudeo to take a loaded pistol with him and shoot Rama or any one who would obstruct him from carrying out his plan. It was an easy matter for them as they used to carry pistols in white cloth bags slung across their shoulders under the clothing.

They were kept waiting till evening while the police officers had been vigorously pursuing their investigation outside. Towards the evening the police officers began interrogating the youngmen present and the Superintendent himself started with Wasudeo and put a volley of questions regarding his movements during the previous night. Wasudeo, drew out a revolver and aimed it at the Superintendent of Police. Before he could use the trigger, the officer knocked the revolver down and the assailant was firmly secured.

Wasudeo and Ranade had not had to wait long over the uncertainty of their fate. Wasudeo confessed having murdered the Dravid brothers to avenge the death of his eldest brother.

Ranade acknowledged his responsibility in helping Wasudeo in his action. He was a student of the Government Workshop, Science College, Poona. He used a part of the lead received from the Workshop for forging purposes from which the bullets that had killed Ganesh and Ramchandra were cut out.

Wasudeo and Ranade were put under arrest at *farashkhana* on February 10, 1899. The Sessions trial opened on March 2, 1899, for the murder of Ganpatrao Dravid and Ramchandra Dravid,

who died at the early hours of the 9th, and at 2-30 p.m. of the 10th February, respectively.

Wasudeo and Ranade were condemned to death. On hearing the sentence the vivacious Wasudeo said that as he was to be hanged twice which event was to come first. A joke no doubt, but terrible.

During the entire proceedings the prisoners appeared in the best of spirits and exhibited thorough indifference as to final outcome of the case.

At the Sessions Court the accused were dressed in white dhoties embroidered with gold and had been laughing all the time in the box.

The High Court confirmed the sentence on both the accused on March 31, 1899.

The valiant Wasudeo was executed on May 8, 1899.

His worthy comrade Ranade was executed on May 10, 1899.

Wasudeo appeared to be calm and showed no signs of nervousness. He kept on reciting prayers till the end.

Ranade was equally composed. He fasted the previous day and spent the whole of the previous night in prayer. He continued his prayer which only stopped with the rope closing tightly round his neck.

While proceeding towards the scaffold by the cell which Balkrishna had been occupying, Wasudeo with a clear gay voice exclaimed: "Good bye, brother, I am going." The latter answered: "Go. I'll follow you day after to-morrow."

Balkrishna was executed on May 12, 1899.

All the accused were executed in the Yerrowda Jail which was sanctified by their last breath.

The Poona plague started dismally and ended disastrously involving the lives of a number of persons some of whom have brought glory to the nation, struggling for settling accounts with the foreigners wherever possible.

The spirit of sacrifice for a cause that was displayed by Damodar and his brothers can be traced back to the great mother who could offer three sons at the Altar of the Motherland in the course of not as many months.

Sister Nivedita came to know about the momentous event and thought of paying her respects in person to the mother then leading a life of devotion and retirement at Poona. The revered lady was

engaged in her daily *puja* when the Sister reached the Chapekar home. She was astounded to find the Mother completely composed; no complaints, no regrets. There was no necessity of giving expression to sentiments of sympathy and solace to one who needed none. Nivedita with devotional awe bowed down to touch the feet of the mother of the heroes. She came away with a sense of deeper philosophy in an Indian mother's life. The spirit of self-respect and march towards self-realisation of the Indian nation was well on its way and Nivedita came to realise that it had proceeded far ahead of the stage of which she had any idea.

## APPENDIX

Whatever doubt was there about the part played by the two brothers Ganesh Shankar Dravid and Ramchandra Dravid, was dispelled by a letter that appeared in a local newspaper (*The Times of India*: February 2, 1899) under the signature of Ganesh which ran as follows:

To the *Editor*—Sir, It is with the greatest diffidence and reluctance that I approach you upon the subject mentioned at the top of this communication (*Poona Tragedy and the Government Reward*)—diffidence, because it is a subject of such delicate nature that those not directly concerned in it may not desire to have anything to do with it and reluctance because it shows a spirit of insatiety which, some may think, should not exist in a man for whom so much has already been done by the authorities. But in spite of this consideration I am obliged to draw your attention to my case in the interests of justice and fair play. \* \* \*

It will be remembered that soon after the tragedy of the jubilee night, a reward of Rs. 20,000 was offered by Government through a public proclamation to any person or persons who could give the police a clue, leading to the detection and final conviction of the murderer. Who supplied this clue and what the result was are now matters of history. It was distinctly admitted by the authorities concerned that the clue was supplied by me and it naturally follows, therefore, that the whole reward should be awarded to me. This has not been done. Only half of the amount has been divided between one of my brothers and myself and . . . the lynx-eyed officials did not forget to deduct from the amount Rs. 260 for income-tax. But that was small matter, and I do not care to be a Shylock hungering for my "pound of flesh". But surely I have a right to claim all the ducats offered by Government! It has been alleged that half of the reward offered was reserved, as Balkrishna Chapekar was not in the hands of the police.

