

# Militant Nationalism In India

And Its Socio-Religious Background

( 1897—1917 )

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*Bhagavaturatna, Premchand Roychand Scholar*

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## **MILITANT NATIONALISM IN INDIA**

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To

DR. R. C. MAJUMDAR

*Doyen of Indian Historians and Pioneer in  
the researches on Militant Nationalism in India*



## PREFACE

By a curious coincidence the authorities of the two premier Universities in Eastern and Western India invited me almost simultaneously to deliver two courses of lectures last year. In response to their invitation I delivered three lectures on the social and political ideas of Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita in the University of Calcutta as the Sister Nivedita Lecturer of 1964 from the 10th to the 13th September, 1965 and four lectures on Militant Nationalism and Lala Lajpat Rai in the University of Bombay from the 10th to the 13th November, 1965, on the occasion of the Lala Lajpat Rai Centenary Celebrations there. The present book combines both the series of lectures to which the introductory and concluding chapters have been added.

My study is confined to a limited period of twenty years (1897-1917). The triumphant return of Swami Vivekananda from his first western tour in 1897 opened a new era in the history of Nationalism in India. India had never before heard such a message of neo-Vedantism, strength and fearlessness and, above all, such a clarion call to abjure all the deities excepting the Motherland for the next fifty years (C.W. III. 300) from the date of his lecture at Madras on February 14, 1897. Nothing illustrates better his prophetic vision than the fact that it was exactly fifty years afterwards, on February 23, 1947, that Major Attlee, the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, announced in the House of Commons the decision of the British Government to quit India.

Militant Nationalism made itself manifest both in the economic and in the political fronts in 1897. It was in this year that the Commissioner of the Central Division of Bombay reported that "Tilak had flooded the country with proclamations against payment of land revenue and urging resistance to any attempt to collect it." His preachings produced tremendous effect, because the same officer states that

there was a partial mutiny amongst the police and "the Village Officers were almost passive or active connivers with the disturbances" (HFM II 196). The year 1897 also witnessed the first case of murder of two Europeans as a protest against the oppressions of the Plague Commissioner of Poona and the arrest of Lokmanya Tilak on a charge of inciting the murders. Shyamji Krishna Varma, the father of Indian revolutionary movement abroad, also sailed for England in that year.

The year 1917 marks the close of the first and most important phase of militant nationalism in this country. The United States of America joined the War on April 6, 1917 and the very next day Ramchandra, the Ghadr leader, was arrested in San Francisco along with sixteen other Indians. Three months later 105 persons were indicted as conspirators in the famous Hindu conspiracy case, charging them with sending military expeditions organised from America and Siam to India and smuggling arms and ammunitions there through China and Japan. Thus in 1917 the hope of getting foreign help vanished away. No further attempt was made to organise a general rising till the advent of Netaji during the second World War. The revolutionaries in India became disorganised for the time being. Out of fear of leakage of their secrets a group of them murdered their own comrade Surendra Kushari, who had been wounded in course of a dacoity at Bara Bazar, Calcutta on May 7, 1917. The same year saw the beginning of a new type of open resistance at Champaran in North Bihar under the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, who abjured violence in every form.

I am grateful to Swami Vitasokananda, the head of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram at Patna for the many valuable suggestions and references he has given me. I express my gratitude to my old teacher, Dr. Pramathanath Banerjee, a former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, who inaugurated my Nivedita lectures in the Darbhanga Hall and to Dr. A. J. Dastoor, University Professor of Politics in the Bombay Univer-

sity for her help in the preparation of lectures on Militant Nationalism in Maharastra. I thank the authorities of the Universities of Calcutta and Bombay for kindly according me permission to get the book published by a great devotee of Swami Vivekananda, Sj. Sures Chandra Das, M.A of the General Printers and Publishers Pte. Ltd., who being present at the lectures in Calcutta expressed his eagerness to publish these in the form of a book. I thank him for bringing it out within a short period.

*Gola Dariapur,*

*Patna 4.*

1. 6. 66

Bimanbehari Majumdar

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Alipore Case—*Alipore Bomb Case*, edited B. K. Basu.

*Aprakasita*—*Aprakasita Rajnaitik Itihasar Ek Adhyaya* by Bhupendra Nath Datta.

Archives—National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Aurobindo—Sri Aurobindo on himself and the Mother.

Autobiography—Lajpat Rai's *Autobiographical Writings* (1965).

Barindra—*Agni Yuga* by Barindra Kumar Ghosh.

Bhai Parmanand—*My Life* by Bhai Parmanand.

B. N. Datta—*Svami Vivekananda, Patriot and Prophet* by Bhupendra Nath Datta.

Chapekar—*Autobiography of Damodar Hari Chapekar*, appended to IFM II.

C.W.—*Complete Works of Svami Vivekananda* (Centenary edition).

Girija—*Sri Aurobindo O Bānglār Swadeshi Yuga* by Girija Shankar Roy Chaudhuri.

H F M—*Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India* (Collected from Bombay Government Records).

Hardinge—*My Indian Years* by Lord Hardinge.

Jadugopal—*Biplabi Jibaner Smriti* by Jādu Gopal Mukhopadhyaya.

M. N. Roy—*Memoirs of M. N. Roy* (1964).

O'Dwyer—*India as I knew it* by Sir Michael O'Dwyer.

Rash Behari—*Rash Behari Basu, His struggle for India's Independence* (1964).

RINC—*Report of the Indian National Congress*.

Savarkar—*Veer Savarkar* by D. Keer.

Sedition Committee—*Report of the Sedition Committee* (1918).

## CHAPTER ONE

### FACETS OF INDIAN NATIONALISM BEFORE 1897

IF Nationalism means simply the devotion to one's nation, there is plenty of evidence of the prevalence of this sentiment in India before the return of Swami Vivekananda from his first tour to the West in January, 1897. But if it signifies a policy of national independence, it is difficult to find any definite trace of it except in some stray utterances of a few advanced thinkers. The first four decades since the outbreak of the movement of 1857 witnessed the germination of the seed of patriotism in our country. The ideal of national unity and of love for the motherland was preached in this period indeed, but no concrete suggestion was made by any individual or organization as to the best way of achieving the independence for India. It was reserved for Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita, Lokamanya Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, Lala Lajpat Rai and a band of active revolutionaries during the two decades following the murder of Rand and Ayrast to chalk out plans for making India free from bondage.

In the sixth decade of the last century it became a fashion to give the appellation, national, to a variety of organizations, like a fair, a newspaper, and even an association for presenting addresses to the incoming and outgoing Lieutenant Governors. The first Indian writer belonging to the academic world to write on a topic relating to Political Science questioned the appropriateness of the name of the Indian National Congress, the greatest of all the political associations organized during the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century. K. Sundararaman Aiyar (1854-1938), Professor of the Presidency College, Madras, and a warm admirer of Swami Vivekananda, wrote in 1903: "Though it calls itself *national*, its methods are not truly such. Our study of the progress of national movements in

European countries shows that they have invariably been initiated for the overthrow of foreign supremacy and the substitution in its place of an independent government controlled and officered by native inhabitants of those countries. The Indian National Congress has no such aim. Lord Lansdowne, when Viceroy of India, acknowledged in handsome terms that it was a perfectly loyal and constitutional movement and the legitimate outcome of the educational and administrative policy of the British Government. A political revolution has no place among the aims of the Congress party in India. Some of its leaders are Englishmen who have held high office in India. The idea that these men are aiming at the dismemberment of the British Empire is one which can only occur to idiots and deserves no notice whatever".<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that the writer was one of the few Government servants who attended and even addressed the first session of the Congress in Bombay in 1885. He was a sympathiser of the Congress and not a hostile critic.

