

"One can get arms by another means which has been found to work well. Many of those who have followed the Russian methods must have noticed that members of the party of the revolutionists are mixed up in the Army of the Czar and they are armed cap-a-pie ready to come over some day to the side of the revolutionists.

"During the French revolution this stratagem was found very effective. Again, when the ruling power happens to be an alien one, the revolutionists have a greater advantage. The foreign Government has to recruit most of its soldiers from among the people. Therefore, if the revolutionists secretly announce the message of independence to these native soldiers, a noble work will be done. When at least they have to encounter the Imperial Power, the revolutionists not only gain the well-trained native soldiers, but also get benefit of the arms and ammunition which the Imperial Power gave the soldiers. Besides all the courage of the ruling power can be destroyed by exciting a serious alarm in its mind."

There is still another source which can be tapped easily but must be done with a good deal of caution. The gun-makers of every land would be too glad to sell arms to revolutionists because they form a big group of customers. The Paper proceeds in the same issue (August 12, 1907) :

"It is a stern fact that for the protection of self-interest Western tradesmen can do anything. In fact, the gun-makers derive more profit from the supply of guns to revolutionists than from any other source. If lakhs of guns be sold in a day, the proceeds certainly do not amount to a trifle, and one to be ignored. Especially if the big gun-makers cannot get to supply their commodity in this manner, it becomes impossible for them to carry on their trade for any length of time. As the Government has got its own workshops, it has not to purchase arms and ammunitions from others. And a big firm cannot subsist on a stray buyer or two. Hence gun-makers have to side with the revolutionists. But one should be very cautious, when he has to import arms in the manner suggested. Because, if the Raj once become aware of the state of things, it will adopt all the precautionary measures in its power and the work of the revolutionists will thus be retarded."

## ***The Clarion Call***

(1895-1908)

The call for preparing oneself for a sanguinary struggle by denial of all comforts and leisure, keeping always ready for any emergency, facing death in the glamour of sacrifice came from poets who flooded the country with songs that breathed fire of patriotic fervour. The Bengali youths splendidly responded to the call as was evidenced by the number of men who came forward boldly and enthusiastically to participate in actions which could lead but to the gallows.

There were a lot of them and each seemed to excel the other in his performance. Poems of Rabindranath, Dwijendralal, Atul Prasad, Rajani Kanta gave expression to the past greatness and present miseries of the Motherland. There was a call for unity, devotion, culture of self-respect for going forward with firm step against endless odds. They never crossed the borderland of caution, never suggesting, even remotely, violence to self or to others.

The group of poets that inspired breath to the living corpse of Indian nationhood was a legion. Most of their songs were banned as soon as they became known but were at once put into the storehouse of memory of those who had the chance of audition or perusal. Some of the specimens are:

“Teach me, O Mother! to attach the least value to life, so that it can feel blessed by its own dedication. Teach me to serve at your feet, to sacrifice life before everybody else. Make me the spearhead of the vanguard of your servants, O Mother!

\* \* \* \* \*

“Let me see whether the flow of my life-blood can rouse new recruits in the soil sanctified by the touch of your feet.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Come all Ye who would die.... Like a devotee and not as a man already dead. There can be no nervousness in killing the demons. The howlings of wild animals should not deter us and inject trepidation into our hearts.... Heedless of the immense density of the forests fraught with peril, who would embrace danger with open arms? Come and die like heroes slaying the ruthless foes.

\* \* \* \* \*

“There will be a severe test whether you have your baptismal of fire.

You are treated with contempt and trampled under the feet by the enemy. Are you capable of burning the enemy or be consumed yourself in the fire; to cover the Universe with the ashes (of the 'enemies and the martyrs)?.... To conquer the enemy, embrace death and prove thereby that you have had your proper baptismal. Hideous looking death is proceeding apace. Marching through the dark dense boundless forests whether you would grasp the sharp-edged sword in your dark-skinned hand (to meet the foe valiantly)?

\* \* \* \* \*

"Come Ye! all, maddened with the joy for embracing death; to mix poison with the smoke of the cremation ground (to make it terribly deadly). The Motherland gives you the call to die. Are you prepared to obey the order or not?.... National humiliation has assumed mighty proportions and the stigma can only be removed through the path of death."

—*Bejoy Chandra Majumdar*

"Initiated in the cult of *shakti* our heads are bowed low at the feet of the dauntless Mother.... We are not afraid to shed our own or cause the spilling of blood of our enemies.... In the clanging of war the Mother comes; satisfied her sword is in the shedding of steaming blood and decimating foes."

—*Barada Charan Mitra*

"Like the sacrificial fire let many millions of human lives that are nearly dead burn aglow. O Mother! Your sons will adore your saintly image with their life-blood."

—*Kusum Kumari Das*

"If you want to sacrifice your life, O Madcap! offer it at once. You would seldom find a more suitable occasion to make a present of yourself to protect your self-respect."

—*Jatindra Mohan Bagchi*

"In the change of the cycle of time, come Ye Mother Chandi! to punish the dreadful demons. The Devils with unparalleled force dismember your body into pieces."

—*Kali Prasanna Karyabisharad*

"Throw away, Mother! all adornments set with jewels; put on a necklace of severed heads of human beings.... Put aside the golden flute and betake thou to the mad sword and quench your thirst with the blood of demons slain by You."

—*Harish Chandra Chakrabarti*

"Come Ye dancing, the Presiding Deity of War, in the midst of your sons with the full panoply of a devastating war.... Teach us the hideous strategy of the battle by infusing the heart with indomitable courage.... We

will place a garland of human heads torn asunder from the trunk of the enemies and adorn you with human bones from head to foot. We will churn the ocean of blood today and bring up the priceless jewel of Independence on the surface. Awake! Mother! the War Incarnate, and we will place our offering at your feet."

—*Kshirode Chandra Ganguli*

"Enthusiatically sacrifice millions of heads with the sweet smile on your lips. Let there be millions of swords dangling over your heads. Pay no heed to the approach of death or to terrible phantoms out to scare you away from predestined way."

—*Manilal Ganguli*

"Inflame the heart of one and all with the spark of your dedicated life. Everything that smacks of selfishness, dissensions, fear of death should be reduced to ashes through the fire (of sufferings)."

\* \* \* \*

"Who is there who would bravely face all possibilities of danger, oppression, thunderbolts descending from Heaven and death and bear all those calmly even when the limbs are dismembered and torn to pieces."

—*Debabrata Basu*

"Accept him as the worthy son of the Mother who would immolate himself by offering his body and soul to wipe away the miseries of the Motherland. He would be recognised as the only person who had paid back the debt he owed to the Mother."

—*Debabrata Basu (?)*

"The down-trodden Bharata wants you, O Murari! the Holder of the (wheel) Sudarshana, to reappear in India. . . . Come with the terrible sword in hand to flood the world with the blood of the enemy. Come Ye, the destroyer of the shackles that hold India in bondage."

\* \* \* \*

"Bring each and every son of the Mother under the unfurled flag fluttering in the sky. Let India adopt a new tune. Come, Ye! in a new attire to flood the world with the enemy's blood."

—*Kamini Kumar Bhattacharyya*

## ***Patriotic Associations***

(1905-1908)

### **National Education**

The leaders of the Anti-Partition Movement were not sitting idle while advocating boycott of schools and colleges. On November 16, 1905, the National Council of Education was constituted with the object "to impart and promote imparting of Education—Literary and Scientific, as well as Technical and Professional—on national lines . . . attaching special importance to a knowledge of the country, its Literature, History and Philosophy and designed to incorporate with the best original ideals of life and thought the best assimilable ideals of the West and to inspire students with a genuine love for and a real desire to serve the country."

A Provisional Committee entrusted to draw up a scheme for the purpose submitted its report on December 2, 1905, which was accepted by "the Council" on March 11, 1906. The "Council" was registered on June 1, 1906 under Act XXI of 1860. The Bengal National College was inaugurated on August 14, 1906. It was a great challenge to the Circulars intended to restrict the activities of the students and their teachers and to punish the institutions that dared flout the humiliating conditions intended to be imposed over their internal working or management by the Government.

### **Anti-Circular Society**

To counter the evil effects of the infamous Circulars relating to participation of students in politics and their punishments, an Anti-Circular Society was formed by Rama Kanta Ray, a Mining Engineer, during the Barisal Conference composed mainly of boys rusticated from schools. They were to serve as volunteers during the session of the Conference. These boys in the language of *The Englishman*, (December 13, 1907), "earned a name . . . through police thrashing".

The formation of a body of selfless workers were deemed by the leaders to be absolutely necessary to enforce the boycott by picketing and for looking to the comforts and convenience of the

participants in gatherings of vast magnitude where great strain and stress were involved.

### National Volunteers

Within a short time the Anti-Circular Society took shape in the *Brati Samiti* and the *Bande Mataram Samprodaya*. A number of *samitis* or *akhras* (i.e. athletic clubs) now sprang up in Calcutta and some places in the adjoining districts of Bengal. A correspondent from Comilla wrote to *The Englishman*, (May 17, 1907), on May 16, that

"there is evidence to show that the majority of the *akhras* have been started mainly for the purpose of training the *Bande Mataram* and the *Brati* people in the use of arms, particularly of the *lathi*, spear, sword, and *goopti* or sword-stick. *Gooptis* are now manufactured and sold openly everywhere."

It was also recognised by the Government (*The Administration of Bengal under Sir Andrew Fraser*, 1903-08, p. 15-16) that "in these clubs young men and boys went through a course of physical training, drill and discipline, and set to work to train themselves in *lathi*-exercises and wrestling. The members of these clubs were called National Volunteers; and the idea seems to have been that they would form a trained body able to resist force with force, and available for other purposes of offence and defence."