I admire the ingenuity of the argument, but cannot say the same about its logic. Why should I suffer for Balkrishna being as wary as the police were incapable? After they had the clue that Damodar and his brothers had something to do with the tragedy, surely anybody with a grain of commonsense would admit that the police blundered—blundered most miserably in arresting Damodar and letting off Balkrishna. What is *my* fault that commonsense was at a discount with the officers conducting the investigation? And for this I am made to suffer—a sort of Jedburgh Justice, indeed!

Well, Balkrishna is now in the hands of the police, and I think I am justified in claiming the other part of the reward. I required special strength of character to come forward to denounce a countryman and thus lay himself open to the charge of being a traitor—the majority of the people were sure to view the thing in this light—and yet I braved all this and did what little I could do to help the authorities. And that I should be deprived of the full benefit of the Government proclamation seems more than unjust and cruel. Of course it is impossible that a poor man like myself can win a tug-of-war with the authorities; but I hope that the inherent sense of justice of the British people will not allow such an injustice to be done to me.

(Dated, Poona, January 31, 1899)

Sd/- Ganesh Shankar David.

## ***The Pointers***

(1899-1905)

### **Boer War**

Towards the close of the last century there was a strong undercurrent of unrest among the intelligentsia of the country, but the British power appeared to have been so firmly entrenched in India that the situation did not warrant the Indians to take by themselves any drastic measure that might undermine the prestige of the Government. Some outside fillip was necessary to set a commotion in the sleeping minds of the nation.

Against this background the progress of the Boer War was watched with keen interest by the educated classes seeking inspiration and courage from outside. The war lasted from October 11, 1899 to May 31, 1902. The news of a major defeat of the English forces at Nicholson's Nek on October 30, at Colenso

on December 16, and the minor reverses suffered by the British at odd encounters were hailed with delight in India. The reverses were overlooked and the victories won by the Boers were magnified and talked about with gusto and glee simply because a handful of Boers had been able to put the powerful British army to shame.

### Russo-Japanese War

Now Japan's encounter with Russia was a matter much nearer home and the progress was watched with uncommon interest as if India had become involved in a life and death struggle herself. It was an event when an Asiatic country of no great geographical dimension and political significance in world affairs mustered sufficient courage to challenge "the vaunted might of the military colossus of the West". The Indians "began to feel the effervescence of the spirit of nationalism fermenting in Asia."

Even when the sabre-rattling had just started in the eastern horizon, it was taken in India as if the fate of Asia had been going to be decided in the Russo-Japanese War. *The Tribune* on November 12, 1903, wrote that

"the little Japan has girded up his loins to fight the giant . . . On the result of this struggle depends the fate of Asia. . . . If he succeeds, Asia is saved; her future ensured, her prestige enhanced and even European politics will not remain uninfluenced by the event . . . Little Japan! she shines in the Far East in all the virgin grandeur of the morning star, heralding the dawn of Asian consciousness."

It was not only the case of India, *The Curzon Gazette*, (February 15, 1904), put it as "the fate of Asia, Persia, China, Afghanistan and Asiatic Turkey" will be decided "with the stand or fall of Japan." Continued the paper:

"In case Japan is worsted in the fight, Asia will pass into the hands of Europeans. On the other hand, if it is Russia who is beaten, new life will be infused into Asia and it will be saved from everlasting ruin."

The Russo-Japanese War was formally declared on February 8, 1904, and the Japanese torpedo boats attacked the Russian warships at Port Arthur and bombarded the port itself on February 9. According to the *Kal*, (February 19, 1904), "Japan is the first power to check the success of European prowess and

diplomacy in Asia." As a consequence, "the hearts of all Indians irresistibly thrill with joy", (*Gujrati*: April 24, 1904), and "all classes of Indians seem to be vicariously fighting Russia through the persons of the gallant Japanese." It continued:

"The news of Japanese victory so transports them with joy, and the rumour of a Japanese failure so depresses them as if they themselves would reap the fruits of victory should the Northern Colossus be beaten." (*The Tribune*: March 12, 1904).

About the Japanese themselves it was said, (the *Bangabasi*: February 13, 1904), that they are

"short in stature but gifted with an iron constitution; 'though a novice', still 'a master of military art....they know very well how to sacrifice every thing, even life, to preserve their independence'. And what more 'he who knows how to die, must also know how to strike a foe'."

