# THE RISE AND GROWTH OF THE CONGRESS IN INDIA

by C. F. Andrews

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A Plea for Understanding

INDIA AND THE PACIFIC

THE CHALLENGE
OF THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

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by

C. F. ANDREWS

and

GIRIJA MOOKERJEE



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# PREFACE

OUR object in writing this book has been to describe in a popular form for the general reader the rise and growth of the All-India National Congress. We have brought the present volume to an end with the year 1920, when the Non-co-operation Movement began, and have thus left over the more recent events for a second volume if the public interest is sufficient to demand it.

The official history of the Congress has already been published in India by Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya at the time of the Congress Jubilee Celebrations in 1935. Our own aim has been to supplement this very full and well-documented work with a volume which could be more easily read by the general public, especially in the West. We have also given much more space to those religious and social forces in Indian history, during the nineteenth century, which led up to the birth of the Congress in the year 1885.

After careful consideration we decided to conclude the present volume with the year 1920 for three reasons:—

(1) An entirely new phase of Indian political life began at this dividing line. The leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, from this time forward, has remained very nearly constant.

(2) The events that followed Non-co-operation in quick succession are too recent for a wholly dispassionate and objective account to be given of them. There is an abundance of material ready for any future historian. Autobiographies have been written, such as the remarkable story of Jawaharlal Nehru's life, and there have been recently published a

very large number of special studies. India came into the limelight of world history during the Round Table Conferences and an immense amount of miscellaneous literature was then issued. All this may be sifted later; but the historical perspective is not yet clear to-day.

(3) To try to cover the whole period in a single volume seemed to us to be a wellnigh impossible task. We found it therefore better to close at a point where this new phase in Congress history began.

As a composite work of two authors, it needs to be explained that the earlier work of collecting the material was done by one of us (Girija Mookerjee) and its arrangement and revision have been carried out by the other (C. F. Andrews). Unfortunately during the last year we have been entirely separated from each other and even correspondence had become very difficult. The revision and final arrangement of the material had to be done without full discussion. But it may be added that previous consultation, while we were both together in England, has made it a comparatively easy task to keep the book in every respect a joint volume. Our grateful thanks are due to Dr. Pattabhi Sitarammayya, who generously gave us permission to make use of his Jubilee History, which is a mine of information. We have tried, at the same time, to keep our own independent judgment throughout with regard to the special period (1885–1920) with which alone we have dealt. We thank also Mademoiselle Croiet for her valuable help in the preparation of the materials. The book is now issued with an earnest hope that it may serve to promote friendship and understanding between India and Great Britain.

C. F. ANDREWS
GIRIJA MOOKERJEE

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## Chapter I

# THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

THOSE who have sought to describe the history of India's political development have been used to take the year 1885, when the National Congress was founded, as their starting-point and in a sense they have been correct. But when they have gone on to regard the years preceding that date as politically barren, they have surely failed to take account of one immensely important factor. They have not realized the very intimate connection in India between the political field and the sphere of religious development.

For in India more than any other country we have always to notice those movements which spring directly out of the religious spirit of the people. One writer has even said that Indians are "incorrigibly religious," and there is some truth underlying this extreme expression. For more than anywhere else in the world, politics and religion in India have become mingled together in such a way that they can hardly be separated, however much we may try to do so.

In this, as well as many other aspects, the India of countless villages and hamlets, scattered far and wide over the land, reminds us very forcibly indeed of the Middle Ages in Europe, where the same religious background is met with leading on to great political results. For in those mediaeval times, when the industrial city life had not yet been established and the country life with its handicrafts was still the centre of civilization and culture, this religious mind

prevailed. We find great leaders of the Church, like Anselm and Bernard of Clairvaux, offering guidance in the affairs of State to emperors and kings. So mighty was the power of their spirit among the multitudes that even the royal leaders dare not disobey.

What has been thus stated in the widest terms of India as a whole is perhaps most true of all concerning Hindu India, though in vitally important respects it is correct also concerning Islam. For in Islam, as enunciated by the Prophet, religion actually rules the State. We can see this same tendency at work even in comparatively recent times, for in the north the Sikh Khalsa has shown us how the Indian mind works towards political and social freedom in and through a religious awakening. The history of the Arya Samaj, which will be referred to later, tells the same story, as does the extremely interesting development of the Radha Soami sect at Dayal Bagh.

This noticeable fact of Indian history has not ceased to influence political events even after the foundation of the National Congress. It would be true to say that Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi have each in turn through their own religious inspiration awakened a love for the Motherland such as no purely political leader has ever been able to evoke. Their influence on the rise and growth of the Congress itself, as we shall see later, has been paramount. Yet Swami Vivekananda remained a monk to the end and never entered the political sphere, and Mahatma Gandhi has often declared openly in public that he only became a national and political leader in order to carry out his faith in God in the midst of a political age.

The most convenient period from which to trace back the modern movement in the religious life of India, which led on to the Indian National Congress development, would be the very remarkable years, from 1828 to 1833, when Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the greatest religious and social reformer of Bengal, had reached the height of his spiritual powers. In every respect he towered head and shoulders above his contemporaries, both European and Indian alike, in the land of his birth.

He also saw, with unique insight, what was likely to be the course of British power in India, and how its peculiar qualities could best be directed towards the interests both of his own country and Great Britain. By every modern historian of India he is rightly claimed as not only the clearest-sighted religious leader of his own age, but also as its most advanced political thinker.

In this connection it is important to notice that the recently published official history of the Indian National Congress corroborates this point of view.[1] The author goes back to this date of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's supreme influence as the starting-point of the whole national movement of Modern India. He rightly calls the Raja "the prophet of Indian nationalism and the father of Modern India." Thompson and Garratt, in their recently published history, *The Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, take a similar view and give to Raja Ram Mohan Roy the same place of unique importance as

[1] *The History of the Indian National Congress*, by Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, published in Madras, 1936. This is the authoritative book written for the fiftieth anniversary of the Congress. It has been revised by different Congress leaders.

the originator of the remarkable *rapprochement* of two alien races, India and Britain, whereby the Eastern and Western cultures have become intermingled.

In the Congress History, published as a jubilee memorial, the well-known story is repeated at some length how the Raja, on his voyage to England round the Cape of Good Hope, insisted, even though he was in feeble health at the time, on going on board a French ship, which was anchored in Cape-town Harbour. He wished to pay homage from India, his own country, to the great French nation, which had raised aloft throughout the world the banner of revolution against all forms of slavery, and had taken as its watchword, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."

While making this effort, he slipped and badly injured his leg. Indeed, he remained lame for the remainder of his life. But he insisted on performing this symbolic act in order to show, as an Indian political leader, his profound sympathy with the cause of freedom that was dearer to him than life itself.

It is also recorded of him that on another occasion, when he was very greatly depressed at the power of the reactionary forces at work in Great Britain, he determined if the cause of freedom was defeated to retire both from Britain and from British India and renounce his citizenship, so that he could become naturalized and live in some country where the cause of political liberty still flourished. So far did he put this cause above every other earthly blessing.

This fundamental faith in civil liberty characterized the whole life of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Herein he was truly the prophet of Indian nationalism, for

such a sovereign faith in liberal principles has been the most marked feature of Indian political life ever since. It has led not merely to a persistent struggle to become free from the foreign control, but also to the initiation of internal reforms. For the present movement towards the emancipation of the depressed and submerged classes owes its strongest incentive to this passion for liberty which Raja Ram Mohan Roy created.

The awakening of this new spirit in Bengal at the beginning of the nineteenth century was extended in wider and wider circles till it reached every part of India. It can be historically proved that later movements, such as the Arya Samaj and the Ramkrishna Mission, though quite independent in origin, were greatly helped in their forward progress owing to the pathway which had already been prepared by the wide scope of the Brahma Samaj and its founder Raja Ram Mohan Roy.[1]

On the British side, the same date, 1828–35, has its own significance. For it was the period of the Reform Movement, which produced at last a threefold result:—

(i) The abolition of slavery within the British Dominions.

(ii) The Indian Charter of racial and religious equality.

(iii) The new democratic Parliament in Great Britain.

When Raja Ram Mohan Roy reached England he found that the reactionary powers had been defeated and that all these three reforms were nearly accomplished. The sight of what he found already on

[1] For the Brahma Samaj, see page 22.

its way gave him new hope for the future. The long preparation which had led up to these three simultaneous measures being put forward, one after the other, and embodied in Acts of Parliament, gave a strong assurance to those who remained in India, even after the Raja's untimely death, that the liberal policy of Great Britain towards that country would be carried through to the end.

These remarkable years proved to be the period of laying foundations, whereon the whole of the later political structure of India was to be built. While in Great Britain the political side of the reforms was noticeable from the very first, in India for fifty years the religious aspect was most apparent.

If this religious background, which intimately touched the masses and not the intellectuals only, had not been firmly established by arduous years of incessant labour; if great personalities had not arisen, one after the other, proclaiming a religious message to the whole of India, the National Congress movement on an all-India basis would never have become possible. It would not have reached the masses; nor would it have been vigorous enough to withstand all the shocks of division, rivalry, and party strife, which are inevitable at the beginning of a great political advance. It was only when the movement reached the village people, through the medium of the supreme personality of Mahatma Gandhi, that its strength became irresistible and its range of action wide enough to cover the whole of India.

For this reason, among others, it is vitally necessary to deal in some detail with the main religious reforms which have arisen in India during the nineteenth century, and to explain how they have always been

associated in public memory with commanding moral and spiritual personalities. These religious movements have one remarkable characteristic. Although they started from a single province and a local area, they reached out in wider and wider circles in order to touch, if possible, every part of India. Thus they made much easier the realization, when the right time came, of an all-India political organization such as the Congress.

One more fact needs explanation before taking in detail these wide movements of religion which characterized the nineteenth century. The starting-point was Bengal. It was a natural and almost inevitable mode of advance, because Bengal was the first part of modern India to come into closest contact with the West, as the focus and centre of British rule. Furthermore, the intellectual atmosphere of Bengal, early in the nineteenth century, which encouraged the fullest freedom of thought, made the order of progress from that province to other parts of India natural. Bengal had peculiar gifts whereby the assimilation of Western thought became comparatively simple. For such a process demands high imaginative power as well as intellectual capacity, and both of these qualities the cultured people of Bengal possessed in full measure. But while this starting-point is a matter of history, the part played by the other provinces of India as the century advanced was no less important. This will be made clear later.

In earlier centuries there had already been close contact between India and the West. For instance, in the days when the military and naval power of Portugal was established at Goa, men of remarkable genius had come out to India. The names of

Vasco da Gama, Albuquerque, Camoens, and Francis Xavier have attained a notable place in world history. But no creative period in Indian thought and life followed from this contact with the Portuguese, even at the height of their literary fame. There was no real blending of cultures.

But when Warren Hastings, Sir William Jones, H. H. Wilson, and others settled in Bengal, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and Carey, Hare, and Duff followed in the early nineteenth, they were able to carry over to the West much of their experience of the East; and Ram Mohan Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore, and others brought from the West much of European thought in return. The earliest instance of this interchange of thought is Warren Hastings's well-known appreciation of the Gita. The time was ripe for such a cultural approach, and a fertilizing soil had been found.

Europe thus received during this germinative period precious seed thoughts from the East, especially concerning the inner life of man. Asia, in its turn, learnt something of the advance of modern science in Europe.

One of the principal reasons for this remarkable renaissance in Bengal at the beginning of the nineteenth century was undoubtedly the French Revolution. The intellectual and spiritual change which was passing over Europe had its repercussions in India. The social and political ideas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries before the French Revolution had a certain uniformity about them, both in the West and East. But those new conceptions of social justice which the Revolution of 1789–93 brought with it were startlingly fresh and

strange. They created a different attitude of mind, just as the ideology of Soviet Russia is attracting world-wide attention to-day. While the rest of India was still only slightly conscious of this new movement of human thought which had come to the West, Bengal was acutely awake. The hard mould of centuries had been broken and the new ideas of human progress found in the minds of the gifted Bengali race their most congenial soil.

NOTE.—Considerable latitude concerning the spelling of Indian names is observed by authors whom we have quoted, and it is difficult to maintain strict uniformity. Thus, Muhammadan, Mahomedan, and Mohamedan have all found their way into English texts, together with Moslem and Muslim. In the same manner Ghosh and Ghose, Dayanand and Dayananda are almost equally common.

## Chapter II

# THE BRAHMA SAMAJ

DURING the earlier days of British rule in India the two most important groups within Bengali Hindu society were the Vaishnavas and Saivas, who worshipped Vishnu and Siva as the one supreme lord of creation. They were both equally orthodox in their rigid observance of the traditional laws of Hindu conduct which were embodied in the caste system. They both recognized all the lesser divinities of the Hindu pantheon. Each group claimed to follow closely the Vedanta philosophy, interpreting it according to its own tradition.

But there was little clarity of vision. For Hinduism itself was at this time in a pitifully moribund condition. The subjugation of the Hindus by the Muslims, which had now lasted for many centuries, seemed to have destroyed initiative. Vast multitudes in East Bengal had become Muslims, though the old Hindu background of thought and life remained. Thus, historically, when the East India Company began to consolidate its power the Hindu community had almost reached the point of exhaustion.

Furthermore, Islam itself, owing in a great measure to the large numbers that had come under its sway, had become rigid and lifeless in its turn. There was neither any active movement of religious thought nor any outstanding spiritual leader. Like Hinduism, Islam had lost its old religious fervour. It was content with keeping its own ceremonial traditions.

The question, which has been already stated, needs

to be put in another form: Why did the religious awakening in Bengal begin in the early nineteenth century? Why did the European influence before that date produce such very feeble results? If it is accepted that a renaissance in Indian thought and life was produced by contact with Western ideas, why did it not begin at an earlier date?

Farquhar, in his book on *Modern Religious Movements in India*, suggests that the two forces which quickened the spirit of Bengal into new life were the impact of British rule and the intellectual stimulus caused by the Christian missions. The latter of these two forces was not felt to any great extent before the nineteenth century was well on its way. A third factor was the great work of the European Oriental scholars, whose publication of noble Sanskrit texts created a wide interest both in India and the West. Farquhar states that when Carey settled down at Serampore, the more far-sighted Englishmen, both in the Mission's and in the Company's service, realized the need of close co-operation in order to accelerate the progress of Indian education. Thus the further study of the East and the new experience of the West went on side by side.

One of the most interesting and romantic incidents of these eventful days was the arrival in Paris, under arrest, of an Englishman named Hamilton, in 1803. During his forced detention he taught Sanskrit to several French scholars and also to Friedrich Schlegel. The latter was deeply impressed by the Sanskrit literature, which was thus opened out to him for the first time. He translated some texts into German. It was a period when patient research was being made in the science of language.

These translations made a great sensation in academic circles. Afterwards a number of European scholars continued to take an increasingly sympathetic interest in India and Indian affairs, creating thereby an enthusiasm for Indian culture and religion quite unknown before.

These were the years (1800–28) which shaped and formed the political and the religious ideas of the founder of the Brahma Samaj—Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833). Born of an old Brahmin family, he was educated at Patna, in Behar, at that time a well-known centre of Islamic studies. It has been said of him that throughout his life the Raja remained profoundly influenced by his early education, both in his habits and tastes. On his return home from Patna at the age of fifteen, he found that the difference of opinion with his father on the question of idolatry had become so great that he was unable to live with him any longer. He therefore left his ancestral home and, after wandering about in India and even visiting Tibet, settled down in Benares in order to study Sanskrit and the Hindu scriptures. In his early youth he was said to have had a great dislike for the English, but after a favourable experience in the service of the East India Company, and close contact with worthy Englishmen like Mr. Digby, he began to alter his opinion. As a man of affairs, he gradually saw that as the British rule had come to stay it was right to make terms with it and to utilize the contact with the West for the good of the Indian people.

On the death of his father in 1803 he moved to Murshidabad, in Bengal, and published in 1804 a pamphlet in Persian called the *Tuhfat-ul-Muahhidin*

or *A Gift to the Deists*, expressing very strong views against idolatry and polytheism. Soon after his retirement from the service of the Company in 1814 he settled down in Calcutta and established in 1815 a society called the "Atmiya Sabha" or the Society of Friends. He also came into contact with the Serampore missionaries, and took up the study of Hebrew and Greek in order to understand the Christian scriptures. In 1820 he published a notable pamphlet called *The Precepts of Jesus: The Guide to Peace and Happiness*. Before that he had already attracted public attention by publishing in English a statement of his own views on religion in a book called *Translation of an Abridgement of the Vedanta, or the Resolution of all the Vedas* (1816).

But the Raja's activities were not confined to controversial discussion of the different religions. He was equally interested in education and social reform, slowly building up at the same time his own religious convictions. He was one of the many Indians who took an active part in the establishment of the Hindu College, which was founded in Calcutta in 1819. His efforts towards social reform were equally fruitful. He championed the agitation against the burning of widows, and it was very largely through his great influence in Bengal that Lord Bentinck was able to abolish *Sati* by an order of the Government on December 4, 1819.

Although Raja Ram Mohan Roy's manifold social reforms were of great importance, it was in religion that his contribution had the most far-reaching effect. In 1828 he founded the Brahma Samaj, a theistic society opposed to polytheism, mythology, and idolatry. This proved to be the first

influential religious movement of the nineteenth century in India.

The Samaj held its first meetings in a house in Chitpur Road, Calcutta. The word "Brahma" is derived from the Sanskrit "Brahman"—the name for God in the Upanishads. "Samaj" means a society or association. Throughout its long history the Brahma Samaj has remained rigorously theistic and opposed to idolatry and has always advocated progressive social reform. While its roots have been grounded deep in the Hindu religion, the Raja, as well as the early founders of the Brahma Samaj, derived inspiration and stimulus from keen intellectual controversies with the Christian missionaries. In fact, the impulse which proved most creative in Ram Mohan Roy's mind was the desire to found a form of religion capable of meeting the missionaries' attacks on Hinduism in a manner which would conform with the scientific spirit of the age.

Yet in spite of the great personality of the Raja and his friends, the progress of the Samaj was slow. It did not create immediately a widespread enthusiasm even among educated people. Nevertheless it released forces, both favourable and hostile, of remarkable intensity, which developed into many different social and religious movements all through the nineteenth century. People were roused from their old lethargy, either to defend or to attack it. Bengali society was rocked with religious discussion, the outcome of which was a saner conception of religion, a more well-informed attitude towards the question of morals, and, above all, a more determined effort to secure justice and liberty, both for the individual and the people.

The first name chosen for the newly formed Church was the Brahma Sabha, but very soon this was changed into Brahma Samaj. The Samaj used to meet every Saturday evening from seven to nine in a hired house in Calcutta. At first there was neither a well-established organization nor any regular membership. It was a weekly gathering, where people met to pray and worship. Ram Mohan fervently believed that he was reviving the ancient character of the Hindu religion. The simple ritual and the spirit of devotion which pervaded the atmosphere of the gatherings represented to him a return to the ancient form of Vedic worship.

The Raja left for England in November 1830 and remained there until his death, in Bristol, on September 27, 1833. While during his stay in England he was engaged in many social and political activities, his contact with the British Unitarians and men like Roscoe and Bentham gave him a greater opportunity of understanding liberal Christian thought. He was impressed by the rational attitude which certain Christian denominations were adopting and he was eager to do the same for Hinduism. A man of unbounded energy and great patriotism, he was born at a time when the civilization of the West with its philanthropic enthusiasm came into close touch with Hinduism through his own interpretation of it. A profound spiritual ferment had been created. It needed a man of large imagination and keen intellect to harmonize these diverse influences and turn their direction towards a positive outlook upon life.

Ram Mohan had thus to perform a double task. He had to challenge Hindu orthodoxy and also to

turn in a new religious direction the negative, sceptical spirit of the first generation of English-educated Bengalis. Miss Collet quotes from an article in the *Asiatic Journal* (1833): "The Raja often deplored the existence of a party which had sprung up in Calcutta, composed principally of imprudent young men, some of them possessing talent, who had avowed themselves sceptics in the widest sense of the term. He described it as partly composed of East Indians and partly of Hindu youth, who from education had learnt to reject their own faith without substituting any other. These he thought more debased than the most bigoted Hindu and their principles the bane of all morality."

Because of his high courage and vast scholarship and comprehension of other religions, the Raja was best fitted to accomplish a union of the spiritual forces of the East and West which had met in India. His success was further made possible by the new temper of the politically minded Indians, who were beginning to question the supremacy of England. The Brahma Samaj, therefore, did not merely establish a new Church; it also brought a reconciliation within Hindu society which led on to progress.

Soon after the death of the Raja the affairs of the Samaj came into the hands of the Maharaja Ramnath Thakur and Prasanna Kumar Thakur, who were not able to give much time to its supervision. Then Ram Mohan's eldest son took it up in his own hands. But he was soon involved in his private affairs and left the Samaj in a very disordered state. Then Dwarkanath Tagore took charge of it. But as he left for England very soon afterwards, its work again began to decline, until his son, Deben-

dranath Tagore, joined the Samaj in 1842. His power of organization and his saintly life once again restored the Samaj's usefulness, which had suffered after the death of the Raja. He published in 1848 a series of extracts from the Hindu scriptures called the *Brahma Dharma*, and its publication satisfied all the different elements of the Samaj. Debendranath remained with the Samaj until 1872, when he finally handed over its affairs to his son Dwijendranath. During the thirty years of Debendranath's stewardship its prestige had grown and many branches were started in different parts of India. He steadfastly believed that original Hinduism was a spiritual theism and that India had no need of any other religion. He showed in his attitude towards radical social ideas a decided disinclination to adopt any newer patterns which he thought were not rooted in the body of Hindu thought and tradition.

In 1857 Keshav Chandra Sen joined the Samaj. Born of a well-known Vaidya[1] family of Calcutta, Keshav very early showed great powers of oratory. Amongst his friends he was regarded as a coming religious leader. Soon, by his gifts of speaking, he became a leading light. He founded in 1860 a society called the "Sangat Sabha" or the "Believers Association" for the discussion of social and religious reforms and particularly for the abolition of the caste system. In 1861 he resigned his position in the Bank of Bengal in order to become a whole-time missionary of the Samaj, and shortly after his resignation he was formally ordained as a minister of the Samaj, with the title of "Acharya." But very soon afterwards,

[1] The Vaidyas of Bengal are supposed to have descended from the Brahmin caste.

because of his radical ideas about the caste system, serious differences of opinion arose with other leaders and he retired from his position as the secretary of the Samaj in 1863. His advocacy of intermarriage and his objection to the wearing of the sacred thread[1] were two of the most vital objections against him.

Keshav, finding that his radical ideas were not supported in Calcutta, made a tour of the whole of India in 1864, as a result of which the "Prarthana Samaj" in Bombay and the "Veda Samaj" in Madras (now called the Brahma Samaj of Madras) were founded. During this tour Keshav had gathered round him a group of younger men who shared his views on the question of a more radical programme of social reform within the Samaj. But these opinions were not shared by any other leading member, and it became therefore inevitable that a schism should take place. Debendranath made repeated attempts to bring about a reconciliation, but Keshav and his young friends were determined to fight out the question of the caste system and they consequently left the Samaj in 1865.

In November 1866 Keshav formed a new society called the "Brahma Samaj of India," and very soon afterwards a selection of theistic texts from different religious scriptures was published for use in the services of the new Samaj. A little while afterwards he met Ramakrishna and began to use frequently in his sermons the word "Bhakti," a term borrowed from the Vaishnava tradition of Bengal. He also

[1] The higher castes amongst the Hindus are required, according to ancient customs, to wear cotton threads next to their skin after they have been initiated to the Hindu doctrines at an early age.

introduced many ceremonies of the Hindu religion, which caused great dissatisfaction among many of those who had sided with him in respect to social reforms. The actual schism took place in 1878, when he consented to give his daughter in marriage to the ruling prince of Cooch Behar, although both the bride and the bridegroom were still under age. In a public statement[1] Keshav justified his action. He did not, however, satisfy a large body of influential members, who left the Samaj as a protest against his action. He afterwards formed the "Nava Vidhan" or the "New Dispensation." He died on January 8, 1884.

The majority of the provincial Samajists and the body of influential members in Calcutta who seceded from the new Samaj formed afterwards the "Sadharan Brahma Samaj" in 1878. Its organization was framed in such a way that one single person could never dominate its affairs. Pundit Siva Nath Sastri, a leading and respected Brahma preacher, also joined the Samaj and on January 22, 1881, a new house for services was opened in Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. Since then the Sadharan Brahma Samaj has made continued progress. Its influence has been very widespread and it has given to the National Congress some of its noblest leaders. In its earliest days it had stood for a complete modernization of the Indian way of life. But the Hindu devotional instincts, which were always latent in its members, soon found expression. In addition to giving the different reform movements the necessary stimulus, it also helped to leaven Hindu society generally.

[1] Keshav published a statement defending his action in the *Indian Mirror* of April 6, 1878.

Thus from whatever angle we start we are led back to the conclusion that the greatest changes in Indian society originally sprang from the commanding spiritual genius of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. At the same time the contact at close quarters with such personalities among the missionaries as Carey and Duff afforded a constant stimulus to the leading members of the Brahma Samaj to reform Hinduism from within. This brought with it a wider study of the religious and political thought of the West.

## Chapter III

# THE ARYA SAMAJ

By the year 1870 the Brahma Samaj, especially among its younger and more advanced members, had brought about within the Hindu community itself a deep desire to carry through certain social and educational reforms on purely Western lines. The majority of educated Indians were thus becoming cut off from those who had not received a Western education. It became the fashion even in the smaller things of life to imitate the West. Though no religious change was contemplated, the West was morally and intellectually all-pervasive. There was no outstanding Indian leader as yet who was strong enough to challenge this process altogether.

Nevertheless, a natural reaction had already begun to set in. A very large section of Hindu society began to cast grave doubts on the wisdom of breaking away so completely from old Hindu traditions and neglecting their own religious philosophy.

This Hindu reaction often took extravagant forms. But gradually it found a certain balance, and while it fostered at first a spirit of somewhat narrow nationalism, it gave to educated Indians a new self-respect as they took legitimate pride in their ancient cultural heritage.

Bepin Chandra Pal, who was a member of the Brahma Samaj, writes in his memoirs as follows:

"When in 1879, I left the University and went to

Calcutta, the Brahma Samaj was still a great intellectual and moral force in the country. The middle nineteenth-century rationalism and individualism of European culture were still the dominating ideas in the life and evolution of modern Bengal. But the conflict of political interests between the new generation of English educated Indians and the British officialdom in the country and the more fundamental cultural conflict between European modernism and Indian mediaevalism soon provoked a new revolt against the foreign domination, in the wake of which followed a new national self-consciousness which in the first flush of its new-found pride of race and culture commenced to repudiate whatever was foreign irrespective of the intrinsic reason and value of it and set up a new defence even of those social institutions and religious and spiritual tendencies that had previously been openly repudiated as false and harmful."

An intellectual basis was provided by the Bengali novelist, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. In a series of brilliant articles in the *Banga Darshan* he interpreted Hindu ethics and religion in accordance with the new rules of criticism accepted as valid in the West, re-explaining and re-assessing the whole content of Hindu belief and traditions.

In Northern India a similar movement had been started by Dayanand Saraswati, a Hindu monk and preacher, who was born in 1824 in the small town of Tankara, in the Kathiawar State of Morvi. Even as a boy he often doubted if the Hindu idols which people worshipped contained any divinity. His parents were disturbed by his attitude and wanted to get him married, thinking

that marriage would alter his views. But Dayanand, being unable to share the opinions of his parents, fled from home. Then began a period of wanderings throughout India, during which he met many ascetics, practised Yoga, and studied the Vedanta with a teacher in Muttra. In 1863, when he thought that his studies were completed, he started preaching his doctrines and began to publish books and pamphlets. He went about all over the country and at last in 1875 conceived the idea of founding the Arya Samaj. It was linked up for a very short time with the Theosophical Society, but the union was soon broken off in 1881. Dayanand died on October 30, 1883, at the age of fifty-nine.

Unlike the leading members of the Brahma Samaj, Dayanand never learnt English. He wrote in Hindi. This made him more intelligible to the masses in Northern India, and the Arya Samaj became, broadly speaking, a mass movement. His followers were attracted by the truly Indian character of his teaching. His idea of going back to the Vedas was shared by many at the time, who were now becoming eager to challenge all the doctrines of the West.

Dayanand held fast to the belief that there was only one God, who was to be worshipped not by images, but as Spirit. He preached that the Vedas contained all the knowledge imparted to man by God and that the essentials of modern science were contained in them.

The popular Hindu doctrines of transmigration, Karma,[1] and the sanctity of the cow were upheld by

[1] The Hindu belief that a man's future is inevitably determined by the deeds he performs.

him. Thus he had his immediate appeal to the common people even while advocating drastic reforms in the social system. The dynamic of his personality and his typically Indian approach to the question of religion brought to him many adherents. He represented the temper of a whole generation and symbolized in his person the political attitude of a large number of Indians of the latter part of last century. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the Brahma leaders had taken their stand on an enlightened reason when they denounced the evils of caste system, child marriage, etc. But Dayanand based his own position on the Vedas and proved to the people that these evils had no sanction in their own scriptures.

The Arya Samaj accepted the permanent existence of the four castes and retained the sacred thread for the three superior castes. On the other hand, it opposed child marriage and encouraged widow remarriage. Thus its tenets represented an intermediate stage between conservative orthodox Hinduism on the one hand and an entirely modern critical outlook on the other. The followers of Dayanand sought to retain modern ideas about science without abandoning either the ancient Vedas or the equally ancient "caste" basis of society. From this standpoint a reform movement spread far and wide over the whole of the North of India and even up to the present day its spirit is active in the villages as well as in the towns.

Thus the lesson of all political advance in India is made clear by Dayanand's remarkable success. For starting from the realm of pure religious truth, he was soon caught up in the current of rising national

feeling. By coming into contact with those who were eager to reform Hindu society, he imbibed their keen enthusiasm. As a great visionary, he saw the future of his country blessed with a true faith and reaping the fruits of modern science. Such a people would be fit for self-rule and would occupy an honoured place among the nations of the world.

## Chapter IV

# THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

A THIRD movement differing remarkably in its inspiration from the Arya Samaj was started by Ramakrishna Paramhansa in Bengal. Ramakrishna, a simple village priest, had neither the learning nor the ability of Dayanand. Yet the entire middle class, Western-educated, Bengali community made him their national hero. Men like Keshav Chandra Sen, the Brahma leader, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the novelist, and Girish Chandra Ghosh, the dramatist, recognized his greatness and regarded him as a saint. It is strange that Ramakrishna, whose early upbringing had been amongst people untouched by English ideas, should stand out as the inspirer of a whole generation. One main reason was that these highly educated men put forward this simple village mystic and genius as the symbol of their revolt against English cultural superiority. They felt instinctively that they had been in danger of going too far and losing their own souls.

Ramakrishna was born in the village of Kamarpukur, in the Hooghli district of Bengal, on February 18, 1836. His parents, who were priestly Brahmins, soon found him a post as assistant priest in a temple at Dakhineswara, near Calcutta, in 1855. Even when he was an ordinary temple priest he would very often pass into a form of trance and remain unconscious for a long time. As in the case of Swami Dayanand, his parents, thinking that marriage would make him more like an ordinary

man, had him married in 1859. But this did not stop his mystical meditations. He would very often fall into *Samadhi* (Yogic trance), from which he would return after a long period. It was about this time, when most of his acquaintances felt baffled with him, that he met a Brahmin nun, who came to him saying that she was sent by God. She helped him much at this early stage of his religious life. Later on he met an Indian monk called Totapuri, who taught him the monistic Vedanta, as preached by the great Sankaracharya, and also many Yogic practices, specially the "Nirvikalpa Samadhi," in which the devotee loses all trace of consciousness.

After Totapuri had left, Ramakrishna tried to attain the Vaishnava ideal of love for God, which is characteristic of Bengal. The next phase of his inner life consisted of a struggle against his own hesitation in matters of caste. After he had succeeded in removing his prejudices against other religions, he met Christians and Muslims and held discourses with them and eventually came to the conclusion that all religions were equally true and that they were various paths leading to the same goal.

The story of his mystical life now began to be spread abroad, and many people came to see him and hear him. Dayanand himself visited him towards the end of 1872, but the meeting was unsuccessful.

It was his contact with men like Keshav Chandra Sen and Girish Chandra Ghosh and others which made him realize what was going on in the minds of the educated people. They spoke and taught in a language which he could hardly understand at first. Yet he was never embarrassed by his ignorance. His

natural goodness and enlightened consciousness made him appreciate things which people never expected from him. In spite of his orthodox upbringing the largeness of his mind made him sympathize with the intellectual dilemma of educated people. His broad sympathy, saintliness of character, and radiant personality disarmed all opposition and he guided and advised people even without knowing it.

Ramakrishna's success with the educated people of his age was also due to the weakness of their intellectual beliefs. For, very many had found it impossible to reconcile the condition in which they were born with the ideas they had imbibed. Their aspirations remained unfulfilled and the answers they had gained from modern science were also inadequate. So they wanted a symbol or focus for all their inner conflict. Ramakrishna, who was mentally their exact opposite, became their ideal. It is worth noticing that most of the men who surrounded Ramakrishna belonged either to the aristocracy of Bengal or else had come from the newly rising upper middle class. M. Romain Rolland mentions the fact that except Latu (a servant) all the men close to Ramakrishna came from the upper stratum of Bengali society.

The movement which Ramakrishna thus set in motion is important because he justified the claim of the Hindus that God can be worshipped and realized by following the traditional methods of India, which the Christian missionaries had characterized as superstitious. This fact gave the rising nationalist consciousness a weapon with which to fight the West. Indians could now claim that their religion was good enough for them. Since they did not want any other

religion, they were capable of looking after themselves. In the same way, politically they were quite capable of governing themselves without foreign interference.

Ramakrishna also created a movement for social reform, which carried political consequences with it. The cult of "Bhakti," or devotion, had always had a special appeal to the Bengali mind. The Bengalis of the late nineteenth century had felt puzzled with their new-found race-consciousness, and it was Ramakrishna who showed them the way towards self-expression. The restlessness of the Bengali mind, gradually manifesting itself both in a new outburst of literature and in grave religious doubts, had reached a stage when it was marked by an inner agony that could not be controlled. An unsympathetic foreign Government, unable to realize the depth of these emotions, only exasperated the youth of Bengal. Together with an almost complete disbelief in religion, there had come something of the helplessness of despair. The stirring call for social service made to the young men by the Ramakrishna movement gave an outlet to this pent-up feeling of dissatisfaction. Many came forward and took vows of celibacy and dedicated their lives with joy to the service of the poor and the needy.

Behind this great movement the figure of Ramakrishna remained enshrined. His childlike tenderness, his homely wisdom and his engaging simplicity had so won the hearts of Young Bengal that they refused any longer to be impressed by the glamour of Western learning. The merit of this movement lay in the fact that although Ramakrishna had never gained any scholastic distinction it became stronger

and grew in importance among the educated classes. The steadiness with which it spread not only in India, but also abroad, was a thing of wonder. Ramakrishna, by being what he was, achieved these remarkable results.

After his death on August 15, 1886, his favourite disciple, Vivekananda (1863–1902), became the chief exponent of his teachings. He had a character altogether different from that of his master. He was forceful and uncompromising. By his remarkable energy he made the cause of Hinduism known in many parts of the world. His appearance in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 was epoch-making for Indian religious thought. He was a scholar with a remarkable knowledge of other religions. His organizing ability soon made him the leader of the Ramakrishna Mission.

The activities of the Ramakrishna Mission itself remained predominantly reformist in the sphere of social service, but Vivekananda by his eloquent appeals had also given a new stimulus to the wider political aspirations of Young India. He came back as a national hero from America and was welcomed as such. His success had increased the self-respect of the Indian people in face of the world at large. The time had passed when merely petitioning the British rulers to remove the manifold grievances and ills of foreign rule, was all that the Congress could achieve. Vivekananda struck a new note, and among the young it found an immediate echo and response. Therefore, when he asked his own countrymen not to blame the English people, but *themselves* for their suffering and degradation, he was voicing their own inner feelings. "I ask myself," he exclaimed, "who

is responsible? And the answer comes every time, 'Not the English, no, they are not responsible: it is *we* who are responsible for all our misery and all our degradation, and we alone are responsible.'"

As to the causes of this degradation he went on as follows: "It is simply due to your having despised the masses of India that you have been living a life of slavery for the last thousand years; it is therefore that you are objects of hatred in the eyes of foreigners and are looked upon with indifference by your countrymen."

Ramakrishna had taken very little active interest in any particular political question. But Vivekananda, from his youth, was vitally interested in the political future of his country; and because of his wide travels and still wider acquaintance with people of many countries he had formed clear opinions regarding the needs of political freedom. Although he did not take any active part in the deliberations of the Congress, he was keenly observant of all that was happening. Many prominent Congress leaders sought his counsels, and he even knew personally some of the younger men who afterwards joined the revolutionary movement. On one occasion, on being asked why he advised a friend not to take part in politics, he said, "What does X know of politics? I have done more politics in my life than X. I had the idea of forming a combination of Indian Princes for the overthrow of foreign yoke. For that reason, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, I have tramped all over the country. But I got no response; the country is dead."[1]

[1] *Swami Vivekananda, the Socialist*, by Dr. Bhupendranath Dutta (Khulna, Bengal), 1929, p. iv.

Thus Vivekananda urged his countrymen to work out their own salvation. He wanted them to learn to do things for themselves without blaming other people or depending on them. It was for this reason that he concentrated on his work at the Ramakrishna Mission, where he intended to turn out a band of workers devoted entirely to the cause of national service.

As a result of his continued efforts, homes of social service and religious discipline were built at Belur, near Calcutta; at Allahabad, in the United Provinces; at Mayavati, in the Himalayas; and at Bangalore, in South India. These are used for the monks, who are made to go through a period of training and discipline before they are permitted to be initiated into the order. Charitable institutions called Sevasrams have grown up all over the country, of which the most important are at Benares, Hardwar, Allahabad, and Brindaban. Educational work is also done in some places, but Vivekananda's idea of building up a great centre of learning on Indian lines was never fulfilled.