It continued:

"They were also used for other purposes, some being sent as messengers between those interested in keeping up the movement, others to collect funds, and others as emissaries to spread their propaganda."

These volunteers in their own way served a very useful purpose and were deemed to be essential to keep up the spirit of resistance against the Government. It is now known that not a few of the members of the corps were prominent in action that followed and struck terror in the hearts of the British Officials.

Announcement in newspapers proved

"that recruiting would be made and military training would be imparted openly in military strategy, wireless telegraphy, archery, target shooting" and the like.

To implement the scheme appeals were issued in public meetings to dedicate one boy from each family to "practise *Kshatriya dharma* and lay down his life" for the Motherland when called upon to do so.

## **Barisal, Conference**

(1906)

The Government lost all sense of proportion. The incidents at Barisal displayed the barbaric attitude of the authorities in utter nakedness. From the very start of the movement Barisal acquired great fame for having passed through tremendous suffering with a spirit of unparalleled courage. It was thought by the leaders to signalise their appreciation of its fortitude in the face of atrocities of the police and the imported Gurkhas by holding a huge political conference in the district. Arrangements were completed according to plan.

The Government in the meantime came out with a fiat that the organisers should have nothing to do with *Bande Mataram*. It was a most difficult situation. After consultations amongst the organisers the Conference was held on April 14, 1906, in a tense atmosphere. Almost from the start it was apprehended that the Government and the people might come into an open clash. And in fact, they did.

The Government threw off its mask and repression was let loose in all its hideousness, furnishing the people with an opportunity to win a unique moral victory over brute force. The credit was monopolised by the leaders and their followers inasmuch as they remained absolutely calm and non-violent in the face of the greatest provocation. The technique of civil resistance was resorted to and practised on a large scale for the first time on the Indian soil with signal success. Barisal laid the foundations of the non-violent warfare that played such an important part in the future struggle of India under the able leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

The proceedings of the Conference had had to be terminated abruptly and the major part of the programme was consequently abandoned. Some of the persons assembled on the occasion including the leaders suffered incredibly severe physical torture and blood flowed freely as a result of assault. The hosts as well as the chief guests had to pass through Magisterial indignities, criminal prosecution not excluded, but the cry of *Bande Mataram*

could be heard over the din of police vociferations and the thud of falling *lathis* on human heads. The young and the old were treated alike in the mad orgy of violent attacks on an unarmed and absolutely peaceful crowd that had nothing to defend themselves with except an indomitable courage in the face of odds, and a love of the Motherland that was to them greater than Heaven.

Thus the seed of armed revolution was sown afresh in the soil of Barisal furrowed by Government atrocities and irrigated by the flow of blood of the martyrs on the memorable *Fourteenth Day* of April in the year of the Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Six.

The hero of the fight was Surendra Nath Banerjea, the uncrowned King of nationalist India. He was singled out for discourteous treatment by the Magistrate and on his return from the field of battle unscathed, the *Punjabee* published the following poem written by one Ram Sharma on April 25, 1906:

"He comes! the conquering hero comes:  
Sing paeans, bother! sound the drums!  
Ye! men and women of Bengal,  
With patience wait the tyrant's fall.

The scales have fallen from your eyes,—  
On! On! where path of honour lies,  
On! On! if needed, freely bleed,—  
For, patriot's blood is freedom's seed."

About three months before the fateful Barisal Conference *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, (January 13, 1906), openly said that any other place than Barisal "which was first to suffer" and suffer terribly would have met "lawlessness with lawlessness, if not with actual anarchy."

*The Indian Empire* warned, (April 10, 1906), the people of Barisal speaking about the Government oppression that was likely to come, and asked the organisers of the Conference

"to decide whether people should adhere to the present mendicant policy or rely on the strength of their strong right arm to bring about the realisation of their national aspirations."

and ended with the significant remark:

"Whining may extort the contemptuous pity, but never the respect of those in power."



Just after the Conference had been forcibly disbanded, the *Sandhya* posed the question

"whether it is well to submit to being assaulted like so many heads of cattle or sheep, or whether it is better for self-defence to wield *lathis* in return for *lathis*."

The spirit of defiance and little care for life began to be preached by the newspapers, the reflection of the people's mind, and the *Sri Sri Bishnu-Priya O Ananda Bazar Patrika* wrote on April 19, 1906, that

"it is necessary to apprise the Government betimes of the fact that they are slowly learning now-a-days to think lightly of death."

The outward manifestations were of

"a terrible storm passing all over the country, infusing rashness in all minds. A crisis is approaching, and if a repetition of the late incidents at Barisal occur anywhere else, the probability is that the people will on that occasion reckon not much of their own lives"

Though the people of India, especially the Bengalis, are by nature meek and tolerant, they are quite as sensitive as the people of other nations, and in such a case the "discontent that has been sown will sink deep into their hearts and result in future trouble", wrote *The Bengalee* on April 20, 1906. It went further:

"Another and a greater Ireland has been created, and the faith of the country in constitutional methods of agitation has been dissipated."

The same Paper dilated the point on April 21:

"Outrage so cowardly, so unprovoked and so brutal" that it had been able to drive "a docile and law-abiding people to the verge of universal, perhaps dangerous discontent."

The mass of the people has a limit of tolerance and it should be remembered by the authorities that

"Brute force must beget brute force, and where the baton and the regulation *lathis* replace intelligence and sane statesmanship, people naturally ignore constitutional methods.... Thus the Government of East Bengal is creating a very critical situation for itself and is likely to be paid back in its own coin."

Throwing off the mask the *Yugantar* came out thundering on April 22, 1906:

"The thirty crores of people of India must raise their hands to stop this course (Barisal happenings) of oppression. Force must be met by force."

It was now apparent that the atrocities at Barisal had spread the flame of indignation throughout the length and breadth of India and the *Sandhya*, (April 28, 1906), urged the people to give expression to their wrath by saying that "cease betaking yourselves like women for good."

The inward feeling of indignation must 'find expression outwardly in anger'; because

"useless indignation like the present is a disgrace to the national character. Patience is not good under all circumstances; feelings of revenge are also necessary in the struggle of life. Revenge is the one unfailing healer of national humiliation."

The venom of insult generated by the Barisal incidents must be eradicated not by mere speeches. It is a well-known fact that "poison can only be destroyed by poison only. The poison of humiliation can be counteracted by poison of revenge."

The outside world might not know the inhuman atrocities committed on the people, contended the *Hitvarta*, (April 29, 1906), but it was of the opinion that

"had it been any other part of the world, the head of Emerson (the offending Magistrate) severed from his trunk would have rolled on the street. Had the manner in which this shameless creature treated gentlemen holding higher position than himself been followed in any other country by any shameless person, his bones would have been crushed to pieces...."

The future was very bleak and it was apparent on the surface that

"arms will be used against arms. The blood of the inoffensive children will be washed with the blood of the white men and the oppressors,.... Even the worm will bite when pressed hard. How long the people of this country will have patience?"

The Paper gave a very lurid picture of things to come unless the offenders be punished. It continued:

"We fear that the *Swadeshi* movement may now take another turn. If instead of *Bande Mataram* the severed head of Emerson be hanged on a flag-staff, it will not be good either for the people or their rulers. Now we warn Government if the barbarous devils in human form be not punished, if the insolence of these men be not brought down, the fire which will be kindled will be extinguished with the blood of thousands of men. What we fear is this."

The inflammatory language of all nationalist newspapers and the sullen temper of the people alerted the District Magistrate about

future trouble and he prohibited any person from carrying between the hours of sunset and sunrise any sword-stick, stick, or bamboo which is more than three and half feet in length or one inch in diameter, in certain streets, bazars and the steamer ghat.

Everything was being done on the plea of maintaining Law and Order and *The Bande Mataram*, (June 5, 1907), interpreted the terms in its inimitable way:

"The Britisher's word is Law; his very presence and existence in India (is) a signal for the suppression and suspension of many patriotic activities. Reconciliation with foreign despotism is perfect Order. It is the height of impertinence to be begging and asking. It is criminal to insist on the undoing of bureaucratic actions. To wish for our eternal serfdom is prudence and peacefulness. To think ourselves irremediably unfit is wisdom and moderation. To imagine ourselves a nation is madness. To love our country is superstition. To work for its emancipation is sedition."

It concluded, therefore, that

"the new nationalism with its boycott and Swadeshi, national education and Swaraj, is subversive of law and order, religion and morality, justice and fairplay, obedience and discipline."

The Papers began to be more outspoken and all shades of opinion pointed the finger to one direction, revenge and blood.

*The Bengalee* wrote on June 15, 1906:

".... It was Emerson who wrote how the brave Lovejoy gave his breast to the bullets of a mob for the right of free speech and opinions and died when it was better not to have lived.

"This same sentiment is prevalent in the Indian mind today. The people know that political freedom can only be gained by the blood of martyrs, and they are prepared to pay the price."

There is open invocation to brute strength because the English "have broken the law". The duty of the people then is:

"Learn to be *goondas* yourselves. Gather brute strength yourselves. Remember that the English revere the strong and are like death itself to the weak."

Once the people is awakened to the sense of serfdom and try to snap the shackles of bondage it can never be suppressed. The people might be "sent to jail, transported and hanged, drawn and quartered" but they cannot abandon the cause which they have made their own wrote the *Bangabasi* (quoted in *The Englishman* on September 2, 1907):

"Depend upon it, patriotism has a perennial spring. They are so to speak, seeds of blood which are above destruction, and even multiply on an attempt at their destruction. A hundred men will rise where a single person is imprisoned."