From different angles Japan's struggle was watched with deep suspense. She was declared to have "unfurled the flag of Asiatic independence in the East"....and it was "enough to inspire a ray of hope in the hearts of the dependent population of India" (*Kal*: March 18, 1904). Every patriotic Indian began to think that the Asiatic nations could not be exploited any longer in the manner that had hitherto been done by the Europeans. The *Kal* in the course of the same article gave a call to the people of Asia:

"The dark night of your misery is about to close. Leave off lethargy, purify your hearts and remembering God, begin to do your duty."

On June 3, 1904, under caption: "*The Day of Retribution*" it called the people

"to prepare themselves to welcome the advent of liberty." It saw "the day of emancipation is about to dawn and there are clear signs in the Eastern Horizon of the rise of the Sun of Asia's glory."

Prayer was raised to Heaven. "Let all Asiatics, Indians and Bengalis, looking towards Heaven solemnly and heartily exclaim, 'Let Japan be victorious' (the *Bangabasi*: February 13, 1904). Beyond expressing sincere good wishes for the success of Japan, active sympathy was shown by the Indians in the humble way that was possible for them. Committees were organised in Bombay and Calcutta for "collecting funds in aid of the Japanese sick and wounded and relief of the widows and orphans of the Japanese soldiers and sailors who fell fighting in the battlefield" (*The Tribune*: March 19, 1904).

*The Bengalee* on April 8, 1904, published the following poem, *Dawn in the East*, written by Bertrand Shadwell giving expression to the idea that underlined the enthusiasm with which the Indian mind greeted the news of Japanese success:

“Wake, Asia, wake. The red sun rises fast  
Arm China, arm thy millions at the Wall,  
The sleep of silent centuries at last  
Is broken by a sudden trumpet call.

\* \* \*

Stand Asia, stand to guard thy continent,  
Gird on thy sword thy citadels to save;  
Forth to thy frontiers now or be content  
Now and for ever to be Europe's slave.

Dawn in the East! The red sun flashes low;  
Strike for thy own, the right against the wrong,  
Now while the robber reels beneath the blow,  
Dealt by an Eastern sword so deft and strong.

The war developed with growing success of the Japanese and the feeling of hope and fear in the minds of the Indians began to be dissipated as days wore on. On August 10, 1904, the Russian Port Arthur fleet was routed by the Japanese Admiralty. The mighty Vladivostock Squadron of Russia was completely destroyed on August 14. On October 10, a major portion of the Russian forces received a rude shaking and had to retreat back to Mukden. History of the Asiatic nations was re-written on January 3, 1905, when Russia had to abandon Port Arthur to Japanese control.

The victorious Japanese entered Mukden after a fierce fight in which 30,000 Russian soldiers were left dead on the field, with another 40,000 prisoners at the mercy of the Japanese generals. It was, on the other hand, estimated that the victory was won on March 10, 1905, at the cost of not less than 50,000 Japanese lives.

Admiral Togo defeated the remnant of the Russian fleet on May 27, 1905, in the battle of the Sea of Japan and it took nearly four months for the peace treaty to be signed at Portsmouth (U.S.A.) on September 5, 1905. Thus the Nation of the Rising Sun, as the *Indu Prakash*, (June 16, 1905), wrote,

“set a unique example before the sleepy East and most effectively demonstrated that there is no inherent defect in oriental character which



permanently incapacitates it from rising to the progressive West in any department of human activity."

Others followed suit in the same vein, almost simultaneously and the *Punjabee*, (June 19, 1905), expressed the Indian feeling in its own way:

"By beating the Russians up hill and down dale . . . by beating them again and again both by land and by sea, Japan has vindicated the honour of Asia, upheld her right to be supreme in her own house and not fall a prey to the foreign adventurers . . . and covered herself with glory and renown . . . What wonder if the whole of Asia glories in the glory of Japan and feels that the midnight of misfortune and wretchedness that has so long hung over her is about to be succeeded by a bright and glorious dawn."

Every country over which a foreigner had exercised domination should offer congratulations to Japan because "for once" as the *Jam-ç-Jamshed* would write, (January 4, 1905), "at least Asia has won over Europe in a deadly combat."

Some foreigners analysed the result of the Russo-Japanese War in their own light. Every shrewd diplomat of the European nations must have felt like using their discretion to keep silent. The views of Prevost Battersby, (*The Anrita Bazar Patrika*: February 26, 1906), gives a faithful picture of the Indian mind. According to the paper:

"The successes of Japan have stirred into something like to flame an ambition which without them would have continued precariously to smoulder."

And Mr. Lynch wrote in *The Daily Chronicle* (quoted in the *Punjabee*: July 10, 1905):

"It marks the revolt of the East against the oppression of the West"

In *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Mr. Skrine expressed his fear

"that the effect of Japan's victory will be that the warlike races of India will grow restive and will know that it is, after all, possible for an Asiatic race to defeat a European people."

