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**SOME  
EMINENT  
INDIAN  
EDITORS**

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**PUBLICATIONS DIVISION**

# Some Eminent Indian Editors

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION  
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING  
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# Introduction

The first half of this century produced some giants in India in politics and journalism. Among them were a few versatile individuals who shone with equal brilliance in both these fields. This volume is a modest tribute to them on the occasion of the bicentenary of the birth of newspaper in India. The lectures presented here were subjects of Annual Lectures organised by the Indian Institute of Mass Communication from 1973 to 1979.

These eminent editors were persons, far apart from each other in their upbringing, outlook and achievements. Yet the two things which they all had in common and abundance were their abiding love for India and their penmanship *par excellence*. Each in his or her own special way made a distinctive contribution to the country's cause and in the process enriched journalism.

Lala Lajpat Rai of *Bandemataram*, as astute and farsighted a leader as he was forceful, was a combination of an erudite scholar and practical genius. Annie Besant of *New India*, whose interests ranged from Home Rule to the Theosophical Society, fought staunchly against prejudice, bigotry and injustice in any form. S. A. Brelvi of *The Chronicle* struggled bravely all through his career for the professional and material rights of fellow journalists, particularly for editorial freedom. Lokmanya Tilak of *Kesari*, a firm and fearless man who substituted spirit and direction for meekness and drift in politics, believed journalism to be primarily a mission to enlighten the masses.

C. Y. Chintamani of *Leader*, as logical as he was persuasive, was never averse to crossing swords even with the mightiest of the mighty on a point of principle and could discard a ministership as easily as one would a garment. Ramanand Chatterjee of *The Modern Review* and *Pravasi*, idealistic and individualistic to the core, was aware of the

immense power of the pen yet remained graciously self-restrained in whatever he wrote. It was during his time that the *Review* won kudos even abroad and became an institution by itself.

Six different but great personalities, but all fired by intense patriotism and sense of justice, they set standards for fearlessness and freedom of the press.

## About the Speakers

1. The late Lala Feroze Chand was a member of the servants of the people society, which was founded by Lala Lajpat Rai. He was for sometime editor of *The Times of India*. His book, *Lala Lajpat Rai: Life and Work* has been published by the Publications Division.

2. Shri B. K. R. Kabad was an assistant editor of the *Hindustan Times* before which he was in the News Services Division of All India Radio.

3. Shri G. N. Acharya worked on the *Bombay Chronicle* for 25 years. He is a member of the Press Council.

4. The late Shri S. R. Tikekar is a veteran journalist of Bombay and author of many books and monographs in English and Marathi. He was for some years secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bombay.

5. Shri Ravindra Nath Verma is an Assistant Editor of the *Hindustan Times*.

6. Prof. R. K. Dasgupta is Director of the National Library. Formerly he was Tagore Professor of Comparative Literature in Delhi University.



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# Lala Lajpat Rai

*Feroz Chand*

**MY** CLOSE association with Lalaji started with the oncoming of the non-cooperation campaign in 1920. My work under him as a journalist started only in 1925. Though he lived only a little more than three years after that, he had put an end to what you may call my apprenticeship days under him a couple of years before his end came.

You would naturally expect me to talk to you mainly of my own days with Lalaji and of what I have a first-hand knowledge, not like a chronicler narrating the whole story of Lalaji's journalistic doings, or like a historian attempting a critical appraisal of his contribution or comparing him with other outstanding figures, to determine a plausible ranking among them.

Very briefly, however, I must refer to the earlier period. Lalaji's public career started when he was not even out of his teens. His writing for the press, even editing some journals, started very precociously in his teens when the Arya Samaj attracted and shaped him and made good use of him. The next phase started—or comes into full view—with the birth of *The Panjabee* in 1904.

On *The Panjabee* I may linger for a few moments, but at least one

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Text of the lecture delivered on August 18, 1973

event of the earlier pre-*Panjabee* phase I must mention. The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885. And within a couple of years arose a big headache for the founders from Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's opposition in the name of the Muslim community. Lajpat Rai, then a young lawyer at Hissar—barely 23—wrote in the press a series of "Open Letters" to Sir Syed using the Aligarh veteran's own earlier writings to debunk his new dispensation of the Hindus and Muslims being two different nations.

To discuss the far-reaching political implications of that controversy would take us too far afield. Restricting oneself to the present theme, one cannot help wondering at the daring and self-confidence of a mofussil lawyer in his early twenties to enter the lists against a redoubtable veteran. He showed, besides, not only daring but all the skill needed in a first-rate polemic. The "Open Letters" appeared anonymously in the first instance. But soon after the writer arrived at Allahabad for the Congress Session (1888). This marks Lajpat Rai's debut in Indian politics, by no means a quiet or tame affair. For senior leaders received the young man from Hissar giving him an ovation right as he stepped out from the train. The author of the "Open Letters" was made much of. He played a conspicuous part in the Congress session. Lajpat Rai's political career was thus launched by his activity as a journalist and the polemic we are talking about was his first noteworthy journalistic performance. In passing, the polemic is around a theme that occupies a central and fundamental position in Lajpat Rai's political thought and in his political activity.

We pass on to *The Panjabee* started as a weekly newspaper in 1904—soon after it started appearing twice a week—by Lajpat Rai with the help of a few leading Arya Samajists in his inner circle. Ten of these friends contributed, more exactly, undertook to contribute if called upon to do so—a sum of Rs. 1,000. A devoted Arya Samajist youth, who had just passed his M.A. and was likely to start a teaching career in the Arya Samaj (D.A.V.) College, was made the manager. The paper was an immediate success and young Jaswant Rai proved a very competent manager so that the sponsors were never called upon to make good their financial undertakings.

*The Tribune* founded by S. Dayal Singh was the leading Indian

paper in English in the Punjab at that time. Eminent Arya Samajists, particularly those keen on politics, were dissatisfied with its policy. They wanted an organ of their own, primarily for political work, not for Samaj propaganda. Mr. Athavale from Maharashtra was appointed editor of *The Panjabee*, having really been chosen for the job by Lokmanya Tilak. But everyone knew that Lala Lajpat Rai, no longer a mofussil lawyer but well established at the chief court bar in Lahore, was the real man behind the paper. He was not just broadly concerned with the paper's policy but regularly wrote for the paper signed contributions as well as unsigned leaders, went to the office to pass the proofs or to scrutinise matter going into the paper, particularly to see that they did not unwittingly, through lack of due care or vigilance, become victims of the then law of sedition. Though he continued in the legal profession, his journalistic routine and responsibilities were quite heavy.

*The Panjabee* was in existence for only a few years. But it made a notable contribution towards the birth of the left wing in Indian politics which made its existence felt at the 1905 Congress in Benaras. Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab were the strongholds of leftist politics. Tilak's *Kesari*, Aurobindo's *Bandemataram* and Lajpat Rai's *Panjabee* were mouthpieces of the left wing in the three regions. Leftist politics of Swaraj, Swadeshi and Boycott were greatly helped by Curzon's partition of Bengal and by the storm of agitation that it raised. In the Punjab this agitation was greatly reinforced by agrarian unrest which made the highest British authorities, including it was said Kitchener himself, apprehensive about the loyalty of the army for (as O'Dwyer put it later) Punjab was the "sword arm" of British Raj.

Among the outstanding Punjab events of that period was the *Panjabee* case, its editor as well as manager having been arrested and prosecuted. The case aroused so much of popular excitement that Gokhale who happened to visit Lahore found himself in an embarrassing situation. A vast concourse received him at the railway station and a triumphal march started. But the two *Panjabee* accused were released the same day. En route it happened that the two "triumphs" commingled and the crowd put the *Panjabee* heroes into Gokhale's carriage without consulting his wishes. 1905-07 was a stormy period

in Punjab and, I think, Lajpat Rai deserves special credit for foreseeing this and to have started *The Panjabee* in 1904 to be an effective organ of more virile politics for he was sure *The Tribune* of those days would not have been helpful.

In May 1907 Lajpat Rai was deported to Mandalay. His remarkable analysis of the agrarian unrest in his province written for *The Panjabee* was published after he had been spirited away. A little detail about the launching of *The Panjabee* is worth recalling as it provided the immediate provocation that finally goaded the Lajpat Rai circle to start a paper of their own. There was some trouble in Government College, Lahore, and something appeared about it in the columns of *The Tribune*. The editor disclosed the source of the report to the principal, an Englishman, and the student informant was taken to task. Such lack of professional ethics was abhorrent and provided the "goad" for an immediate launching of a new paper.

More than a decade intervenes between *The Panjabee* and the twenties of my association with Lalaji, this period including Lajpat Rai's five years of virtual exile because of World War I. Law is said to be a "jealous mistress" but, continuing the figure of speech, one might say that Lajpat Rai was a successful happy 'bigamist'. Anyway the exile rid him of the 'jealous' one. He was free now to give as much time as he liked to journalism. But, howsoever remarkable his talents and contribution in this field, he was dedicated to his mission of liberating and serving his people in thralldom. His journalism had to be but a means in furtherance of that mission, not to provide a livelihood or a career.

The war created peculiar difficulties in all the three countries of his years of exile. In England, where he happened to be when the war broke out, propaganda through the press for Indians' liberation from the British stranglehold became extremely difficult. Even before America's entering the war those difficulties naturally assumed a formidable shape. Even in Japan special difficulties existed because of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. I would cut out all detail and content myself with a bald assertion that Lajpat Rai had a way of getting around such difficulties and was able to render highly meritorious service to the cause through the press of all the three countries in that difficult period.

But for unusual journalistic skills this would not have been possible. The same skill we discern also in a journal that Lalaji himself edited during this period—the monthly *Young India* issued on behalf of his India Home Rule League. About this small monthly magazine I have said somewhere that it lacked the bulk and vast armoury of a dreadnought, but afforded a superb example of the economy of a pocket battleship.

Now we come to the 'twenties' when the exile came to an end. Lalaji's planning for his work on his return, gave high priority to the starting of two journals, a daily in Urdu and a weekly in English. From the outset Lajpat Rai had never lost sight of the importance of our own languages. For a mass awakening in his own region he had been making abundant use of Urdu. Also he realised that the changed times required a daily with an efficient news service, not merely a weekly. An English language journal was necessary for influencing public opinion on an all India scale. For this he thought a weekly magazine with an educative mission was the proper vehicle—something very different from *The Panjabee* which, though a weekly, had primarily been a newspaper in its look and make-up, no different from the daily papers of that period, and giving the week's news as also special news stories from its own correspondents.

For the Urdu daily, a joint-stock company was floated. Within a few months of Lalaji's return the daily *Bandemataram* made its appearance, Lalaji being managing director of the company and editor of the daily. It was an immediate success not merely because of Lalaji's name, nor just because his signed contributions appearing regularly in the paper were avidly looked forward to, but because, besides these, it was in every way decidedly superior to its contemporaries in production, in make-up, in news services, in its literary standards, above all, in its boldness visible alike in the news columns and in comment. It had a larger, more competent, much better paid staff and was able to attract many outstanding contributors and sought to discover new talent of outstanding merit. No wonder that it rapidly built up a high circulation and soon surpassed previous records of Urdu dailies.

The *Bandemataram* served as a great training school. So many

started their career here and after acquiring some experience claimed senior positions elsewhere. Naturally even papers unfriendly to Lalaji were often manned and conducted by former *Bandemataram* men and Lalaji at times recalled a Persian couplet which runs

*Kas niyamokht ilm-i-tir as man  
ki eqbat mara nishanah ne Kard*

"No one learnt the art of archery from me who later did not make me his target." But he received the shafts sportingly and could smile when complaining.

The birth of this daily was a landmark in the annals of the Urdu press. I had not meant to burden this talk with quotations. But you will permit me to give you the history of the *Bandemataram* on "high authority" through a quotation which luckily runs into just two sentences :

"In 1920, Lala Lajpat Rai started *Bandemataram* under the editorship of S. Mohan Singh Sawhney. It was a popular newspaper but it ceased publication after the death of Lala Lajpat Rai." After the obituary sentence we are told: "It is now in irregular publication from Delhi."

I have given you the *Bandemataram* history in full as it appears in the history column prepared by a veteran editor for the Press Commission. And, the veteran was that time editing Punjab's leading daily! Condescension enough to give two sentences to Lajpat Rai's "language" sheet—daily or weekly need not matter, need not be specified. This Sawhney mentioned as Lajpat Rai's editor was perhaps a newborn baby in 1920, more likely a tiny tot! Such being the state of affairs in our Republic. I must confine myself to the Republic of Letters in which journalism claims a conspicuous place. It is futile to expect justice being done to the part the *Bandemataram* played in its day particularly as not only has the paper ceased to exist but after the 1947 partition, it has become extremely difficult to get a file for a considerable period, or even a few stray copies.

I might, therefore, say a few words about its achievements and distinctive doings. First of all, then, this paper must be given a high place on the "roll of honour" for the amount of repression that befell its lot—police raids, demand of security or forfeiture, confiscation

of copies, or closure, prosecution and prison terms. When repression started in right earnest to suppress non-cooperation, prosecution came in quick succession. At one time I believe half a dozen *Bandemataram* men were undergoing prison terms. Quite naturally, the authorities regarded this paper as a most powerful anti-Government propagandist. The *Bandemataram* achieved unprecedented popularity and influence by its bold preaching of non-cooperation and its dauntless exposures of repression and tyranny. It took 'sedition' to remote villages that might otherwise have remained unaffected.

Talking of non-co-operation, I should mention that a most important item of the original non-co-operation programme—the boycott of legislatures—was a distinctive *Bandemataram* contribution. Lala Lajpat Rai was the first to suggest this boycott through his paper. This proposal made news that found nation-wide publicity and Mahatma Gandhi endorsing the suggestion in *Young India* made it a vital part of the programme that he got passed at the Special Congress session in September 1920.

I have said a word about the prison terms undergone by *Bandemataram* men. To my mind even a more important contribution, because of more abiding value was, what the *Bandemataram* achieved in prison reform.

The *Bandemataram* made very sensational disclosures about tyranny and torture that obtained in His Majesty's prison in Multan. The disclosures led to a *cause celebre* in which the high official named in the disclosures who sued the paper for defamation came out so badly that the evidence and findings in the case were referred to in British Parliament and in international Prison Reform gatherings. Lord Olivier, at one time Secretary of State for India, congratulated Lala Lajpat Rai's paper for the spotlight on gross maladministration in prisons. The Punjab legislature repeatedly discussed the matter and a committee was set up whose recommendations started a process of prison reform. The contribution of the *Bandemataram* here, to my mind, was so credible that I cannot think of many comparable achievements of our English dailies.

As I said, Lalaji was keen on a weekly in English but actually this materialized about five years after the start of the Urdu daily.

The non-cooperation campaign was an enormous tax on his time and energy. Before the end of 1921 he was in prison to come out (with shattered health) in the latter half of 1923 and the quest for health included a trip of Europe. All this delayed his plans but I think his chief hesitation arose from his aiming rather too high. The weeklies that he liked best were Massingham's *The Nation* and its American namesake edited by Villard. He had occasionally written for the *New Statesman* (of Webbs) in which *The Nation* merged later on and for the American *New Republic* and both of these weeklies he liked much. He knew very well that the high standards in weekly journalism that these "highbrows" set were not attainable in our country. Yet he aimed at producing a weekly journal of opinion that thoughtful people would find readable and stimulating and that would by its merit exercise influence on public opinion in a way different from, and perhaps more effective than that of, daily journalism.

In retrospect compared with the "highbrows" I have named, the weekly Lalaji ran could not be rated higher than "middlebrow." Apart from the questions of resources, talent and of readers' demand, Lalaji's weekly had to be above all an organ of propaganda and finicky ways of "highbrowism" would ill compare with such an objective. All the same the weekly made its intellectual impact, was recognised for its educative value and as regards its influence, as judged by nation-wide quotation, reproduction and comment, it ranked next only to Gandhi's *Young India*. Combining sobriety with vigour *The People* was generally recognised as a weekly review of advanced politics, distinctly (but not rabidly) leftist.

Lalaji wanted a kind of weekly different from the familiar patterns in Indian journalism. He fastidiously wanted to make sure of a dependable 'understudy' before he decided on launching his scheme.

I was lucky to be chosen for the 'understudy's' role. The fastidious chooser chose a callow youth without any journalistic experience worth the name. As I said at the outset, under him I served my apprenticeship. From him I learnt all my lessons in journalism. Before I tell you about the 'training', a word may seem called for in regard to what preceded it. Lalaji had peculiar, unobtrusive and somewhat intuitive ways of making assessment of the capabilities and short-

comings of those who came in contact with him. I rather fancy he started sizing me up and adjudging my potentiality from the summary of the day's news that I used to prepare for him when he was a prisoner in the Lahore Central Jail. The Punjab authorities, outdoing everybody else in their crude ways, would not let him have a newspaper. I should mention that prison officials were quite often better than the instructions they had to enforce. The doctor on his round quite often "forgot" his own paper in Lalaji's cell. Lalaji never accepted Gandhiji's code for a 'model prisoner'—he was a political prisoner, not a satyagrahi prisoner. If he accepted or endorsed 'satyagraha,' it was only for its use as a political weapon and not for its superior spiritual virtue. Soon every day I was preparing a summary and delivering it to a trustworthy man at the prison gate. You are listening to a smuggler who is as proud of what he did as Lalaji himself was sure of the correctness of his conduct in using "other channels" as a political prisoner. The smuggler was naturally proud for not only had the smuggling been authorised by Lalaji, but it had been endorsed also by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya who, when he interviewed Lalaji in jail, had carried the morning papers with him, very confident that the authorities would not stop him from passing these on to Lalaji. Even Malaviyaji's request and persuasive ways proved of no avail—and so he had to ask us to use our usual channels.

I mention the smuggled news-sheet not to claim any merit for my handicraft but as an illustration of Lalaji's ways of making assessments and also of his being extremely newsthirsty. For, as I heard from his prison-mates, if once in a way the news arrangements failed, he would be in a temper cursing everybody for neglecting him. I remember Harkishan Lal, then a Minister in the Punjab Government, called on Lalaji some time before his arrest. Laughingly, Lalaji asked a 'favour' of the Minister. "You may soon be having me as your prisoner. Feed and treat me as you like, but just grant me one favour, a western style commode for my bowels have too long been used to it." If Harkishan Lal could really grant a favour in prison Lajpat Rai should have asked him above all not to be deprived of a newspaper which he needed at least as much as what he actually asked for.

When Lalaji came out, now and then minor assignments cropped

up. He may be writing out a presidential address. If in Urdu, an English version had to be prepared and vice versa; or it had to be condensed for press telegrams. At Karachi (1923-end) he wrote out an important statement announcing that he had decided to devote his time and energy to an all-India anti-untouchability drive. (This was his resolution on the day sacred to Guru Gobind Singh). As he handed me what he had written out, he observed "Make a precis of this for a press telegram. Let me see your journalistic aptitude." So, clearly, this was how he made his assessments though such a subsidiary purpose was usually not made explicit. Having gauged my aptitude in his own way, Lalaji decided that I should "go through the mill" as he himself put it and for this he sent me for a brief term to *The Bombay Chronicle* then being edited by S. A. Brelvi.

Coming to the real 'training' under Lalaji himself, if I were to speak in the more prosaic terms of the concrete "lessons" that I received, I can recall hardly anything beyond a succinct two-word formula "likho, pharo," (write, tear up) which he was apt to repeat to signify that the process had to be ever continued. For added force, he would at times add "That's what I used to do." In this two-word course of lessons lay concealed the master-keys: patience, perseverance and fastidious self-criticism.

The "lessons" did not consist of explicit oral instruction but emerged from what one observed. Thus the very first issue of our weekly, *The People* almost the very first item therein, gave me an unforgettable lesson that one could not have learnt from text-books and class lectures. This reminiscence about the very first issue I treasure as affording a remarkable glimpse of the real greatness of both Lajpat Rai and C. F. Andrews (whom I consider almost a co-founder of *The People*). The paper opened after the customary "Ourselves" with an obituary tribute to Principal S. K. Rudra. In the course of this occurred a sentence:

"....though a Christian by faith and belonging to the second generation of Indian Christians, he preserved the Hindi traits of gentleness, amiability and unbounded hospitality."

A Christian reader sent a letter of protest, taking exception to "though a Christian," which seemed to imply that the virtues mentioned

were peculiar to Hindus or not equally cherished by Christians, or people of other faiths. That letter was, of course, published with a handsome apology over the initials "L.R." which read:

"I am exceedingly sorry for the unconscious mistake which I have been guilty of. I never meant to make any reflection on the Christian or any other community. I have been the fortunate recipient of unbounded hospitality at the hands of many Christians and Jews. As to gentleness and amiability, they are not the monopoly of any particular community."

The peculiar glimpse of real greatness that this episode gave me I can share with you only if I reveal that the exceptionable words for which Lalaji so readily apologized had actually not been written by him. The opening obituary paragraph had been done by Andrews and this was marked off not very conspicuously from Lalaji's own tribute which appeared over his initials and ran into three paras filling a whole column. Lalaji's three paras were unexceptionable. Andrews somewhat over-stretched his Christian charity in lauding Hindu virtues. "Sushil Kumar Rudra used to declare openly that he cherished all that was good in Hinduism and yet he was a profound Christian" thus Andrews wrote to Gandhiji. No doubt it was Rudra's own attitude towards the finer Hindu traits that had influenced Andrews when he wrote that unsigned obituary in *The People*. Perhaps Rudra would not have seen much offence in that sentence beginning "though a Christian."

As most obvious, *The People* in Lajpat Rai's scheme was a necessary complement to the work being done through the *Bandemataram*; but there is a highly significant contrast too in the part played by these two journals. The non-cooperation upsurge arose soon after, almost synchronised with, the birth of the *Bandemataram*, and so its role in its heyday was to do the utmost that a newspaper could to invigorate that campaign. *The People* was born when the tide was receding. It was a time for stock-taking; a time to shed self-complacency, while yet warding off a whining defeatism and frustration, to do some "furious" thinking for the future lines of action. This called for even greater courage than that needed in undergoing imprisonment. Even dead fish can swim with the current: it is going against it that calls for rare

courage, stamina and gumption. *The People* shone bright by virtue of this superior kind of courage. Its editor could think unfettered by the framework of an ideology, Gandhian or any other brand. He assayed everything on the pragmatic touchstone. He spoke out with the courage of his convictions however much these differed from those of Gandhiji or the "High Command" of his day. He could espouse unpopular views and in certain situations he thought this was a moral duty.

Under Lajpat Rai I learnt some very salutary and valuable lessons in what I may call the role of dissidence or non-conformity—in what situations "Ekala Chalo" becomes an imperative duty, even though this may exact a high price and entail great sacrifice—and within what limits such dissidence must operate. I may make a confession here that ruminating over the events in the post-Lajpat Rai years, I asked myself whether I had learnt this valuable lesson perfectly. The scrutiny found me wanting. A most senseless thing was done by the Congress Working Committee in 1930 when it called upon newspapers to suspend publication. Even Lajpat Rai's successors (including myself) failed and proved unworthy of the departed chief when against their own judgement or convictions they closed down their papers which suffered grievously thereby. Far from the damage thus done to it the *Bandemataram* was never really able to recover. This is one of the things for which I must censure myself as having proved an unworthy disciple.

Journalistic opinion was overwhelmingly against the Working Committee's ukase—few know today that it was in this context that the Working Committee was for the first time dubbed the "High Command" and the epithet ironically expressed censure of its rigid, authoritarian ways. The epithet has persisted and come to be used by Congress leaders themselves without a suggestion of irony, censure or shame.

About this time Vithalbhai J. Patel had resigned speakership of the Central Assembly. The working Committee ordered an inquiry into a firing incident in Peshwar by a Committee with Patel as Chairman. The inquiry Committee held its sittings at Rawalpindi. Stopping on his way at Lahore, Patel very emphatically justified the sus-

pension ukase and vehemently asked the people to boycott newspapers if they defied it. Yet after recording sensational evidence for a couple of days and finding it completely blacked out by the Press he frantically called me from Lahore to arrange publicity in other people's papers, which of course had not suspended publication, for the sensational disclosures being made before his Committee.

It was one of the strangest experiences in my journalistic career thus to be "high-commanded" to suspend publication of the papers that would be most interested in giving effective publicity to Governmental repression, and soon after the suspension to be requested to use my good offices to persuade the others who at best would be half-hearted in giving publicity to the doings of those who were holding out threats of "boycott" to these organs.

As a journalist of dissidence I do not know of another in the domain of journalism whom I could put alongside of Lajpat Rai. The inmost spirit of his dissidence was missed by those who assessed it merely in the current political terms, "right" or "left" etc. and did not realise the underlying moral force. I would give one illustration. The Congress adopted the "spinning franchise" at its Belgaum session in 1924 over which Gandhiji himself presided. Lalaji opposed it vigorously in the Congress gathering and of course also in his journals. He thus courted unpopularity, alike among non-changers and Swarajists, and invited Mohammed Ali's biting sarcasm and even the Mahatma himself took it with less of composure than he normally did when Lalaji differed. Though Lalaji disapproved the spinning franchise on political grounds, vehemence of his opposition really arose out of a moral disgust. He was convinced that there was no sincerity in the Swarajists' acceptance of the "franchise", that they merely sought to flatter the Mahatma and in a bargaining spirit to strike a deal exacting *quid pro quo*. Few amongst them actually became spinners. The next few months made the hollowness of it clear to the Mahatma and he himself had the "franchise" withdrawn. The insincerity and the hypocrisy repelled Lajpat Rai for more than the political futility of such a franchise. Commenting on this situation *The People* wrote that if Tartufle, Moliere's embodiment of hypocrisy, were to visit our land he would come dressed in khadi for this

had become the badge of his tribe of hypocrites. Dissidence has value and force only when it springs from a moral urge not merely as a phenomenon of oozing originality.

I attach the highest importance to the moral aspect that I have underlined because in the journalistic dispensation that I received from my chief such moral values and moral sensibility were supreme requisites in higher varieties of purposeful journalism. But I do not mean that the other, that is, the usual technical or literary things had no place in the training or apprenticeship under Lalaji. Primarily these things were left to the purely professional people working on the staff; all the same I would give you one or two illustrations of Lalaji's own interest in this aspect. *Bandemataram* was the first daily in Urdu (at least in Lahore, the leading centre of Urdu journalism) to use headline running across several columns. This revolutionized the make-up of Urdu dailies. Subject to correction, my recollection is that *Bandemataram* was Urdu's first morning daily—it did not start as a morning paper though.

I remember also that *The Tribune*, being very conservative in its make-up etc., used to have the editorials on the front page when almost all other papers had started using it for news. One day Lalaji specially called on the editor, Babu Kalinath Ray, at his house. I was with him and this is the only occasion I can recall of Lalaji making such a call. In the course of talk Lalaji pressed Kali Babu to keep abreast of the times and to take his editorials inside leaving the front page for the display of important news. Later, of course, under pressure from his own team, Kali Babu had to bow and, much against his own wishes, accept the change in times.