When repression was in full swing and defiance of the law and retaliation for grievances, real or otherwise, had been a matter of common event, Romesh Chandra Dutt expressed his considered views in *The London Times* on June 10, 1908, saying that people were not the only element to blame and coercion was certainly not the only remedy to bring the situation under control:

"The Partition of Bengal was not of Sir Bampfylde's doing nor was it effected by the present Government—they are the sad inheritors of its results. When there was an outburst of feeling against that measure, an impression was created . . . that a counter agitation would find favour. This was setting class against class and sect against sect, and the result was an outbreak or rioting, plunder, and unnamable outrages in East Bengal, such as has not been witnessed in times of peace in British India within fifty years and more that I can myself remember.

"It was then that large classes of people began to feel that they could hope for no redress, that they would get nothing but coercion. Disappointment sank into despair, and ideas of crime were generated.

"Crime must be repressed and repressed with a strong hand; . . . But is repression alone the proper remedy for the state of things described above? It has been tried with greater severity than Sir B. Fuller thinks during the last twelve months, and has failed. It will always fail, for in India, as in Ireland, coercion alone is no remedy."

Wrote Aurobindo at the time:

"Tyrants have tried but have they ever succeeded in repressing the natural love of freedom in man? Repressed, it has grown in strength; crushed under the heel of the tyrant, it has assumed a myriad forms and in successive incarnations gained in strength and inspiration from repeated failures and endless suffering, it has risen finally, to overthrow its oppressor for good; this is the teaching of history; this is the message of Humanity.

"But like the scriptural adder, tyrannies have eyes but they see not, have ears but they hear not, and the universal teaching of history and the eternal message of humanity are both lost on them. And the car of progress has, through human folly and perversity, to wade through blood and ruin on earth."

## **Congress Rift**

(1893-1907)

### **The Trend**

While Tilak and Paranjpe had been preaching extremism in their own way starting with Shivaji Utsab and the Poona Plague, Aurobindo, long before he came to political limelight, had a vision of things to come and the way in which they were going to affect the political activities of future India. As far back as 1893 when the political leaders of the time had been preaching moderation and the role of the educated classes was limited to the upliftment of the illiterate masses by degrees and stages, Aurobindo wrote (Ray Chaudhuri, G.: *Aurobinda () Swadcsi Yug*, pp. 68-69) in the *Indu Prakash* on September 18, 1893, that the self-appointed leaders would better not forget the lessons of history of a country, i.e., France, where the "ignorant proletariat" through "purification of blood and fire—blotted out in five terrible years the accumulated oppression of thirteen centuries." Further, the history, he added, that of Ireland, Italy, America, etc., told not a different tale. After what Aurobindo had said, it became apparent to the discerning and the intelligent classes that sooner or later a mass armed revolution, some sort of a violent expression of the national sentiment, was in the offing.

The controversy over moderate and extremist politics inside the Congress had not yet openly raised its head, but the *Kal* gave a picture of power slipping into the hands of the masses. It wrote in its issue of January 8, 1904:

"The so-called National Congress which has been holding its sittings year after year is not really a 'National' Congress. It is only composed of a section of those persons whom Englishmen are pleased to call educated and as the majority of them are entirely subservient to Englishmen, the Congress will most probably remain in its present condition and will never be able to render any good to the country. There is, however, another Congress which has not yet met. But when it does meet, no one will dare oppose its demands. In that Congress the speakers will not deliver their speeches by word of mouth, nor will the delegates composing it recline on chairs in a grand *mandap*, for it would be impossible to provide chairs for thirty crores of delegates. The present Congress is composed of educated class, but the

Congress to which we allude, will be composed of uneducated masses. No one will venture to disregard the resolutions passed by this last mentioned Congress. In that Congress the delegates will be driven on to their work by hunger felt by thirty crores of people. The right asked for by thirty crores of people will be demand for food. Deeds not words, will be their motto. As yet no one knows for certain when such Congress will meet. There is, however, no doubt that both the Government and the educated men of this country are paving the way for its assembly."

While the partition agitation grew in intensity leading towards birth of revolutionary societies, the Indian National Congress had been showing marks of drifting towards extremism in the shape of more direct action. The leaders controlling the Congress at the time were not slow to mark the change and the two main resolutions of the Congress were accepted as a measure of compromise passed at the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress in December 1906 between the Moderates and Extremists.

The first of these ran as follows :

"Having regard to the fact that the people of this country have little or no voice in its administration and that their representations to the Government do not receive due consideration, this Congress is of opinion that the boycott movement inaugurated in Bengal by way of protest against the partition of that province was and is legitimate."

The second was :

"This Congress is of opinion that the system of Government obtaining in the self-governing British colonies should be extended to India."

Even this small demand was resented by the influential Papers in England. In early January 1907, *The Times* declared that the last session of the Congress "was not likely to add to its reputation and influence both in India and abroad. A split", continued the Paper, "between the extremists and the moderates was only averted by moderates adopting largely the extremists' policy." It wanted to stress upon the folly of Dadabhai Naoraji's claim to self-government like the colonies by saying,

"Since India has been won by the sword and is held in the last resort, by the sword, it was well for the small highly educated classes represented at the Congress that the sword stands between them and their native enemies." (*The Englishman*, January 4, 1907).

Needless to say the remarks of *The Times* added the necessary fuel to the fire of resentment then prevailing.

The resolutions of 1906 failed to produce the requisite atmosphere of peace between the two contending forces in the Congress. In 1907, the plenary session of the Congress was to have been held in Nagpur but the differences between the two outstanding schools of thought, viz., the moderate and the extremist, became so pronounced and gradually bitter, that it was thought advisable to shift the venue to Surat so that the session could be held in a calmer atmosphere, far away from Tilak's sphere of influence.

The newspapers and periodicals began to appear in support of the two opposing views with a greater and greater emphasis on the respective ideology and outside Bengal, this was marked by the appearance of the *Hind Kesari* in May, 1907, with the aim of spreading among Hindi-speaking people as well as the Mahrathas, the views expressed by Tilak's Mahrathi *Kesari* published in Poona. The articles expressed extreme views to the extent of supporting violence under the cover of a thin veil of constitutional agitation, that could not conceal its motives.

The *Hind Kesari* found a good sojourner in the common path of exciting journalism in the *Desh Sevak* which ably sponsored the cause of violent extremism.

### Midnapore Conference

Shortly before the Surat Congress the Midnapore Political Conference held on December 7, 1907, cast a shadow of the coming events inasmuch as the leaders of Bengal met there only to disperse not only without doing any serious business but with open breach in their ranks. The extreme views supported the movement for social boycott, establishment of *akhras* as part of defence associations and demanded *Swaraj* pure and simple, all of which the moderates stoutly opposed. In particular, they were not prepared to ask anything more than *Swaraj* on the line of colonial government.

Further indications of the gathering storm were not wanting. On December 15, 1907, a meeting held in College Square, Calcutta, led by Aurobindo amongst others suggested the name of Lala Lajpat Rai as President of the next session of the Congress, where the name of Rash Behari Ghose had already been circulated. Lalaji declined to be drawn into the controversy and the matter was put to rest for the time being.

### Surat Congress

The Congress Session at Surat could not be held due to disturbances, each party accusing the other for the failure; and it was suspended *sine die* on December 27, 1907. The moderates issued a manifesto on the same date inviting delegates to a Convention to be held on a future date who would subscribe to the view of "attainment by India of self-government like that of the self-governing dominions" and "advance towards this goal by strictly constitutional means by bringing about steady reform of the existing system of administration".

It is needless to say that the Surat split added a great impetus to the revolutionary spirit of India leading the way towards violent acts. The mind of the people, at least of a large section of it, was getting round towards direct action as evidenced by the tremendous increase in circulation of newspapers publishing such views and the large and larger gathering at meetings held by the exponents of extremism.

The subsequent vicissitudes through which the Congress passed in later years made it possible to demand complete Independence in the Lucknow Congress in 1920 and it rapidly moved towards direct non-violent action in 1921, 1930 and 1942 under Gandhiji.

It took a long time for the Congress to decide whether to abjure support to the action of the revolutionists. It adopted a policy of expressing appreciation of the motive but condemnation of the act itself. Gradually and under the influence of Gandhiji it completely withdrew support to any outrage associated with the freedom's battle.



# ***The Printed Lines of Flame***

## **The Gita**

When a nation is stirred to its depths and pledges everything for the attainment of independence, the atmosphere created by the demand draws nourishment not only from new sources, but it hunts up the old traditional ones for inspiration that readily appeals to subtle emotions of the people both young and old.

The *Gita*, a part of the great *Mahabharata*, had been in existence from time that is past for how many thousand years, nobody can say with any definiteness. Amongst the religious books of the Hindus, the *Gita* has been regarded as containing the quintessence of spiritual thoughts and teachings. A resurgent Bengal in the background of a national upheaval gave it a new orientation. It came to be regarded as a "Scripture of the *Karmayoga*, a Light leading us on the path of action, a Gospel of Work." Because of its continual insistence on action it was deemed suitable for breaking the stupor that had overtaken India in its grips. Gradually other aspects receded, at least for the time being, from view. The *Gita* exhorts a fighter to go into action

"for the protection of the weak and the oppressed and for the maintenance of right and justice in the World To shrink from such a duty—to speak of avoidance of a fight, is confusion of mind and delusion, a weakness of the heart, an unmanliness, a fall from the virility of the fighter and the hero."

It further declared that

"there is continually a struggle between right and wrong, justice and injustice, the force that protects and the force that violates and oppresses, and when this has once been brought to the issue of physical strife, the champion and the standard bearer of the Right must not shake and tremble at the violent and terrible nature of the work he has to do; he must not abandon his followers or fellow-fighters, betray the cause and leave the standard of Right and Justice to trail in the dust and be trampled into mire by blood-stained feet of the oppressor, because of a weak pity for the violent and cruel and physical horror of the vastness of the destruction decreed." (Sri Aurobindo: *Essays on the Gita*, 1959, p. 86).