In April 1898 the building of the headquarters of the order was begun at Belur, near Calcutta. The dedication took place on December 9, 1898, and the final occupation on January 2, 1899. Its functions were divided. (i) The Ramakrishna Math is a purely monastic body with a retreat for the monks, having as its avowed object the maintenance of a universal religion. (ii) The Mission exercises jurisdiction over all works of public utility, both philanthropic and charitable. It is open both to the laymen and the monks. It was legally registered

in April 1909, a few years after the death of Vivekananda.

The Ramakrishna Mission differed from other social and religious movements in this respect, that it put emphasis on that aspect of Vedanta which encourages universalism in its religious conception. Dayanand was never consciously drawn to a universal conception of religion, although some of his disciples claimed that the Arya Samaj was meant for the whole of humanity. But Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, because of the cult of Vaishnavism in Bengal, were fitted to evolve, each in his own way, a conception of religion which became universal. Vivekananda specially, by his new interpretation of Hindu religion, raised it to a universal status.

Above all, Vivekananda's intrepid patriotism gave a new colour to the Nationalist movement throughout India. The monk and the patriot were curiously blended in him, and Sister Nivedita has recorded in her Reminiscences how very often he passed from one mood to the other. Mrs. Besant had described him as the warrior monk; and it is true that he had been deeply influenced by the political thinking of his time. His preachings of Hinduism had more references to the immediate condition of the people than those of Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna was like a gentle wind. He saw truth and spoke about it in the immemorial manner of ancient India. But Vivekananda was like a storm sweeping away all obstacles from the path of India's future greatness.

The year 1895 was the date of Vivekananda's return from America after his successful vindication of the Hindu religion in that country. More than any other single individual of that period, he had

made his own contribution to the new awakening of India. As we read his biography we realize how, even without being connected with the Congress, he very largely shaped its policy and promoted its evolution.

## Chapter V

# THE ALIGARH MOVEMENT

By far the most outstanding figure in the Muslim world of India during the nineteenth century was Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the founder of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, which has now become the Muslim University and accepts students from all over India and from other lands in the East.

The story has never yet been fully told of the remarkable revival of Islamic culture at Delhi from 1835 to 1857 as it came in touch with Western learning. This renaissance in the north-west of India presented a remarkable parallel, in many directions, to the revival of learning in Bengal. The innate beauty and flexibility of the Urdu language—as it retained its near kinship with Persian literature on the one hand and absorbed new ideas from the culture of the West on the other—afforded an admirable medium for this revival of learning in the north-west just as the Bengali language was the true medium in Bengal. If Rabindranath Tagore has given the fullest expression in poetry to the Bengali revival, Muhammad Iqbal has done the same thing through his Urdu and Persian poetry for the Punjab.

Even as late as the year 1908 there were those still living at Delhi who had taken part in their youth in this efflorescence of Urdu literature under the last of the Moghul emperors. Munshi Zaka Ullah and Maulvi Nazir Ahmed were two of these; Altaf Husain "Hali" of Panipat was a third. The results

of this early cultural contact between India and Britain in the north-west provinces were remarkable. Professor Ramchandra, an eminent Hindu scholar, who became a Christian, was one of the first-fruits of this contact. He was, in his own day, a mathematician of very high repute. There were also poets and writers in Urdu, who gained much of their inspiration from a study of English authors. Perhaps the most interesting fact of all is that this renaissance flourished, not through learning to speak and write English, but through the mother tongue, Urdu. It remained wholly indigenous. Those who were its highest exponents never used English as a medium of conversation, though they read and studied English books. They also refused to adopt English customs.

To give one example, Munshi Zaka Ullah made an immensely laborious effort to reproduce the science and mathematics of the West in an Urdu form. He also wrote modern history and geography in the same manner. These books were steeped in Western culture, although the author never spoke English, but only read it in books. He greatly lamented, in his later life, that Urdu had not been made all along the medium of instruction in the new universities of northern India instead of English.

All this remarkable revival of learning went on in Delhi right up to the outbreak of the mutiny of the sepoys at Meerut on May 11, 1857. These troops marched into Delhi in the course of a few hours, and from that time forward modern education and culture ceased. Those who had received the Western learning were all suspect by the mutineers. Professor

Ramchandra and many others barely escaped with their lives. For many years after the siege and capture of Delhi every sign of the earlier education had vanished. Only very slowly did it return, and it never reached in later days the glory of its first efflorescence.

The community that suffered most at the hands of the British when the mutiny had been quelled was that of the Muslims. The rebellion was regarded, quite unjustly, as having had its origin among *them*. The truth seems to be that discontent was universal both among Hindus and Muslims alike, and the sepoy rebellion fanned the flame into open revolt. But the theory somehow got abroad, and was very widely held by British administrators, that the whole outbreak was the last bid for power on the part of Muslims, who had thus sought to restore at Delhi the throne of the Great Moghuls.

On this account, because they were so suspected even after the rebellion had been crushed, the Muslims steadily lost ground, both in education and in Government favour. Some of the noblest families were brought to the verge of ruin, and in many parts of the north of India the plight of the Muslims became almost desperate. In Delhi itself even the direct descendants of the royal family lived in miserable destitution. As late as the early years of the twentieth century this state of things continued. Illiteracy among the Muslim population soon reached a far higher percentage than among the other communities, and in spite of every effort that is now being made to recover lost ground, this deficiency still remains.

The one man who broke the spell of this desperate

state of affairs was Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. He had passed through the dreadful days of the revolt with a record of service to the Government which gave him a right to speak on behalf of his own Muslim community. His life during those terrible days reads like a romance. He made his appeal just at the time when the official world had begun to be seriously alarmed at the backwardness of Muslim education and to realize the danger to political affairs if this increased still further. There were enlightened educationists also among the officials to whom Sir Syed Ahmed appealed in the name of justice as well as of high expediency.

Thus he struck the right note at the right time by his public pronouncement that his own Muslim people had been unfairly treated. His appeal went home because it came from the depths of his own heart. Strangely enough, as we look back to-day, the greatest opposition which he had to face came from within his own community. For, there were men of deep piety and ancient learning among them who regarded Western education itself as leading to irreligion and atheism. They were content to go on with Arabic culture alone, while turning their backs on all the new knowledge which the West had brought into the world.

But this reactionary educational policy was entirely contrary to the true spirit of Islam. For the Prophet had urged his followers to get knowledge wherever it could be found and had encouraged learning of every kind. But one of the results of the long and studied neglect of the Muslims by the ruling power had been to drive their thoughts and sentiments inward, until the new learning which was so rapidly

coming into India from every side became regarded as *harām*—an unclean thing.

No one but a giant in intellectual power and vigorous personality could have overcome this obstacle so completely as to make the leading Muhammadan families, on whom success really depended, ready to defy the anathemas of their own religious leaders and send their sons to a college which had already been condemned as leading to atheism.

In an almost superhuman task of removing obstacles of this kind out of the way and obtaining the necessary funds, Sir Syed Ahmed was helped most of all by those at Delhi of his own age and standing, who had already received Western education before the outbreak of 1857, and yet had in no way changed their manner of life or dress or thrown over their religion. Maulvi Nazir Ahmed was a stalwart champion whose name was known everywhere in the Punjab and the United Provinces for his brilliant Urdu prose. It was true that many were afraid of him as a "free-thinker" in certain matters of religion, but no one could deny either his life of strict piety or his championship of the Muslim faith. His Arabic learning also was almost unparalleled. He became one of the ardent followers and lieutenants of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.

It may be well to give at this point the carefully considered verdict of one who knew Sir Syed intimately and had worked with him in his great enterprise at Aligarh from the very start. Sir Theodore Morison writes: "Sir Syed was first and last a religious reformer; he summoned his people to return to the sanity and simplicity of primitive

Islam. He denounced the superstitions and bigotry with which their faith had become encrusted; he told his people that the only instrument which could accomplish this regeneration was education and that education must be on Western lines; there was nothing contrary to the principles of Islam, he said, in the acquisition of Western learning—as the Maulvis ignorantly proclaimed. Had not the Prophet said: 'Go even to the Walls of China for the sake of learning. . . .' Sir Syed was violently attacked for his courageous opinions and suffered much social persecution, but no persecution could daunt his leonine courage; his great personality prevailed at length over opposition and misrepresentation, and in the last years of his life he exercised a marvellous ascendancy over Muslim opinion. When he was laid to rest by the side of the mosque of the college in Aligarh, a lifelong friend of his said to me: 'Other men have written books and founded colleges; but to arrest, as with a wall, the degeneration of a whole people—that is the work of a prophet!' That remark conveys, in my opinion, a correct judgment of Sir Syed's personality and of the quality of his work. For myself I can say that I have never met another man so great as he."[1]

The Aligarh movement, which was thus started by its founder, Sir Syed Ahmed, has had its times of depression as well as its remarkable successes. Much depended on the English principals of the M.A.O. College, who were carefully chosen by the board of trustees with the help of friends of the movement in England. In Beck, Morrison, and Arnold, three well-wishers of Islam were chosen in succession,

[1] *Political India*, p. 88, published by Oxford University Press.

and this helped to set the tone of the College and to create public confidence among the leading Muslims in its favour.

The movement was by no means confined to Aligarh, though that was made its centre. For in every city of the north of India, and in other parts of India also, the new spirit spread rapidly. Schools and colleges sprang up where the Muslim culture was taught side by side with the learning of the West. If to-day the Muslim community has made up much of the leeway that it had lost during the latter half of the nineteenth century, it is in a very great measure due to that spirit of Islam which Sir Syed Ahmed rightly declared to be the friend of all human culture and science in whatever part of the world it may be found. We shall note in a later chapter the effect of the Aligarh movement upon the political life of the Muslim community after the founding of the National Congress in 1885.

## Chapter VI

# OTHER RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

THE Sikhs, who are to be found chiefly in the Punjab, have a romantic history of their own which has been told in story and song. They form a community based on religion which traces back its origin to Guru Nanak, who was born in the Punjab in A.D. 1469. He was a devotee of the Bhakti school of religious devotion and also a social reformer. His followers were given the name of "Sikh," which means "disciple." During the persecutions of this new religion by the Moghul Emperors at Delhi, the community was welded together and grew in strength and also in political importance. This came to a head in the martyrdom at Delhi of the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, and the organizing ability of his son, Guru Govind Singh, who transformed the Sikhs into a militant body called the "Khalsa." He gave to every member the name Singh, which means Lion, and constituted sacraments which bound the religious members in one brotherhood. The body of scriptures called the *Granth Sahib* was completed and a central shrine was built at Amritsar, which was named the Golden Temple. The city of Amritsar thenceforward became the centre of the new faith.

The remarkable reign of Ranjit Singh, who conquered the Punjab in 1820, gave to this religion a political importance which it had never had before. But when the Maharaja died in 1839 this military sovereignty in the north-west of India fell to pieces.

In the revolt of 1857 the Sikh troops were enlisted on the side of the British and this fact kept the revolt from spreading in the north-west beyond the city of Delhi.

The great revival among the Sikhs came after this outbreak was over. A strong communal spirit developed which sought at the same time to purge the Sikh faith from many abuses. These made it in some danger of relapsing into Hinduism once more in matters of caste and idol worship. The reformers sought to purge the Sikh *Gurdwaras* (temples) of anything idolatrous and at the same time to set up in them abbots, called *mahants*, whose lives were lived in accordance with the religion they professed.

Along with these reforms in worship, education was carried forward by means of a remarkable number of Sikh schools and colleges. No outstanding personality can be mentioned separately, but what is all the more noticeable has been the large number of religious reformers who have devoted themselves to the good of the community. The total strength of the Sikhs at the present time is nearly five millions and their influence is still felt most widely of all in the Punjab. The Indian states of the Punjab, which are under Sikh rulers, form a considerable part of this population. The Sikhs have also travelled more widely to every part of the world than any other body among the people of India, and they have formed, since the Punjab came under British control, an important and celebrated section of the Indian Army. In the political development of India they have also taken a prominent part and have given progressive and enlightened leaders to the Congress movement.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Christian Church in India, in its ancient forms of orthodoxy, had lost much of its inner power of reformation and revival. Like Hinduism and Islam, it had suffered for many centuries from a slow decline which had reached its lowest point as the eighteenth century drew to an end.

The ancient history of Christianity in India forms a profoundly interesting study. Its origin is said to have dated back to the preaching of the Apostle, St. Thomas, and the record of his name is still preserved in San Thome and St. Thomas's Mount, which lie just outside the city of Madras. Early in the fourth century (the date is still uncertain) large numbers of Syrian Christians from the Near East found a haven of refuge from persecution along the Malabar and Coromandel coasts of southern India. They were very hospitably welcomed by the ruling princes of those days and were given at a later period their own place in the body politic.

Much later, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a second influx came with the Portuguese, who made Goa the centre of their new maritime empire. Very soon conversion to the Christian faith was made an integral part of their imperial rule and large numbers submitted to the invaders and became baptized. At the same time St. Francis Xavier, by his marvellously saintly life, raised the Christian ideal in India to an altogether higher level. The missionaries who followed him literally laid down their lives for the truth they taught. St. Francis Xavier himself died young owing to his fervour of religious devotion. Rarely has such a noble Christian apostle come to the East. His tomb at Goa is a centre of pilgrimage, not

only for Christians, but also for those of other faiths.

With the decline of the maritime empire of Portugal in the East, the Catholic Church in western India, which owed allegiance to Rome, lost most of its imperial support. But missionaries who lived saintly lives still came out from Europe and kept alive the Christian faith among those who were living along the western coast. They also built up congregations of Christians in the south. Nevertheless a slow decline had set in towards the end of the eighteenth century, as has already been stated.

The new impetus at the beginning of the nineteenth century came first of all in the south from the reformed Churches of Europe. The Lutherans and other missionary bodies began their memorable work, chiefly among the untouchables, and vast numbers of these unfortunate and despised people embraced the Christian religion. Very soon these outcasts of humanity began to show the power within themselves of rising to a new life which they had received from their Christian faith. This gained for them a respect from those who had treated them before as unworthy even to be touched or approached, and had regarded them almost as subhuman.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect of this in the long run on the rising political and social life of India in the nineteenth century. It meant the future emancipation of a large part of the population from a condition almost worse than slavery. That emancipation has not even yet been accomplished, but this was the first step towards it.

One other factor needs to be mentioned which broke down barriers of a different kind and led to

important political results. Western education was introduced into India at the very first in a large measure through Christian colleges and schools. The most noticeable feature in this respect was the moral basis and the personal influence of noble self-sacrificing lives upon the students. This produced an idealism altogether different from the purely secular and professional teaching which was given in Government institutions. Thus the Christian education helped to build up character among those who were non-Christians as well as among Christians and served to direct their minds towards the most urgent social reforms. If the political life of India were to be built up on strong and secure foundations, these social injustices had to be eliminated, and here the Christian colleges, whose doors were open to all, played a notable part. To take one example only, the life-long work of a great principal, such as Dr. Miller, of the Madras Christian College, shows in a striking manner the value to the national movement of an education carried out on so broad a Christian basis.

Added to these more general results of the modern movement in the Christian Church there must also be reckoned a revival in the south of India among the more ancient Christian Churches—both Syrian and Roman. It has been already explained how these had become integrated with the life of India itself, since they could trace back their own history for many centuries. Their revival was an asset to Indian politics, and it is noticeable to-day that some of the ablest leaders, such as Mr. George Joseph and Mr. John Baptista, have come from these ancient Churches. It is equally noticeable that others, such

as Kali Charan Banerji, S. K. Rudra, K. T. Paul, and S. K. Datta have come from the reformed Churches.

Since the Christians in India have now reached a total membership of nearly seven millions and stand next to the Parsees in order of literacy and general education, it appears to be certain that in the near future a much larger place will be occupied by them in the life of the nation than has been accorded to them in the past. This has already happened in China and Japan, and is likely to happen in India also.

If, as seems likely, the Anglo-Indian community, with its Christian basis, finds a point of contact and union with the Indian Christians and develops this more closely than in the past, then the Christian element in India will be still further strengthened and its service to the national movement, which the Congress represents, will be greatly increased.

The Parsees in India have a history that runs parallel in remarkable ways to that of the ancient Christian Churches. For the Parsees also sought for a refuge from their own mother country, many centuries ago, and they found it in India. They eagerly accepted the hospitality that was offered to them and sent for others who had remained in Persia. What is now the Bombay Presidency became their new home and they have clung to it ever since.

Again, we note how with them, as with the Christian exiles from Syria, the original purity of their faith became in the course of many centuries overlaid with meaningless forms and ceremonies. These had gradually taken the place of living religion in the hearts of the people. Thus the nobility

of the faith of their founder, Zarathustra, was being threatened. Nothing short of a revival from within could have saved it from ultimate extinction.

That revival came during the whole period of the nineteenth century. It does not seem to have been due to any single personality or religious leader. It was due rather to the innate virtues which had been developed within the community itself. Through these it was able to withstand the shocks of time and even the onset of decay. For the religious instinct within the heart recovered speedily when brought into contact with the new learning which had come from the West. The Parsees were able to assimilate it without losing their own identity. In many of their social customs they stood out conspicuously for conditions which were altogether healthy and sound, as compared with those around them. The position of women was dignified; marriage was celebrated at a mature age; all members of the community shared a common religious equality: those who were poverty-stricken or otherwise distressed were generously supported. Thus they instinctively appropriated the best that could be offered in the Western education that they now received with its democratic background. Their social life was not out of harmony with it. In the business of everyday life the Parsee community has shown outstanding capacity, and the great city of Bombay owes very much of its advance in modern methods of administration to its energy and enterprise.

From the very first the Parsees have been prominent in the great work of national reconstruction which the political movement has brought about. To mention three names only, the early history of the

Congress during its first phase is bound up with the three outstanding figures of Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, and Sir Dinshaw Edulji Wacha. Their presence within the Congress ranks in its early days was indispensable. Not merely were they outstanding personalities, but they had also that splendid business capacity which was sorely needed if the Congress was to be carried forward on sound practical lines. It will be explained also in a later chapter how the Congress in its early days owed more to the faithful work of Dadabhai Naoroji in London than to any other single person. Thus as compared with their almost insignificant numbers in the vast Indian population the Parsees have provided a very remarkable array of Congress leaders, and it may also be stated that all through the period with which this volume deals their reputation remained at this high level.

In this summary of religious movements throughout India the Jains and Buddhists have not as yet been mentioned in any detail. Buddhism is almost entirely confined to Burma, which has now been separated from India and even in earlier days naturally stood apart from the Indian Continent as a distinct geographical area. The Jains are to be found in many parts of India, especially as a commercial body engaged in banking and industrial affairs. They have shared along with Hinduism the national and social awakening and have produced men of very great eminence in the business world. In this way they have made their own deep impression on the national life as a whole, but in the purely political field they have not taken much active part. At the same time their religious faith has been quickened by the

recovery of their ancient literature, and the principle of non-violence for which they have stood out so firmly through all the centuries has been made one of the greatest factors, under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, in the programme of the National Congress.

Part Two

# BEFORE AND AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF 1857

*The Growing Racial Cleavage*

## Chapter I

# THE LIBERAL TRADITION

RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY, the founder of Modern India, was greatly attracted (as we have already seen) towards the liberal tradition in English education and English political history through his own personal experiences with Mr. Digby and others; for these relations had been of the happiest nature. His was a very noble character and he never forgot the kindness which had been shown to him when he was young.

It is extremely interesting to find from his correspondence that he did not advocate, as others did, the complete withdrawal of power from the East India Company in favour of the British Crown.

His private secretary wrote this note about him: "He stood up firmly against the proposals of his more radical friends for exchanging the East India Company's rule for a colonial form of government. His argument was that in all matters connected with the Colonies he had found, from long observation, that the Minister was absolute and that the majority of the House of Commons proved subservient. . . . The change proposed was therefore a change from a limited Government, presenting a variety of checks on any abuse of its power, for an absolute despotism."

We shall see later on, when we come to the state of India in the second half of the nineteenth century, under the Crown, how large an amount of truth there was in the Raja's own surmising, and with what

remarkable prescience he had realized beforehand what might happen when this change took place at last. At this point it is sufficient to note the fact that neither the Raja himself nor those who followed closely his ideas, favoured the proposal, which was in the air, of vesting all legislative power in the British Parliament as the arbiter of India's destiny, not only in the great final issues, but also in the smallest details of administration. He was very well aware, from his own bitter experience, of the enormous difficulty and delay involved in having reference made to England in an age when communications were slow beyond anything that we can now imagine. There was also the ever-present danger of vast disturbances arising again in Europe which might cut off all connection with the East. With a trading company good terms could be obtained under these conditions, but with officers of the Crown placed in full authority the dangers of a dictatorship, or what would come near it, were very great.

The main reason, however, why the "Company" rule was preferred to direct rule by the British Crown was a simpler one than that just put forward. Indians had now grown used to the "Company" as a part and parcel of their own daily existence, and custom holds sway everywhere in human hearts, especially in the East. There seems also, at this time, to have been very little sign of what is now marked down as "race feeling." There was, indeed, a pompousness—at times rather ridiculous—associated with the routine life of a servant of the "Company." Many of the old Moghul ceremonial customs which were intended to mark out their ruling power were kept

up. But all this simply placed the Englishman on a level with certain classes of the Indian nobility, whose ways of living he frankly adopted, even in the matter of dress, within the precincts of his own bungalow. It did not divide him off from the society of Indians altogether.

The story of those spacious times has been accurately described, with a fund of genuine humour, by Professor T. G. P. Spear of Delhi in his admirable book called *The Nabobs*, which forms a mine of information for this very interesting period. He shows us how these young servants of the "Company" came over from England by the long and monotonous sea voyage round the Cape, which not seldom lasted nearly six months when the winds were unfavourable. Their purpose was to stay out in India for the whole length of their service till they had made their fortunes. They, therefore, deliberately assimilated, from the very start, many of the manners and customs of the country and found pleasure in the society of the small and select number of Indian gentlemen who at that time could speak with them in English, or could understand their own barbarous Hindustani sufficiently to carry on a tolerable conversation. Thus in those days they did not shut themselves off from Indian society and lead a club life of their own entirely apart.

The Raja's visit to the West, coming at a propitious time, gave him full confidence concerning the spread of English liberal ideas and made him hopeful as to the relations between Great Britain and his own country. He suffered in England from continual ill-health, and there were misfortunes which made the last year of his life in England a sad one.

But he was upheld by his own magnanimous spirit and also by the hope that even before death came he might see the result of his many labours in the passing of the new Indian Charter. He did not live to see that day, but the formula had already been agreed upon and the matter had been decided.

A striking parallel may be drawn between the Raja, with all his hopes centred on the great Indian reforms of 1833, and Wilberforce, who at the same time was hoping against hope that his own measure for the Abolition of Slavery would be carried by the same House of Commons before he should pass away.

In many ways these two men, though so unlike in intellectual ability (for here the Raja far outpassed others of his own generation), were very near to one another in their single-hearted devotion to a life-long cause of humanity. Wilberforce longed to see the barrier of slavery, which separated by a great gulf man from man, removed. Ram Mohan Roy longed to see the barrier which separated East from West removed so that the human race might be one.

The formula, which the new Indian Charter presented, was satisfactory. It declared that "no Indian by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them, shall be disabled from holding any place, office, or any employment, under the said Government."

The Court of Directors interpreted and defined the new Charter as follows:—

"The Court conceives this section to mean that there shall be no governing caste in British India: that, whatever other tests of qualification shall be

adopted, distinction of race or religion shall not be of that number: that no subject of the King, whether of Indian, or British, or mixed descent, shall be excluded from posts usually conferred on uncovenanted servants, or from the covenanted service itself provided he be otherwise eligible."

The Parliamentary Committee went even farther and recommended that "the interests of the native subjects are to be consulted *in preference* to those of Europeans, wherever the two come into competition."

It is important to note that owing to this remarkable Charter of 1833, the principle of racial and religious equality became embodied in the British Constitution. It passed on from India to the Crown Colonies and for a long time remained unchallenged and undisputed. Only in the twentieth century has it been called in question.

This period in British history was a great age in the annals of the West. It summed up much of what had been attempted by the French Revolution and brought it to fruition. Looking back upon it in these post-war days, with personal dictatorships governing half of Europe, we stand amazed at the practical steps which idealism of a high type was able to achieve at such an early date.

It was the period when the middle classes in Great Britain and other countries began to receive their full share in the administration and in the carrying out into practice of their ideals. Not merely did it offer to India her charter of racial equality, it also started on its perilous and adventurous course Western education in the East.

For the time being this educational step was by

far the most notable change. Macaulay was its sponsor. From the very first, Alexander Duff in Calcutta and Wilson in Bombay were ardent supporters. But Raja Ram Mohan Roy had been the pioneer, without whose aid no forward movement would have succeeded. He gave to the "new learning" the full sanction of the most enlightened judgment of the age. His death at Bristol just at the time when these great issues were at stake was a heavy blow to the reform movement in India. For many grave obstacles had still to be overcome and his invaluable help was very sorely needed. He left no successor who could effectively carry on his work.

We read in A. L. O. E.'s correspondence how opposition was immediately raised among a certain class of Europeans against the new education, as well as among orthodox Indians. These discontented Europeans were afraid that it would introduce "insolent manners, vanity, deceit, and infidelity." The conservative members of Hindu society feared that it might ultimately destroy their whole caste system and thus undermine their religion.

With rough accuracy it may be said that Alexander Duff carried through by the driving force of his great personality the reforms in education for which Ram Mohan Roy had already pioneered the way. But if the Raja had lived a little longer, that education itself would not have been so one-sided as Macaulay and Duff made it.

"The excitement," Duff wrote at the time, "for Western education continued unabated. They pursued us along the streets: they threw open the doors of our palankeens: they poured in their supplications

with a pitiful earnestness of countenance which might have softened a heart of stone."

A contemporary picture like that gives us a glimpse of the desperate earnestness that prevailed. The cordial co-operation at this time of leading Europeans with the Indian educational reformers continued for many years in Bengal. The fervour that accompanied it was witnessed not only in the two other presidency cities of Madras and Bombay, but also as far north as Delhi, where the last of the Moghuls still held his shadowy court.

All through this period, before the revolt in 1857, a steady advance was thus maintained. The second famous education despatch of 1854 (almost equal in importance to Macaulay's Minute of 1834) was actually being put into practice in the different provinces which were under British rule when the outbreak of 1857 occurred.

The chief political organizations which were founded during these highly critical years, between 1833 and 1857, will be dealt with later in another chapter. Here, at this point, it will be sufficient to call attention to the statement which was made by the British Indian Association in its constitution.

"The great object," it asserts, "of this Association shall be to promote the improvement and efficiency of the British Indian Government by every legitimate means in its power, and thereby to advance the common interests of Great Britain and India."

The last portion of this sentence is well worth close attention. It breathes no sense of inferiority, but just the reverse. There is a genuine belief in partnership as the one aim set before both people. There is no sense of reserve due to mutual fear and suspicion.

With the complete collapse of the Moghul power at the beginning of the nineteenth century, those forces in India which had been held together hitherto had tended to become detached. The mass of the common people had begun to look everywhere around, seeking for some new binding power which could stand between themselves and chaos; for it was evidently impossible to stand alone. The nervous fear of attack from one side or the other by some neighbouring state kept up this eagerness to find security. This made men look with a certain sense of relief towards the rise of a new central unifying administration which could take the place of the Moghuls. For it appeared certain that only in some such way as this could further disintegration be avoided.

The Marquess of Hastings, as Governor-General, had already referred to this entirely new situation which had arisen as early as 1824.

"There is nothing humiliating," he wrote in one of his despatches, "in our own rule, since a paramount power has been for centuries a notion so familiar, that its existence seems almost indispensable. . . . This leaning to intimate union with us has been produced by a plain and natural policy on our part. Heretofore, we had been prone to assume an air of superiority, revolting to them . . . and a conception had been entertained, that a reserved manner and a tone of dictation would impress them with a notion of our power and would bend them to unquestioning acquiescence to our will."[1]

"I therefore pointedly enjoined," he continued,

[1] *Summary of Administration*, by the Marquess of Hastings, 1824 (London: William Earle).

"the strictest observance of polite and unassuming demeanour on the part of our functionaries towards the rulers, with courtesy towards the better classes and kindness of manner towards the lower. . . . The effect of these measures has been of late so visible throughout the country, that no man will be found to doubt it, or to hesitate in saying whence it arises."

For a long time the East India Company's affairs appear to have been conducted on these congenial lines. This was specially noticeable during the time when Lord Bentinck was Governor-General. No doubt the question of expediency was continually present with the rulers, and since trade and revenue were their main objects, anything like extreme rudeness which interfered with these was discountenanced. It may be true that the feeling of racial antipathy on both sides began to gather strength as the century advanced and became one of the causes that led on to the outbreak of rebellion in 1857. However that may be, it is certain that the events of that disastrous year changed the whole relationship between the two races. As the revolt spread the fiercest passions were roused. There was an agony of suspense that broke down the nerves even of the strongest. Gradually the ordinary conventions of life gave way one by one. The temperament of a large majority of English men and women, who had been living in India during the outbreak of rebellion, seemed to have passed beyond the bounds of ordinary control. A kind of hysteria of vengeance took hold of people who at other times acted and spoke in a normal and sane manner. A cruelly retributive and retaliatory spirit revealed itself in action. It was as if everything

was being done in a panic and some terrible enemy was being held at bay.

One thing no Englishman ought to forget, although it has found far too meagre acknowledgment hitherto in histories written from the British point of view. The massacres which had taken place during the rebellion itself, at Cawnpore and other places, were followed by reprisals no less horrible and far more widespread from the side of the victorious armies after the war was over. We owe it chiefly to Dr. Edward Thompson that this record has been no longer concealed.[1]

The brutal events of those terrible times set up a barrier between the two races. Both people, the Indian and the British, are singularly free from the evil spirit of the vendetta; but circumstances in India, where the two races have met, are nearly always abnormal; for foreign rule itself is an abnormal thing and can never be simple and natural on either side.

Thus, even though human life settled down again to its ordinary routine, the basis of sincere and friendly relationship was shattered, as if by an earthquake shock, for more than two generations. The aftermath of war, carried on with extreme desperation and violence on either side, could not easily be forgotten.

The comparatively small number of the British who ruled thus precariously in India, after the great shock was over, made the alarm and restless anxiety all the greater. Such an atmosphere of continual

[1] See Dr. Edward Thompson's books, *The Other Side of the Medal* and *Reconstruction in India*; and E. J. Thompson and G. T. Garratt's *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* (published by Macmillan).

alarm does not tend to create kindly and genial relations. The bitter memory of the past on both sides lingered on and reappeared in most unlikely quarters.

The relapse that followed the year 1857 was greatest of all on the Muslim side. The last vestige of the old Moghul Empire at Delhi was erased and the reprisals fell most heavily upon the followers of Islam. This deepened among them the sense of injustice and resentment.

Not merely in India itself did this untoward reaction occur. It was present, causing injury to the renewal of friendly relations, in Britain also. Thus it tended to undo the healing work which Lord Canning had essayed to perform.

For this reason also, instead of the Queen's Proclamation being cordially welcomed by Englishmen themselves and put into immediate practice, it was for a long time deliberately shelved and ignored by those in power. The British Parliament, where lay the final responsibility, connived at this; for the cry for reprisals was louder in England than it was among officials in India itself. Though in after years the Proclamation brought much that was good in its train, in the first few years after it had been given out to the world as the final word of British policy in India, the smouldering forces of resentment, together with the increase of racial bitterness, prevented its being carried out in practice.

Since this whole question of racial relations is vital to the subject of India's political development, it may be well at the close of this chapter to trace out with a few details how the terms of the Queen's Proclamation were violated. For this factor explains

more clearly than anything else the course of subsequent events. Racial and religious equality before the law and in the administration had been pledged in emphatic language by the Queen. It was therefore presumed by Indians themselves that these two things would be strictly observed and carried out by the Chief Ministers who exercised her rule in India. But they were in many respects disillusioned.

The passage which is quoted most often as revealing how little notice was taken of the Queen's command is found in a confidential despatch of Lord Lytton, which became public property by some accident and has never been contradicted. It reads as follows:—

"We all know that these claims and expectations can never be fulfilled. We have to choose between prohibiting them and cheating them, and we have chosen the least straightforward course. . . . Both the Governments of England and of India appear to me, up to the present moment, unable to answer satisfactorily the charge of having taken every means in their power of breaking to the heart the words of promise which they have uttered to the ear."[1]

Other writers have been less frank and ingenuous than Lord Lytton; they have, one and all, called attention to the words "as far as may be" which appear in the Proclamation itself. But they have made themselves the judges of the occasions when Indians might be placed in positions of authority, and in doing so history has proved again and again that their judgment was at fault.

The gravamen of the charge of bad faith during

[1] Quoted from Mr. G. K. Gokhale's Presidential Address at the All-India National Congress, Benares, 1905.

the controversy which has been raised over this question have rested most of all upon the question of *racial* equality. But it may be seriously questioned whether in the long run the temptation to favour one religion rather than another—at one time Hinduism, at another time Islam—has not led to just as great a breach of faith as the direct racial issue. Here the utterance of Sir Bamfylde Fuller in East Bengal concerning Islam as his "favourite wife" has never been forgotten. Yet this, after all, was the unguarded utterance of a singularly injudicious Governor. The policy itself of "divide and rule" has never been actually formulated; but what foreign Government in times of stress, when its own very existence was at stake, could be safely entrusted with such tremendous powers of playing off one religious prejudice against another? That which was done with brutal frankness after the Mutiny, when the Muslims were deliberately repressed, has been attempted again and again in less stressful and dangerous times.

## Chapter II

# THE PERIOD OF STRAIN

THE greatest change of all in the Indian situation came after the Mutiny was over.

"The racial cleavage," write Thompson and Garratt, "became more marked, though the extent of the difference before and after the Mutiny has sometimes been exaggerated. It must be confessed that the growing number of English women who began to settle down in India with their husbands increased the tendency of the white population to form not only a caste, but a group of trade unions and the recent vivid memories of 1857 inevitably encouraged a belief that these sacrifices merited 'some more substantial recompense than the privilege of governing India in a spirit of wisdom and unselfishness.' Amongst the better class of Englishmen this idea was translated into the belief that the British Empire in India was far more of a permanency than their predecessors had imagined, that the British element must be strengthened, and, as laid down by Sir John Strachey, 'in all departments of essential importance there must be selected Englishmen to maintain a standard of efficiency.' The rougher type of Englishmen interpreted this general feeling by classing all Indians into one opprobrious category, by a disregard for authority, and by a rudeness of bearing which was to be the cause of continuous and growing friction during the next half century."[1]

[1] *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India,* by Thompson and Garratt, p. 465 (Macmillan).

The transference of power from the East India Company to the British Crown, which Disraeli accomplished, came, as we have seen, at an inauspicious moment. On the Indian side it was at first merely acquiesced in. Hearts were too sore to welcome it. On the English side, in spite of the Queen's Proclamation, the atmosphere was far too tense for any sudden peace and reconciliation. Instead of this, terrible deeds of retribution and vengeance, with all the ruthless cruelty of panic, were perpetrated and then hushed up by an evil conspiracy of silence.

The more carefully we study the historical records, the more clearly we find out that this period between 1858 and 1885 was one of stress and strain, wherein the gulf between the rising English-educated Indians and the British residents became wider, in spite of certain ameliorating circumstances.

There were, it need hardly be stated, remarkable exceptions on both sides. Dadabhai Naoroji was able to enter Parliament, holding the high respect of his Finsbury constituency. In India, no Viceroy was ever so truly loved by Indians as Lord Ripon. As the years went on, the faith in the goodness of Queen Victoria became, all over India, an asset of the highest value always making for peace. But the factor that most of all sustained the belief in British justice was the education given in English history and English literature. This opened a new world to each generation in India in its turn, and brought with it a renaissance in thought and an eagerness to practise the ideal of liberty in daily life which that literature expressed.

Rabindranath Tagore has described this effect of

English literature on the Indian mind in a passage which has almost become classical and will bear repeating; for it describes the very period concerning which this chapter is written.

"When I was young," he writes, "we were all full of admiration for Europe, with its high civilization and its vast scientific progress, and especially for England, which had brought this knowledge to our own doors. We had come to know England through her glorious literature, which had brought a new inspiration into our young lives. The English authors, whose books and poems we studied, were full of love for humanity, justice, and freedom.

"This great literary tradition had come down to us from the revolution period. We felt its power in Wordsworth's sonnets about human liberty. We gloried in it even in the immature productions of Shelley, written in the enthusiasm of his youth, when he declared against the tyranny of priestcrafts and preached the overthrow of all despotisms through the power of suffering bravely endured.

"All this fired our youthful imaginations. We believed with all our simple faith that even if we rebelled against foreign rule, we should have the sympathy of the West. We felt that England was on our side in wishing us to gain our freedom."

The poet goes on to say how coldly these young enthusiasms were received by Englishmen as a whole who were living in India. They resented any appearance of equality, and very few had the imagination to realize the true homage to England which was being paid by the awakening Indian mind.

For one of the chief results of education in English history and literature had been to equalize the races

intellectually, in certain material respects, and the more nearly this happened the greater the dislike from the English side. Sir Henry Cotton, writing about the period which followed the outbreak of rebellion in 1857, says these significant words: "*This abhorrence of equality rankles in the mind of all Anglo-Indians, and especially of officials.* It is the peculiarity of residence in the East to develop sentiments of intolerance and race superiority. Nearly all young men, on their first arrival in India, are animated by kindly feelings towards the natives of the country. Their generous instincts recoil from the outward manifestations of dislike evinced by the older residents, and it is rare to hear them degenerate to harsh expression, *until after they have become demoralized by bad example and the false position in which they are placed.* Degeneration, however, soon sets in and few escape it." (The italics are ours.—C. F. A. and G. M.)