His calculations went just a bit wrong. It was not the 'warlike races' but the entire middle class intelligentsia took up the cudgel and the whole country, particularly Maharashtra, Bengal and Punjab, joined hands for emancipating the country from the thralldom of the West.

## **Activities Abroad**

(1897-1906)

The Poona bomb of June 1897 followed by an all round police persecution alerted Shyamaji Krishnavarma, a native of Kathiawar, who had first visited England in 1884, returning in 1885. To avoid arrest he quietly left Bombay in 1897 and went over to London.

Krishnavarma was not a man to rest idle and to look helplessly on the measures that had been ruthlessly suppressing all manifestations of political activities. He thought that some sort of organisation to "show on behalf of India" to the people of the united Kingdom, "how Indians really fare and feel under British rule" had become necessary. With a view to give shape to his ideas he started publishing an English penny monthly from January 1905, *The Indian Sociologist*, an Organ of Freedom and of Political, Social and Religious Reform. The journal mainly supported the programme of the Indian National Congress of the day. But he went further and enunciated a formula, after Herbert Spencer, that "resistance to aggression is not simply justifiable but imperative. Non-resistance hurts both altruism and egoism." (*The Indian Sociologist*: January, 1905).

He followed his debut in the journalistic line with the establishment of the Indian Home Rule Society on February 18, 1905, for advancing the cause of Home Rule for India through propaganda, to make the people intensely conscious of their loss of freedom and to inculcate the idea of national unity.

A thorough-going man that he was, Krishnavarma was not satisfied with what he had already done but declared in the May (1905) issue of *The Indian Sociologist* that "he proposed to open a house or hostel in London to be called 'India House' during the early part of July next for the accommodation of the gentlemen holding the Indian Travelling Fellowships, and of other Indians who may be deemed eligible to reside there" (*ibid*: p. 135). The House came into existence on July 1, 1905. On February 23, 1907, Shyamaji announced a donation of Rs. 10,000 for the purpose of establishing an organisation of "Political Missionaries in India".

What these 'Missionaries' would be like was given by Hardayal, a young man who had gone over to England for studies with a Government scholarship.

"They should love nothing more than the Cause. It should be to them in place of father, mother, brother and friend. They should reject the counsels of timid prudence, the 'false reptile prudence', anathemised by Burke, even if they come from the nearest and dearest relatives. They should undertake the task in a religious spirit; earnestness and self-denial should be their guiding principles. They should grieve like Commander Hirose of Japan, that they have only one life to give to their country..."

And Shyamaji himself declared his faith, closely following the language of Finton Lalor, the Irish patriot (Sir James O'Connor: *The History of Ireland*, Vol. I, pp. 262-63) saying :

"That the entire ownership of India, moral, material, up to the sun and down to the centre, is vested as of right in the people of India. That they, and none but they, are the land-owners and law-makers of their country; that all laws are null and void not made by them: And that this full right of ownership may and ought to be asserted and enforced by any and all means which the divine power has put within the power of man."

As soon as Hardayal became initiated to the faith of Indian nationalism and associated himself with the Indian Home Rule Society of the U.K., he renounced the Government stipend with which he studied at Oxford, began to take active part in the activities of the 'Society' and after helping in the consolidation and coordination of the various sections, left for India in January 1908 with his ailing wife.

Meanwhile Shyamaji announced his scheme for allocation of the scholarship and how it was to be used 'for the production of literature in English and the principal Indian languages.' In *The Indian Sociologist* he preached, days in days out, complete non-cooperation and withdrawal of active help to the British Rule in India, and on the positive side, fomenting of strikes. He preached complete non-cooperation with the foreigner in maintaining his domination over India, and also with institutions that had been helping the Government in various ways, such as Banks, Civil and Military Service, Law Courts, Educational institutions, boycott of Anglo-Indian newspapers and to crown all, to resort to strikes, 'the modern weapon of revolution'.

Krishnavarma was not satisfied with the peaceful methods that would only prolong the agony of serfdom but thought that

some sort of rough-and-ready method should also be adopted to accelerate the pace of the march towards freedom. In one of the issues of his journal he suggested that to meet the atrocious steps taken by the British Government in India to suppress all expressions of any organised movement, the Indian should adopt force to meet the exigencies of the situation. They should think of measuring their own strength against the adversaries for the protection of their lives and properties as all sorts of constitutional agitation had failed to produce any effect. Wrote he in December 1907:

“It seems that any agitation in India now, must be carried on secretly and that the only methods which can bring the English Government to its senses are the Russian methods vigorously and incessantly applied until the English relax their tyranny and are driven out of the country.... It is likely that as a general principle the Russian method will begin with Indian officials rather than European.....”