If we turn from the question of freedom from the control of an external authority to the problem of internal cohesion among the people of different provinces speaking diverse languages and professing different religions we find that the solvent of nationalism had not been able to create a sense of unity in Indians even at the beginning of the present century. A great nationalist writer like Tilak wrote in *Kesari* in 1901: "Just as Panini for some particular reason brought under one grammatical rule (Sūtra) the phrase, 'dog and youngman and Indra', so too, it was only by accident within the mantle (Sātra) of British rule that the Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Parsis, Bengalis, Madrasis etc.,

<sup>1</sup> K. Sundararaman—*Four Political Essays* (Madras, Natesan, 1903), 159. The writer dedicated the book to Swami Vivekananda, whom he called "the greatest teacher of modern times". The great Swami called on him at Trivendrum early in 1893 and stayed in his house for more than a week. See his articles—"Swami Vivekananda at Trivendrum, March-April, 1914, in *Brahmavadin* and 'Vivekananda, our Supreme Teacher' in the first issue of the *Vedanta Kesari*.

all these people who once had different nationalities, have been brought together. Therefore, it is wrong to suppose from this that their nationality has become one."<sup>2</sup> But it must be admitted that powerful forces, like the introduction of scientific means of communication and transport, of one common system of law and judicial administration, the diffusion of knowledge in English language and literature, the rise of the Indian Press, the unfolding of the glories of India by the painstaking researches of a devoted band of Indologists, both Western and Indian and above all, the writings of a host of poets, dramatists, novelists and essayists were at work to inspire the people of India with the spirit of intense devotion to their country. This is, of course, an important aspect of nationalism.

The history of political thought as well as movement in India rightly begins with Raja Rammohan Roy. He was a great admirer of the British Government and Civilisation, yet he could foresee that Indians would not tolerate an oppressive system of administration for ever. In 1829 he wrote: "Supposing that one hundred years hence the Native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirement of general and political knowledge as well as of modern arts and sciences, is it possible that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectually any unjust and oppressive measures serving to degrade them in the scale of society? It should not be lost sight of that the position of India is very different from that of Ireland, to any quarter of which an English fleet may suddenly convey a body of troops that may force its way in the requisite direction and succeed in suppressing every effort of a refractory spirit. Were India to share one-fourth of the knowledge and energy of that country, she would prove from her remote situation, her riches and her vast population, either useful and profitable as a willing province, an ally of the British Empire, or troublesome and annoying as a

<sup>2</sup> *Kesari*, April 23, 1901.



determined enemy.”<sup>3</sup> He was writing this long before the emergence of the idea of the Commonwealth or even of responsible Self-Government in the Dominions. He could, therefore, describe the future of India only as an ally of the British Empire.

But the ways and means he suggested for effecting improvement in the social and political status of India can hardly be approved of by the nationalists of the twentieth century. He suggested that a large number of Europeans, having learning and character should settle down in India permanently and that in course of time they would be able to elevate the Indians to their own level of culture and civilization. In an article contributed to a paper in London on July 14, 1832, he said that “the presence, countenance and support of the European settlers would not only afford to the natives protection against the imposition and oppression of their landlord and other superiors, but also against any abuse of power on the part of those in authority.” There is nothing objectionable in this sort of expectation. But one gets simply bewildered when it is found that Rammohan Roy envisaged a future for India in which she would adopt the English language, the Christian religion and European manners.<sup>4</sup> If he really wanted such a metamorphosis of India he cannot be called a nationalist in any sense of the term. But most probably he did not mean what he wrote on the spur of the moment.

<sup>3</sup> Collett—*Rammohan Roy* (Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Ed. ), 386.

<sup>4</sup> Speaking about the eventuality of a separation between India and England he wrote in the article referred to above : “If events should occur to effect a separation ( which may arise from many accidental causes, about which it is vain to speculate or make predictions ), still a friendly and highly advantageous commercial intercourse may be kept up between the two free and *Christian countries, united as they will be by resemblance of language, religion and manners.*” ( Italics ours ). This article has been quoted in *Chaturanga*, ( a Bengali quarterly Journal edited by Humayun Kabir ) Vol. XXI, No. 3, 321-323 in an article contributed by Saumendranath Tagore.

The first open denunciation of the British domination in India came naturally from Maharashtra. In less than a quarter of a century from the date of the final subjection of the Mahratta people, Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar wrote in the *Bombay Gazette* in 1841: "We cannot look upon your Government in any other light than that of the most bitter curse India has ever been visited with."<sup>5</sup> This sort of outburst, however, was extremely rare even amongst the Mahratta young men, who could not forget that the empire of India eluded their grasp only a few decades ago.

Gopal Hari Deshmukh (1823-1892), popularly known as *Lokahitawadi*, expressed great appreciation for the British rule in his *Sata Patre*, which were written between 1848 and 1850. He considered the British rule much better than the Government by the Hindus or the Moslems especially because of the introduction of social justice.<sup>6</sup> He, however, could not reconcile himself to the idea of being perpetually governed by the British. He could not but regard the foreign domination as a punishment for the people. Being himself a Government servant he had to express his ideas with extreme caution.<sup>7</sup> But he had the courage to think of the day when India would become independent. He suggested three ways by following which India could become free. First, the method of constitutional agitation. He hoped that when the Indians would become educated and wise they would ask the British rulers to give them Parliamentary institutions. With childlike simplicity he wrote: "When our people sit in Parliament, they will say that they have become wise like the English and they should not be denied the real power. If the Hindus support this demand by majority vote, the Government will have to concede it. If our people learn to administer properly and

<sup>5</sup> *Bombay Gazette*, August 20, 1841.

<sup>6</sup> *Sata Patre*, Letter No. 94.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 54: "A child takes ten or twenty years to become educated. A country then must take two or four hundred years to become reformed. As a child receives punishment in the school, the people are receiving it (under the alien rule)."

give up the habit of taking bribes, all high posts including that of the Governor would come to them. Then, of course, the English will become mere traders in the country as they originally were. Our people will enjoy independence."<sup>8</sup> He also held out a threat to the British rulers to the effect that in case they refused to yield to the constitutional demand of the Indian people, events similar to those in America would happen in India. He was sure that God would ask the English to quit India as soon as Indians became wise.<sup>9</sup> But he thought that the people in India were not enlightened enough to take to revolution.

*Lokahitawadi* was also the first Indian to talk of the importance of supporting Indian industries. "Let us stop the import of foreign goods", he wrote, "let us not purchase British goods, but sell them our own goods. Why should we bother even if we are required to use rough indigenous cloth instead of fine British cloth?" The genesis of the idea of boycotting foreign goods may also be traced to his writings. He exhorted his countrymen to resolve jointly not to purchase foreign goods. "All should take an oath to use only that which is produced in our country."<sup>10</sup> The childish vein in some of the statements made by Gopal Hari Deshmukh is due to the fact that at the time of writing these letters he was a young man of less than 27 years of age and that he had not got the advantage of high education. But the boldness of his ideas in those early days marks him out as one of the most original thinkers. But he was neither a political philosopher nor a practical worker in the political field.

The efforts of Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour for achieving the unification of Italy in the sixties of the last century produced a tremendous effect on Indian political thinking. It is significant that Rajnarayan Bose published

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 54, dated 1 April, 1849, 328-329 (Continental Prakashan, Poona Ed. )

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Letter No. 89.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Letter Nos. 44 and 57.

the prospectus of the *Society for the Promotion of National Feeling* (*Jatiya Gaurava Sancarini Sabha*) in 1866, the year in which Venetia was transferred from Austria to Italy. The chief aim of the Society was "to promote and foster national feeling which would lead to the formation of a national character and thereby to the eventual promotion of the prosperity of the nation."<sup>11</sup> He was conscious of the importance of physical exercise and tried to promote it through a National Gymnasium, set up by Nabagopal Mitra. The latter received his inspiration from Rajnarayan Bose, with whose co-operation he started the Patriots' Association in 1865. Subsequently he also established the *National Society*, the *National School* and the *National Paper*. As some people called him the father of Nationalism, Rajnarayan humorously styled himself as the grandfather of Nationalism. He could not foresee at that time that he would deserve that title literally because of the momentous part played by his daughter's sons, Sri Aurobindo and Barindra Kumar in the history of the freedom movement of the country. He had grasped the essential elements of the national movement. If the physique of the national worker was to be built up through rigorous physical exercises, his intellect was to be sharpened by the revival of the study of Sanskrit literature and his heart was to be inspired by national music. This is why he proposed to set up a Model School in Hindu Music. But it must be admitted that his achievement in the practical field did not amount to much. Rabindranath Tagore in his *Jivana Smriti* refers in a lighter vein to the secret society which Rajnarayan Bose organised. It is difficult to find out whether it was really a childish affair, as Tagore considered it prudent to label it in 1911 when the C.I.D. was harassing every one suspected of having any connection with the revolutionary movement.