Sir Henry Cotton, who wrote this, came from one of those old British families which had served in India faithfully for three generations. His father and grandfather had lived there, under the "Company." His own service, which was a distinguished one, was all passed under the Crown; and during the twenty years between 1860 and 1880, he had seen this racial feeling becoming steadily worse. He gave his warning at last almost in desperation: "The people of India," he said in the preface to *New India*, "enlightened and educated by ourselves, expanding with new ideas, and fired by an ambition to which English education has given birth, make demands which are continually more and more reasonable, and more and more irresistible."

It is this period of strain, during which racial bitterness on both sides was thus rapidly increasing, that led on to the National Congress.

When the British Parliament finally took over the affairs of the East India Company in 1858 and Queen Victoria was made, by proclamation, "Empress of India," the servants of the Company who were engaged in administration were given the covenanted assurance that all their chartered rights would be protected and preserved. Such an assurance from the Crown meant much more than the mere contract of a prosperous trading company. It made each civilian, for all practical purposes, a small dictator in his own sphere.

It is a wonderful thing to notice, at this point, the prescience of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. His forecast was exactly fulfilled. For, as he surmised, the British Parliament allowed the civilians in India to build up their own "native policy" (as they were accustomed to call it) with the least amount of interference.

Thus, in practice, the Covenanted Civil Service became a rigid oligarchy with sovereign rights of its own which were rarely disputed. As long as the rising educated classes merely accepted this position and submitted to it in a passive manner, the vast agricultural population remained quiet, however great the hardships of famine, indebtedness, and disease that they were called upon to bear. The Civil Service constituted itself an irresponsible and irremovable executive, answerable only to the code which the service itself had gradually framed.

On certain sides this code was a high one. It soon brought to an end that corruption in high places

which had not seldom disgraced the Company rule, especially in its earlier days. The district officers who came out fresh from the public school life of England were conscientious, hardworking, and self-sacrificing. They had a genuine love for the Indian peasant over whom they exercised a curious form of benign, paternal despotism. In times of famine they could be relied upon to do their duty, not seldom at the cost of life itself. The very high emoluments they received, together with the strictness of the service code, made bribery a thing practically unknown. This itself proved for India an enormous gain, the fruits of which have multiplied with each fresh generation.

But since there was hardly any ventilation, as yet, of public grievances, while the drifting apart of the two races continued, there was little permanent advance made by the administration. The true social and political progress came rather from those indigenous religious movements which have been already recorded. The civil servants[1] themselves kept somewhat coldly aloof from these vast spiritual forces, looking on them not seldom with an air of suspicion as not unlikely to cause a disturbance. Yet even here, as so often in India, exceptions at once rise to the mind; and the presence of such men as Sir Edwin Arnold and Sir William Hunter, in the Civil Service, reveals a high level of thoughtful and intelligent appreciation of the inner life of India.

The one feature of this period, from 1858 to 1885, for which great credit may be taken by the Government of India, was the civil engineering work on a large scale which was now for the first time at-

[1] The members of the Indian Civil Service.

tempted. Irrigation probably takes the first place, but the railway programme also deserves honourable mention. Yet, when one looks farther, it is clear that the social services among the poor, which at this very time were making such advance in Great Britain, leading on to universal primary education and immensely improved sanitation, were literally starved in India by an impossible military budget. A second ruinous and disgraceful war with Afghanistan kept the Frontier in a state of perpetual unrest and led on to further military extravagances.

All the while, as the Indian population rapidly increased, new evils appeared beneath the surface, and hardly any voice was raised against them. For this was the critical period when the Manchester school of individualism and free trade dominated English thought. The enthusiasm for it was so great as a panacea for every ill that it was applied by each progressive administrator to Indian affairs as though it could work wonders there also. The different economic basis of Indian life, as that of a rural population, did not seem to strike the imagination of the rulers in Great Britain, who were obsessed with the doctrines of *laissez-faire* and unrestricted competition.

Without any opposition, but rather with encouragement from the Government of India, British capital on a big scale marked down the Indian population as one of the largest fields for its own enterprise. Just as India administratively had been looked upon, after the disaster of 1857–8, as a country to be kept in subjection, so now under the Crown, and with the guarantee of the British Parliament behind it, the same India became the

hunting-ground for a quite unparalleled exploitation. Manufactured goods from Lancashire poured in, duty free, even though they killed indigenous village industries and upset the whole village economy. The grave injury done by this was hardly realized at the time, because the theory of free trade and unlimited competition still held away. But a wound was dealt at the very heart of Indian village life and no one was disturbed by it or realized its deadly effect.

On the more personal and domestic side also sinister changes began to take place which, in the course of time, altered in a marked degree the relationship between the two races, increasing bitterness, hostility, and fear. The presence of a much larger number of English women, now that the Suez Canal route had been opened and the long journey round the Cape was no longer necessary, added very greatly indeed to a new racial tension. For it raised up a barrier against the free intercourse between Indians and Englishmen of bygone days and led on to what has been called in India the "Club" life. This took more and more an exclusive turn, and a caste barrier was raised against the admission of any Indian into this whole area of an Englishman's existence in the country.

Wilfrid Blunt, who came out with Lord Ripon, and was singularly observant in these matters, notices in his diary the rapidity of the change which had already become established when he arrived in India.

"The Anglo-Indian," he wrote, "of the Company days, loved India in a way that no 'Queen's' official dreams of doing now. Loving it, he served it better, and was better loved in return."

After this, he tries in his own way to explain the

reason. It was, he says, because the civilian, under the Crown, looked much more to England than to India. His wife was with him, but she continually went backwards and forwards: his young children were obliged to stay in England: and for these two reasons his heart remained where his real home was. His career became Europe-centred. Those who before had all their chief interests in India had changed their outlook. They talked about India as "this wretched country" and in this way became, what they often called themselves, "birds of passage." No one could wholly blame them, but it was necessary to blame the system which led to such unfortunate results.

Professor T. G. P. Spear of Delhi tells the same story in the following words: "With the advent of the woman from England a new standard was introduced; one set of traditions and customs died away and another equally rigid took its place."[1]

Another writer, with a wide knowledge of India, H. C. E. Zacharias, in *Renascent India*[2] writes pungently as follows: "Under the inspiration of the ladies they succeeded in organizing English Society in Calcutta, with devastating faithfulness, upon the great models of Brixton and Upper Tooting."

A still further cause, which made for a separation between the two races and an aloofness that did not exist to the same extent in the Company days, needs also to be mentioned. The Indian Civil Service under the Crown had been thrown open to the test of an examination which had to be held

[1] *The Nabobs*, by T. G. P. Spear, p. 140 (published by Humphrey Milford).

[2] Published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

in England. As the emoluments were very high, a set of candidates, intellectually brilliant, presented themselves. But the conditions of the examination were so heavily weighted in favour of an English public school and university training that by far the larger proportion of candidates was drawn from those ranks. This type of Englishman had peculiar marks which could easily be distinguished, and the narrowness of the sphere of selection tended to make the Civil Service almost a close corporation.

During the years 1858 to 1885, with which we are now dealing, there was hardly any chance of an Indian being able to qualify. The few exceptions only proved the rule. Lieut.-Colonel Osborne, in his book *Must We Lose India*,[1] has shown from his own experience how this "public school" type, when it reached India in large numbers, had a tendency to exaggerate in a peculiar way both the good and the bad qualities of what is called "The Sahib attitude," which had become fixed and standardized in official circles. The good side was a conscientious determination to live at a certain level of uprightness and integrity. Combined with this went a form of stoical courage in facing hard duties. The bad side, which Colonel Osborne deals with very severely, was an arrogant and even insolent behaviour towards Indians of the intellectual and Western-educated type which often left a festering wound behind it.

The partial remedy for the smouldering discontent in India, which was thus engendered, came at last not from India but from England. For when Gladstone rose to power, his splendid moral integrity of character and ardent love of freedom carried the

[1] Published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

people of England in their ideas about India far beyond the vulgar and tawdry imperialism of Benjamin Disraeli. Gradually the moral concern of certain prominent members of the British Parliament as to the duty of England towards India became acute. The awakened conscience of really great personalities, like Gladstone and Bright, Fawcett and Bradlaugh, each viewing India from a different angle, brought some of the best minds together in their study of the Indian question. By far the noblest influence in bringing this change about in England was the magnificent work done by Dadabhai Naoroji. His own pure character with its unworldly outlook won the hearts of all Englishmen who met him. As the century went on, books were written by Romesh Chunder Dutt, Dadabhai Naoroji, and W. Digby which presented the Indian economic problem in an entirely new light. This also deeply stirred the conscience of Great Britain. In one of his most celebrated Midlothian speeches Gladstone said:

"Our title to be in India depends on a first condition, namely, that our being there is profitable to the Indian people, and on a second condition, that we can make Indians themselves both see and understand it to be profitable."

With these two ends clearly in view, he selected in the year 1880 with the utmost care and consideration Lord Ripon to be the new Governor-General, after the disastrous rule of Lord Lytton had nearly brought ruin to India. Queen Victoria gladly confirmed the appointment. Indeed, so great was the anxiety concerning India at this time that Queen Victoria herself took the deepest interest in the choice and accepted Gladstone's own wish in

this matter with a keen appreciation of the aim he had in view. Her heart had been deeply distressed by the disastrous Afghan War and the still more disastrous famines which had recently taken place; and though, as a strong Conservative, she was out of sympathy with Gladstone's Liberal ideas, her practical common sense told her that a good, religious man like Lord Ripon might in the long run do more than anything else to save India from any further disaster.

It will not be necessary to describe in detail the course of the long struggle between the Viceroy, Lord Ripon, and the powerful forces of European reaction which met him on his arrival in India. All that here needs to be recorded is that they had become so strong that the Viceroy himself was obliged to bow before the storm when the Ilbert Bill, which aimed at racial justice, was brought forward. Even he, with all his authority and with the full weight of Indian opinion behind him, could not succeed in carrying out in practice that racial equality before the law which the Queen's Proclamation had declared to be the aim of the Administration.

The eminently fair-minded and impartial writer on representative government, Mr. John Stuart Mill, had his chief attention fixed on India when he wrote the following passage:—

"If there be a fact to which all experience testifies, it is that when a country holds another in subjection, the individuals of the ruling people who resort to the foreign country to make their fortune are of all others those who must need to be held under powerful restraint. They are always one of the chief

difficulties of the Government. Armed with the prestige and filled with the scornful overbearingness of the conquering nation, they have the feelings inspired by the sense of absolute power without its sense of responsibility.

"Among a people, like that of India, the utmost efforts of the public authorities are not enough for the effectual protection of the weak against the strong: and of all the strong, the European settlers are the strongest. Wherever the demoralizing of the situation is not in a most remarkable degree corrected by the personal character of the individual, they think the people of the country mere dirt under their feet."

This passage along with much of the same character is quoted by Sir Henry Cotton, who confirms from his own intimate experience in India what John Stuart Mill had predicted.

"We find," he wrote, "in private life an almost universal use of irritating expressions in regard to natives[1] which are not the less offensive when they proceed from persons who hold an official position and have in other respects the outward seeming of English gentlemen. Among women, who are more rapidly demoralized than men, the abuse of 'those horrid natives' is almost universal. Among men, how often do we hear the term 'nigger' applied, without any indication of anger or intentional contempt, but as though it was the proper designation of the people of the country? Even with those who are too well-informed to use this term, the sentiment

[1] He uses this word "native" quite innocently. It is now never used by anyone in India who is anxious not to offend. The word "Indian" is used instead.

that prompts its use is not wholly set aside. It is a grave symptom that the official to-day has now succumbed as completely as the non-official."

The chapter from which this is taken is called "The Bitterness of Race Feeling," and it is significant that it was written just before the time when an All-India National Congress was being practically considered.

By an inevitable reaction against such racial domination the forces of Indian opinion were growing morally stronger. But before this reaction can be seen in its proper setting it is necessary to realize how far the helplessness of a completely disarmed people had gone. For this state of things can only be dimly imagined to-day. Yet in a few rapid strokes the picture must be drawn if the history of the times is to be understood. Fortunately, we have in Wilfrid Blunt's diary just the illustrations that we need for that purpose.

He relates how a leading Indian had said to him, after receiving a cruel injury on the railway platform, "*We feel insulted at such things, but we are not surprised.*" Such a sentence as that reveals a whole inner world of humiliation!

Again, in his diary, Blunt writes: "It is painful to see what terror he (i.e. Sir Alfred Lyall) inspires. F——, in spite of his boldness, was struck speechless in his presence, and stood barefooted before him. I told F—— to put on his shoes: but Lyall said he had better stay as he was."

When contemporary accounts like this are read, it must be remembered that ever since 1857–8 the people of India had been disarmed, while on the other hand all weapons of powerful offence had been

concentrated in British hands. During the years 1857–85 this disarming process was relentlessly carried out and all the heavy artillery was placed in British hands. Furthermore, the power of a leading member of the Civil Service, such as a Governor, or Commissioner, was, within certain limits, despotic. It is not difficult therefore to understand how the language of complete submission entered into common speech.

Yet surely subservience had reached its limit when a sentence could be written in the *Indian Mirror*, under the heading "Native attachment and gratitude to good, just and generous Englishmen," as follows:—

"The native heart is naturally kind, but the kindness becomes warmer, when the object of it is a member of the dominant class. It is not always because we expect any return from him, but it is a peculiar feeling with us to be anxious to stand well with a race to whom we owe so many obligations as a fallen and subject people."[1]

It is irksome indeed to read such concluding words as these. A "fallen and subject people"! The whole passage seems to us now to be utterly fulsome, though when it was written it was felt to be sincere. But it surely makes us realize something of the crushing humiliation that lies behind it!

It has been necessary to face such facts as these, which happened more than sixty years ago, in order to appreciate how immeasurably above this level the whole nation has been raised to-day. More, perhaps, than any other single factor the Congress, in spite

[1] It is quoted in Sir H. Cotton's *New India*; and the strange thing about it is that even *he* did not appear to realize the fulsomeness of it.

of all its vicissitudes, has lifted India out of that terrible slough of Despond.

For it was slowly realized—at first among a handful only of the leading people in each of the big centres and then by vast multitudes—that India must shake herself free by her own effort from a mental and spiritual bondage which was far more grievous to be borne than any external subjection. Thus the ardent desire to unite politically in order to fight against this common evil of subjection became a flaming passion. The years of Congress history starting from 1885 are the record of an ever-widening growth, until to-day even in the remotest villages of India the "Congress" has become a household word.

Wilfrid Blunt reveals to us his own keen appreciation of the first beginnings of this new spirit which to him betokened an India freed from the bondage of the past. Even as early as 1883 a National Conference was held in Calcutta, which seemed to him to pave the way for what he hoped might become a National Parliament. Indeed, these very words "National Parliament" were being used by those present at this Conference to signify what he saw on the occasion.

"At twelve o'clock," he writes, "I went to the first meeting of the National Conference in Calcutta —a really important occasion, as there were delegates from most of the great towns. As A. M. Bose in his opening speech remarked, it was the first stage towards a 'National Parliament.' The real feature of the meeting was an attack on the Covenanted Civil Service by Surendranath Banerjea. His speech was quite as good a one as I have ever heard in my

life, and entirely fell in with my own view of the matter.

"On the 29th, I went to the second meeting at which the Civil Service was again discussed. . . . Then I went to the last meeting, in which they discussed the 'National Fund.' . . . So ended the first session of the Indian Parliament. May it be a memorable day in history!"

Things were clearly beginning to move at last in the right direction of founding an All-India National Congress. On the one side of the picture there was the unbelievably humiliating plight into which the country had subsided, and the startling defeat of the Viceroy himself on the question of the Ilbert Bill, in which he had merely sought to implement at last the Queen's Proclamation. Thereby was revealed a sinister power of hostility to Indian interests, in non-official European circles, which had never been even dreamt of before.

On the other side of the picture we see the high spirit of the Indian leaders revived and an effort made to achieve a unity of purpose which should transcend all racial and religious differences. We see also a remarkable combination of Indian and British statesmen, who loved India, struggling together in harmony in order to save India from the crushing disaster of another outbreak more terrible and calamitous than that of 1857.

It was out of this complex of forces, at a propitious moment, that the All-India National Congress was born.

Part Three

# FORERUNNERS OF THE CONGRESS

*The Difficulties of an All-India Basis*

## Chapter I

# THE BRITISH INDIAN ASSOCIATION

THE intellectual confusion in which the educated Indians found themselves in the 'seventies and the 'eighties of the last century has already been mentioned. It was because of this that a section of them at that time had swung completely round to a more orthodox position as regards their religious beliefs. Dayanand and Ramakrishna had discovered that the Western-educated intellectuals were more eager to hear them even than the masses who were traditionally accustomed to look up to saints and monks for advice. Men devoted entirely to meditation, who have lived and died in sanctity, have always existed in India. Their spiritual achievements have remained an object of admiration to the ordinary Hindu, but they have hardly been able to alter the course of events, nor have they attempted to do so. But with Dayanand and Vivekananda we are faced with an entirely new situation. They were expressing profound judgments on national events in a public manner. Men of affairs, highly educated in the Western ways, were seeking their counsels and guidance in their reaction against the impact of the West.

The reason was that the educated classes were no longer content to be led by the West. They had at last come into intellectual conflict with the British administration as far as it embodied purely Western ideas and kept them in subjection. The swing of the pendulum had come and they had

begun to despise themselves on account of the extreme length of intellectual submission to which they had gone. At first, as was natural, they attempted to preserve their own interests that were being threatened and began to organize themselves for that purpose. This led to the foundation of the Zemindary Association in 1837.

As the name itself suggests, this was primarily an organization of the Bengali landholders formed n order to protect their vested rights from encroachment. But although it sought to preserve the economic interests of the feudal landlords, it had also a wider purpose and programme. At the first meeting on November 12, 1837, it was laid down that "the Zemindary Association is intended to embrace people of all descriptions, without reference to caste, country, or complexion, and rejecting all exclusiveness, is to be based, on the most universal and liberal principles; the only qualification to become its members being the possession of interest in the soil of the country."

This meeting had appointed a Committee, consisting of men like Prasanna Coomar Tagore, who had already been actively connected with the founding of the Brahma Samaj. The new society was bound, therefore, to be interested in the general well-being of the community. The fact that it had among its members prominent men who had already belonged to the Brahma Samaj Movement insured this. Although, therefore, the object of the association was "to promote the general interest of landholders," it afforded, as Raja Rajendralal Mitra declared, "the first lesson in the art of fighting constitutionally for their rights and taught them man-

fully to assert their claims and give expression to their opinions."

About six years later, another organization with a similar purpose was started in Calcutta, called the Bengal British India Society; this was formed on April 20, 1843, and its aim was "the collection and dissemination of information relating to the actual condition of the people of British India, and the laws and institutions and resources of the country; and to employ such other means of a peaceable and lawful character, as may appear calculated to secure the welfare, extend the just rights and advance the interests of all classes of our fellow subjects."[1]

The society resolved to adopt and recommend only such measures "as are consistent with pure loyalty to the person and government of the reigning sovereign of the British Dominions and the due observance of the Laws and Regulations of this country; and shall discountenance every effort to subvert legal authority or disturb the peace and well-being of the society."[2]

The Bengal British India Society, however, did not receive much public support and it carried on without making itself felt politically. Between the years 1843 and 1850, before the foundation of the British Indian Association, there were only two political organizations in the whole of India, the Bengal British India Society and the Zemindary Association, which was now called the Landholders' Society. There was some attempt to organize branch

[1] *Reformer*, November 14, 1837, quoted in the *Asiatic Journal*.
[2] *Raja Rajendralal Mitra's Speeches*, by Rai Jogeshur Mitter (S. K. Lahiri, Calcutta), 1892, p. 25.

associations in other parts of the country but without much success.

Both these organizations had English membership. It was not until the introduction of a Bill by the Law member of the Government of India, Mr. Bethune, in the Legislative Council of 1850 to protect the poor peasants against molestation by the non-official Englishmen that there occurred a complete estrangement between the non-official Englishmen and the Indian upper classes.

The laws of the country provided, at that time, that an ordinary Englishman committing an offence in a distant part of the country could not be tried at the place where it was committed. He was subject only to the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court in Calcutta. Mr. Bethune introduced some Bills into the Council in order to remove these anomalies. But the English community started such an agitation over these Bills that eventually they had to be withdrawn.

The success of the English community over these Bills was a great shock to the Indian public.[1] They realized, on the one hand, that public agitation well conducted can ultimately move the administration, and on the other hand that in spite of a certain fundamental unity of economic interests between the landowning classes and the English merchants and planters it was nearly impossible for them to agree when the vital political status of the two races came into question. When, as an outcome of the rejection of these Bills, the British Indian Association was

[1] They were called the "Black" Bills by the English community—an epithet taken up later in 1919 by the Congress to denote the Rowlatt Acts.

formed, there was not a single English member on it, whereas both the Zemindary Association and the Bengal British India Society had a certain number of British members. Thus the foundation of the British Indian Association marked the beginning of the rise of racial hostilities in India between the British non-officials and the Indian upper classes, which grew in intensity after the outbreak of revolt in 1857.

The British Indian Association was started on October 31, 1851, and the Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society were merged into it. The first executive committee was composed of prominent members of both these organizations. The immediate reason for its formation was the withdrawal of the so-called "Black" Bills, but there was another reason besides. This was the question of the renewal of the Charter of the East India Company, which was due in 1853. Indian public men of affairs had realized that it was essential that they should be able to work together in order to impress upon Parliament the unanimity of their demands if they were to bring about changes in the administration.

The object of the British Indian Association was described in its first annual report to be "to secure improvements in the local administration of the country and in the system of government laid down by Parliament."

In the year 1852 the British Indian Association sent a petition to Parliament "relative to the East India Company's Charter" which was coming up for renewal in Parliament in 1853. It warned Parliament of the state of feeling in the country

in these words. "They cannot but feel that they have not profited by their connection with Great Britain to the extent which they had a right to look for." Regarding the previous Charter, the Association stated that it was true that some changes were made in the system of government, "but no provision was made for introducing those benefits which the circumstances of India notoriously require." In its memorandum it gave a list of grievances which afterwards formed a section of the Congress demand. These were—the relaxation of the pressure of the revenue system; the improvement of judicial administration; the protection of the life and property of the people from molestation; relief from the monopolies of the East India Company; encouragement of indigenous manufacture; education of the people, and the admission of the Indians to the higher administrative services.

It therefore submitted, (1) that the future management of Indian affairs should be vested in one body consisting of not more than twelve members; (2) that the function of the Supreme Government should be limited to the disposal of political and military affairs, a control over the Governors of the several Presidencies, and a veto on the laws passed by the Legislative Council in India; (3) that the Legislature of India should be a body not only distinct from the persons in whom the political and executive powers are vested, but also possessing a *popular character*, so as, in some respects, to represent the sentiments of the people and to be so looked upon by them; (4) that a Legislative Council should be constituted at Calcutta composed of seventeen members, three selected from the "most respectable

and qualified inhabitants" of each Presidency; one member appointed by the Governor of each Presidency from among the senior civil officers, and one appointed by the Crown to preside over the Council, quite independent of the control of the Government.

The petition also included a survey of the whole field of administration, with valuable constructive suggestions for its improvement. It defined the powers of the Legislative Council, laid down the degree of control to be exercised over the administration by Parliament, asked for a declaration guaranteeing religious laws and institutions of the country, showed how economy could be practised in the various fields of the Government in the public services, criticized the judicial system, the civil and criminal procedures, the police, and the magistracy, and prayed for the abolition of the monopolies of the East India Company, specially of the salt trade, and held the opinion that "though the revenue raised by the Company both from the land and from other sources far exceeds what was drawn from the country by its Mahomedan rulers, a very inadequate portion of it is devoted to improvements in the means of land and water communications."

The petition also complained that no "provision has been made by the Company's Government on a suitable scale for the education of the natives," and it strongly objected to the "support of bishops and other highly paid functionaries out of the general revenue of the country" when the Government of the Company "is for a mixed community, the members of which are of opposite sects and the majority composed of Hindoos and Mahomedans."

Space has been given to this memorandum because it is practically the first political document of constructive statemanship emanating from an Indian public body. Raja Ram Mohun Roy's "Appeal to the King in Council" was also a very valuable piece of Indian draftsmanship on the question of public administration, but it did not carry such immediate weight because Indian public opinion was not sufficiently well-organized at that time. But in 1852 there had already grown a body of men, especially in Bengal, who were thinking out the economic and political problems of the country and giving expression to them not merely in hostile criticism but in well-founded judgment and with informed opinion. It is all the more remarkable because none of the members of the British Indian Association had any actual administrative experience. Yet the document shows knowledge of the system of government, a real grasp of the needs of the people, and a wide range of interest. Being predominantly an organization of landholders, it would not have been surprising if it had only dealt with those aspects of the administration which merely concerned themselves and their own economic interests. Yet the petition covers practically all the questions which agitated the public mind, not only in Bengal, but throughout India.

The British Indian Association was also the first political body to adopt an All-India outlook. It was not satisfied by merely stating the grievances of a particular group of people and a particular community. True to its objects, it concerned itself with the future of India as a whole.

Very soon after its foundation Debendranath

Tagore, who was its secretary, opened correspondence with prominent men in Madras with the idea of forming a branch association there. His remarkably able letter of December 11, 1851, is well worth quoting in full as it brings us into the heart of public opinion at that time, not long before the eve of the revolt of 1857. He states the main object of the Association and the need of an All-India organization as follows: "It must be obvious to you that the representations which are to be made to the British Parliament, with reference to the approaching termination of the East India Company's Charter, would have great weight if they were made simultaneously by the Natives of every part of British India or by a society having just pretensions to represent them. They would, the Committee believe, possess the same influence, whether they came separately from Calcutta, and Agra, and Bombay, and Madras, from so many distinct bodies associated together for the same ends, but acting independently of each other, or from one central body representing the wishes and interests of the several Presidencies. There are, however, advantages likely to flow from the union of the Native gentlemen of the other three Presidencies with the British Indian Association, which should not be overlooked. One evident advantage would be, that the expenses attendant upon the prosecution of those ends, would be greatly lessened: for instance, in the one case, it would be necessary to provide for the cost of a single agent, to represent the Association in England and submit their representation to Parliament: whereas, in the other case, each Presidency would have to bear the expense of a separate agent. Moreover,

there would not be the same diversity of opinions as to the reforms and measures to be sought for, as must be expected when several bodies devise separate plans for the improvement of the administration. . . . And it will afford them (B.I.A.) great pleasure to find that their fellow-subjects of your Presidency are willing and ready to second the efforts which they have entered upon; whether it be by uniting with them, or by forming a distinct Society on the same principles and for the same purpose. If such a disposition exist, no time should be lost in organizing either a Corresponding Committee, or an Association, as the discussion on the subject of the Charter and other questions which it involves, cannot fail to take place at a very early date."[1]

In this letter Debendranath describes also the purpose of the Association and its progress. He writes: "As a proof of the earnestness of the native gentlemen of this part of the country to carry out the objects of the Association, the Committee desires me to state, that though the Society has but just been formed, and as yet numbers but few gentlemen in its ranks, the sum of Co.'s Rs. 16,000 has already been subscribed for providing the requisite resources and that the Committee have prepared and submitted to the Legislative Council a petition regarding a proposed law, the subject of which is not altogether of a local nature, inasmuch as it embraces questions regarding the efficiency of the police and resources of the Government expressly for

[1] *Proceedings of the Madras Branch of the British Indian Association and of the Deccan Association* (London: Mitchell Printing, Charing Cross Road, 1852).

its maintenance, but in great part applied to the general purposes of the State."[1]

Debendranath's letter was read at a public meeting at Madras opened by the Sheriff (Mr. L. Cooper, an English trader), and a branch association was formed with the object of promoting "the improvement and efficiency of the British Indian Government by every legitimate means in its power, and thereby to advance the common interests of Great Britain and India, and ameliorate the condition of the native inhabitants of the subject country." It was also decided to memorialize from time to time the authorities in India or in England for the removal of existing and prevention of proposed injurious measures.

A branch of the British Indian Association was founded also in Oudh (probably on March 26, 1851), "to take every lawful and constitutional measure so to help Her Majesty's administration in Hindoostan and especially in Oudh that it may prove conducive to the welfare equally of the people of Britain and this country."

A large number of the taluqdars or landholders joined as members. Dakhina Runjan Mookerjee, who had been a member of the Brahma Samaj and also of the British Indian Association, seems to have been its moving spirit. He acted as its honorary secretary.

The attempt to found in this manner, through different local branches, an All-India organization, proved, however, in the end unsuccessful. These were the years of ever-increasing racial hostility

[1] *Proceedings of the Madras Branch of the British Indian Association.* 1852.

between the English and the Indians. The efforts of the British Indian Association towards pacification met with no favourable response and the antagonism between the two communities eventually flared up in the form of the revolt of 1857–8. But until that disastrous outbreak the association carried on from year to year.

After the year 1858 the British Indian Association identified itself more and more with the interests of the landed aristocracy and ceased to represent the political ambitions of the Indian people. Indeed, it threw its whole weight for the most part on the side of the British rule in order to preserve its own interests. This attitude becomes clear in the petition, sent to Parliament in 1859, which urges the Government to introduce the permanent settlement all over India for the following reasons: "Your petitioners urge that the disturbances following the late mutiny of the Sepoy army have well established the political advantage of a body of permanently settled Zemindars, over the class of superior proprietors of land, who, under various demominations, with various rights, are to be found in all the unsettled provinces. A comparison of the loyal and the disloyal throughout the late period of crisis will, your petitioners submit, at least show the tendency of a Permanent Settlement to create a powerful class, who feel their interest as one with the ruling power, and who are satisfied with their position; no less than it shows that the opposite system has an exactly opposite tendency and result."[1]

The grounds here brought forward are clearly an

[1] This argument is repeated in the petition submitted to the House of Commons in 1860.

appeal to class interests, whether of the British rulers on the one hand, or the landholders on the other. There is nothing national about them. There were, however, other questions on which the Association took a more popular attitude. Regarding the Legislative Council, it stated that there was no "representation of the voice of the people, their views, their wishes, or their wants." With reference to the judicial system again, it was of opinion that the system is "radically wrong and defective," and with regard to education it pointed out the disparity between the expenses for supervision and grants for educational institutions. In 1856–7 the cost of supervision was Rs. 795,410, whereas the grants-in-aid to educational institutions were only Rs. 51,313.

The exclusive character of the Association must have been an object of criticism, for we find that in 1870 there was already a movement to lower its subscriptions without any success. This attempt was made by Sisir Kumar Ghose, the founder of the great Nationalist newspaper, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. The parochial nature of the Association and its extremely cautious policy did not fit in with the rising temper of the middle classes. They were becoming clamorous and were not only challenging the supremacy of the British Government, but were also questioning the right of the landed aristocracy to represent the people.

The old feudal landholders had begun to look upon themselves as the natural leaders of the country, but the Western-educated Indians, deeply influenced by the ideas of freedom and individual liberty, had begun to question the right of the British Government to be in India at all. The landowning classes,

on the other hand, realized that their real interest lay in the consolidation of the British rule. A vital difference, therefore, soon became inevitable. So in 1875 Surendranath Banerjea, representing the educated middle classes, founded the Indian Association.

With the foundation of the Indian Association, Indian politics enters a new phase. It was the first step taken towards the organization of the All-India National Congress.

## Chapter II

# THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

DISSATISFACTION with the exclusive character of the British Indian Association led first to the establishment of the Indian League in 1875, by Sisir Kumar Ghose and his brother Motilal Ghose. The latter afterwards became the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, whose history is intimately connected with the development of Nationalism in the last century in northern India. The Indian League, however, did not command popular support, and because of the difference of opinion with its secretary, Shumbhoo Churan Mookerjee, a large number of its members soon joined the Indian Association.

It is, however, characteristic of this earlier political movement that persons connected with its foundation were largely men who had settled in Calcutta only very recently and did not belong to the aristocracy. Newer types of men, mostly from the middle class, were coming to the front in Indian politics. The landed classes did not oppose this intrusion. Kristodas Paul, one of the prominent members of the British Indian Association, supported the idea of the Indian Association, which was formally established on July 26, 1875, mainly through the efforts of Surendranath Banerjea. After he had been dismissed from the Civil Service, he was offered a post as a teacher in a Calcutta College. There he came in contact with a large number of young men dissatisfied with the existing order of things.

His dismissal, which by most Indians was regarded as an act of injustice, made him seem a martyr in the eyes of many people. Like Sisir Kumar, Surendranath also had felt the need of a political organization of the middle class. With this object in view he organized the Indian Association. The first meeting of the Indian Association was attended by some members of the British Indian Association. Surendranath says in his memoirs: "There was the clear need for another political Association on a more democratic basis and the fact was indeed recognized by the leaders of the British Indian Association. For some of its most distinguished members such as the Maharaja Narendra Krishna, Babu Kristo Das Pal, and others, attended the inaugural meeting of the new Association, and encouraged its formation by their presence. And let me gratefully add here that throughout the relations between the new Association and the British Indian Association were of the most cordial character. . . ."[1]

He goes on to say that the famous Brahma Samaj leader, Keshav Chandra Sen, himself proposed the president at a meeting in the Town Hall, Calcutta, on March 24, 1877, to protest against the Secretary of State's decision with regard to the Indian Civil Service Examinations. It was thus apparent that there was very little fundamental antagonism between these two political bodies at that time. The landed aristocracy were not afraid of an intrusion into their privileges by the rising middle classes.

The object of the Association, according to one of the leaders, was stated as follows: "Loyalty to the British rule and agitation for a constitutional Govern-

[1] *A Nation in Making*, p. 40, published by Milford, 1925.

ment are, as we have already stated, the two maxims which the Indian Association has always promulgated."[1]

Surendranath, in his autobiography, states that the Indian Association had the following ideals in front of it when it was started: (i) The creation of a strong public opinion in India towards political questions; (ii) the unification of the Indian people on a common political programme; and (iii) the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity. The Indian Association helped in realizing these ideals to a large extent. The emphasis on national unity, which was a characteristic feature of the programme of the Association, was the result of the contact of the best minds of India with the West, and the popularity of the teachings of Mazzini, the Italian patriot of the last century. Mazzini's success in unifying Italy against foreign rule was held up before the Indian public as an example of the manner in which a subject nation could attain its freedom. Surendranath made several speeches on the idealism and heroic courage of Mazzini, and the young men of that time were urged to imitate his example.

The reduction of the age for the candidates for the Indian Civil Service Examinations afforded an excellent opportunity for the Association to start an All-India campaign. At a public meeting held on March 24, 1877, in Calcutta, Surendranath was appointed a special delegate to visit other parts of India in order to secure support for the memorial which the Association was sending to Parliament. Surendranath's tour in northern India was a re-

[1] R. C. Palit, in an introduction to a book called *Speeches of Babu Surendranath Banerjea,* Calcutta, 1880.

markable success and helped to create a feeling of national solidarity on important political issues. Such tours have become one of the chief features of Indian politics ever since, but Surendranath was the first politician to receive an All-India popularity. His visit to the north was an experiment, and its success was unexpected and revealing. Sir Henry Cotton, a contemporary observer, wrote about this tour in his book *New India*, published shortly after. He said: "During the past year the tour of a Bengalee lecturer, lecturing in English in Upper India, assumed the character of a triumphal progress; and at the present moment the name of Surendra Nath Banerjea excites as much enthusiasm among the rising generation in Multan as in Dacca." As a result of his visit many branch associations were formed in other parts of Bengal and India. The Lahore branch was formed during 1877–8. Wherever he went the representatives of the middle classes showed keen interest in the Civil Service Memorial, which was adopted at public meetings held under the patronage of leading leaders of the liberal professions in various towns of northern India.

The Memorial, which sought to obtain a modification of the Secretary of State's order and a simultaneous Civil Service Examination in India and England, was given to a delegate of the Association to deliver in person to the House of Commons. This was a further departure from the methods of constitutional agitation in India. The ground in England had long been prepared by Dadabhai Naoroji, who was in residence in that country. Lal Mohan Ghose was entrusted with the task of sub-

mitting the Memorial to Parliament, and his collaboration with the British Liberals made the cause of the Association a minor political event in England. There was a demonstration in its favour by the British Liberals at a meeting held in Willis's Rooms, where Lal Mohun's eloquent pleading of the Indian cause made a profound impression. As a result of this and of Dadabhai's persistent efforts the Indian Government was empowered to make direct appointment for the Civil Service from amongst Indians of proved merit and ability. This order was laid on the table of the House of Commons within twenty-four hours of the demonstration at Willis's Rooms. Indian politicians at that time were very deeply impressed by the promptness with which Parliament had acted in this matter. They regarded it as a great victory for constitutional agitation.

The success of the Association on this issue increased the belief in the efficacy of constitutional methods. When therefore Lord Lytton passed the Vernacular Press Act in 1878, curtailing the freedom of the Indian newspapers, the association addressed a letter of protest to Mr. Gladstone, who was Prime Minister in England at that time. This obnoxious Act was repealed by Lord Ripon, who became the Viceroy in 1880 and remained at that post until 1884. Lord Ripon's liberal administration, as we shall see later, gave the greatest impetus to the foundation of the Congress and his encouragement of constitutional reform made the leaders of the Indian Association support the Congress movement.

With the full establishment of the Congress, the Indian Association gradually lost its political im-

portance. Yet it has to be remembered that the idea of holding an All-India Conference with representatives from every province was its own invention. The first Indian Conference was held in 1883, and judging from Blunt's remarks, who was present, it made quite a good beginning. Ananda Mohan Bose, who presided, remarked that it was the first stage towards a National Parliament.

After the first All-India Conference, Surendranath made another tour in northern India, delivering speeches on the importance of national unity. In the meantime the agitation over the Ilbert Bill had already broken out and politically-minded Indians were again convinced of the importance of combining in order to show their strength. The success of the English community in making the Government withdraw the Bill gave an impetus to organize a National Assembly where Indians from all parts of the country could meet and discuss national affairs.