Copies of *The Indian Sociologist* regularly reached India and were read with great avidity. In England, the British press became very alert and volleyed forth accusations against the journal as well as the activities of the ‘India House’. For safety Krishnavarma himself had to shift his headquarters to Paris, the paper being printed in England.

Amongst those who gathered round Shyamaji was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar who left India for London in June 1906. Vinayak had by this time decided to throw himself completely into the struggle for the great Cause. He asked his followers to shed all fear of suffering that might come in its wake. He entrusted his unfinished job to his worthy elder brother, Ganesh Damodar, the founder of the *Abhinav Bharat Society* which played a very important role in the Freedom Movement of India in subsequent years.

# ***Premonitions of Disorder***

(1900-1905)

## **Advocacy for Violence**

The part played by the *Kesari* was by now widely known. It was soon followed by the *Kal*, a weekly Marathi paper first published from Poona in 1898 by Shivaram Mahadeo Paranjpe. Paranjpe was warned for seditious writings in 1900, 1904, 1905 and 1907. In 1908 he was prosecuted and thrown into prison. The paper, more than any other, openly advocated violence as the only measure which the foreigners would appreciate and watch with awe. It developed its argument from point to point by presenting the miserable and helpless condition of India and then exhorting the people to take steps for the emancipation of the country, if needs be, by resorting to violence.

The *Kal* commented as if by a letter in verse from a correspondent under the caption: "*Have you killed Afzal Khan?*" on March 25, 1904, on the custom of planting a triumphal flag in the front of each house on the Hindu New Year's Day of which the following is the substance:

"Why are you planting the triumphal flag? What achievement is it meant to commemorate? Are you merely following an immemorial custom in planting it? Have you delivered the Aryans from their miseries and conferred upon them the boon of independence? Have you won a victory on the battlefield? Have you driven away those who kick the Indians and rob them of their independence? Have you killed Afzal Khan or driven away Durani? Have you distinguished yourself like Rani of Jhansi? If you have done none of these things, why do you erect a flag in vain? .... First achieve victory and then erect a triumphal flag before your house."

Newspapers began to inculcate the value of resistance and self-help and the *Barisal Hitaishi*, (April 23, 1904), wrote:

"We have no hope of regaining the favour of Englishmen by resorting to flattery and sycophancy. Who can arrest the course of time to avoid the immutable ways of Providence? ....

"The Bengalees must either be conquerors in this struggle or be effaced from the face of the earth... Do not look to officials for favour like the thirsty bird hopelessly looking at the clouds for a drop of water. Learn to rely on your own selves; to stand on your own legs.

"Beware! Firmly and courageously oppose every action of the Government which is tainted with the sin of oppression."

On June 17, 1904, the *Kal* asked its readers to mark the inescapable signs of the European nations that had

"hitherto been guilty of cruel murder of countless persons and other inequities" being overtaken by Nemesis.

There was awakening of the spirit of revolt amongst the conquered nations everywhere, and

"we must recognise the finger of Providence in the arrangement" and remember the resson that 'what God wills cannot be delayed'."

The prime cause of India's miserable condition was attributed by the *Kal* (August 12, 1904), to the unnatural presence of the Englishman in India. The Indians should realise without delay their relation to the British rulers which, as the paper reminded

"resembled that of Hamlet's mother to his uncle in Shakespeare's play. The uncle did not mean to do serious harm to the Prince; he only wanted his mother and wished that Hamlet should be content with coarse fare. But this injustice was not long tolerated in the capital of Denmark. It is one of nature's healthy laws that no injustice is allowed to continue long. Hamlet's uncle professed affection towards the Prince, and the latter too, showed outward obedience to him. The same is true of Englishmen and the natives. The relations between the two are utterly unnatural and insincere....

"When the Prince was in a state of undecisiveness and doubt, the ghost of his father appeared and asked him to remember the greatness of Denmark and that of the murdered King, Hamlet's father. The same thing was very much applicable to the political and economic condition of India. To remedy such evil, Hamlet promised in a stirring speech. We should all try to do likewise and form the resolution that Hamlet formed on hearing the last words of the ghost."

### Russian Example

The *Kal* published on August 26, 1904, the report that a high official of the Russian Government had been assassinated by a member of the Nihilist party. The man on arrest asserted that "he had done a right thing in murdering M. de Plehve for which he hoped to be rewarded in heaven."

His demands were:

- (i) Parliament of the people,
- (ii) Liberty of the press,
- (iii) Repeal of repressive laws,

- (iv) Cessation of war with Japan,
- (v) Measures for prevention of famines, and
- (vi) Release of political prisoners.