The great Tilak made good use of its teachings in the political field for the first time in India. He found that to achieve the goal

it was necessary "to reawaken not only the political mind, but the soul of the people by linking its future to its past", and what literature could do it more effectively than the *Gita* which had emanated from the "lotus-mouthed" Padmanabha—God Sri Krishna:

"Never give up yourself unto despondency or despair. Buck up. It is disreputable, un-Aryan and unworthy of the (bliss of) Heaven (un-heavenly) not to think of a fight when the cause is just. Never to think of the results, good, bad or indifferent, but work on ceaselessly and no sin is attached to him who can work with the same spirit."

The God is with the fighters and human agencies are necessary to act as instruments (*nimitta matra*). Because, hasn't the Lord said:

"Wherever there is decay of righteousness, O Bharata! and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then I send forth (incarnate myself) for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the firm establishment of righteousness, I am born from age to age." (Lord Zetland: *The Heart of Aryavarta*, p. 124).

It may be stated that these words falling from the lips of the Lord was accepted as the motto of the *Yugantar*, that had done more than any other printed matter for ushering in Indian Revolution into the field of reality.

### The *Ananda Math*

In all its aspects the *Swadeshi* Movement, because that was the name given to the convulsive agitation against the Partition, derived strength from a particular book the *Ananda Math* of Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the *rishi* of modern India. He gave India "the reviving *mantra* which is creating a new India, the *mantra*, *Bande Mataram*." The "new nationalism which *Bande Mataram* reveals" as Bepin Chandra Pal said, "is not a mere civic or economic or political ideal. It is religion."

The *Ananda Math* was published in 1882 and the poem beginning with the two words, *Bande Mataram*, "Hail Thee! Mother!" or "Hail! Motherland!" or simply "Mother, I bow to Thee!" was composed even earlier. The *mantra* in the song, as Aurobindo said, "breathed ecstasy at the contemplation of the Motherland in all its beauty, serenity and glory."

Because of an amalgam of Sanskrit and Bengali words it was not very well received by some eminent litterateurs, Bankim's friends, of the time. Bankim persisted in believing in its great future and incorporated it in his novel. If it had at the time of publication failed to rouse not a tith of the great emotion that it could evoke in later years, gradually it assumed the rank of the National Anthem of India. *Bande Mataram* served as a battle-cry "not only of the revolutionary societies but of the whole of nationalist Bengal, which differed from the societies in method only, and not in aim." (Lord Zetland: *The Heart of Aryavarta*, p. 144).

Aurobindo translated the whole poem, into English and presented it to the struggling nations of the whole world and named Bankim as one of the Makers of Modern India. In the language of Aurobindo:

"No nation can grow without finding a fit and satisfying medium of expression for the new self into which it is developing—without a language which shall give permanent shape to its thoughts and feelings and carry every new impulse swiftly and triumphantly into the consciousness of all. It was Bankim's first great service to India that he gave the race which stood in its vanguard such a perfect and satisfying Medium" (Sri Aurobindo: *Bankim, Tilak and Dayananda*, 1947, p. 9).

It has been aptly said that

"Bankim had a positive vision of what was needed for the salvation of the country. He saw that the force from above must be met by a mightier reacting force from below,—the strength of repression by an insurgent national strength. He bade us to leave the canine method of agitation for the leonine" (*ibid*, p. 10).

But what are the elements which would be able to uphold his ideas? They are to be *byragees*, mendicants, whose whole existence is to be based on *tyaga* "complete self-sacrifice for the country and complete self-devotion to the work of liberation." He inculcated through the pages of this immortal novel, the strict rules of association, perfect organisation and the "third element of moral strength" in which there must be "infusion of religious feeling into patriotic work." Who can deny that "the religion of patriotism is the master idea of Bankim's writings?"

In the *Ananda Math* itself Bankim says through the mouth of a *Sannyasin* (Bhabananda) that

"we do not recognise any other Mother. To us 'the Mother and the

Motherland are greater than Heaven.' We declare that the Motherland is the real Mother. We have got no mother, no father, no brother, no friend, no wife, son, habitation, etc. We have only our Mother 'richly-watered, richly-fruited, cool with the winds of the south, dark with the crops of the harvests, the Mother'."

In the same chapter Bhabananda says, with regard to the plundering of the State money :

"We do not commit theft or dacoity. The money would be (misused) taken by (a foreign) king. He has practically no claim over the money. One who does not administer the country (in the interests of sons of the soil) he loses his claim to be called as the monarch of the land."

And the question (from his companion, Mahendra) that "in such incidents there is every chance of losing one's life", was met by the tart reply that, "One does not die twice in a lifetime." This is the way, as if indicated by the direction of the finger, to salvation. It causes awakening, as if in a flush, from long delusions and *Bande Mataram* was on the lips of those who had been undergoing more cruel form of torture, of being flogged on the rack over bare bodies or had been climbing the steps leading to the scaffold.

### *Bhawani Mandir*

*Bhawani Mandir* (The Temple of Bhawani) written by Aurobindo and published in 1905, sets out the aims and objects of the revolutionaries. It exhorted the readers to invoke the blessings of *Shakti* (physical, mental, moral and spiritual strength) so that they might become fit soldiers for the fight for freedom. It openly preached the gospel of force as the prerequisite to national emancipation. Japan had shown the way which in some detail might be followed with profit. But he must base his struggle on a solid foundation of religion. Attached to the temple of Bhawani (or Kali) "far from the contamination of modern cities and as yet little trodden by man," there should be organised a new order of *karma-yogis* always ready to renounce everything in the cause of the Mother. The foundation of the New Order should be absolutely above all weaknesses. The knowledge enshrined in the mighty formula of the ancient gospel of the *vedanta* should be striven for attainment. It was optional for the political devotees to become *Sannyasis* (ascetics). Most of them were to be

*brahmacharis* (unmarried for life) who would return to the *garhastya ashram* (the family life) when the aim i.e. the liberation of India from the foreign yoke had been reached. The combination of the religious, political and social views was clearly brought out in the rules given in some detail. It is apparent the idea was taken from the *Ananda Math* of Bankim Chandra, a reference to which has already been made.

Everyone who called himself an Indian should endeavour to make India greater than what she was in the past so that she may fulfil her destiny reserved for her, for the salvation of humanity. The future religion—a harmonious synthesis of all religions of the whole world, was to emanate from India with the ultimate object of forging mankind into one race owing allegiance to one world religion. The philosophical side of the treatise has been expressed in the following words:

“In the unending revolutions of the world, as the wheel of the Eternal turns mightily in its courses, the Infinite Energy which streams forth from the Eternal and sets the wheel to work looms up in the vision of man in various aspects and infinite forms. Each aspect creates and marks an age” (Langley, G. H. *Sti Aurobindo*, p vii)

The teachings of the *Bhawani Mandir* influenced the revolutionary societies of Bengal in a very large measure. They combined the idea of Russian method of revolutionary violence with the principles advocated in the book. For a long time the two went hand in hand but due to the exigencies of the situation, the spirit of violence got the uppermost and it was found difficult to cling to the religious aspect of the movement.

To the above may be added the names of two other books, *Lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi* by Jogendra Nath Vidyabhusan, and *Swadhinatar Itihasu* (History of Independence) by Durga Charan Sanyal, which crept into every nationalist home and were read with great interest by every young man with patriotic sentiments.

### ***Mukti Kon Pathe***

The *Gita* and the *Ananda Math*, combined with the inspiring message of Vivekananda roused the people to a state of national consciousness not known before. Literature—prose, poetry, songs, drama, cartoons, leaflets combined with newspapers support-

ing the cause made their appearance in thousands. The Government of the day was not slow to react sharply and suppression and prosecutions for sedition became as common as the monsoon showers. It is difficult to mention even some of these which upheld the spirit of patriotism in the drooping heart of the nation, but two, of which short notices are given below, are singled out to present a glimpse of the minds of those who were out to resurrect a new India :

*Mukti Kon Pathe* (Which Way Salvation Lies) was the boldest of all. It suggested the ways and means of raising funds for the deliverance of the country from foreign yoke. The most inspiring articles of the *Yugantar* found their way into the pages of the book giving the main features of the campaign that were being applied in practice. The salient points of the coming movement that had to be kept in view were more or less on the following line :

“In the present conditions of our country there is no lack of undertakings and agitations regarding it; and by the grace of God, the Bengalis are everywhere being initiated by these efforts into a love of the country and a determination to obtain liberty. Therefore, let these be by no means disregarded. But if these agitations be joined without the ideal of freedom being cherished in the heart, real strength and training will never be acquired from them. Therefore, as the members of the band will, on the one hand, stake their lives on increasing the scope of the party, so on the other they should remain persevering and active in keeping the country excited by these undertakings and agitations.”

It pointed out that not much muscle was required to shoot Europeans, that arms could be procured through firm determination and that weapons could be prepared clandestinely in some secret places. Indians could be sent to foreign countries to learn the art of making weapons. The assistance of Indian soldiers must be obtained. They should be made to realize the misery and wretchedness of the country. The heroism of Shivaji must be extolled. As long as revolutionary work remained in infancy, expenses could be met by subscriptions. But as work advanced, money must be exacted from society by the application of force. If the revolution is being brought about for the welfare of society, then it is perfectly just to collect money from society for the purpose. It is admitted that theft and dacoity are crimes because they violate the principle

of good society. But the political dacoit is aiming at the good of society,

“so no sin but rather virtue attaches to the destruction of small good for the sake of some higher good. Therefore, if revolutionaries extort money from the miserly or luxurious members of society by the application of force, their conduct is perfectly just.”