With these ends in view, the Indian Association organized the Second National Conference in Calcutta in December 1885, practically at the same time that the National Congress was meeting for the first time in Bombay. The Conference was on this occasion organized jointly by the British Indian Association, the Indian Association, and the Central Mohammedan Association—a political organization of the Muslims started a short time before in Calcutta.

The reason why two conferences, with more or less the same objects in view, were being held at the same time was that the preliminary arrangements were made independently and none of the organizers

knew what the others were doing until just before the sittings of the Congress and the Conference. Surendranath Banerjea, writing about this coincidence, says in his memoirs: "Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, who presided over the Bombay Congress, invited me to attend it. I told him that it was too late to suspend the Conference and that, as I had a large share in its organization, it would not be possible for me to leave Calcutta and attend the Bombay Congress."

The Indian Association lost its earlier political importance as soon as the National Congress began fully to function. It remained a separate institution for a long time, without any great hold upon the country until the Moderates of Bengal revived it after they had seceded from the Congress because of its more advanced political views. It then became once more an active supporter of the national programme from the Conservative standpoint.

Part Four

# THE FIRST CONGRESS OF 1885

*Its Initial Success*

## Chapter I

# ON THE EVE OF THE CONGRESS

"No Indian," said Mr. Gokhale in London in 1913, "could have started the Indian National Congress. Apart from the fact that anyone putting his hand to such a gigantic task had need to have Mr. Hume's commanding personality, even if an Indian had possessed such a personality and had come forward to start such a movement, embracing all India, the officials would not have allowed it to come into existence. If the founder of the Congress had not been a great Englishman and a distinguished ex-official, such was the distrust of political agitation in those days that the authorities would have at once found some way or the other of suppressing the movement."[1]

We have here the evidence of Mr. G. K. Gokhale with regard to the founding of the Congress, and this view has been generally accepted as accurate. Undoubtedly Mr. A. O. Hume was the driving force; and the name "Father of the Congress," which has been sometimes given to him, is fairly correct. At the same time, other very important factors were at work which helped Mr. A. O. Hume in his task.

It has been possible to consult, while writing this chapter, two who were actually members of the first Congress session with regard to its foundation. Sir Dinsha Wacha most kindly replied through his granddaughter, who wrote as follows:

[1] Quoted in *Allan O. Hume*, p. 63, by Sir W. Wedderburn, 1913, published by T. Fisher Unwin.

"My grandfather, owing to his great age, has lost his memory somewhat, and is therefore unable to recall many things, but he has instructed me to write and let you know as much as he remembers. (1) The idea of the Indian National Congress originated with Hume, and not with Dadabhai Naoroji. The idea of a 'National Assembly with a National Fund' came from the public men of Calcutta, notable among whom was Mr. Kristo Das Pal. Sir Dinsha cannot recall the name of Mr. Tarapada Banerji."

Professor Sundar Raman, the only other surviving member of the first Congress, gives an interesting description of certain events which accompanied its actual foundation. This statement is of special interest as revealing the working of Hume's own mind. It makes abundantly clear how critical the times were, and how near to an explosion were the hidden forces which were working beneath the surface of Indian society. Hume had travelled about India a great deal and had a keenly observant mind. Thus his visits to Lord Dufferin, which are mentioned by Professor Sundar Raman, must have had an exceptional importance. The Professor writes as follows:

"While he was still at Simla, Mr. Hume paid frequent visits to the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, who had just then arrived in India as successor to Lord Ripon. During one of those visits the conversation turned upon Mr. Hume's aspiration for shaping and influencing English public opinion so as to start a movement for India's political unity and regeneration. Mr. Hume's idea was to rouse the conscience of the people of England by carrying on a persistent

agitation in Great Britain with the support and encouragement of leading friends of India, both among Englishmen and Scotsmen, whether or not officially connected with India. Lord Dufferin considered the question from a purely private sympathizer's point of view and expressed his opinion that such an agitation in England was foredoomed to failure, as all intelligent Englishmen were fully aware of the advantages of all kinds, economic, political, administrative, etc., which Great Britain derived from her huge and passive Dependency. He also convinced Mr. Hume that the latter could secure his own aims best by confining the agitation to India, for the present, and by making Indian public men all over the land start to organize and develop to its full strength a national organization in India itself, conducted with zeal and discretion by her own leaders under Mr. Hume's sympathetic and courageous lead."[1]

If we accept Professor Sundar Raman's statement as accurate, it would appear that the idea of the Congress partly originated with Lord Dufferin. The fact also remains that, as early as the year 1883, the suggestion of combining for an All-India political agitation had become already widespread. It was in the air. We have seen that the Indian Association had carried on an All-India agitation regarding the Civil Service Memorial, and Surendranath's tour in northern India had brought the All-India idea still nearer. In the south the Madras Mahajana Sabha and in western India the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha had prepared the way for an All-India political

[1] The *Hindu* (Congress Jubilee Supplement), reproduced in the *Indian Social Reformer*, January 4, 1936.

platform. Ananda Mohun Bose's speech at the first National Conference in Calcutta prophesied a future Native Parliament.

Professor Sundar Raman mentioned another interesting fact, that in December 1883, after the annual convention of the Theosophical Society, Diwan Bahadur Raghunath Rao got up a special meeting of his friends "to find ways and means of bringing together Indian politicians to inaugurate a political movement for the regeneration and reform of the methods of government of this country, calculated to promote a future Indian advance towards Swaraj." In southern India there was undoubtedly a growing political consciousness, especially after the inauguration of a Representative Assembly in 1881 by the Mysore State "to bring the masses in co-operation with the administrative machinery."

Hume himself, in a speech at a public meeting at Allahabad on April 30, 1888, modestly disclaimed his own single authorship of the idea. "The Congress movement," he said, "is only one outcome—though at the moment the most prominent and tangible—of the labours of a body of cultured men, mostly born natives of India, who, some years ago, banded themselves together to labour silently for the good of India."

To prove the truth of Hume's statement we have a letter written to the *Indian Mirror* of Calcutta on July 4, 1883, by Tarapada Banerji, a Bengali lawyer of Krishnanagore, near Calcutta. Tarapada, who took an absorbing interest in political questions, wrote as follows:—

"In the first place, a public meeting ought to be convened in Calcutta as soon as possible . . . asking

gentlemen from different parts of India to be present. With the consent of the majority, a general committee ought to be formed and representative men of all parts of India ought to be elected members."

He afterwards proposed much more definitely the appointment of a managing committee and a fund, with the following objects:—

"To have a permanent delegate in England to represent to our rulers there the true state of this country, and to agitate Indian questions.

"2. To adopt suitable means for the purpose of imparting political education to the people of India and for this purpose to have a staff of "political missionaries" whose duty would be, among other things, to establish People's Associations, Shopkeepers' Associations, and the like, wherever possible.

"3. To encourage national trade and industry by annually awarding medals, prizes and certificates to inventors of machines of practical importance and to authors of treatises on Arts and Science, etc.

"4. To adopt means for the creation of good feeling between the different religious sects of India."

This letter, among other writings and speeches at the time, shows how strongly Indian public opinion was inclining towards the thought of an All-India organization. How far this proposal had developed is illustrated by one more letter which Tarapada wrote to the *Indian Mirror*. He stated that his own proposal had been well received by the Indian Association, and that the imprisonment of Surendranath Banerjea had suggested to him, "*as it must have suggested to many of my countrymen, who care to think of India's welfare, that the opportunity*

*had come to do something towards the creation of a National Fund and the formation of a National Assembly.*"

This proposal of a National Assembly with a National Fund gave concisely and accurately in a single phrase the necessary framework of a Congress. In concluding his letter Tarapada put forward the reasons why this National Assembly should be called immediately. He wrote:

"If we once admit that India has real grievances and wants, which ought to be removed, it follows as a matter of logical consequence, that we ought to form a National Assembly and constitute a National Fund."

After the Congress had been established, Tarapada Banerji, in a letter to a friend, thus described the part he had played in its formation:

"You have inquired of me whether the movement in question (the Congress) is conducted on principles inculcated by me so far back as May 1883. I am afraid I must answer you in the negative. You may remember that before giving to the public a rough sketch of my plan, I wrote to several Associations and great men of the country to form a National Assembly and constitute a National Fund. Notwithstanding that my country abounded in Associations and Sabhas, I advocated the formation of a National Assembly, as I thought that the existing Associations were not truly representative in their character and none of them could fulfil the object I had in view. I wanted two things. (1st) A National Assembly. (2nd) A National Fund. To me they were like *Purusa* and *Prakriti*.[1] A National Assembly without a

[1] i.e. "Soul and body."

National Fund is like an engineer without his instruments."

About the Congress he wrote: "In the year 1884, there was a National Conference in Calcutta. The Indian Association took advantage of the advent of the great men of the country on the occasion of the Exhibition. The next year, there was something more systematic. The people of Bombay succeeded in securing the attendance of some great men of the country. They called the gathering a National Congress."

Sir Dinsha Wacha, in his letter quoted above, states that his own recollection was that the idea of a National Assembly with a National Fund came from the public leaders of Bengal, notable among whom was Kristo Das Pal. Sir Dinsha's memory for details was astonishing and his recollection here also may be correct, though we have not been able to trace any direct reference in his writings, but Tarapada's letters to the *Indian Mirror* show that as early as 1883 there were public men who had felt the practical need of a Congress and also considered in some detail the logical course of action which had to be followed, if a great opportunity of uniting educated India was not to be missed.

To write this does not in the least take away the great credit which is due to Mr. Hume; for his dynamic personality and unbounded energy were obviously needed in order to make the venture a success. It seems also to be true, as Mr. Gokhale bluntly stated, that without his support the official mind would have devised some means of strangling the infant Congress at its birth, and the work would have had to be done all over again. Hume's credit

goes still farther; for he helped, perhaps more than anyone else, to discover future Congress leaders; he did not, any more than was absolutely necessary, take the lead himself. He realized most of all, the crisis through which India was passing, and did everything in his power to prevent a violent and desperate outbreak of revolts.

The story has been told that Hume, in earlier years in his official capacity, came into possession of several volumes of secret reports from the C.I.D. of those days which showed clearly the increasing volume of discontent among the village people. There were records even of conspiracies and secret societies. This was not to be wondered at, because towards the end of the Lytton régime the peasants in different parts of India were on the verge of an agrarian revolt. In the Bombay Presidency riots had already started. The years just before the Congress were among the most dangerous since 1857.

It was Hume, among English officials, who saw this disaster impending and tried to prevent it. He also realized the impossibility of stirring the Government of India to take steps to relieve the chronic distress. Lulled in an atmosphere of self-complacency the officials were not prepared to disturb their own peace of mind. They had suppressed one revolt, in 1857, and this gave them a feeling of security. It is strange how history repeats itself; for just as in the earlier outbreak of 1857 there were officials who were entirely ignorant of popular feeling, so it was at this time also.

This complacent attitude was Hume's greatest difficulty. So he went to Simla in order to make

clear to the authorities how almost desperate the situation had become. It is probable that this visit made the new Viceroy, who was a brilliant man of affairs, realize the gravity of the situation and encourage Hume to go on with the formation of the Congress.

The time was fully ripe, as we have seen, for this All-India movement. In place of an agrarian revolt, which would have had the sympathy and support of the educated classes, it gave the rising forces a national platform from which to create a New India. It was all to the good in the long run that a revolutionary situation based on violence was not allowed to be created once again, for it could only have caused useless bloodshed and an increase of racial hatred.

Unable to rouse the English officials to the danger of the situation, Hume turned to the Indian leaders. He had been brought up in the Liberal tradition of the Manchester school and his disappointment at the apathy of the British Government was profound. He knew that his own countrymen would do nothing for India of their own accord. But *could* they do anything unless the Indian leaders acted for themselves? "In vain," he said to the graduates of Calcutta University, "may aliens like myself love India and her children as well as the most loving of these. . . . They may place their experience, abilities and knowledge at the disposal of the workers, but they lack the essential of nationality, and the real work must ever be done by the people of the country themselves."[1]

Hume went over to England some time before

[1] See Note at the end of this chapter.

the end of the year and interested himself in meeting people who would be of use to the great cause he had undertaken. He met several Members of Parliament and spoke to them about it. He also organized an agency for giving Indian news to the English newspapers. He was like a man who saw impending disaster and desperately sought to prevent it.

Having made all arrangements in England, Hume returned to India before the Congress began. The preliminary work in India seemed to have lacked coherence. At any rate, there had been very little contact with all the various political organizations. Surendranath Banerjea, as we have noticed, says that he himself was informed too late and that, without knowing that there would be an All-India Congress at all, he had helped to organize the Second National Conference in Calcutta. This strange fact shows how extremely difficult it was as yet to organize fully on a national scale.

Thus in the end the main initiative of the first Congress had to come from Hume. Personality still counts and will always count in Indian politics. Yet it is equally true that one person, or a few persons, do not make national history. Throughout the whole record of the Congress we have clear examples which show how new forces brought with them newer leadership. That has been the reason why the Congress from the beginning has remained such a vital force. It has grown continuously in importance and power all over the country. For example, Naoroji and Surendranath led the Congress in the early days when the need of their leadership was the greatest. Gokhale took up their work and carried it forward. Aurobindo and Tilak changed its

course when a new set of circumstances arose. Last of all, in our own times, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subash Chandra Bose have come into leadership in turn, owing to different national emergencies to which they have responded.

Yet even this is not a complete analysis of the Indian situation; for while there is abundant proof, from historical records, that great personalities mould and shape the times in which they live, they always do so by reaching down to those hidden subconscious forces and instincts which lie deepest of all in the souls of men. They arouse these and bring them to the surface and thus receive their own spiritual renewal from the very people whom they in turn inspire.

The strength of the Congress has lain chiefly in this—that it has always kept touch with these deeper hidden forces in the national life and has used them for increasing its own hold upon the affection of the people. It has gone on from the leadership of the small intellectual class at the top to make its appeal to the masses of the village people and the labouring classes who form the vast majority of the population.

## Chapter II

# THE FIRST CONGRESS

THE preparations for the first Congress must have begun very early in 1885. The circular of invitation was issued in March of the same year. It is interesting to note that the name "Congress" was suggested only a few days before the meeting had taken place. The circular stated that a Conference of the "Indian National Union" was to be held at Poona from December 25th to 31st, 1885. It also required that the Conference should be composed of delegates —"leading politicians well-acquainted with the English language"—from all parts of the country. It is worth while to remember that the founders of the first Congress invited only those leaders of the country who were "well-acquainted with the English language."

The direct objects of the Conference, according to this circular, were:

"(i) To enable all the most earnest labourers in the cause of national progress to become personally known to each other.

"(ii) To discuss and decide upon the political operations to be undertaken during the ensuing year."

The circular goes on to say: "Indirectly this Conference will form the germ of a native Parliament, and, if properly conducted, will constitute in a few years an unanswerable reply to the assertion that India is still wholly unfit for any form of representative institutions. The first Conference will

decide whether the next shall be again held at Poona or whether, following the precedent of the British Indian Association, the Conference shall be held year by year at different important centres."

Thus, although the Conference started without any definite aim, it eventually gave expression to the general wishes of the people for a "Native Parliament." We have seen that in Bengal they were thinking of a "National Assembly," and in western India, where Poona more than Bombay was the political centre at that time, the idea of a national platform on the same lines was quite popular. Poona was also the home of the "Sarvajanik Sabha," which had for a number of years trained the people in political agitation. It was for these reasons that Poona was selected as the meeting-place of the Conference. The circular also mentions that "Mr. Chiplunkar and others of the Sarvajanik Sabha have consented to form a Reception Committee."

But unfortunately only a few days before the Conference was to meet several cases of cholera were reported in Poona and, according to the official report, which in the meantime had begun to call the Conference the "Indian National Congress," it was decided to hold the Congress in Bombay. Through the efforts of the Bombay Presidency Association and the liberality of the managers of the Goculdas Tejpal Sanskrit College and Boarding Trust, everything was ready by the morning of the 27th, when the representatives began to arrive.

Thus by an accident the first Congress met in Bombay instead of at Poona. On the proposal of Hume and seconded by Telang and Subramania Iyer, W. C. Bonnerjee was elected President of the

Congress. In his presidential speech Bonnerjee said that the objects of the Congress were:

"(i) The promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in our country's cause in these parts of the Empire.

"(ii) The eradication by direct friendly personal intercourse of all possible race, creed, or provincial prejudices amongst all lovers of country, and the fuller development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in our beloved Lord Ripon's ever memorable reign.

"(iii) The authoritative record of the matured opinions of the educated classes in India on some of the more important and pressing of the social questions of the day.

"(iv) The determination of the methods by which during the next twelve months it is desirable for native politicians to labour in the public interests."

He also praised England for "the inestimable blessing of Western education" and said that "all they desired was that the basis of the government should be widened and that people should have their proper and legitimate share in it." He also believed that the Congress would be equally advantageous to the authorities and to the people.

This was the general attitude of the first members of the Congress who met together at Bombay to discuss the future of India. One feels to-day, when politics dominates so much of the Indian life, that these statements are curiously out of touch with the realities of the Indian situation. But we have to remember that life was far less organized in India then. Besides, there was very little experience of

public gatherings and agitations. They were, in fact, only creating precedents.

But the most impressive thing in the first Congress was the far-sighted vision of the speakers themselves. Although it was the first time that Indian leaders had met on a political platform their acquaintance with the public questions of the day appeared to be thorough and full. The knowledge of the administration which they exhibited in their speeches was remarkable judging from the fact that until then the Indian people had very little share in it. For example, Sir Dinsha Wacha's speech on the Army budget showed an intimate knowledge of the Army finances and its tone and contents reveal a capacity of high statesmanship. Amongst other speakers, Subramania Iyer, Telang, Norendranath Sen, Dadabhai Naoroji, all showed great knowledge of the administration and demonstrated how well these people were capable of running a country if they were once given a chance.

Subramania Iyer, speaking on the first resolution with regard to a parliamentary enquiry into the conditions of India, put forward a thesis which shows how closely the Indian leaders, even at that time, were following the political development of the whole country and how well they knew the policy most advantageous to India.

"Such an enquiry," he said, "was regularly made in the days of the East India Company. In 1773, 1793, 1813, 1833, and 1853, searching and elaborate investigations were made into the results of the administration of the Company, as represented by the financial condition of the Government and by general progress of the people. . . . While the

domestic and foreign policy of the Company was closely watched and subjected to periodical criticism and reform, these enquiries furnished wholesome checks and safeguards, particularly in the administration of finance." "In many respects," he adds, "India has been a loser by the transfer of the government to the Crown instead of a gainer. Since that time, the condition of the people has undergone a most distressing deterioration. They have been subjected to a less sympathetic despotism, and the expenditure and indebtedness of their Government have increased in a ratio utterly disproportionate to all improvement in its financial resources."

This criticism of the Government did not mean that the bulk of the Indian opinion at the Congress was opposed to the British rule as such. On the contrary, among the majority of the Congress leaders there was almost a childlike and pathetic belief in the fair play of the British Parliament. "We are British subjects," said Dadabhai Naoroji, "and subjects of the same gracious Sovereign who has pledged her Royal word that we are to her as all her other subjects, and we have a right to all British institutions. If we are true to ourselves and perseveringly ask what we desire, the British people are the very people on earth who will give us what is right and just."

Although the first Congress leaders did not set out with any very ambitious scheme, in view of self-government, there were men who were already thinking in original terms about India's future. Norendranath Sen, for instance, a delegate from Bengal, made the remarkable suggestion that as an alternative for a Standing Committee of the House

of Commons in place of the India Council, there might be a small parliament in India with many Indian members. Indian political bodies should be asked to name such members and also have a voice in the formation of the existing Executive Councils.

Thus among these Western-educated Congress leaders, who echoed the language of the British Liberals, there were some who were ready to go much farther and claim radical alterations in the Constitution.

There were also others, even in the first Congress, who were already advocating a fighting programme and showed a strong sense of the realities of the Indian situation. In fact, it appears that the idea of a boycott of British goods as a means of wresting concessions from the British Parliament was already growing amongst the Indian leaders even in those very early days. "If goods are available in our own market," says Mr. Girija Bhushan Mookerjee, another delegate from Bengal, "why should we—poor as we are—go to a foreign country and pay a much higher price for imported goods? Then again, the high salaries and pensions enjoyed by our civilian rulers are mostly spent out of the country. The experience, bought at such a high price, is not retained in the country for its future use, but is shipped out of the country and pretty often employed against our interest." It is quite remarkable that this speech from Bengal was made in the very first Congress. It shows how, from the start, the economic issue loomed almost as large in some men's minds as the political demand for self-rule.

The gathering was dissolved amid cheers for the Queen-Empress. The official report ends thus:

"Mr. Hume, after acknowledging the honour done him, said that as the giving of cheers had been entrusted to him, he must be allowed to propose—on the principle of better late than never—giving of cheers, and that not only three but three times three, and if possible thrice that, for one, the latchet of whose shoes he was unworthy to loose, one to whom they were all dear, to whom they were all as children—need he say, Her Most Gracious Majesty The Queen-Empress."

"The rest of the speaker's remarks," the report adds, "was lost in the storm of applause that instantly burst out, and the asked-for cheers were given over and over."

It was in this way that the first Congress ended its historic session. The All-India movement had come to its birth.

## NOTE

Sir William Wedderburn, in his book on *Allan Octavian Hume*, has given a summary of Hume's remarkable circular letter addressed to the "Graduates of Calcutta University." The passage, slightly abbreviated, runs as follows:

"Towards the close of Lord Lytton's viceroyalty, that is about 1878 and 1879, Mr. Hume became convinced that some definite action was called for to counteract the growing unrest. From well-wishers in different parts of the country he received warnings of the danger to the Government, and to the future welfare of India, from the economic sufferings of the masses, and the alienation of the intellectuals. But happily the arrival of Lord Ripon revived hope among the people. Accordingly, the first movement towards a definite scheme is to be found in a circular letter, dated 1st March 1883, addressed to the 'Graduates of the Calcutta University.'

The letter opens with these wise and kindly words: 'Constituting as you do, a large body of the most highly educated Indians, you should, in the natural order of things, constitute also the most important source of all mental, moral, social, and political progress in India. Whether in the individual or the nation, all vital progress must spring from within, and it is to you, her most cultured and enlightened minds, her most favoured sons, that your country must look for the initiative. In vain may aliens, like myself, love India and her children, as well as the most loving of these; in vain may they, for her and their good, give time and trouble, money and thought; in vain may they struggle and sacrifice; they may assist with advice and suggestions; they may place their experience, abilities, and knowledge at the disposal of the workers, but they lack the essential of nationality, and the real work must ever be done by the people of the country themselves.' . . . 'Our little army must be *sui generis* in discipline and equipment, and the question simply is, how many of you will prove to possess, in addition to your high scholastic attainments, the unselfishness, moral courage, self-control, and active spirit of benevolence essential in all who should enlist.' And then he proposed that a commencement should be made with a body of fifty 'founders,' to be the mustard seed of future growth; 'if only fifty men, good and true, can be found to join as founders, the thing can be established, and the further development will be comparatively easy.' The details of the organization would have to be decided by the members themselves. But he made suggestions as to the personnel, discipline, and working methods of the association; and specially he insisted on its constitution being democratic, and free from personal ambitions: the head should merely be the chief servant and his council assistant servants. This is the principle followed in later years by Mr. Gokhale in his Servants of India Society; and it conforms to the precept, 'He that is greatest among you, let him be your servant.' And this long letter ends with an appeal, which both stirs and stings: 'As I said before, you are the salt of the land. And if amongst even you, the élite, fifty

men cannot be found with sufficient power of self-sacrifice, sufficient love for and pride in their country, sufficient genuine and unselfish heartfelt patriotism to take the initiative, and if needs be, devote the rest of their lives to the Cause—then there is no hope for India. Her sons must and will remain mere humble and helpless instruments in the hands of foreign rulers, for "they would be free, themselves must strike the blow." And if even the leaders of thought are all either such poor creatures, or so selfishly wedded to personal concerns, that they dare not or will not strike a blow for their country's sake, then justly and rightly are they kept down and trampled on, for they deserve nothing better. Every nation secures precisely as good a government as it merits. If you, the picked men, the most highly educated of the nation, cannot, scorning personal ease and selfish objects, make a resolute struggle to secure greater freedom for yourselves and your country, a more impartial administration, a larger share in the management of your own affairs, then we your friends are wrong, and our adversaries right; then Lord Ripon's noble aspirations for your good are fruitless and visionary, then at present, at any rate, all hopes of progress are at an end, and India truly neither lacks nor deserves any better government than she now enjoys. Only, if this be so, let us hear no more fractious, peevish complaints that you are kept in leading strings, and treated like children, for you will have proved yourselves such. Men know how to act. Let there be no more complaints of Englishmen being preferred to you in all important offices, for if you lack that public spirit, that highest form of altruistic devotion that leads men to subordinate private ease to the public weal, that true patriotism that has made Englishmen what they are—then rightly are these preferred to you, and rightly and inevitably have they become your rulers. And rulers and taskmasters they must continue, let the yoke gall your shoulders never so sorely, until you realize and stand prepared to act upon the eternal truth that, whether in the case of individuals or nations, self-sacrifice and unselfishness are the only unfailing guides to freedom and happiness.'"

Part Five

# THE EARLY DAYS

*Constitutional Agitation*

## Chapter I

# COUNCIL REFORM

THE marked success which had attended the session of the first Congress in Bombay did not die away as soon as it was over. The number of delegates who attended the second session in Calcutta rose to 412, and when the Congress was transferred to Madras, in the year 1887, its numbers reached over six hundred. It has been reckoned that during the first thirteen years of its existence more than ten thousand delegates had travelled at their own expense and at great inconvenience not seldom for thousands of miles in order to be present. This was undertaken often at the risk of the local or provincial officials' disapproval; for the Congress session soon ceased to be patronized by those in authority and fell under suspicion as "disloyal."

From the very first these annual sessions of the National Congress were able to strike the public imagination, especially in the big towns. The village interest in the new organization, which was all important, did not come until much later, and this proved to be one of its weaknesses in its early days. In a manner entirely different from the earlier organizations, which had sprung up and then died down again, the Congress from the very first had started with an All-India outlook and its yearly meeting was not confined to a single area. It was truly a stroke of genius which made the place at which the Congress was held rotate from year to year. In its early days this not merely emphasized

its true national outlook, but also stirred up enthusiasm in new local areas. No part of India could complain that it was left out; for its own turn would come in due course.

The liberal ideals of Lord Ripon, as Viceroy from 1880–4, together with his deep religious nature, which had a singular appeal to the Indian mind, had greatly encouraged the Indian leaders themselves to follow the same liberal course in their own national sphere. His retirement from office, with the sympathy of the whole educated India behind him, had roused a wave of popular enthusiasm such as had never been witnessed before under British rule. The remarkable farewell that the people of the country gave him at every city, while his own countrymen remained sullenly silent, was symbolical of great inner change that had come over India. It represented a new common mind which was national and made India one people. It superseded what was merely local and provincial.

This universal and unanimous public opinion was something that the officials themselves had never witnessed before. Sir Auckland Colvin's pamphlet called *If It Be Real, What Does It Mean?* speaks of this changed attitude toward the British rule with great concern, almost with alarm. English correspondents also noticed this strange new spirit that was abroad and had its centre in the Congress itself.

"Behind the delegates," wrote one of them, "especially in the Madras Presidency, a part of the Central Provinces, Bombay, Bengal and Northern India, are millions of people who have been made acquainted with what Congress is working for and whole-heartedly support its programme. . . . It

has become a factor in the affairs of India and England that has to be reckoned with."[1]

Mr. W. S. Caine, M.P., visited India about this time on a tour of enquiry to find out the true state of affairs. He came back to England with the startling news—which could not easily be challenged—that the Congress had already nine-tenths of the middle class of India behind it, and that its national character had been triumphantly vindicated and confirmed.

"Every student," he reported to his constituency in the North of England, "who is taught English and can read English History, becomes a Congress-wallah. The four thousand Indian gentlemen sitting round me are picked men of the legal, medical, engineering and literary professions all over India. . . . The Congress contains everything that is serious, earnest and enterprising in Indian society. It can neither be ignored, nor suppressed. . . . I have never attended a political gathering of such intense interest, or one that is likely to have such a wide influence, for good or evil, on the destinies of a great country. May God be its guide!"

The first few years of the Congress history were remarkably free from any pronounced hostility from the side of the Government of India, though considerable anxiety soon became apparent and dislike showed itself in many quarters. Lord Dufferin himself had invited all the delegates of the Second Congress Session in Calcutta to his own garden-party as distinguished visitors. Lord Connemara, the Governor of Madras, had followed suit when

[1] Quoted from the *Newcastle Daily Leader*, February 12, 1889, by the Indian Agency, 25 Craven Street, London.

the Third Session took place at that city. It has already been explained in this volume how the final suggestion, that an All-India Congress should be held to deal with political questions, seems to have emanated from Lord Dufferin himself in his conversations with Mr. A. O. Hume. It was therefore only in keeping with what had happened that the first relationship between the Government of India and the Congress should have been of a cordial nature.

S. K. Ratcliffe, in his book called *Sir W. Wedderburn and the Indian Reform Movement*, writes as follows:

"Lord Dufferin's attitude at this time was interesting and revealing. Not only did he welcome the Congress, but it was he who, when Hume told him of his intention to begin reform agitation on the social side of Indian life, advised him to widen its scope and aim definitely at political education."[1]

Looking back now at the past from this distance of time, it is full of interest to notice that the organizers of the first Congress in Bombay in 1885 seriously thought of asking Lord Reay, the Governor of Bombay, to preside over the meeting. Only at the last moment was it decided not to do so.

But this friendly and sympathetic attitude took later on a different turn. The first sign of this was a "neutrality" circular, published by the Government, forbidding any official to attend any Congress meeting even as a visitor. But as the Right Hon. Srinivasa Sastri has pointed out, "Neutrality is a difficult virtue to preserve towards persistent critics. Officials soon

[1] *Sir W. Wedderburn and the Indian Reform Movement*, published by Allen & Unwin, London.

became distinctly hostile and threw obstacles in the way."[1]

Thus the so-called Government neutrality armed itself with official powers. "Nobody," wrote Sir Auckland Colvin, "is more willing than I am to recognize, encourage and find under the Government of India an opening for the younger men, who . . . have sprung into existence as a new factor in the country. But I cannot, on that account, affect to recognize in these forward spirits of the present generation the political maturity of all India, or regard even this, the most advanced element, otherwise than still in the stage of political babyhood. For I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that no nation, least of all a nation in the East, can be trusted, within less than the life-time of a living man, to adopt and put into practice conceptions of political life, confined at present mainly to the Anglo-Saxon race—and only by them elaborated after long and painful centuries."[2]

This revealing passage has been quoted at length because it indicates very concisely what was the general outlook of liberal British opinion in India at that time.

Much more definitely hostile criticism grew up side by side with this. "The great warrior communities," wrote one critic, "the landed gentry, the proud and sensitive Muhammadans, the Eurasians, and the native Christians, will have none of them."

The same writer goes on to call those Congress

[1] *Indian National Congress*, by G. A. Natesan, Madras. Introduction, p. 5.

[2] *Audi Alteram Partem*, 1888, p. 26.

delegates, who had come all the way at their own expense and with extreme difficulty to attend the Congress, "amateur politicians, whose presumption is only equalled by their ignorance." They are "disappointed candidates for office and discontented lawyers who represent no one but themselves."

Phrases like these have been so often used since as to become almost nauseating; but in those early days they formed the handiest stick with which to beat the Congress. Such abuse, however, only made the Congress more vigorous than ever. For any institution that has won the heart of the people thrives on persecution and abuse.

K. T. Paul, of Madras Presidency, whose recent death has been a very severe loss, not only to his own Indian Christian community but also to the national cause, in his book called *The British Connection with India*, has given a true estimate of what was happening in those days. He writes, "The men who assembled were only thousands in numbers, but each single one of them through the special avenues peculiar to India represented many more hundreds, and through them many more thousands."

In the first Bombay Congress the political note was sounded in a clear, democratic manner as follows:

"This Congress considers the reform and expansion of the supreme and existing local Legislative Councils, by the admission of a considerable proportion of elected members, and the formation of similar Councils for the North-Western Provinces and Oudh and also for the Punjab, essential; and holds also that all Budgets should be referred to these Councils for consideration: and that a Standing Committee of the House of Commons should be constituted to

receive and consider any formal protests that may be recorded by majorities of such Councils against the exercise by the Executive of power, which would be vested in it, of overruling the decisions of such majorities."

Those who could frame a resolution in these tempered and moderate terms could hardly be regarded as "in the stage of political babyhood," as Sir Auckland Colvin contemptuously stated; nor could they be rightly called "amateur politicians whose presumption is only equalled by their ignorance"! Such phrases only revealed an ignorance of what was really happening in India at the time.

A further resolution, which was to appear at every Congress meeting, demanded that, "in accordance with the views expressed by the India Office Committee, examinations for the covenanted Civil Service be held simultaneously, one in England, one in India, both being as far as possible identical in nature, and that those who compete in both countries be finally classified in one list according to merit."

It is strange that an obviously fair and simple resolution like this based on the Queen's Proclamation of racial equality should have had to wait for nearly forty years before it could overcome official opposition. It shows how true to fact Lord Lytton's confidential note about that Proclamation was.

While the annual session of the Congress was moved in turn from one centre to another, provincial conferences were also organized which helped to build up the National Congress and also to foster local enthusiasm. It is noticeable that from the very first these provincial conferences not merely dealt

with local issues, but also turned their attention to All-India subjects. In this way the wider outlook was preserved. Here again there was a touch of genius in thus combining provincial with national enthusiasm.

The leaders of the Congress soon became dissatisfied with merely passing resolutions once a year. In all the larger provinces membership was sedulously fostered and working committees were formed for carrying on the work. The newspaper Press under Indian control was strengthened, and some of the great newspapers were founded at this time with the object of representing the full Congress platform. Propaganda was carried on in England, which has been referred to in another chapter. Books and pamphlets were written in India itself which advocated the Congress point of view.

When it is realized that the greater part of this work was voluntary, and all expenses were met by voluntary subscriptions, it will be realized how deep were the springs of national enthusiasm from which the Congress drew its resources. The area was still comparatively limited, because up to the end of the nineteenth century, and even beyond it, the appeal was made almost entirely to the English-educated classes. Business, even in committee, was conducted in English, and the highly intelligent and politically-minded non-English-speaking public had hardly yet been touched. So strong was this tradition of conducting every meeting in English that Rabindranath Tagore, when elected to preside at a provincial conference in Bengal, quite startled his audience and also delighted them by delivering his speech in Bengali, his own mother-tongue and theirs! This

happened in the year 1905 and was probably the first occasion when a large provincial Congress meeting severed itself completely from the old, bad "English" tradition, which kept the poorer people who had never studied this foreign language out of touch with their own highest national concerns.

## Chapter II

# THE END OF THE CENTURY

RIGHT up to the time of the passing through the British Parliament of the India Councils Act in 1892 the Congress had repeatedly, year after year, confirmed its own "Council Reform" resolution and sent it to the British Parliament. This was done with a somewhat dreary iteration and the monotony of it began to pall. At the Poona Congress of 1889, which was attended by Mr. Charles Bradlaugh and presided over by Sir William Wedderburn, from London, the Congress went much further. It submitted a complete scheme to Mr. Bradlaugh with a request that he would cause a Bill to be drafted on the lines therein indicated, and that he would introduce this at the earliest possible moment into the House of Commons as the Congress proposal. Acting on these instructions, Mr. Bradlaugh introduced his Bill in 1890. But the Government, in order to forestall this, introduced a Bill of its own.

Mr. Bradlaugh unfortunately did not live to finish his great and noble work for India to which he had dedicated the later years of his life. He died in 1891. The Government Bill, called Lord Cross's "Indian Councils Bill," was thus able to have the field all to itself. After being passed in both Houses of Parliament it received the Royal assent as the Indian Councils Act of 1892.

The Congress, even though it had won a victory, felt disappointed at the provisions of the Act. The position of Dadabhai Naoroji in England was also

considerably weakened by the death of Charles Bradlaugh, who had so firmly championed the Indian cause in the British House of Commons. The Congress regretted "that the Act itself does not concede to the people the right of electing their own representatives to the Council and hopes and expects that the rules now being prepared under the Act will be framed on the lines of Mr. Gladstone's declaration in the House of Commons and will do adequate justice to the people of this country."

At the same time the Congress recognized that the Act "is intended to give the people of India a real living representation in the Legislative Councils."[1]

In spite of the somewhat meagre result of its early efforts, the National Congress had now fully realized the usefulness of sustained political work. However dissatisfied the leaders of the public were with the Act, the general feeling was that the Congress had justified its existence and proved the value of united public action. It had also clearly succeeded in moving the Indian Government to go farther than it had intended, and that in itself was a victory. Furthermore, it had begun to train a number of public men to conduct public affairs in a thoroughly able manner and to take responsibility in the public administration.

The significance of the Act of 1892 may be thus stated. The Governor-General had always had a council to assist him in his administration. His council was generally composed of the heads of departments, who could be consulted on their own subjects. He could also seek their opinion on matters

[1] Resolution 1, Eighth Congress, Allahabad, 1892.

of general importance. In 1833, in order to facilitate work, a law member was added to the council. In 1853 the administrative and the legislative business was separated. The sessions for legislative purposes were attended by two judges of the Bengal Supreme Court and one additional official from the provincial Governments of Madras, Bengal, Bombay, and Agra respectively. Further changes were introduced in 1861, when six more members were added to the legislative sessions, of whom three were to be non-officials. Out of these three, some were always Indians. This Act of 1861 also provided for a separate council for the provincial Governments, of whom half were to be non-officials.