Nabagopal Mitra's *Jatiya Mela*, which came to be known as the Hindu Mela, played a significant role in

<sup>11</sup> *Modern Review*, June 1944, 444 ff.

preaching Swadeshi. It used to meet every year from 1867 to 1880 and gave a great incentive to the revival of Indian arts and crafts. Rajnarayan Bose insisted on the use of the Bengali language for educational as well as for propaganda purposes. He, however, made an exception in favour of the English language when the propaganda was to reach the English people or the people of other Provinces in India. Nabagopal Mitra took pride in conducting his *National Paper* in incorrect English because his national feeling would not allow him to learn a foreign language properly!<sup>12</sup> The type of nationalism preached by Rajnarayan and Nabagopal suffered from several shortcomings. It appealed only to the Bengali people; it excluded the Moslems altogether and it was mainly sentimental in character. Its sponsors evinced little organising ability.

These defects were sought to be remedied by the *Indian Association*, which was the first political organization with a distinct all-India outlook. It deputed Surendranath Banerjee to go on lecture tours to northern India, from Patna to Lahore in 1877 and to western and southern India next year. His lectures evoked the spirit of national unity and inspired the people of different towns and cities to set up branches of the Indian Association. The object of the Indian Association, however, was to secure a few more posts for Indians and to remove some administrative grievances.

While Surendranath Banerjee was making the first sincere effort to rouse the national spirit through strictly constitutional agitation, a Mahratti young man, senior to him by three years made a bold attempt to drive out the English from India by physical force. This was Wasudeo Balwant Phadke (1845-1883), a Chitpavan Brahmana of the Kolaba district, who tried to raise an army for "destroying the English". At first he collected a band of youngmen and gave them training in the use of arms and also lectured to them on Swadeshi and patriotism. But he could get practi-

<sup>12</sup> Bipinchandra Pal—*Navayuger Bangla*, 149-150.

cally no response from the educated middle class. He himself did not receive high education either in any school or college. He was able to pick up a working knowledge of English and by virtue of it to secure a post in the Military Accounts Department of the Commissariat in 1863. His hatred against the British Government was first roused on account of his failure to secure leave to pay a visit to his ailing mother. When the leave was at last sanctioned he rushed to his mother but found her already dead. The devastating famine of 1876-77 in which thousands of people died in the Deccan made him a determined enemy of the British Government, because he attributed all the miseries to their oppressive rule. He decided to give up his job, the comforts of his family life and devote his whole life to the task of liberating India. Students of history and psychology should be grateful to him for furnishing them with an insight into his thoughts motivating his activities in his Diary and the autobiography. He wrote the autobiography three months before his arrest. This was certainly a reckless task because he was sure to be prosecuted in case it fell into the hands of the Police, but it is much more valuable than Chapekar's autobiography which being written in prison cannot be said to be absolutely spontaneous in character. In his autobiography Phadke reveals the state of his mind in 1878 on the eve of his resignation from Government service thus: "My mind turned against the English, and I wished to ruin them. From morning to night, bathing, eating, sleeping I was brooding over this and I could get no proper rest. At midnight I used to get up and think how this ruin might be done until I was as one mad. I learned to fire at targets, to ride, and also sword and club exercises."<sup>13</sup> He travelled widely in the guise of a Sannyasi with matted hair and visited Nāsik, Nagar, Khandēsh, Berar, Nagpur, Ujjain, Kolhapur, Tasgaon, Miraj, Sangli and Baroda. His plan of action bears a remarkable similarity to that outlined by the revolutionaries during the

<sup>13</sup> HFMI 82. The autobiography has been translated by Major Daniel.

first world war. Thus he states in his autobiography (21-24) : "Having obtained Rs. 5,000/- from a *Sowkar* I proposed to send to all sides three or four men a month in advance, so that small gangs might be raised by them from which great fear would come to the English. The mails would be stopped and the railway and telegraphs interrupted, so that no information could go from one place to another. Then the jails would be opened and all the long-sentenced prisoners would join me because if the English Government remained they would not get off." He was bent upon raising an army of 200 men only to begin with. But he could not do so for lack of funds. He gathered round him a few persons of the backward Ramoshis Community and began to collect funds by dacoity. But he felt disgusted with the behaviour of the Ramoshis who wanted merely to make money. In the anguish of his heart he wrote: "Under such circumstances how can 200 men be collected? What has God done? If I had assembled 200 men I would have looted the Khed treasury and got much money, as at this time the revenue was being collected, and had I got more money I could have got the assistance of 500 horses." He found greater assistance from the Dhangars, who were men of their word. He writes in his Diary on the 24th March, 1879 that he told the Dhangars that he was a Raja, "who had come to overpower the English". He tried to enlist their services by promising to give them Inam on achieving success in his mission. Any appeal to their sense of patriotism would certainly have fallen flat. In one village he asked for contribution for furthering his ends but as none gave it voluntarily he got them beaten up and procured Rs. 200/-. "The women offered their ornaments but I refused to take them."<sup>14</sup> We will deal with his other activities in this direction in Chapter V. The Police was making vigorous efforts to arrest him. He felt dejected and probably to hide himself or to seek divine assistance he went to the famous temple of

<sup>14</sup> Autobiography of Phadke. 30.

Nallikarjuna at Sri Shaila in the Kurnul district of Madras Presidency on the 14th April, 1879. He states that he had taken the vow on the 2nd April that if Siva and Parvati did not grant his wishes he would put an end to his life. With prophetic vision he wrote at Shri Shaila, on the 19th April: "My life alone will not be given thus, but thousands of others will be killed for I was not alone in this affair. One person cannot manage a whole family then how is a state to be managed by one? Bearing this in mind I commenced this work but the result has not been good, therefore, having come here I have engaged in prayer." He did not get a favourable response, and therefore, he decided to commit suicide after a week. On the 20th April he wrote: "I have only seven days to live, so I bow before the feet of all my brethren, inhabitants of India and give up my life for you and will remain pleading for you in the just court of God.....I pray to God that he may take my life as a sacrifice for your welfare, and of you all I take farewell." This is not the language of an ordinary dacoit nor even of an extra-ordinary conspirator. He is talking almost in the same mystical trend which characterised the famous Uttarpara speech of Sri Aurobindo.<sup>15</sup>

Phadke did not commit suicide. He was laid up with high fever. After his recovery he went to Ghanur in the State of the Nizam and entered into a written contract with Ismail Khan, a Jamadar of Rohillas. The Jamadar agreed to furnish Phadke with 500 Rohillas on a salary of Rs. 10/- each. Sunasi, a Ramoshi Naique agreed to supply 100 coolies and two other Naiques 100 and 200 coolies respectively. When all arrangements had been made for raising thus an army of 900 men Phadke was captured. The

<sup>15</sup> Immediately after his acquittal in the Alipore Bomb Case Sri Aurobindo said in course of the Uttarpara speech: "If thou art, then Thou knowest my heart. Thou knowest that I do not ask for Mukti, I do not ask for anything which others ask for. I ask only for strength to uplift this nation. I ask only to be allowed to live and work for this people whom I love and to whom I pray that I may devote my life." (Speeches of Sri Aurobindo, 62, ).



whole plan failed. Phadke did not succeed in enlisting the support of the educated middle class people, who were too few in number at that time. He was not able to inspire the Ramoshis or even his faithful Dhangars, not to speak of the Rohillas, with nationalistic fervour. There was practically no popular support for his efforts. It is difficult to call it a symptom of nationalist movement. But he himself had become a sort of a hero in the eyes of many. A Marathi newspaper entitled the *Shivaji* wrote on the 21st November, 1879: "For the good of his countrymen he gave up a comfortable situation, abandoned a young wife, and sacrificed his own happiness. He did not commit dacoities in order to amass wealth. We cannot help praising him for his disinterestedness and patriotism, but his plans for effecting the deliverance of his countrymen were not suitable to the present times." Another newspaper the *Deccan Star* wrote two days later: "In the eyes of his countrymen Wasudev Balvant Phadke did not commit any wrong." An English lady presented him with flowers at the railway station when he was being taken away from Poona for transportation.