The training that I received under Lalaji was, as you would have seen by now, of a sort entirely different from the usual pattern of journalistic training. And, please do not run away with the impression that I merely observed some trait and learnt the trick, or caught the contagion. I assure you it also entailed hard work and the most concentrated application that I was capable of. From the outset I realised that Lalaji had been looking for an understudy—though I do not recollect his ever having used that expression. So to my own mind my real task was to equip myself to the best of my ability for that role.

I must understand not only Lalaji's expressed views on the current situation but must thoroughly understand his background to be able to see how he would "react" to a particular kind of happening. For the most part his "copy" came by mail from all parts of India, often from abroad. I know his writing was often done in great hurry. There was no paucity of men who would have subbed his copy better than I did even at my best, and more carefully corrected all the slips and lapses of grammar of idiom. But the real thing was to be able to spot the marks of hurry even where grammar and usage had not been offended.

The understudy would not merely "sub" the copy: he might find it necessary to take more substantial liberties with it, that is to revise it as he might do it himself. In unsigned editorial comment of course the "understudy" had to be deputized for him and take care not to let his own thinking obtrude into this deputizing though of course he could have his say elsewhere in the paper. All this called for a rapport more thorough and much subtler than might normally be expected in a "deputy" chosen just on professional merit. Not long after starting in my role of "understudy" I was taking liberties with his copy which the best of subs would dare not, and I was encouraged in this and at times received special thanks for this. And I took good care not to let my own thinking—if different from Lalaji's—obtrude. This is the supreme training that I received in handling "Lalaji's copy" by trying to get beneath the writer's skin, so to say. Having understood Lalaji's initial hesitancy and his fastidiousness, I had started diffidently. But it seemed his preferring the callow youth over accomplished seniors from the profession had succeeded—at least he was satisfied it had.

For the *Bandemataram*, I should add, Ram Prasad, a trusted lieutenant from the Arya Samaj days and a seasoned person had filled the bill to satisfaction as joint editor. Largely as a by-product of the concentrated application needed for the "understudy's" role, I think I acquired some merit for my own independent use as leader-writer and commentator.

On the subject of "smuggling", I would like to add that it had been a two-way affair. Out of the prison came more than one impor-

tant series of contributions from Lalaji including "The ABC of Indian Politics" which appeared in the *Modern Review* over the name of Lajpat Rai's son, Dr. Amrit Rai. Being of more than passing interest, these articles were reissued in book form, after Lalaji's release, with his own name on the cover. Another important smuggled series, published anonymously, bore the title "Cogitations of a Constitutional Grumbler". The title, showing a journalistic flair, was given by Lalaji himself. Some of the smuggled articles were signed 'Vidur'. (Two important communications, one addressed to Gandhiji after the Bardoli retreat and another to C. R. Das about Council Entry and Hindu-Muslim problem, caused a flutter. But they are outside my present scope).

Even from jail Lalaji could effectively make a contribution towards the stock-taking necessitated by the ebbing away of non-cooperation and, though the author of Council boycott, when the time of rethinking came, C. R. Das was substantially helped in the new orientation he sought by Lalaji's writings for the press as well as private communications. The "Cogitations" were done in a style akin to the Platonic dialogue wherein figure Dayal Das, a rather native Gandhite, scantily clad and shivering in the before-dawn cold of a north Indian winter, and still hesitating when offered a cup of tea by the friend he is visiting. And, of course, he is offered in the course of the dialogue much dissillusioning illumination. The series showed Lalaji's aptitude in offering political wisdom in a slightly satirical vein and in handling a formd iialogue combined with "Cogitations" that one would think he had not been used to.

I started my narration with Lajpat Rai's polemic against Sir Syed through the 'Open Letters'. There were a few more note worthy 'Open Letters'—one addressed to Montague, another to David Llyod George—during Lalaji's American days. And his memorable polemics included those with Srinivasa Sastri (about "moderate" politics), with Mahatma Hans Raj (about the D.A.V. College), a brief one with Mahatma Gandhi (regarding ahimsa), and perhaps the last in this series with Motilal Nehru when Lalaji parted company with Swarajists. (The last of his books is a piece of polemical writing, *Unhappy India*.)

Among our politician journalists Lalaji was a particularly dis-

tinguished polemicist. I have barely mentioned the more memorable of his polemics; brief comments on these might be of interest, but I resist the temptation. However, I must not forget to refer to an occasion when he fought shy of entering the list—that is when Mohammed Ali started lampooning him in *The Comrade*. Lalaji shied away just dismissing the attacks as “billings gate.”

In those days the ‘press conference’ was something unknown. But the “interview” was a recognised institution, and Lalaji as a journalist had decided views on the interviewer’s role who entered into disputation with people whose views he did not like. Interviewers who came to him (or those who went out on behalf of his papers) were often told about this. Wherever he went interviewers flocked to elicit his views; but one interview that struck me as being in a class by itself was granted in London, and one of the best known editors, A. G. Gardiner, was the interviewer. “What will you do if you were made the Viceroy?”

A small interviewing incident in which a rejected interviewer in a way scored against him. A young man from a Lahore Urdu weekly, in politics unfriendly to Lalaji and otherwise esteemed rather low by him (in spite of some literary worth) sought Lalaji’s views on current politics. Lalaji declined. The interviewer persisted “But you are our leader....” Somewhat petulantly, Lalaji said “Have given up leadership”. The paper published this much on a whole page with a query at the bottom—“Will the people permit him to?” A journalist worth his salt can put a rebuff to some use.

I could say a lot about Lalaji’s notions of the editor’s independence and of freedom of the Press, if I had not already taken too long. Let my own experience under Lalaji serve as a brief illustration. When on his insistence I took over the weekly’s editorship, Lalaji offered the fullest assurance that neither he nor anyone else would interfere in my work as editor. And never did I have occasion to experience the least bit of interference or pressure.

About his keenness on independence of the Press, I recall that when he joined the Swaraj Party, one of the reservations he conveyed to Pandit Motilal as leader of the party was that his joining the party would not imply that his papers would lose the right of free comment

that they had been exercising in regard to Swaraj Party's programmes and policies. His differences with the Swaraj Party included, among other things, his attitude towards important legislation affecting the Press. The Press in those days functioned under severe restraints and ran great risks and the Punjab administration was notoriously intolerant. Lajpat Rai and his papers let go no opportunity of attacking foreign rule and of exposing repression and yet it was no easy task to get this inconvenient critic into the clutches of law for his writings. Executive action of course was a different matter—as also situations in which inviting legal action seemed worthwhile, as for instance in the *Bande-mataram cause celebre* arising out of its exposures of jail tyranny. In this school I learnt my lessons of 'brinkmanship' which helped me go through a fairly long journalistic career and during the most difficult times, almost unscathed. The repressive laws were excellent schooling for the mastery of 'Brinkmanship.' An editorial in *The People* quoted Nietzsche's profound words: "It is no small advantage to have a hundred Damoclean swords forged by law hanging above one's head; that is how we learnt to dance, that is how one attains freedom of movement."

So many things I have not even touched upon, even important things like Lalaji's connection with *The Hindustan Times*. I would have liked also to say something about his style in Urdu and in English. I could have given a lot of trivia if that sort of talk interested you as to how he worked, how he conformed to the ways current among journalists, in what ways he provided a contrast to these. Or about his extraordinary clarity or dispatch in scanning news, in assessing it, and at his writing desk. I have said little about his range, and some of you may think he wrote only political stuff. His travelogues and occasional journals offer great variety, the impulse behind which was not that of the true diarist but of the true journalist who cares above all for topicality and readability. Even now I sometimes read his earlier *Panjabee* travelogues—and enjoy these even more than the later ones which I published in *The People*.

I have tried to give you a few glimpses of Lala Lajpat Rai as seen at work in the journalistic domain. Today many who know of him as a great political leader are not aware what an outstanding con-

tribution he made as a journalist. C. F. Andrews, who had ample opportunity to watch his journalistic work, and who was a very competent judge of such things, pressed on him the suggestion that he might withdraw from all other public activity and give India a national (English language) daily that would do for public opinion in this country what C. P. Scott's *Manchester Guardian* was at that time doing for British public opinion. No one else in Andrews' reckoning was cut out for this role; and he attached so much importance to it that he thought that the loss to all other fields by Lalaji's withdrawal would be more than made up by the gain. Yet we lose sight of his great contribution to journalism because this was overshadowed by his vast contribution in other fields.

India's freedom struggle was blessed with a number of front-rank leaders who were brilliant as editors too, though their journalistic contribution we are likely to lose sight of. They were the glory of Indian journalism, and the profession does itself honour by cherishing their memory as such. Here I must content myself with naming just half a dozen who to my mind constitute stars of the first magnitude—Annie Besant, Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Abul Kalam Azad, Mohammed Ali -- and a luminary in a class by himself—Mahatma Gandhi.







# Annie Besant

*B.K.R. Kabad*

**T**HERE IS an initial difficulty in speaking of Annie Besant as journalist. To an extent this is true also of the other eminent personages who figure in this series, but in her case there are some special reasons which accentuate the difficulty.

None of the great leaders who are the subject of our study in this series was what we might call a professional journalist. To them, journalism was not an avocation; it merely furnished an instrument, a means, to serve the larger purposes of their other public activities. But they all had the qualities which make a great journalist.

What does that phrase mean, really? Not merely the ability to put an idea across or to engage and hold the attention of the reader though of course these qualities are important and indeed indispensable in a journalist. But we also look for something more, for something higher. No journalist can be regarded as great, or even for that matter of the front rank, if he is not able to claim "with a clear conscience that he has made his pen the servant of things he cared for and believed in." He must never shrink from his obligation "to serve truth without fear, to admonish the people and expose the demagogue, to chide the wayward and embolden the faint-hearted in a word, to

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Text of the lecture delivered on April 13, 1974

provide sound comment on public life in all its aspects that should be his task and the source of his power."

The comments I have quoted above are by men who were themselves eminent journalists—Wickham Steed and Wilson Harris. They were speaking of Thomas Barnes and his successor Delane who between them raised *The London Times* to the pre-eminent position it maintained for more than a century and also of the great Liberal editors, C. P. Scott and J. A. Spender, who by their personal qualities shed lustre on the papers they edited—the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Westminster Gazette*.

I have referred to these names for a particular reason. When we speak of these men do we not at once, almost automatically, recall the names of the papers they were associated with? We say, Delane of the *Times*, C. P. Scott of the *Guardian* and so on. The two together—the man and the paper—come to mind at the same moment to form, as it were, one composite personality. It is the same if we come nearer home. Take Motilal Ghosh or C. Y. Chintamani, to pick out only two from among the great journalists of bygone days. They were great men who rendered important public service and Chintamani in particular also played a part on the larger political stage. But they will be remembered always as Motilal Ghosh of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and Chintamani of *The Leader*.

Now, this process is reversed when we try to put Mrs. Besant or Tilak or Gandhiji in the same category. How many outside Manarashtra, when we mention Tilak, will at once think of *The Kesari*; how many among the countless numbers throughout the world to whom Gandhi is an honoured name know he had also been the editor of a famous weekly?

Mrs Besant is in yet another class. Not many remember her today though her status was hardly less exalted than that of the other great pioneers of the Indian freedom movement; and fever still, when they recall her name, think of *New India*, though for several years that newspaper, under her editorship, was the leading nationalist daily in the country. But this is not why I say that she is in a different class. When she came to India she had already become a well-known public figure in England. It is true Gandhiji also came to India only after he

had earned a great reputation in South Africa as the leader of the Indian community there. But the two parts of his career were of a piece. What he attempted, endured and achieved in South Africa could rightly be regarded as a prelude and preparation for his work in India. It was an episode in the same epic story.

But there is no such clearly discernible connection between the part played by Mrs. Besant in various public movements in her own country and her subsequent career in India unless we look closer when perhaps we might be able to identify an underlying unity of aim and purpose. Echoes of those distant campaigns can still be heard, for they have passed into history. Prof. G. M. Trevelyan, for instance, refers to the movement led by Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant in support of what is now known as family planning. Strange as it may seem to us today, they were prosecuted for advocating it and giving it publicity<sup>1</sup>. Bernard Shaw<sup>2</sup> makes a passing reference to the outrageous attempts made through the courts to deprive Mrs. Besant of the custody of her children because of her openly professed agnostic beliefs. Prof. Raymond Chapman has noticed in his lively volume, *The Victorian Debate*<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Besant's final abandonment of agnosticism in her search for a more positive faith.

All these currents and cross-currents of opinion had very little to do with India. It is true Charles Bradlaugh who was Mrs. Besant's close associate in some of these movements had long been actively interested in Indian affairs and was even sometimes called the Member for India because of his consistent championship of Indian interests in the House of Commons. Mrs. Besant herself wrote a pamphlet—*England, India and Afghanistan*—and in other ways too took a well-informed interest in India long before she came to this country but it was interest shown as a spectator and not as a participant. It is only by a stretch of the imagination that one can find a link between these activities and her leadership of the Indian freedom movement later. There was a long intervening period of nearly 21 years, from her first

<sup>1</sup>*English Social History* (2nd Edn.) p. 563.

<sup>2</sup>*Sixteen Self-Sketches* p. 56,

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid*, p. 283,

arrival in India in 1893 to 1914, the year which marked her entry into both Indian politics and Indian journalism.

The reason why I have traced these developments is two-fold. In the first place I wished to explain what I meant when I began by saying that there was an initial difficulty in dealing with Annie Besant and the other political leaders in their role as journalists. We now begin to see why. Though they were journalists in the true sense—and outstanding in that category—they were also a great many other things besides, and what they did as journalists will make little sense to us unless seen as part of a more variegated picture.

Some of the great professional journalists too have interests outside journalism. C. P. Scott was a member of Parliament for some years; Chintamani was minister in a provincial government. But if we consider their life's work in retrospect the whole of it, to my mind, is encompassed by their work for their papers. What lay outside was of little significance. As for the other leaders I have spoken of, their journalistic work is only one aspect of their total achievement, a fragment, albeit a significant and vital one but still a fragment, of a larger life.

That is a very important difference. If one speaks of the work a journalist has done in the course of his profession, one has said practically everything worth while that there is to be said about him. But when one begins to study what a political leader has done by way of journalism, his journalistic work acquires value only in the larger context of his work elsewhere. A man's life does not fall into water-tight compartments. Each aspect of it influences the rest. To attempt any thing like a true assessment of Mrs. Besant's work as a journalist, one has to bear this in mind and to look at it from different points of view.

There was first of all the intimate and continuous inter-relationship between her journalistic and her political work. Her newspaper articles reflected, as we shall see, the different phases of her political campaigning both within the Congress and outside, its ups and downs, its achievements and failures. Then there was her theosophical background from which was derived, I think, her profound faith in India's high destiny and her conviction that India had a special mission to fulfil in the world. Last but by no means least relevant to an understanding

of her political attitude in different situations was her earlier career in England as a fighter against blind prejudice, bigotry and social injustice. It is this which puts her in a different class from the other leaders I have mentioned.

Let us take the high spots of her career in journalism and politics. Oddly enough, they synchronise very closely. As I said, 1914 was the year when she began taking an active part in Indian politics which at that time really meant Congress politics. It was also the year when she entered Indian journalism. She seems to have thought at that time that in doing this she was taking a somewhat daring step. "Please do not have a fit" she writes to her friend, Miss Esther Bright, on July 16, 1914, "but I have bought a daily paper in Madras." She goes on to add "It is needed for the work. It was a rag, but it will be a power. It is the oldest paper in Madras (1841). It is quite exciting to edit a daily paper! I expect to make it good. I have cleared off all the coarse advertisements . . ."

I have quoted this letter at some length because it makes clear one or two essential points. It shows, for one thing, her tremendous confidence in herself. Taking over and running a daily newspaper was probably not as onerous and hazardous an undertaking sixty years ago as it is today. But it still could not have been an easy or light one. And she knew what it involved; she was not taking a leap in the dark. She had for years worked in England on a journal, *The National Reformer*, beginning with a staff appointment and rising to be joint editor. She took over this new responsibility because, as she said, she needed a daily paper "for the work," by which of course she meant her political work. She also started a weekly journal, *The Commonweal*, at about the same time.

The letter also shows with what high seriousness she approached her task. One of the first things she did was to clear off "all the coarse advertisements"; the newspaper was to her not just a money-spinner; it was a sacred trust.

Years earlier she had defined what precisely this meant for her. In a moving passage of her autobiography she writes: "Very solemn is to me the responsibility of the public teacher, standing forth in Press and on platform to partly mould the thought of his time, swaying

thousands of readers and hearers year after year. No weightier responsibility can anyone take, no more sacred charge. The written and the spoken word start forces none may measure, set working brain after brain, influence numbers unknown to the forthgiver of the word, work for good or for evil all down the stream of time. Feeling the greatness of the career, the solemnity of the duty, I pledged my word to the cause I love that no effort on my part should be wanted to render myself worthy of the privilege of service that I took; that I would read and study, and would train every faculty that I had; that I would polish my language, discipline my thought, widen my knowledge. And this at least I may say, that I have written and spoken much, I have studied and thought more, and that I have not given to my mistress Truth that 'which has cost me nothing<sup>1</sup>'.

The time soon came when her resolution was to be put to a new and more severe trial. Persecution for one's opinions was something to which Mrs. Besant was no stranger. Way back in the 1870s, she had become the storm centre of a fierce controversy. The young wife of a beneficed clergyman, she discovered that she had lost faith in the Gospels as divinely revealed truth. Too honest to conform to the outward formalities of the Church while remaining sceptical of its essential doctrine she ceased to attend the communion.

It is not too difficult to imagine the kind of courage needed in the wife of a parish priest to take this step in a small tightly-knit village community. To us in this permissive age, all the fuss over a retreat from established religious beliefs might seem a boring irrelevance. But in mid Victorian England the sort of problems which were worrying Mrs. Besant caused a profound emotional and intellectual upheaval manifested in movements ranging from those of the Tractarians at one end to the National Secular Society at the other. The immediate social reaction to Mrs. Besant's departure from conformity was savage. It broke up her home and involved her in long proceedings in the courts to retain custody of her children. She also came up before the courts when she and Bradlaugh were prosecuted for putting into circulation a neo-Malthusian pamphlet giving publicity to birth control methods.

<sup>1</sup>*Annie Besant : An Autobiography* (5th Impression 1920) pp. 188-189.

It is hardly surprising that so spirited a campaigner, when she entered the Indian political arena, should have thrown in her lot with what was known as the Extremist wing of the Congress, of which Tilak was the leading luminary at the time. This was the year 1914. Tilak was back in politics after six years in prison but found that the Moderates had banged the doors of the Congress against him and were determined to keep him out. Practically his only important friend and ally in the Congress was Mrs. Besant. She had little patience with what she considered the milk-and-water policies of the Moderates.

Under their control, the 1914 session of the Congress in Madras had again witnessed the monotonous reiteration of familiar demands—for more places for Indians in the Civil Service, the right to bear arms, the right to hold commissions in the armed forces and so on. The furthest the Moderates would go was to pass a resolution appealing to Britain to take 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”. The next session of the Congress, under the presidentship of Sir S. P. (later Lord) Sinha took an even more cautious line. “The day will not break the sooner” observed the president, “because we get up before twilight.”

Mrs. Besant would have none of this. She came out boldly in support of the demand for full freedom or, as she termed it, Home Rule. World War I had broken out at about this time and that gave a special emphasis to the demand. But Mr. Sri Prakasa, in his attractive little book<sup>1</sup>, perhaps puts the case a bit high when he says “Mrs. Besant’s slogan was “England’s difficulty is India’s opportunity”. It does not seem that Mrs. Besant’s intention was to use Home Rule as a bargaining counter although some things she said could bear that interpretation. It is clear from numerous articles and speeches that her intention was only to stress the obvious truth that only a free people could be expected to fight for freedom and world peace.

For instance, she said : ‘Young men cannot be expected to make the sacrifice asked for unless they are inspired by a passionate love for their motherland such as emptied the universities of Great Britain.

<sup>1</sup>*Annie Besant, as Woman and as Leader* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan)p. 30

Love for a foreign empire in which they are a dependency cannot do it. Love for an empire in which they are a partner will do it. The prospect of a prolongation of inferiority will not inspire; the love of liberty and the hope of winning it and of becoming citizens of an empire of free nations will inspire. Let there be no mistake..."(New India, March 2, 1917).

Or again : "We claim liberty, not favour. We claim freedom, not the goodwill of the Government. Freedom is the right of every human being and without the process of law none should have the power to take it..." (*New India*, January 1, 1919). There are many more articles to this effect, most of them appearing in *New India*. As she has herself recorded, "Round this (that is, *New India*) and the weekly *Commonweal* was destined to rage the battle for Home Rule."

The formal inauguration of the Home Rule League was announced in *New India* on 25 September 1915. "It has been decided (the paper said) to start a Home Rule League, with Home Rule for India as its only object, as an auxiliary to the National Congress here and its British committee in England, the special function of the committee being to educate the English democracy in relation to India and to take up the work which Charles Bradlaugh began and which was prematurely struck out of his hands by death."

The authorities were quick to take alarm at these developments. The Madras Government suggested that Mrs. Besant should be "forced to leave India," adding among other things, "her writings will lose a good deal of their danger because of the distance between herself and her audience." The Government of India did not agree; its Home Member remarked : "Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League is foolish and wild and I doubt whether even the National Congress will adopt it." He was partly right. The National Congress was then in the hands of the Moderates and their first reactions were predictable. B. Shiva Rao, who was on the editorial Staff of *New India* at the time and was close to the developments taking place within the Congress, says : "Few among those alive today are aware that at the time of the inauguration of the freedom movement in 1917 many eminent Indians, including for a time Gandhiji himself, were uneasy about the radical demand<sup>1</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> *India's Freedom Movement* p. 45

The Government, while unwilling to deport Mrs. Besant, took other measures to restrain her activities. She was asked to provide security under the Press Act for "the better conduct of her publications." This amount was soon forfeited and a higher deposit claimed. She contested this order in the Madras High Court but failed and had to go up to Privy Council. There was a touch of dramatic irony in the fact noted by Shiva Rao<sup>1</sup> that her petition was opposed in the High Court by the then Advocate General of Madras, Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, who went on later to be president of the Congress like herself and whose fortunes in that organisation proved in some respects to be almost as chequered as her own.

Mrs. Besant evidently had a clear premonition of the impending perils. Months before these happenings she wrote : "One sits at the editorial table with the sword of Damocles hanging over one's head on the thin hair of some official. It is heavy and anxious work, but it is glorious to be allowed to serve the Ancient Motherland, to think of her, write for her, speak for her, live for her and to dream of the happier days when Press Acts and the rest of the legislation of that ilk shall be of the past....The chains of Press Acts here are inexpressibly galling, but it is for India's sake and for her, even slavery is welcome. Better to be in thrall here, at the mercy of any ill-tempered official, than to be in any other land." (December 1914, *The Young Citizen*).

As could be expected, official persecution only gave added strength both to the Home Rule movement and its leader. A little over a year after she began active participation in Congress work, her position in that organisation had become strong enough for her supporters to propose her for the presidentship of the 1916 session. But the Moderates were still in a majority and got their candidate Mr. Amvika Charan Mozumdar, whom hardly any one remembers today, elected by 62 votes against Mrs. Besant's 25.

The voting figures, however, do not reveal the full extent of Mrs. Besant's influence, even on Moderates' opinion. For it was at this session at Lucknow that a rapprochement was effected, mainly through Mrs. Besant's efforts, between the Moderates and the Extremists after nearly

<sup>1</sup>*Indian Freedom Movement* p. 42.

a decade of estrangement. An even more important step taken at Lucknow was the pact, for which too the credit must go largely to Mrs. Besant, between the re-united Congress and the Muslim League.

This was an ideal very close to her heart, for which she worked tirelessly through her writings in the Press and in her public addresses. "There is no difference for us between Hindus and Musalman," she insisted "Both are Indians; both come from the womb of the Mother." (*New India*, November 16, 1917). She saw the Hindu-Muslim problem as part of the larger problem of national unity, and she defined what this meant for her. "We do not want absolute identity of opinion on every detail; we want identity of object and variety of method all animated by one desire, the liberty of the motherland. Their methods may be—ought to be—different, as they appeal to different temperaments and to different types of mind....Not identity of opinion, but identity of aspiration, not a single body but many bodies moving with a common purpose—that is the perfection of the national organisation and it implies independence of thought and vitality on which the character of the nation depends (*New India*, 16 April 1918)".

She conveyed the same idea in different language in a remarkable address to the 1918 special session of the Congress : "I would like to remind you that we are like an army with a strenuous campaign before it, advancing against well-disciplined and serried hosts. For the success of such an army, unity is absolutely necessary. Now, in every army, you have your artillery, your cavalry and your infantry. But their place is different and they must be co-ordinated if they are to succeed in the struggle. If your cavalry charge ahead, brilliantly galloping on the foe without the protection of the artillery, without the support of the infantry, what will happen;..."

The years 1916-1919 were the busiest and most rewarding in the life of *New India* and in the political career of its editor. She was now in the very forefront of the movement for India's freedom. Her Home Rule League was making rapid headway in different parts of the country. Branches sprang up in almost all the large cities and, in certain areas, even in towns at the district and taluk levels.

Mr. Jinnah was president of the Bombay branch. In Allahabad, Jawaharlal Nehru said : "I worked especially for Mrs. Besant's Home

Rule League—Mrs. Besant began to play an ever increasing part in the Indian political scene. The atmosphere became electric and most of us young men felt exhilarated and expected big things in the future. Mrs. Besant's internment added greatly to the excitement of the intelligentsia, and vitalised the Home Rule movement all over the country. Her internment stirred even the older generation including many of the Moderate leaders. This resulted in my father and other Moderate leaders joining the Home Rule League. Some months later most of the moderate leaders resigned from the league. My father remained in it and became president of the Allahabad branch."

The authorities, as this extract shows, at last took the desperate step of placing Mrs. Besant and two of her closest adjutants in internment at Ootacamund. The sequel was predictable. To us, with memories of the far more ruthless reprisals against fighters in the Quit India movement, the excitement caused throughout the country by Mrs. Besant's internment may seem somewhat excessive. It is nevertheless a fact that a wave of anger swept through the country such as had not been witnessed even after the savage sentence passed on Lokamanya Tilak some years earlier.

It brought into the movement vast numbers who had till then remained uninterested in political problems. After a few months the authorities lifted the order of internment when they discovered that they had only succeeded in creating a worst mess than the one they had been trying to clear. The Secretary of State for India, Mr. Edwin Montagu, who had observed these proceedings from afar with scarcely concealed disapproval, noted grimly in his diary : "I particularly like Shiva who cut his wife into 52 pieces only to discover that he had 52 wives. That is really what happened to the Government of India when it interned Mrs. Besant."

Something else also happened besides this multiplication. The last vestiges of opposition to Mrs. Besant within the Congress were extinguished and she was elected president of the 1917 session of the Congress in Calcutta. Her presidential address was a stirring call for a renewed effort to win freedom : "To see India free, to see her hold up her head among the nations, to see her sons and daughters respected everywhere, to see her worthy of her mighty past, engaged in building a

yet mightier future—is not this worth working for, worth suffering for, worth living for and worth dying for?" Before Mrs. Besant's time, the Congress President was little more than chairman of the annual session. When the session was over he receded into the background. She introduced a radical change by which the president functioned actively throughout the year until his successor took over.