Commented the *Kal* :

"One is perfectly astonished to read these demands of the Nihilists. Famines occur daily in India and the Indian Government has been waging war against Tibet for several days past; but India produced no Nihilists to make Government stop these famines or these wars"

Under caption: "*The Educative Value of Murder*", the Editor elaborated his point, on September 2, 1904, on the significance of such murders and the lesson they should carry to the oppressors. The *Kal* extolled the motive of the act as one that had not been done for any personal gain, and was, therefore, thoroughly justifiable.

"These political murders are not like the common murders for which offenders are tried in judicial courts every day. When a King or an exalted functionary in a State is assassinated the world stops for a while to consider their significance. Such murders are apt to dazzle and stupefy the mind as the appearance of a meteor or the bursting of a pent up volcano. People ask one another what these murders mean, and persons of a reflective turn of mind form their own conclusions as to the object of Providence in allowing them to occur. The object with which these murders are committed is not the acquisition of sordid gain or the gratification of such passions as jealousy or animosity. The laudable object which underlies them is to cut off a poisonous part, which otherwise threatens to impart its venom to the entire organism of the universe. These murders thus constitute a kind of surgical remedy calculated to preserve the organism of the State unharmed by amputating the poisoned limb. To change the metaphor, they are, as it were the terrible and deafening cry uttered by the oppressed masses when the rich and the great are plunged in all sorts of gaities and have no time to listen to the grievances of the poor. There is nothing connected with these murders that needs secrecy and concealment. They are perpetrated for the good of the world, and though primarily connected with secrecy the whole world is eventually taken into confidence about them."

As to the immediate cause of this assassination, wrote the *Kal* that it was Plehve's tyranny over the whole land, inhuman torture and 'infernal torment' which brought that terrible fate to him. It ought to have served as a warning to the tyrants all over the world but which in practice it did not.

The paper accepts murder as the logical outcome of tyranny:

"In short, the brutal oppression of M. de Plehve rendered his assassina-

tion inevitable.... such murders are inexpedient in a free country, but that a revolutionary propaganda is suited to the circumstances of a despotically governed country like Russia, where public criticism of political questions is tabooed and where the grievances of the people are left unredressed while repression reigns rampant through the land."

Then the writer compared the administration of Plehve with that of Lord Curzon "where the list of grievances was certainly much longer than the list of Plehve's acts."

The reader was left to draw his own conclusion and if possible to choose his own course of action for the redress of oppression that had taken possession of the country.

Papers of other Provinces also commented on the Nihilist manifest<sup>o</sup> in the background of Indian condition. The *Punjabee*, (April 13, 1905), purported to point out to the Czar the futility of trying to suppress by violence the aspirations of the Liberty Party; that such acts invariably tended to increase the strength of the revolutionists, and the dangers they had to face only made them more careful and better organised.

It pursued the theme by saying,

"What kind of Government is this which maintains such 'order'? Is it not really a band of usurpers? This is why the Government in Russia has no moral influence over the people; this is why Russia produces so many revolutionists; this is why an event like killing of the Tsar excites no sympathy among a great part of this very people.... Regicide in Russia is very popular. There are only two outlets from such a situation, either a revolution which will neither be averted nor prevented by condemnations to death, or the spontaneous surrender of supreme authority to the people to assist in the work of the Government."

Coming nearer home the *Punjabee*, (August 28, 1905), made it clear to the Government that it was now futile to try to stop the progress of the nation to its predestined goal. It ran thus:

"The rulers of our country are an all-powerful class of men.... The Juggernaut Car of autocratic rule rolls merrily along mangling and crushing under its wheels all and sundry that have the misfortune to cross its path....

"Progress is predestined", and "we must range forward, making a clean sweep of every obstacle and barrier that a foolish bureaucracy may see fit to place in our path."

Apparently the Nihilists had won, may be to the great hope of the Indians aspiring for independence. On October 17, 1905, 'the Czar of all the Russias' granted to his people a Representative



Assembly and a large measure of freedom, the absence of which as he said, would have rendered the promised Duma a mere farce. Thus the undisputed power of the bureaucracy most unwillingly yielded to the pressure of public opinion manifested through violent acts and the dawn of a new era for the Russian Empire was ushered in by Emperor Nicholas. His Majesty grieved over the disorders and troubles in the capital and many other parts of the Empire because as His Majesty felt that

“the well-being of the Russian Sovereign is indissolubly bound up with the well-being of the people and the people’s sorrow was his sorrow.”

He was, therefore, bent upon

“bringing as speedy an end as possible of the troubles so dangerous to the State.”

He was pleased, therefore, to instruct

“the various authorities to take steps for the prevention of overt manifestations of disorder, turmoil and violence...”

and at the same time he found it

“indispensable to unify the work of the superior Government... for the introduction of peace into the public life.”