There are some points of similarity between the plan of Phadke and the plot of Bankim Chandra's famous novel, *Anandamath*. Bankim kept himself fully acquainted with the current of events in India. He must have come across the report of the sensational case of Phadke in some newspapers in November, 1879. He started writing his *Anandamath* a few months later and its first instalment was published in the *Bangadarshana* in 1880. The background of *Anandamath* has been depicted on the canvas of events of the famine of 1770 and the famine of 1876-77 proved a turning point in the life of Phadke. The Sannyasis of *Anandamath* looted the Government revenue just as Phadke planned to loot the treasury. Bankim has described the grim determination of the followers of Satyananda to liberate India from the clutches of the *Mlechhas*. These *Mlechhas* were apparently the Moslems but Bankimchandra knew as much as his discerning readers know that political

power had slipped away from the grasp of the Moslems after 1765. All the talk of the Sannyasis of *Anandamath* about the uprooting of Moslem power really meant the liberation of the country from British power.

The *Vande-Mataram* song which now forms a part of the *Anandamath* was published in the *Bangadarshana* in 1875, that is, five years before the arrest of Phadke. This soul-stirring song became the sacred hymn for the worship of the new goddess, the Motherland. It ultimately transformed Nationalism into a new religion. Sri Aurobindo says that Bankim "bade us leave the canine method of agitation for the leonine."<sup>16</sup> It is probable that he had such an idea in his mind, but as he was a Government servant it was impossible for him to express it in so many words. His contemporaries failed to understand the significance of his veiled utterances. For three decades since its publication the *Vande Mataram* song did not stir up the imagination of the Bengali-speaking people. It was only during the Swadeshi movement that the song became a sort of war-cry. Hemchandra Ghosh, the famous revolutionary leader of Dacca, wrote that he met Vivekananda who advised him and his friends to study Bankimchandra and take up the patriotic work indicated by him. Swami Vivekananda elaborated the cult of the Motherland, preached originally by Bankimchandra. Just as the mystery of the *Gopi-prema* lay hidden in the Bhagavata-purana till the advent of Chaitanya, similarly the worship of the motherland got a new significance from the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda and the writings of Sri Aurobindo. These two saints practised what the seer Bankim preached indirectly through his novels *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani*. This becomes clear from the interpretation which Sri Aurobindo makes of the message of Bankim Chandra.

In the seventies and eighties of the last century neither the vision of Bankimchandra nor that of Lokamanya Tilak could spread beyond the frontiers of their own province.

<sup>16</sup> Sri Aurobindo -- *Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda*, 11.

The *Vande Mataram* song speaks of seventy million children of the Mother, the figure given in the first Census of India for the population of the Presidency of Fort William. Moreover, when Bankim describes the Motherland as richly-watered, richly-fruited and cool with the winds of the south, he is certainly not thinking of the deserts of Rajputana or the hilly tracts of Maharashtra. He certainly leaves out of account an important section of India when he writes: "It is thy image we raise in every temple."

The Indian National Congress lacked the idealism of Bankimchandra but it brought together on a common platform the people of different provinces, speaking diverse languages and professing various religions. Swami Vivekananda observed in course of an interview in 1896 that he considered the Indian National Congress Movement as significant because, "a nation is being made out of India's different races." He further said, "It will certainly end in the working out of India's homogeneity, in her acquiring what we may call democratic ideas." He indicated briefly the way in which this process will work. He stressed the need of enlisting the co-operation of the masses. He said, "Intelligence must not remain the monopoly of the cultured few; it will be disseminated from higher to lower classes. Education is coming and compulsory education will follow. The immense power of our people for work must be utilised. India's potentialities are great and will be called forth."<sup>17</sup> The only political leader of India who made any effort to appeal to the masses was Lokmanya Tilak, who started the Ganapati festival in 1893 and the Sivaji festival in 1895 for the purpose. But the first one never became popular outside Maharashtra and the appeal of the second one was limited.

Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) who joined the Congress for the first time in 1887<sup>18</sup> draws a pen picture of the beliefs and aspirations of Congressmen in those days in the following words:

<sup>17</sup> C. W. V. 199.

"In 1887 we all believed that England was conscientiously and deliberately working for the political emancipation of India. We believed that she would take us by the hand and gradually set us in our own proper place among the nations of the world. We believed that by the gradual expansion of the principles and organization of self-government that had been introduced by Lord Ripon, by the reform and expansion of Legislative Councils, by the introduction of a large number of people of this country into our Public Service, by opening to us the gates of the military services, by granting us the Charter of free citizenship and investing us with the right of organizing national militia—we hoped, we believed in 1887, that by these means England would gradually train us to become a free nation and take up our place among the free states of the world."<sup>18</sup> But Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1907, that is, one year after Pal, that the politicians in India in the nineteenth century could not realize the elementary truth that the subject nation "must aim not only at a national government responsible to the people but a free national government unhampered even in the least degree by foreign control." He further added with absolute frankness that they being "schooled by British patrons, trained to the fixed idea of English superiority and Indian inferiority, their imagination could not embrace the idea of national liberty, and perhaps they did not even desire it at heart, preferring the comfortable ease which at that time still seemed possible in a servitude under British protection to the struggles and sacrifices of a hard and difficult independence."<sup>19</sup> Here we find the characteristic intolerance of an idealist. Sri Aurobindo was unwilling to recognise the difficulties which the early leaders of the Congress had to face. The people were uneducated, unarmed and unorganized. The idea of making sacrifice for the abstract ideal of national independence did not appeal to them. The first experiment

<sup>18</sup> Bipin Chandra Pal—*The New Movement*, 1906.

<sup>19</sup> Sri Aurobindo—*The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, 18.

of issuing propaganda literature in the languages of the people in 1887 encountered such a determined opposition from the Government that it proved to be the last during the remaining years of the nineteenth century.

Sri Aurobindo condemned in severe terms the futility of making agitation for a Permanent Settlement, or for the employment of a larger number of Indians. But we find his later collaborator Bal Gangadhar Tilak speaking from the Congress platform exactly on these subjects. He joined the Congress for the first time in 1889 and addressed the gathering on the reform of the legislative council. In 1891 he spoke on the need for modifying the Arms Act, in 1893 and also in 1895 on Permanent Settlement, and again in another speech in 1895 he demanded opportunities for greater opening for Indians in the Medical Service. In 1896 he asked for modification of Provincial Contracts. These complete the list of his speeches in the Congress in the nineteenth century. Bipin Chandra Pal appeared on the Congress rostrum for the first time in 1886 when he spoke on the need of accepting the verdict of the Jury as final. Next year he addressed the Congress on the employment of Indians in the Military Service and also the need for repealing the Arms Act. In 1888 he supported the resolution on the Commission to enquire into the industrial condition and technical education and in 1889 on the reform of the Legislative Council. He was absent from the Congress from 1890 to 1895. In 1896 he spoke on the need for repealing the Inland Emigration Act and in 1897 proposed a vote of thanks to the Chair. There was hardly any evidence of extremism in Bal or Pal before 1897. The performance of Lala Lajpat Rai, another member of the famous Lal-Bal-Pal fraternity, was no better during the last century. He spoke on the reform of Legislative Council in 1888 and 1889. For the next three years he was absent. In 1893 he supported the resolution on the separation of Judiciary from the Executive, a subject on which Sri Aurobindo said in 1907, "the mere deprivation of judicial functions will not disarm executive tyranny so long as both

executive and judiciary are mainly white and subservient to a central authority irresponsible, alien and bureaucratic ; for the central authority can always tighten its grip on the judiciary of which it is the controller and paymaster and habituate it to a constant support of executive action.”<sup>19</sup> Lala Lajpat Rai evinced little interest in the activities of the Congress between 1894 and 1899.