The year 1917-1918 saw Mrs. Besant at the height of her prestige and influence. The Congress was solidly behind her. The Muslim League had joined hands with it largely through her own patient and skilful diplomacy. The two organisations had put forward a united demand, embodied in the Lucknow pact, which had been put into shape mainly by her efforts. There were hopes that, on the basis of this pact, further improvements could be secured in the Montague-Chelmsford scheme which was then being framed. The future seemed bright and promising.

No one surveying the political scene at that moment would have believed that in little over a year all this would change with a dramatic suddenness, that there would be a complete reversal in Mrs. Besant's fortunes and that from being the most reviled of political leaders. But forces were already gathering which were to head off the whole national movement in quite another direction and to plunge the country into a new storm of unrest the like of which it had never experienced before.

Gandhiji, as we saw, had begun as a Moderate and as an avowed disciple of the prince of Moderate leaders, Gokhale. He continued to be one for a while longer. Though he had been shocked by what he saw of the misbehaviour of British planters and officials and their callous disregard of the interests of indigo plantation workers in Champaran in Bihar and of the farmers in famine-stricken Kheda in Gujarat he led an agitation in both these places—he did not entirely lose confidence in Britain's good faith. What finally disillusioned him was the Rowlatt Bill which sought to arm the executive with arbitrary powers and to further abridge the rights of the people. He had experimented with the weapon of Satyagraha in South Africa. He now decided that there was nothing to be done except to use it to counter the new threats that were shaping up in the country.

Mrs. Besant found herself wholly out of sympathy with this movement. It went against her entire bent of mind, against the methods in which she had been trained and against her most deep-seated convictions. There is no point today in stirring up the ashes of this old controversy. And if I go into it at all it is only to show, as far as possible in Mrs. Besant's own words, how she reacted to this crisis in her political career and why, for this seems to me vital in understanding her role both as political leader and journalist.

Recalling the events of this time, she wrote in *New India* (September 18, 1922): "In 1919, when first the idea of passive resistance was mooted in connection with the Rowlatt Bill, I wrote in this journal some articles on "Law", seeing the dangers which would follow if the idea spread of breaking laws....The removal of quarrels from the arbitrament of force to that of the courts of law is the measure of civilisation in every country....Hence good citizens, as I pointed out in 1919, if compelled by conscience to break any particular law, were always careful meticulously to acknowledge the supremacy of law and willingly to submit themselves to the penalty attached to the breach of the special law they disobeyed. Organised disobedience of laws, arranged by a committee blindly to be obeyed, in order to 'discredit the Government' is a crime against the nation far greater than that of armed rebellion—greater because it strikes at the foundation of social security, whereas leaders of armed rebellion enforce law in the regions they occupy."

Her attitude to satyagraha, however, was not one of unmixed condemnation. She was careful to explain (*The Theosophist*, April 1919): "Society depends on obedience to law. The worst evil of bad laws is that they diminish respect for law; and the worst evil of the Rowlatt Act is that it substitutes executive force for law. Hence it seems to me that while the motive of the true Satyagrahi is spiritual, his action is misaken; his character will improve through his high motive but his method of subjecting his civic conscience to the dictation of another is mischievous and gravely increases the danger of general lawlessness threatening society in every country for his example may be appealed to, however unfairly, by the apostles of violence as justifying their breaches of the law."

Underlying her sustained opposition to the non-cooperation move-

ment was her conviction that it inevitably involved the risk of outbreaks of riotous violence. She was unalterably opposed to this as a means of political action, pointing out (*New India*, December 14, 1923) that she had held this view since 1874 when she began working with Charles Bradlaugh "who abhorred rioting as the worst danger of a popular movement which stood for liberty and the rights of the people". She went on, "Having held this belief for close upon 50 years, i.e., during the whole of my public life, I see no reason to change it now. All those who care for freedom share it though they may not think it expedient to say so in times of popular excitement."

But questions of expediency did not trouble Mrs. Besant for one moment as even her critics and traducers were ready to admit. Again and again in her life she had shown that once she was persuaded that a particular course of action was the right one she would pursue it without hesitation, whatever the consequences. Not that she was insensitive to consequences or unaware of their possible implications. Only, she was ready to take the consequences whatever they might be.

Referring to the transitions in her own religious life, from acquiescence in the Anglican communion to agnosticism and from agnosticism to Theosophy, she says in her *Autobiography* : "That, however, which no force could compel me to do, which I refused to threats of fine and prison, to separation from my children, to social ostracism and to insults and ignominy worse to bear than death, I surrendered freely when all the struggle was over and a great part of society and of public opinion had adopted the view that cost Mr. Bradlaugh and myself so dear." It was hardly to be expected that a person who had endured so much for her principles would now shrink from taking a course which she thought right for fear of the consequences. At the same time, she was too seasoned a campaigner not to know what the consequences would be. She was ready to face them.

As she wrote in *The Theosophist* (December 1920) : "And when Mr. Gandhi's civil disobedience threatened law and invited riot and repression, I flung away my popularity to oppose him and strove in England to improve the then unsatisfactory reforms and, with many other Indians, helped in widening them and in making them a substantial step towards Home Rule ; equally for this, I have fought unflinchingly since April

last against non-cooperation.” As a footnote to this extract from her article, it may be mentioned that the demand that Indians should have the right to frame their own Constitution was first put forward by Mrs. Besant. Shiva Rao points out that this was one of the demands made by her when she appeared before the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. The idea eventually took shape in the Commonwealth of India Bill, framed by an all-party committee on India and introduced in the House of Commons by Mr. George Lansbury of the Labour Party.

Here we see clearly the two separate strands in her political thinking. On the one hand, she recognised that the course she thought right had lost its popular appeal, on the other she decided that this was no excuse for her to give up the struggle, to retire from the arena, and to content herself with mere recrimination. A lesser person might have felt chagrined and bitter that so many years of devoted service had been so ill-requited; a more timid person might have been daunted by the challenge posed by superior numerical strength, by the knowledge that all the big battallions were on the other side. But there is no trace of any querulous defeatism in what she wrote during these years. And the amazing thing is that she was well past seventy when she launched this two-pronged campaign—critical at one level, constructive at the other. Ten years after she had launched the campaign, when she was nearly 82, her writing was as vigorous and incisive as ever.

For instance, when the Lahore Congress raised the banner of Purna Swaraj and rallied public opinion behind it, she wrote: “Now I have opposed non-cooperation from its palmy days of triumph when its crowds hissed me on the platform, drowned my voice with motor horns and other arguments of non-cooperation; and I oppose it now in the days of its revival. I regard it as a setback to all sane political activity, and as inevitably resulting in violence and bloodshed despite its talk of non-violence” (*New India*).

She tirelessly explained her point of view in articles in all the journals with which she was connected throughout the intervening decade. She insisted that the Satyagraha that was practised and preached was not a spiritual weapon: “For the spiritual world is an orderly world, and the breaking of laws in our physical world, not because the

conscience feels the law to be broken to be so bad that obedience to it is disobedience to conscience but because another person selects them for disobedience seems to me to be at once illogical and unspiritual, so that the result of the action is very doubtful. I am told that logic is not everything but that undoubtedly true statement does not exalt illogicality to the rank of a virtue, nor even make it desirable.” (*The Theosophist*, April 1919).

I shall give three more extracts from her writings, as they seem to sum up the two aspects—critical and constructive—of her approach to the issue of Satyagraha.

The first, originally appearing in *The Leader*, was republished by her in a pamphlet. It says: “But it is important that everyone should understand that non-cooperation is a revolutionary method as much as taking up arms. Attempts to transform government to destroy a government whether by machine gun or paralysis is revolutionary; and to assert an empty right to kill by guns or paralysis when you can do neither is childish. India should not lower herself in the eyes of the world by such empty assertions which she cannot carry out. Cannot? Yes, cannot, because her people are not sufficiently united nor sufficiently in earnest to make the sacrifices necessary to win freedom by a sudden leap.”

The second extract is from *New India* of December 24, 1921: “Home Rule, Swaraj, must be clothed in methods and details, and these are matters for the brain to construct, not for the heart to sing. It is methods and details which Liberals and National Home Rulers have to propose, and these fall coldly on the ear of excited crowds, accustomed to revel in appeals to their emotions with never a practical word as to the relation between the glowing periods and the prosaic drudgery of political work.”

And thirdly, this passage taken from *The Citizen* of April 1920 and reproduced in one of her pamphlets: “Revolution by violence is inexpedient and impossible. Revolution by non-violence, non-cooperation, leads either to anarchy or futility. What is left? Working to get our best men into the Councils. Sending up from every Council a resolution demanding justice on the offending officials of the Punjab and for compensation to the families of their victims, with the annul-

ment of all sentences and refund of all fines; a resolution demanding the repeal of all emergency legislation in connection with the disturbances including sedition and treason in speech; the passing of a bill abolishing the sex disqualification for the political franchise so as to enlist the great force of Indian womanhood for the public benefit; the using of every power for improving the condition of the masses, by local self-government, education, improvements in agriculture, industries and the like."

"To the impatient, this may be less attractive than the direct struggle for immediate redress; but it is sure, it is within our power, it means the political education of the people, the winning of liberty, the guarding of it when won. For liberty is not safe under a statute but under the spirit of the nation."

To us in this day and age, more than 25 years after the attainment of freedom, all this sounds eminently sound and sensible. With the advantage of hindsight we can see much truth and much wisdom in what she wrote elsewhere also about agitations by students and modes of protest which have now become all too familiar. She said for instance in a speech: "I object to boys being thrown into political conflicts. They may ruin their whole lives in a sudden surge of excitement and in their manhood bitterly reproach those who took advantage of their inexperience."

Yet again: "When India has Swaraj, how are her governments to deal with brickbat-throwing mobs? Are they to be allowed to kill and maim as they choose, to fire houses, to burn living men to death? If not, at what stage of brickbat-throwing may bullets make reply? One of my objections to mass disobedience and to plundering mobs is that they are rearing huge obstacles in the way of the Home Rule government. When the Paris mobs had either guillotined or driven away the French nobility, and had glutted themselves with blood, Napoleon thought that what was needed was a whiff of grapeshot. Safety of life, limb and property is the duty to secure which governments are made. Without such safety, society cannot exist." (*New India*, December 13, 1923).

All this, if I may say so, has an almost contemporary ring. But the traumatic aftermath of Jallianwala Bagh and the Punjab atrocities was not a time for sage and sober counsel, for appeals to reason and

common sense. It was a time for passionate protests, for grand gestures and dramatic renunciations. Even apart from that, it seems very doubtful, to say the least, if a great mass movement could have been sparked by prudent suggestions for reform, still less whether, without such a mass movement, freedom could have been won within the same time. Be that as it may, I have no wish to pass judgement on these issues. My intention, as I have already said, is only to show what Mrs. Besant's stand was in particular situations and how she justified and defended it.

All the vicissitudes of her career were faithfully reflected in *New India*. For though, as we have seen, Mrs. Besant wrote frequently in other journals also with which she was connected, it was *New India* that was the principal vehicle for her political opinions. Its rise was as meteoric as her own and its decline as steep. But throughout in its career, as Shiva Rao has rightly claimed, it stood for certain principles and like its illustrious editor, cheerfully paid the price for their vindication.

Mr. Khabardar's main emphasis in his excellent analysis of Mrs. Annie Besant's contribution to India's freedom movement is on her courage of conviction displayed at different stages during the two decades that she was active in the movement. Shortly after the outbreak of the first world war, she boldly made a demand not for reforms in instalment or stages but for a position of complete equality for India with the self-governing Dominions in the reconstruction of the British Empire after the war.

This was at a time when leading Indians, including for a time even Mahatma Gandhi, considered such a demand to be premature. As Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras at that time, warned her publicly in May 1917: "if Home Rule means nothing less than at a very early date the placing of the executive government in all its departments in the direct and full control of legislative councils containing a large majority of elected members, I feel sure that among Indians acquainted with public affairs, nobody having any true sense of responsibility considers it or will declare it within the range of practical politics." She continued her campaign notwithstanding the hostility of the British rulers and the studied indifference of the moderate leaders of

that generation towards her campaign.

Her pioneering effort secured support from unexpected quarters. The first Imperial War Conference in 1917 expressed the view that the readjustment of constitutional relations of the components of the British Empire should be based on a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous units of an Imperial Commonwealth and of India as an important portion of the same; that British should further recognise the right of the Dominions and of India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and foreign relations and provide effective arrangements for continuous consultations in all important matters of common Imperial concern.

As Mr. Khabd has pointed out in a passing reference, Mrs. Besant's organisation of the Home Rule League, with provincial, district and local branches all over the country set the pattern which she herself introduced into the Congress as its President after the Calcutta session in 1917. It was the organisation of the Congress for activity throughout the year in all parts of the country that infused vitality into the freedom movement.

At the end of the first world war, with Home Rule or Dominion Status accepted on all sides, Mrs. Besant proceeded to place another great concept before the country namely, the framing of a comprehensive measure on the basis of Dominion Status by India's natural leaders. She was the first to make the claim before the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill in 1921 that India could not be satisfied for all time with a constitution framed for her at Westminster. A National Convention of which she and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru were the guiding spirits spent nearly three years (1922 to 1925) on the draft of the Commonwealth of India Bill—the first example of a parliamentary measure conferring freedom on India to be introduced in the House of Commons for its first reading in 1926. For Mrs. Besant, who believed in an orderly evolution of the world to a federation on a global basis, the British Empire was but the first stage, followed by the establishment of a multi-racial Commonwealth of which India and other erstwhile colonies of the British Empire could be members on the same status as Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

By 1931, though Mrs. Besant was too feeble to take an active part

in the movement, she had the satisfaction of securing a policy statement by Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, the Labour Prime Minister of Britain, at the end of the Round Table Conference in January 1931 in the following terms:

“Responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon the Legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such provisions as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances, and also with such guarantees as are required by minorities to protect their political liberties and rights.

In such statutory safeguards as may be made for meeting the needs of the transitional period, it will be a primary concern of His Majesty’s Government to see that the reserved powers are so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new Constitution to full responsibility for her own Government.”

Mrs. Besant did not realise her dream to which she had given expression, at the beginning of her political career in India in 1914, of seeing India in the enjoyment of Swaraj before her death. But by September, 1933 when she passed away, India had already been promised by Mr. Macdonald as the Prime Minister of a national coalition government in Britain that “by our labours together, India will come to possess the only thing which she now lacks to give her the status of a Dominion amongst the British Commonwealth of Nations: what now lacks for that, the responsibilities and the cares, the burdens and difficulties, but also the pride and the honour of responsible self-government”.

This note will not be complete without a personal reference to her daily life, enriched by numerous acts of kindness and generosity, to a poor boy unable to pay his school fee; or to a bright young man keen on going abroad for higher education; or to a grief-stricken husband or father mourning the death of a wife or a child. Busy she was all day and far into the night, but never so busy to close her heart to a genuine cry for sympathy or help.

And, as an editor, she was a superb artist. An editorial for her paper *New India*, written by a junior like myself, would undergo several minor alterations, a word here, a phrase there, an expression trans-

posed from one part of a sentence to another and the result was a polished piece of writing with a quality that was not in the original. She laid down exacting standards for the members of the editorial staff. No criticism was permitted in the paper, of a person that was dead or had ceased to be active in public life; and no attribution of unworthy motives to an opponent with whom she was not in agreement.

All through her political activities, Mrs. Besant was sustained by the faith that India's spiritual knowledge would be of vital importance to the world's future. Even before her entry into the political arena she had declared: "If religion perish here, it will perish everywhere; and in India's hand is laid the sacred charge of keeping alight the torch of the spirit amid the fogs and storms of increasing materialism. . . India, bereft of spirituality, will have no future, but will pass on into the darkness, as Greece and Rome have passed."

Her repeated warnings against the dangers of mass civil disobedience which virtually isolated her in her final years from the stream of India's national life are now being realised in free India as having been inspired by a deep love of India and a far-sighted vision of her destiny. Mrs. Besant's place among the builders of modern India, as I have observed elsewhere, is one that time will only brighten.







# Syed Abdullah Brelvi

*G. N. Acharya*

IT IS TWENTY-FIVE years—short of a few weeks—since Syed Abdullah Brelvi passed away. He was the last of the band of great editors of Indian journalism, men and women cast in a nobler mould, who stood the challenge of a heroic age. The other three persons Mrs. Annie Besant, Lala Lajpat Rai and Lokmanya Tilak who have been the subjects of earlier lectures in this series belonged to the same charismatic company. But there was a difference between them and Brelvi.

Politics came first to Mrs. Besant, Lajpat Rai and Lokmanya. It was the breath of their being. Brelvi was more of a professional. He flung into politics because as a journalist, working on a famous, fighting nationalist newspaper, he was in the front-line of the battle for freedom. His two prison terms were incidental to the attempt to perform his duty as an independent editor loyal to the concept of national freedom.<sup>1</sup>

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Text of the lecture delivered on November 21, 1975.

<sup>1</sup>He was first arrested in November 1930 on a charge of publishing prohibited news. He declined to defend himself and was sentenced to a jail term of six months and a half on November 24. In January 1932, he was among the leaders arrested in a general round-up at the beginning of the Second Civil Disobedience Movement. He was released after a few days and served with a notice to report to the police periodically. He disobeyed and was ordered on January 18 to be detained for two years.

His closest friend, the late Mr. V. L. Mehta, has said that Brelvi was monogamous in his loyalties and it was always the Congress for him. As a loyal Congressman he was at different times a member of the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee, the All India Congress Committee and, during the Civil Disobedience Movement, became a substitute member of the Congress Working Committee. Otherwise he held no office though he was a friend of many of the top Congress leaders, and sometimes their unobtrusive counsellor.

He had also a marginal interest in labour and social problems. In 1928, he was a member of the Joint Strike Committee headed by the labour veteran, the late Mr. N. M. Joshi, which ran the longest textile strike yet known. It ran for nine months. He was also a member of the Textile Inquiry Committee appointed by the first Congress Government in 1937. He made his contribution to the formative years of the Saboo Siddique Institution.

In this lecture, however, we are concerned solely with his work as a journalist and editor which was so outstanding by any standard that I am mildly surprised that for all these years no attempt at a comprehensive and critical assessment has been made. This, probably, is the first though very small such effort.

Part of the reason may be Brelvi's own personality. He was quiet and unostentatious. His life was ordered by some scrupulous code of elegance in which there was no place for egotism or bragging. It was easy to be friendly with Brelvi but difficult to be intimate. He was always courteous, but he never gushed. He hardly spoke or wrote about himself or anything that happened to him. As I stand here, I picture him as tall, handsome, balding, with an intellectual face that was smiling or in repose. I had never seen it distorted in anger or hatred. He never lost his poise, his temper or his dignity. Reticence about his personal life or problems was a part of that dignity.

There was, for instance, an extraordinary incident on November 27, 1945, when Brelvi went to vote for Hussein-bhoy Laljee who stood for elections to the Central Legislative Assembly in opposition to Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Groups of League hooligans made it impossible for the candidate to go to his own booth at the voting centre at Anjuman-e-Islam. Confronted by the same crowd, Brelvi insisted

on his right to vote for anybody he liked and openly declared his preference for Laljee. He was surrounded and hustled and pushed to the League tent. But he would not leave without exercising his voting right. On the way out the hostile crowd again gave him a rough handling and he was spat upon.<sup>1</sup>

It was a delicate piece of reporting *The Chronicle* carried next morning. The candidate's discomfiture and his protests, and subsequent action are all there on the front page; but Brelvi's adventure appears in small type on page 5.

Typical of Brelvi's reticence is an article "Looking Back" he wrote for the Silver Jubilee number of *The Bombay Chronicle*, published on March 3, 1938. Except for a brief review of world and national affairs in the previous quarter century, it is principally ritualistic, recalling other people's services and thanking them<sup>2</sup>. From the point of view of biographical detail, it is singularly disappointing. However, from this and other articles in the same number, I have been able to glean the bare bones of *The Chronicle* Story, and Brelvi's close connection with it.

*The Chronicle* was founded by Pherozshah Mehta, then called the "Lion of Bombay". The main reason was that the existing Anglo-

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<sup>1</sup>I was told by Brelvi's eldest son, Naseem, that the man who led the affront was at the time of the lecture a prominent member of the Bombay Municipal Corporation.

Mr. Moinuddin Harris, at present a member of the Press Commission, has told me of another incident of which he was an eye witness of Brelvi's coolness in the face of danger. He was presiding over a meeting at what was then called the Jinnah Hall, some time before Gandhiji left for the Round Table Conference (August 19, 1931). Some supporters of the Ali brothers and the Khilafat Committee had occupied much of the hall and created a disturbance. When they started assaulting the small number of organisers, the volunteers helped those on the dais to get out through a side entrance. Some one attempted to stab Brelvi, but the knife just missed its mark; only his long *sherwani* was slit.

<sup>2</sup>Mr. M. C. Chagla, then a struggling Bar-at-Law, and occasional contributor to *The Chronicle* wrote in the same number an article in which he said: "A morning in Bombay would be very empty indeed, without the daily *Chronicle*".

Indian newspapers were all Establishment journals. Pherozeshah wanted a paper that would be the voice of nascent Indian nationalism. According to Pat Lovett in his book on Indian journalism written in 1927 which I read long ago and which is unavailable now, Pherozshah who was a great personal friend offered him the editorship of the paper. But as by then he had become editor of Calcutta's *Capital* (Where he became famous as "Ditcher"), the choice fell on Benjamin Guy Horniman of *The Statesman*. He was one of those rare Britishers who loved India more than he loved the Empire. Lovett records that under the guidance of Pherozshah Mehta, Horniman made *The Chronicle* a power in the land.

His name, however, did not appear on the imprint line. The declaration of the editor's name became obligatory only several years later in 1920. *The Chronicle* story, as told by my friend N. G. Jog, who later retired as Bombay resident editor of *The Indian Express* records that its principal assets were "the faith of the founder and the dash of its editor." It had also another advantage. English newspapers of the day meant for the elite were priced at one quarter of a rupee. But *The Chronicle* was sold at a quarter of that price.

Brelvi, then a young graduate, joined the paper in March 1915, two years after it was started. He was made an assistant editor and, because the paper had no regular assistant editor, was put to work day and night. An incident that happened two years later must be so unusual in the annals of our journalism that I regret that Brelvi has made but a casual reference to it.

After the death of Pherozshah in 1916, Chimanlal Setalvad became the chairman of the Company. Next year there arose some differences between the Board and the editor. One night Horniman just put on his hat and walked out. Next morning Brelvi and other members of the staff joined him. An attempt was made to run the paper with others, but failed. After a few days the editor and his staff came back, the Board resigned and was reconstituted with M. A. Jinnah, then a fiery nationalist, as its Chairman. Today's editors have no such powers. They are hired and fired without so much as the courtesy of an announcement.

Incidentally, if I may interrupt the chronological narration,

this was the beginning of a lasting personal friendship between Brelvi and Jinnah though their political ways diverged far and wide. Even after he became an advocate of Pakistan, Jinnah told a reporter of a rival paper (Mr. Jaffri of *The Times of India*) with reference to *The Chronicle*: "It's the enemy paper; but they do justice to me." The friendship endured till September 28, 1955. That morning, following the failure of the famous Gandhi-Jinnah talks, Brelvi wrote an editorial which, among other things, said that Jinnah's attitude was not that of "a leader endowed with the authentic spark of statesmanship", that he lacked "knowledge of the country's history during the last twenty-five years," that he was "not inspired by a genuine spirit of honourable compromise," and that his behaviour was that "of an advocate, mechanically pleading from his brief." Jinnah, in sight of his goal, never forgave Brelvi.

To return to our main theme, *The Bombay Chronicle* encountered the biggest crisis of its life so far when on April 26, 1919 an ailing Horniman was dragged from his sick bed, put aboard a ship and deported to England. Simultaneously an order of censorship was served on the all directors of the Indian Newspaper Company, the owners of *The Chronicle*. The paper suspended publication immediately; yet, three days later, its security deposit was forfeited under the Press Act. One month of futile negotiations followed. On May 31 the paper resumed publication but with the editorial columns left blank. Also, the censored portion of news was indicated by asterisks. This is not permitted in the modern and more ruthless censorship system one of whose principles is that even the fact of censorship should not be made known to the public.

It was in this crisis that the directors decided to ask Brelvi, then only 28, to take charge of the paper as editor. His name, of course, did not appear on the imprint line but he filed a declaration as printer and was asked to make a fresh security deposit of Rs. 10,000. The arrangement was *pro tem*; while the search for a big name was on. The new find who took over in September 1920 was the famous Islamic scholar Maramaduke Pickthall. But in view of Brelvi's competent management of his ad-interim charge he was named Joint Editor. Four years later Pickthall resigned to join the Hyderabad Educational Service.

Brelvi continued as editor. By 1924, Motilal Nehru joined the Board of Directors as its chairman but only for a brief spell. *The Chronicle* changed hands again.

In January 1926 Horniman staged a triumphant return via Ceylon. In Lovett's words, "the exile defied the powers of darkness by returning without leave. The Government took no notice in spite of public ovations at Madras and Bombay. 'The Public Danger' of seven years ago was treated as an extinct volcano, which was worldly wise." He was immediately put in charge of *The Chronicle*, but only too briefly. He soon left, along with some other colleagues, to join the short-lived *Indian National Herald*. The subsequent life and sad last days of this wayward genius who died on October 16, 1948 remain one of the many unilluminated chapters of our national and journalistic history.

Brelvi, who had been working without pause for seven years and was looking forward to a holiday, did not go out with him as he did in 1917. It was one thing to follow an editor into the street when he left because of differences with the management, but quite another to follow him when he left to take up another job. Pothan Joseph who probably holds the record for the number and variety of newspapers edited by any one individual, once wrote of Brelvi's "dauntless fidelity" to *The Chronicle*. He himself had joined *The Chronicle* in 1917 followed by Syed Hossain, another star of those days; and both had moved away to more promising pastures. He came in again for a brief spell in 1924 and left. Brelvi was more steadfast.

But it was not this quality alone nor just his competence in handling the problems and people that routinely come the way of any editor that made him indispensable. Very early he had established his reputation as that rare animal—a good writer. In those days and long afterwards a great deal of writing in *The Chronicle* was anonymous. An early exception was a long article by Brelvi innocently headed "Colossal Incompetence—A short review of Lord Chelmsford's Viceroyalty", published on April 2, 1921. Newsprint shortage was unknown and reading was matter of leisure. The article attracted wide attention. To meet the public demand, it was printed as a pamphlet and sold at two annas a copy. Pickthall in a short note said that "in view of the very able review of Lord Chelmsford's Viceroyalty" 'he had not only decided

to reprint the pamphlet, but also to reveal the name of the writer." Brelvi's name appeared on the fly leaf.

With that article Brelvi had established his reputation as a front-rank writer. In after years, many men of learning and talent filled the editorial columns of *The Chronicle*. But Brelvi always kept himself up to date and could take over at short notice. On five different occasions, for short spells of time, I served as his secretary during the absence on leave of the permanent incumbent, S. R. Kakirde. So I was familiar with his method. He would write on small pieces of memo paper in a swift, neat hand, the lines slanting across the page, and send them to be typed sheet by sheet. This draft would later be revised, refined and retyped. The writing was so fast that often my poor typing would fall behind.