But the Act of 1892 for the first time accepted the principle of election and also gave the members of council the right of question and discussion for the annual budgets without the right of voting. The official majority was maintained. The non-official members were to be recommended by municipalities and district boards. Five more non-official members were added to the Viceroy's Council, one to be elected by each of the four provincial councils and one by the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce.

The Congress accepted the Act chiefly on the recommendation of W. C. Bonnerjee, who was President at Allahabad in 1892. He fully hoped that the rules framed under the Act would be such as to give the members power to expand the Act. "I have no doubt," he said in his presidential address, "that we shall be glad to put away the first plank in our Congress platform, namely, the reform and reconstruction of the Legislative Councils."

He spoke thus because he thought that by their

reconstruction the Government for the first time would be face to face with the representatives of the people and would know their wishes and fulfil them. But when the rules were framed there was great dissatisfaction. Dadabhai Naoroji, presiding over the ninth Congress at Lahore in 1893, said: "Not only are the present rules unsatisfactory, even for the fulfilment of the Act itself as interpreted in the House of Commons by Mr. Gladstone; not only have we yet to obtain the full living representation of the people of India; but also a much further extension of their extremely restricted powers, which render the Councils almost a mere name. . . . We are still to all intents and purposes under an arbitrary rule."

In the next year, at the Madras Congress of 1894, the following resolution was passed:—

"The rules now in force under the India Councils Act of 1892 are materially defective and the Congress prays that H.E. the Viceroy in Council will be pleased to have fresh rules framed in a liberal spirit with a view to the better working of the Act and suited to the conditions and requirements of each province."

The period between 1885 and 1892 was naturally the most critical of all. For in these earliest days any severe blow to the Congress from within its own ranks might have been fatal. The vital issue, which could only be solved by experience, was whether there was a sufficient volume of serious thought and enthusiasm in the country which could make united action, year after year, on a large scale feasible. It was also necessary to test thoroughly by practical experience whether the enthusiasm which was

evident in the large centres such as Bombay and Calcutta and Madras could be relied on in the smaller provincial centres also. On the whole, the first decade of Congress history gave great encouragement and hope for the future. New life seemed to spring up everywhere, at whatever centre the holding of the Congress was fixed. By thus passing from one part of India to another each year the All-India character of the new Congress organization became gradually determined and national unity was consolidated.

This period, therefore, may best be regarded as one in which the National Congress was taking shape and finding its own place in the new life of the Indian nation. Summing up the whole situation as briefly as possible, the very halting and hesitating manner in which the Indian leaders set out on their strange career with the aid of their Liberal British supporters soon passed away as they gained self-confidence. The store of new power and energy which had been accumulated within the nation as a result of the social and religious awakening was found to be far greater than had ever been imagined. These budding forces of life from within began to flower and bear fruit.

Thus, although external conditions and the international situation—such as the tension between Russia and the Ottoman Empire—came within the scope of the Congress movement and to some extent shaped its course, the powers which sustained it and vitalized it came from within. They were wholly indigenous. Even the aid which at first was given by sympathetic Englishmen, like Mr. Hume, soon played a secondary part. The increasing hostility of

the Government of India fully ensured that none but the most genuine and tested friends of India from abroad would face that displeasure and still take part in the Congress development.

However insufficient to-day the reforms of 1892–4 appear to be, they seemed to those who had never organized on an All-India scale before to represent a notable victory over the forces of reaction, and if we take into consideration the defeat and retirement of Lord Ripon himself, owing entirely to these same reactionary forces, the change of atmosphere which had come about in so short a time is truly remarkable. Those who themselves had gone through that period of despair and had come out of the darkness of those days into the new sunshine of hope are best able to judge concerning the change which had been effected. Mr. Alfred Webb, M.P., presiding over the Tenth Congress at Allahabad, gave expression to the general feeling of educated India when he said:

"Within the lifetime of a generation you have obtained in India what may be regarded as the first instalment of reform in the direction of the expansion and reconstruction of the Legislative Councils, which has cost other countries centuries of toil and effort. You have many reasons to be proud of what you have achieved in other directions also."[1]

Thus the educated middle class of India in these years had gained their first victory, however limited and incomplete, over the bureaucracy. This was historically noteworthy, because it proved that there had begun to spring up from within those new social and religious forces to which we called attention in

[1] Alfred Webb, Presidential Address, Tenth Congress, Madras, 1894.

earlier chapters. Starting from Raja Ram Mohan Roy, in Bengal, they had expanded all over India and had created a new All-India public. Taking first of all a religious form, they expressed an awakening of the national consciousness in every part of India and not in Bengal only. The strength of the All-India movement lay in the newly educated middle classes. The remains of the feudal aristocracy had not responded to this new awakening. The Government of India had become very dimly aware of it, but had not realized its immense potency. The harsh reaction of the English community in Calcutta against the Ilbert Bill had aroused it into activity. In Bengal, Bombay, and Madras the idea had simultaneously arisen of using the very same political power which had been so effective when used by Englishmen themselves.

Hume was the only administrator who had foreseen the consequences of the rise of the middle classes and he had advised Lord Dufferin accordingly. Otherwise the bureaucracy in India had seemed singularly unaware of the power that had arisen among this class of English-educated Indians whom they profoundly despised. Their racial contempt had led to this singular lack of insight.

The national movement, thus begun by the Congress, represented both the social aspirations of the middle classes in India and also the supreme desire for freedom and racial justice. It was not, however, until William Digby and Dadabhai Naoroji took up the economic aspect of the British occupation and revealed the impoverishment of the country, owing to the heavy military expenditure and "home charges," that these same middle classes, with their

intellect keenly alert, were startled into further action. For the facts themselves were staggering.

Dadabhai Naoroji was not only India's first great statesman, but also the first Indian economist who laid the foundation of an Indian school of economic thinking. He led the way forward to the great work of G. K. Gokhale which followed and compelled by its moral force and strict integrity the attention of English statesmen and economists in their turn.

It was during these closing years of the nineteenth century that the field which India gave for safe investments of capital under Government security, at a higher rate of interest than gilt-edged securities in England itself, began to bind India to the City of London—the greatest share market in the world. These bonds became stronger and tighter every year. Finance in Great Britain began to regard India more as a profitable market for investment than anything else. The coming into power of one party or another in the British Parliament, when this had happened, made little material difference in fundamental policy. For India became less and less a party question. An India Debate emptied the House of Commons. More and more the economic issue took precedence over everything else. Only on such a basis can the imposition of an excise duty on cotton goods made in India by Indian mills be understood. Lancashire's interests overruled every other consideration.

Indians, with very rare exceptions, had failed to appreciate the manner in which their country was being utilized for England's benefit and the way in which British capital was being encouraged while Indian savings were allowed to lie idle and were not utilized for the great public works which were being

built. It was only under the stress of war that the appeal was made at last for Indian capital to carry on the war. The result of that appeal surprised everyone by the largeness and the spontaneity of the response.

At this time the Congress leaders were chiefly concerned with obtaining political favours for their own educated classes and rebutting the insult and contempt which was levelled at them by Englishmen, who treated them as racial inferiors. There was extraordinarily little thought of the exploitation which was going on all the while and the ever-increasing misery and poverty of the common people.

A typical example of this general short-sightedness may be seen in the presidential address of Surendranath Banerjea at Poona in 1895. While refuting the charge, made by an English-edited newspaper, that Indians were beginning to include the figure of "Congress" in the Hindu pantheon, he made this statement: "I was not aware that any responsible Congressman had ever asked for representative institutions for one woman or for the masses of our people." He added the words, "We should be satisfied if we obtain representative institutions of modified character for the educated community, who by reason of their culture and enlightenment, their assimilation of English ideas, and their familiarity with English methods of government, might be presumed to be qualified for such a boon."[1]

The contrast is a very striking one between a Congress audience which could applaud sentiments

[1] Presidential Address, Surendranath Banerjea, Poona, 1895, pp. 213–14 (published Natesan, Madras).

of that kind forty years ago with the Congress of to-day! It was only the genius of Dadabhai Naoroji and his marvellous insight into the true meaning of the British connection in relation to the growing poverty of India that brought the economic issue into prominence. When the work done by William Digby and Dadabhai had been made public and the facts had been proved by an increasing volume of statistics, this subject took its rightful place at last in the minds of all political spokesmen. Later on, when Mahatma Gandhi became the recognized Congress leader, the poverty of India's villages became its primary concern, and it has remained such ever since.

## Chapter III

# THE BRITISH COMMITTEE

FROM the earliest days, under the direction of Mr. A. O. Hume, the Congress had realized the importance of an agency in London which should be able to represent the interests of India at the very centre of power. Especially in the late nineteenth century it was held universally among Indian political leaders that the only way to get their grievances redressed was to bring them incessantly before the notice of the British public.

This idea persisted until 1920, when the Congress adopted the policy of active Non-co-operation. At that time it was decided to sever this close connection with British statesmen and to throw every bit of energy into the struggle in India itself. But before this there was an almost pathetic reliance on the power and influence of the British electorate. The British would soon make an end of the "unwisdom and injustice of the present administration" and set forward "the auspicious continuance of British rule in India," when once they had been "made acquainted with the conditions which existed in our unhappy country." Phrases like these occur again and again in the literature of the times.

Most of the early Congress leaders had been in England; many had been educated there from boyhood onwards: nearly all of them had brought back with them the idealism of British liberalism. They had not yet realized how, behind the scenes, the mighty power of finance-capitalism was undermining

these liberal ideals all the while and bringing in gross self-seeking instead.

"Individual English officials," a Congressman wrote in 1888, "may violate my liberties and usurp my rights; but I know that English public opinion will ever be, as it always has been, on the side of justice and righteousness. But this I cannot honestly and truly say of my own people."[1]

This pathetic trust in British justice was a marked feature of the age. The contrast was constantly drawn by leading Congressmen between the high-handed behaviour of British officials in India as compared with the generous reception which every plea for a Liberal policy received in England. There was also very little risk in Great Britain of that governmental interference which dogged the steps of Indian politicians in India itself.

From many contemporary records it may be gathered that as early as 1887, two years after the first session of the National Congress in Bombay, the first steps were taken to organize public opinion in Great Britain. Dadabhai Naoroji, who had already lived for some time in England as a merchant, offered to act as a voluntary agent of the Congress. He was not given any funds, nor did he seek any formal recognition, yet in a very short time he was able to make a deep impression. Pandit Bishan Narayan Dhar writes in 1889: "The change which has occurred in English public opinion and in the attitude of Parliament with regard to the National Congress has influenced in a decisive manner the policy of the Government of India and instances may be cited which will show that even in this country

[1] Quoted by F. Pincott from the *Advocate*, June 19, 1888.

the agitation has not failed to bear fruit. The first Congress had insisted on establishing Provincial Councils for the North-Western Province and the Punjab and the Government gave a Council to the United Provinces."[1]

Charles Bradlaugh at this time threw his whole weight into the cause of the Congress and his influence gave the Indian Agency the necessary stimulus which it had lacked before. He became the champion of the National Congress in the British Parliament, working with Dadabhai in London. An office was opened at 25 Craven Street, Strand, with Mr. William Digby as superintendent. An advisory body of public men was formed in July 1889 which was called the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. Sir William Wedderburn was elected chairman and retained that office until his death in January 1918.

In December 1889 Charles Bradlaugh attended the Congress session at Poona. A formal resolution was passed confirming the appointment of the British Committee. A number of prominent leaders were appointed at the same time to conduct a campaign in England. Their names were Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendranath Banerjea, Manomohan Ghosh, R. N. Mudholkar, and W. C. Bonnerjee. With them were five Englishmen, George Yule, A. O. Hume, J. Adam, Eardley Norton, and J. E. Howard. A sum of 45,000 rupees was raised to cover their expenses.

Pundit Bishan Narayan Dhar wrote: "The Liberal Press is enthusiastic for the Congress, and the general tone of the Conservative papers is one of

[1] *India in England*, pp. 24, 25.

approbation, if not of eulogy. There is not a single town of importance in Great Britain where the name of the Congress is not known. . . . Great public meetings have been held in London and other places."

But the most effective work of all was being done by Mr. William Digby, who published in close co-operation with Dadabhai a book called *Prosperous British India*, which led to considerable controversy. An attack had been made on the Congress by Sir E. Watkins in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He wrote: "I am strongly of opinion that Russian gold is being circulated . . . among these native agitators of whom you hear so much. You may compare it to the circulation of American dollars in Ireland."

Mr. A. O. Hume replied with some heat, pointing out that although the Congress expenditure for the last year was £20,000, there was, in addition, expenditure in kind after the traditional Indian fashion. As regards himself, instead of receiving any remuneration, he had spent £1,472 out of his own pocket. "The success of the Congress Movement," he wrote, "means the removal of all those causes of dissatisfaction which tend to alienate India from England and the perfect consolidation of union between the two countries."

In India itself this new activity in Great Britain led to violent opposition from a section of the European Press. The *Englishman*, of Calcutta, wanted Mr. W. S. Caine, M.P., to be deported and the *Pioneer* wrote in a similar manner about Mr. A. O. Hume.

The agency in London issued pamphlets giving general information. One of these, by Mr. W.

Digby, *The Queen Empress's Promises: how they are broken*, created a considerable stir at the time. The work of the British Committee was highly appreciated in India and a resolution thanking the workers was passed at the Calcutta Congress of 1890. So great was the enthusiasm aroused that a further resolution was passed to hold a session of the Congress itself in London in 1892 of not less than one hundred delegates and Rs. 46,000 were voted for the expenses of the coming year in Great Britain. It was also in 1890 that the first issue of the journal *India* was published. In 1891 the proposed session of the Congress in London was postponed "in view of the General Election now impending in England." A sum of money equivalent to that of previous years was also passed unanimously.

In 1892 the Congress thanked "the electors of Central Finsbury both for their kindly sympathy with its objects and for having so generously accorded to it the valuable services of their honoured friend, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, who is destined, the Congress hopes, long to represent both Central Finsbury and India in the British Parliament."

From time to time English members of the British Committee visited the Congress sessions. While each year a sum of nearly half a lakh of rupees was sent over from India to meet the expenses, it became clear towards the end of the century that such a large sum could not be continued, year by year, without great difficulty. In 1901 the sum was reduced to Rs. 30,000. In 1902 a certain number of copies of *India* were allocated to each province in order to meet expenses. A special delegation fee of

Rs. 10 was also charged which went to meet the London expenses.

Meanwhile, within the Congress itself a division of opinion had arisen. The "New Party," as it was called, wished to concentrate all agitation in India. By the year 1905 the Congress was becoming more active than ever in India itself. Yet in 1908 a resolution thanked the British Committee "for its disinterested and strenuous services in the cause of India's political advancement."

The most effective way of making the facts about India known by those in authority was by the journal *India*, which was first published monthly and kept up a high standard of accurate information and comment. William Digby was the first editor until the end of the year 1892. Then up to September 1893 H. M. Stephens, Lecturer in Indian History at Cambridge, edited the paper. After that Mr. Gordon Hewart, now Lord Hewart, Lord Chief Justice, became the editor. His brilliant writing did much to rouse interest in Indian affairs. From January 1898 it became a weekly journal. "It is simply carrying on," the editor wrote, "the business of its deceased parent the monthly *India* whose hard-earned savings have given it a start in life." Among those who carried on with great self-sacrifice this weekly edition, Sir H. E. A. Cotton, S. K. Ratcliffe, H. S. L. Polak, Helena Normanton, and Fenner Brockway may be mentioned.

The British Committee's work became more extensive as the nineteenth century drew to its close. Not only were over a hundred meetings held in the large towns in a single year, but speakers were supplied to numerous other social and political gather-

ings where the problem of India was discussed. *India* became a powerful organ for bringing to the notice of English readers different aspects of the Indian subject. Mr. Romesh Dutt was a frequent contributor and his articles on "Land Settlement and Famine" attracted wide attention.

The change, however, which has already been mentioned, came early in the twentieth century, when the new party arose within the Congress itself which objected to petitioning in any shape or form and took up a "Sinn Fein" attitude with regard to Indian political affairs. The charge of mendicancy was constantly levelled against the older type of politician by this new school which will be described fully later. Their opportunity of carrying public opinion with them came in 1905 with the partition of Bengal. For this flagrant act of Lord Curzon, undertaken without any previous consultation with Indian leaders, proved clearly that the bureaucracy both in India and in England had become quite unwilling to relinquish any of its power by peaceable methods of persuasion. The programme of direct action by an ever-increasing boycott became substituted for a programme of constitutional agitation.

In this new atmosphere of independence it became clear that very few further funds would be provided in India for British Committee work in London. Englishmen themselves who were the true friends of India maintained their work of contact and good-will: but they had to provide their own funds in order to keep their organization active, and the paper *India* was obliged to stand on its own feet, though here a certain amount of help was still forthcoming. The paper lingered on up to

the end of the year 1921 when it was suspended by the Congress. Looking back over the years that have passed since with all their important events, so difficult for Englishmen to understand, there can be little doubt that a great opportunity was lost by the withdrawal of the valuable paper from circulation at one of the most critical times in the history of the relationship between India and Great Britain.

During these later years Sir Henry Cotton, Sir William Wedderburn, and Dr. G. B. Clark worked on, with Mr. Douglas Hall as secretary, carrying out their very difficult task with a devotion that needs full recognition. One of the causes which was specially indebted to the British Committee for the help it rendered at a crucial moment was that of the Indians in South Africa. It also brought steady pressure to bear on British public opinion all through the course of Mahatma Gandhi's passive resistance struggle in that country.

## Chapter IV

# THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

THE attitude of the great Muslim community towards the Congress in these early days needs careful examination. For while some of those who were liberal and progressive became members of the Congress from the very outset and held the highest offices in its organization, the Muslims as a body held aloof. Strong pressure was exercised by leading Muslims in this direction.

The movement against the Congress was led by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who was undoubtedly the greatest personality which the Muslim community had produced in the whole of the nineteenth century. No name stands out like his in the history of Islam in India during that period. His romantic story has already been related in the chapter which deals with the Aligarh movement. It has been pointed out that, while his heroic attempt at reform started from a purely religious basis, it widened out inevitably until it touched both the social and political sphere. The band of fellow workers that he gathered round him contained some of the noblest names in Islam, and he held their loyalty to the very end. He was their chosen leader and they followed him faithfully.

His aim, as we have related, was to impart a liberal English education of the highest type to Muslim youths, whose backwardness had greatly distressed him. This Liberal religious movement within Islam, which led onward to the foundation of the M.A.O. College, has profoundly affected the

whole political life of India. It has hitherto tended to make the National Congress only partially in touch with the Muslim community as a whole. The Muslim League has represented a parallel political body of ever-growing importance, which has never been amalgamated with the Congress, although (as we shall see later) not seldom working in cordial co-operation with it.

In the origin and foundation of the Congress Sir Syed Ahmed seems to have taken no part. He was entirely absorbed in the work of his own college at Aligarh. He had at first to break down the hostility of the Europeans. For, as we have seen, the strong conviction prevailed that the outbreak of rebellion was the last effort of the Moghul Emperor in Delhi, in conspiracy with Muslims in other places, to restore in some form or other Muslim rule. All this seems to have been entirely imaginary, for the revolt broke out owing to entirely different causes. But the cloud under which the whole Muslim world in India remained was not really dispersed until the singularly striking personality of Sir Syed Ahmed brought conviction to the minds of those in authority that their fears had been groundless and that it was to say the least bad policy to drive the Muslims to despair.

In founding his college at Aligarh Sir Syed Ahmed relied on the support of the Government in everything he attempted. The staff of the college was recruited in a great measure from England and every possible care was taken in appointing the principal, on whom so much depended. Even Sir Syed Ahmed's unbounded energy was almost exhausted in meeting the difficulties of the earliest days.

It was an amazing thing to see Sir Syed Ahmed's energy still unexhausted when he was drawing near to his eightieth year and the difficulties of the college seemed to grow greater instead of less. His vitality remained unabated up to the very end.

Sir Syed Ahmed from the first had stood out against any close amalgamation with the Congress. He held with all the strength of a life-long conviction that the Muslims in India must stand by themselves and work out their own salvation as a community with the help of the British rulers. He had grown old in mind as well as in body during the last years of his long life and this may have had something to do with his final decision. His personality was always commanding, and it became more so as he grew older, while the respect and reverence for him among Muslims were far greater in those last years than they had ever been before. For these reasons his decision to oppose the Congress and his advice to hold aloof from it received after his death in 1898 almost a religious sanction. In the north of India his counsel prevailed and his verdict was quoted as sacrosanct for a whole generation.

Yet there were Muslims of the highest reputation who all along took exception to this attitude. Their strength at first lay chiefly in the Bombay Presidency, for Sir Syed Ahmed's influence was powerful in the north. The Hon. Mr. Badruddin Tyabji presided over the Third Congress in Madras and Rahmatullah M. Sayani presided at Calcutta in 1896. The former stated in his presidential address at Madras: "I, for one, am utterly at a loss to understand why Musalmans should not work shoulder to shoulder with their fellow countrymen (applause) of other races

and creeds, for the common benefit of all (loud applause). Gentlemen, this is the principle on which we in the Bombay Presidency have always acted. . . . I have not the smallest doubt that this is also the view held, with but few, though perhaps important exceptions, by the leaders of the Musalman communities throughout India."[1]

Nine years after this the Hon. R. M. Sayani, presiding over the Calcutta Congress of 1896, took up the discussion of the whole question of the Muslims joining the Congress. It was a masterly address, typical of liberal Muslim opinion all over the world. After giving many reasons why his own community ought to identify itself with the one national body, the Congress, he made a passionate appeal in the following words:—

"Indeed, it will be a happy day for India when the disproportion between those Muhammadans who actually are at school, and those who ought to be at school, is reduced to the lowest possible minimum, and the Indian Musalmans as a body make it a point to educate their children and actively co-operate in all the public movements in the country generally and especially our good Congress, the germ of our future federated Parliament . . . with hearts honest, true and unselfish . . . and thus participate in our great bloodless battle for justice and freedom, and especially make a beginning now, when all our minor anxieties are overshadowed by the cloud now impending over our beloved land, in which we too plainly discern the spectre of famine frowning down upon a teeming, frugal and cease-

[1] Presidential Address, Madras, 1887, Badruddin Tyabji, pp. 26, 27 (Natesan).

lessly industrious population, and join in asking redress at the hands of Government and in expressing disapproval of the mistaken system."

The later history of the Muslim-Congress *rapprochement*, which had thus been partly effected after the death of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, will be traced out in the following pages. But briefly the story runs thus. The great body of the Muslim community stood aloof from active participation in the Congress gatherings until the "Reign of the Moderates" began after the break-up of the Congress into two sections at Surat and the secession of those who were called Extremists for nearly ten years. During those years it was quite possible for patriotic Muslims to sign the Congress Creed without any fear of Government displeasure. Indeed, matters went so far during the viceroyalty of Lord Hardinge that Congress itself appeared to be coming back into Government favour, and when the War broke out in 1914 no public body in the whole of India showed more active readiness to participate in the struggle on the side of the British than the Congress.

Difficulties arose among leading Muslims when Turkey joined the Central Powers and fought against Great Britain. This divided for a time the Muslim community in India, but the great mass of public opinion remained firm on the side of the Allies and a pledge was given that none of the holy places of Islam would be touched. During these years of strain and excitement while the War was being carried on an *entente cordiale* was formed between the Congress and the Muslim League which resulted in the Lucknow Pact of 1916.

This was intended to co-ordinate the relations

between the two bodies and held the political field without a rival for many years to come. At the end of the period with which this book deals, this *entente* had become for all practical purposes a close alliance, and when the Non-co-operation struggle was organized in 1920 and the Khilafat Movement was taken up by the Congress itself, a Hindu-Muslim unity in actual practice began such as had rarely been witnessed in India before.

## Chapter V

# INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA

One other special subject needs to be mentioned in outline at this point which will come up later during a period when it assumed an All-India importance. The Indians who had been sent abroad to the British Colonies under an iniquitous system called "indentured labour" had been spread over them as labourers wherever there were sugar plantations. The emigration began soon after slavery was abolished; for the emancipated negroes refused to work any longer on the plantations where they had been forced to work as slaves. The sugar industry was saved by Indian labour, but at a terrible cost. For the five years of indenture were hardly less servile in character than the years of slavery itself.

In the West Indies, British Guiana, Mauritius, Natal, Fiji, thousands of Indians who had been recruited from the villages of Madras and the United Provinces were sent out under inhuman and immoral conditions. The recruiting itself was often fraudulent, especially that of the women, and the proportion of women to men was scandalously low.

Indians themselves had no voice in all these arrangements, which were made between the India Office and the Colonial Office. The consent was obtained in the first instance from the East India Company and then from the Government of India under the British Crown.

From time to time reports reached India concerning the evils which had sprung up along with the

system and of the horrible conditions under which the emigrant ships made their voyages and the large number of deaths on the journey. But nothing as yet could be done by Indians themselves and the recruiting went on unimpeded.

In 1894–6, however, the conditions under which the Indians were obliged to live in South Africa brought the whole evil state of things prominently before the Congress. Mr. V. Madanjit was the delegate from Natal who first introduced the subject to the notice of the National Congress, and year after year he persisted in making his voice heard. In 1894 the disenfranchisement of those Indians who had settled as free men in Natal was vehemently opposed by Congress. Again, in 1896, a further and much more seriously humiliating Act was passed. For it was ruled that those who had finished their five years of indenture on the sugar plantations should either renew this term of indenture and go back to the plantations or else pay to the Natal Government an iniquitous poll tax of £3 per annum for the privilege of remaining in the land. If they refused to do either of these they could be compulsorily repatriated.

Even these outrages of public justice were exceeded by the indignities heaped on Indians of all ranks of society by the European settlers. The story was told at each Congress session by Mr. Madanjit and others, how in the Transvaal and in Natal every inhuman thing was done to make their lives intolerable; how they were turned out of tramcars, pushed off the street pavements into the road, excluded from dining-rooms, abused, and treated with humiliations which no human being was able to bear.

The deplorable condition of Indians under indenture was allowed to go on not only in South Africa, but in Fiji and other parts of the British Dominions. Yet the Government of India was so subordinate at Westminster to the British Parliament that nothing at all adequate could be done to relieve it.

It has been thought well to bring this question of the treatment of Indians abroad into full prominence at this early stage, because it was out of this hard school of adversity and humiliation that the character of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was moulded. It was in South Africa also that he fashioned the weapons of non-violent non-co-operation and Satyagraha, or civil resistance, which were used by him with such powerful effect in India in later years. Out of that furnace of suffering his whole personality was refined, as pure gold is refined in the fire.

In the strangest manner possible, therefore, and beyond all human expectation, it was out of this dark hour of humiliation that the day of freedom for India dawned.

If we ask ourselves the further question, "What was the attitude of the bureaucracy towards the Congress during this period?" it is difficult to find direct and positive statements. It would almost seem as if a "conspiracy of silence" had been entered into by the authorities and the general opinion had been reached that the less said about the Congress the better. The earlier patronizing attitude had been succeeded, as we have seen, by a marked hostility in certain quarters and by the definite instructions that no one engaged in Government service should

have any direct part in Congress affairs. But as far as the records carry us, this was followed by something approaching to indifference.

The opinion had probably been reached that the new appointments on the Legislative Councils of non-official members, either by nomination or by the narrowest form of election, would take away from the National Congress any real power that might endanger the administration. Therefore, the less said about it in official circles the better. As far as we have been able to find out by enquiry from those who were actively engaged in Congress work at the end of last century, this was the normal attitude of English officials in India.

By non-official Englishmen the Congress was mainly held in contempt as representing only a "microscopical minority" of the Indian population which talked and passed resolutions. The theory was widely held that, by way of contrast, the District Officers of the Civil Service were far closer in touch with the rural India and understood its wants much better than the Congress barristers, who exploited the villagers in the law courts by their heavy fees and spent their lives in the cities out of touch with the voiceless masses of the common people.

It was not till Mahatma Gandhi took the lead in Congress affairs many years later that this reproach was entirely swept away. No one to-day could doubt for a moment that the Congress is in close touch with the village people. That is the cause of its success. But the fact that this has happened is due more to Mahatma Gandhi than to anyone else.

It is interesting to find that from the First Congress sessions onwards a strong protest was raised against

the very heavy military expenditure for British as compared with Indian troops, which was chiefly due to their transportation and maintenance in a hot climate. This extravagance crippled financial expenditure in every other direction. Along with protests against the Army budget resolutions were put forward advocating the formation of military schools and colleges where young Indian officers might be trained for the highest commands. The Queen's pledge of 1858 announcing and reaffirming racial equality was pointed out as making it imperative to throw open all commissions in the Indian Army to Indians as well as Englishmen. At the same time, the relaxation of the Arms Act was demanded in order to prevent the lowering of the martial standard among people in India who were prepared for military service.

In the light of the immense importance that has been given to the handicrafts of spinning and weaving in recent years, it is extremely interesting to note that as early as the Ninth Congress of 1893 Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya made the following fervent appeal:—

"Where are the weavers, where are those men who lived by different industries and manufactures, and where are the manufactures that were sent to England and other European countries in very large quantities, year after year? All that has become a thing of the past. Every one who is sitting here is clothed in cloth of British make—almost every one. Wherever you go, you find British manufactures staring you in the face.

"All that is left to the people is to drag out a miserable existence by agriculture and make infini-

tesimal profit out of the little trade left to them. . . . How, then is it possible for the country to be happy?"

An invincible belief in British justice runs through the whole of this period, from the first session onwards. This was mentioned in all the presidential addresses and was not formal and conventional, but genuine and sincere.

"The Congress," said one chairman of a reception committee, "is the greatest glory of British Rule in India. . . . We happily live under a Constitution whose watchword is freedom and whose main pillar is toleration." Mr. Rahmatullah Sayani in 1896 declared, "A more honest or sturdy nation does not exist under the sun than this English nation." Two years later Ananda Mohan Bose emphasized their loyalty at Madras. "The educated classes are the friends and not the foes of England—her natural and necessary allies in the great work that lies before her."

When we get glowing words like these in contrast with harsh acts in South Africa and elsewhere, it becomes clear that Indian political leaders were living in a world of dreams. They were not realists at all. They had not yet faced the hard facts of life which their own kith and kin were experiencing. Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Madanjit, and Mr. Polak made clear by their speeches throughout India and also before the Congress, on different occasions, that Indians in South Africa were helots and not free citizens at all. They were used as "hewers of wood and drawers of water" rather than offered an honoured place in the Dominions.

## Chapter VI

# THE FAMINE PERIOD

THE history of the National Congress from 1892 to 1905 has an importance of its own because it was the last time when the Congress leaders as a whole still implicitly believed that by presenting a fair and reasonable case and acting along purely constitutional lines, according to Parliamentary precedent, they could get the most glaring evils righted and at last win for themselves their freedom.

There were statesmen, thinkers, and organizers of the highest calibre, men of whom any nation might be proud, who went to the extreme length of patience and forbearance without even conceiving the thought in their minds that new methods were absolutely needed in order to shake the British Parliament out of its selfish indifference concerning Indian affairs.

Even though the news came regularly from England that the day set apart in the House of Commons for "Indian affairs" was the one day on which it was hard to find a quorum, this faith in British justice remained almost unshaken. It was still believed that an efficient and highly paid bureaucracy, with unlimited power in its hands, would willingly relinquish its power into the hands of those whom it had learnt to consider inferior and incapable of managing the administration of their own people.

When the fact is fully realized that this judgment concerning Indian incapacity for self-government

had become rooted in the minds of those who possessed authority, it is not difficult to understand how mistaken this purely mendicant method of gaining liberty was. Not even in a millennium would *swaraj* have been conceded along these lines. Yet with a magnificent faith and courage which we all may admire, men of the noblest character, brought up in the old English tradition of

> Freedom slowly broadening down
> From precedent to precedent,

still continued to believe and hope and labour, with little or no response.

Such men were Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, with his indomitable faith and organizing capacity, which spent itself at last in the foundation of the Hindu University at Benares, where his power was unimpeded and its results magnificent. Such again was Dadabhai Naoroji, who had now at last reached extreme old age, with his confidence in British justice entirely unshaken in spite of rebuff after rebuff. Such also was Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the uncrowned ruler of Bombay, on account of his amazing capacity for practical affairs. Sir Subramanya Iyer, Sir C. Sankaran Nair, and K. Nageshwara Rao Pantalu in the Southern Presidency were men of the same calibre. P. Ananda Charlu, Dr. Rashbehari Ghose, Sir Satyendra (afterwards Lord) Sinha, Badruddin Tyabjo, and Rahmatullah Sayani could all be mentioned, along with Sir Ali Imam and Syed Hasan Imam, as sharing these same rooted ideas that nothing more was needed to reach the goal of freedom, which all had in view, except at

every step forward to co-operate with the Government of India and to point out in constitutional ways where it was going on a wrong path and acting contrary to the best Indian opinion.

Two persons have been omitted from the list because they stood at this time somewhere between the old and the new schools of thought. Mr. G. K. Gokhale, in the Bombay Presidency, was a man of political genius far beyond others with whom he worked night and day. His character was so utterly selfless that Mr. Gandhi, coming as a stranger from South Africa, gave his allegiance to him at first sight. "Here is the man for me," he said to himself, and he followed him faithfully till his early death in 1915 deprived India of the greatest mind in national affairs that she possessed.

Surendranath Banerjea is still more difficult to place. Going to the very edge of revolution and in the Bengal partition days leading the whole Bengali people in revolt, he yet remained to the end a constitutionalist at heart, as his autobiography clearly shows. But during this period he was feared and almost hated by the authorities on account of his power to sway not only the educated classes by his oratorical English, but also to hold vast audiences from the villages enthralled by his eloquence in his mother tongue.

Many other names could be mentioned of Congressmen of this period, some of whom are still living while others have passed away. Mr. Jinnah, of Bombay, was just beginning to rise in All-India public importance. His accession to the Congress at this time as the most brilliant and eloquent among the younger Muslims, brought many of them, after

Sir Syed Ahmed's death, closer to the national organization than they had ever come before. Men watched his career from every part of India and regarded him, along with G. K. Gokhale, as one of the coming Congress leaders. Tej Bahadur Sapru, from Allahabad, as a member of the Congress in those early days, was equally brilliant in his profession at the Bar and great things were expected of him. D. E. Wacha, as secretary of the Central Congress office, did invaluable service which needs to be recorded.

But while, under Lord Curzon, with his astounding ability and prodigious powers of work, the officials in India hardened and the note of imperialism became more dominant, the fire of passion, anger, and burning indignation began to enter into the Congress proceedings. The yoke of foreign subjection was far more bitterly felt. The evils from which India suffered were much more clearly seen. A new type of Congressman came into the foreground. Lokmanya Tilak, Bepin Chandra Pal, Brahmabandav Upadhayaya, and, greatest of all in intellectual eminence, Aurobindo Ghose, swayed the younger Congress members and created a new Congress mentality. Their individual achievements will be described later. Here it will be sufficient to notice how they brought into Indian Congress politics an entirely new note, which carried the younger generation with it from the first day when it was sounded.

They won their earliest psychological victory by naming the method of petitioning Parliament, "mendicancy." What was demanded, they said, was not to be asked for on bended knee, but rather as

men who had justice all the while on their side. Lokmanya Tilak's famous sentence, "Freedom is my birthright, and I will have it," rang throughout India. It became the slogan of the new Congress leaders as they went out to do battle against the bureaucracy.

Certain outstanding events in the history of the times helped greatly the rise of this new political outlook in India. The first was the Italo-Abyssinian War of 1894. The crushing defeat at Adowa of an entire Italian army by the Abyssinians was the first blow that destroyed once and for all the idea of the invincibility of European arms. Young India began suddenly to rub its eyes and ask the question, "Is England really unassailable? May we not, sometime in the future, challenge Great Britain as Abyssinia has challenged Italy?"

The superiority of European military and naval power had been taken so much for granted that this Italian defeat by Africans armed with matchlocks came to India first of all with a shock of surprise and then as an example to emulate when the right time should come. The sudden reaction caused by this event was not felt in India alone but all over Asia. It restored self-confidence and stirred the blood of youth in every country. It was felt as far as Japan, which was fast rising to power. Though Young India was bound with fetters, yet one day she would be free.

Towards the close of the nineteenth century, just at the time when the failure of the Indian Councils Act of 1892 to give any real satisfaction was realized with intense disappointment and the defeat of the Italians at Adowa had raised new hopes, India was

visited by one of the most prolonged and disastrous famine periods that had ever occurred in all her long history. The sense of oppression became in consequence more vividly acute.

In the North-West Provinces, failure of crops had taken place over 25,000 square miles and a population of thirteen million human beings was affected. A second area of famine in Rajputana and Central India covered 30,000 square miles and involved a population of fourteen millions. Yet a third area included Benares, Allahabad, and Agra with a population of twelve and a half millions.

The relief work, organized by the Government of India, broke down completely under a sudden strain of this kind. Mr. Gokhale, with facts which could not be answered or refuted, brought forward instances of neglect which showed how badly the relief work had been carried on and how discontent had spread among the people. In the Bombay Presidency, where it was much better organized than elsewhere, he gives this instance:

"About five or six weeks back there were about 1,800 labourers: no sheds had been provided for them and they had to sleep in the open fields at night. . . . Then the work expected from these poor people is too much; the men are starving and the result is they are unable to do the quantity of work expected from them. The hours of work are also far too long: the roll call is sounded at six in the morning and the work goes on till six in the evening with an interval of about an hour at noon."[1]

[1] G. K. Gokhale, speaking at the Calcutta Congress of 1896 in support of the Congress Famine Resolution. *Speeches of Gokhale*, Natesan, p. 558.

The wages paid were less than those paid to convicted criminals in jails.

The Congress, at its Calcutta session, unanimously adopted a resolution which pointed out what were considered to be the causes of the famine. It was regarded as due to "the drain of wealth from the country, which has been going on for years together, and the excessive taxation and over-assessment consequent on a policy of extravagance followed by the Government both in the Civil and Military Departments."