Swami Vivekananda found that there was much unreality in the national movement in India. A share in the government of the country was asked for without making the people fit for it. He told his disciples at the Belur Math in 1898: “Without the necessary preparation what will mere shouting in the Congress avail?” One of them said that all the educated men of the country have joined the Congress. Swamiji took strong objection to the misuse of the term ‘educated’. He said: “The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name?”<sup>20</sup> On the 21st of February, 1900 he wrote to Swami Akhandananda from California: “In these days of dire famine, flood, disease and pestilence, tell me where your Congressmen are. Will it do merely to say, ‘Hand the Government of the country over to us’? And who is there to listen to them? If a man does work, has he opened his mouth to ask for anything?”<sup>21</sup> Thus the nationalism which prevailed in India before 1897 was largely unreal. It did not make any sincere effort to awaken the masses or to develop their physical and moral strength. The task of Swami Vivekananda was to provide a solid spiritual foundation to the national movement. None before him had taken such a synthetic view of the social and political problems of India. The significance of the different phases of militant nationalism in India can be grasped only by a detailed study of his ideas relating to these problems.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>20</sup> C.W. VII. 147.

<sup>21</sup> C.W. VI. 427.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SOCIAL IDEAS OF VIVEKANANDA AND NIVEDITA

The social ideas of Swami Vivekananda reveal a deep insight into the fundamentals of sociological principles. The breadth of vision and the constructive genius displayed by him in his pronouncements on social problems are, in many respects, unique in character. He was primarily a religious teacher preaching the Vedanta philosophy. But he wanted to make religion the life force of the nation, the instrument for galvanising the social, economic and political structure of India.

The Vedanta he preached was not merely abstruse and speculative but also dynamic and practical. He was never tired of stressing the ultimate truth that every one is but the manifestation of the Supreme Reality and that the ideal of the oneness of all is to be realised by all. He assured all that there is infinite capacity in everyone to become great and good. He firmly believed that the greatness of India could be revived by the Vedantic Monism. Apart from genuine spiritual urge, Swamiji was attracted to Vedantism because he considered that the Monistic discipline would give India the type of values she needed. "What our country now wants", he declared at Kumbhakonam in 1897, "are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion even if it meant going down to the bottom of the Ocean and meeting death face to face. This is what we want, and that can only be created, established and strengthened by understanding and realising the ideal of the Advaita, that ideal of the oneness of all."<sup>1</sup> As strong muscles and braving of death are not generally

<sup>1</sup> C. W. III. 190.

associated with the life of seekers of philosophical truth, the political implication of the inspiring exhortation is unmistakable. The secret he preached openly, was: 'Feel that you are great and you become great.' This is why he frequently reminded Indians that they were the inheritors of a great cultural legacy, that they had no reason to be ashamed of their past and of any social institution. While the Christian missionaries decried our custom and religion and the preachers of the *Brahmo Samaj*, the *Prarthana Samaj* and the *Arya Samaj* condemned Image worship, caste system and thousand other practices of the Hindu society, Swami Vivekananda boldly stood up to proclaim the glory of our social organization. Both Rammohan Roy and Swami Dayananda had tried to revive the Vedantic and the Vedic culture by ignoring altogether the development of India in the Pauranic age. While they regarded the epoch of the Puranas as a period of decadence and retrogression, Vivekananda, as the great disciple of the worshipper of the Divine Mother, showed that the religion of love and devotion was the bequest of the Pauranic civilization and it could not on any account be ignored.

Vivekananda was not only a great philosopher but also a close student of history. He attempted to substantiate his theories and conclusions by reference to historical instance. In his investigations of social evolution of India he followed the footsteps of Aristotle and Montesquieu. Long before the publication of K. P. Jayaswal's *Hindu Polity* he spoke of ancient Indian republics and showed that the Government by the people was not totally unknown in ancient India. He also pointed out that the doctrine of self-government was fully developed in the Buddhist monasteries.<sup>2</sup> He refused to parrot the findings of the Orientalists. He dived deep into the ancient Sanskrit literature to find out the sequence of development of social organization in this country. The Western scholars have propagated the idea that the Aryans came from outside and

<sup>2</sup> C. W. IV. 442.



subjugated the indigenous people of India and relegated them to the rank of Sudras. Vivekananda, on the other hand, said emphatically that 'there is not one word in our scriptures, not one, to prove that the Aryan ever came from anywhere outside of India, and in ancient India was included Afghanistan.' As to the Sudras being the aborigines he humorously pointed out: "And the theory that the Sudra caste were all non-Aryans and they were a multitude, is equally illogical and equally irrational. It could not have been possible in those days that a few Aryans settled and lived there with a hundred thousand slaves at their command. These slaves would have eaten them up, made 'Chutney' of them in five minutes."<sup>3</sup> From such observations he drew the conclusion that all the four original castes belonged to the same racial stock and all were held in equal esteem. He supports his theory by drawing upon the evidence of the *Mahabharata*, which says that in the beginning of the Satya Yuga there was one caste, the Brahmins, and then by differentiation of occupations, they went on dividing themselves into different castes and "that is the only true and rational explanation that has been given." He concludes his argument by stating that the four ages move in cycle and "in the coming Satya Yuga, all the other castes will have to go back to the same condition," i.e., become Brahmanas again. He did not believe that in the original scheme of caste division there was any gradation of superiority and privilege. They had different professions no doubt, but they were all equal in dignity and prestige. In concluding his study of the contrast between the East and the West, he reiterated the view that there would not have been the institution of *Varna-shrama* had the Aryans exterminated the aborigines in order to settle on their lands. He boldly asserts: "The object of the peoples of Europe is to exterminate all in order to live themselves. The aim of the Aryans is to raise all up to their own level, nay, even to a higher level than

<sup>3</sup> C. W. III. 293.

themselves. The means of European civilization is the sword; of the Aryans, the division into different *Varnas*. This system of division into different *Varnas* is the stepping-stone to civilization, making one rise higher and higher in proportion to one's learning and culture."<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to ascertain how far Swamiji's theory was historically correct; but it certainly raised the people in their self-estimation and promoted the cause of nationalism in India.

Swami Vivekananda criticised the social reform movement severely at times, but he was in a sense the greatest of social reformers. Being himself a Sannyasi, he had the courage to criticise even the great Sankaracharya, because the latter had pronounced the dictum 'knowledge (of the Vedic lore) should not be imparted to the Sudras.' He initiated hundreds of his Western disciples with the *Pranava* (Om) mantra. On being asked why he did so, he replied straightway: "My disciples are all Brahmins. I quite admit the truth of the words that none except the Brahmins has the right to *Pranava*. But the son of a Brahmin is not necessarily always a Brahmin."<sup>5</sup> He held that it was possible for a person to be changed from one caste to another, because caste is or ought to be determined by quality. The orthodox Hindus raised the cry that their religion was in danger of being lost when the Government passed the Age of Consent Bill. Swami Vivekananda retorted: "As if religion consisted in making a girl a mother at the age of twelve or thirteen! So the rulers also naturally think, 'Goodness gracious! What a religion is there! And these people lead political agitations and demand political rights!'"<sup>6</sup> It should be remembered in this connection that he lived for more than a week in the house of Lokmanya Tilak in September, 1892, that is, only a few months after the condemnation of the Act by Tilak at the Bombay Political Conference; but he did not disclose his name even.

The points of difference between the social reformers

<sup>4</sup> C. W. V. 537.

<sup>5</sup> C. W. V. 376.