The most dramatic illustration of his capacity for instant writing I know occurred on August 14, 1941. I was on duty at the news desk at about 10 p. m. when a call came from what was then the Reuter-A.P.U. office. The mid-ocean declaration signed by Churchill and Roosevelt which later came to be called the Atlantic Charter had just been signed. The text was to be released only the next day. But following revelations in the American Press, C. R. Attlee, Deputy Prime Minister of wartime Britain, had made a broadcast on the B. B. C. Reuter wanted to know if *The Chronicle* had made any comment.

I was a very junior member of the editorial staff but I knew the assistant editors had all left early in the evening long before these cables had come through. I said I would ask the editor when he came in. It was Brelvi's custom always to come to the office around 11 p. m. to pass the edit page proofs and have an idea of the morning's paper. As soon as he came in I told him about the call. He looked up for a moment, and then said: "Tell them we will send the gally proofs at two a.m." I told them and went home at the end of my shift at midnight. Next morning the paper carried the editorial which had to be written, type-set, proofed and put in the remade page before the deadline.

I will not strain the meaning of the word by calling it brilliant. There was never any straining for effects in *The Chronicle*, no attempt to deck out one's poverty of style with pilfered phrases. Brelvi's style was noted for clarity, vigour when vigour was required, fairmindedness,

tolerance, understanding and foresight—remarkably different from the current standards varying from the puerile to borrowed thunder. There never was any playing to the gallery.

Brelvi's greatness as a journalist, however, transcended his mere professional competence and abilities as a writer. The pith and substance of his greatness did not lie in achievement but in the constant endeavours to maintain his independence as an editor. This involved an unceasing struggle with the pulls and counterpulls of a variety of forces. Unimaginative proprietors interested in nothing except niggling economies, insistent advertisers, an inadequate, ill paid and often discontented staff, politicians and governments, and oppressive laws, were some of those against whom his persistence and persuasive skill had to be constantly used. Added to this he had taken upon himself the almost hopeless task of organising journalists, first to safeguard their professional interests and then to promote their economic interests. In all these the successes that attended his colossal efforts were partial, often ephemeral, and most of the tasks he undertook have still remained at various, incomplete stages.

I should, I think, most properly deal with Brelvi's endeavours for the security and economic betterment of journalists first because, of all the great editors, this was his distinctive contribution. The first known attempt to organise journalists in India was made by Horniman who founded the Press Association of India on December 13, 1915. But it did not prosper. With Horniman's deportation its brief twilight career ended. Brelvi took up the broken threads in 1923, and on his initiative a meeting of journalists at the premises of the Bombay Presidency Association (opposite the present university clock tower at Bombay) on Sunday, November 4, 1923, decided to set up the Journalists' Association of India. Markmaduke Pickthall presided.

The first annual report of the Association records that at the end of the year it had 79 members. It had no premises and paid no rent; but it paid rent for chairs. That report makes it clear that the chief concern of the new association during its first year was to secure the return of Horniman who had been refused a passport. Mr. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, Editor, *The Hindu*, its first choice as president, having died soon after, at a meeting on February 16, 1924 it elected Mahatma

Gandhi, Editor, *Young India* as its President. But in a letter from Poona three days later Gandhiji declined the honour. "If the President is supposed to do any work for the Association," he pointed out, "you might as well expect active work for the Association from me. Then, what will be the Association's position and mine if, while Non-cooperation is going on, the Association promotes a deputation to a Governor or a Viceroy." His shrewd guess proved correct because a deputation to the Governor was proposed for seeking the return of Horniman; but the Governor declined to meet it.

Dr. Annie Besant took the Mahatma's place. But it was a passing parade. Only Brelvi stayed with it in one post or another until in 1937 he took over as Chairman of the Executive Committee and the vestigial office of President was in due course abolished. After a continuous life of 51 years, the Association, which later changed its name to Bombay Union of Journalists, celebrated its birth anniversary, on November 4. Mr. D. K. Umrigar and Mr. S. A. Iyer, two veterans who were present at that first meeting 51 years ago, were present with bouquets. For only about a year Brelvi declined to be Chairman because of a conflict between his position as President of All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference and his position as Chairman of the Bombay Association, as I shall presently narrate.

The Editors' Conference had come into being on November 10, 1940 out of a conference of editors called to protest against increasing government interference with the press during war time. Brelvi was one of the chief sponsors. Its record of achievement could probably be best summed up in Brelvi's own words, in his first presidential address to the Conference on January 10, 1944 at Madras: "We have not secured positive gains in the shape of enlargement of our freedom, but we have been able to prevent much harm being done to the press by the bureaucrats many of whom are prone to act arbitrarily and ruthlessly and, not seldom, vindictively."

The main instrument of this negative gain was an agreement with the Government of India in which the Conference agreed that the press "will not impede war effort," which, according to Brelvi was "not the same thing as saying that it has undertaken to promote the war effort." In return the Government agreed to permit a measure

of freedom of political expression and comment. Censorship was to be replaced by what was euphemistically called "consultative scrutiny." In an article I wrote in January 1944 I had commented that the Government had accepted "Scrutiny" hundred per cent. "As for scrutiny being consultative, they seem to have made a private resolve that it would be consultative when it suited them, unilateral when it did not."<sup>1</sup>

Brelvi was elected President of the Editors' Conference for two successive terms, 1944 and 1945. At his first address at Madras on January 10, 1944 he injected a new theme, a subject which was uppermost in his mind, into the proceedings of the Conference. "It is clear that if our traditions and standards are to be preserved at the highest levels," he said, "the Press must continually attract to its service men who, in their mental and moral equipment, represent the best that our country produces. The Press cannot attract such men to its service unless it makes it worth their while to work for it." He went on to point out that "the average working journalist is paid a very meagre salary and this, added to the absence of any scheme for pension or provident fund, makes his life one of perpetual anxiety."

I cannot recall if the expression "working journalist" was in common use in the profession by then; but I do think that this was the first occasion when it was publicly used from an authoritative platform. Equally, Brelvi's answer to the question who should enforce the standards when evolved, I think, was also of a pioneering nature. "Primarily the journalists themselves must help themselves and by organising a powerful trade union of their own, as in Britain, effectively protect their rights and interests," he said.

Naturally, the Bombay Association of which he was Chairman was the first to take that hint. On December 16 the same year it set up a committee to draft a Union Constitution. Ultimately the Bombay Union of Journalists was registered as a trade union on February 20, 1947.

<sup>1</sup>He borrowed from me a copy of the journal in which the article was published and, after having read it, returned it to me with a broad smile at the beautiful irreverence of the language in which it was couched.

Meanwhile Brelvi had tried to use the Editors' Conference to draw up some standards. A committee was charged with the task of negotiating a minimum wage. The Bombay Association set up its own ancillary committee which recommended a uniform minimum of Rs. 125. The Editors' Committee, which negotiated with the proprietors, came up with a suggestion of Rs. 100 for English papers and Rs. 75 for the Indian language papers. This report was endorsed by the Standing Committee of the Editors' Conference in October, and was denounced by the Bombay Association at its December meeting. Brelvi who had been elected President of the Editors' Conference for a second term found it embarrassing to continue as Chariman of the Bombay Association<sup>1</sup>. But after he ceased to be the President of the Editors' Conference he resumed his active association, became the first Chairman of the new Union, and stayed in that office till the last day of his life.

At the ensuing annual session of the Editors' Conference at Calcutta on January 27, 1945 Brelvi explained that they were forced to accept the differential minimum only because of the owners. He assured "the working journalists that the distinction made between the minimum salaries in English and Indian language papers is neither of the editors' seeking nor accords with their desire and they would heartily welcome its immediate abolition." Speaking for himself he said that he had "not the slightest doubt that the Indian language press in the very near future will become the more flourishing more influential and more dominant member of our journalistic family." That remains an unfulfilled hope; the very near future seems still very distant.

By 1944 Brelvi had come to believe not only in the necessity of trade unions for journalists but of an all-India Federation. In his inaugural speech to the Tamil Nadu Journalists' Federation on January 9, 1944, devoted almost entirely to the question of securing a fair

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<sup>1</sup>As a personal aside I may say that I had a good deal to do with his discomfiture. I drafted the conference resolution and moved it too when I found nobody else was willing. But Brelvi did not hold it against me at all. He appreciated my bold stand against him.

deal for working journalists, he expressed the hope that "before long an All India Federation of journalists' organisations in different parts of the country would be established to safeguard the interests of the press as a whole and get a fair deal for working journalists." He was not the man to rest with merely expressing a hope. Despite his several other concerns, and his weak heart which began to trouble him by 1946, Brelvi, in association with Gopinath Srivastava, an ardent Congressman and journalist from Uttar Pradesh, started to make plans for a Federation. Its coming was delayed by the unfortunate and premature death of both of its sponsors. Mr. M. Chalapathi Rau stepped courageously into the breach. It was under his leadership that a Convention attended by representatives of 23 journalists' organisations then in existence met at New Delhi on October 20, 1950 and decided to launch the Federation.

Inevitably, freedom of the Press, and in particular freedom of information, was the other dominant and lifelong concern of Brelvi. He wrote and spoke constantly urging the repeal of a vast body of legislation imposing a variety of restrictions on the press. In his 1945 Presidential address to the fourth session of the Editors' Conference at Calcutta, for instance, he flatly stated that India had "not known a genuinely free press," and argued that democracy cannot exist "without those vital freedoms of which freedom of the Press is the most important."

By then he had already become aware that even in a democracy there were subtle ways in which freedom of information can be curbed. Why pass odious laws of censorship which attract public criticism if you can do the same thing or even better by hiring a publicity officer and others of the same species, under different names and disguises, to manage the news for you. The problem of managed news at governmental level began to take shape even with the formation of the first Congress ministry before the War. As a reporter, it hit me for the first time on November 7, 1938 when Bombay's industrial workers went on a one-day strike to protest against the enactment of the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act. In a firing incident after a mass meeting that day, two men were killed.

Till then we could generally walk into a police station or into

the casualty department of a hospital and gather the day's news. That day, I found all the old news sources plugged. By then the government had acquired a Public Relations Officer (a bumptious person in A.S.E. Iyer) and news was becoming officialised. The process has since been completed and a central news room doles out on the phone whatever the police choose to give out. Individual initiative is dead, in this as in virtually all other fields of news gathering. The proprietors prefer it that way because enterprise could be both costly and risky.

Brelvi came up against this phenomenon in August 1939 when he deputed K. U. Kini as a special correspondent of *The Chronicle* to Poona to cover the autumn session of the legislature and to get special news. Trouble started at once because Kini was an independent-minded reporter who would not let the P.R.O. decide for him. We find Brelvi writing to him in a letter of August 20: "If you meet Mr. Kher or any minister, please tell them that you have instructions from me to get information from them directly. I am sorry Mr. Iyer has not been treating you fairly."

He still thought of the ministers as his freedom-loving friends. But they too had become victims of the hobgoblin of public relations. The P.R.O. had other weapons. He could use the Associated Press obviously because a single agency is easier to control. The plea of economy was dangled before one of the owners who was complaining that they were "paying through the nose." It is needless to follow the entire episode step by step. Only part of it is covered by letters; the rest was by phone. Kini has shared his memories with me. (*Kini has seen and approved this passage*<sup>1</sup>).

Brelvi wrote to B. G. Kher but it was no use. So he withdrew Kini from September 1. Very soon the war ended that particular phase of the problem. By 1946, Brelvi had been able to persuade the proprietors to take a more liberal line. He later told me he had a lot of trouble. This was just a sample of similar experiences. Today news management and public relations have grown to menacing proportions. Many public relations officers principally promote private relations. But others, I fear, have developed frightening skills which

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<sup>1</sup>Shri Kini passed away on January 7, 1975

have had a tremendous impact on the freedom of news. We now live in the classic age of hand-out journalism.

In his first Presidential address to the Editors' Conference, Brelvi had tentatively posed the question, "Why should there not be a Journalists' Charter?" Before his next address a year later the American Society of a newspaper editors had put forward a proposal for a News Charter of the World for ensuring the removal of all political, economic and military obstacles to the freedom of world information in peace time. A committee of the Society was touring some countries to canvass support. Brelvi warmly welcomed the proposal and offered the support of the Conference. "Few countries in the past have suffered and still suffer more than India from systematic and purposeful distortion, perversion and choking of news channels," he said.

Similar pressures were building up from other nations just out of the horrors of the war. To Brelvi's satisfaction, the matter was soon taken up in the highest world forum. On December 14, 1946 the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a resolution which said in part: "Freedom of information is a fundamental human right and is a touchstone of all freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated," and that "understanding and cooperation among nations are impossible without an alert and sound world opinion, which in turn is wholly dependent on freedom of information." Out of this resolution emerged the United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information held at Geneva in the summer of 1948. It was inevitable that Brelvi should be a member of the Indian delegation. Later, at a speech in London, he made a report on the achievements of the Conference. Two articles condensed from the address were distributed by the Associated Press and were published in *The Chronicle* on May 14 and 15, 1948 during his absence.

The conventions and resolutions adopted by the Conference and their subsequent progress in other U.N. organs are briefly reviewed by the Press Commission in its report. (Paragraphs 970 to 980, pages 364 to 369). It is hardly necessary to cover that ground again because, to my knowledge, the Convention on Freedom of Information has not been ratified by India or any other State.

Brelvi played a persuasive role in getting the Geneva Conference

to adopt another recommendation on a subject near to his heart. It was that "all States should consider the advisability of assuring by free negotiations between employers and employees (or where necessary by law) the following points without exclusion of other benefits; the initial emolument of the professional journalist; automatic system of increase in salaries for seniority, taking into account previous experience; stability of employment and compensation in case of wrongful dismissal, superannuation and retirement; payment of salaries during vacations, system of compensation for accidents at work and the settlement of professional disputes." Some considerable progress in this direction has been made here in the last few years.

Another endeavour of Brelvi on which he had laboured hard conscientiously was the Press Laws Inquiry Committee which submitted its slender 52-page report on May 22, 1948. He worked hard to persuade the other members to recommend the repeal of various oppressive laws and to liberalise others. The Committee's report is riddled with footnotes from Brelvi supported by Kasturi Srinivasan of *The Hindu*. It is of little interest now because it has been superseded by the more exhaustive review of Press laws by the Press Commission.

By the time Brelvi returned from the Geneva Conference there were gathering though none of us fully realised it. For some years, the shortsighted proprietors had been sullen against Brelvi's independence and his refusal to go along with their ideas of economy and journalism. In his absence they inducted into office a joint editor, a stranger to *The Chronicle* traditions. The camel had entered the tent. "I am knocking my head against a stone wall," Brelvi confessed to me at the end of 1948 in a rare departure from his habitual reticence. His response was to work harder in disregard of his heart condition. The end was inevitable.

In a brief message on the occasion of *The Chronicle's* silver jubilee, Mahatma Gandhi had said: "*The Bombay Chronicle* is not merely a newspaper. It is an institution which must grow with the growth of the nation." It was a portent of evil that on the eve of Independence there was a strike in the paper perhaps the first and the last because the proprietors would not pay Independence Day bonus which

everyone else was paying; and it was not for lack of resources either. They had to pay that and more later under the award of an adjudicator.

By 1954, five years after the passing of Brelvi, the Press Commission ruefully noted: "We have seen in Bombay an instance of a paper with a great tradition behind it which is now faced with a declining circulation and is publishing cheap features comprising the usual mixture of sex and crime which proprietors all over the world have taken to as the tonic for falling sales. Whether it is sensationalism or pornography, the question is: whom does it benefit? And the answer is— 'the proprietor'. (Page 270, para 691).

Under our laws a newspaper is a piece of property, like any other, buyable, transferable, heritable. The owner has powers of life and death over it. Closing a socially useful institution is not listed as any offence in the Penal Code. It is needless to linger on the sad chapter of agony which ended ignominiously in April 1959. But coming events cast their shadows; and what he probably foresaw as inevitable contributed to the shortening of Brelvi's life. But he never stopped his missionary role to his last day. That day is marked by a sad memory apart from the death itself. On that evening the Bombay Union of Journalists gave a reception to C. Rajagopalachari, the first Indian, and as it happily turned out, the last Governor-General. Brelvi had a coronary attack and was banned by his doctors from attending. His speech was read by K. Gopalaswamy.

I owe it to the devotion of my friend T. S. Rajagopalan, then a reporter of the *Associated Press*, that a copy of the speech sent to him by Brelvi's then secretary, E. Balasubramanian (who was very happy to hear of this) has been preserved. "The press in India," Brelvi said, "has played a glorious part in the struggle for Indian freedom. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the history of the struggle is, to no small extent, the history of the struggle of the Press to emancipate itself from the restrictions imposed by an alien bureaucracy with a view to preventing it from espousing the cause of Indian Freedom. In carrying on this struggle the press did nothing more or less than its duty. Similarly, it is determined to do its duty, in a free India, by helping in the establishment of true political and economic democracy."

"It is a strange irony," he complained, "that after all that the Press in India has done for the achievement of their country's freedom, our Constitution-makers should fight shy even of the mere mention of the Press in the Constitution." He went on to assert that what the Indian press demands is "a freedom neither more nor less than that enjoyed by the Press in Britain and the U.S.A., as it is determined to do its duty in helping to stabilise and strengthen democratic rule in the country. For, we of the Press felt strongly that a free and independent press is as essential to a democracy as democracy is essential to the existence of a free and independent Press."

That was his life-long slogan; and those were his last words too.

The reply was a disappointing performance. Speaking on behalf of the Government, the Governor-General claimed that "the press in India enjoys the same rights as the press in England." He implied that Brelvi must have been joking when he demanded more freedom. He was prepared to let an international jury of journalists look at different Indian newspapers. He anticipated their verdict: "The press is enjoying thorough freedom in India." "I cannot imagine what more freedom you want," he asked querulously. "You have every other right except that of taking a baton in the hand and going about beating the people."

It is better not to dwell too long on his speech. It was as well that Brelvi did not live to hear it. Today, when the highest judicial authority has held that freedom of the Press encompasses nothing more than the corporate right of the owners of newspapers to run their business profitably, the battle that Brelvi fought all his life still remains to be fought by other hands, on other fronts, by other means; that battle perhaps never ends.



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*S. R. Tikekar*

Lokamanya Tilak

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# Lokamanya Tilak

*S. R. Tikekar*

The triumph of the *Kesari* was the triumph of Tilak. He showed by his journalism what a powerful weapon it becomes in the hands of an astute, far-seeing, forceful and first-rate man of ability and letters. Tilak in addition to his being a scholar was a man of practical genius. He brushed aside everything that interfered with his programme with the restlessness of a born strategist.

—*Subodh Patrika*

LOKAMANYA BAL GANGADHAR TILAK (1856-1920) belonged to an age separated from the present by more than half a century. Although he was a popular leader of an all India stature and was respected as an eminent patriot, he was primarily an educationist who turned late to journalism and became editor of the *Kesari*. There were other facets to his versatile personality. A Sanskrit scholar, an Indologist, a mathematician of a high order, a lawyer... all rolled into a wonderful leader of men known collectively as Lokamanya Tilak.

Our study will however be confined to the editorial achievements of Tilak. Here I would like to express my appreciation of the Institute's idea of studying Tilak as an editor. For the most part, many of Tilak's biographies do not contain any direct reference to this as-

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<sup>1</sup>Text of a lecture delivered on August 17, 1974.

pect of his life, although it is repeated throughout that he said this and that through the columns of the *Kesari* or the *Mahratta*. I know the source of material for this study, viz., the more four volumes of writings of Tilak published by the *Kesari* Office, Poona. I must here disclose a wonderful additional source which is likely to have escaped the attention of students of Tilak. We only know that the Anglo-Indian press was dead against Tilak and his tribe of nationalist editors and leaders. But what they actually wrote against the nationalist movement and what made Tilak so desperately provocative in writing about them, is not available elsewhere, except in the files of the *Times of India*. That gap in our source materials is ably filled by a Soviet publication, originally in Russian, now available in English translation: *Tilak and the Struggle for Indian Freedom* (Bombay: 1966). It is indeed surprising that the students behind 'the iron curtain' could secure so much contemporary material while we in India have not got it.

For the present generation it is not easy to have an idea of the social and political conditions of the times Tilak lived in. The British rule had been firmly established and the public at large was feeling happy and contented. They thought that the British rule was indeed a blessing which gave them education, offered well paid jobs and did not interfere with their form of worship; railways, post offices and telegraphs had been introduced and there was a high class judicial system. There was nothing to complain about, that's what the people in general thought.

Among the thinkers who were considered leaders there was evidently a greater awareness of the benefits of the new administration. The British connection with India, it was believed by this enlightened group, was an act of divine dispensation. To be ruled over by such a great people as the British was indeed a fortunate happening. That it was for the good of India was their firm conviction.

The British Indian administration of those days was quite different; it did not tolerate any opposition to it. It was more imperialist in its thinking than the proverbial Col. Blimp. It expected meek submission from every one including the press. It considered popular leaders as unwanted and unnecessary and it was, on that account, bent on

teaching every one a lesson in meekness.

Journalism in India was not quite grown then. It had two distinct castes in which it was growing and the two were, far from being friendly, arrayed in opposite camps. One of them, the more favoured of the Government, was of course the Anglo-Indian Press voluntarily committed to the British administration and the other was the Indian, known as the native press.

In the second category were included the "vernacular" papers and some of the English papers conducted by Indians. Years later, the native press became known as the nationalist press, indirectly suggesting that the Anglo-Indian press was not national but was perhaps only official.

As days passed by, the native press included those who sided with the government and were opposed to the nationalist press as such. The nationalist press, however, remained true to its category, always putting forth the people's voice and critically examining opposing, the official policies. It naturally became a suspect in the eyes of the administration. The two sections of the press were thus practically at war. An inkling of governmental thinking could be sensed in advance from the tone of the Anglo-Indian press.

Although Tilak did not prefer journalism as a career he was immensely suited to be a good editor. He had no plans of being at the helm of any paper when he started his educational career after graduation along with young enthusiastic colleagues wanting to serve the people. They founded the Deccan Education Society and started a school and a college. Tilak loved to be a teacher in the institutions and his preference was for mathematics or for Sanskrit.

But when the six bright young men issued a statement about starting the *Kesari* in Marathi and the *Mahratta* in English as two weeklies, as part of their wider educational drive in 1880, Tilak seems to have drafted it. The announcement bears the unmistakable stamp of Tilak's clear-cut expression and a definite original line of thinking.

The newspaper will contain the usual features, news of political events, commercial information, etc., and besides these, there will be articles on the condition of the people, reviews of newly

published books and such other topics. It is also intended to give a summary of the political happenings discussed in England, as it is necessary that our people should understand them..... The three things, (i) conditions in this country, (ii) books in our language and (iii) political events in England, have not been discussed adequately in any of the newspapers so far. We have decided to make good this deficiency.

In addition to this justification, their policy is also made clear. We are determined to discuss every subject in an impartial manner and in the light of what we think to be true. There is undoubtedly a tendency towards flattery under the British rule and all honest people would admit that this tendency is undesirable and is detrimental to the interests of the people. The articles in the proposed newspaper will be in keeping with the name given to it.

(Pradhan and Bhagwat p. 19-20)

An assurance in such an outspoken way was something that the people had not read or heard before. The confidence of the young men demanded attention. This, their opening round, had in fact won half their battle. The promoters secured the goodwill of a section of the educated public and there was a sort of an assurance of a good reception to the weeklies.

The six signatories were: Vishnushastri Chipulunkar, B. G. Tilak, Prin. V. S. Apte, G. K. Apte, G. K. Garde, G. G. Agarkar and M. B. Namjoshi.

Although the *Kesari* began publication in 1881, Tilak became its sole editor only in 1890. During the first decade he was writing for it only occasionally. That is the reason why in the collection of his writings from the *Kesari*, published in four more volumes, the first article is of 1888. The Crawford case, as it was then known, against the corrupt civilian, was handled exclusively by Tilak.

Journalism of those days was not so much of hunting for news as it is today. The viewspaper rather than the newspaper ruled the day. Editors were keen on finding out questions of public interest for their comments. News was not so much in demand then. Rea-

ders too were eagerly waiting for the views and they were wanting to know which topic had been chosen for editorial comment. In other words, those were the days when the readers read the editorials mostly. Bits of news, two to three line summaries, were no doubt provided on a separate page covering the entire world.

Tilak's idea of journalism was to educate the people about the conditions they were in, which was a sort of an awakening. He did not like their indifference to the political situation. He wanted them to realise that even under foreign domination the people had some rights and it was right for them to assert those rights, with a fight with the authorities if necessary. He realised that the British administration was based on certain well-defined rules and that everything that the government did or did not do had a constitutional backing. Tilak was the first who realised this position clearly and he strove hard to explain it to readers of the *Kesari* and the *Mahratta*.

The next lesson which Tilak taught to the readers of the *Kesari* was that the government of India was but a long chain of servants, from the Viceroy down to the smallest fry, appointed by the British Crown to look after the people of India on behalf of the Crown.

The Queen's Proclamation of 1858 came very handy to Tilak in this for his constitutional education. He thought it to be a charter for the Indians of their rights and of the assurance from the Imperial Majesty. In particular, Tilak picked out the concluding part of it wherein the Queen had publicly declared "in their contentment, our security and in their gratitude, our best reward."

We can well imagine how very useful Tilak must have found these sentiments expressed by Queen Victoria after taking over the Indian empire from the East India Company. It is doubtful whether any official had so carefully read it. Few, very few indeed among those who had read it, could have thought that someone among the Indians would use that Proclamation as a charter of rights and fight the administration on its strength. But Tilak proved to be that uncommon and unexpected Indian who exploited the Proclamation to the fullest extent for the good of the people.

When Tilak insisted on being treated as the Queen wanted Indians to be treated, the authorities were taken by surprise. In fact, they

were non-plussed. They could not put forth the excuse that the Proclamation did not mean what it said; nor could they argue that it was a document that had become time-barred, while the Queen was living and ruling.

Circumstances helped Tilak in carrying on his educative campaign amongst a people who had not yet awakened to their political ambitions. He wrote on a variety of current topics and explained the implications of governmental actions as they affected the people. The Crawford case and its offshoots lingered long into 1889. Squandermania of the administration, oppressive interpretation of some of the rules and regulations, gold and silver coinage and the problems of currency, sufferings of the peasantry because of the enhanced land-revenue were some of the subjects handled by Tilak in his usual way. The annual budget of Bombay Presidency or of India, arrival of a new Governor or Viceroy or their departure from India, the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress and other events came handy for the critical observation of the educative editor.

Tilak's chief merit was that he had correctly diagnosed the Indian case; secondly, he knew what the prescription was and he was confident that he could administer it well. "The administration is bound by a certain constitution and it cannot be run in an autocratic manner," he used to repeat many times.