The book further exhorted its readers to obtain the “help of the native soldiers . . . . Although these soldiers for the sake of their stomach accept service in the Government of the ruling foreigners, still they were nothing but men made of flesh and blood. They possessed the power of original thinking. Therefore, when the revolutionaries had explained to them the woes and miseries of the country, they in proper time, would swell the ranks of the revolutionaries with arms and weapons given to them by the rulers . . . . As it was possible to persuade the soldiers in this way, the modern English Raj of India did not allow the cunning Bengalis to enter into the ranks of the army . . . . Aid in the shape of arms might be secretly obtained by securing the help of the foreign ruling powers.”

It was the most outspoken book and indicated without the least shadow of doubt that matters had been taking shape which could not but lead to open conflict.

### *Bartaman Rananiti*

*Bartaman Rananiti* (The Modern Science or Technique of War), published in October 1907, exhorted the youth of the land to conquer fear and keep himself ready to face death. He should be expert in sword play and in carrying on guerilla warfare against the enemy who had disarmed them in order to keep them emasculated and innocuous for all times to come, he must be an adept.

Under the caption, *A New Literary Departure*, *The Bande Mataram* in its issue of October 13, 1907, wrote the following in respect of the book:

“\* \* \* The book is a small manual which seeks to describe for the benefit of those, who like the people of Bengal under the beneficent Pax Britannica, are entirely unacquainted with the subject, the nature and use of modern weapons, the meaning of military terms, the use and distribution of the various limbs of a modern army, the broad principles of guerilla warfare.

These are freely illustrated by detailed references to the latest modern wars, the Boer and the Russo-Japanese, in the first of which many new developments were brought to light or tested and in the second corrected by the experience of a greater field of warfare under more normal conditions. The book is a new departure in Bengali literature and one which shows the new trend of the national mind. In the old days of a narrow life and confined aspirations, we were satisfied with the production of romantic poetry and novels varied by occasional excursions into academic philosophy and criticism. Now-a-days the heart of the nation is rising to higher things; history, the patriotic drama, political writings, songs of national aspiration, draughts from the fountain of our ancient living religion and thoughts are almost the sole literature which command a hearing.

The new-born nation is eagerly seeking after its development and organisation and anything which will help it and widen its sphere of useful knowledge, will deserve and gain its attention.

\*        .        \*        \*

It is perfectly true that no practical use can be made of its contents at the moment; but the will and desire of thousands creates its own field and when the spirit of a nation demands any sphere of activity material events are shaped by that demand in ways that at the time seem to be the wild dreams of an unbridled imagination. Our business is to prepare our countrymen by all kinds of knowledge and action for the life of a nation, by knowledge and action when both are immediately permitted us, by knowledge alone for action which though not permitted now, is a necessary part of the future nation's perfect development. When the earnest soul prepared itself by what *Sadhana* is possible to it, however imperfect, God in his own good time prepares the field and the opportunity for perfect *Sadhana* and complete attainment."

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* (1895), *Vihari*, *Bande Mataram* (1906), *Yugantar* (1906), *Sandhya*, *Navasakti*, *Karma Yogin*, *Pratoda* (Bombay), *Sahayak* (Lahore), *Peshawal* (Lahore), *Hoonkar*, *Swaraj*, *Desha-Sevak* and a host of others of the like nature 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), *Desher Katha*, *Sambhu-Nishambhu Badh* (slaying of



the demons bearing the names) a short drama, *Anal Prabha*, *Naba Uddcepan*, *Ranajiter Jiban Jajna*, etc., stood as representatives of a host of others.

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 tide of a mighty flood.

### Press Law

The growing influence of the newspapers on the public mind unnerved the Government and it was thought advisable to take steps for bringing them under absolute control. Before June 3, 1907, when a circular was issued by the Government of India, Home Department (Public), the policy relating to newspapers was that "the local Governments intending prosecution against a newspaper were to submit the whole case to the Central Government for sanction detailing the circumstances under which it had been decided to proceed against a Paper and the action which it had proposed to take".

This salutary rule was given a go-by and the Government of India empowered the Local Government to institute prosecutions in all cases where the law had been infringed. The authority thus obtained was freely, and with vengeance, exercised and prosecutions were started against newspapers all over India, particularly in the Punjab, Bombay and Bengal. Troubles descended on the devoted heads of the editors, printers, owners of printing presses, etc., not excluding hawkers and distributors of such printed matters including pamphlets and leaflets. In such cases the provisions under Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code were liberally applied.

## ***Stirrings in Punjab***

(1907-08)

When Bengal had been passing through an unprecedented upheaval over the Partition of the Province, Punjab was stirred to its very depths by a Government measure unwise and provocative to the extreme. The steps adopted by the sturdy peasantry of the Punjab were immensely successful in forcing the Government to revise its policy and in bringing the Punjab officials to their senses.

The excessive land-tax with a further addition of irrigation and other rates ignited the dry fuel that Punjab had been at the time. It was stated that the "the demands of land revenue were excessive, the irrigation rates still more excessive, and the rules and regulations of the most exasperating kind." To add to the resentment of the affected people, the officers of the Canal Colony with a very poor conception about their duty tried to coerce to submission two millions of people cultivating three million acres "as if they were dealing with a little model farm." *The Pioneer* expressed its opinion that "a poker-backed Prussian official was mild in comparison with the canal bureaucrats."

In utter disregard of the temper of the sullen and disgruntled peasantry and giving a go-by to administrative tact, the Punjab Government brought in the Colonisation Bill to force all its foolish measures down the throats of an unwilling and sullen peasantry by threats of imprisonment. The Bill was intended for rewarding old soldiers and to facilitate recruiting for the future.

It was in the Chenab Colonies, where there had been no reduction of irrigation and land-tax that the bitterest opposition prevailed. Cases were started against six members of the Bar, three being barristers of the London Inns of Court at Rawalpindi for inciting the subjects of His Majesty the King Emperor to rebellion.

Three men were arrested in early May, 1907, and were kept in prison, bail being refused, for five months. When the case came up for hearing all of them were acquitted of any complicity

in sedition. Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh were deported and the agitation at once assumed an all-India character.

The ferment in Bengal infected the minds of the redoubtable Punjabis. A daily story of "assault, of boycotting and general lawlessness" from East Bengal reached Punjab and the newspapers there made caustic comments on them. Signs of activity and unrest were visible more in the urban areas than in the rural. Attempts were made to kick up trouble in the important cities such as Rawalpindi, Sialkot and Lyallpur. Seditious speeches were openly delivered and Europeans were insulted at the first opportunity. Rioting broke out over the judgment of the *Punjabee* and measures were adopted to strengthen the hands of the agitators in the Chenab Canal Colony and Bari Doab. A confidential official note contained that pains were taken

"to turn every incident to anti-British feeling and to inflame the passion of the Sikhs, that the police were being pilloried as traitors to their fellow countrymen in connection with the agitation and were advised to quit the service of the Government, while the invitation was addressed to the Indian soldiers."

The note continued

"that some of the leaders looked to driving the British out of the country or at any rate from power, either by force or by passive resistance of the people as a whole and (that) the method by which they had set themselves to bring the Government to a standstill was by endeavouring to stir up a strong feeling of racial hatred."

Searches and arrests continued unabated. Complicity with Bengal was established by the discovery of a bomb-manual used by the accused in the Alipore Conspiracy Case.

The people in turn lost their temper and violence reared up its head in the chief towns of Punjab, such as Lahore, Delhi, Rawalpindi, etc. There was bloodshed on both sides and no case of violence on the part of the authorities was allowed to pass off smoothly, there being fight almost everywhere unequal though it might have been.

The discontent permeated to the barracks of soldiers and caused restiveness amongst them. It was too much for the military authorities to view the matter complacently and Lord Kitchener had to intervene in person for the repeal of the "fatuous Colonization Bill".

Punjab's active resistance produced its repercussions in Bengal and the Bengalis were asked to take a leaf out of the book of the Punjabi brethren. The *Yugantar* wrote on June 16, 1907, under caption: *The Lathi as a Remedy*.

"In the Punjab a hue and cry was raised as soon as the water rate was enhanced. The period of making representation and submitting petitions did not last more than two weeks. The people then applied the remedy which is applied to fools. There were a few broken heads and a few houses were burnt down, and the authorities gave up the idea of enhancing the water rate. The Colonisation Act too became inoperative. How wonderful the remedy; *the Kabuli medicine* is indeed the best of medicines."

### ***Contempt for the Law Courts .***

(1907-08)

#### ***The Yugantar***

With the growing tempo of nationalism manifesting itself through the newspapers the Government vigorously started a larger number of prosecutions under the law of sedition against editors marked for their outspokenness. To meet this challenge the policy of ignoring the law courts was resorted to by the party concerned and some other public men connected with the trial refusing to participate in the proceedings of the court.

The first test was made in the case of the *Yugantar* with Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta (brother of the great Swami Vivekananda) as its Editor, who was prosecuted for sedition for an article appearing in its issue of June 16, 1907. When the trial had just started the Editor made the following statement on July 22, 1907:

"I, Bhupendra Nath Datta, do hereby beg to state that I am the Editor of the Journal *Yugantar* and I am solely responsible for all the articles in question. I have done what I have considered in good faith to be my duty by my country. I do not wish to make any other statement or to take any further action in the trial."

The articles alleged to have offended the law were *Bhoi Bhanga* (Away with Fear) and *Lathyousadhi* (The Stick-medicine) or 'the Politics for Indians.'