<sup>6</sup> *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*.

and the Swamiji are worth investigating. The essential point of difference was that like a fond mother who cannot allow others to abuse her son and who herself would chastise him severely, Vivekananda could not tolerate the condemnation of the Hindu society by the reformers, though at times his own criticism was far more severe and sweeping. He had seen that throughout the nineteenth century there had been much condemnation of Hindu society and the only good that it did was to provoke the Hindus to abuse the reformers and to produce a vituperative literature in every Indian language which was the shame and despair of the country.<sup>7</sup> The reformers made hasty generalizations. They attributed all the evils to the Hindu religion and held it responsible for the degeneration of the country. Vivekananda compared them to the man in the story, who while attempting to kill the mosquito that sat on a friend's forehead, dealt such a heavy blow that the latter died with the mosquito. But the reformers dashed themselves against immovable rocks as it were.<sup>8</sup> He referred to the platform speeches made by the thousands and denunciations in volume after volume, but these had produced no result at all. He attributed their failure to the denunciation itself and said: "We must try to keep our historically acquired character as a people."<sup>9</sup> He regretted that most of the modern reform movements had been inconsiderate imitations. On another occasion he elucidated this point further by stating that "all is a growth from inside out, that all evolution is only a manifestation of a preceding involution. They did not know that the seed can only assimilate the surrounding elements, but grows a tree in its own nature."<sup>10</sup> Here is his philosophy of natural growth. If you sow the seed, it will germinate, provided it gets the necessary water, sunlight, etc. The tree will grow to its full stature in favourable environment, but it cannot be anything but that tree the seed of which has been sown. You cannot reform a tamarind tree to be a mango tree.

<sup>7</sup> C. W. III. 215.

<sup>8</sup> C. W. IV. 347.

<sup>9</sup> C. W. III. 195.

<sup>10</sup> C. W. IV. 347.

Condemnation and denunciation are to be replaced by loving solicitude for the society and the individuals constituting the social organization. He reminds that the nation like a ship has been ferrying millions and millions of souls across the water of life for many centuries. If it has become a little damaged through our own fault, it should not be cursed on that account. "If there are holes in this national ship, this society of ours, we are its children, let us go and stop the holes. . . . Say not one harsh word against this society. I love it for its past greatness. I love you all because you are children of Gods and because you are the children of the glorious forefathers".<sup>11</sup> In explaining the 'Mission of the Vedanta', he said "denunciation is not at all the way to do good."

Secondly, Swami Vivekananda did not like the haughty tone and arrogance of the social reformers who dared to dictate to the society. "This way thou shouldst move and not that". Again he appealed to historical experience and said, "This wonderful national machine has worked through ages, this wonderful river of national life is flowing before us. Who knows, and who dares to say, whether it is good and how it shall move. Thousands of circumstances are crowding round it, giving it a special impulse, making it dull at one time and quicker at another. Who dares command its motion?"<sup>12</sup>

Thirdly, Swami Vivekananda claimed that he was a greater reformer than any one of the social reformers. He was greater because his scheme of reform was more thorough and all-embracing. "They want to reform only little bits. I want root and branch reform. Where we differ is in the method. Theirs is the method of destruction; mine is that of construction. I do not believe in reform; I believe in growth."<sup>13</sup> In his lecture on the 'Mission of the Vedanta' he said again, "My ideal is growth, expansion, development on national lines."

Does this development on national lines imply reviving

<sup>11</sup> C. W. III. 227.

<sup>12</sup> C. W. III. 213.

<sup>13</sup> C. W. III. 283.

the past age? Like Ranade he too held that it was impossible to go back to the past. But with much greater optimism he said, "Our ancestors did great things in the past, but we have to grow into a fuller life and march beyond even their great achievements". How can we now go back and degenerate ourselves? That cannot be; that must not be; going back will lead to national decay and death. Therefore, let us go forward and do yet greater things."<sup>14</sup>

The social reform advocated by a few educated persons did not touch the masses. The Reformers wanted widow re-marriage and female emancipation, but the Swamiji told them that the masses did not observe *Purdah*, that their womenfolk lent a helping hand to the males in all their avocations and that widow re-marriage was already prevalent amongst them. He, therefore, held that the social reform scheme did not affect seventy per cent of the people.<sup>15</sup> But Swamiji did not make any reference to the attempts of the Social Reform Conference to raise the age of marriage. Swamiji himself admitted that it was desirable to make a move in that direction. Economic causes had been operating amongst the educated classes in Bengal to raise the minimum age of marriage of girls. "Whatever might be the reason for it, the age of marrying girls should be raised still higher."<sup>16</sup>

To Vivekananda the basic problem of social reform was that there was no urge for it amongst the people themselves. A few of the educated people wanted to impose their ideas of social reform on the masses. This he calls a tyranny—the tyranny of the minority which is the worst of its type the world has ever seen. He wants to make the people move themselves. But they are deprived of all opportunities for education and hence do not appreciate the necessity for reform. Swamiji, therefore, laid down the programme of social reform in the following words: "First, educate the nation, create your legislative body, and then the law will be forthcoming. First create the power, the sanc-

<sup>14</sup> C. W. III. 195-96<sup>15</sup> C. W. III. 216.<sup>16</sup> C. W. V. 341.

tion from which the law will spring. The kings are gone ; where is the new sanction, the new power of the people? Bring it up. Therefore, even for social reform, the first duty is to educate the people, and you will have to wait till that time comes.”<sup>17</sup> Being well-versed in the Sanskrit *Sutra* literature which expresses a bundle of ideas in a few brief words, the Swamiji also used the same technique and expressed a volume of ideas in a condensed and precise style. Like Swami Dayananda he was looking forward to the days when the people will awaken, seize power and introduce social reform themselves, without the intervention of leaders belonging to the so-called upper classes.

But it must be clearly understood that by educating the masses Swamiji did not merely mean imparting to them the knowledge of three R's. To him education is a process for the manifestation of the perfection already inherent in every individual. Education is to be the very basis of development of personality. It is to impart the sense of self-respect, faith in oneself that one has the capacity for infinite progress in all directions. “The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education.”<sup>18</sup> He scathingly condemned the system of education current in his time, and called it a negative education which teaches pupils to despise their country and their forefathers. He wrote in his essay entitled ‘The Future of India’: “Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library.”<sup>19</sup> As a first step to national regeneration he wanted to have control over the whole education of the country, spiritual and secular.

Again, Swamiji describes education as a development of

<sup>17</sup> C. W. III. 216.

<sup>18</sup> C. W. IV. 490.

<sup>19</sup> C. W. III. 301.

faculty or as a training of individuals to will rightly or efficiently.<sup>20</sup> In course of a conversation, he elucidates the idea further by stating that he wants that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased and the intellect is expanded. In short, education must enable a man not only economically but also intellectually to stand on his legs.<sup>21</sup>

The traditional Sannyasis allow very little scope for individual judgment as they expect everybody to follow indiscriminately every word of the *Sastras*. But Vivekananda never wanted to take away the freedom of thought of anybody. He did not mind if people made mistakes. He humorously said that trees never disobey law, cows never steal, oysters never tell a lie, but they are not greater than man. To him life is a tremendous assertion of freedom. As such he thinks that "Obedience to law, carried far enough would make us simply matter—either in society, or in politics, or religion. Too many laws are a sure sign of death."<sup>22</sup> Again in his lecture on 'Vedanta and Indian Life' he said, "Liberty is the first condition of growth. It is wrong, a thousand times wrong, if any of you dares to say, 'I will work out the salvation of this woman or child'. I am asked again and again, what I think of the widow problem and what I think of the woman question. Let me answer once for all—am I a widow that you ask me that nonsense? Am I woman that you ask me that question again and again? Who are you to solve women's problems? Are you the Lord God that you should rule over every widow and every woman? Hands off! They will solve their own problems."<sup>23</sup>

Ranade and his school tried indeed to rouse the conscience of the people so that they might take to social reform. But their vision never travelled beyond the small section of the people educated in the Western style. They had little or no contact with the masses. They did not try to rouse the people to self-help as Swamiji did. The method advocated by Vivekananda was certainly more radical and comprehen-

<sup>20</sup> C. W. V. 231.