Explaining further the rights of the people as such and replying to the criticism of his teachings, Tilak wrote :

There was no bar at all in agitating for political rights. Every educated man will begin to think politically and that is as it should be. We will tell the Government; we have a right to be heard; we will place before you what we want; we will tell you to redress our grievances. We will draw your attention to your lapses and to neglected aspects of your work. In doing so, we will be within our rights.

(Vol. Ip. 72; 9 August 1892)

Such a public declaration secured for Tilak many followers and

at the same time made government very uneasy. But that was political awakening of the Indians as had never been attempted before.

The officials were basking in the glory of Victorian imperialism which was nearing its zenith and every one of the British Indian officials felt, more like the quadruped moving under the shadow of a cart, that he had added his quota in that glory. Such an attitude made them supremely arrogant and completely indifferent to their duties towards the people, entrusted to their care by the Crown. To such a class of officials the direct declaration of Tilak that they were but servants of the British Crown and that they had a duty to perform towards the people was an insulting affront, even as it was perhaps a discovery to them about their real position. And they did not like to be told about it as it was a bitter truth. That a smart Indian should be so bold as to declare it in the press that they were but servants to serve the people of India, under orders of the Crown, was too much for those who had lulled themselves into a masterly inactive position of aristocratic security. They disliked the person who was so agitating. Tilak's critical appraisals of the performance of the retiring Governors of Bombay or the Viceroys of India were a merciless operation which the reader enjoyed and which caused endless burning in the hearts of bureaucracy and the Anglo-Indian press alike. Lord Landsdowne's case is worth reporting at length. He followed Lord Dufferin and he was the Viceroy during 1888-94. Tilak's Editorial when he was retiring begins: 'To give credit for all the happenings during his term of the Viceroy would be like crediting the crow perched on the mast of a sailing vessel with steering it.'

But the hitting editorial tried to peep into the mind of the retiring Viceroy and some of the lingering thoughts have been expressed as:— "Having been responsible for the important office for five years, what's my reward? Mere words of mild compliments! What a poor appreciation of my hard work. That a stone replica would stand in the airy Maidan (at Calcutta) under sun and rain is a consolation of a sort. But it is a poor reward counting about rupees sixty or seventy thousand collected by those who made fortunes under my favour. I have not been able to do any thing

in particular for the people of India who paid me so much by way of salary and other expenses. In fact the guilty conscience would be biting me that I have been instrumental in causing them great harm than any good. . .”

Then there is a frontal attack in bold terms. “Landsdowne being innocent, dull and utterly incapable, could do neither any good nor bad for India. For causing harm, some strength is necessary. Lord Landsdowne lacked even that. We do not know how to describe the noble Lord. Ripon was a good Viceroy and Lytton was a bad one. But Landsdowne is neither. Which meant that he only affixed his signature to whatever was placed before him. How can such an official be given credit for having served India” more Then Tilak comes to the final critical appraisal in a practical way. “If the Viceroy has to “say” yes to what the State Secretary proposes, then we have a highly paid Viceroy, drawing Rs. 20,000 a month? Even a clerk at Rs. 200 p. m. would serve the purpose well. And if they have no will to assert themselves why do persons like Lord Landsdowne come to India?”

“It is not possible that the Parliament which appoints the Viceroy at Rs. 20,000 p. m. would not consider what he has to say on matters of state policy. Sending a weekly newsletter to London is not the only work of the Viceroy. If it were the salary for the job, Rs. 20,000, is too high.”

(Vol. Ip. 263-68; 30 January 1894)

Landsdowne's successor was Lord Elgin (1894-99) and the famine was acute during his regime. Tilak was rather blunt and frank in his expression. Only two short observations will suffice to show the tone of the editorials. Comparing the conditions in England and in India, Tilak said : “Had such a famine broken out in England and had the Prime Minister been as apathetic as Lord Elgin, his Government would have, in less than a week, collapsed like a house of cards.”

(*Keer*, p. 110)

On another occasion, Tilak thundered: “Fifty persons were lying

dead (in Baroda) and the Viceroy (Lord Elgin), without condescending even so much as to give a moment's thought to them, plunged himself into hearty enjoyment. Under the prevailing situation, regretted Tilak, there is no one to bring the Viceroy, who is practically the Emperor of India, to book."

(*Keer*, p. 112-113)

Lord Curzon followed Lord Elgin (1899-1905) and he gave ample opportunities to Tilak for critical observations. And they all are most enjoyable pieces of literary productions. Even Curzon must have got them translated for being acquainted with the sort of praise he had received from the great Indian leader and a far greater Indian editor. The suggestive yet burning expressions that Tilak used to suit the imperial temper of the Lord are seen in these two short pieces:

At the time of the Delhi Darbar in 1903, famine had not abated and celebrations as such were opposed by all the nationalist press. Sarcastically Tilak suggested: "Those who had gathered in Delhi for the Darbar would do well to go up the Qutab Minar and cast a glance around; they would notice the remains of the seven cities of Delhi. . ." That of course was to suggest that the British empire has to go the way all previous empires had gone. Similar thoughts followed; again hitting at Lord Curzon's zest for imperial pomp: "We too had Ayo-dhya of Ramachandra, Indraprastha of the Pandavas, Ujjayin of Vikram, Kanouj of Prithvi Raj, Delhi of the Mughals and Vijayanagr in the Deccan. These were prosperous capitals once. When we are being told about the progress of modern cities like Bombay and Calcutta, thoughts of that departed glory of ancient capitals crowd our minds. . ."

Vol. Ip. 398; 24 February 1903)

When Tilak could say this openly more about the highest official of the Crown in India, would he care for the district collectors or commissioners, and their performance. And this was the most disquieting thought to the entire officialdom and the Anglo-Indian press patronised by them. To those who believed that they were the final and unchall-

engeable authority in India, such a frontal attack as posed by Tilak was most insulting and irritating. Hence followed all the persecutions and prosecutions of Tilak and they gave him an opportunity to prove his mettle. Without such harassment at the hands of the officials, it is uncertain whether even half the qualities of Tilak would have become known to the world at large. The prosecutions made Tilak great; and the fact that he was posed against the consolidated might of the great British Empire raised Tilak as a far greater editor.

Tilak's bold and fearless attacks were new and the old orthodox people were afraid that his voice would be silenced. When out of kind anxiety for Tilak they cautioned him, and suggested him to be a bit mild in his expression, he would invariably say in return: "We have not started the papers for winning the favour of the Government. We shall not be sorry for its displeasure because of our criticism of its policy. Nor will we hesitate to suffer the consequences of that displeasure. If the repressive policy of the Government is not to be protested against and if we are not to tell the people that the folly of the administration will cause them suffering, and that all such acts of the government will not be in the interests of the government itself, why then have any paper at all? Our views and the way in which they are expressed may sound harsh? but that is so because of the way of our thinking. When the heart burns under protest against disgusting wrongs and gross injustice, that fire will naturally be reflected in the writings and expressions of the writer."

(G. V. Ketkar, p. 76)

That was his typical reply. It fully represents his way of thinking and the unflinching spirit that prompted him to be so bold and unbending. He had a clear idea of what he was about. He also knew fully well how he was going to do what he had decided to achieve.

Here is a specimen of his method of goading the people to stand up erect for their rights face to face with high officials.

To fight the great famine in India in 1896 Government of India had enacted a Famine Relief Code specifically outlining the do's and don'ts for the officers at district and taluka levels. Tilak's stand at

that time was to educate the people as to what the government had proposed and how the lower officials were refusing to do what they had specifically been told to do. His instructions to the people at large were quite simple and foolproof: "Take the Famine Relief Code in one hand. Go to the Collector or the Mamlatdar. Tell him what you are entitled to under the Code and see that he gives all that to you. For such a purpose the educated youth must come to help the ignorant farmer. The officers may try to shirk their responsibility. They may not heed to your requests. But tell them firmly that as Indians you are entitled the concessions under the Code. In demanding all that you are not acting against, but fully in accord with, the law." (Vol. Ip. 589; 15 December 1896)

This then was Tilak's way of educating the public to wake them up to their rights and to goad them to fight for asserting them. This journalistic contribution of Tilak in the national awakening must be considered as the solid foundation on which the later political leaders could easily build the manor of Swarajya.

The lesson thus taught by Tilak during the days of famine was so well learnt by the people that under Swarajya both the union and the state governments were terribly afraid to use the word famine in their official communiques. Instead they used the words 'scarcity' and 'acute scarcity'. They were so afraid that some old guard would organise the villagers to demand as Tilak had organised the villagers to demand, as Tilak had taught them to do, the relief measures as prescribed in the Famine Relief Code. Care also was taken to remove the copies of the Code from the secretariat and legislative libraries so that younger legislators could not realise what the Code had prescribed and why the Government was fighting shy of the word Famine. More than that, the Government of Maharashtra carried out a great propagandist campaign to say that under Swarajya Famine had disappeared from Maharashtra. Self-deception of high dignitaries could not have been better exposed.

This attitude of the Indian government under self-rule admitted two realities: (i) The lesson in fighting for rights as taught by Tilak had been well learnt by the people at large; and (ii) the welfare measures as proposed by the foreign British government for fighting the famine

before the turn of the century were far beyond the reach of the people's welfare government 75 years later.

In educating the people Tilak used the *Kesari* as the main tool. And he was clever enough to find many excuses to write about to keep up the readers' interest. Whatever the topic the burden of Tilak's song was bound to be the same:

The British Indian administration holds back many reforms and concessions which the Crown would like to bestow on the people of India.

The bureaucracy is incompetent and inexperienced for the job for which it is appointed and paid handsomely. It has always looked after the British interests at the cost of India.

How offending this repeated finding of Tilak must have been to the seasoned steel frame can be imagined. Even today after 25 years of Swarajya a minister loses his temper when charged in the legislature with incompetency and the lesser officials do not like to be told that they are appointed for serving the people. And they fly into a terrible rage when he, who had drunk deep at the Tilak fountain of free thought tells them that officers are paid out of taxes paid by the people. The reaction of the British officers at the Tilakite teaching can therefore be imagined from that of our own ministers and officers even after so many years.

The government was afraid of Tilak's teachings. It was indeed a powerful way of preaching which Tilak had adopted through the *Kesari*. Here are some of the specimens of his exhortations:

Awaken oh people, this is not the time to sleep. Collect thousands of signatures on the applications and send them to the government. Time is short; don't delay. We must now explain to the farmers their right about the laws affecting the forest, salt and excise as they are not interpreted in the interests of the agriculturists; they are in fact being harassed on account of these.

(*Kesari Prabodh*, p. 822)

But the line of thinking of Tilak is clearly seen in the following longish extract: "Political rights are never obtained by begging. Whatever be the government, it would be selfish; when one nation dominates over another it does so for selfish ends and not for the good of the ruled. Even if the rulers were not foreigners they would not part with their power easily or voluntarily. Unless they have been caught in a tight corner they will not part with power. If the people want power they have to obtain it by self-help and by fighting for it. If the rulers say that they would hand over to you your administration after you were fit for governing yourself, it need not be taken literally. One need not be lulled by such sweet promises. We must work hard for it and work continuously for it. Try the obstructionist tactics as far as possible. Unless you close the opponent's nose, his mouth will not be opened. It is a point of selfish interest, pure and simple. All talk of fair play and generous attitude is bosh. This is politics; this is not religious fraternity. History does not record any event where the conquered have been given freedom by the conquerors willingly."

"Please be frank and forthright. Don't hesitate to say what you want. Try to do what other nations under similar circumstances did. Do not be afraid at all. Don't be daunted by difficulties. Swarajya is not won that easily. It will not be obtained without facing difficulties. You have to pass through the midnight before it dawns. If you want to win Swarajya it will be won only by your hard work, by your firm determination, and by your bold endeavour. If the government is powerful remember it has become so with your own support. The strength of the government is because of differences amongst yourselves. Your weakness is the Government's strength. And your ignorance is their power. If you know all this then every thing is yours. This is in brief the policy of the new party ready to back it up with your heart, your active and financial support."

Based on the St.Petersburg letter from its correspondent published in the *Times of India*, Tilak wrote an editorial in the *Kesari* and it shows how wide awake he was to the mischievous ways and suggestive tricks of the Anglo-Indian press. The purport of the letter from the Russian capital was that while the Czar had granted freedom of the press, the Russian police took stern action against many editors and the

papers they were editing. Within a fortnight, it was reported that 26 papers were fined about Rs. 50,000 and 22 papers were forced to close down and editors of others, who could not pay the fine, were put into prison.

(Vol. IIp. 191-94; 13 August 1907)

This aroused the suspicion of Tilak and he asked: "Is this prompting the Indian police to do what the Russian police had done?" Taking the parallel to its logical conclusion, Tilak warned that the government may follow the Russian example; but that will not stop the Indian aspirations from their natural growth; the people will not stop clamouring for self-rule. Such an aspiration may suffer a set-back for the time being and the police may carry on their ruthless policy for some days. But they must remember that there is a limit even to the sufferings of the Indians.

The way Tilak attacked his opponents, whether in the political field or in journalism, made him popular in the eyes of the public. For he was fierce in his attack, fearless in expression and never missing his mark. Every shot was telling. Such a brave fight was unknown before Tilak, meekness having been the common quality of the people. The arguments were so well put forward that it would be difficult to disprove what Tilak had been saying. Typical of Tilak's attacks must be read in the original Marathi to adequately appreciate the brilliance of his wit and the biting strength of his sarcasm. He was at his best while taking stock of the performance of the retiring Viceroys or Governors when others would be arranging send off parties to them.

For an idea about the content of a new Government of India, Tilak's clarification was: "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. Unorganised, 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. Our object is to obtain eventually a large share in the administration of our own country. Our remote ideal is a confederacy of the Indian provinces possessing colonial self-government with all imperial questions set

apart for the central government in England.”

(*Struggle*, p. 552)

During July 1897 Tilak wrote a series of three fiery editorials; even their captions would indicate the strong expression and the burning mind. “Is Government in its senses?” (July 6) was followed by “Administration is not seeking revenge.” (July 13) and on the 20th appeared “What’s Treason?”

The first of these was due to the harassment of citizens of Poona immediately after the Rand and Ayerst murders. The *Kesari* pertinently referred to a similar incident in far off Peshawar where a Ghazi had shot dead a Britisher on the day of the jubilee. But the government of the Punjab, Tilak stated, did not lose its head; it was not reported to have considered this as a seditious crime; nor had it attributed it as an act of criminal conspiracy. Why then had the government of Bombay taken into its head to do so here?

Referring to the promptings of the *Times of India*, that Tilak and other editors like him should be prosecuted for sedition, Tilak asserted that the charge would not stand a judicial scrutiny. As long as it was not proved, shoutings of the *Times* would have no meaning at all.

In the second article, the administration was told in plain terms its duties and functions under provocative conditions created by the dastardly murder of two Britishers. A crime should be handled only as a crime and drastic steps like calling in the military or imposing penal police force need not be taken. Those who cannot handle the crime in the usual way must be considered unfit for administration. “It seems that the Government of Bombay is being dominated by some wicked element or it is not on its senses. Seeking revenge should never be the idea of administration—Some collectors seem to be possessed of the idea of revenge; the Governor ought not to be guided by them. The object of bringing Governors from outside the civil service would be defeated if the civilians were allowed to decide the course of action to be followed under such conditions.”

(Vol. Ip. 678-81)

In the third of the articles, Tilak has discussed the interpretation

of section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code and showed very intelligently the difference between disaffection and disapproval. Here Tilak asserts his right to criticise the working of the administration and to point out its mistakes and unjust rulings as these our acts would not constitute an offence against the Government. We have every right to complain to the State Secretary to send us another Governor in place of this, whom we don't want.

Tilak further explained his position as an editor in clear terms. Bringing to the notice of the government the complaints from the public or their grievances or to tell the government to redress them or to ask the people to complain about them do not constitute acts of treason. In support of this right of the people Tilak cited the decision of the Calcutta High Court and asserted once more that expression of disapproval of any action of the administration was no crime; why, that was the right of every citizen.

What, however, must have offended the sensitive bureaucracy was Tilak's observation in conclusion, "Government holds no monopoly for common sense and at times it does commit blunders like a child, inspite of its great strength, and the public has to suffer the consequences of the blunders of the bureaucracy."

Curiously, in the course of three editorials in the previous month (June 1897) Tilak had brilliantly surveyed the conditions of India during the reign of Queen Victoria and showed how they went from bad to worse inspite of the good intentions of the Queen. Obviously, the survey that exposed the official report about the welfare and happiness of Indians, was not liked by the government and the Anglo-Indian press alike. For the very reason the editorials must be cosidered as master pieces of Tilak's critical performance.

The editorial responsibility of the *Kesari* brought Tilak three times into legal troubles; (i) in 1882, in company of Agarkar, for defamation of Barve from Kolhapur; (ii) for Shivaji articles in 1897 for the charge of sedition, suggesting murder of British officials and (iii) for sedition again in 1908 for advocating use of bombs.

In all the cases Tilak was found guilty and imprisoned as if to justify his prophetic words at the end of the third trial: "It may be the will of Providence that the cause which I represent may prosper more

by my suffering than by my remaining free." All the three trials raised the stature of Tilak and the cause he represented did prosper because of his imprisonments.

The first case, better known as the Kolhapur case, was of little consequence as the new editors were trapped by forged letters. They did tender an apology for their mistake; but Barve was not to be satisfied with it and wanting to teach the young editors a lesson he prosecuted them. Agarkar and Tilak spent about 108 days in Dongri jail in Bombay as a consequence and they had an adequate idea of what editorial responsibility has in store. That did not discourage them at all.

In the second case, the atmosphere was surcharged with the murders of two British officers in Poona during what were the worst days of the plague epidemic. At that time Tilak had suggested the observation of Shivaji *utsave* and written about the heroic achievements of the Chhatrapati. The Afzal Khan episode was made much of by the Anglo-Indian press and Shivaji was dubbed a murderer of a guest and Tilak was charged with encouraging such murders when he suggested celebrations for Shivaji. This was of course twisting of historical events and putting wrong interpretation on centuries old incidents. Later in the British Court in London, Tilak himself gave a convincing reply to the very charge. Cromwell Day was observed in Britain; did it mean encouraging killing of British kings?

Whatever it was, Tilak was convicted for 18 months of imprisonment for sedition, absence of affection being interpreted as disaffection, much to the surprise of many eminent jurists in India and in Britain. The injustice to Tilak was so clear that the lead in condoning the sentence passed on an eminent Indian scholar, for his patriotism. At the end of one year Tilak was released from prison with the understanding that the remaining six months of punishment would be added were he to be similarly convicted again.

That occasion was the third conviction after the second trial for sedition in 1908. Bombs had been used in Bengal and a British officer was killed in Nasik. Tilak's writings in the *Kesari* were taken to inspire such crimes and he was prosecuted. In the search of the editorial office of the *Kesari* the police found a card on which names of two books on

explosives were written. That was the evidence the police had to involve Tilak as spreading the cult of the bomb. Tilak had already written why the cult of bomb spreads, suggesting that dissatisfaction, injustice and frustration which the youth saw everywhere under the foreign rule compelled him to take to the dangerous ways of the bomb. For dissuading him from that dangerous path Tilak suggested granting of political reform and association of Indians with the administration in a greater degree. Tilak's exposition was crystal clear; while tracing the causes of cult of the bomb he wanted to show that conditions had deteriorated considerably under the British rule:

"Old type of Swarajya is gone. Trade is ruined. Industries have collapsed. Wealth has disappeared. Ability has left and courage has failed. There is no education according to new system, no rights, no respect for public opinion, no prosperity, no contentment. There is a violent pressure of three D's: *Daridrya* (poverty), *Dushkal* (famine) and *Dravyashosha* (sucking of wealth), constantly troubling us."

(*Struggle*, June 9, 1908; p. 554)

The rise of nationalism was itself the product of the enlightened policy of the British: but why are they now going back to repressive policy and denying the natural rights, Tilak asked. He prefaced his question by saying:

"Liberty of speech and freedom of the press give birth to a nation and nourish it. Seeing that India was thus turning into a nation, the bureaucracy had been wanting to smash both; they have fulfilled their strong desire by taking advantage of the bomb in Bengal."

(*The Times of India* 4 July 1908; *Struggle*, p. 555)

What drove the mild Bengalis to terrorism, asked Tilak and himself provided the answer. Since the partition, the Bengalis had become exasperated and all their effort to get the partition rescinded by lawful means have proved fruitless. This was what led the Bengalis to terrorism, Tilak asserted. At the same time he clarified the position:

“There is as wide difference between the bombs in Europe desiring to destroy society and the bombs in Bengal as between earth and heaven. There is an excess of patriotism at the root of the bombs in Bengal while the bombs in Europe are the product of hatred felt for selfish millionaires. The Bengalis can be compared to the exasperated Russian patriot who threw a bomb in despair because the Tsar’s officers did not grant the right of the Duma.”

(*Struggle*, p. 557)

Showing clearly the connection between the political power in the hands of the people and the resort to harmful and dangerous weapons like the bombs, Tilak wrote:

“The power in the hands of the British bureaucracy must by degrees be transferred to our hands; there is no other alternative; the rule of authority should come into the hands of the representatives of the people.”

And the way of getting it was:

“The authorities have to conduct themselves in subservience to the public, in proportion to the rights of Swarajya acquired by the people. Power should remain in the hands of such authorities as may be approved by the people and that it should be taken away from the hands of such authorities as may not be liked by the people. This is Swarajya; if Swarajya is exercised there will be no bombs.”

(June 1980, *Struggle*, p. 558)

For such clear-cut and fearless exposition of the Indian case, for such a masterly analysis of the causes that led to the cult of the bomb, Tilak was convicted to six years’ R. I. This was the severest punishment to Tilak who was nearing 60. It was on this occasion that Tilak declared his firm faith in higher powers that rule the destinies of things. He

was confident about his innocence and it was perhaps the will of providence that the cause which he represented was to prosper more by his suffering than by his remaining free. Out of spite perhaps he was this time taken to the farthest eastern corner of the Indian empire—to Mandalay in Burma.

But did not such prosecutions make Tilak the bright jewel he proved to be? Without war no soldier, they say; without these legal battles Tilak would perhaps not have shone so bright as he did.

Mandalay became in the course of Tilak's imprisonment the birth place of his magnum opus, the *Gita Rahasya*. By the time he came out conditions had changed and he got himself involved in the Home Rule movement. The speeches he delivered were considered by the District Magistrate, Poona, objectionable and a security deposit of Rs. 6000 was demanded of Tilak. On appeal against this order, at the Bombay High Court, Tilak won a great victory for free speech and for the Home Rule League.

The fighter editor that Tilak was fought one of his fiercest battles just a year before his death. That was in a British Court in London where he sued Sir Valentine Chirol for his defamatory observations in *Indian Unrest* (Macmillan, 1910). As Tilak was in jail at the time of the publication of the book he could take action only after his release and he decided to file a suit in a British rather than in an Indian Court. This masterstroke of strategy of Tilak in going to London was realised only by a British civilian, appointed officially by the Government of India, to help Chirol.

He was Mr. A. Montgomery and he was frankly of the opinion that there was a fair prospect of success on the most important parts of the libel. The verdict was likely to be for the plaintiff and the amount of damages would depend on the outcome of his cross-examination. This view was considered as too pessimistic and the Government of India decided to help Chirol as if the case was against itself. All material and resources were placed at his disposal.

The battle was not an easy one. It was heavily set against the Indian who was trying to bring Government of India into ridicule if he were to win. If justice had been meted out to Tilak he would have filed a similar suit for damages against the Government of India. That

was the fear weighing with the the Government when it decided to help Chirol with all their might.

Tilak lost the battle and he had to pay costs; but it was a battle worth fighting and it was indeed creditable that Tilak took that risk. In his defeat was seen the justice of the cause he fought for. Chirol, whose reaction after the case is available, admitted that his professional performance was challenged only twice by two persons, throughout his long career: one of them was of course Tilak and the other was Kaiser William II, the German Emperor.

(*Keer*, p. 415)

Tilak took the defeat philosophically and the Indians expressed their gratitude by presenting him with a purse more to meet the great financial burden of the case. Tilak's other involvement in a legal case which took a large part of his time and money was not at all connected with his editorial work. It arose out of a social responsibility to a friend. It lasted him almost all his life, its last chapter having been closed a few days before his death.

Some observers noticed a change in the policy of Tilak after his return from Mandalay. They rightly thought that the advancing age of the Lokamanya was perhaps bringing about a change. But it was really the political and international situation that called for a change in the tactics of the politician and Tilak was clever to sense the change in the direction of the wind and to set his sails accordingly.

Tilak's exhortation to the youth of the country to join the Indian defence force was taken as an instance of softening of his attitude. Tilak told the youth: "In order to be able to hold high offices in the army, you have to begin from the very beginning. You cannot do it otherwise even as you cannot be an expert swimmer without learning to swim. Without entering water, you will not be able to swim. So also you have to enter the defence force to enable yourself to hold high military ranks. If, however, there be a refusal to train you properly, you will then have to complain against that."

(Vol. III. 352)

This changed tactics need not be taken as toning down the figh-

ting spirit. Age may have reduced the intensity of the expression and maturity of thought may have taken a more constructive turn. But the fighter for rights was throughout unchanged as seen in the concluding suggestion that if the training was not adequate in the defence force, complaints should be lodged against it.

Today, looking back, it must be admitted that the British administrators behaved constitutionally in dealing with opponents like Tilak. What would have happened had Tilak just been put behind bars, or deported without any trial. A miscarriage of justice presupposes a sort of a judicial trial. We have been quite familiar here and abroad with many instances of political opponents being detained for weeks and months without any judicial proceedings against them. Tilak therefore was in a far happier position on two counts: first, there was a judicial trial and, secondly, the detailed proceedings of that trial were allowed to be printed in many languages. How valuable the trial was and how helpful it proved in building the image of Tilak and, at the same time, how damaging it was to the administrators need not be stressed. We only note that the Government's measures proved in the long run to be kind and useful for the national movement as such. In their effort to crush the public agitation and its leader, Tilak, whatever they did or did not do helped build up the spirit of the people and of the leader.

Tilak became an editor first, and political leadership came to him unsought. He was shrewd enough not to allow it to slip by. He used his paper to lead the people. Tilak became strong on account of the *Kesari* while *Kesari* grew in strength and circulation because of the personality of Tilak behind it. It was this mutual building up which made a great impression in awakening the masses on one hand and the British Indian administration on the other. While the one looked at Tilak with respect, reverence and gratitude, the other was filled with fear, envy and hatred for the popular leader-editor. In this twin role of Tilak he had no precedent to follow; it was his own original thinking that made him so successful.

In this wider educative effort Tilak came in conflict with two well established institutions: (i) The government established by law and (ii) The Anglo-Indian press which had grown under the direct patro-

nage and support of that Government.

In his own way, Tilak gave a brave fight to the Anglo-Indian Press, and that fight was extended to the British press also. His fearless fights with the press form an important and brilliant chapter of his personal life even as they are also a chapter of the history of Indian journalism.

Throughout his journalistic career the Anglo-Indian press, was Tilak's strong and bitter critic, particularly, the *Times of India* from Bombay. It was frequently publishing translations of Tilak's articles. Comments by writers using pen-names were also being published from time to time. Whether the translations were made by the *Times* or they were obtained from the official Oriental Translator, we do not know. We however know on the authority of the *Times* London, that Mr. T. J. Bennet was persistently bringing pressure on the Government of Bombay through his paper, the *Times of India* to prosecute Tilak for sedition.