The judgment of the Magistrate was delivered on July 24, 1907. It was to this effect:

"The article entitled (*Bhoi Bhanga*) 'Away with Fear' commences with the assertion that the British Empire is a huge sham—house without foundation and that a slight push will bring it down in fragments.... The writer says that owing merely to the foolishness of his countrymen that the British Empire continues to exist.... its strength has been exaggerated and he describes it as a bogey which needs only a push to ensure its downfall.

"He then refers to the events in the Punjab and in this connection the article headed '*Stick Medicine*' is more explicit for the writer alleges that in the Punjab an outcry was raised as soon as the water-rate was enhanced and the people devoted only a short period of time to the making of constitutional objections to the enhancement and then resorted to violence. They applied, he says, the remedy which is always applied to fools, ... heads were broken, houses burnt and the authorities abandoned the idea of enhancement. There is no such wonderful remedy, he concludes, as the *Kabuli medicine*."

Prosecution of newspapers was looked upon with great disfavour and the ultimate result according to the *Sandhya*, (July 22, 1907), was likely to engender a spirit of revenge. It plainly told that,

".... Hidden amongst the mango groves of Plassey, without having even a semblance of battle, and by fraud, forgery and deceptive means, they have taken possession of Bengal. That is why they fail to understand us. Now they have the audacity to tread on the tail of a cobra. The very sedition cases.... will start the fire.... We know that you are thick-skinned and cannot understand subtle words. The Bengalee now wants to settle accounts with you.

"You seek introduction to us by treading on our tail. Do whatever you please. Only remember the hideous cobra and its sting (bite)."

On the conviction of Bhupendra Nath, *The Bande Mataram* wrote a classic editorial giving the viewpoint of a nationalist in all its aspects with particular stress on the inalienable right to freedom of the oppressed people of the world. (*Idic* appendix)

## APPENDIX

*The Bande Mataram* on July 28, 1909<sup>7</sup>, wrote on the conviction of Bhupendra Nath Datta, the Editor of the *Yugantar* :

The bureaucracy as usual has over-reached itself in instituting a case under the sedition clause against the Editor of the *Yugantar*. The *Punjabee* prosecution did untold harm to their prestige and helped to shatter the not over-abundant remnant of their moral ascendancy; its work was negative and destructive.

But the *Yugantar* prosecution has been a positive gain to the national cause; it has begun the positive work of building up the moral ascendancy of the people which is to replace that of the alien and nullify his mere physical superiority. This momentous result the editor of *Yugantar* has brought about by his masterly inactivity. His refusal to plead has been worth many sensational trials. It has produced an enormous effect on public mind all over India not only as an individual instance of moral courage and readiness to suffer quietly, and simply, as a matter of course as one's plain duty to the country, but as the first practical application in the face of persecution of the sheer uncompromising spirit of Swarajism. For the first time a man has been found who can say to the power of alien imperialism, 'with all thy pomp of empire and splendour and dominion, with all thy boast of invincibility and mastery irresistible, with all thy wealth of men and money and guns and cannon, with all thy strength of law and strength of the sword, with all thy power to confine, to torture or to slay the body, yet for me, for the spirit, the real man in me, thou art not. Thou art only a phase, a phenomenon, a passing illusion and the only lasting realities are my Mother and my Freedom.'

It is well that we should understand the real issue on which all other depend and from which they arise. The question is not whether one Bhupendra Nath Dutt published matter which we knew to be likely to bring the Government established by law, to wit certain mediocrities in Belvedere, Darjeeling, Shillong or Simla who collectively call themselves the Government of Bengal or of India, into contempt or hatred, or to encourage a desire to resist or subvert their lawful authority. If that were all, we might argue the question whether what he did was wise or what he wrote was true or mistaken, legal or illegal. As it is, these things do not matter even to the value of a broken *cowrie*. The real issue for us nationalists is something quite different and infinitely more vital. It is this. 'Is India free', not even 'Shall India be free?', but 'Is India free' and am I as an Indian free or a self-bound to the service, the behest or the forced guidance of something outside or alien to myself and mine, something which is *anatman*, not myself? Am I, are my people part of humanity, the select and chosen temple of the Brahman, and entitled therefore to grow straight in the

strength of our own spirit, free and with head erect before mankind, or are we a herd of cattle to live our own life or only a life prescribed and circumscribed for us by something outside ourselves? Are we to guide our own destinies or are we to have no destiny except nullity, except death? For, it is nonsense to talk of other people guiding our destinies; that is an euphemism for killing our destinies altogether; it is nonsense to talk of others giving us enlightenment, civilization, political training, for the enlightenment that is given and not acquired brings not light but confusion, the civilization that is imposed from outside kills a nation instead of invigorating it, and the training which is not acquired by our own experience and effort incapacitates and does not make efficient. The issue of freedom is, therefore, the only issue. All other issues are merely delusion and *Maya*; all other talk is the talk of men that sleep or are in intellectual or moral bondage.

We nationalists declare that man is for ever and inalienably free and that we too are, both individually as Indian men and collectively as Indian nation, for ever and inalienably free. As free men we will speak the thing that seems right to us without caring what other may do to our bodies to punish us for being free men, as free men we will educate ourselves in our own schools, settle our differences by our own arbitrations, sell and buy our own goods, build up our own character, our own civilization, our own national destinies. Your school, your administration, your law courts, your manufactured articles, your legislative councils, your ordinances and sedition laws are to us things alien and unreal and we eschew them as *Maya*, as *anatman*. If men and nations are inalienably free, then bondage is an illusion, the rule of one nation over another is against natural laws and, therefore, is a falsehood, and falsehoods can only endure so long as Truth refuses to recognise itself. The princes of Bengal at the time of Plassey did not realise that we could save ourselves; they thought that something outside would save us. We were not enslaved by Clive, for not even a thousand Clives could have had strength enough to enslave us. We were enslaved by our own delusions, by the false convictions, by the false conviction of weakness. And the moment we get the full conviction of our strength, the conviction that we are for ever and inalienably free, and that no body but ourselves can either take or keep from us that inalienable or priceless possession, from that moment freedom is assured. So long as we go on crying, 'We are unfit, we are unfit', or even doubt our fitness, so long we shall make and keep ourselves unfit. It is only the conviction of freedom that makes and keeps men fit for freedom. To create that conviction, to encourage and make habitual that practice is the whole aim of the new movement. Nationalism is the gospel of inalienable freedom, Boycott is the practice of freedom. To break the Boycott and to stop the preaching of nationalism is the whole object of the bureaucracy. *The Times* saw this when it singled out the writings of *Bande Mataram* and *Yugantar*, the speeches of Bepin Chandra Pal and his like, and above all, the Boycott as the root of all evil. Behind all technicalities

this is the true and only issue in these sedition cases. The nationalists declare that Indians are for ever and inalienably free man and vindicate their right to preach this gospel; Mr. Morley and the bureaucrats tell us we are for ever and inalienably property of England and would pursue our preaching as a crime. Who or what shall reconcile this fundamental and irreconcilable opposition?

### The Bande Mataram

*The Bande Mataram* prosecution, on August 26, 1907, afforded another opportunity for flouting the authority of the law courts. Bepin Chandra Pal was summoned as a witness for the prosecution against *The Bande Mataram* and he declined to participate in the proceedings of the courts. When on August 26, 1907, he was called upon to take the oath, he bluntly refused saying: "I have conscientious objections to be sworn in or to take part in the proceedings." The Magistrate was apparently irritated and enquired:

"Have you conscientious objections to be solemnly affirmed?"

*Witness* : I decline to take part in these proceedings because I consider it....

*Court* : I have nothing to do with that. Have you conscientious objections to be affirmed in any other case?

*Witness* : No. But I have conscientious objections to take part in this case.

*Court* : You must take it in this case then.

*Witness* : I decline to do that.

*Court* : Questions will be put to you and if you refuse to answer then you must take the consequence.

*Witness* : On conscientious grounds, I must refuse.

Bepin Chandra Pal was then in a separate case prosecuted on a charge of contempt of Court. Totally unconcerned he made a statement before the Magistrate, on September 19, 1907, giving reasons for his action in the following language:

"It is no doubt the duty of every member of the society to help the administration of justice to give evidence in the interest of social well-being, but when prosecutions prompted by executive policy the consideration of which is outside the jurisdiction of the law courts, are against that very interest, the duty of the individual must on the self-same ground be necessarily different. I honestly believe that the prosecutions like that of *The Bande Mataram* are unjust and injurious; unjust,.... because they are subversive of the rights of the people, and injurious, because they are calculated to stifle freedom of thought and speech, nor are they justified in the interest of public



peace. I had, accordingly, conscientious objection to take any part in the prosecution. I, therefore, refuse to be sworn or be affirmed in that case. I had no intention of showing disrespect to the Court before which that case was pending. As I was not permitted to make this statement (at the time), I do so now."

Bepin Chandra was convicted and awarded simple imprisonment for six months. It may be mentioned that there were disturbances both inside and outside the court room on days the case was called for hearing. It spread to places near about the court where the police and the younger section of the public came into open clash. Prosecution was at once started against some of them. In one of such cases a young lad of fifteen summers was awarded fifteen stripes.

The judgment was received by the agitated public with the utmost indignation and it was one more fact that literally added fuel to the fire of discontent that was raging at the time throughout Bengal and helped in intensifying the tempo of the movement against the Government.