It went on to remind the Government of "its solemn duty to save human life and mitigate human suffering." It also stated that the provisions in the existing Famine Code were inadequate as regards wages and rations, and oppressive as regards task work. It appealed to Government "to redeem its pledges by restoring the Famine Insurance Fund to its original purpose, namely, the immediate relief of the famine-stricken people."

There were many things which happened in those terrible famine years which could never afterwards be forgotten. On the Indian side there was the utter helplessness of their own situation, while millions were starving and dying. This brought home to every leader the wrong that was being done by leaving the whole relief administration in the hands of officials, most of whom were of a different race. For however great might be their individual sacrifice, when famine prevailed, they were likely to differ from Indians themselves as to the method of relief. It appears that the decision had been made by Lord Elgin not to ask for help from Great Britain, since "it was hoped that there would be no

need for such an appeal, and that the rains would be sufficient to save the country from an extensive famine."[1]

The Congress, on hearing this fatal decision, supplemented their main resolution with these words: "In view of the fact that private charity in England is ready to flow freely into this country at this awful juncture and that large classes of sufferers can only be reached by private charity, this Congress desires to enter its most emphatic protest against the manner in which the Government of India is at present blocking the way and humbly ventures to express the hope that the disastrous mistake committed by Lord Lytton's Government in the matter will not be repeated on this occasion."[2]

It has been necessary to deal with this at considerable length because we are able to see from it how the Congress leaders were carried on from purely political questions as to the Indian Councils, with direct or indirect representation, to the economic questions affecting the daily lives of the villagers. From being concerned chiefly with franchise it became concerned primarily with daily food. From being interested mainly in the rights and privileges of an educated class, it became absorbed in the sufferings of the poor.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of the effect of the famine period upon the whole history of the Congress. Many of those who had taken a leading part in Congress affairs had been men of affluence, who had made fortunes, for the most part, in the legal profession or in commerce.

[1] *Annual Register*, Longmans, London, 1897, pp. 341–2.
[2] Twelfth Resolution, Calcutta Congress, 1896.

Of their courage and patriotism there could be no question. They were ready also to make great sacrifices for the public cause. But they had strangely little touch with the villages. Now they were able to see with their own eyes what the real sufferings of India were. They were also forced to face the question whether the country districts of India were getting poorer under the foreign rule which had been administering them with foreign methods.

## Chapter VII

# THE PLAGUE

At the very time that famine was raging, the bubonic plague appeared in India in its most virulent form. It was destined in the course of the next twenty years to destroy hundreds of thousands of people.

In September 1897 there was a sudden and alarming increase of the epidemic in Poona which had been for some time past threatened with just such an outbreak. In Poona City, on November 15th, 134 cases and 94 deaths were reported within forty-eight hours, and on that date there were 634 cases in the Poona hospitals. The total returns for Bombay Presidency up to the end of the year were 14,257 cases and 11,882 deaths. It was frankly acknowledged in the official summary of the events which led up to the "plague riots" that "the repressive measures, which were absolutely necessary to stamp out the plague, came in conflict with the caste prejudices of the Hindus."

These plague prevention methods unfortunately took the most stringent form just in the very part of western India where there had been already such heartburning recriminations over the method of famine relief. Public feeling, which had already reached a very high state of tension, was still further embittered by the Government's foolish action in churlishly refusing to take advice and assistance from the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha. Tilak started at once Hindu Plague Hospitals and worked night and

day to collect the necessary funds. He refused to leave Poona as others did and remained at his post, accompanying the search parties as a volunteer and in this way helping to restore confidence. He had also given the people sane advice and had strongly supported certain measures adopted for the suppression of the plague, urging at the same time that they should be carried out in a conciliatory spirit without offending the susceptibilities of the religious communities.

His great simplicity of life and self-sacrifice on behalf of the people gained him in after years the name of Lokmanya, which may be translated "respected by the people." He was in every way the leader of the masses. It is not possible to discuss at length the trial which followed after plague riots had taken place and two English soldiers (one an officer) were murdered. Tilak was charged with publishing articles in his paper, the *Kesari*, which incited to violence. Six European jurors returned a verdict of guilty and three Indian jurors returned "not guilty." The judge accepted the verdict of the majority and sentenced Tilak to eighteen months' imprisonment. Leave to appeal to the Privy Council was refused.

This imprisonment without appeal to the Privy Council raised a storm of indignation throughout the country. The *Hindu*, of Madras, commenting on the trial, wrote: "The progress of the people has been pushed back fifty years. The next aim of our enemies will be the Congress which they want to see stamped out."[1]

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, of Calcutta, expressed

[1] *The Hindu*, Madras, September 15, 1897, "The Tilak Trial."

the astonishment of the educated classes at the new turn of events. "Have we not been taught," it wrote, "from our infancy that the Goddess Freedom, when expelled from every country in the world, took refuge in England? Did not a distinguished English poet, in a few sublime lines, claim for his country the credit that no sooner did a man touch British soil than his shackles fell off? . . . Placing implicit faith in the professions of Englishmen generally and their statesmen specially, the Indians undertook to criticize Government measures freely. Do they not feel now as Gil Blas did when he was expelled?"[1]

The *Hindu* added these significant words: "Nothing has happened during these forty years to remind the people more of their abject helplessness and to give more poignancy to their consciousness of their political subjection than the recent doings of the Bombay Government."

The Congress, in its resolution, dealt with the general principle, urging the amendment of the notorious clause 124A of the Indian Penal Code, which made it a criminal offence for anyone to bring the Government into hatred or contempt. It urged that such a law was too vague and that it might be used for any sinister purpose. It should therefore be brought into line with that of England. "From our earliest school days," said Mr. C. Sankaran Nair, "the great English writers have been our classics. Englishmen have been our professors in Colleges. English History is taught in our Schools. We now live the life of the English. . . . To deny us the freedom of the Press: to deny us representative institutions,

[1] *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, September 19, 1897.

England will have to ignore those very principles for which the noblest names in her history toiled and bled."[1]

The result of this imprisonment of Mr. Tilak could easily be predicted. While the older members of the Congress gave wise and moderate counsel, a new party was formed with a much more sweeping and revolutionary programme. On Tilak's release he at once became its recognized leader.

In the years that followed a further event occurred outside India which was of far greater moment in the East than the Italian defeat by the Abyssinians at Adowa. For after a prolonged conflict, the Russian Army and Navy both received a crushing defeat at the hands of Japan. The consequences of this were twofold:

(1) Those who had criticized the Government of India's military expenditure had been told that the expense was necessary in order to resist a Russian invasion. They were now able to point to this overthrow of Russia by an Eastern Power like Japan.

(2) There was a feeling of jubilation because a European Power had been beaten by an Eastern nation. The younger generation in India began to ask the question whether the British Army was needed by India to resist an invasion. Might not the Indian money spent on bringing over British troops from England be better spent on rescuing the poor from famine, plague, and pestilence?

Questions like these naturally raised in young patriotic minds, a whole series of doubts as to whether the older members of the Congress were right in merely protesting and petitioning. The feeling

[1] Presidential Address, C. Sankaran Nair, 1897, pp. 377–8 and 396.

became general that something far more drastic was needed if the succession of disasters, whereby the poor were becoming poorer, and famine was always threatening, was to be stopped. If Japan had been able out of its own resources to win such a victory, why could not India, with much larger latent resources, be powerful enough to gain her own freedom?

Apart from the political status, which concerned chiefly the educated classes, the misery of the whole country owing to famine and plague, revealed a situation in which the masses of the poorest classes were vitally involved. Thus it came home to the minds of educated Indians that unless they themselves were prepared to act, instead of merely criticizing the British administration, they would not be worthy of their freedom. The Boers had put up a gallant fight in South Africa. The Japanese had fought nobly in the Far East. Their own turn might come. It would mean much more than merely sending mendicant resolutions to England.

Lord Curzon's viceroyalty coincided with these difficult days. Lovat Fraser in his biography begins with a paragraph stating that, just before the new Viceroy landed, "the Indian peoples were apparently more docile than ever and they were certainly outwardly tranquil. The annual gatherings of the National Congress furnished a vent for the expression of eloquent aspirations on the part of a few ardent politicians of whom not much was heard for the rest of the year. . . . Few foresaw that the time was approaching when the entire country would be disturbed by strife and unrest."[1]

[1] *India Under Curzon and After*, by Lovat Fraser (Heinemann 1911), p. 1.

Certainly Lord Curzon on his arrival in 1898 inherited a task which had become amazingly complicated. He had immediately to decide the Frontier problem and to settle what was to be done with Chitral; to supervise measures for checking the spread of plague and, above all, to re-establish a country still suffering from the ravages of famine. But behind all these he was faced more than any other Viceroy since the days of Lord Lytton with the silent, sullen, and ever-increasing opposition of national India, which had now become more closely knit together owing to the political activities of Congress. He had also to overhaul the rusty machinery of Government itself.

On the day before the new Viceroy landed, the Congress, which met that year in Madras, passed the following resolution of welcome:

"The All-India National Congress notes with gratitude his Lordship's words of sympathy for the people of India and trusts that the policy of progress and confidence in the people which has characterized the best traditions of British Rule in this country will be followed during his tenure of office and authorizes the President to wire the foregoing resolution to His Lordship at Bombay."[1]

Two years later at the Sixteenth Congress at Lahore in 1900, the Congress passed another resolution thanking Lord Curzon "for the benevolence of his famine policy, and for his firm resolve to uphold the interests of order and justice."

Ananda Mohun Bose, the President of the Madras Congress in 1900, paid him a striking tribute: "To Lord Curzon will fall the honour of

[1] Fourteenth Congress, Madras, 1898.

carrying for the first time the British administration of a United India to a new century. May that century open in sunshine and brightness and hope, free from shadows which linger over the land, not only from the calamities of Nature, but also from the weakness of man."[1]

How Lord Curzon's attitude changed and he became more autocratic than any of his predecessors will be told in the next section. For in the long run no one did more to inflame the minds of the younger generation against the autocratic nature of British rule than he did.

[1] A. N. Bose, President, Sixteenth Congress, 1960 (Natesan), p. 403.

Part Six

# THE SECOND PHASE

*The Revolt Against the Partition*

## Chapter I

# THE CURZON ERA

LOOKING back upon the first five years of the twentieth century, which have been aptly described as the Curzon Era, we are able to see to-day in perspective that the increasingly imperious and high-handed attitude of Lord Curzon towards the people of India led on directly to a very strong reaction. For it came at the very time when the new spirit of nationalism in Bengal was gathering to a head. The National Congress, which had welcomed him with open arms when he first came, was in almost open revolt when he retired.

Yet he had a greatness of his own which India also recognized, and at the beginning of his career, as we have seen, he had won high praise on account of his remarkable courage and justice. For he severely censured, first of all, a British battalion in Rangoon which had refused to expose and condemn a dastardly outrage by a party of soldiers that had led to the death of an Indian woman; and on a second occasion, when an action of a similar character occurred at Sialkot, he had degraded the whole regiment. Such fearless impartiality towards his own countrymen gained him something of the same bitter hostility from them that had been shown earlier to Lord Ripon, when he also had stood out for equal racial justice.

The official history of the Congress sums up this side of his career in the following manner:

"His Ancient Monuments Preservation Act is a

blessing for which Indian Nationalism owes him a deep debt of gratitude. The manly way in which he punished a regiment in the Rangoon and O'Hara cases remains as a tribute to his courage and sense of justice."

It was Lord Curzon, too, who refused to allow Indian indentured labour to be recruited for the Transvaal gold-mines after the Boer War.

But the period between 1900 and 1906 was far too full of national fervour and excitement to suffer tamely, without any protest, retrograde and reactionary acts by the same Viceroy, who was prepared in imperial interests to take away liberties and privileges already granted. His noble conduct in the matter of the British soldiers was soon discounted among patriotic Indians on account of his curtailment of self-government in spheres where free institutions had already been granted by the governing power. He showed this reactionary attitude both towards the Calcutta Corporation and also towards the universities. For under the plea of reform, he officialized these bodies and in this way went clean against the current of the times which was running rapidly towards freedom. He also quite gratuitously charged the educated classes of India with untruthfulness, as though truth was a Western virtue. Such strange obliquity of vision undid much of the good he had accomplished in other departments with an almost superhuman energy of masterfulness. Finally he exceeded the limits of all his previous high-handed and despotic actions by forcing the partition of Bengal against the will of the people, dividing the language area at one stroke.

Thus in spite of his early promise and popularity

he soon showed himself in a hundred ways a Conservative imperialist who had no strong belief in the innate capacity of Indians to govern themselves. He openly stated that Indians must be regarded as "unequal to the responsibilities of high office." Thus in the long run he placed upon Queen Victoria's proclamation of racial equality a narrow interpretation and acted as though it was a pledge for a far distant future rather than an immediate present. We are told, however, that he redeemed this want of trust in Indian capacity for self-government towards the end of the Great War by cordially accepting the new proclamation which was announced by Mr. Montagu in the House of Commons in August 1917, and that he proposed at the Cabinet meeting that the word "responsible" should be added, which made all the difference to that document.

The National Congress, which the official régime of Lord Curzon treated with a superior air of contempt, at first appeared to be almost helpless in the face of such an imperious ruler, who took no notice of public opinion when it thwarted his own will. Clearly the constitutional form of petitioning carried no weight with an autocracy of this kind. The resolutions which were passed in the early years of the new century at the Congress gatherings reveal a pathetic perplexity. The only substantive remedy which was proposed, as a practical solution of the deadlock between rulers and people, was the revival of the old form of periodic enquiry by the British Parliament into Indian affairs which might result in a new mandate.

It was during this highly explosive period of renascent nationalism that the Russian fleet was

defeated by the rising power of Japan. This event thrilled the whole of Asia. The news was rapidly broadcast from one people to another all over the East. It was declared that the aggressive Western nations were not so strong as they outwardly appeared to be. The spell was broken. The ardent fire of patriotism flamed up in the hearts of multitudes of the common people. A new era was dawning when the whole of Asia would be free. The atmosphere of India changed from despondency to hope.

To the new Congress party—led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bepin Chandra Pal, and Aurobindo Ghose—the days of mere petitioning were now over. They were looked back upon with something of disdain. Another form of attack on the stronghold of bureaucracy was needed according to their doctrine. The era of direct action had arrived. When, therefore, Lord Curzon against all entreaty decided without consultation to partition Bengal, he did the very thing that was certain to cause a conflagration. For Bengal had already become the most progressive province in the whole of India and a great literary renaissance had raised high the hopes of her people. To cut the language area in half at such a time by a stroke of the pen was a wanton outrage which stirred Bengal to its very depths with indignation. The whole country was soon ablaze.

Thus the golden opportunity was offered to the younger Congress leaders for testing the weapon of boycott which had just been forged. In certain respects it bore a resemblance to the Non-co-operation movement which Mahatma Gandhi initiated in later years. But, in other respects, the two movements were poles apart. For the boycott laid

no stress on non-violence; and as soon as ever the programme was put into operation violence and secret conspiracy broke out.

Here the Government of India had to share the blame. For repression in its ruthless form was employed, and Sir Bamfylde Fuller openly threatened that bloodshed might be necessary if the Congress on their side carried out their boycott to extreme lengths. Gurkha troops were brought down and stationed in East Bengal. Meetings were prohibited. Every weapon was used to crush the movement before it became too strong.

In East Bengal special efforts of repression were directed against the student community in the schools and colleges. The Government officials seemed for a time to lose all sense of proportion and a regular "dragooning" took place among the student class. The only result was further conspiracy and rebellion. The boycott movement was driven underground and the seeds of revolution were sown. This produced an atmosphere altogether different from the earlier Congress meetings with their petitioning and congratulatory resolutions. The educated classes, which had formerly been accustomed to lay stress on the benign influence of British rule, watched these events that were happening before their eyes in Bengal with something akin to dismay. Their temper was no longer passive and submissive to authority as it had been before. The immediate reaction of public opinion among all classes of the community was far too strong against these wanton acts of repression for it to have any chance of success. Instead of crushing the new-found spirit of independence which was everywhere abroad, it only increased its momentum.

On one side the effect of this repression was altogether deplorable and it needs to be mentioned with all frankness. For the police tyranny and espionage of the worst type, including the use of *agents provocateurs*, led to underground plots and preparation of bombs which did not stop short even at assassination. The Terrorist movement, as it was called, came very rapidly to a head. The ruthlessness of the police was answered by the violence of the secret conspirators. Thus a vicious circle was formed. Repression led on to violence, and violence led on to further repression. The miseries of nearly thirty years, during which the young manhood of Bengal was blighted by a terrible curse, have only just been brought to a close. This has been effected chiefly owing to the incredible sacrifice and the magnetic influence of the personality of Mahatma Gandhi. No one else could have wrought such a miracle, and his whole life has been staked on this great venture of reconciliation and peace.

The day when the partition was carried out was October 16th. Year after year in Bengal this date was kept sacred. The ceremony of *rakhi bandhan* was performed, wherein the sister tied a slight woollen thread round her brother's wrist and asked him to take the vow to undo the partition of Bengal. Thus the religious instinct of this highly imaginative and emotional people was brought to bear upon the political scene in this manner.

The whole of India, far beyond the boundaries of the Congress as it was then organized, responded to the appeal of Bengal. Each province became aroused in turn. The National Movement spread into remote country districts where the words

*Swadeshi* and *Swaraj* had hardly ever been heard before. When John Morley, as Secretary of State for India, to the great disappointment of all in India who valued Bengali culture, declared in the British Parliament that the partition of Bengal was a "settled fact," the Swadeshi Movement and the boycott of British goods became all the more strenuous.

Then followed one of those mischievous and misdirected actions which revealed the panic of the Government as the fiftieth anniversary of the Mutiny drew near. John Morley was threatened with a "second mutiny" in the Punjab if he did not act immediately and deport certain people without trial. Lala Lajpat Rai, who had been protesting in the strongest manner possible against an iniquitous Bill which was being introduced in the Punjab, was suddenly deported. A year later a saintly member of the Brahma Samaj, Krishna Kumar Mitter, who could not by any conceivable stretch of imagination be regarded as a violent, secret conspirator, was deported also along with others. Looking back at such arbitrary acts as these, which no one would defend or justify to-day, we are able to see more clearly why, at a later period, Mahatma Gandhi made the passing of the Rowlatt Act the signal for an open revolt.

In a recent volume on Lord Minto, published by his widow, we find that *after* the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai, the Viceroy carefully examined the Bill that was being put forward by the Punjab Government and discovered too late that it involved a clear breach of promise given to the retired and pensioned soldiers. He refused to sanction it, although pressed

very hard to do so: but he did not immediately recall from exile and imprisonment Lala Lajpat Rai. When, a year later, he was called upon to deport in the same manner the Bengali leaders, he offered no resistance to the official pressure that was brought to bear upon him.

It has been necessary at this point to go into these details because this policy of repression and the passing of many repressive Acts led more than anything else in the long run to stiffen the attitude of the Congress and to destroy once and for all what the younger leaders had rightly named the "mendicant policy."

Imprisonment and deportation became, during these years, the hard road of suffering which many were called upon to tread who loved their country and fearlessly condemned the Government when it departed from its liberal policy. Not till Lord Hardinge took up the reins of office did this repressive policy cease. His cancellation of the partition was an act of statesmanship which alone brought appeasement.

On the other side, the course taken was equally disastrous. For the terrorists, who were engaged in an underground conspiracy to overthrow the Government, having been provoked to violence by this reign of repression, perpetrated acts of bomb-throwing, shooting, and dacoity which hardened the counter-attacks of the police. This led on to all the horrors of a vendetta, with the inevitable suffering of innocent persons which such conduct always brings with it.

The lives of officials and magistrates were threatened by the revolutionary party. Two ladies,

the Kennedys, were killed at Muzaffarpur by mistake for Mr. Kingsford, the district judge. Other murders, such as that of Sir Curzon Wylie, in London, and of Mr. Jackson, the collector, at Nasik, revealed the horror of those times.

While these comments have carried us far beyond the period of 1905 to 1907, with which this chapter specially deals, it has been necessary thus to look ahead because it was in the early days of the partition struggle that the Government of India left aside its liberal methods of administration and became openly and violently repressive. On the other hand, it was in that same early period that terrorism and secret conspiracy found a lodgment in Bengal among the younger generation and led on to such disastrous results.

## Chapter II

# DADABHAI AND *SWARAJ*

DADABHAI NAOROJI, who was always reasonable by temperament, had been gradually losing patience with the bureaucracy owing to its obdurate opposition to all the demands of the Congress, however moderately presented. He had come back from England in extreme old age to preside at Calcutta, and he expressed himself with the utmost freedom. No speech delivered by a president of the National Congress ever had more far-reaching effects than that of Dadabhai in 1906. It led on, almost inevitably, to the split between the Moderates and Extremists, which came about at Surat only a year later.

Dadabhai was a determined fighter along constitutional lines. He was a statesman of Victorian Liberal traditions, whose long residence in England had given him an insight into British character, which he greatly admired. In the course of his parliamentary life in England he had been obliged to withstand many personal attacks and he had done so quite cheerfully; but the attitude of the Government of India towards the partition of Bengal and the obstinacy of John Morley in refusing to undo a political blunder of the worst character had made him desperate. He was also fired with enthusiasm by the splendid fight against this arbitrary decision which the Bengal leaders were making. He was with them in every phase of the struggle and his whole heart went out in admiration for a people who were so determined to offer resistance to injustice.

Thus his presidential speech in 1906 formed a remarkable departure from the conventional type of Congress address. Before this it had become almost a precedent that the president should review at some length the political events of the year and bring in as many arguments as possible in favour of Indians governing themselves. But Dadabhai introduced more business-like methods. His address was brief, pointed, and spirited. He wished the Congress not merely to applaud a good speech from the president, but to get to work in framing practical resolutions.

In the second place he introduced an altogether new tone which was free from the conventional phrases of former speakers. "We do not ask for any favours," he said. "We want only justice. Instead of going into any further divisions of our rights as British citizens, the whole matter can be comprised in one word—'self-government' or *Swaraj*, like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies."[1]

It was not only that Lokmanya Tilak's phrase had been adopted, and that "self-government" was now put forward as a right—but it was also for the first time, in such a place, that the form and nature of India's demand was expressed by an Indian word, *Swaraj*, the meaning of which could be easily understood throughout the length and breadth of India by the simplest villager as well as by the educated classes.

The old spell had been broken at last and men now spoke out their minds freely. This brought with it a psychological change that worked miracles in the succeeding years. It came at a time when the

[1] By this last word he meant what are now called the Dominions.

whole of educated India was eagerly desiring to have a symbol of its new aspirations, and this *mantram*[1] had been supplied by one who had spent long years of his life in exile in England, brooding over his country's poverty which he longed to cure.

Looking back, it appears strange that out of many leaders of the Congress, all of them younger than himself, it was Dadabhai who should have fathomed so instinctively and correctly the wishes of Young India and given expression to them in a simple word which was taken up as a battle-cry of freedom in after years.

The more one studies Dadabhai's singularly noble life and character and the purity of his record as a patriot, the more one is struck by the fact that he was never a mere politician in the ordinary sense of the term, but rather a prophet who felt the wrongs and the sorrows of the poor as his own. He had realized that the Congress movement in India had reached a new phase along with the struggle against the partition of Bengal. Mere sporadic outbursts of energy, here and there, could never attain the goal. The younger generation would not be satisfied with long-drawn-out reforms. The change in Indian political life that was needed, if it was to become effective, must be fundamental.

In one sense the change which the younger party desired was not radical, because it was almost purely political. Hardly as yet did it touch the underlying economic problem of exploitation, nor did it deal drastically with such fundamental social evils as untouchability, the position of women, child marriage, and the refusal to allow widows to re-

[1] *Mantram* is a propitious hymn, here it should mean a slogan.

marry. Nevertheless, on the political surface it was sincere, enthusiastic, and well justified.

We find also that this transformation in the political outlook, which threw away caution altogether and demanded fundamental rights, was brought about by many causes, some of which, such as the partition and Lord Curzon's hauteur, have been already noticed. But there were others much more deep seated which even made an alliance possible between the stiff orthodoxy of the Maharastra political leaders and the social idealists of Bengal, led by Aurobindo Ghose.

Such a conjunction of opposites as this was in itself an amazing fact, because Tilak and Aurobindo belonged to essentially different and opposed schools of thought so far as Hindu social customs were concerned, and it seemed impossible to find between them a common basis. Tilak's emergence into politics was in connection with the Shivaji Festival, the organization of which was a concrete example of Hindu achievement as well as a symbol of Hindu orthodoxy. Tilak seemed herein to be strangely lacking in political wisdom and to be quite unaware that by laying stress on such a festival at such a time he was sowing the seeds of Muslim antagonism in the near future.

Aurobindo, on the other hand, had entered into the arena out of the generous impulse of his highly strung nature. His approach was that of a devotee to an ideal rather than a practical realist.

His stay in the political arena was not a long one. Like Rabindranath Tagore before him, he soon realized that politics with its compromises was not his own rightful sphere. He went back into the life

of spiritual contemplation to which he rightly belonged.

The new forces to which Dadabhai had given eloquent expression, investing them with the symbolic word *Swaraj*, soon proved to be vital and strong enough to overcome these limitations imposed by differences of approach. There was the same conviction of the supreme need of freedom, whether it came from an idealist like Aurobindo, belonging to the Brahma Samaj, or a Chitpavan Brahmin, like Tilak, eager to revive and maintain his orthodox Hindu faith in all its completeness. Sooner or later the break would be certain to come and orthodoxy would either have to move forward or else sink back into reaction. The Hindu-Muslim problem would also have to be faced and the open accusation removed that on the main issues the Congress favoured Hinduism rather than Islam.

The events, therefore, that led up to the actual split in the Congress, which was not healed for many years, form an interesting study. Dadabhai's attitude, as we have seen, was largely responsible for the bolder tone of the Calcutta resolutions of 1906. His speech from the chair gave the lead. The more moderate elements inside the Congress had become extremely alarmed at the turn of events. There is no doubt that the change of the place where the next Congress was held from Nagpur to Surat was welcomed, if not actually arranged, by the party led by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. He had succeeded by the towering strength of his personality in preventing the resolutions for Boycott and National Education being included in the political programme of the Bombay Political Conference held at Surat in April

1907. It was quite natural therefore that he should hope to prevent them also at the Congress itself.

Gokhale, though far removed from Sir Pherozeshah Mehta in certain respects, was yet very unhappy at the line taken by the younger party. "You do not realize," he said, "the enormous reserve of power behind the Government. If the Congress were to do anything such as you suggest, the Government would have no difficulty in throttling it in five minutes."[1]

About this time Tilak himself told Nevinson,[2] who had asked him about his political views:

"Certainly there is a very small party which talks about abolishing the British rule at once and completely. That does not concern us: it is much too far in the future. Unorganized, disarmed, and still disunited, we should not have a chance of shaking the British suzerainty. We may leave all that sort of thing to a distant time."

Nevertheless, in support of the younger party was an increasing number of delegates who held with the utmost fervour that a drastic change in Congress method was needed if it were to be effective. The whole partition agitation had gone forward on new lines. It had pointed the way for an All-India struggle.

"Last year," they stated, "the Calcutta Congress, composed of Moderates and Nationalists, unanimously resolved to have for our goal *Swaraj*. It also passed certain resolutions on *Swadeshi*, Boycott, and National Education. The Bombay Moderates did

[1] Gokhale's version of the split, *The Surat Congress and Conferences*, by Natesan, p. xv.

[2] *New Spirit in India*, by H. W. Nevinson, p. 72 (Harper, 1908).

not raise any dissentient voice. Why cannot this be made the National Programme?"

Gokhale pointed out that the word *Swaraj* was only used by Dadabhai Naoroji himself; it did not appear in the Calcutta resolutions. But the very mention of *Swaraj* made the majority of the delegates believe that the whole Congress, Moderate as well as Nationalist, was changing its traditional attitude.

Mr. Nevinson, who was present at the Surat Congress, and was very closely in touch with the negotiators, has pointed out the difference which could not be bridged over. He writes as follows:

"The boycott of foreign goods was plain: it was a necessary part of *Swadeshi*, whether used as a political protest, or as an encouragement to Indian industries. But the boycott *movement* might mean the rejection of almost anything—the rejection of foreign goods, of foreign justice, foreign appointments, foreign education, foreign authority, taxation, Government itself. Already it had been so interpreted, both at the Calcutta Congress and frequently throughout the year. To yield on this point would be to hand over the Congress to the Extremists for ever. . . . Here was no half-way house, no common ground for compromise. The alteration of the wording was vital."[1]

There is no necessity, at this late hour of the day, to go further and to enter into details as to how the split actually came about. The hurling of the Mahratta shoe, which H. W. Nevinson made famous in his book called *The New Spirit in India* by his pungent humour, was quite unpremeditated and

[1] *The New Spirit in India*, by H. W. Nevinson, pp. 252, 253.

was also much regretted afterwards. It put the new party in the wrong, when much was to be said for their point of view. The pity of it was that if this unfortunate incident had not occurred, and if Dr. Rashbehari Ghose's presidential address had been listened to with patience, there was much in it that was much bolder in tone and accent than anything that had gone before.

He recognized clearly the new spirit which was inspiring the younger generation and severely blamed the Government for its "divide and rule" policy adopted in Bengal. In many ways it went as far as the new party wished.

"What we do demand," he stated, "is that our rulers should introduce reforms as steps towards giving us that self-government which is now the aspiration of a people educated for three generations in the political ideals of the West. . . . We want in reality and not in mere name to be the sons of the Empire. Our ambition is to draw closer to England and to be drawn into that greater Britain in which we have now no place. The ideal for which we are stirring is autonomy within the Empire and not absolute independence."

It is interesting to read words like these to-day and to note how much wider the gulf had grown; but a statement such as this was regarded as "advanced" in the politics of 1907.

It was with regard to Lord Curzon's administration that there was hardly a shade of difference between the two parties. Sir Rashbehari said: "We have, gentlemen, a long and heavy indictment to bring against Lord Curzon. We charge him with having arrested the progress of education. We

charge him with having set back the dial of local self-government. We charge him with having deliberately sacrificed the interests of the Indian people in order to conciliate English exploiters and administrators. And lastly, we charge him with having set Bengal in a blaze."

Nevertheless, even words as strong as these would not now satisfy those who were convinced of the utter futility of denouncing things on the Congress platform without any intention of rectifying them in practice. Sir Rashbehari clearly had these in mind when he spoke of "those who assert that nothing good can come out of England and that passive resistance, if persisted in, would compel the English to retire from the country." He adds, "All their hopes are centred in passive resistance of a most comprehensive kind, derived I presume from the modern history of Hungary. In a word, we must get rid of our habit of leaning on Government and create in its place a habit of thinking and acting as if the Government were not."

The younger party which advocated this new direction of the Congress programme must have been very strong at the time to draw from the president such serious and respectful consideration. It was owing to their desire to focus the public mind impressively on their new programme and method of political action that the new party broke with the old Congress members at Surat.

# Part VII

# THE THIRD PHASE

## *The Reign of the Moderates*

## Chapter I

# THE REIGN OF THE MODERATES

By the time of the next Congress session, which was held in Madras in 1908, the Moderates had recaptured much of their lost power. This was largely due to the announcement of the Morley–Minto reforms.

The old Congressmen had now something tangible to show for their slow, constitutional methods; for, in spite of the very meagre character of the reforms, compared with what had been demanded, there was a concrete advance in the new constitution which John Morley, as Secretary of State, had been able to introduce. Above all, for the first time an Indian member was taken into the Executive Councils both of the Viceroy and also of the Provincial Governments. What this meant when the World War broke out in 1914 will come under consideration later. Here it is sufficient to point out that this step was itself an answer to the new party when it raised the objection against the moderate school of Indian politics that the conventional method of petition and appeal was ineffective.

But the moderate school had no answer which could account for the strangely illiberal method of repression which the Government of India now adopted. Lord Minto had none of the intellectual capacity and understanding of constitutional history which Lord Curzon possessed. He was simple and straightforward; but his education had been in a military school, and he was inclined to adopt

military methods whenever he was puzzled and confused. While he stood out strongly for the reforms and went with John Morley, even when the highest authorities at home in England thought he was going too far, he gave way at once to his subordinates when they formulated a scheme of repression against anything which they regarded as "extreme." History repeats itself, and the same policy of repression on the one hand and reform on the other was carried out a quarter of a century later with equally bad results.

Reform proposals could not compensate for this injustice and for the destruction of freedom which accompanied them. Furthermore, they were of a meagre character. In addition to Indian members being taken on to the Executive Councils, there was to be an extension of local self-government and the debate on the budget in all Houses of Assembly was to be accompanied by a free and full discussion, though not with any power of decision. Clearly such small results would not satisfy progressive India for long.

It is a sign of pitiable weakness that these acts of fierce and unjust repression were permitted to pass almost unchallenged by the Constitutionalists, who now allowed themselves to be called the "Moderates" and took pride in the title. The most humiliating example of this submissive temper needs to be quoted from Dr. Rashbehari Ghose's Congress address at Madras in 1908: "The clouds," he cried, "are now breaking in blessings over your heads slaking the parched and thirsty earth. The time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

The note of pathos, with which he ended this

extraordinary address, needs also to be quoted; for it brings us into the inner minds of those who were fighting the battle of *Swaraj*.

"Yes," he said, "a younger generation will take up the work, who will, I trust, have some kindly thoughts for those who too in their day strove to do their duty, however imperfectly, through good report and evil report, with, it may be, a somewhat chastened fervour, but, I may say without boasting, with a fervour as genuine as that which stirs and inspires younger hearts."

The satisfaction among the Moderates over Lord Morley's despatch outlining the reforms was profuse. The resolution ran as follows:

"This Congress desires to give expression to the deep and general satisfaction with which the Reform proposals formulated in Lord Morley's Despatch have been received throughout the country: it places on record its sense of the high statesmanship which had dictated the action of the Government in the matter, and it tenders to Lord Morley and Lord Minto its most sincere and grateful thanks for their proposals. The Congress is of opinion that the expansion of the Legislative Councils and the enlargements of their powers and functions in the appointment of Indian members to the Executive Councils . . . and the further developments of local self government constitute a large and liberal instalment of reforms. . . . This Congress expresses the confident hope that the details of the proposed scheme will be worked out in the same liberal spirit in which its main provisions have been conceived."

But when the Congress had met at Lahore in 1909, with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya as

president, the Regulations had been published as well as the Reforms. Just as had happened before in 1892, they caused the greatest dissatisfaction. They showed that the bureaucracy in India had been at work seeking to diminish the concessions which had been made.

A manifesto, issued by the Bengali leaders, headed by Dr. Rashbehari Ghose and Surendranath Banerjea, contained the following statement:

"The Reform scheme was regarded as the beginning of a new era of conciliatory Government which would be consummated by the modification of the partition of Bengal. But its further developments, in which a system of separate class representation found a prominent place, somewhat checked the first outburst of public enthusiasm: and the disappointment was deepened by the pronouncement of Lord Morley that he would be no party to any modification of the Partition. . . . The Regulations were felt to be in striking contrast to Lord Morley's great utterance in announcing the Reforms. In several grave matters of principle they were retrograde as compared with those framed under the Parliamentary Statute of 1892. . . . In the main, the regulations have reduced the educated community to an insignificant minority in a scheme which was largely due to their efforts."

Mr. G. K. Gokhale, presiding over a meeting of the Deccan Sabha, also protested against the Regulations and the difference made in the treatment of the two great religious communities in regard both to the franchise and the qualifications for candidates.

The Congress passed the following resolution, moved by Surendranath Banerjea:

"This Congress, while gratefully appreciating the earnest and arduous efforts of Lord Morley and Lord Minto in extending to the people of this country a fairly liberal measure of constitutional reforms, as now embodied in the India Councils Act of 1909, deems it its duty to place on record its strong disapproval of the creation of separate electorates on the basis of religion and regrets that the Regulations framed under the Act have not been framed in the same liberal spirit in which Lord Morley's despatch of last year was conceived. In particular they have caused widespread dissatisfaction,

"(*a*) On account of the excessive and unfairly preponderant representation given to one particular religion.

"(*b*) The unjust, invidious, and humiliating distinctions made between the Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of His Majesty in the matter of the electorates, the franchise, and the qualifications of candidates.

"(*c*) The wide, arbitrary, and unreasonable disqualifications and restrictions for candidates seeking election to the Councils.

"(*d*) The general distrust of the educated classes that runs through the whole course of the Regulations.

"(*e*) The unsatisfactory composition of non-official majorities in the Provincial Councils."

It was keenly felt, as Surendranath Banerjea explained, that the educated classes, who had been leaders in the Reform movement, were being made as ineffective as possible. The Government was determined to render them if possible innocuous. "The bureaucracy," he declared, "is bent on having

its revenge upon us for having persistently carried on the agitation which had resulted in the Reform Scheme."

The president of the Congress, Pandit M. M. Malaviya, also denounced what he called one of the most vicious features of the reforms, namely communal representation. "The Hindu," he exclaimed, "the Parsee, and Christian graduates of thirty years' standing—men like Guru Das Banerjee, Dr. Bhandarkar, Sir Subramania Iyer and Dr. Rashbehari Ghose—have not been given a vote, which has been given to every Muhammadan graduate of five years' standing."

The Congress of 1909, at Lahore, was remarkable also for another reason. The grievances of the Indians in the Transvaal had created a profound impression, and the presence of a delegate, Mr. H. S. L. Polak, from South Africa, had brought the question once more to the forefront. Mr. Polak, an Englishman, for many years past had been the intimate friend and companion of Mr. Gandhi, sharing his home with him and in every way identifying himself with the Indian cause. He had suffered much in consequence, and in 1913 went to prison with him, along with Mr. Kallenbach, as will be afterwards narrated.

The enthusiasm with which the appeal for funds was responded to after Mr. Polak's address showed that the Congress was looked up to for guidance and support by Indians in all parts of the world.