(*All About Tilak*, p. 189)

The attitude of the *Times of India* came in for a severe counter-attack from Tilak. In fact he never lost an opportunity to expose this anti-people and anti-national attitude of the paper. "Pet dogs of the bureaucracy" was an apt expression Tilak used for the *Times of India* and other papers of that class. But his most favourite expression was Sanskrit, *nripangana-gata-khala*, meaning, the wicked hovering about a royal courtyard.

But what were the Anglo-Indian papers writing that was so provocative to Tilak and others? They were in the first place publishing regularly translations of Tilak's writings and commenting on them in a manner some times that did not behove enlightened journalists. We have some specimens of the Anglo-Indian press attack from the volume about Tilak. Tilak said this openly: "When the Anglo-Indian papers suggested that the native leaders should be flogged wholesale, that they should be sent to the gallows and that for one act of violence twenty of them should be shot, it was his duty as a journalist to reply to such attacks and to show that such writings were most silly and absurd."

(*The Times of India*, July 15, 1908; *Struggle*, p. 466)

Tilak also knew what the *Pioneer* had written about a secret pamphlet of the Golden Bengal, an underground society; it was suggested that the "Britishers be thrown into the Ganges". When the *Pioneer* came to know of this it flew into a terrible rage and warned: "We would descend upon the Bengalis with fire and sword and we would shoot and hang as remorselessly as in 1857 or perhaps even more so."

(Sept. 8, 1906; *Struggle*, p. 386 n. 225)

Tilak upheld the national liberation movement against attacks by the Anglo-Indian press. He particularly repudiated the allegation of that press that the political agitators, the leaders of the national movement, were entirely to blame for the bomb outrages. Such newspapers as the *Englishman* and the *Statesman*, Calcutta, and *The Times of India*, Bombay and others charged that it was these leaders' severe comments on the high-handed or contumacious behaviour of the English bureaucracy that had brought about the present terrible situation and recommended intensified persecution for such writings and speeches in order to stop this agitation.

But the *Pioneer* had excelled itself in making a wonderful suggestion to prevent the terrible occurrences:

Government should have a ready list of the suspected leaders of bomb-throwers for each province, district or taluka and notify that if there was any bomb outrage within such and such limits, 10, 20, or 25 persons out of the list would be hanged.

Tilak's comment on this suggestion was: "This may strike terror in the public mind, but in the end will be of no avail. England may possibly be able to accomplish the national assassination of Ireland; but it is not possible to do this in the case of India."

(*Struggle*, p. 563)

But even the loyal editor of *The Times of India* was obliged to tender an unconditional apology for having published some insinuations against Tilak and that apology was published prominently in its issue of November 24, 1899. "We regret the more insertion through inadvertence in our columns of statements which we regard as unwarranted, and as doing serious injustice to Mr. Tilak."

Similarly, the *Globe* of London too had tendered an unconditional apology for the same inadvertence. The *Times* had picked up the matter from the *Globe* and when Tilak served notices for legal action, both came out with an apology which was of course gracefully accepted and further proceedings dropped.

On another occasion, when in 1916 a security was demanded from Tilak by the District Magistrate, Poona, for his speeches on Home Rule, *The Times of India* hastily attacked him. "We have not published the speeches because we have no intention of allowing our columns for wider dissemination of seditious writings. If Mr. Tilak who is sixty years old and has been in politics for the greater part of his life, has not learnt wisdom now, then it is absolutely necessary for the administration to put restrictions on his political activities." (August 15, 1916) Later, the High Court at Bombay, set aside the order of the District Magistrate. It also expressed its difference with the previous interpretation of disaffection and asserted that absence of affection could not be taken to mean disaffection. "By Swarajya, Tilak meant a share of political authority" it declared, "and to subject the administration of the country to the control of the people or the people of India. And such an object was not an infringement of the law."

(Pradhan and Bhagwat p. 272-73)

After the judgement was given by the High Court (November 9, 1916), *The Times of India* hastened to eat its words. It came out immediately with an apology: "In the light of this exposition of law as applied to (Tilak's) speeches, the deductions based on the decision of the Magistrate, which we regret having made in the August 15 issue, must be unreservedly withdrawn."

It sounds strange to us today that the Anglo-Indian press should have stooped so low in maligning the national hero instead of being free and independent. The low mentality of that press was seen when the obituary notes on Tilak were written, particularly by *The Times of India* and *The Statesman* of Calcutta. Not all the Anglo-Indian press was so aligned with the authorities of the day. But the two in India, *The Times* from Bombay and *The Statesman* from Calcutta reached their low depths of bad taste when they wrote about Tilak

in such an undignified manner that it evoked strong protests from the readers. The nationalist press was busy for weeks after the demise of Tilak in publishing the protests against these two leading dailies. Here then was a grand refusal to face facts and call a spade a spade. "Tilak died leaving behind him no constructive monument" lamented *The Times of India* "his nationalism was no true nationalism, for it was mainly anti-British and anti-Mohammedan and aimed not at a genuine democracy but at revival of the theocratical domination. It is a lamentable record for a man of his abilities, courage and energy; but such it is."

But *The Statesman* was somewhat different in tone. It admitted that Tilak "was undoubtedly a man of great abilities, of commanding personality and of volcanic energy. But he was carried away" *The Statesman* notes, "by personal jealousies and race-hatred. . . His aims were wrong, his methods indefensible and mischievous, as the spirit in which he worked bad. With the death of Mr. Tilak, India is purified by the disappearance of a malign and degrading influence. Of good faith, honour and fairness, he had no conception. He was mere fighter, and to him it was a matter of indifference whether he used a dagger or poison-gas. Ruthlessness of this kind may provoke a certain admiration from the mob who always love violence but in a civilised age it is as absolute as the morals of Shivaji, to whom in fact Mr. Tilak bore a marked resemblance.

(*All about Tilak* p. 197)

The colonial set-up under the British domination required a fighter to wrest power from those who were holding it back and Tilak was born to prepare the ground. Gandhiji immediately followed him to complete his work. This is not to deny the contribution of many others in this huge task of national awakening.

The work was of such a nature that it required a fighter to instil the spirit among the people and Tilak proved to be an excellent fighter. Enough material has been provided to show his qualities in this special field. The continuity of Tilak's work as carried out by Gandhiji was perhaps not perceptible to Tilak's immediate successors at the *Kesari* office and there arose in consequence an imaginary opposition

to Gandhi and more to his methods of non-violence non-cooperation. It seems as though the idea of Gandhiji's non co-operation originated with Tilak and he expressed it in 1907 in explaining the tenets of the new party: "We have perceived one fact, that the whole of (British Indian) administration which is carried by a handful Englishmen is carried on with our assistance. We are all in more subordinate service.... Have you not the power of self-denial and self-abstinence in such a way as not to assist this foreign government to rule over you? this is boycott and this is what is meant when we say boycott is a political weapon. We shall not give them assistance to collect revenue, and keep peace. We shall not assist them in fighting beyond the frontiers or outside India with Indian blood and money. We shall not assist them in carrying on the administration of justice. We shall have our own courts and when time comes we shall not pay taxes. Can you do that by your united efforts? If you can, you are free from tomorrow."

*(All About Tilak, p. csi)*

Having chosen to fight with the administration, Tilak was dubbed an extremist as opposed to others who were moderates. On two main points, the two parties of Indian politics in Tilak's times differed and differed widely. Ranade and Gokhale who were the moderate leaders firmly believed in Divine Dispensation, which meant that they believed that the Britishers were brought to India by providence for the good of India. To such a group Tilak's attitude was naturally unacceptable. Ranade and others could not even accept Dadabhai's findings that England was enriched at the cost of India. Open and invisible exports from India were enriching Britain while at the same time they were leaving India poorer. This Dadabhai and others had proved with facts and figures; but such a disclosure went against the noble nature of Britain which the moderates had imagined to themselves. Although Gokhale studied the budget papers and spoke over them impressively, he could not consider this fundamental truth in Anglo-Indian relations. Hence the intensity of the differences between the two opposing parties. The other point of difference was whether social reform was to be brought about by passing legislation, thus giving more power to an alien administration. Tilak was no social

reformer and he hated to bring about such a reform by asking the foreign power to legislate.

Tilak's orthodoxy has been commented on by most of his biographers. But he was wanting to achieve the political strength for the masses and to enable him to keep his contact intact with the political end in view, he did not want any diversion. In order to maintain a solid and united front, he was more in favour of agitating politically than talking of social reform at the same time. An editor who opposed to the age of consent bill was no doubt orthodox; but that orthodoxy was prompted by the thought of keeping up the intensity of the political fight.

Tilak's exposition about the Hindu-Muslim riots runs into many editorials and his stand is too well known to be repeated here. It was the administration that was in the wrong during such troubled times and British interpretation that Tilak was anti-Moahmmedan in action and thought was not at all correct. Tilak's support to cow protection was interpreted by the administrators as provoking the Muslims. But Tilak was an All-India leader and not a leader of this or that community. Prohibition and picketting before wine-shops had been defended by Tilak vehemently and his strong condemnation of the British excise policy was in fact a crushing rejoinder to *The Times of India*, which had pleaded for a free sale of liquor, even as easily as a loaf of bread or a measure of rice in open market.

As almost all the states of the Union have gone against the line propagated by Tilak, and have moreover encouraged breweries within their respective states, I would only say Tilak's condemnation of such a policy was in very strong terms.

The scholar-editor in Tilak was seen in the three tomes to his credit: two in English were (i) *The Orion* (1892) and (ii) *The Arctic Home of the Vedas* (1903) and (iii) was *Gita Rahasya* (Marathi, 1915). The last was a jail product in the sense that it was completed in Mandalay. It has by now been translated into most of the leading Indian languages and in English and has already gone into many editions. The three books were more than enough to establish the author as an Indologist of a high order and a scholar of great eminence. The importance of *Gita Rahasya* lies in the fact that Tilak acted what he had preached

in it.

While reviewing books too Tilak's vast reading could at once prove impressive. The classics and the epics were so to say on the tip of his pen as they were. The appropriate lines came to him as if by instinct. That was possible because of his vast reading and strong memory. The apt Sanskrit quotations which he frequently used at the beginning of his articles set the tune for what followed. It was on that account a literary treat to read his writings; why, they are so even after more than half a century of their first appearance. The boldness of expression and clear thinking are the dominant features of Tilak's editorials.

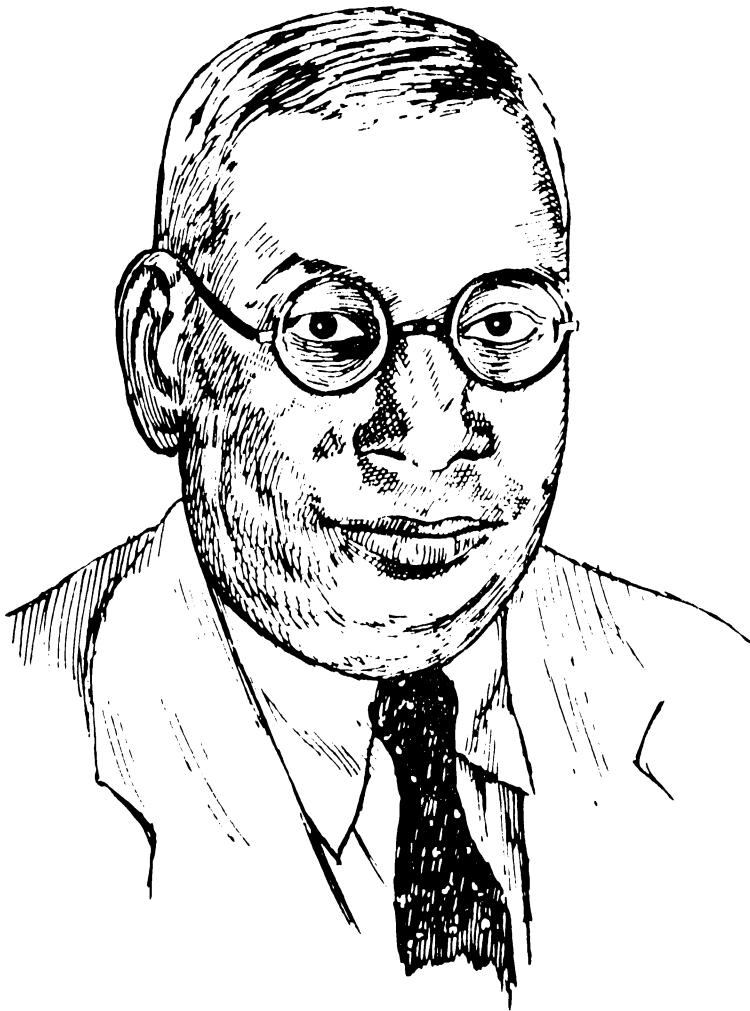
In addition to his personal contribution to Indian journalism, Tilak inspired many young men to take to this modern tool of mass communication. Many papers were started at different places to follow the *Kesari* line. How well they followed Tilak and the *Kesari* can be judged from the fact that about a dozen of them were prosecuted between 1905-08 for seditious writings. The *Swarajya* was a paper issued in four languages, Marathi, Telugu, Urdu and Hindi; and all of them came under official displeasure for the same offence. The two weeklies, the *Udaya* from Amravati and the *Maharashtra* from Nagpur, owe their beginning to Tilak's inspiration. At a time when subscribing to the *Kesari* was frowned upon by the officials, it was customary for the countryside to have it on some minor's name and get the paper read to a group of keen and devoted listeners. This educative aspect of the *Kesari* was very great and its circulation was no indication of its actual readership.

In the matter of supplying a new and current vocabulary the contribution of the *Kesari* is so great that it cannot be adequately appreciated today. An effort in the direction is made in the *Kesari Prabodh*, to list all new terms and expressions introduced by Tilak while writing about a variety of new and complicated topics through the *Kesari*. The *Kesari Prabodh* is in fact an epitome of the subjects that appeared in the columns of the *Kesari* during its 50 years out of which more than half were during the regime of Tilak. This then was Tilak, the editor, who suffered tremendously at the hands of the officials and the Anglo-Indian press. It seems

that some one had to so suffer to pave the road for the succeeding generations. We knew that there was a change for the better in the official attitude towards freedom fighters. The Anglo-Indian press too realised its function better and it cooled down to view the nationalist press in proper perspective. For this welcome change, credit goes to Tilak and his suffering. Gandhiji, who closely followed Tilak in political leadership and in the editorial responsibility of his own papers, had comparatively speaking, a far smoother sailing mainly because Tilak had earlier suffered for it.

In conclusion, Tilak's achievements can be best summed up in the words of *Subodha Patrika* which was in the camp of the social reformers, of the followers of the Prarthana Samaj :

"The *Kesari* won its way to popular support, recognition and worship by its direct style, by its mastery of its view point, and by the great personality behind it. It has never minced matters in driving its gospel home to hearts of its vast reading public. The ordinary reader demands force and clear presentation. The more forceful it is the better he understands. The *Kesari* was written in sentences that struck and burnt into the heart and soul of its readers. Every phrase went piercing through. The shot told and it was meant to tell. It was so because behind the *Kesari* was an editor who knew his facts thoroughly, who had the art to select the right thing at the right moment, whose powerful pen was wielded with a single pointed aim to make his political gospel a living sentiment among the people."





# C. Y. Chintamani

*Ravindra Nath Verma*

I FEEL somewhat nervous in talking to you on C. Y. Chintamani. The subject is immense, and my relations with him were those of pupil to master. Had he been alive today, he would have been 98, on April 10 to be precise. All through his long and eventful career he was looked upon by his colleagues and contemporaries as the grand patriarch. When his sixtieth birthday was celebrated in 1940, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru said: "Public life as we know it today was a stagnant pool 40 years ago, Chintamani came and stirred its waters."

And that faithfully described the state of affairs in Allahabad, the capital of north-western Provinces as Uttar Pradesh then was, at the turn of the century—a city which only a couple of decades later was praised by Mahatma Gandhi as the intellectual nerve centre of north India, in the making of which Chintamani's role was significant.

Earlier speakers in this series have dealt with two great names in Indian politics of a bygone era: Mrs Annie Besant and Lokamanya Tilak. Both were distinguished journalists, also commanding considerable influence among educated Indians and instilling in them certain amount of political consciousness. Chintamani belonged to the same category. Like his two famous contemporaries—among them he was the youngest—he too

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<sup>1</sup>Text of an address delivered on April 20, 1978

rose to the top in the public life of the country, besides being the Leader of the Opposition in the U. P. Legislative Council for nearly a decade, even as he edited an English daily with devotion and distinction, under the most difficult conditions.

The two walks of life have had a close affinity at all times and in every part of the democratic world, but this was more true of India in the early days of the national struggle for self-government. Mrs. Besant edited *The New India* in Madras, Tilak brought out *Kesari* and *Mahratta* in Poona, Surendranath Bannerjee conducted *The Bengalee* in Calcutta and Chintamani edited *The Leader* in Allahabad.

Chintamani and Mr. Nagendranath Gupta were appointed the first editors of *The Leader* when a few patriotic and public spirited citizens of Allahabad, most of them advocates of the High Court, led by Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, decided to bring out a daily paper to serve the nationalist cause. Among them were Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mr. Sachchidananda Sinha (who later became the first President of Constituent Assembly) and Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru. Pandit Motilal Nehru was chairman of the first Board of Directors. *The Leader* was thus born on October 24, 1909, incorporating with it a bi-weekly, *The Indian People*, which was edited by Mr. Sinha. Mr. Gupta left the paper a year later. From then onwards, Chintamani was at the helm for 32 years. There were two breaks when Chintamani became Education Minister of U. P. in 1920 and again when liberal leader of Bombay had persuaded him to edit Mr. Jehangir Petit's *Indian Daily Mail*.

The first editorial of the paper disapproved of extremism in the nationalist movement which had already manifested itself under the leadership of Tilak and the terrorist activities in Calcutta and other parts of Bengal in the wake of the partition of Bengal. "There is not the slightest suggestion so far as we are concerned," said the article, "that there is any connection between the extremist and the nationalist party and the few score of hare-brained youths who fancy they can blow up the British Empire in India with a few bombs." Explaining how the paper must serve the cause, as it did all along its long life, *The Leader* said: "This is the work before us: to discourage and dispel the forces of evil and to encourage the forces of good; to demonstrate that the task of nation-building is not the work of the impati-

ent mason or thoughtless destroyer, but of the patient and the faithful and heartfelt worker. In this great and wide field *The Leader* appears as an humble but earnest worker."

Looking back, one may say that Chintamani's career was one of the classic cases of lucky failures. Early in life he had the ambition to become a lawyer. But circumstances took him to the editorial chair of *Vizag Spectator*, an English weekly, while he was still in his teens, and an undergraduate, on a handsome salary of Rs. 30 per month. That was on August 24, 1898.

He had passed his matriculation examination of Madras University in the first division. But he failed two years later in the F. A. examination because of continued illness; perhaps also because he was devoting more time to the study of public questions than to the college course and was already writing for *The Spectator*. Soon after he became its editor, Chintamani bought its goodwill for Rs. 300, and shifted it to his home town, Vizianagram, giving it a new name,—*The Herald*. But it could not last long owing to financial difficulties.

It was in 1903 that Chintamani shifted to Allahabad to assist Mr. Sachidananda Sinha in the conduct of *The Indian People*. Years later, whenever Mr. Sinha's contribution to public life in north India was recalled one never failed to mention his greatest gift to U. P. was C. Y. Chintamani for it was upon his invitation that Chintamani had come to Allahabad from the south, on a salary of Rs. 40 a month.

It was not that Allahabad did not have a newspaper in those days. The city had an English daily in *The Pioneer*, owned, edited and managed by Englishmen. Rudyard Kipling was its assistant editor for some time. Even as he served the British Army in India as a subaltern, Winston Churchill wrote for this paper from the North-West Frontier, covering the Afghan war. But, like its well-established Anglo-Indian contemporaries in Bombay and Calcutta, the *Pioneer* too had no sympathy with the nationalist cause and was not bothered much about the people's problems. It was, so to say, a paper of the English elitists, by the elitists and for the elitists. Therefore, with the growth of the national movement and Congress work among educated Indians, the need was felt for a daily paper. And that need was eminently fulfilled by *The Leader*. Babu Ganga Prasad Varma's *Advocate*, published from Lucknow,

was considered inadequate for the purpose. Besides, the hub of nationalist activity in U.P. was at Allahabad.

Financial stringency, apart from official persecution, had caused the death of many useful papers in those days. Almost from the very beginning of its career it looked as though *The Leader* would meet the same fate. Though it voiced the views of the moderates and was committed to constitutional methods of agitation, the bureaucracy was always suspicious and more often than not branded the paper as extremist. While still in its infancy, it had twice been warned and narrowly escaped government action.

As regards the financial crises, it was Chintamani's personal effort that saved *The Leader* more than once. First, a leading lawyer of Allahabad, Dr. Satish Chandra Banerji, and next a number of patriotic and philanthropic people in Benares came to the rescue of *The Leader* not only because of the noble cause it was serving but also, and perhaps more so, because they were convinced that Chintamani alone would be able to run it if financial support were forthcoming. They knew that, apart from his ability, Chintamani loved *The Leader* and considered no sacrifice too big for the cause.

He was already used to a 20-hour day and had literally gone through the mill. Recalling his earlier days as a journalist Chintamani had told a colleague: "I was not merely the editor. I was foreman, proof-reader, reporter, sub-editor, editor and manager—all rolled into one. I had to see to the composing of the matter, I had to read proofs, I had to edit telegrams and, having done all this, I had to apply myself to hurriedly writing the editorial comments. I worked tremendously hard."

The confidence thus reposed in him by the directors of *The Leader* was more than justified for, by the time it had survived the first decade, the paper was looked upon as the leading nationalist daily of north India. Chintamani had attained prominence in the public life of the country, advancing all just causes.

It would be of interest for the present generation of editors, who are debating the vexed question of ownership and control of newspapers, to know that while Chintamani always conceded to the proprietors the right to choose or dismiss the editor, as also their right to

lay down a broad framework of policy for the paper, they had no right in his view to dictate to the editor in his day-to-day work. A few notable incidents in this connection must be mentioned showing as they do Chintamani's unbending independence.

Along with the British Empire Exhibition, the Congress session was also held in Allahabad in 1910. Pandit Motilal Nehru, as chairman of the entertainments sub-committee, had invited Calcutta's Gauhar Jan for a concert on the occasion. This was criticised in the editorial columns of *The Leader* which invited the wrath of Pandit Motilal. He was very angry with the "impertinent" editor who held the view that as chairman of the Board of Directors Pandit Motilal could remove him from office but he could not tell him what or what not to write in the paper.

A similar brush occurred when *The Leader* refused to publish Pandit Motilal Nehru's letter during the principal political controversy in 1916-17, namely, the Jehangirabad Amendment to the U.P. Municipalities Bill providing for separate electorates. Pandit Motilal and Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru had supported the amendment and both of them were subjected to merciless attacks in *The Leader*. On both occasions, however, Chintamani's point of view in the tiff with the chairman was upheld by the Board of Directors.

Not long afterwards, when Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was chairman of the Board of Directors, the question was whether *The Leader* should support or oppose the acceptance of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform scheme under which the Government of India Bill was passed by the British Parliament in 1919. By that time the Congress had split between moderates and extremists, the former having organised themselves into a separate party, the National Liberal Federation. A staunch Liberal and a follower of Gokhale as he was, Chintamani had no doubt that, falling far short of the nationalist aspirations though it did, the 1919 Act should nevertheless be worked by the Congress in the best interests of the country.

Pandit Malaviya was known to be opposed to it in the first instance. The situation was thus most embarrassing for the editor of *The Leader*. Pandit Malaviya was not only Chairman of the paper, he was also its founder. And the issue involved a major question of policy. But, rather

than compromise on the issue to keep his job, Chintamani lost no time in offering his immediate resignation. Pandit Malaviya replied, equally promptly, refusing to accept his resignation, "as he felt that *The Leader* (which both Chintamani and he loved) could get on without him as chairman of the directorate but not without Chintamani as editor—and, therefore, surrendered his own directorship in the interests of the paper."

A couple of decades later, during the second world war when Chintamani and *The Leader* stuck to the Liberal party's policy of supporting Britain's war effort in India, and this had inevitably led to frequent criticism of Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress, the paper suffered in circulation and business. But for Chintamani these were never the primary considerations for running a newspaper. Principles to him were the uppermost. I remember how the board of directors had gone to him almost in a deputation to persuade him to avoid criticism of the Congress and the Mahatma, if only for the sake of the paper and its fortunes. From his sick bed Chintamani's instant reply was that it was open to the directors to change the policy of *The Leader* but his name must be removed before that was done. In the event the directors retreated because they felt Chintamani's exit from *The Leader* would be a bigger blow to the paper.

As editor he was perhaps the hardest-task master, as it were. He may not have been a working journalist in the sense in which we understand the term. But he was certainly a hard working journalist and the most exacting of editorial chiefs. Inaccuracy or sensationalism in reporting, slipshod work in subbing or proof-reading and lack of purpose or sincerity in writing were among his deadliest enemies in the profession. Even the minutest details, including mistakes of punctuation, would not escape his attention.

By the time he reached the office in the afternoon he had read the entire paper and was ready with his comments. The erring members of the staff knew they could not get away with anything. They were warned and mildly punished when necessary. In the midst of his other duties in the office including leader writing he would, while he was at his desk, go through all important stories before these went down to the composing room. All that did not mean, however, that he did not

relax or did not have a sense of humour. Often he would repair to the newsroom or the open terrace where the subs worked during summer evenings, and say: "Stop work for a while, gentlemen, and let us talk scandal and I assure you I can give you four stories for every one that you may be able to give." Famous as he was as a brilliant conversationalist, these were but rare though very welcome moments for the staff.

His painstaking efforts had improved the standards of *The Leader* from year to year and decade to decade, giving it a pride of place in the country's nationalist press, specially in the North. Mahatma Gandhi had described it in its silver jubilee year, 1934, as one of the best edited Indian dailies despite the fact that it was critical of him, while Dr. Rajendra Prasad in that year had called it a national institution.

It was Chintamani's creed that while facts were sacred, comment was free. And he believed, too, that a newspaper's most important function was to educate the people giving the readers not only what they want but what they should want, in the editor's view. In this, as in many other aspects of journalism, he was at the height of his career compared to some of the greatest British editors, including J. A. Spender of *Westminster Gazette* and C. P. Scott of *Manchester Guardian*. He was as unmindful of official frowns as of popular support of frenzy.

The readers eagerly awaited their copy of *The Leader* whenever there was an important political development, anxious to read the editorials, apart from getting the news. His editorial on the Chetwode Committee's report on the reorganisation of defence had prompted senior University professors and others to remark that it would be far better for the country if *The Leader's* editorial rather than the report was made the basis for reform. But, while Chintamani was famous for his leaders, often long yet never dull for a moment and highly educative, his pungent paragraphs were read with equal interest. And, what paragraphs! These sometimes consisted of a sentence or two. On the death of Germany's ex-Kaiser, William II, for instance: "The ex-Kaiser is dead. De mortuis nil nisi bonum."