The *Punjabee* thus commented on the judgment of the case (quoted in *The Bande Mataram*, September 22, 1907) :

"One need not be sympathiser or admirer of *The Bande Mataram* newspaper to come to the conclusion that the prosecution which has been started against it, instead of establishing any healthful principles conducive to order and peace, is likely rather to bring about situation which must engender irreverence instead of respect for the law. The sentence passed upon Babu Bepin Chandra Pal, which came off as an offshoot of the case, has already gone a good way in this direction. Mr. Pal's case shows that there is nothing of the disorderly or law-defying spirit even in the foremost exponents of the new movement, but that some of them are actuated by principles and motives high above the common level. These principles and motives imply a nobler ideal of human relations than the European Civil and Criminal Codes have been able to reach and for these principles their exponents are ready to suffer rather than be instruments of bringing harm upon others. For what Babu Bepin Chandra Pal has been punished? Certainly not for anything that can be called immoral or unworthy, not to say criminal. He has paid the penalty of possessing a higher ideal of duty towards his fellowmen than the legislators have had the wisdom to foresee. To call his offence 'contempt' of Court is misuse of language, for there was no spirit of contempt or defiance towards the Court in his action; only he expressed his inability to be a party to the carrying out of what he believed to be an unrighteous policy of the executive. He may have been right or not in his point or view, but his offence at the worst was merely technical, and not one implying moral depravity such as constitutes a crime."

The *Punjabee* truly expressed the mind of millions of Indians that felt extremely agitated over the outcome of the case.

### The *Sandhya*

Amongst a galaxy of redoubtable heroes of the Swadeshi days Brahmabandhab Upadhyay was a figure scintillating in its own brilliance. He was one of the most intrepid men who put heart into many a drooping spirit; exposing himself most recklessly to the onslaughts of bureaucratic sallies. He is reckoned as a principal factor in bringing about a new spirit in the country.

The country, in addition to his other qualities of head and heart, knows him most as the Editor of the *Sandhya*, one of the very few newspapers the articles of which breathed fire and inspired a nation into activity from stupor. As its motto it wrote on March 30, 1907, "If death come in the striving, that death will be converted to immortality." Further on May 10, 1907, he wrote: "Listen and you will hear the Mother's trumpet sounding. Mother's sons do not tarry, but get ready; go about from village to village and prepare the Indians for death."

He had no doubts in his mind that his writings would bring the whole weight of the Government's ire on his head, but he did not take a step backwards on his resolve to see the Motherland free from foreign yoke. About the chances of his own suffering he used to say (October 29, 1907):

"Oppression and tyranny are of no consequence to a people who consider it a sin to identify the body with the soul. Who can oppress a people in whose view the physical body is so contemptible as to be fit to be thrown away like a piece of torn rag? Those who think that the body is everything, are afraid of oppression. What need I fear as I am a Bengali Brahmin? If the *feringhi* should dare put me in the rack, I shall throw my body before his face as if it were torn *Thanthania* slipper." (*Thanthania* is a place in Calcutta well-known for the manufacture of country slippers.)

For sarcastic and vitriolic writings making the objects of his attack look small and worthy of nothing but ridicule, he had no parallel. When necessary, his pen would pour forth a flood of burning lava of courage making the timid and the wary forget their weakness. The captions of his editorials would at once catch the imagination and the solid arguments, presented in a most

enchanting, sometimes poetic style, would seldom fail to carry conviction with his readers.

He was persecuted in a most heartless manner till his death. His paper the *Sandhya* was proceeded against for seditious writings over and over again but his indomitable spirit would soar high over petty or selfish considerations.

During the publication of a series of editorials with which this note is principally concerned, it came to be known that warrants for the search of the press where *Sandhya* was printed as well as the arrest of its Editor were in contemplation of the Government. The press was searched on August 30, and the Editor arrested on September 3, 1907. He was taken to the thana and released on bail.

The case was started as everything was ready almost immediately and from day to day Brahmabandhab would stand in the box showing no signs on his countenance the pain that hernia caused him to suffer. He would not permit his Counsel to ask for a seat as he was determined not to ask any favour from an alien Magistrate before whom he was undergoing his trial. And it never occurred to the Magistrate to show a little courtesy to a fairly old and highly educated man of wide culture to offer a seat.

Almost at the initial stage of the case the Editor made the following classic statement before the Court on September 23, 1907:

"I accept the entire responsibility of the publication, management and conduct of the newspaper *Sandhya*, and I say that I am the writer of the article *Ekhan theke gechi premier dai* which appeared in the *Sandhya* of the 13th August, 1907, being one of the articles forming the subject matter of this prosecution. But I do not want to take any part in this trial because I do not believe that in carrying out my humble share of the God-appointed mission of *Svaraj*, I am in any way accountable to the alien people who happen to rule over us and whose interest is and must necessarily be in the way of our true national development."

The offending article, *Now I am engrossed in Love* as has been said, appeared on August 13. The prosecution discovered sedition in several others, written before and after the 13th and contemplated prosecution after the judgment in the case under hearing had been delivered.

The very captions were remarkable for expression of forceful

ideas, not to speak of their contents. On August 8, it was "*Yugantar rakta-rakti, feringider phatlo pittii*", (at Yugantar [ Office ] there is free flow of blood; the feringhis having their bile-sac burst are trembling in terror); on the 9th: "*Dhiler badale patkel*" (Tit for Tat); on the 12th: "*Kalighate jora panta, ekta kalo ekta sada*" (At Kalighat, a pair of he-goats, for sacrifice, one is black, the other is white); on the 20th: "*Seditioner hurum durum, feringider akkel gurum*" (Sedition galore, and the Feringhis are dumbfounded); on the 21st: "*Feringhi param dayalu—feringhir kripaya dari gajay, seet kale khai sankalu*" (Feringhi is extremely kind; through his bounty the beard grows, sweet [white] potato is eaten in the winter); on the 23rd: "*Bachha sakal niye jachhe Sri-Brindaban*" (Younglings are being taken to Sri-Brindaban i.e., youngsters are being taken to the prison house).

When the case was called for hearing on October 23, 1907, the Court was informed that the accused had been lying ill in the Campbell Hospital.

On the 26th a medical report (from the Teacher of Surgery) on the condition of the patient was placed before the Court. It ran: "I do not think that he will be able to attend the Court before a month."

The Public Prosecutor, a European, was more vindictive than the Magistrate. He demanded the presence of the Surgeon and to declare, perhaps on oath, before the Magistrate his opinion. Fortunately for the Surgeon, the Magistrate overruled the contention of the Government Pleader.

The bureaucracy was not satisfied with what had been done to the accused. It brought a second charge of sedition, perhaps with many more in the offing had Providence not stood in its way. The Magistrate cancelled the previous bail bond and threatened to hurry him into jail as soon as he would be pronounced fit to be discharged from the hospital.

In the hospital due to deterioration in his condition, the patient was operated upon for strangulation of hernia. Everything had been progressing satisfactorily when all on a sudden on October 26, 1907, the patient developed signs of tetanus at about 8 at night. In the next morning, after a lapse of some twelve hours, the visitors were told that the condition of the patient was serious and he was sinking. He expired an hour later at about 9 a.m.

The last request of the patient made to the doctors was not to make him unconscious by applying chloroform. His thoughts apparently fixed above, probably he wanted to experience in full possession of his senses what suffering He had ordained for him. Perhaps, he wanted to contemplate on the glory of His creation up to his last conscious moments. It might be that his desire was to ponder over the pitiful condition of his countrymen and freedom of his Motherland for which he had so nobly dedicated his life.

Brahmabandhab had absolute faith in himself. He was sure that the snare spread by the *feringhi* government for his imprisonment would completely fail in its purpose. On October 26, 1907, the day previous to his death, he expressed himself as follows:

"I will not go to the jail of the *feringhi* to work as a prisoner. I had never been at any one's beck and call. I obeyed none. At the fag end of my old age they will send me to jail for law's sake, and I will work for nothing! Impossible! I won't go to jail; I have been called." (*Amar dak eśe qeche* : The summonses have already reached me)

While himself getting ready for the supreme sacrifice, he issued a call to his countrymen to be ready for the coming struggle. (On August 9, 1907, at a meeting organised in connection with the Boycott celebration at Kalighat, Brahmabandhab said,

"At the altar of Kali both the sin and the virtue of the *feringhi* needed to be sacrificed. The sin of the *feringhi* consisted in his persistence of repressive measures and could be traced to the battle of Plassey where the *feringhi* hidden amongst the mango grove usurped the sovereignty of India."

He appealed to the fathers all over Bengal to consecrate at least one of their children to the service of the mother-country. He desired that young-men instead of taking insults and assaults of the *feringhi* lying down must learn to repay them back on the spot. A brave attitude and occasional scuffles with the *feringhi* would make the latter shake in their shoes.

He was rather bitter against his own countrymen (*Kalo panta* : black he-goats) who were devoid of patriotic feelings and would help the Government in suppressing the spirit of liberty surging in the minds of the people. In the course of a speech he expressed his views about these men in the following vein:

"I fear the black *feringhi*, who had been infatuated by *feringhi* manners and customs even more than I fear the *feringhi* race. Our country, our

people, our social system, which are so excellent, seemed to be all blasted by hot wind of *feringhi* luxury. To save the country and the nation the dirty stream of *feringhi* manners and usages must be put to a stop and the people must be persuaded to believe that these are not suitable to our constitution, and therefore, must be harmful. What is harmful should be rejected by all means. Owing to a strange and unnatural love for *feringhi* manners, they have passed current in this country. To get rid of this love, we must create dislike."

In his death under peculiar circumstances the intellectuals instead of losing heart thought that through *ichha-mrityu*, death at will, the patriotic yogi electrified the imagination of the people and that by his death he would work more effectively than he would have ever hoped to do in flesh and blood.