With this laudable object in view (*The Amrita Bazar Patrika*: November 30, 1905) His Majesty promulgated.

“*First*, by giving to the population the firm foundation of public liberty based on the principles of real inviolability of the person and of freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association;

“*Secondly*, without interfering with the already arranged elections to the Duma allowing participation as far as possible in the said Duma... leaving the ultimate development of the principle of the general electoral right to the newly established legislative order;

“*Thirdly*, by establishing as an unalterable rule that no law shall come into effect without the approval of the Duma...”

“We call on all faithful sons of Russia to remember their duty to their country,... to bring all their efforts to bear on the restoration of calm and peace throughout our natal land.”

“Given at Peterhof on the 17th day of October (O. S.) 1905, in the 11th year of our Reign.

Nicholas”

It is a pity that this lesson of violence and its repercussions on the most powerful satrap of the time was lost upon the British Government at home and in India; or that the intensity of turmoil

and violence had not yet reached the pitch which might force the hands of the Government for accepting wise counsel of moderation, caution and compromise.

The *Pratijna* published a poem on July 26, 1905, depicting an interview between Ramdas Swami and Shivaji which was to the effect:

“The night is very dark, overcast with clouds—giving out at times flashes of lightning.”

“Shivaji seeking an answer for advancing the national and individual interests of a people (from his Guru) was asked to look up and he saw the figure of Mother India with a terrible sword in her hand and saying with a smile on her lips:

‘This is the one way on earth’.”

The patience of the oppressed people had reached its limits. The *Dnyottcjak*, on December 1, 1905, uttered a warning by comparing the population with an elephant and the King, its *mahout*.

“As long as this huge animal is kept under proper control, everything goes on all right, but when it gets infuriated, it tramples the driver under foot. So long as the people tamely submit to the oppression of their rulers, they fail to obtain the legitimate rights.”

The country now heads towards an unprecedented crisis. The sudden flare of the symptoms bedimmed the intellect of the rulers of India's destiny. There were now heard protests against constitutional methods. *The Tribune*, (September 16, 1905), asked the people to eschew a mendicant policy:

“Constitutional agitation in a country ruled by unconstitutional Government—in other words constitutional agitation by a people without any constitutional means or instrument by which to enforce its will upon those in power—is a grim mockery. The supreme moment has come for deciding between the present mendicant—fondly called, constitutional—methods of political agitation, and those demanded and justified by the requirements of the situation. Let Congress leaders take note.”

The movement was now taking a new turn.

## ***Idea and Action***

(1902-1908)

### **Aurobindo**

After his return from England Aurobindo lived in Baroda in the service of the State Government. He was not very much associated with any political activity in India; he was, as it were, watching the trend of events and preparing himself for the next step. He used to visit Bengal from time to time to study matters first hand and to contact men who had already been working in the line. He scanned the situation as best as he could and came to the conclusion that

“secret action of preparation by itself is not likely to be effective if there were not also a wide public movement which would create a universal patriotic fervour and popularise the idea of independence as its idea and aim of Indian politics.”

He thought of giving a new outlook to the movement by introducing non-co-operation, resistance to authority wherever possible and marshalling of all available forces for revolutionary action.

Independently of his contact with the workers in Bengal, Aurobindo seems to have intimate touch with Thakur Sahib of Poona. The Thakur was “a noble of the Udaipur State” (Sri Aurobindo: *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother*: 1953, p. 28) and happened to be the head of a secret society that had been silently working in Bombay. There were a few others not very prominent, who had the same object in view, and Thakur Sahib, though not a member of any of the organisations, acted as the connecting link between all of them. He concentrated his attention on Maharashtra and the Maharashtrians who had still been simmering with discontent. His foresight made him realise that unless there be a considerable section in the Army to help the cause of revolution, the movement could not have the same strength as was essential for the occasion. On this assumption he directed his secret efforts towards this end and succeeded in winning over two or three regiments of the Indian Army. He never came to limelight although he was recognised as the axis of secret organisations. He occupied an abiding place in the

mind of Sri Aurobindo as one who served as the beacon light in the dark passage leading to a successful armed revolution.

Before he finally shifted to Bengal on the advice of Sister Nivedita, Aurobindo sent an energetic young man, who had been in the Baroda Army, to explore avenues of activity and to come into contact with those who had already established secret societies in Bengal, which, for certain, "did not" at the time "include terrorism in its programme."

Jatin Banerjee, in later life known as Niralamba Swami, was commissioned to execute a

"programme of preparation and action which Aurobindo thought might occupy a period of thirty years before fruition become possible.... The idea was to establish secretly or, as far as visible action could be taken, under various pretexts and covers, revolutionary propaganda and recruiting throughout Bengal."