An important feature was the promptness with which he commented not taking long to make up his mind even on major issues, the sole consideration being the national interests according to his

judgement. One of his most remarkable performances related to the British Government's White Paper on Constitutional reforms culminating in the Government of India Act, 1935. Reuter's cables carrying the White Paper were received piecemeal some time in the afternoon but the 9 p.m. dak edition of *The Leader* carried not only an extensive summary of the report but also Chintamani's leading article on the subject. This reminds one of his journalist sons, C. L. R. Sastri's remark that Chintamani wrote like a robot.

After he had quit the Congress and joined the Liberal Federation with Surendranath Banerjea, Dinshaw Wacha, Srinivasa Sastri, Sivawami Aiyer, Chimanlal Setalvad, Dr. R. P. Paranjpye and Tej Bahadur Sapru (and later Mrs. Besant also), Chintamani's editorship of *The Leader* had created the inevitable impression that it was the Liberal party's paper. But that was not so. *The Leader* remained independent and reserved to itself the right to criticise the Liberals as well, as indeed it did on occasion. As a political leader or as editor of *The Leader* Chintamani did not enjoy popularity among the masses as none of the Liberal leaders did. They could not, in the very nature of things. And yet he was respected throughout the province and outside, even by his political opponents, because of his transparent honesty and ability. Whatever he said or wrote was treated with deference and *The leader* was able to wield influence among all sections of its readers, not excluding the government. Any adverse comment or report in its columns against district officials, for instance, was promptly taken notice of at headquarters of the government. In fact one of the Governors, Sir William Marris, had written in one of his despatches to the Government of India that his greatest difficulty was *The Leader* of Allahabad because all supporters of the Raj were pilloried in its columns.

At the non-government level also the situation was not different. Fairly early in its career when the paper launched a campaign against the Jehangirabad Amendment to the U.P. Municipalities Bill, to which reference has been made, there was favourable reaction throughout the province. It resulted ultimately in the resignation of prominent non-official members from the major municipal boards in U.P., among them Pandit Motilal Nehru from the Allahabad Municipal Board. The paper was equally effective in its campaign against the Simon

Commission in which Congressmen and Liberals had worked together.

In the autumn of 1938 when the first Congress Ministry in U.P. under the leadership of Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant introduced the Employment Tax Bill, Chintamani was up against it. He had ceased to be a member of the legislature, having lost the election to the Assembly. But through the columns of *The Leader* he organised public opinion against the Bill. He himself wrote a number of powerful, well-informed editorials criticising the measure and questioning its legality.

There was then no provision for writ petitions and India was still a subject nation. However, after persistent agitation through constitutional means, the Constitution Act itself was amended by the British Parliament only to make it clear beyond any doubt that the provincial governments would have no powers to impose anything in the nature of an income-tax which was a central subject. Apart from his efforts on this issue through *The Leader*, Chintamani had organised a mass signature campaign against the Bill which was more or less like a referendum.

In fact *The Leader* had served as the virtual leader of the Opposition to the Congress Ministry in U. P. in those days. Senior ministers were often heard saying that Chintamani was more troublesome outside the legislature than he might have been inside it. Some of them, including Pandit Pant, even missed him on the floor of the House, considering it ironical that the best debater in the province, indeed one of the ablest parliamentarians in the country, should not have been a member of the Assembly when the provincial part of the 1935 Act was implemented. Pandit Pant, it may be recalled, had worked as deputy leader of the opposition with Chintamani as leader in the old Legislative Council. And it was long before all that the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Edwin Montagu, had written in his *Indian Diary*, a day-to-day record of his visit to this country in 1917-18: "Then Chelmsford and I had a long interview with Mr. Chintamani, the editor of the Allahabad *Leader*. He is an extraordinarily intelligent man, I think the cleverest Indian in debate I have yet seen..."

Back in 1941 when the Muslim League had formally raised the demand for partition of the country, Chintamani was on his sick bed and worked from there. Not only did he dictate a long editorial, run-

ning into three columns, on Mr. Jinnah's presidential address to the Madras session of the League—an editorial which was reproduced in parts or in full in many nationalist papers, and in which he had described Jinnah as the most tragic of the many tragedies they had witnessed in Indian politics for 40 years—but he wrote, also, about 100 letters to prominent people in public life, inviting them to write signed articles for *The Leader* against partition. The response was quick and overwhelming. But, before the campaign thus started by him could gain momentum, Chintamani was dead.

In politics, as has been observed, Chintamani was an ardent follower of Gokhale. Though he had the highest regard for Mahatma Gandhi as a man, he was highly critical of him as a politician and opposed his methods of direct action, non-cooperation or mass civil disobedience for the attainment of Swaraj. There was no dispute about the goal, but differences on methods were acute. And, whether as a journalist or as a politician, since he had no two sets of opinion—one for private consumption and another for public expression—Chintamani was more often than not a much misunderstood man. But, by and large, his sincerity was never doubted.

Like Gokhale, he was a firm believer in constitutional methods of agitation and in the gradualness of progress towards self-government. It was his belief that if the Congress under Gandhiji had worked in the legislative councils instead of taking to the streets, the country would have been better served and Swaraj would still have come. This conviction of his regularly found expression in the columns of *The Leader* and in other forums. But his whole case was most forcefully argued in the series of lectures on "Indian Politics Since the Mutiny," which he delivered at Andhra University in 1936 upon the invitation of its Vice-Chancellor, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, who later became the second President of India.

Besides an amazing command of the English language and an encyclopaedic knowledge of subjects, acquired through self-education and ceaseless work, one of the strongest weapons in Chintamani's armoury was his stupendous memory. It served him well in his professional work, as also in the larger political field, in public debate or private discussions. It was a wonderful sight to see him dictating his

leaders, giving long "quotes" where necessary, but without reference to any book or document, and he never had an occasion to contradict himself. It was this gift, in fact, which made his opponents almost tremble in his presence for the fear of being confronted with facts and figures that could be most embarrassing, at times devastating in their effect when it came to demolishing the opponent's case. When the British Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, had described Chintamani as his "nimble critic" at the first Round Table Conference, Chintamani retorted with the remark that most of the ammunition for his attack on British Policy in a particular context came from Mr. Macdonald's own book *The Government of India*.

On his arrival in London for the conference Chintamani silenced a prominent British spokesman, an old friend. He was Lord Butler (formerly Sir Harcourt Butler who had been Governor of U.P. when Chintamani was Education Minister). And, memory again came to his aid. It so happened that the arrival of Indian delegates for the Conference was greeted with a signed article by Butler in the *Times* strongly opposing the grant of further political power to India on the ground of low literacy among her people. Chintamani had not even reached his hotel as Mr. Henry Polak, a friend of India and of Mahatma Gandhi in particular, had taken him first to his place for tea, and he straight-away dictated to his host's stenographer a crushing reply to Lord Butler, reminding his lordship and the readers of *The Times* that it was Butler who, as Education Member of the Government of India, had turned down Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill some 20 years earlier. The letter appeared the next morning in the leading London papers, and the mischief sought to be wrought by the ex-Governor was promptly undone.

In the 1920s Mahatma Gandhi had convened an anti-repression conference in Bombay against what was virtually Regulation III of 1818 rule in Bengal. An all-party conference, it had attracted leaders of all shades of political opinion. "The subjects committee," as a friend recalled, "took so much time in evolving an agreed formula acceptable to the moderates as well as the extremists that there was no time left between its closure and the open session of the conference. The question arose as to who would move the resolution. Mahatma Gandhi sug-

gested Mr. Sastri's name (the Right Hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri). But the latter declined, saying that it was a politico-legal subject and the mover should be one of the distinguished lawyers while he himself would follow later. But the lawyers who were no less than Pandit Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. M. R. Jayakar, Mr. Bhulabhai Desai and others, would not agree on the ground that they had not with them the necessary literature and advised postponement of the conference until the evening.

The Mahatma, however, was determined the other way. In sheer desperation he suddenly turned to Chintamani and said: "You are the only person who can save the situation. You certainly require no previous notice on any political subject." The command was obeyed. According to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's version, "Mr. Chintamani's was a most learned and exhaustive commentary on the law of sedition and history of repression, giving all dates and the minutest details of the relevant Acts, Ordinances, Orders, Rules and Regulations, not omitting a single case of any importance."

Gokhale had described Chintamani to Mahatma Gandhi as one possessing a "lawyer's brain" even during his early days as editor of *The Leader*. And the Mahatma recalled this compliment two decades later when he and other Congress leaders had come to Allahabad early in 1931 on the death of Pandit Motilal Nehru. They were still there when the first Round Table Conference returned home. They rushed to Allahabad to persuade the Mahatma to accept the Government's invitation to attend the second conference. Sapru, Jayakar and the Nawab of Bhopal tried for several days, but failed. Srinivasa Sastri also appealed to the Mahatma, and became so emotional that he actually fainted and medical aid had to be summoned. But Gandhiji remained firm, his only objection being that, according to these leaders, the decisions already reached at the first RTC could not be reopened.

The country, however, was keen on Gandhiji's participation. There was, therefore, considerable disappointment over his decision not to go for the conference. But, as it happened, Chintamani succeeded where others had failed. His return to Allahabad had been delayed because he came back via the Continent. And at his very first meeting with the Mahatma he convinced him of the need and desirability of

his participation. Chintamani's view was that the British members of the conference were so shrewd that they had not committed themselves to any decision and that nothing had indeed been finally decided. Gandhiji brightened up and almost immediately announced his decision to meet the Viceroy to discuss the preliminaries. He told those present at the meeting that Chintamani's brilliant exposition of the issues involved had reminded him of what Gokhale had said decades earlier that, though a journalist by profession, Chintamani had a "lawyer's brain."

As editor of *The Leader* Chintamani was no respecter of persons, however big or however close to him in friendship: his sole consideration in the conduct of the paper was good of the country. He had on many occasions criticised Gokhale, his political mentor; Sapru, his life-long friend, and Chimanlal Setaivad, one of the stalwarts of the Liberal party. He believed with Lord Acton that there should be no absolute devotion to mortal man, and with Bertrand Russel that it was dangerous to regard any one man as infallible.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, among other friends, once pleaded with Chintamani to editorially support the appointment of Mr. Justice Iqbal Ahmad as Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court upon the sudden death of Sir John Thom. Mr. Justice Ahmed was the senior-most puisne judge of the High Court and was Acting Chief Justice, but there was an element of uncertainty about his being made permanent. Apart from other things, it was Government's policy to appoint as Chief Justice only those among the judges or lawyers who had been members of the English Bar. Mr. Justice Ahmed was an advocate judge.

Chintamani refused to accede to Sir Tej's request on the ground that if newspapers were not free to criticise the choice of judges or chief justices—referring to the Kapil Deo Malaviya case—it was not their duty either to recommend or to approve any appointment. And, not only that, Chintamani reminded Sir Tej and other friends of their past statements on the subject "with dates, occasions and the context all to their astonishment, embarrassment, amusement and confusion."

The Malaviya case was an important event in the history of *The Leader* and Chintamani's editorship. It was better known as *The Leader*

contempt case. Mr. Kapil Deo Malaviya was an upcoming practising lawyer in the High Court. Without Chintamani's approval a letter by him was published in *The Leader*, which among other things criticised the mode of appointment of judges, including some "recent appointments," although the main subject of the letter was elections to the Bar Council.

This was considered by the High Court of which Sir Shah Mohammed Sulaiman was then the Chief Justice as contempt of court. Notices were sent to the writer of the letter as also to Chintamani, who was then Chief Editor of *The Leader*, and the publisher, Pandit Krishna Ram Mehta. Chintamani and Pandit Krishna Ram filed affidavits to the effect that it was never their intention to bring the High Court or any of its judges into contempt by publishing the letter. Also, that the letter would not have been published if it had seemed to them to impute any unfairness to the judges.

The division bench of the High Court which heard the case held that the passage in the letter was contempt of court, and fined the writer of the letter, but with regard to the Chief Editor and publisher of the paper the judgment said:

"Mr. Chintamani and Mr. Krishna Ram have filed affidavits in which they candidly state that they had no intention of defaming the High Court and that had they thought that the article in question contained passages which might be construed as contempt of court they would not have published it. No doubt Mr. Chintamani and Mr. Krishna Ram, not unreasonably, relied upon the fact that the article in question was written by an advocate of standing at the bar....

"In the circumstance, we are prepared to take a lenient view of the conduct of Mr. Chintamani and Mr. Krishna Ram.... Their responsibility in connection with the offence committed is less than that of the author of the article in question. We are of opinion that in the case of Mr. Chintamani and Mr. Krishna Ram a warning by this court is sufficient in the circumstances. We hold that they are guilty of contempt of court. We consider it unnecessary to inflict punishment. But we order them each to pay Rs. 100 towards the Government's costs in these proceedings."

Against this, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who appeared for the de-

fence, filed an application for leave to appeal to the Privy Council. The High Court rejected it. An application was thereafter made to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council for special leave to appeal. The Privy Council also rejected the application. But during arguments on behalf of the Allahabad High Court, Lord Bainesburgh, one of the members of the Judicial Committee, observed:

"There is the danger which possibly one might get into if one were to attach more than their fair literal construction to the words, that you might find yourself in the position of enabling the court by means of proceedings for contempt to interfere with legitimate criticism of judicial appointments, and that must never be." And, again: "Is it not possible that the learned judges came to the conclusion at which they arrived by attributing to the words a meaning which they do not naturally bear?"

To this question the High Court counsel, Mr. Dunne, replied thus: "You are dealing with India; you are dealing with Indian people, you are dealing with a class of people who have not the mentality which your lordships have got or which you can extend to the public generally in England; the prestige of the court there must be upheld, and one must consider the class of persons who might be influenced by observations such as this."

In his rejoinder, Sir William Jowitt, former Attorney-General and counsel for Chintamani and Mr. Krishna Ram, said: "I submit that the court have committed on the face of their judgement this cardinal error that they have said that a reflection on a judge before he became a judge, and therefore not a criticism of him as a judge, which is stressed in Gray's case, is a contempt of court. The Lord Chief Justice points out it must be a criticism of a judge as a judge."

Afterwards, Mr. K. D. Malaviya, the advocate who had written the letter to *The Leader*, submitted an apology to the High Court. The news was wired to papers outside Allahabad, and *the National Call* of Delhi published the item under the headline: "Mr. C. Y. Chintamani and others tender unqualified apology," This mistake was brought to the notice of the editor of the paper, and was corrected by *The Leader*. For this offence, however, the High Court punished the paper by informing all the district judges of U.P., through an official letter

by the Registrar, that the name of *The Leader* had been struck off from the list of approved newspapers. The result was that *The Leader* lost lakhs of rupees in revenue because of non-publication of Court notices. Chintamani and his colleague, Mr. Krishna Ram Mehta, had refused to apologise, and the former strongly commented on the utter injustice and impropriety of the High Court order.

The irony of the situation was that while such strong and un-called for action was taken by an Indian Chief Justice, it was undone by his British successor, Sir John Thom, who got that office when Sir Shan Sulaiman was appointed a judge of the Federal Court. One of the first administrative orders of Sir John Thom was the lifting of the ban on *The Leader*. Yet, will it be believed that a couple of years later when Sir Shah Sulaiman suddenly died in Delhi, *The Leader* carried a black-bordered leading article, written by Chintamani himself, which was full of praise for the former Chief Justice as a judge and a scientist. Such were his standards of journalism.

In its earlier years *The Leader* had been warned by the Government on the publication of an article by Pandit Bishan Narayan Dar, one of the leading Congressmen of U.P. And yet another warning needed, at the instance of Gokhale and Sir William Wedderburn, chairman of the British Committee of the Congress and its ex-President, the intervention of the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Montagu, and Lord Crewe.

When he resigned as Education Minister of U.P., because of serious differences with the Governor, Sir William Marris, Chintamani had not told his Excellency: "I place my resignation and myself in your hands." Which, as a British writer said, was quite often the "formula of some resigners". In their farewell meeting Sir William was keen to know if Chintamani would go back to journalism and, upon a reply in the affirmative, the Governor expressed the hope that he would not betray official secrets. Chintamani was blunt: "Why should your Excellency want an undertaking from me about official secrets; I take it that your Excellency is aware that there is such a thing as the Official Secrets Act. If and when I infringe the law you will deal with me. And, may I say for your Excellency's information that I have been in journalism long enough to make use of official secrets by circum-

venting the law in public interest?"

Many of Chintamani's sincere friends had felt that he should not have accepted knighthood when it came in 1939 as an anti-climax to his career, a dominant feature of which all along had been his sturdy independence. People had their fears and asked if his independence would be compromised. The answer was a big "no", in view of the subsequent events. Apart from the fact that it took the Governor of U.P. more than six months to persuade the Chief Editor of *The Leader* through common friends to accept the title, it was noted that when at the end of the same year Sir Harry Haig retired Chintamani not only damned him with faint praise but indicted Sir Harry with a critical review of his five-year term in a five-column long editorial.

Nothing indeed could buy him. As Editor of *The Leader* when his salary was only Rs. 500 per month he had declined Montagu's offer of membership of the Secretary of State's India Council in London. As editor of *The Leader*, he had told Montagu, he would have greater opportunities of serving the country than as member of an advisory council though the material gain to him would have been incomparably big.

His long tenure with *The Leader* had produced some very loyal and able colleagues who imbibed some of his best principles. Among them were, first and foremost, Mr. Krishna Ram Mehta, Mr. Mahipat Ram Nagar, Mr. Rameshwar Nath Zutshi and Mr. Keshav Dev Sharma. Mr. Zutshi remained editor of the paper until a few years before it was closed in 1967. There was in Mr. Sharma's writings an amazing similarity of style with that of Chintamani. So much so, that when Chintamani fell seriously ill in 1938 he had asked Sharmaji to continue the campaign against the Congress Ministry's Employment Tax Bill (he had himself written three editorials on the subject). Sharmaji obeyed the orders so faithfully indeed that the next three or four edits that he wrote were believed by many readers to be Chintamani's.

As your institution<sup>1</sup> has so much to do with journalism it will be of interest to recall Chintamani's views on training for the profession. Presiding over the third session of the All India Press Conference held in Calcutta in 1935 he said: "There are frequent complaints that

<sup>1</sup>The Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi

press employees are not accorded fair treatment in respect of security of tenure or fair remuneration or reasonable hours of work. On the side of employers there are complaints that men with a fair degree of ability and knowledge are not easily available for engagement on the staffs of newspapers. While sufficiently high preliminary qualifications are required of members of other professions there are no institutions for training of journalists and no minimum qualifications demanded of applicants for appointment as sub-editor and reporter. It is not always realised that not every stenotypist can be a reporter and that not every man who has failed to get a job elsewhere is good enough for appointment as a sub-editor...Ultimately, it is true, the best school of journalism is the office of a daily newspaper. Nevertheless a certain amount of preliminary training of prospective journalists should be very welcome to those who are responsible for the conduct of big newspapers."

A word about his many illnesses. His was indeed one of those cases where a strong will could sustain one for long periods despite serious ailments of a permanent nature. Almost from the first year of his illustrious career in journalism Chintamani suffered from poor health. As a friend rightly said, "He had a number of diseases as his constant companion—gout, rheumatism, elephantiasis, cardiac asthma, ear trouble, etc. Yet he fought them valiantly all his life."

"At a time when he was strictly forbidden to leave his bed," wrote a young colleague, "Chintamani continued to do from day to day such a quantity of work as would have amazed anyone. In fact the issue of *The Leader* on the day of his death also contained the last editorial article that he ever wrote." To the remark that it was very wrong of him to overstrain himself in this manner Chintamani's reply was: "I cannot help it. That has been my life's habit. If you come to think of it, I imagine that this sustains me too..." That was like Curzon's spinal pain. Hard work at the desk "was a relief to him, and perhaps unconsciously a counter-irritant to his almost constant pain or discomfort." (Winston Churchill in *Great Contemporaries*).

Talking of the great old-time editors, Philip Gibbs wrote, "He was a king in his own domain, or at least the impartial judge of governments and statesmen and all public men and world affairs. His edi-

torial "We" was tremendous.. They had a pride of their own beyond that of princes. They knew the power of the pen, mightier than the sword. They were the judges and the critics..They were journalists." Gibbs had the Fleet Street celebrities in mind when he wrote these words. India, too, had them—among whom Chintamani was a colossus.







# Ramananda Chatterjee

*R. K. Dasgupta*

I THANK the Indian Institute of Mass Communication for its very kindly asking me to give this year's lecture in its series of annual lectures on eminent editors of India. It is an honour which I very greatly value although I may not quite deserve it. I, however, confess that I feel exceedingly happy to have this chance of speaking on a man whom I look upon as one of greatest enlighteners and shapers of public opinion in modern India. When I first saw him at a function in the Scottish Church College, Calcutta in 1931 I thought there was something of a sage in his presence and I remember how myself and my fellow students gazed at him with wonder and listened to his gentle voice with profound respect. His flowing silvery bearded and his golden complexion, his broad glowing brow and large dark eyes reminded us of Rabindranath Tagore and as I now contemplate that noble appearance I recall what Romain Rolland wrote about the man in his diary after meeting him on 11 September 1926. "His patriarchal figure" Rolland wrote "make me think of a Tolstoy more sweet and compassionate."

I had my last glimpse of that sweet and compassionate face in the morning of October 1, 1943 when I attended his funeral at the cre-

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Text of an address delivered on February 16, 1979

matorium on Lower Circular Road, Calcutta. He had died the previous day at 7.30 in the evening. Since the prominent leaders of the city were then in jail it was a small gathering of mourners who laid to rest on that autumn morning its wisest and most respected citizen. I remember I heard one of them say as if in a soliloquy "We have none like him amongst us—none so high-souled and none so pure in mind and in speech." I wish I could make these words the text of this evening's address as they seem to echo those of Romain Rolland, "sweet and compassionate". Our journalism today is a great deal more advanced than it was in the time of Ramananda. The Indian press is now much more resourceful in tools and techniques, much more sophisticated in its operations. There are not a few clever journalists who get a good price for their cleverness and whose editorial powers can be curbed only by a government that does not value freedom of expression. But while we admire the professional finesse and the confident style of our contemporary journalists we seem to miss something of that nobility of temper which Longinus says is the soul of eloquence. Sweetness and compassion are indeed rare commodities in these days, they gave Ramananda's words their power.

I am very happy that the Indian Institute of Mass Communication has chosen Ramananda Chatterjee as the subject of this year's annual lecture. Ramananda is indeed a very important figure in the history of mass communication in twentieth century India. He had a philosophy of communication and that philosophy guided the policy of the papers he founded and edited. In the last fifty years and particularly since the end of the second world war there has been a good deal of serious thinking on the problem of mass communication and we have now a large body of literature on the subject. Out of the diversity of ideas represented in that literature one basic universally accepted idea emerges and that idea was very lucidly stated in May 1973 by Dr. Urho Kekkonen, then President of Finland, and is very appropriately quoted in Kaarle Nordenstreng's paper entitled 'From Mass Media to Mass Consciousness' included in George Gerbner's *Mass Media Policies in Changing Cultures* (1977). "By diverting communication and education" Dr. Kekkonen said 'to the development of spontaneous thinking and independent assumption of knowledge we make possible

to search for consciousness so much desired for the future". Ramananda's labours as an editor were directed towards this development of spontaneous thinking which alone could make possible a search for an enlightened consciousness on national and international affairs.

He knew what he must communicate to whom, how and to what purpose; in our colonial days it was not easy to have clear ideas about these basic questions of communication. And we may not today understand the significance of his answers to these question at a time when the whole process of communication is so highly institutionalised. For one thing Ramananda owned the papers he edited. Secondly, he was not obliged to serve the interests of any industrial houses for the sake of revenue from advertisements. Thirdly, his papers had no links with any political party. His papers, therefore, had an individuality, the impress of a great personality which we miss in contemporary journalism. That individuality burst through the anonymity of his own contribution to his two papers, *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review*. If his views appealed to many and gained universality it was the universality of the voice of reason. That he meant to enlarge the share of communication as far as possible we can see from the fact that he edited papers in Bengali and English and that in January 1928 he founded a Hindi monthly magazine *Vishal Bharat* with Pandit Banarsidas Chaturvedi as its editor.

Today the problem of mass communication in the West has a complexity and magnitude which need not worry us in this country where the diverse and contrary forces of an industrial civilisation are yet to influence the media and the motives of communication at various levels. But we have our own problems of mass communication particularly when the vast masses of our people are illiterate. Obviously Ramananda did not think of reaching the rural masses and worked for the enlightenment of the educated classes whose ideas and actions, he thought, were capable of bringing about a change in society as a whole. He believed in the role of an intellectual elite as an instrument of social progress and in our colonial days such a belief was not looked upon as a form of fashionable elitism repugnant to the spirit of democracy. Today we are obliged to air a measure of anti-elitism for the sake of the rural vote which makes and unmakes governments. Perhaps

Ramananda reflected on the mechanisms of social communication in ancient and medieval India which brought the wisdom of the small Brahmanical elite to the peasantry and even inspired the beggar-bard. In the socialist world an exponent of elitism was Lenin who towards the end of his life wrote an article significantly entitled 'Better Fewer But Butter' published in the Pravda of March 4, 1923.

It may be difficult for me to vivify the image of a journalist who edited papers which had no connection with either big industrial houses or with influential political parties. And I fear my task is made still more difficult by the fact that Ramananda did not believe in labelled ideologies or in any absolute commitment to an institution or individual. Even his contemporaries could not make out if he was a supporter of the Right or the Left elements in the Indian National Congress and while there were many who thought he was just a liberal in his political opinion many others thought he was an extremist. In her work entitled *The Indian Press* (1940) Margarita Barns calls Ramananda's *Modern Review* "India's most celebrated monthly" and adds that "it supports the Right wing in Indian politics." (p. 425) On the other hand the magazine is mentioned as an "organ of extreme Indian opinion" (p. 506) in N. K. Murthy's *Indian Journalism* (1966). In his *The Awakening of India* Ramsay Macdonald says about *The Modern Review* that it "is most in sympathy with the left wing." Jawaharlal Nehru too thought that Ramananda was too much of a liberal to have in him that spirit of non-conformity which must mark a nationalist movement. In a letter dated July 12, 1929 addressed to K. T. Shah (and included in the fourth volume of Prof. S. Gopal's edition of the *Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru*) Nehru says that "Ramananda Chatterjee is cast in too ancient a mould to look at things from a modern point of view" (p. 564). In a letter to Edward Thompson (April 22, 1937) Nehru says that he has not ceased to wonder at the fact that all your stress in discussing India is on unimportant and irrelevant factors." The first of these 'unimportant and irrelevant factors' mentioned in this letter is Ramananda, the second his *Modern Review* and the third is Sri Aurobindo'. It is however important to remember that Nehru's devastatingly self-critical article 'The Rashtrapati' was published in the *Modern Review* in November 1937. Mahatma Gandhi however

held Ramananda and his paper in great esteem. Writing in the *Young India* of April 29, 1926 he said "anything mentioned in Ramananda Chatterjee's magazine would naturally command weight and deserve attention." It is extremely unlikely that Mahatma Gandhi meant to say that the paper commanded weight and deserved attention because of its old fashioned ideas.