Others found the hand of benign Providence in this melancholy event. Brahmabandhab's death filled the hearts of the people with hopes of liberty. On the receipt of the news of his death wrote *The Bandh Mataram* on October 28, 1907, that

"if anything was necessary to overcome our scepticism, the sublime close of this great indomitable nationalist... invincible in life and in death,.... furnished that one logic about the ultimate triumph of freedom."

A better appreciation of the great man was published in its issue of November 3, 1907, which ran thus:

"In the most dramatic and miraculous march of events which mark the progress of nationalist movement in India, the closing of the earthly career of Upadhyay Brahmabandhab, the brave and renowned editor of *Sandhya*, in the Campbell Medical Hospital on Sunday (27. 10. 07) morning, strikes the imagination in a peculiarly powerful way. His was a personality which of late came to be discussed under every roof of Bengal for the inspired and forceful statement he had made when placed on a charge of sedition before a servant of the bureaucracy. He told him to his face that he owed no responsibility to an alien bureaucracy for preaching the God-appointed mission of *Swaraj*. The statement might have appeared quixotic to many. To the eye of Faith and Hope, however, the future stands self-revealed. The man of faith speaks uncommon things... he speaks strange truths... for he is a prophet. He knows the will of Providence as Whose instrument he works. The messengers of Liberty have a despot-defying strength which knows no compromise... knows no defeat. All who work in the train of despotism, hangman, priest, tax-gatherer, soldier, lawyer, lord, jailor, and sycophant try to rivet their iron chains on the Messiah of human emancipation, but he eludes their grasp and travels to spheres where kings have little power. The passing away of Upadhyay Brahmabandhab when the bureaucracy was pursuing him with the most unedifying vindictiveness proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that when the infidel supposes that he cau

very well triumph with the prison, scaffold, handcuffs, iron necklace and lead balls at his command, Faith twists him with his audacity and takes his victim far out of his reach."

The nationalist cause suffered a great loss at the time at the demise of one of its mightiest stalwarts.

## ***The Ignition Point***

(1906-1908)

### **Precursor**

It may be stated that the Anusilan Samity brought into being by Satish Chandra Bose in 1902 had been growing up in its own way under P. Mitra as its head. Jatin Banerji visited Calcutta at the time to explore the possibility of initiating youngmen into the use of arms. In 1904 Barindra Kumar Ghose came from Baroda with the express object of "preaching the cause of independence" as a political missionary. He had to go back somewhat disappointed. The agitation against the Partition of Bengal had been gaining momentum and the soil was found very suitable by him when he came back for sowing the seeds of discontent against the ruling authority. It was thought by the leaders of the secret societies that purely political propagauda was not sufficient for such a great cause. In addition, the mental make-up of the youth of the country should have a spiritual background so that they might prepare themselves to remain firm in the face of dangers. The time was ripe and one by one youngmen of the middle class *bhadralok* family slowly but steadily moved towards the centres beset with the greatest dangers to human life. Some of them were highly educated, with knowledge in various fields of life and some, to the greatest advantage to the Society, with the knowledge of preparing high explosives. Books such as *Nitro Explosives* by Stanford, *The Swordsman* by Alfred Hutton, *A Handbook of Modern Explosives* by Eissler, *Modern Weapons and Modern War* by J. S. Bloch, *Field Exercises*, *Manual of Military Engineering*, *Infantry Training*, *Cavalry Drill*,

*Machine Gun Training, Quick Training for War, etc., etc.*, were acquired in secret and the best use was made of them. (*Report of the Sedition Committee, 1918; p. 102*).

### Preparation

By 1906 the country entered the stage of action from the incubatory stage of preparation. Secret societies worth the name such as the *Atmonnati Samiti*, etc., came into existence here and there all over Bengal, particularly in the new province of Eastern Bengal. Plans were completed not only for strengthening the organisations but also for translating them into action.

For violent actions arms are more necessary than anything else. The means were indicated in the writings of the *Yugantar*. These were to be drawn from internal sources such as from soldiers, smugglers or careless owners. But this method was for all practical purposes considered to be absolutely inadequate. The workers were not slow to move to Chandernagore, the small French possession near Calcutta, where the rules of possessing arms were rather liberal (with the only restriction that it should not be exposed in the street by the owner) and importations easy through post. The revolutionaries began to place orders for arms with France and get their supply in small lots from time to time. While only two guns and six revolvers were received in Chandernagore in 1906, in 1907 the number of registered parcels rose to 34 most of them containing revolvers, all despatched from St. Etienne, the Government Arms Factory in France.

### Pledge

Needless to say that secrecy was the most important factor in the organisation of societies out to act in a manner which invited upon themselves the direst punishment in the armoury of the law and the executive authority. In the enlistment of members some sort of pledge had had to be taken by everyone coming within their fold. This had been the case with every 'Society' since its inception. Administration of oaths brought the societies very near the model of the Russian revolutionaries. It redounds to the credit of the pioneers that the secrecy enjoined on the members was well maintained for a long time and far-flung organisations,



almost under the nose of the authority, grew up gradually in very distant parts of Bengal.

With the growth of the *Samitis* and "having regard to the place where, the time when, and the person and persons concerned", it was found necessary to have strict supervision and inspection over them. The organisers had to make some efficient arrangements for dividing the whole of Bengal into divisions and subdivisions, from "the Central *Samitis* going down to the *Mahakuma Samitis*." To achieve the best result the right person with the right mission must be in charge of the centres so that the work could be carried on in a most thorough-going manner.

There were different types of oaths according to the status of the workers. The initial and final vows were meant for all ordinary members, the initial to be taken at the time of admission into the *samiti* and the final after the novice had reached a certain stage of culture or attachment. The two special vows were intended only for the members of the inner circle; and amongst them also there was obviously a gradation.

The *initial* vow is harmless. The member undertakes never to separate himself from the *samiti*, to be loyal to its interests, to keep his own character immaculate, to carry out the orders of those in charge without question, to be proficient in gymnastics and drill, to keep secret from all non-members, to master the art of self-defence, and to work out the welfare of the country and gradually of the world.

The *final* vow opened with a declaration that no internal matters whatsoever relating to the *samiti* were to be divulged to any one; nor to be even discussed unnecessarily. The member who took his final vow undertook to carry out unquestioningly the orders of the *parichalak* or the head of the *samiti*, to keep him informed of his own whereabouts wherever he might be, to inform the chief of the existence of conspiracies against the *samiti* and under his orders to remedy them; to return to duty whenever the President might command, to consider no kind of work as humiliating, to cultivate self-abnegation and self-sacrifice and to keep secret from all persons not equally bound by oath the instructions that he had received.

Under the *first special vow* the member undertakes to remain attached to the circle till its object has been fulfilled, to sever the

tie of affection for parents and relations, for hearth and home, to render absolute obedience to the leader in the work of the circle and to give up vicious habits of all description.

The *second special vow* enjoined that the member undertakes to stake his life and all that he possesses to, accomplish the work of the circle, called the circle for the enhancement of good sense, to keep the inner secrets inviolate, and never to discuss or mention them, to carry out commands without question, to preserve the secrecy of *mantras*, to conceal nothing from the leader, never to deceive the leader by untruth, to be always engaged in the practice of religion, to lead an ideal life before the public and finally to mete out just punishment to those antagonistic to it.

With reference to the rules of conduct the same secrecy was strictly enjoined. There is to be no unnecessary discussion whatsoever with anybody, not to write letters even to relations without the same being censored by the leader. Any money, from whatsoever source it might come, was to be regarded as the common property of the society. All weaknesses in the members and deficiencies of the *samiti* were to be brought to the notice of the leader and remedied by every possible means. The duties and responsibilities of the leaders of different units were also given in every detail more particularly those relating to the maintenance and improvement of the *samiti*, physical exercise, collection of fund and so on and so forth.

### Outburst

Before there was any outward manifestation of revolutionary activity, the secret societies had established themselves on a firm footing and had been extending their ramifications far and wide. As has already been said that the Partition of Bengal in October 1905 and the repression that followed on those who worked with the ultimate object of getting the Partition annulled through peaceful means, gave a fillip to the spirit and strength to the hands of those who thought that the organised violence of the Government should be met by counter-violence however feeble.

The first full picture of an well-knit organisation of determined youngmen came to light when the Alipore Bomb Case was started following the Muzaffarpore outrage in April 1908.

In the meantime stray attempts at revolutionary action were being made by impatient boys and now it is known for certain that in August and September 1906, and in May 1907 overt acts were planned in North Bengal but abandoned.

In October and November 1907, two plots for blowing up the Lt. Governor's train ended in nothing. The first act of any significance was the attempt to wreck the Lt. Governor's train at Narayangarh in Midnapore on December 6, 1907, the explosion showing that some success has been attained in the manufacture of bombs inasmuch as the explosive though failed in its objective, caused a hole as big as five feet deep and five feet wide.

Incidents of no great import occurred but that the attempt on a former District Magistrate of Dacca on December 23, 1907, with a shot on his back in Faridpur was one of a daring nature and alerted the Government about the serious proportion that "the *Swadeshi* agitation" had been assuming.

This was followed by an attack by a bomb on the *Maire* of Chandernagore on April 11, 1908, while he was at dinner. It became known that unlike his predecessors in office, the gentleman had been trying seriously to prevent import of arms from foreign countries through this patch of the French territory.

Failures at the initial stage could not deter the young firebrands from planning bigger actions. The motto that influenced them was to the effect that:

"Sometimes failure is even more glorious than success. It is better to defy a hostile fate by choosing out the surest way to Death, proudly throwing away the poor resources of physical life and prosperity and so making Fate ashamed of the poorness of its victory."

One incident that took the first toll of revolutionary activity of the twentieth century involving a valuable life, that of Prafulla Chakrabarti, deserves special mention.