<sup>21</sup> C. W. V. 342.

<sup>22</sup> C. W. V. 267

<sup>23</sup> CW. III. 246.

sive. But one may legitimately question the net effect of his method on society. Has it been possible to invoke the divinity of man amongst the masses or to rouse their social consciousness? The Ramakrishna Mission has done much excellent work in many fields but it has not been able to generate any mass movement for social reform. Despite the enactment of the Bill introduced by Hara Bilas Sarda, who, by the way, came from the rank of followers of the Arya Samaj, child marriage has not disappeared altogether. The true type of education that Swamiji formulated remains a mere ideal which has still got to be translated into fact. But the stature of a thinker is not always to be judged by the amount of success in translating his ideas into practice. In that case Plato and Rousseau would have been assigned a very low place in the history of social and political thought.

In spite of the Swamiji's denunciation of social reformers it appears that his methodology was not dissimilar to that of Ram Mohan and Vidyasagar. Ranade called it the traditional method. Vivekananda wanted to make the caste system flexible. He tried to prove from the scriptures that originally there was no inseparable barrier between one caste and another. He writes in "A Plan of work for India" that "the original idea of *Jati* was the freedom of the individual to express his nature, his *Prakriti*, his *Jati*, his caste; and so it remained for thousands of years. Not even in the latest books is interdining prohibited; nor in any of the older books is inter-marriage forbidden. .... The present caste is not the real *Jati*, but a hindrance to its progress. It really has prevented the free action of *Jati*, i.e., caste or variation. Any crystallised custom or privilege or hereditary class in any shape really prevents caste (*Jati*) from having its full sway; and whenever any nation ceases to produce this immense variety, it must die. Therefore, what I have to tell you, my countrymen, is this, that India fell because you prevented and abolished caste. Every frozen aristocracy or privileged class is a blow to caste and is not caste. Let *Jati* have its sway, break down



every barrier in the way of caste, and we shall rise.”<sup>24</sup> Because of this unusual interpretation of the caste system he held that “What caste really is, not one in a million understands”.<sup>25</sup> He held that if the caste system had divided the people, it also united them, because all the members of a caste were bound to help their fellows in times of need. It checked the struggle for social or personal supremacy which embitters the relations between the classes in other countries. But the worst feature of the caste was that it suppressed competition.<sup>26</sup>

Vivekananda boldly castigated the Brahmana priests for the distortion of the original scriptures to suit their class interests. He quoted some lines to the effect that “if the Sudra hears the Vedas, fill his ears with molten lead, and if he remembers a line, cut his tongue out. If he says to the Brahmin, ‘You Bramin’, cut his tongue out”. His comment on this is that it is diabolical barbarism and that “such devils sometimes arose among the ancients”. But he held that in the age following the tone was modified a little when the Brahmanas simply said, “Do not disturb the Sudras, but do not teach them higher things”. He was here referring to the age of Sankaracharya. Swamiji described a third stage in which the Brahmanas became more tolerant and said that if the Sudras imitated the Brahmanas they ought to be encouraged.<sup>27</sup>

Vivekananda firmly believed in the essential equality of all men and hence he had no sympathy with caste arrogance. He said: “I can perform one duty in social life, and you another ; you can govern a country and I can mend a pair of old shoes, but that is no reason why you are greater than I ; for can you mend my shoes?”<sup>28</sup> Here he is preaching a doctrine which, in all probability had never been practised in ancient India, and which is not being translated into practice in any of the so-called democratic countries. A true Vedantist alone can have the courage to

<sup>24</sup> C. W. IV. 372.

<sup>25</sup> C. W. V. 214.

<sup>26</sup> C. W. VIII. 242.

<sup>27</sup> C. W. III. 296.

<sup>28</sup> C. W. III. 245.

express such sentiments. This is why he had to castigate the prevalent form of religion so mercilessly. He who would not allow others to utter a single condemnatory word against our religion and society went to the length of saying in private conversation: "We are neither Vedantists, nor Pauranics, nor Tantrics. We are just 'Don't Touchists'."<sup>29</sup> "Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking-pot; and religion is 'Don't touch me', 'I am holy'. If this goes on for another century, every one of us will be in a lunatic asylum."<sup>30</sup> Then again on another occasion he wrote; "A country where millions of people live on the flower of the *Mahua* plant, and a million or two of *Sadhus*, and a hundred million or so of Brahmanas suck the blood of these poor people, without even the least effort for their amelioration—is that a country or a hell? Is that a Religion or the Devil's dance?"<sup>31</sup> Again at another place he wrote: "As long as *touch-me-not-ism* is your creed and the kitchen-pot your deity, you cannot rise spiritually."<sup>32</sup>

Nothing pained Vivekananda so much as the condition of the *Pariahs* in Malabar. He noted with deep regret that they were not allowed to pass through the same street as the high-caste men. But as soon as some of them became converts to Christianity or Islam no such treatment was accorded them. He called such a custom sheer madness and exhorted upon all to treat them with derision until they "mend their manners".<sup>33</sup> Here he was trying to bring about a much-needed social reform by persuasion and social pressure. Eradication of the evils of caste system and uplift of the masses constituted the very basis of his theory of Nationalism.

The awakening of the masses was considered by him the essential ingredient for the regeneration of India. He was so very enthusiastic in championing the cause of the down-trodden untouchables that in February, 1897 he said in his lecture on the 'Mission of the Vedanta': "If

<sup>29</sup> C. W. III. 167 and IV. 303.      <sup>30</sup> C. W. III. 167.

<sup>31</sup> C. W. VI. 224.      <sup>32</sup> C. W. V. 267.      <sup>33</sup> C. W. III. 294-95. ✓

the Brahmin has more aptitude for learning on the ground of heredity than the *Pariah*, spend no more money on the Brahmin's education, but spend all on the *Pariah*. Give to the weak, for there all the gift is needed. If the Brahmin is born clever, he can educate himself without help."<sup>34</sup> The beginning of the Anti-Brahmana movement in Madras may be traced to this exhortation. But it should be noted at the same time that he requested the non-Brahmin castes to use moderation: "To the non-Brahmin castes I say 'Wait, be not in a hurry. Do not seize every opportunity of fighting the Brahmin, because, as I have shown, you are suffering from your own fault, . . . Instead of wasting your energies in vain discussions and quarrels in the newspapers, instead of fighting and quarrelling in your own homes—which is sinful—use all your energies in acquiring the culture which the Brahmin has and the thing is done'."<sup>35</sup> Had this counsel been adhered to much of the bitterness of quarrel between the Brahmanas and the non-Brahmanas would have disappeared. Nobody before

<sup>34</sup> C. W. III. 193.

<sup>35</sup> C. W. III. 298. It is worth mentioning in this connection that this quarrel did not originate in 1907 and certainly not in 1917 when the Justice Party was organised by the non-Brahmanas in Madras. In the *Madras Review* of 1897 we find an article written by C. Karunakar Menon that in the elections it was the most common thing to hear of the distinction between the Brahmanas and non-Brahmanas. "When a non-Brahmana is elected against a Brahmana, satisfaction is openly expressed by people interested in keeping up caste and sectional differences, not that a really worthy candidate has been elected but that there is one non-Brahmana against one Brahmana." The Constitution of the Indian Republic provides for special privileges such as assured quota of places and stipends in educational institutions for the Scheduled castes and Backward communities. The result is that there is a scramble amongst castes for being included in these lists. The claims of as many 2399 communities have already been admitted for being included as Backward. The Harijans number 70 millions and the 913 major Backward communities 116 millions.

Swami Vivekananda had attached so much importance to the masses.