We may not understand Ramananda and his ideals and principles if we must try to stick on his lofty brow one or the other of the several political labels by which we often designate our politicians today. Intellectually he was too free to put himself in any doctrinal strait-jacket. Loyalty to an active conscience was the only loyalty he valued and such loyalty does not favour dogmatic adherence to any system or school. It is important to see that Ramananda was not a typical Bengali in his intellectual temper and here Ramsay Macdonald who knew him personally misunderstood him. Ramananda was a great admirer of Tagore and of the artists of the Bengal school and his two papers did a great deal to popularize the poet and the artists at home and abroad. He was a master of the Bengali language and he loved his race and his people. And yet he had something in his nature which distinguished him from the rest of his people. Ramsay Macdonald says that *The Modern Review* has "all the characteristics of the Bengali spirit" (p. 122) and about that spirit he remarks that "it creates India by song and worship, it is clothing her in queenly garments". (p. 50). There is very little of 'song and worship' in Ramananda's approach to the Indian struggle. He was on the contrary an exponent of the critical spirit and he was too serious in his pursuit of that spirit to care for anything melodramatic or pompous in political behaviour. Of this faith in reason as an instrument of progress his most memorable pronouncement is his article entitled 'Nation-Building and the Critical Spirit' published in *Welfare* in January 1925 and reproduced in the Ramananda birth-centenary issue of the *Modern Review* (June 1965). And here he is a child of the European Enlightenment, a believer in rational understanding of the human situation as the only means of human progress. "No-changers and Swarajists, Moslem Leaguers and Khilafatis, Non-Brahmins and Sanatanists" he says "all require a rebellious mood against the tyranny of shibboleths and catchwords. There

has grown up in our midst a political caste system. The tyranny of this grown political caste system must be destroyed. Free and sane thinking in politics must take its place." Words such as these may seem strange at a time when we have only multiplied our political castes while pretending to reduce their number.

Ramananda came to journalism from the teaching profession where he could have risen to any height to which the finest of academicians could aspire. When I say this I do not have in mind the professors of today many of whom would have been highly successful highwaymen if they were not on the pay-roll of our universities. When he was invited by Hermachandra Maitra, Principal, City College, Calcutta, to work as an honorary lecturer in English in 1888 he had just obtained a first in English Honours in Calcutta University standing first in the list and it was a unique distinction to be a college teacher without a master's degree in the subject. In the same year he began to write for the *Indian Messenger*, an English weekly issued by the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. While pursuing his studies for the master's degree in English as a student of City College where he was also teaching, Ramananda used to write editorial notes for *The Indian Mirror* and contribute articles to the Bengali weekly *Sanjivani* and the Bengali Magazine *Dharmabandhu*. He was, however, preparing himself for an academic career and in 1890 he took a first class master's degree in English in Calcutta University which had then produced some very fine scholars in the subject.

1890 is an important year, a turning point in Ramananda's life. He was then twenty-five years old and the Indian National Congress had been founded just five years earlier. His private journal which his daughter Shanta Devi has used in her large 300-page Bengali biography of her father published in 1947 shows how in this year he decided to dedicate himself to national service. He had already become a Brahmo and had made the acquaintance of some of the finest men of the Brahmo community. Now he took up the editorship of the Brahmo magazine *Dharmabandhu*. He also became Assistant Editor of the Brahmo weekly *The Indian Messenger*. On the other hand the new political atmosphere in the country created by the Indian national Congress cast its spell on his young and growing mind. He translated

into Bengali Sir William Wedderburn's presidential address at the Bombay Congress of 1889 for the *Sanjivani* and he was so deeply impressed by Charles Bradlaugh's speech on the Cooly Question that he thought of founding a society for the protection of coolies. So when the Government of Bengal offered him a state scholarship for higher studies in England he declined it and also refused appointment as a Deputy Magistrate. Instead he accepted a lectureship in English in city college on a monthly salary of hundred rupees. This year he attended the sixth session of the Congress held in Calcutta under the presidentship of Phirozeshah Mehta. As editor of the Bengali magazine *Dasi* which ceased publication in May 1897 is excellent source-material for a social-economic history of Bengal towards the close of the last century.

It was indeed amazing how Ramananda could do so equally well in teaching, social service and journalism and a close examination of his private journal would show that he thought that they were the three aspects of one single moral and intellectual endeavour—an endeavour to live for others. In one of the entries in his private journal during this period of his life he wrote: "Use your pen for service and neither for honour nor for money. Acquire knowledge, courage and the spirit of sacrifice".

What brought Ramananda to Allahabad in October 1895 to live there as Principal of Kayastha Pathsala when he was so deeply rooted in Calcutta is difficult to say. His diary, his biographies by his daughter and by Jogesh Chandra Bangal (1965) and Nemai Sadhan Bose's English work on him published in 1974 have little to say on this question. Most probably he was constrained to accept the principalship carrying a monthly salary of two hundred and fifty rupees, in those days a mentionable sum, because the lectureship in City College gave him much less than what he needed to maintain his family and to meet the expenses of his experiments in journalism. He was an excellent principal and an excellent teacher of English and in his 11 years as head of intermediate college he gave it a standing in the educational system of the United Provinces. The university of Allahabad made him one of its fellows and his articles in the English weekly *Advocate* of Lucknow led to important changes in the system of school

education of the province. But journalism pursued Ramananda even when he was in the midst of his heavy academic and administrative duties in Allahabad. He was appointed editor of the English monthly *Kayastha Samachar* which appeared in July 1899 and he edited the paper till June 1900 when its editorship went to Sachchidananda Sinha who converted it into his own *Hindustan Review* in 1903. Ramananda was a regular contributor to this paper till the foundation of his *Modern Review* in January 1907. In December 1897 he founded and edited the Bengali monthly *Pradeep* which was enriched by contributions from the foremost Bengali writers of the day including Rabindranath Tagore. In 1899 Ramananda gave up the editorship of this paper when he found that it was not possible to conduct it worthily from Allahabad.

But Ramananda soon realized that journalism was his forte and very function of his life. In April 1901 he founded the Bengali illustrated monthly *Pravasi* which was published in Allahabad by Chintamani Ghosh, proprietor of the Indian Press. In production, choice of articles and in illustration *Pravasi* made a tremendous impression on its readers and it became the voice of the second phase of the Bengali renaissance, of the world of Rabindranath, Abanindranath, J. C. Bose and P. C. Roy. It was the first Bengali magazine to offer multi-coloured illustrations and the first to concern itself with the intellectual and political movement of India as a whole. The two striking features of Ramananda's editorial policy were that the paper must find out the best of writers to give it their very best and that it must pay its contributors howsoever modest might be the payment. He sent Rabindranath an advance of three hundred rupees for his novel *Gora* and this was in those days a unique gesture from an editor to a writer.

Till September 1906 Ramananda was both a teacher and a journalist and he knew how to integrate the two professions into a single calling. In September 1906 he resigned his principalship of Kayastha Pathshala due to differences with the authorities of that college regarding how it should be administered. If the authorities were unkind to the distinguished principal or failed to understand his ideas the Indian press must thank them for that unkindness which made Ramananda embrace journalism as his only profession. In January 1907 ap-

peared the first number of *The Modern Review : An Indian Monthly and Miscellany* edited by Ramananda Chatterjee.

At this distance of time it may not be easy for us to understand the courage a Bengali living in Allahabad needed to start a paper in the midst of the Swadeshi Movement in Bengali. The Bengali patriots were branded as extremists and the revolutionary temper of Aurobindo and Bipin Pal who were in active alliance with Lajpat Rai and Tilak had antagonised the ruling classes beyond measure. At the Calcutta Congress of 1906 the extremists dominated the scene and even Dadabhai Naoroji, the moderate, voiced their feelings. The Congress concluded on December 29, 1906. *The Modern Review* appeared three days later on January 1, 1907. Actually Ramananda brought to the Congress advance copies of the paper for the prominent delegates. He knew that the Indian press had already made the government indignant and repressive laws would be passed to control it. The Act for the Prevention of Incitements to Murder and to other offences in Newspapers, that is, Act VII of 1908 was passed in June that year, that is, within a year and a half of the establishment of *The Modern Review*. And after this came the Act to Provide for the Better Control of the Press, Act I of 1910. When Ramananda launched *The Modern Review* he knew that the government policy was to suppress the Swadeshi Movement through a series of repressive laws and ordinances. He decided to edit an English paper to disseminate the patriotic spirit of the *Pravasi* amongst the educated classes of the country as a whole and to acquaint the world with the legitimate political aspirations of the Indian people. His whole purpose was to show to the civilised world that what the government was suppressing as the treasonable activity of a group of extremists was essentially a whole nation's will to free itself from its bondage to foreign rule.

We cannot then raise the question whether Ramananda was a moderate or an extremist. He was a nationalist and the spirit of nationalism was closer to the spirit of the extremists than to the spirit of the moderates. I think it was William Thomas Stead (1840-1912) editor of *The Review of Reviews* who was the first to explain in unmis-takeable terms the political faith of Ramananda which he said was above the controversies between the extremists and the moderates.

In an article entitled "Ramananda Chatterjee, Journalist-Agitator" published in his paper in January 1909, that is, two years after the foundation of *The Modern Review* Stead wrote about the man: 'the sanest Indians do not permit themselves to be a labelled Extremist or Moderate. They prefer to be called Nationalists.....A notable example of this order of Nationalists is Ramananda Chatterjee. He belongs to the class of leaders who seek, through the medium of the press, to rouse India to a sense of its fallen condition and inspire the natives of the land of help themselves.'

As we proceed to watch Ramananda's career as a journalist from the foundation of *The Modern Review* in January 1907 to his death on September 30, 1943 we must pause for a while to ask ourselves an important question. The question is this—if Ramananda's objective was to help the nationalist movement, why did he not found and edit a daily newspaper or a paper devoted only to political and economic questions? Why did he found a magazine which offered articles on literature, history, philosophy and the arts; not a few amongst us may think that he chose to edit a literary magazine because he was a professor of literature and was himself an able writer of English and Bengali prose. While his literary abilities were certainly an asset to his work as a journalist he was not really interested in literature from an academic point of view and he never wrote a line of professorial prose and he scrupulously shunned all forms of academic pomposity. We may not today understand his editorial policy affiliating his country's intellectual life to the intellectual life of the world community because today the divorce between politics and the life of the intellect is most complete. And we are now in the grip of a form of intellectual swadeshi which is much severer than the swadeshi of our colonial days when our desire for national freedom was not required to be strengthened by any claim of cultural autarchy. Ramananda believed in the tradition of intellectual internationalism inaugurated by Ramamohun Roy and greatly valued by Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru.

He wanted to draw the attention of the civilized world to his own civilization and he knew that we could make others look at us only when we were ready to look at them. *The Modern Review* gave

strength to the Indian cause by making that cause a part of the civilized world's intellectual and moral concern. The paper was intended to give an international dimension to our national movement and to give dignity to our political aspiration by presenting to the world an image of our intellectual achievements. One of the foreign admirers of the paper to understand this was J. T. Sunderland who wrote about it in 1936 that "this unique and able monthly has been a perpetual wonder to me on account of the breadth and wealth of its contents. . . . Indeed I know of no other periodical that so fully and adequately represents the real India. . . . But it does not stop with India. . . . It passes on and takes actually the whole world for its field. I speak with care when I say that we do not have in America, nor is there in England, any review or magazine that covers so wide a field and that does it with such accuracy of scholarship and so interestingly. For all these reasons, I regard *The Modern Review* under the conspicuously able and wise editorship of Mr. Chatterjee as an absolutely invaluable asset to India and, at the same time, as a messenger from India to the outside world the importance of which can hardly be overestimated." I have placed before you the entire text of this distinguished tribute to the paper and its editor because I have searched in vain amongst books and articles on the subject for any other statement which brings out so clearly and so forcefully the achievement of Ramananda Chatterjee as an editor.

I do not wish to tire you with a detailed account of the nature of the articles published in *The Modern Review*. I will mention the contents of its first number to give you an idea of their variety. The number included the following articles: W. Knox Johnson's 'Western Literature and the Educated Public in India', Heramba Chandra Maitra's 'Work and Wages', Dinesh Chandra Sen's 'Behula: A Myth of the snake-goddess', V. B. Patvardhan's 'The Hindu Widow's Home', G. Subramani Iyer's 'Mr. Morley and India's Industrial Future', Sister Nivedita's 'The Function of Art in Shaping Nationality', K. R. Kirtikar's 'The Study of Natural Science in the Indian Universities', G. V. Joshi's 'The Industrial Problem in India', E. B. Havell's 'The Indian Handloom Industry', articles on 'Dadabhai Naoroji's 'Ravi Varma', 'Calcutta', Balchandra Krishna's 'Self-Reliance Against

Mendicancy', D. B. Parasinis's 'Maratha Historical Literature', Jadunath Sarkar's 'Sivaji Letters' (From the Persian) and newly discovered material and review of books written in English, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati and Bengali. The choice of subjects is indeed as impressive as the choice of contributors. I remember when I first began to read *The Modern Review* regularly and seriously in 1931 I used to be so impressed by the large variety of intellectual fare it offered month by month that I would often sit with bound volumes of its early issues and wonder at their encyclopaedic density. The entire corpus of *The Modern Review* from January 1907 to 1943 constitute an intellectual history of India for this period and an excellent account of our response to the arts, letters and politics of the world.

When Ramananda left Allahabad to settle in Calcutta in April 1908 the Swadeshi Movement had taken a violent turn. On April 30 that year a bomb intended to kill Kingsford, the judge of Muzaffarpur, killed two British ladies, Mrs. and Miss Kennedy and on the 2nd of May a conspiracy to 'Wage war against the King-Emperor' as the *Rowlatt Sedition Committee Report* (1918) later put it, was unearthed in a garden-house in north Calcutta and on the 15th of May a bomb exploded in the same part of the city. The split between the extremists and the moderates at the Surat Congress of 1907 had confused public opinion on the political forces in the country. In a situation like this Ramananda's first important task was to define his attitude to the Swadeshi Movement and the many forces behind the movement. He realized that it was not only a movement against the partition, it was also a movement for self-government. Actually when in 1910 Sir Valentine Chirol wrote in his *Indian Unrest* that the question 'was not whether Bengal should be one unpartitioned province or two partitioned provinces under British rule, but whether British rule itself was to endure in Bengal or anywhere in India', he meant the spirit of nationalism which the Swadeshi Movement had created in the country. While Ramananda saw this he also saw more and here he was very much himself and did not allow his ideas to be influenced by any individuals and groups. As a journalist Ramananda was scrupulously non-aligned and this gave his papers, *Pravasi* and *The Modern Review*, their individuality and their force. He never clinged to any leader and never cared to be the

mouthpiece of any party, group or faction. But his faith in individualism did not lapse into any form of egotism and he was noted for his gentleness of temper and his self-restraint. But when one does not care to commit himself to the more influential elements in the political life of a country one almost necessarily faces problems. A star choosing to dwell apart may suffer for the isolation. When you do not wholeheartedly support a party or the leader of a party you are accused of not having a policy and Ramananda was so accused. But such accusation, did not bother a man who was ready to disagree with himself, to unsay today what he had said earlier. Ramananda gave his answer to this accusation fourteen years after the end of the Swadeshi Movement and the annulment of the Partition. Writing in *The Modern Review* of October 1925 he said 'regarding the charge that *The Modern Review* suffers from lack of editorial policy we can only see that we care only for truth and principles, not policy, and we try always to decide what ought to be said, not with reference to what we may have written before but in the light of the knowledge and experience we possess at the time of writing. We are not guided by any mechanical adherence to what is regarded as consistency but with regard for truth and principles.' Here Ramananda raises a vital question of journalistic ethos, a question regarding what we may mention as 'political affiliation.' He respected this neutrality as the very soul of journalistic freedom. This independence of opinion not only annoyed the government it also annoyed leaders and parties. You may look in vain for an appreciation of Ramananda in the writings and speeches of the foremost leaders of his times. There is no mention of him in Surendranath Banerjee's autobiography *A Nation in Making* published in 1924. It appears the moderates suspected that he was an extremist and the extremists suspected that he was a moderate.

It appears that soon after removing his papers from Allahabad to Calcutta Ramananda took two important decisions. He decided to devote himself entirely to journalism and to make Calcutta the scene of his labours. In 1928 when Motilal Nehru offered him the editorship of, *Independent* an English daily to be established in Allahabad, he very politely declined although he was asked to name his salary. Motilal even told him that he had the ambition to bring back *The*

*Modern Review* ultimately to the city where it was born.

Ramananda had a philosophy of journalism, that is, he had certain basic convictions about an editor's task and his way of accomplishing it. And I think his most important statement of this philosophy deserves the closest attention of those who are concerned with the press as the most important instrument of communication in modern society. I am therefore placing before you one whole paragraph from his article entitled 'Journalism in India' published in *The Modern Review* in January 1923: "Ours is a difficult task. We have to serve and please many masters. The staff of those journals which are owned by capitalists have to serve them. They may not in all cases do their bidding directly, but there is indirect, perhaps unconscious, pressure on their minds. But even in the case of those who own their papers, there are other masters to serve and please. There is the circle of readers drawn from all or some political, social, religious or communal sections. There are the advertisers. And last of all one must not offend the ruling bureaucracy beyond a certain more or less known and unknowable point. Having to serve so many masters we may seek to be excused for not listening above all to the voice of the Master within, speaking through our conscience. But there can be no excuse. Ours is a sacred duty. We must not sacrifice our convictions for any advantage whatsoever. Great is the temptation to play to the gallery; but our task is to mould and guide as well as to give publicity to public opinion. Capitalists who are not journalists but own journals should not interfere with the freedom of opinion. Capitalists who are not journalists, but own journals, should not interfere with the freedom of opinion of their staff." Words such as these may appear absurdly idealistic today but Ramananda was an idealist and he believed that if idealism was not possible in politics it must at least be the virtue of the press. I think what did not make Ramananda an idol of the people during the Swadeshi Movement was his dislike for the rhetoric or invective. He was forthright in his expression and sometimes very sharp and incisive. But he would never be abusive or scurrilous. In an article entitled 'The Place of Journalism in Society' he gives the well-known anecdote of a young applicant for a job in *The Pall Mall Gazette* telling its editor John Morley that his qualification for a career in journalism was invective and adds that

though "we may shine in invective, we should never forget that journalism is a high, though not the highest, calling and preparation for it involves not only the acquisition of varied knowledge and information, but also the training of the intellect and moral and spiritual self-discipline." "Judged by this standard" he continues "none of us may be able to pass the test, but there is nothing to lose, but everything to gain by seriously placing a high ideal before ourselves." Ramananda, however, valued force of expression and we can say about his style what Frederic White says about William Thoma Stead of *The Review of Reviews* that "his power of extracting and stating a case was probably unsurpassed in our time." (*The Life of W. T. Stead*), 1925, ii, 76).

Ramananda did place before himself a high ideal and he had to suffer for this idealism. He was arrested on June 6, 1928 for reprinting in Calcutta J. T. Sunderland's *India in Bondage* and was fined two thousand rupees for the offence. But what was perhaps much more painful for him was that he was obliged to publish in his paper his disagreement with his friend Tagore. It was his *Modern Review* which published the poet's *Gitanjali* poems in English translation and presented an image of him to the world a few years before he was awarded the Nobel prize. At the poet's death in 1941 he said he was feeling very lonely without him. But when Tagore said that India's spiritual and moral emancipation was more important than her political freedom he very strongly criticized the idea. "We are unable to accept the poet's suggestion" he wrote "that political emancipation is not an immediate duty, and that it should be attempted after spiritual and social freedom has been achieved. We do not think that universal education of the people is practicable without state action. And such state action has been taken only in politically free countries."

When we reflect on Ramananda's work as an editor we must consider the fact that there were hours in his life when he, in a certain way, joined politics. He ceased to be a member of the Congress in 1910 most probably because he did not like to belong to any party as editor of an influential paper. He however attended some of the annual sessions of the Congress including the Lahore session of 1929 which adopted Nehru's historic resolution on complete independence. But on two occasions he was actively associated with politics. He presided

over the Surat session of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1929 and he attended the Congress Nationalist Party meeting held in Bombay in 1934. When we examine what he said at these meetings and what he wrote about them in his two papers we discover that his connection with these two bodies was only an extension of his work as a journalist. He was strongly opposed to separate electorate which he thought would destroy India's nationhood and lead to disintegration. Personally I do not favour any active link between the press and political parties except when a party chooses to have its own paper. But Ramananda's participation in politics is marginal and there is nothing to establish that his papers took any partisan view of any of the major issues of our national life. Ramananda avoided any obligation to institutions or individuals to preserve his editorial freedom. When he was invited to visit the League of Nations in 1926 he did not accept travelling expenses from that international body 'to be free', as he wrote in *The Modern Review* 'from the least conscious or unconscious pressure of a sense of obligation in his mind'. On his return he said about the League in his paper that it was dominated by some imperialist predatory nations.

Yet another question about Ramananda's work as an editor is his active support for the elements in the Congress who wanted Subhas to be its president in 1936. I do not think in this he was prompted by any provincial spirit. He was opposed to the Government of India Act of 1935 on which he remarked in an article entitled 'This is not Self-Government' published in *Asia* in January 1936 that it 'provides for Gubernatorial Autonomy.' He hoped that Subhas would reject the Act without reservation. But when Jawaharlal Nehru was elected President of the Congress Ramananda greeted him in an article in *The Modern Review* published in January 1937. To those who did not welcome the election of a socialist as President of the Congress he put the question "Why denounce socialists for cherishing their opinions particularly when the objectors cannot produce a practicable substitute?"

If we must try to sum up Ramananda's political ideas and define them in terms of schools of political thought we may not know how to judge him. Our younger generation may ask—was he a radical or a liberal and as an old man I may not find a neat answer. In religion he was a Brahmo, that is, a non-conformist if not a radical Hindu. In letters

he was a modernist and an ardent admirer of Tagore, in his taste for the arts too he was as progressive as a supporter of the school of Abanindranath Tagore. In politics he was a confirmed nationalist. He supported the Swadeshi Movement of 1905-1911 and although he was opposed to terrorism he published pictures of Aurobindo Ghosh, Barin Ghosh and several other revolutionaries in his papers and said that their extremist action was a natural reaction against an oppressive regime. He rejected the Morley-Minto Reforms, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and the Government of India Act of 1935. He wholeheartedly supported the Non-cooperation Movement of 1921 and the Civil disobedience Movement of 1930. In an article entitled "On India's Struggle for Emancipation" published in *Asia* in August 1930 he wrote "India means to be free, must be free either by peaceful methods or by bloody methods, and she has chosen first, the methods of peace." In 1942 too he was with the Congress and its movement for immediate freedom. It will, therefore, be an error to imagine that Ramananda was a liberal reformist in politics. He was, on the contrary, a radical in this uncompromising insistence on freedom and we can deny him this appellation only when by radicalism we mean belief in armed revolution. Sir Jadunath Sarkar once remarked that if, as Watter Bagehot said, "the first thirty years of the 19th century was a species of dual between the *Edinburgh Review* and Lord Eldon, the Tory Lord Chancellor, the first forty years of the 20th century were marked by a still longer dual between *The Modern Review* and the Tories' power over India's destiny.

Ramananda said quite a few things in his papers which present him as a radical. Though not a socialist he said in *The Modern Review* of November 1930 that the money-value of even genuine intellectual work should not be considered so immensely greater than that of physical labour and manual skill. The worker should be not only profit-sharing, but also management-sharing. As regards capital, the more concerns we have where the workers are themselves the capitalists on a co-operative basis the better. But for such an ideal economic system, he thought, was needed a leadership which must be at once responsible and selfless. Even in those days when politics was yet to become a gainful profession for those who more were not good for anything else he suspected that not a few leaders were only pursuing

power in the name of service. "As things stand" he wrote in *The Modern Review* of August 1938 "good kisan leaders are only useful grievance-finders, grievance-ventilators and grievance-redressers, and bad kisan leaders are troublecreators and fishers in troubled waters. What is wanted is that good kisan leaders and labour leaders should also be work-creators and work-finders and the bad variety of so called leaders should find for themselves some ostensible means of honest living and leave the kisans and the labourers alone." These are hard words and they may seem harder to our ears. But Ramananda was capable of being harsh when harshness was unavoidable. One of the immensely quotable sentences of Ramananda, a sentence which has the force of an aphorism, is "it is a sad and ominous moment when one will admit that he has quarrel with truth."

It is extremely unlikely that Ramananda's ideas on journalism will make a very profound appeal to the journalists of today. For one thing, he was not a journalist concerned with the daily press which is now the soul of the profession. Secondly, he was a journalist when we were struggling for freedom and when those who were involved in the struggle were more or less united in their dedication to their ideal. The kind of political writing represented is the three volumes of the work called *Towards Home Rule*, (1917-1918), a collection of papers and paragraphs from *The Modern Review* mostly written by Ramananda, is marked by a quiet reflective temper which the speed of the daily press may not encourage. It has something of the intellectual quality which we find in his edition of the English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy published in 1906, 17 volumes of Chatterjee's Picture Albums (1920), a collections of representative specimens of Indian Painting, and *The Golden Book of Tagore* (1931), which S. T. Sunderland called 'a dignified and beautiful volume.' Today we have too many parties and parties within parties and too many policies and too many programmes and above all too many individuals and too many interests clashing with each other and the task of the journalism today has a complexity and magnitude which Ramananda could not contemplate. And, thirdly, the editor of a paper owned by himself may not be an acceptable mentor to journalists working for big newspapers owned by the big industry. Fourthly, by journalism Ramananda did not mean a concern with poli-

tical and economic questions alone while they are really the only concerns of a journalist today. Ramananda was concerned with the life of the nation as a whole, its history, literature, philosophy and art. This breadth of outlook gave his paper its intellectual dignity and international prestige. For this Andre Karpeles called *The Modern Review* 'one of the marvels of India, a perfumed breeze from Bengal', Sir Michael Sadler mentioned it as 'one of the lively periodicals of the world' and I think when B. G. Horniman of *The Bombay Chronicle* said about Ramananda that 'I bow down before him for he has surpassed us all in a particular type of journalism' he meant this special quality of his two journals.

It must, however, be admitted that journalism is essentially a profession concerned with politics and political questions with appropriate bearings on economic and social questions. We must judge Ramananda in respect of the primary concern of a journalist even when we admire him for his wider cultural interests. I think the Press Commission Report of 1954 sums up the virtues of *The Modern Review* and its editor exceedingly well. It described the paper as 'a complete record of important events and comments with deft touches from the Editor's keenly analytical pen'. Ramananda valued precision in reporting and he knew that the validity of his comments, however sharp, would depend on the veracity of the report of what he was commenting on. Here lies Ramananda's editorial principle and he practised it to a fault. And this makes his editorial notes covering a period of over three decades an encyclopedia of political events and political opinion of the period. This principle prompted him to master the political scene of his time in all its details. It also required a great deal of self-mastery.



**PUBLICATIONS DIVISION**

**MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING  
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