There was a very small attendance of young people at the Lahore Congress, because of the prohibitory order of the local educational authority, as well as on account of the gulf which was widening between the right and the left wing of the Congress.

## Chapter II

# NEW DELHI

THE Congress at Allahabad in 1910 was presided over by Sir William Wedderburn, who was also the president of the British committee in London. The special correspondent of *The Times* who was present stated that the Allahabad session was characterized by a marked absence of enthusiasm and by a general chilliness of atmosphere. This was not far from the truth.

The fact was that the enthusiasm which the Congress movement had been able to evoke owing to the participation of the younger men with more advanced ideas was now slowly evaporating. On account of the new formulas of membership and the rigid exclusion of the extremists, the national organization tended to find itself quite out of touch with the more radical thinkers. It was rapidly becoming an institution devoted merely to half-hearted measures without the energy to meet the full current of the more progressive forces which were gathering strength in every direction.

Although the attitude of *The Times* special correspondent was far from favourable to the Indian demands, one cannot but accept his general observation as correct. For life seemed to have gone out of the body of the Congress. A study of the resolutions passed confirms this. The only constructive and helpful suggestion at Allahabad seems to have been the strong protest made against the system of communal electorates which had been introduced by the

Minto–Morley Reforms of 1909. The following resolution was adopted:

"While recognizing the necessity of providing for a fair and adequate representation in the Legislative Councils for the Muhammadans and other communities where they are in a minority, this Congress disapproves of the regulations promulgated last year to carry out this object by means of separate electorates, and in particular it urges upon the Government the justice and expediency of modifying the regulations framed under the Indian Councils Act of 1909, before another election comes on, so as to remove anomalous distinctions between the different sections of His Majesty's subjects in matters of franchise and the qualifications of candidates, and the arbitrary disqualifications and restrictions for candidates seeking election to the Councils. The Congress also urges a modification of the regulations, where necessary, relating to the composition of non-official majorities in the Provincial Councils, so as to render them effective for practical purposes."

The Congress went on to deprecate the extension, or application, of the principle of separate communal electorates for municipalities, district boards, or the local bodies.

The truth of the matter was that the Congress of 1910 was completely dominated by the prospect of reconciliation with the Government, because of Lord Hardinge's agreeing to receive a Congress deputation. Strange as this may seem to-day, ever since Lord Curzon had refused to receive Sir Henry Cotton as the head of a Congress deputation, its leaders had not been given any opportunity of putting their views before the head of the adminis-

tration. Lord Hardinge's sympathetic attitude and Mr. Gokhale's assurances that great things might be hoped for under the new régime were largely responsible for the moderate tone of the proceedings of the Lahore Congress of 1910. The address to the Viceroy ran as follows: "We look forward to a period of peace, progress and prosperity for India under the guidance of one who was a trusted friend of our beloved King-Emperor, Edward the Peace-Maker, whose loss we shall never cease to deplore."

The Viceroy in a cordial reply stated that "the aim of the Government of India has been to promote the material welfare and the moral development of the Indian people, and to mete out even-handed justice to all races, classes and creeds."

We may reproduce at this point a letter written to the *Madras Standard* by its Allahabad correspondent which reveals the state of public life at this period. He says:

"The break-up of public life that has followed the rigorous working of the new repressive Acts has led to complete demoralization in portions of Bengal and the Central Provinces. Active public life has not only become impossible in them but also is positively dreaded because of the increase of police activities to which it leads. In one word, the Congress is the only avenue left in all India for the ventilation of just grievances, and this point is receiving greater and greater attention at the present moment."

The year 1911 was to be marked by one of the greatest changes which had ever been made in the administration of India during the whole period of British rule. It was decided to commemorate the King's visit by changing the capital of India from

Calcutta to Delhi, and at the same time to revise the partition of Bengal in such a way that the Bengali language area should remain intact. The secret was kept with remarkable success, and the King's visit was inaugurated with this startling announcement which changed the map of India.

By making Calcutta the capital of a province rather than the capital of India, this royal declaration equalized the provincial areas both in dignity and importance. By doing so it served to help forward the Congress organization which was on a provincial basis. It also made it easier for the executive centre of the Congress to be stationed at the most convenient place in India, such as Allahabad, rather than to be tied to one of the metropolitan cities. Still further, its direct and immediate effect was to strengthen indefinitely the hands of the Moderates, who could claim with some truth that by constitutional agitation they had undone what had been called a settled fact.

Thus it was in an unwonted atmosphere of official favour that the twenty-sixth session of the Congress at Calcutta met under the presidentship of Pandit Bishan Narain Dhar; the Honourable Mr. Bhupendranath Basu was the chairman of the Reception Committee. Owing to the presence of the King in India, and the important announcement of the modification of the partition of Bengal, in the most dramatic circumstances, the Calcutta Congress was completely dominated by these two facts. The president, in his opening speech, repudiates the idea of communal representation, regrets that more Indians are not recruited to the public services, and prays to the Government for simultaneous

examinations both in India and in England for the Indian Civil Service. He expresses the feeling of the Moderates in the Congress as follows: "It must be borne in mind that the destinies of India and England are now linked together, and that in order to succeed in their political struggles it is indispensable that the sympathies of the English people should be enlisted on our side. But above all, we must instruct and organize our own public opinion." [1]

After a strongly worded declaration of loyal homage to the King and a "humble expression of profound gratitude for his gracious announcement, modifying the Partition of Bengal," the Congress passed a unanimous resolution in support of Mr. Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill, "earnestly inviting the Government to afford necessary facilities for further stages of the Bill in Council." It also condemned repressive legislation, respectfully presenting its protest against the Seditious Meetings Act and the Press Act, and praying that in view of the loyal enthusiasm evoked by the royal visit and the official pronouncement about an improvement in the general situation, these measures, as well as the regulations authorizing deportations without trial, might now be removed from the Indian Statute Book.

Speaking about this special Congress, Mr. Harold Cox, a well-known English publicist who was in India during the Durbar and had carefully attended the Congress sessions afterwards, made certain criticisms which are important as coming from a detached observer. Writing in the *Daily Graphic* (February 13, 1912), he says: "In particular the

[1] Quoted by *India*, London, January 13, 1911, p. 15.

far-reaching reforms for which Lord Morley is responsible may confidently be attributed to the pressure exercised by the Indian National Congress, and it might be imagined that a body which had achieved such a tremendous success would have acquired as a consequence increased influence and power. . . . The very contrary appears to be the case. The success achieved has been the undoing of the Congress."

There was much truth in this observation, for it can hardly be questioned that the Moderates failed to give to the nation the lead which it so badly needed. The fact was that it did not reflect the national opinion, but represented only a group of older men, desperately sincere and earnest, but too conservative in their views to reflect the rising spirit in the country as a whole. This fact was brought out more clearly in the next Congress, which was held at Bankipore in 1912.

The session was overshadowed by an attempted outrage on the life of Lord Hardinge by the throwing of a bomb on the day of the state entry into Delhi. This outrage took place only a few days before the assembly of the Congress and cast a dark shadow over the whole proceedings. The only relieving feature of 1912 was the welcome fact that, at this centre, a large number of Muhammadan delegates had deliberately joined the Congress because of its moderation and their presence greatly added to its prestige and importance as a political organization.

Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haque, who was the chairman of the Reception Committee, in a very interesting and thoughtful speech, said that "already a great and

powerful party of liberal Musalmans had arisen, whose aims and ideals were the aims and ideals of the Indian National Congress. . . . And this was the party which was bound to lead in future the Moslems of India."

The Honourable R. N. Mudholkar, who presided over the Congress, made a weighty and critical speech which was filled with the spirit of hope because of the new attitude of the Government of Lord Hardinge. He declared that they could discern the change—amounting almost to the birth of a new spirit—in the attitude of the official mind towards Indians and their aspirations. There was far greater insistence by responsible statesmen and administrators on trust and confidence in the people and on the necessity of consulting their opinions, on drawing them and the Government into closer bonds of co-operation and mutual esteem.

The Government of India's despatch of August 25, 1911, announcing that provincial autonomy was the definite aim of the administration, had put new hope into the minds of the Congress leaders. The president declared that the profound significance of the announcement of provincial autonomy as the goal in an important State document could not possibly be gainsaid. . . . Indians had every reason to feel immensely strengthened and fortified by that declaration.

The most important Congress resolution of this year was that concerning the treatment of the Indians in South Africa, which again came into prominence in a very urgent manner. On the motion of Mr. Gokhale, who had just returned from that country, and had inquired into the grievances of the

recently released in order to carry on negotiations with General Smuts at Pretoria. Lord Hardinge, as Viceroy, had spoken out in Madras expressing the "indignation burning and deep" which Indians felt at the humiliations which had been thrust upon their fellow countrymen in Natal. He also condemned the shooting which had taken place on the estates with many casualties.

Abhorrence was expressed by the Congress at the cruel treatment to which Indians had been subjected in the recent strike. The personnel of the South African Union Committee was objected to because two of its members were already known to be biased, and because it did not include persons who commanded the confidence of Indians in South Africa.

The resolution went on to state that while tendering its most respectful thanks to His Excellency the Viceroy for the statesmanlike pronouncement of the policy of the Government of India on the South African question, it requested the Imperial and Indian Governments to take the steps needed to redress the grievances relating to the questions of the £3 tax, indentured labour, domicile, the education test, the validity of Indian marriages, and other questions bearing on the status of Indians in South Africa.

It then acknowledged its warm and grateful appreciation of the heroic struggle carried on by Mr. Gandhi and his co-workers, and called upon the people of India of all classes and creeds to continue to supply them with funds.

It was at this Congress that the name of Mr. Gandhi received a prominence that marked already

his future greatness. With general consent the popular title "Mahatma" (meaning "great soul") was added to his original name. It has become more and more associated with him ever since.

The other important feature of the Karachi Congress was the improved relation between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Karachi Congress was the forerunner of the Lucknow Pact and also of the wonderful loyalty the Muslims showed to the Congress in the days of the Non-co-operation movement. The resolution was to the following effect: "That this Congress places on record its warm appreciation of the adoption by the All-India Muslim League of the ideal of self-government for India within the British Empire and expresses its complete accord with the belief that the League has so emphatically declared in its last sessions that the political future of the country depends on the harmonious working and co-operation of the various communities in it, which has been a cherished ideal of the Congress. This Congress most heartily welcomes the hope expressed by the League that leaders of different communities will make every endeavour to find a *modus operandi* for joint and concerted action on all questions of national good and earnestly appeals to all sections of the people to help the object we all have at heart."

The other important contribution was a resolution moved by Mr. M. A. Jinnah on the reorganization of the India Office, suggesting that the salary of the Secretary of State for India should be placed on the British Estimates, and a resolution moved by Mr. B. N. Basu protesting against the continuation of the Indian Press Act on the Statute Book.

The president, in conclusion, described the decade that was closing with the year as a momentous period of stress and storm such as marked a great upheaval. The unrest from which—thanks alike to the good sense of the people and to British statesmanship—India had safely emerged, was part of the prodigious wave of awakening and unrest that swept over the whole of Asia.

Part VIII

# WAR AND THE CONGRESS

*The Lucknow Pact*

## Chapter I

# WAR AND THE CONGRESS

On the very eve of the declaration of war, a deputation of the Congress consisting of B. N. Basu, M. A. Jinnah, Lajpat Rai, N. M. Samarth, B. N. Sarma, and S. Sinha, happened to be in London in connection with the proposed reforms of the India Council. This fact became of great public importance, for as soon as war was declared this Congress deputation along with other prominent Indians addressed a letter to the Secretary of State for India for submission to the King.

Amongst other things the letter stated: "We have not the slightest doubt that, as on previous occasions, when the British forces were engaged in defending the interests of the Empire, so on the present, the Princes and peoples of India will readily and willingly co-operate to the best of their ability and afford opportunities of securing that end by placing the resources of their country at His Majesty's disposal.

"We wish it to be clearly understood that, whatever differences in questions affecting the internal administration of our country might exist in peaceful times, the devotion of the people of India to the British Throne in the face of an external foe is bound to ensure such a feeling of harmony and internal peace that they can have no other thought than that of being united with the British nation in a whole-hearted endeavour to secure a speedy victory for the Empire."

Mr. Gandhi, who arrived in London from South Africa just on the eve of the declaration of war, said at a reception given in his honour at the Hotel Cecil on August 8th, that he hoped his young friends would "think imperially" in the best sense of the word and "do their duty."

He also wrote a letter to the Under-Secretary of State for India offering to take up active service during the War. The letter read as follows: "It was thought desirable by many of us that during the crisis that has overtaken the Empire and whilst many Englishmen, leaving their ordinary vocation in life, are responding to the Imperial call, those Indians who are residing in the United Kingdom and who can at all do so should place themselves unconditionally at the disposal of the authorities.

"On behalf of ourselves and those whose names appear on the list appended hereto, we beg to offer our services to the Authorities. We venture to trust that the Right Hon'ble Marquess of Crewe will approve of our offer. . . .

"We would respectfully emphasize the fact that the one dominant idea guiding us is that of rendering such humble assistance as we may be considered capable of performing, as an earnest of our desire to share the responsibilities of membership of this great Empire if we would share its privileges."

The Congress, meeting at Madras in 1914 under the presidency of Bhupendranath Basu, gave expression to similar feelings. Sir S. Subramania Iyer, who was the chairman of the Reception Committee, justified the holding of the Congress during the War—as some people had suggested that it might embarrass the Government—by saying that

if they had not met in the Congress they would have lost a golden opportunity of giving expression, in their united capacity as Congressmen, to their unswerving devotion and attachment to the King-Emperor.

The Congress accordingly passed one of the first resolutions, expressing its profound devotion to the Throne, "its unswerving allegiance to the British connection, and its firm resolve to stand by the Empire at all hazards and at all costs. . . ."

The Governor of Madras, Lord Pentland, attended the second day's session of the Congress, and was enthusiastically received by the delegates and visitors, who numbered about three thousand. Lord Pentland was the first Indian provincial ruler to attend a session of the Congress. Surendranath Banerjea, in moving the resolution, said: "In the name of the Congress, speaking in behalf of United India, Hindus and Mahomedans, and of all classes, races and creeds, we desire to proclaim to the world, and tell the enemies of England and all else whom it might concern, that behind the serried ranks of the finest armies in the world there are multitudinous races and creeds banded as one man and resolved to die in the defence of the Great Empire—(cheers)—to which all are proud to belong, and which is the symbol of human freedom, justice, and civilization, wherever its flag might float."

But although the Congress continually protested its loyalty to the Empire, the hard-headed practical men did not see why, as a recognition of the great part India was playing in the War, India should not claim equality and political concessions to herself enjoyed by the other Dominions and other

members of the British Empire. Mrs. Annie Besant therefore sponsored the following resolution: "This Congress begs to convey to His Excellency the Viceroy the profound gratitude of the people of India for the sympathetic manner in which he has handled the questions connected with the emigration of Indians abroad:

"And while welcoming His Excellency's suggestion of reciprocity as the underlying basis of negotiations with the Colonies, desires to record its conviction that any policy of reciprocity to be effective and acceptable to the people of India must proceed on the basis that the Government of India should possess and exercise the same power of dealing with the Colonies as they have in regard to India."

Surendranath Banerjea's motion followed: "In view of the profound and avowed loyalty of the people of India, as manifested in the present crisis, this Congress appeals to the Government to perpetuate it, and make it an enduring and valuable asset of the Empire by removing invidious distinctions between His Majesty's Indian and other subjects, by redeeming the pledges contained in the despatch of August 25, 1911, and by taking such measures as may be necessary for the recognition of India as a component part of a federal Empire, in the full and free enjoyment of all the rights belonging to the people."

Mrs. Besant, in supporting the resolution, said that "if a mushroom nation like the Boers who fought the British were deserving of freedom, Indians, who were fighting for Britain now with the traditions of their ancient civilization, were fit for freedom."

The president said in conclusion: "Let them be ready for the future. He saw its vision. He saw his country occupying an honoured and proud place in the comity of nations, her sons sitting in the Councils of their great Empire conscious of their strength and bearing its burden as valued and trusted comrades and friends."

Had not the Prime Minister, he continued, given expression to the wish of the English people and said to them that the Indians along with others were "joint and equal custodians of our common interests"? Who could, in the face of these world-shaking events, deny India her right? Why should Indians demand a change? His answer was that the world was swinging onward on the uplifting ropes of time. In Europe, the war of nations, now in progress, would knock off the last weights of mediaeval domination of one man over many; of one race over another. The tide of wider life was flowing through the gateways of the West into the still waters of the East. . . . If English rule in India meant the canonization of a bureaucracy, if it meant a perpetual domination and perpetual tutelage, an increasing dead weight on the soul of India, it would be a curse to civilization and a blot to humanity.

During 1915, because of the prolongation of the War, and the importance of India for the British Empire, which the Indians began to realize more and more, and also because of the prosecutions, on the slightest suspicion, of Indian politicians, there were already growing symptoms of discontent such as afterwards became a characteristic feature of post-War India. The Calcutta *Bengalee*, writing after five months of the War, said in a leading article of

January 6, 1915: "India is not only bearing her own share of the fight, but she has the materials for continually replenishing her own contingents, and indeed of even making good the inevitable wastage in the British Army for as long as this war may possibly last. . . . And those who see all this cannot help being moved by new desires and new ambitions and they cannot help recognizing that the greatness of the Empire hinges more upon the attitude and the strength of India than upon those of any other Unit of the British Empire.

"This War has created a new self-consciousness and self-confidence in our people. It has revealed the need of our help and support for the Empire to which we belong. . . . It is folly and suicidal conceit to ignore these new conditions and to talk and act as if nothing had happened to affect the Indian mind since the war commenced."

The Bombay Congress of 1915 was obliged to meet under special difficulties. The War had dragged on; there were rumours and alarms in the country; the Congress had lost three of its ablest leaders in the deaths of Gokhale, Pherozeshah Mehta, and Henry Cotton. There had been also ever-increasing discontent throughout the country. The Lahore Conspiracy case had been prolonged; the two brothers, Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, were interned under the Defence of India Act. The times were out of joint and it was very difficult to look forward with any hope.

The Honourable Sir S. P. Sinha, who had been a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, presided over the Congress that year. His presidential address, as might be expected, was sober and

temperate in tone. Indeed, he provoked considerable controversy by saying that even if the English nation were willing to make an immediate free gift of full self-government—and those who differed most from the Congress were the first to deny the existence of such willingness—he took leave to doubt whether the boon would be worth having as such: for it was a commonplace of politics that nations, like individuals, must grow into freedom, and nothing was so baneful in political institutions as their prematurity.

In concluding his address he stated that in the midst of the carnage and massacre there was being accomplished the destruction of much that was evil and the budding forth of much that would abide. . . . It seemed to him that under the benign dispensation of an inscrutable Providence they would emerge into a new era of peace and good-will, and their beloved Motherland would occupy an honoured place in the Empire . . . they would become the free and equal citizens of a Great Empire, bearing its burdens, sharing its responsibilities and participating in its heritage of freedom and glory as comrades and brethren.

On the motion of Surendranath Banerjea, the Congress adopted a resolution affirming that the time had arrived to introduce substantial measures of reform towards the attainment of self-government by liberalizing the system of government so as to secure to the people themselves an effective control over it by the introduction of provincial autonomy, including financial independence; the expansion of the Legislative Councils so as to make them truly and adequately representative of all sections of the people, and to give them effective control over the

acts of the Executive Government; the reconstruction of the various existing Executive Councils and the establishment of similar councils in provinces where they did not exist; the reform or abolition of the Council of the Secretary of State for India; and a liberal measure of local self-government.

The resolution also further authorized the Congress to frame a scheme of reform. Mrs. Besant, who seconded the resolution, described it "as perhaps the most momentous that had ever been laid before the National Congress during the thirty years of its splendid existence."

One other significant resolution revealing one of the political tendencies of the year was moved by Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah, to the effect that "in the best interests of the people of India it was necessary that complete fiscal freedom, with special reference to import, export, and excise duties, should now be conceded to the Government of India."

The most striking feature, however, was the possibility of closer co-operation between the Congress and the Muslim League. Not only did some of the prominent Congress leaders attend the League's session, which was also being held in Bombay, but the League appointed a committee "to formulate a scheme for self-government after conferring with other political bodies."

Along with this Muslim approach the extremists had now determined themselves to come back into the Congress. Their strength in the country had steadily increased. They made overtures, and it became clear that a united Congress could now be achieved once more. There were several candidates for the presidentship, and the All-India Congress

Committee confirmed the majority vote of the Provincial Congress Committees and elected Mr. Ambika Charan Mazumdar as president. Mrs. Besant, who was a favourite with the extremists, received twenty-five votes and Mr. Mazumdar received sixty-two votes.

The Lucknow Congress of 1916 was historic in many respects. As the president himself said: "If the United Congress was buried nine years ago in the debris of the old French garden at Surat, it was re-born that day in the Kaiserbagh at Lucknow. Both the wings of the Indian Nationalist party had come together and had realized their true position and responsibility. So long as there were honesty of motive and singleness of purpose the widest divergence of opinion need not frighten them."

It was apparent that the War had released entirely new forces in Indian politics. The outlook of the Moderates had broadened, and the extremists did not want to be left outside the deliberations of the Congress, which was making history. Bepin Chandra Pal, Tilak, Besant, all had come to attend the Congress session, and for the first time since the Congress at Calcutta in 1906, when Dadabhai had given expression to the desire for *Swaraj*, a president of the Congress had voiced forth, and correctly understood, the hopes and fears of the Indian nation.

Mr. Mazumdar, in his address, said that the bureaucracy which now ruled the country was despotism condensed. . . . The people, however, had completely outgrown this system and a new spirit had arisen in the country. Whether it was called visionary, or impatient idealism, the spirit was the

manifestation of a democratic force which was transforming the destinies of an old world to a new order of things. Under the pressure of this irresistible force, time-honoured kingdoms were crumbling to pieces, and hereditary monarchs of ancient and even celestial origin were quietly taking their exit without shedding a tear or a drop of blood. . . . This new spirit might be impulsive, but it was perfectly genuine and intensely patriotic. . . . Old ideas were changing faster than some could realize and it was no fault of the Indian people if they were unable to reconcile themselves to a patriarchal or a parental form of government. The present Government, whatever its claims for the maintenance of an orderly administration might be, had become an anachronism. It might make a people perfectly happy, but it could not make them resourceful, or even contented, self-reliant, and manly in their life and conduct.

It was no longer a question of fitness, or of reforms. India must govern herself.

Mr. Majumdar's speech thus struck once more the full note of *Swaraj* which Dadabhai Naoroji had uttered at Calcutta ten years before.

This is indicated in the resolution on self-government passed by the Lucknow Congress as follows: "That, having regard to the fact that the great communities of India are the inheritors of ancient civilizations, and have shown great capacity for government and administration, and to the progress in education and public spirit made by them during a century of British rule, and, further, having regard to the fact that the present system of government does not satisfy the legitimate aspirations of

the people and has become unsuited to the existing conditions and requirements, the Congress is of opinion that the time has come when His Majesty the King-Emperor should be pleased to issue a proclamation announcing that it is the aim and intention of British Policy to confer self-government on India at an early date; that this Congress demands that a definite step should be taken towards self-government by granting the reforms contained in the scheme prepared by the All-India Congress Committee and adopted by the All-India Muslim League; and that in the construction of the Empire, India shall be lifted from the position of a dependency to that of an equal partner in the Empire along with the self-governing Dominions."

Mrs. Besant pointed out, with reference to the question of embarrassing the Government during the War, that they were following the example of the self-governing Dominions. They were only taking the advice of Mr. Bonar Law, who had advised the Colonies to strike while the iron was hot. Not only did she advise this course, but she deliberately acted upon it. Her Home Rule League exceeded that of Mr. Tilak himself in its demands for immediate *Swaraj*. For a time she was interned by the Government of India as a war measure, along with her two companions, Mr. B. P. Wadia and Mr. G. S. Arundale. But she was soon released because the Secretary of State, Mr. Montagu, and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, were already in consultation together concerning the reforms which were to be introduced at the earliest moment in recognition of India's services during the War.

The popularity which Mrs. Besant received from

this internment and its sequel made her name the only one that gained general support as president of the Calcutta Congress in December 1917. But before this event comes before us, it is necessary to obtain the main outline of the Lucknow Pact itself.

## Chapter II

# THE LUCKNOW PACT

THE outcome of the Lucknow Congress, in constructive politics, was the Lucknow Pact. The main proposals embodied in the Pact with regard to the Hindu-Muslim controversy, which were accepted by the Congress and the Muslim League and by the Government of India itself, ran as follows:—

"Adequate provisions should be made for the representation of important minorities by election and the Muhammadans should be represented through special electorates on the Provincial Legislative Councils in the following proportions:

Punjab, one-half of the elected Indian members.
United Provinces, 30 per cent of the elected Indian members.
Bengal, 40 per cent of the elected Indian members.
Bihar, 25 per cent of the elected Indian members.
Central Provinces, 15 per cent of the elected Indian members.
Madras, 15 per cent of the elected Indian members.
Bombay, one-third of the elected Indian members.

"Provided that no Muhammadan shall participate in any of the other elections to the Imperial or Provincial Legislative Councils, save and except those by electorates representing special interests.

"Provided further that no Bill nor any clause thereof nor a resolution introduced by non-official members affecting one or the other community, which question is to be determined by the members

of that community in the Legislative Council concerned, shall be proceeded with, if three-fourths of the members of that community in the particular Council, Imperial or Provincial, opposes the Bill or any clause thereof or the resolution."

With regard to the Imperial Legislative Council and the Government of India, the Pact made the following proposal:

The franchise for the Imperial Legislative Council should be widened as far as possible on the lines of the electorates for Muhammadans for the Provincial Legislative Councils, and the elected members of the Provincial Legislative Councils should also form an electorate for the return of members to the Imperial Legislative Council.

One-third of the Indian elected members should be Muhammadans elected by separate Muhammadan electorates in the several provinces, in the proportion, as nearly as may be, in which they are represented on the Provincial Legislative Councils by separate Muhammadan electorates.

The thirty-second session of the Congress met in Calcutta in December 1917. Mrs. Besant was finally elected its president. She was chosen by every electoral body outside Bengal. In the meantime there had happened two incidents of first-class political importance in connection with India. First of all was the statement of Mr. Montagu in the House of Commons in connection with the Indian policy of the British Government of August 20 (1917) in which he said: "The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration,

and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. They have decided that substantial steps should be taken as soon as possible and that it is of the highest importance, as a preliminary to considering what these steps should be, that there should be a free and informal exchange of opinion between those in authority at home and in India."

The second event of importance was Mr. Montagu's visit to India. He was the first Secretary of State for India to do so. The visit followed as a result of this momentous statement in the House of Commons, which was destined to change the whole attitude of Great Britain towards India and to lead on directly to self-government.

The Calcutta Congress, although largely dominated by the extremists, passed a resolution "that this Congress, speaking on behalf of the united people of India, begs respectfully to convey to His Majesty the King-Emperor their deep loyalty and profound attachment to the Throne, their unswerving allegiance to the British connection and their firm resolve to stand by the Empire at all hazards and at all costs."

The wording of this resolution was clearly due to Mrs. Besant occupying the chair as president, for it returns to the conventional attitude towards the British connection which the extremists themselves had discarded. One interesting feature of the Calcutta Congress was a record number of four thousand delegates and the presence of about four hundred Indian ladies.

The Congress affirmed the Congress-League Scheme of Reforms and passed the following resolution on self-government.

"The Congress expresses its grateful satisfaction over the pronouncement of His Majesty's Secretary of State for India on behalf of the Imperial Government that its object is the establishment of responsible government in India. The Congress strongly urges the necessity for the immediate enactment of a Parliamentary Statute providing for the establishment of responsible government in India at an early date, the full measure to be attained within a time-limit to be fixed in the Statute itself.

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

Mrs. Besant's address in Calcutta was remarkably outspoken. It was delivered with all her wonderful eloquence and fire. Whatever might be the consequence of the War, she declared, India's right to freedom must be immediately recognized. She went on to state: 'I once said in England that the 'condition of India's loyalty was India's freedom.' I may now add that 'The condition of India's usefulness to the Empire is India's freedom. . . .' Great Britain needs India as much as India needs England for prosperity in Peace as well as for safety in War. Mr. Montagu has wisely said that for equipment in war a nation needs freedom in peace. Therefore I say that for both countries alike the lesson of the War is Home Rule for India."

Her analysis of the causes of the new awakening in India was exhaustive. Speaking about the forces

in India she said: "There have been special forces at work during the last few years to arouse a new spirit in India and to alter her attitude of mind. These may be summed up as:—

"(*a*) The Awakening of Asia.

"(*b*) Discussion abroad on Alien Rule and Imperial Reconstruction.

"(*c*) Loss of belief in the superiority of the white races of the world.

"(*d*) The Awakening of Indian Womanhood to claim its ancient position.

"(*e*) The Awakening of the masses.

"India to-day," she declared, "stands erect, no suppliant people; her hand is stretched out to Britain in friendship, not in subservience; in co-operation, not in obedience. The War that has entered on its fourth year has for its true object the destruction of autocracy and to establish the God-given right to self-rule and self-development of every nation. Therefore it is necessary that the War should be fought to its appointed end and that no premature peace should leave its object unattained. Autocracy and bureaucracy must perish utterly in East and West."

Immediately after the Calcutta Congress of 1917 things began to move swiftly. The Montagu–Chelmsford report was published on July 12, 1918, and aroused fierce controversy in India. It at once showed that there were fundamental differences between the two schools of thought and the issue was further complicated by the recommendations of the Rowlatt Commission, which were vehemently resented.

The Rowlatt Commission's report was published

on July 18th. The Commission was appointed by the Government of India to investigate the question of sedition, and was presided over by Mr. Justice Rowlatt, the members being Sir Basil Scott (Chief Justice, Bombay High Court), Sir Verney Lovatt (Commissioner, Lucknow), Justice C. V. Kumaraswami Sastri (Madras), and Provash Chandra Mitra (Calcutta).

The report contained a review of the revolutionary conspiracies in India, the association of the Bengal seditionists with German plots, the abortive efforts to ship arms to conspirators, and the plans for rising which were eventually defeated. The recommendations contained proposals for imprisoning and interning revolutionary suspects on the order of a judicial board without open trial. They were at once taken to imply the denial to the individual of the right to be tried openly by his peers, which was the very centre of the whole judicial system.

After the release of the Reforms Report on July 12, 1918, it was found that Indian political opinion was divided into two sharply defined parties. On the very day after its publication at a conference of the right wing of the Congress leaders in Calcutta, presided over by Surendranath Banerjea, a resolution was passed that the conference, while reserving its judgment upon details, welcomed the reform scheme as accomplishing a real and definite stage in the progressive realization of responsible government. But on July 14th the proposals were condemned by the left-wing Nationalists at the Bengal Provincial Conference, presided over by Bepin Chandra Pal.

The cleavage of opinion was real. The left wing was trying its level best to bring the Moderate

leaders to the Special Congress which was to be held at Bombay to consider the Reforms Report. But the Moderates, as Sir Dinsha Wacha wrote, felt it necessary to hold an All-India Conference of the Moderate party owing to the great danger of the Reform scheme being wrecked by the extremists.

This special congress at Bombay was presided over by Syed Hasan Imam. Vithalbhai Patel was the chairman of the Reception Committee. A few Moderate leaders attended, among whom were Pandit M. M. Malaviya, J. B. Petit, B. N. Sarma, G. A. Natesan, and Harkishen Lal.

The resolution, which indirectly had reference to the proposed reforms, was to the following effect: "That this Congress reaffirms the principles of reform contained in the Resolutions relating to self-government adopted in the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League held at Lucknow in December 1916 and at Calcutta in December 1917, and declares that nothing less than self-government within the Empire can satisfy the Indian people, and, by enabling it to take its rightful place as a free and self-governing Nation in the British Commonwealth, strengthen the connection between Great Britain and India."

The third resolution ran: "That this Congress declares that the people of India are fit for responsible government, and repudiates the assumption to the contrary contained in the Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms."

The fourth resolution contains more comprehensive suggestions. "The Government of India shall have undivided administrative authority on matters directly concerning peace, tranquillity and defence of the country, subject to the following:

"That the Statute to be passed by Parliament should include the Declaration of the Rights of the People of India as British citizens.

"(*a*) That all Indian subjects of His Majesty and all the subjects naturalized or resident in India are equal before the law, and there shall be no penal or administrative law in force in this country, whether substantive or procedural, of a discriminative character.

"(*b*) That no Indian subject of His Majesty shall be liable to suffer in liberty, life, property, or in respect of free speech or writing, or the right of association, except under sentence by an ordinary court of justice, and as a result of lawful and open trial:

"(*c*) That every Indian subject shall be entitled to bear arms, subject to the purchase of a licence, as in Great Britain, and that right shall not be taken away save by sentence of an ordinary court of justice.

"(*d*) That the Press shall be free and that no licence or security shall be demanded on the registration of a press or a newspaper.

"(*e*) That corporal punishment shall not be inflicted on any Indian subject of His Majesty, save under conditions applying equally to all other British subjects."

After setting forward these fundamental rights, a fifth resolution was passed concerning the reform proposals as they stood in the Montagu–Chelmsford Report: "That this Congress appreciates the earnest attempt on the part of the Right Hon. the Secretary of State and His Excellency the Viceroy to inaugurate a system of Responsible Government in India, but while it recognizes that some of the pro-

posals constitute an advance on the present conditions in some directions, it is of opinion that the proposals as a whole are disappointing and unsatisfactory, and suggests the following modifications as absolutely necessary to constitute a substantial step towards Responsible Government:

"That this Congress entirely disagrees with the formula contained in the said Report that the Provinces are the domain in which the earlier steps should be taken towards the progressive realization of Responsible Government, and that the authority of the Government of India in essential matters must remain indisputable pending experience of the effect of the changes proposed to be introduced in the Provinces, and the Congress is of opinion that simultaneous advance is indispensable both in the Provinces and the Government of India."

It will not be necessary at this point to enumerate all the constitutional proposals which followed this resolution, because they had very little practical effect except in so far as they enabled the Viceroy and Secretary of State to judge in what way the minds of the ablest Indians were working. As we have seen, they reaffirmed the Congress-League scheme as regards the Muslim representation in the Legislatures. They also proposed drastic alterations in the control exercised by the British Parliament through the Secretary of State. Fiscal autonomy was demanded as an inherent right of the Indian people, and in the central Indian Legislature the Council of State was to be abolished, as was also the India Council in London. The whole idea underlying the proposals was to make the new constitution as democratic as possible.

# Part IX

# THE AFTERMATH OF WAR

*Non-Co-operation*

## Chapter I

# SELF-DETERMINATION

THE passing of the Rowlatt Act, more than anything else, was in the end responsible for the great change of Congress policy which came later. It should be noted that even so moderate a statesman as the Right Hon. V. S. Sastri warned the Government in the plainest manner possible of the fatal consequences if it insisted on defying the will of the people by forcing this Act upon them just after the conclusion of the War. But no attention was paid to his warning.

The large element of the Congress which refused to attend the Bombay session held a conference of their own in the same city on November 1st, under the presidentship of Surendranath Banerjea, and passed a resolution cordially welcoming "the reform proposals of the Secretary of State and the Viceroy of India as constituting a distinct advance on present conditions both as regards the Government of India and the Provincial Governments and also a real and substantial step towards the progressive realization of 'responsible government' in the Provinces in due fulfilment of the terms of the announcement of August 20, 1917."

They suggested some minor changes to the proposals and appointed a committee to select a deputation to proceed to England in order to urge on British statesmen and the British public "the wisdom and necessity of supporting the Montagu–Chelmsford reform scheme."

The Delhi Congress of December 1918 revealed

a more resolute spirit and a new determination. Its departure from the traditional method of effusive "loyalty" resolutions was significant of a change which was rapidly coming over the whole of India and culminated in the boycott of the Prince of Wales's visit in 1921. Respect for the Royal House remained, but this in future was to be made consonant with India's own self-respect and in no way to infringe upon it.

This Delhi session was a marked success from many points of view. The correspondent of *India* gave the good news in London that out of the six thousand delegates present nearly one thousand came from the villages and were tillers of the soil (February 14, 1919). He went on to say that the proceedings were conducted with great dignity, tolerance, and decorum. He gave the example of a speaker of the Moderate party who was listened to with marked attention even though the vast majority of the audience was against him.

The fact that the Indian cultivators were now beginning to take an active part in the proceedings of the Congress, and were able to speak in their own mother tongue instead of English, marks a definite turning-point in Congress history. It showed very clearly indeed that the earlier days, when English alone was spoken and none but the English-educated attended, were now over.

The whole tone of the resolutions had altered. It had become much more incisive. One of the first was on the Rowlatt Bills. "The recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee," it stated, "if given effect to will interfere with the fundamental rights of the Indian people."

This insistence on certain fundamental rights being observed at all costs came up again and again, not only in Congress resolutions but also in the form of a constitution for New India which Congress proposed.

One further factor which made the Delhi session eventful as a new departure in Congress proceedings was its deep interest in the world at large outside India itself.

The War had brought India much nearer to this outside world. Thoughtful men and women in India had begun to look upon the Indian problem not merely as an issue between the Indian people and the British Government, but as one in which the whole world was interested. Lord Sinha (now raised to the peerage) and the Maharaja of Bikaner were appointed members of the Peace Conference in Paris, and had taken part in the deliberations of that Conference as representatives of the Government of India. Mr. Lloyd George's famous announcement about making the world safe for democracy and President Wilson's theory of self-determination had aroused universal interest in India. Leaders began to realize that in order to wrest power from the British Government they must make India a great world issue and must not be content with regarding what happened merely as a domestic concern between India and Great Britain. For the first time, therefore, in its long history the Congress embarked upon a scheme which was intended to attract the attention of the world outside on behalf of Indian freedom. Since this was an entirely new departure on the part of the Congress, the resolution on "self-determination" needs to be quoted in full. It ran as follows:

"In view of the pronouncements of President Wilson, Mr. Lloyd George, and other statesmen, that to ensure the future peace of the world, the principle of self-determination should be applied to all progressive nations, this Congress claims the recognition of India by the British Parliament and by the Peace Conference as one of the progressive nations to whom the principle of self-determination should be applied.