The programme was fairly exhaustive inasmuch as it envisaged establishment of societies dealing with cultural, intellectual and moral principles and to win over young men who had already shown their tendency towards public activities for revolutionary action. Preparation was to be made for ultimate military action for the purpose of which athletics, training in offensive and defensive action, riding, deeds of adventure, drill and organised movement, etc., had had to be practised.

Jatin Banerjee was successful in his mission and was able to form a nucleus in Calcutta within a reasonable time. He was helped in every possible way by P. Mitra who had already a unit functioning at the time to his credit, and could carry a rather hopeful tale to Sri Aurobindo who had been watching every event with the eye of a man of penetrating foresight looking ahead for a scheme of direct action.

Aurobindo whispered into the ears of his followers the spirit of Mazzini's formula,

"Liberty is the right of every man to exercise his faculties without impediment or restraint in the accomplishment of his special mission, and in the choice of its means most conducive to its accomplishment."

The means adopted by him was "a preparation for open revolt", in case passive resistance was found insufficient for the purpose. "There must be a secret organisation with the sole object of an armed insurrection" was the motto that was followed.

With Aurobindo in Bengal and Tilak in Maharashtra whom the former "regarded as one possible leader for a revolutionary party", coming to the forefront, others holding progressive views relegated themselves to the background. These two leaders began to be looked upon as political thinkers who were likely to chalk out a path quite different from what had been trodden so far.

From subsequent events it is guessed that Aurobindo shared his responsibility with some other leaders, sufficiently progressive for the time, such as (Raja) Subodh Mallick, Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, Chitranjan Das, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Sister Nivedita, and one or two others. But with regard to direct action his confidence rested on a group of young men, dare-devils, who within a short period appeared in the arena with the flash of bursting bombs and firing pistols, a new technique and a new weapon to forge their way towards the ultimate goal.

It did not take a long time for words of caution to be showered from every quarter. But a typical revolutionary, in the language of Ida A Taylor (*The Revolutionary Types*) "enters upon his hazardous enterprise with a full appreciation of the perils of the way." Warnings not only from the wise people but also from the pages of history were there.

"Each prophet of evil has a discovery of his own in this line to proclaim. Death, intending travellers are admonished, lies in this direction, disaster in this; and since every thoroughfare hitherto explored has been found to lead in the end to the first, and with scarcely inferior degree to the second, it is manifest that an attempt to controvert the statement is labour lost."

These men were dubbed 'impatient idealists' and 'dreamers' having not much to do with the realities of life. For them Taylor pleads:

"There are dreams rendering men indifferent to danger, and aims which supersede the allurements of paths of pleasantness and peace. To anticipate that the adventurer will be turned from his purpose by a prediction of misfortune is to betray a confidence in the docility of human nature, far from being borne out by facts."

### Literature to the Fore

Starting with a few, the revolutionary idea, the thought of direct action, captured the minds of a larger and larger number

of people in its grip. Newspapers from the South to the North began to breathe brimstone and fire and received the kind attention of the authorities. *Poona Vaibhav* (1897), *Madavritta* (1897), *Kesari*, *Kal*, *Vihari*; *Bande Mataram* (1906), *Yugantar* (1906), *Sandhya*, *Navasakti*, *Karma-Yogin*, *Pratoda* (Bombay), *Sahayak* (Lahore), *Peshawal* (Lahore), *Hoonkar*, *Sworaj*, *Dcscha-Sevak* and a host of others of the ilk appeared (and disappeared) in quick succession.

Books and other literature were proscribed or confiscated as often as the authorities could sign orders for the purpose. *The Laghu Abhinav Bharat Gatha* (Marathi poems of Ganesh Damodar Savarkar), *Mukti Kon Pathe*, *Bortaman Rananiti*, *Bhawanir Mandir*, *Swadhinatar Itihasa*, *Life of Mazzini* and *Garibaldi*, *Deshar Katha* (in Bengali), etc., received special attention. Publications of a similar nature were *Sambhu-Nishambhu Badh* (slaying of the demons bearing the names) a short drama, *Anal Prabha*, *Naba Uddeepan*, *Ranajiter Jiban Jajna*, etc.\* The *Bhagabad Gita* was listed by the police as a highly seditious literature and cases were not rare when that Sacred Book of the Hindus was taken away by the police in the course of a search for dangerous weapons and seditious literature. In later years the *Report of the Seditious Committee* published (1918) by the Government of Bengal was for all practical purposes treated as one falling into the group and literally suppressed though not openly declared as a publication every copy of which was "to be confiscated wherever found".

The measures for suppression and repression were intensified by the Government with every day but it seemed that they had placed implicit faith on a bund of sand to stem the rising tide of a mighty flood.