"As a practical application of the principle in India, the first step should be the removal of all hindrance to free discussion, and therefore the immediate repeal of all laws, regulations, and ordinances restricting the free discussion of political questions; and further, the abolition of the laws, regulations and ordinances which confer on the executive the power to arrest, detain, intern, extern or imprison any British subject in India outside the process of ordinary civil or criminal law and the assimilation of the law of sedition to that of England, and finally the passing of an Act of Parliament which will establish at an early date complete responsible government in India. And when complete responsible government shall be thus established, the final authority in all internal affairs shall be the supreme Legislative Assembly as voicing the will of the Indian Nation."

In order to make this good the Congress urged that "in justice to India, it should be represented by an elected representative, or representatives, to the same extent as the self-governing Dominions at any Conference that may be held to deliberate on or settle the terms of peace or reconstruction. In view of the shortness of time, and in anticipation of this

request being acceded to by His Majesty's Government, this Congress elects, as its representatives, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, M. K. Gandhi and Syed Hasan Imam."

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, in his presidential address, took up this theme of self-determination and reminded his hearers that the British Premier had announced: "You are entitled to rejoice, people of Britain, that the Allies, Dominions and India have won a glorious victory. It is the most wonderful victory for liberty in the history of the world."

"Then," the Pandit urges, "I am sure we all feel most deeply grateful to these our British fellow-subjects for their generous appreciation of our contributions to the War. The question now is to what extent is India going to benefit by the principles for which she gave her lives and treasure, namely, the principles of justice and liberty, of the right of every nation to live an unmolested life of freedom and to grow according to its own God-given nature, to manage its own affairs, and to mould its own destiny."

"There is, however," the president continued, "the second and no less important aspect of self-determination—complete responsible government on the lines of the Dominions—so that, being under the British Crown, we should be allowed freedom in the administration of all our domestic affairs. . . . We are asking for the measure of self-government which we have indicated by our Congress-League scheme of 1916.

"Therefore, let the British Government give effect to the principle of self-determination in India by

accepting the proposals so put forward by the representatives of the people of India. Let the preamble to the Statute, which is under preparation, incorporate the principle of self-determination and provide that the representatives of the people of India shall have an effective vote in determining the future steps of progress towards complete responsible government. This will produce contentment and gratitude among the people of India and strengthen their attachment to the British Empire."

The changes which were noticed at the Delhi Congress of 1918 became much more pronounced in the following year. For universal unrest grew in strength from day to day and the political atmosphere became far more tense in consequence.

Before relating the incidents in the Punjab which threw the whole of India into dismay and confusion, it may be well to close this chapter with the strong demand which Congress made at the end of the War to other nations, and not to Great Britain alone, for the fulfilment of the principle of self-determination on behalf of which the War had been fought. An appeal was formally put before the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate on August 29th, through Mr. Dudley F. Malone, representing the people of India. His submission to the Committee was that, if the Covenant of the League of Nations was passed as it stood, it would destroy the hopes of the subject countries all over the world.

"The hearts of three hundred and fifty million people in India, the millions in Ireland, and the millions in Egypt, will be broken, if it is passed in

its present form; and we come here with a specific request that this distinguished Committee should so amend the League of Nations Covenant as to make it obligatory on every signatory to the Covenant and to that Treaty to provide democratic institutions for the people who live under the government of any signatory."

He afterwards read before the Foreign Relations Committee the resolution of the Delhi Congress on the Peace Conference.

It was through Lala Lajpat Rai's effort that the question of India was thus brought before the Foreign Relations Committee in the United States. The Congress at Amritsar in 1919 thanked him for his services rendered in that country. India was thus for the first time taking her quarrel with England to other countries for support, and the letter Mr. Tilak wrote to M. Clemenceau, President of the Peace Conference, after his passport had been refused by Great Britain, shows already the conception of India as a free nation which was growing in the minds of the Congress leaders. He said:

"It is unnecessary for me to dwell upon the imperative importance of solving the Indian question for the purpose of ensuring the future peace of the world and the progress of the people of India. India is self-contained, harbours no designs upon the integrity of other States, and has no ambition outside India. With her vast area, enormous resources, and prodigious population, she may well aspire to be a leading Power in Asia, if not in the world. She could, therefore, be a powerful steward of the League of Nations in the East for maintaining the peace of the world and the stability of the British Empire

against all aggressors and disturbers of peace, whether in Asia or elsewhere."

The further events which happened in 1919 at the time when the Peace Conference was sitting at Paris and the German people were being compelled to drink the cup of humiliation to the dregs are so important in their bearing on the whole future of the Congress that they must be reserved for another chapter. They really bring to an end one period of Congress history and open another. Since, however, they are bound up with Mahatma Gandhi's appearance on the political stage, as the recognized leader and protagonist of the National Congress, it will be necessary first of all to give an outline of his remarkable career during the War after his return from South Africa.

## Chapter II

# MAHATMA GANDHI

EARLY in the year 1915, on February 19th, soon after Mr. Gandhi's return from South Africa, Mr. Gokhale died at Poona. The blow for a time was almost overwhelming to Mr. Gandhi himself: for it shattered one of his life's dreams. He had taken Mr. Gokhale as his political *guru* and had determined to work under him in India and thus to learn his wisdom. Now he would have to hew out his path forward through all the difficulties of India's political life alone. Mr. Gokhale, knowing well the immense store of spiritual energy that was held in reserve in Mr. Gandhi's frail body, had taken a promise from him that for a whole year after his arrival in India he would not undertake the initiative in any direct political work, but watch the current of events. He faithfully observed that promise.

Since the War was being waged, and he had offered his services (while in London) to render aid to the wounded and had only been hindered by a very serious attack of pleurisy, he now offered again for the same service in India. When his health was strong enough he proposed to raise a corps of stretcher-bearers and hospital assistants up to the number of a thousand in order to tend the sick and wounded in the Mesopotamian campaign. He had already served with distinction in that capacity, both in the Boer and Zulu Wars in South Africa, and therefore knew well at first hand all the hardships which this would involve. Yet he made the offer.

Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, was deeply touched at this request for service from one who had only just recovered from an almost fatal illness, but because of his already enfeebled health he refused the generous offer and sent a cordial message to Mr. Gandhi that his presence in India itself at that critical time would be of more service than any that he might be able to render abroad.

So for a time Mr. Gandhi retired to a house outside Ahmedabad, which he fitted up as an *asram*. There he continued to train and discipline those whom he had brought over from South Africa, and others were added to their numbers. After some delay a permanent site was chosen on the banks of the river four miles from Ahmedabad, which became known all over India as Sabarmati Asram. When the training of all his disciplined companions should be completed he had already determined to employ the same method of righting some of India's intolerable wrongs which had already proved so successful in South Africa. He had coined in that country a word for his process—*Satyagraha*; those who were engaged in it were called *Satyagrahis*. The word implies the offering of non-violent moral resistance to wrong-doing, whereby the *Satyagrahi* is ready to go to prison or undertake any hardship or suffering in order to undo the wrong. All the while he is bound to serve the cause of truth in thought and word and deed, and to bear no malice or hatred in his heart towards those who may cause him to suffer or even put him in prison.

In the first instance, on a large scale, Mr. Gandhi used this very powerful moral weapon against the iniquities of the indenture system of Indian labour

whereby many thousands of simple and ignorant people were being recruited, not seldom by fraudulent means, to go out as agricultural labourers to the Crown colonies in order to work in the sugar plantations.

The vast injustice connected with this labour recruiting had already been exposed, time after time, by Mr. Gokhale, Mr. Polak, and others[1] who had thoroughly studied the question. Mr. Gandhi himself had often borne witness against it; for he had seen its effects on the Indian emigrants in Natal. But the Government of India, though accepting an Act in the Legislative Council for its abolition, had weakly agreed with the Colonial Office to allow it to continue for five years longer. Since the greatest evil of all happened to the women who were being recruited, this was clearly intolerable.

Mahatma Gandhi (it was at this time that the title was universally given to him by the people of India) proposed as a last resort to picket the ships on which these labourers were sent abroad. He and his companions would thus plead in a non-violent and peaceful manner with those who had been recruited, pointing out the evils of which they were entirely unaware.

Since such direct action, taken in war-time, might end in a prosecution under the Defence Act, Mahatma Gandhi was fully aware that such a step might mean ultimate imprisonment. But he and his companions were ready joyfully to go to prison for such a cause.

[1] I should like to mention here the name of Mr. Andrews, whose invaluable services in this connection need being referred to, although, out of modesty, he would not like to do so.—*G. M.*

Fortunately, however, the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, saw the danger of precipitating a passive resistance struggle. He therefore called Mahatma Gandhi to see him and had a long talk with him. The result was that he decided to suspend all further emigration for the time that the War lasted.

Thus the first great moral victory was won. The indenture system was temporarily stopped as a "war measure," and after the War was over it was never renewed. The whole system was abolished on January 1, 1920, and thus an evil which had gone on for nearly a hundred years was brought to an end.

The second *Satyagraha* campaign was carried on by the same method in Champaran District, in the province of Bihar. The villagers had appealed to Mahatma Gandhi to come to their rescue against a whole series of illegal exactions which had gone on for a long while unredressed in connection with the indigo plantations. The moment that he took up their cause and was on the point of entering the district he was threatened by the district magistrate with an order forbidding him to do so, which he deliberately disobeyed. He thus courted imprisonment from the very first. Here again the Government of India was wise. Realizing in time that grave injustice had been done to the peasants by these illegal taxes and that no remedy had been found for it for generations, the Lieut.-Governor of the province, Sir F. Sly, withdrew the prosecution and invited Mahatma Gandhi to help in a thorough enquiry. The result of this was that a commission was appointed on which Mr. Gandhi served, along with landlords and indigo planters and Government officials.

The evidence of injustice was overwhelming and the findings of the commission were unanimous. These were, in a large measure, in favour of the villagers and the illegal exactions were abolished.

Thus once more, without violence of any kind, a long-standing and grievous abuse was removed from some of the poorest villages in India. The complete triumph of moral resistance without resort to force was again vindicated. The whole of India was startled, even in the midst of the World War, by this conflict which was able to win such victories without striking a blow.

One more *Satyagraha* struggle must be recorded, because in this case it was carried on by Mr. Gandhi against his own countrymen in order to attain justice. It also led to a union between the rapidly rising Labour Movement and the Congress which was of inestimable value in the days which were ahead.

The Labour Union in Ahmedabad had brought about, under the wise leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, a partial solution of the increasingly difficult problem of the relations between employers and employed. Here again his fundamental principles of non-violence and truth had been brought into exercise in a singularly original manner. Then, at one point, a conflict took place and the employers refused to grant the 20 per cent rise in wages which was demanded as the minimum rise at a time during the War when huge profits were being made by the cotton industry. The employers declared a lock-out and the men and women employed who had taken a pledge to hold out for the rise in wages were about to give way when Mr. Gandhi himself declared that he would not touch food until

the employers granted the just demand of the workers.

This told upon the employers and Srimati Sarabhai, the wife of Seth Ambalal Sarabhai,[1] was able to persuade them to yield and thus saved Mahatma Gandhi's life. Two leading members of the Congress, Srimati Anasuyaben and Shankerlal Banker, had been the chief organizers of the workers all through along with Gulzarilal. Thus the Congress may be described as actively helping in this manner in the Labour Movement which was to become, at a later stage, one of the chief wings of its support.

Mahatma Gandhi acknowledged later that this ending of the dispute had not been the purest form of *Satyagraha* as he had been driven to the desperate expedient of a "fast unto death."[2]

It has been necessary, at this point, to describe at some length by different examples the new method of *Satyagraha* or non-violent, truthful resistance. For Mahatma Gandhi thus began to perfect this weapon on a comparatively small scale before he attempted to use it, from 1920 onwards, as a national means for obtaining *Swaraj*, after other methods had been tried in vain. As will be seen later on, his first attempt in 1919 in offering resistance to the Rowlatt Acts ended in failure, because violence ensued; and at Bombay, when the Prince of Wales landed in 1921, followed by Chauri Chaura in 1922, there was a further failure, because the mass of the people of India had not understood the principle of non-violence. But by slow degrees

[1] A leading mill-owner.

[2] For an Indian estimate of Mahatma Gandhi's message see Appendix, page 299.

he has been able by his moral personality to impress upon his followers that non-violence and truthfulness are the life and soul of his message, and while these failures have been faithfully acknowledged by him he has also prevented bloodshed again and again and has led the people of India forward to an amazing series of successes wherein thousands of men and women have gone to prison and have withstood *lathi*[1] charges unarmed without striking a single blow in return. He has thus been able to win in India true moral victories on a nation-wide scale such as that which led to the Gandhi–Smuts Agreement in South Africa.

[1] Bamboo sticks.

## Chapter III

# THE PUNJAB DISTURBANCES

By far the most important event of the year 1919 was the passive revolt started by Mahatma Gandhi against the passing of the Rowlatt Act, which led almost immediately to an outbreak of violence in the Punjab and at Ahmedabad. Mahatma Gandhi confessed that he had made a "Himalayan blunder" in calling for a non-violent revolt before the people were trained and ready for it.

But what followed at Amritsar and Lahore and other places in the Punjab, when the Government sought to crush every sign of resistance by imposing martial law, culminated in the massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh and the humiliation of the "crawling order," along with a deliberate reign of terror and "frightfulness" unexampled in Indian history since the years 1857–8. The Congress decided, as soon as martial law was withdrawn, to start an independent enquiry. The claim was also made by Mahatma Gandhi on its behalf that an impartial Commission with a chairman from Great Britain should be appointed officially to enquire into what had happened.

An important action on the part of the Congress which was taken at this critical time was to send a deputation to England consisting of Messrs. B. G. Tilak, V. J. Patel, Dewan Madhav Rao, N. C. Kelkar, B. G. Horniman, Dr. Mehta, Syed Hasan Imam, B. C. Pal, and A. Rangaswami Iyenger. Messrs. Chenchiah, G. S. Khaparde, and Dr. Sathaye were also chosen.

During the stay of the deputation in England a fourfold work was done. (i) The British Committee of the Congress was reorganized. (ii) The Congress policy with regard to the Government of India Bill was pressed by every legitimate political means upon Parliament and the Joint Select Committee. (iii) The case for Indian Home Rule and the truth (as far as was then known) about the oppression in the Punjab, while under martial law, was widely disseminated by a nation-wide campaign. (iv) Efforts were made to bring about united action among the various Indian deputations and politicians who had come over to England at the same time as the Congress deputation. All these efforts were attended with varying measures of success.

Before the deputation arrived in England the All-India Congress Committee, which had begun to play its rôle as a subsidiary organization of the Congress, had met on June 8, 1919, and had protested against Mr. Horniman's deportation and the prohibitory order against Mahatma Gandhi. The Committee also condemned the martial law atrocities in the Punjab, and noted with satisfaction that "the Viceroy and Mr. Montagu have recognized the necessity of an enquiry into the causes of unrest and into the complaints against the authorities of the use of excessive and unlawful force in relation to recent occurrences in the Punjab." The Committee demanded that a Parliamentary Committee of persons wholly unconnected with the Punjab events should be sent out at the earliest possible moment. It urged that the following matters should be included within the scope of the enquiry:

(1) The policy of the Government of India and

the Punjab Government in dealing with the recent disturbances.

(2) Sir Michael O'Dwyer's régime in the Punjab, with special reference to the methods of recruitment for the Indian Army and the Labour Corps, the raising of the War Loan, the administration of martial law, and the complaint of excessive and unlawful use of force by the authorities.

(3) The recent occurrences in Delhi and other places.

The personnel of the Commission of Enquiry into the Punjab disturbances, consisting of six members, was announced in a speech of the Viceroy to the Legislative Council on September 5th: (1) Lord Justice Hunter (Chairman); (2) Mr. Justice Rankin, of the Calcutta High Court; (3) General George Barrow, military member, Secretary of State's Council; (4) Mr. W. Rice, Secretary to the Government of Burma; (5) Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed, of the Gwalior Judicial Service; (6) Sir Chimanlal Setalwad, of Bombay. Two more members of the United Provinces Legislative Council were added to the Committee in an announcement on September 18, 1919. They were: (1) The Hon. Thos. Smith, Managing Director of the Muir Mills Company, Cawnpore, and (2) the Hon. Pandit Jagat Narain, of Lucknow.

The composition of this Commission was strongly objected to by Indians themselves. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, in the Viceroy's Legislative Council, raised the important issue that the Commission should not have been appointed by the Government of India, since the Government themselves were the accused party. Simultaneously with

the appointment of the Commission, the Indian Government also introduced and passed an Indemnity Bill, based upon the assurance given to the officers that they would be protected and indemnified against anything they might do in establishing law and order.

The first public session of the Disorders Committee (Hunter Commission) was held in Delhi from November 3rd to 9th. It afterwards proceeded to Lahore. Then, with dramatic suddenness, the interest of the whole of the British Press was turned towards the Amritsar massacre as the evidence before the Committee began to filter through. The surprise and resentment of the more liberal-minded Englishmen can best be summed up by the words which appeared in a leading article in *India* on December 19, 1919:—

"For eight months the truth has been held back from the British people, but now at last they learn from the mouth of the man who did it, namely, General Dyer, what was done to paralyse and terrorize Amritsar into submission, and even after the orgies of cruelty of the last few years England reels with the shock. The whole affair is strongly reminiscent of Peterloo, whose centenary we must have been keeping a few weeks after a practical repetition of it."

Both in India and in England the revelations which came out before the Hunter Commission created the widest alarm and surprise. *The Times*, commenting on the evidence on December 16th in a leading article, expressed astonishment at the grave concealment of facts. "Not by any means for the first time," it wrote, "there appears to have been

studious concealment of relevant facts; but perhaps Mr. Montagu was not permitted to know the whole truth, because on May 29th, and again on October 30th, he made statements in the House of Commons at variance with the number of casualties now acknowledged."

It was at this critical moment, when the whole world was staggered at the revelation of cruelties perpetrated at Amritsar, that the next Congress session was held in that very city under the presidentship of Pundit Motilal Nehru, whose son, Jawaharlal Nehru, had taken active part in the Congress enquiry. Swami Shraddhananda, founder of the Gurukula University at Hardwar, was elected chairman of the Reception Committee. The delegates numbered eight thousand (including one thousand five hundred peasants) and the visitors were over six thousand. Considering the intense indignation which had been aroused all over India, the president's speech was remarkably restrained.

He said that they were assembled at that Amritsar Congress in deep mourning for the cruel murder of hundreds of their brothers. He himself was the chief mourner. "We must also do reverence to the sacred memory of the dead, who were killed in Amritsar and elsewhere in the Punjab, and to the living, who were put to indignities worse even than death itself and had suffered the most shameful barbarities. No monument in marble or bronze is needed to consecrate their memory."

In an appeal to Great Britain, the president again besought the British people to do the right thing by India, and to redress the cruel wrong which had been done.

"It is for England to learn the lesson and put an end to conditions which permit these occurrences in her own dominions. If our lives and honour are to remain at the mercy of an irresponsible executive and military; if the ordinary rights of human beings are denied to us, then all talk of reform is a mockery."

Like the president's speech, the resolutions of the Amritsar Congress also show the spirit of calmness and restraint to a remarkable degree.

The first Congress resolution thanked His Majesty the King-Emperor for his proclamation of December 23, 1919, and welcomed the announcement of the Prince of Wales's proposed visit to India.

The Congress resolution on Amritsar was moderate in tone and reasonable in its general sentiment. "In view of the fact that neither the Hunter Commission, nor the Congress Committee, has finished its examination of witnesses, yet, having regard to the cold-blooded, calculated massacre of innocent men and children (an act without parallel in modern times), the Congress urges upon the Government of India, and the Secretary of State, that, as a preliminary to legal proceedings being taken against him, General Dyer should be immediately relieved of his command.

"This Congress desires to place it on record that, in its opinion, the Government of India and the Punjab Government must in any event be held responsible for the inexcusable delay in placing an authoritative statement of the massacre of the Jallianwalla Bagh before the public and His Majesty's Government."

There was a unanimous demand at the same time

that Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who was the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab during the massacre, should be relieved of his immediate duties as a member of the Army Commission. This should be done "as a preliminary, necessary to legal action being taken against him." The demand was also made for the recall of the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, "in view of the fact that he had completely forfeited the confidence of the people of this country." The Congress placed further on record its very grateful appreciation of the action taken by Sir Sankaran Nair in resigning his office as member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy, "as a protest against the policy pursued by the Government of India."

A committee was appointed "to devise the best method of perpetuating the memory of the dead, to have a proper scheme of trust prepared, and to collect subscriptions for that purpose," and it was decided that the site known as Jallianwalla Bagh, in Amritsar, should be acquired for the nation, and be used as a memorial to perpetuate the memory of those who were killed or wounded on the 13th day of April 1919 during the massacre by General Dyer.

With regard to the Reform Act, the Congress passed the following resolution:—

"This Congress (1) reiterates its declaration of last year that India is fit for full Responsible Government and repudiates all asumptions to the contrary wherever made . (2) Adheres to the resolutions passed at the Delhi Congress regarding constitutional reforms and is of opinion that the Reforms Act is inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing. (3) Urges that Parliament should take early steps to establish full Responsible Government in India in

accordance with the principle of self-determination. (4) Trusts that, so far as may be possible, the people will so work the reforms as to secure an early establishment of full Responsible Government, and (5) Offers its thanks to the Right Hon. E. S. Montagu for his labours in connection with the reforms."

The tone of the Amritsar resolutions has been attributed to the personal influence of Mr. Montagu, who both during and after his tour in India, in connection with the introduction of reforms, had persuaded the Moderate element of the Congress to work the new constitution. But it was really the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi as the recognized new leader of affairs that made most of all for this conciliatory resolution at such a critical moment. The story has often been told of the extreme difficulty with which he was at last able to carry this resolution at the Amritsar Congress. It was really the triumph of one man, and even he could hardly win his way when public feeling had been so deeply stirred.

The Muslim opinion in India was generally falling in line with that of the Congress. This is illustrated by the resolutions passed by the All-India Muslim League, which also held its session at Amritsar in close conjunction with the Congress. Hakim Ajmal Khan, a veteran leader and a member of the Congress, presided over its deliberations. The Muslim League, besides passing resolutions protesting (*a*) against the Amritsar Massacre and (*b*) against the proposed dismemberment of Turkey, adopted a resolution on reforms very much on the lines adopted by the Congress.

By March 1920 the question of the Caliphate

had become very acute, and for a time this almost overshadowed the Punjab question in public importance. The All-India Khilafat Delegation, headed by Maulana Muhammad Ali, formerly editor of the *Comrade*, had arrived in London in order to put before the European Powers and the British Parliament the Indian point of view with regard to Turkey. This Muslim delegation was received by Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State. It also had an important official interview with the Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George.

The Congress Enquiry Report on the massacre at Amritsar was published soon after, on March 23rd, and its main recommendations were the following:

(*a*) The repeal of the Rowlatt Act.

(*b*) The relieving of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, General Dyer, Colonel Johnson, Colonel O'Brien, Mr. Bosworth Smith, Sri Ram Sud, and Malik Sahib Khan of any position of responsibility under the Crown.

(*c*) A local inquiry into the corrupt practices of minor officials and their dismissal on proof of their guilt.

(*d*) The recall of the Viceroy.

(*e*) The refund of the fines collected from the people, who were convicted by special tribunals, and remission of all indemnity imposed on cities affected; and the refund thereof where it has already been collected and the removal of punitive police.

The Congress Report was signed by M. K. Gandhi, C. R. Das, M. R. Jayakar, Fazl-ul-Haque, and Abbas Tyabji. Fazl-ul-Haque retired after a week's service owing to domestic affairs.

The Hunter Report was published in May 1920.

The Majority Report, consisting of the findings of five European members, can be summarized as follows:

(1) There was nothing to show that the outbreak was part of a pre-arranged conspiracy to overthrow the British Government. Nevertheless the Satyagraha Movement amounted to an illegal conspiracy. (2) The outbreak was not treasonably connected with the Afghan War. (3) If the notice had been disregarded, General Dyer would have been justified in firing on the crowd to compel it to disperse. "In continuing to fire for so long as he did, it appears to us that General Dyer committed a grave error." (4) The crawling order was "an act of humiliation; it has continued to be a source of bitterness and social ill-feeling long after it was recalled."

The Commission also thought that Colonel Johnson's treatment of the Lahore students was "unnecessarily severe." As regards martial law, the Commission's finding was that "the authorities were justified in declaring martial law. The length of time it remained in operation is open to criticism. We find no reason for holding, or even thinking, that undue harshness was adopted as a matter of policy."

The Minority Report of the Indian members differed materially from that of the Europeans. It came much nearer to the conclusions of the Congress Committee. Thus there was an immense gap between responsible Indian opinion and official British opinion as to the character and seriousness of the disturbances in the Punjab in 1919. It was only after many years that these incidents could be forgotten. The "shadow of Amritsar" darkened the light of friendship and reconciliation which Mr. Montagu hoped for as a result of the reforms.

## Chapter IV

# NON-CO-OPERATION

IMMEDIATELY after the publication of the Hunter Report on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the members of the All-India Congress Committee met at Benares towards the end of May. Intense excitement had been roused throughout India at what was regarded in every way as a "white-washing" report. An indignant protest was made both against the attitude of the Secretary of State with regard to the Punjab affairs (as disclosed in his despatch on the Hunter Report) and also against His Majesty's Government for accepting the Hunter Committee Majority's recommendations and paying practically no attention to the Minority Report. The strongest objections were also raised against the procedure adopted to bring to a conclusion the grave and vital issues of the Punjab tragedy without offering any opportunity for public criticism or parliamentary debate. The Congress Enquiry Committee considered that the Government of India and the Punjab Government had both grievously erred in proclaiming martial law after the disturbances had been quelled and allowing it to be inhumanly administered and also in continuing it altogether too long. The All-India Congress Committee also unanimously resolved at the same time to hold a special session of the Congress in Calcutta later in the year.

In the meantime as might be easily expected the Hunter Report had aroused universal indignation in

India. The debate in the House of Lords on General Dyer increased this and also very greatly strengthened Mahatma Gandhi's proposal of non-co-operation. For he had already fully thought out a scheme of withdrawing all assistance from the Government as a method of protest against the Punjab wrong.

The Muslim community at once gave him their support on account of the attitude of the Allied Powers with regard to Turkey. For Turkey had been peremptorily required by the Allies to sign the Peace Treaty by midnight on July 27th, ejection from Constantinople being threatened as an alternative. A humiliating treaty was eventually signed at Sèvres. General Hadi Pasha, Riza Tewfik Bey, and Rashid Bey signed it. This oppression of Turkey had intensely embittered the feelings of the Indian Muhammadans. The Khilafat delegation went back to India determined to oppose the British Government by passive resistance on a large scale.

It was in circumstances such as these that the Special Session of the Congress met at Calcutta on September 5, 1920, under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai of the Punjab. Sj. B. Chakravarty, an old Bengali Congress leader, acted as the chairman of the Reception Committee. He claimed for India independence on the lines of Egypt, and criticized the House of Lords attitude towards the Dyer motion. The Congress was specially convened to consider the recommendations of the Hunter Committee, the Turkish Peace Treaty, and Non-co-operation. There was a huge gathering of twenty thousand persons, including five thousand delegates, representing all the Provinces. The chief feature of the Congress was an unusual number of Muslim

delegates, who came to the Congress determined to support the Non-co-operation programme.

The President, Lala Lajpat Rai, condemned at length the Punjab martial law atrocities. He put forward a strong indictment against Sir Michael O'Dwyer and dealt also with the Khilafat question. With regard to Non-co-operation he left the Congress to give an open decision, realizing the full gravity of the issue which lay before them. The Calcutta Congress thanked the Punjab Enquiry Sub-Committee for its labours, and expressed its "deep and bitter disappointment at the drift, tone, and tendency of the Majority Report of the Hunter Committee."

Mahatma Gandhi's resolution on Non-co-operation was adopted by a big majority after a long debate over an amendment moved by Bepin Chandra Pal. Nearly two thousand delegates voted for Mahatma Gandhi's resolution and eight hundred and four voted against it. The resolution proposed by Gandhi himself was a very long one; but it is necessary to quote it, because it represents concisely the attitude which the Congress adopted, from 1920 onwards, with hardly any modification. It was worded thus: "In view of the fact that on the Khilafat question both the Indian and Imperial Governments have signally failed in their duty towards the Musalmans of India and the Prime Minister has deliberately broken his pledged word given to them, and that it is the duty of every non-Moslem Indian in every legitimate manner to assist his Musalman brother in his attempt to remove the religious calamity that has overtaken him; and in view of the fact that, in the matter of the events of

April 1919, both the said Governments have grossly neglected or failed to protect the innocent people of the Punjab and punish officers guilty of unsoldierly and barbarous behaviour towards them, and have exonerated Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who proved himself directly responsible for most of the official crimes and also callous to the sufferings of the people placed under his administration; and in view of the fact that the debate in the House of Commons and specially in the House of Lords, betrayed a woeful lack of sympathy with the people of India and showed virtual support of the systematic terrorism and frightfulness adopted in the Punjab; and that the latest Viceregal pronouncement is proof of entire absence of repentance in the matters of the Khilafat and the Punjab, this Congress is of opinion that there can be no contentment in India without redress of these two wrongs, and that the only effectual means to vindicate national honour and to prevent a repetition of similar wrongs in future is the establishment of *Swaraj*.

"This Congress is further of opinion that there is no course left open for the people of India but to approve of and adopt the policy of progressive, non-violent Non-co-operation, until the said wrongs are righted and *Swaraj* is established.

"And inasmuch as a beginning should be made by the classes who have hitherto moulded and represented public opinion; and inasmuch as Government consolidates its powers through titles and honours bestowed on the people, through schools controlled by it, through its law courts and its Legislative Councils, and inasmuch as it is desirable, in the present state of the movement, to take the minimum

risk and to call for the least sacrifice compatible with the attainment of the desired object, this Congress earnestly advises:

"(*a*) Surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation of nominated posts in local bodies.

"(*b*) Refusal to attend Government levees, Durbars and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials, or in their honour.

"(*c*) Gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges, establishment of national schools and colleges in the various Provinces.

"(*d*) Gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants and establishment of private arbitration courts by them for the settlement of private disputes.

"(*e*) Refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia.

"(*f*) Withdrawal by candidates from election to the reformed Councils and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election.

"(*g*) Boycott of Foreign goods.

"And inasmuch as the Non-co-operation movement has been conceived as a measure of discipline and self-sacrifice, without which no nation can make real progress, and an opportunity should be given in the first stage of Non-co-operation to every man, woman and child for such discipline and self-sacrifice, this Congress advises the adoption of *Swadeshi* in cotton piece goods on a vast scale; and inasmuch as the existing mills of India, with indigenous capital and control, do not manufacture sufficient yarn and sufficient cloth for the requirements of the nation, and are not likely to do so for a long time to come,

this Congress advises immediately stimulation of further manufacture on a large scale, by means of reviving hand-spinning in every home, and hand-weaving on the part of millions of the weavers who have abandoned their ancient and honourable calling for want of encouragement."

This famous resolution on Non-co-operation was enthusiastically taken up without delay. The Sub-Committee, appointed to find out ways and means of carrying it out, set to work immediately. Soon after the Special Congress, the All-India Congress Committee adopted a revised constitution for the Congress, changing the declared object of the Congress to that of the "attainment of self-government by the people of India by all peaceful and legitimate means" and omitting the word "constitutional." This was afterwards ratified in substance at the Nagpur Congress.

The Non-co-operation movement had already gained strength and made many new converts when the Congress met at Nagpur under the presidentship of Mr. Vijiaraghava Chariar, of Madras. He advocated a cautious policy, but the delegates who had assembled had already made up their minds.

One of the first resolutions passed was the determination of the aim of the Congress. This afterwards became regarded as its creed. Mahatma Gandhi's amendment was adopted,

"That the object of the Congress is the attainment of *Swaraj* by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means."

The Congress then unanimously passed a resolution detailing the steps to be taken for complete, peaceful Non-co-operation. In a further resolution

intended to make India economically independent, merchants and traders were to be called upon to carry out a gradual boycott of foreign goods. Hand-spinning and hand-weaving were to be encouraged. The Congress also undertook to organize committees in each village, or group of villages, with a provincial central organization in the principal cities of each Province, for the purpose of speeding up the progress of Non-co-operation.

Effective steps were to be taken to raise a national fund called the "All-India Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund." The ratification of the Non-co-operation resolution was adopted with the following preamble: "Whereas in the opinion of the Congress the existing Government of India has forfeited the confidence of the country and the people of India are now determined to establish *Swaraj*, as all methods hitherto adopted by the people of India have failed to secure due recognition of their rights and liberties and the redress of their many and grievous wrongs, more specially in reference to the Khilafat and the Punjab: Now this Congress, while re-affirming the resolution on non-violent Non-co-operation, declares that the entire or any part of the scheme of non-violent Non-co-operation, with the renunciation of voluntary association with the present Government at one end, and the refusal to pay taxes at the other, should be put in force at a time to be determined by either the Indian National Congress or the All-India Congress Committee; and that, in the meanwhile, in order to prepare the country for it, effective steps should be taken in that behalf."

After this the resolution puts forth, in greater detail, the different measures to be taken for the

furtherance of the Congress programme, very much on the lines adopted at the Special Session in Calcutta.

At the Nagpur Congress we come to the end of our story. The Congress assumes a new rôle, unique both in its own history and also in the history of India.

# APPENDIX

THE following summary is given by Dr. Kunhikannan of Mahatma Gandhi's mission in the world to-day:

Gandhi's message is not for Hindus alone but to all mankind. It bids them set their face against the use of physical force for the advancement of all just causes, fill the reservoirs of moral strength by purity and selflessness, by simplicity of life and love of humanity, and draw on those for the advancement of their cause. To a world distracted by the mad passions resulting from jealousy, greed and the employment of brute force, Gandhi offers a way to peace and good-will.

It is appropriate that the doctrine of non-violence in national causes should have taken its birth in India. India had, within her borders, the complex and intricate racial problem which confronts the world to-day. She had to evolve cohesion and harmony out of a medley of races and creeds in every stage of intellectual and moral evolution, all compelled to live side by side, and she achieved it with a fair degree of success. The problem of the world to-day is the problem of the racial contacts complicated by the shrinkage of distance and growing interdependence of the people of the world; and the way India has solved her problem is not without its lessons to the world at large. India now bids the world through the noblest and best of her sons to discard brute force, and trust to moral persuasion, by suffering, if need be, in the pursuit of all legitimate national causes, and she has herself under Gandhi's guidance set the example. She struggles for her freedom and self-expression, conserving and augmenting her moral and spiritual energies, frittering away none, and submitting patiently to suffering in the full confidence that her rulers, now so absorbed in their self-interest, are not lost to humanity, and her cry will not fail to pierce their hearts.

The same writer sums up the relations between India and Britain thus:

> The existing Government is incapable of effecting national regeneration and national consolidation. None will question the perfection of its machinery. The experience and intelligence of successive administrators of the highest ability have gone into the making of it. It has made its power and authority felt in the remotest corner of India. But it serves national interests only so far as they are not prejudicial to the interests of the British; and the interests of the British in India are not so much the interests of government as of exploitation. Secondly, their authority, being derived from an external source, descends down to the very depths of society, not checked or moderated at each stage by any authority derived from the people. What there has been of democratic advance has been designed more as a safety-valve to prevent explosions of the national temper than to conciliate or assist the national spirit. In these circumstances, all that is necessary is that the Government should be so constituted that it subserves national interests, and that the parasitic roots of an overgrown bureaucracy, which have penetrated deep into the cells of national life, are cut off.
>
> Government is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end, and the end of national government in India is not so much progress as regeneration; not so much to guide energies along useful lines of national activity as to rouse them; not the creation of facilities for the production of wealth, but the fostering of the enterprise and resolution required for its vigorous pursuit to revive and restore the personality of the Indian now lying crushed and broken under the dead weight of officialdom, to soothe and restore to action nerves long paralysed, to make him realize that he has something to live for and a part to play—this is the primary need of the country. It demands of those in authority qualities of insight, sympathy, understanding and humanity. They are virtues, fortunately, cultivated in India for centuries, but they should

not be superseded by the narrow outlook and passion which a prematurely introduced democracy is bound to let loose.

For the sake of her own tranquillity and for the sake of the tranquillity of the world, India should remain India, regenerated, revived and restored, but still India in her grace and beauty and in her pensive refinements. In that process of revival and restoration, Indians should seek the co-operation of the British not as their masters, but as their friends.

If they have ceased to be tolerated as rulers, they may be welcome as friends, and they make excellent friends. There are many hundreds of Britons who have been of the greatest service to Indians, and who went out of their way to do it. There will be many more of that type ready to serve and give their best on a basis of equality and friendship. Their standards of devotion to duty and their sense of discipline and their aptitude for team work are above those of the Indian, and under a National Government—there being no room for racial arrogance and superciliousness—they would work with Indians as brethren in a common cause of national endeavour. They may have a place in India as factory managers, research workers, professors of universities, and as specialists. In these capacities they will prove to be of the greatest service, stimulating, guiding and co-operating with the people of the country during the next stage of Indian political evolution, controlled and directed by Indians themselves, for which Britain in spite of all her faults has prepared the way.

To Britain herself, the credit will be eternal of having set on a career of self-determined progress a fifth of the human race. The world owes many things to Britain, far more to her than to any other country. To the long list she will add one more of having advanced to equal rank, status, and independence peoples different in colour, race and culture, and thus taken the first and most substantial step to a world federation.

# INDEX