He wished the Indian National Congress a hearty success, because it was attempting to make one India out of India's different races.<sup>36</sup> But at the same time he was pained to find that it did not make any attempt to remove the apathy of the masses. He believed that "No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well-educated, well-fed and well-cared for."<sup>37</sup> He attributed their degradation to the age-long suppression by the priestly class and also to the domination of foreigners. The means he suggested for awakening them was to give them ideas, to open their eyes to what is going on in the world around them and then "they will work their own salvation."<sup>38</sup> He found in the increasing number of labour strikes a sign of the awakening of the masses.<sup>39</sup> He believed that "when the masses will wake up, they will come to understand your oppression of them, and by a puff of their mouth you will be entirely blown away."<sup>40</sup> On another occasion he said: "The masses in our country are like the sleeping Leviathan."<sup>41</sup> He advised his disciples to go from one part of the country to another, from village to village, and to make the people understand that merely sitting idle would do no more. He exhorted them to "initiate all, even down to the *Chandalas* in these fiery Mantras."<sup>42</sup>

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century it was not unusual for some of the European planters to kick an Indian labourer to death. Swamiji believed that we ourselves were responsible for such a state of affairs. With the fierce zeal of the ancient prophet he said, "Our aristocratic ancestors went on treading the common masses of our country under foot till they became helpless, till under this torment the poor, poor people, nearly forgot that they were human beings. They have been compelled to be merely

<sup>36</sup> C. W. V. 199.

<sup>37</sup> C. W. V. 222.

<sup>38</sup> C. W. IV. 362.

<sup>39</sup> C. W. VII. 149.

<sup>40</sup> C. W. VII. 150.

<sup>41</sup> C. W. V. 380.

<sup>42</sup> C. W. V. 381.

hewers of wood and drawers of water for centuries, so much so that they are made to believe that they are born as slaves, born as hewers of wood and drawers of water. With all our boasted education of modern times, if any body says a kind word for them, I often find our men shrink at once from the duty of lifting them up, these poor down-trodden people. Not only so, but I also find that all sorts of most demoniacal and brutal arguments, culled from gibberish from the Western world, are brought forward in order to brutalise and tyrannise over the poor all the more."<sup>43</sup> The last sentence is a fling at the pseudo-scientific theory propounded by Sasadhara Tarka-Chudamani.

A section of the Christian missionaries could not detect anything except a reactionary policy in the social views of Swami Vivekananda. They did not care to go through all his writings nor could they find out the reason why he denounced the so-called social reformers, who had no love for the social and cultural heritage of India. His views on the Indian social system were far more liberal than those of Lokamanya Tilak who took the lead in the campaign against the Age of Consent Bill and agreed to perform the purificatory ceremony for an alleged breach of the caste rules.<sup>44</sup>

The mission of the Vedanta, according to Swamiji, is to inspire the down-trodden masses with the message of the Upanisads—Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached. The goal hinted at here is all-comprehensive, including first and foremost the spiritual enlightenment, with social and political emancipation as its necessary logical sequence.

Sister Nivedita clarifies many of the ideas of her Mas-

<sup>43</sup> C. W. III. 192.

<sup>44</sup> K. P. Karunakaran has Tilak in his mind when he writes of Extremists as follows: "The form of the political campaigns conducted by them and the methods used by them to make their cause popular gave the impression that they were social reactionaries and religious revivalists." *Continuity and Change in Indian Politics*, 93.

ter. Her interpretation often shows that there is no contradiction between the speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda. She was neither a reformist nor a reactionary. In explaining the necessity for creating great literatures in the diverse provincial languages of India she insisted that these must voice the past, translate the present and forecast the future. This is true not only of literary works but also of social institutions of renaissance India. She emphatically declared: "Our watchword, then, is no longer 'reform'. In its place we have taken the word 'construct.' We have to recreate the Dharma. We have to build again the *Maha-Bharata*, the great India."<sup>45</sup>

She was fascinated by many of the social institutions of India. She observed that Hinduism saw behind the individual, the family, and behind the family, society. She, of course, held that society was meant for the individual and not individual for society. But at the same time she did not fail to notice that "as surely as the descent of man is a long story of the gradual dominance of the many parts of the animal body by the specialised human brain, so surely does the history of the corporate life reveal a similar process of the growing co-ordination of parts in an organic whole."<sup>46</sup>

Sister Nivedita could not join those who demanded reforms in Indian society because the Indian family life appeared to her a synonym for idyllic felicity. "In India," she wrote, "the sanctity and sweetness of family life have been raised to the rank of a great culture. Widowhood is a religion, motherhood a dream of perfection and the pride and protectiveness of a man are developed to a very high degree."<sup>47</sup> She, therefore, felt no urgency for raising the age of marriage for girls nor for introducing the remarriage of widows. She relates how Swami Vivekananda could never reconcile himself to a widow taking a second

<sup>45</sup> Nivedita—*Select Essays*, 152.

<sup>46</sup> Nivedita—*Civil and National Ideals*, 39.

<sup>47</sup> *Select Essays*, 37.

husband and giving up the white-bordered cloth, the symbol of purity.

She had little sympathy for the Christian missionaries. She complained that Christianity in India did not stand for social integration. Its missionaries constantly harped on the theme that all that the Indians had so long held to be right was really wrong. Such an attitude is responsible for incalculable social mischief.

The Brahmos and the Arya Samajists as well as the Christian missionaries denounced the caste system. Sister Nivedita says that her Master rarely criticised it but constantly investigated it. "As an inevitable phenomenon of all human life, he could not look upon it as if it had been peculiar to Hinduism."<sup>48</sup> She was of opinion that the term 'caste' ought to stand translated as 'honour'.<sup>49</sup> It signifies the standard of honour which is associated with rank.<sup>50</sup> To her the caste was by no means an antithesis of democracy. If she had seen the way of voting in general elections in Republican India and the manner in which the Ministry is formed in many states outside Bengal, she would probably have changed her opinion. She was not altogether blind to the defects of the caste system. She said that the observance of caste law had entailed many foolish and irritating losses upon society in the half a century preceding 1904 when she wrote her famous book *The Web of Indian Life*. She had in her mind particularly the case of those who on their return from foreign countries were threatened with ostracism. She, however, believed that in course of time the Indian people themselves would determine how the institution of caste was to be modified. No reform need be superimposed on the Hindu society through the agency of the State, which was not amenable to the control of Indians at that time. But it would be wrong to think that Sister Nivedita and her

<sup>48</sup> Nivedita—*The Master as I saw him*, 288.

<sup>49</sup> Nivedita—*The Web of Indian Life*, 137.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 154.

Master were advocates of static condition in Indian society.

Swami Vivekananda wanted to make Hinduism aggressive, so that it might become active and proselytising, capable of sending out special missions of making converts, of taking back into her fold those of her own children who had adopted some other religion.<sup>51</sup> Sister Nivedita wrote a booklet, entitled *Aggressive Hinduism* with a view to elucidating the ideas of Swami Vivekananda on this point. She explained in it that character is real spirituality and *Mukti* or Salvation lies in overcoming the thirst for *Mukti*. She advocated the adoption of an aggressive policy because India would have "to wrestle with the powers that are against us" and to contribute to the world's sum of culture, and not merely remain contented with making adaptations from it. "The Indianising of India, the organizing of our national thought, the laying out of our line of march, all this is to be done by us, not by others on our behalf."<sup>52</sup> On another occasion she wrote: "The power to count the cost and hesitate is gone for ever."<sup>53</sup> What was needed most to translate this ideal into action was a strong band of *Sannyasi* workers. Sister Nivedita sounds the clarion call when she writes: "Strong as the thunderbolt, austere as Brahmacharya, great-hearted and selfless, such should be that *Sannyasin* who has taken the service of others as his *Sannyasa*, and not less than this should be the son of a militant Hinduism."<sup>54</sup> This is the logical fulfilment of the ideas and ideals preached by Swami Vivekananda.

<sup>51</sup> Nivedita—*The Master as I saw him*, 236.

<sup>52</sup> Nivedita—*Religion and Dharma*, 146.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 150.

<sup>54</sup> Nivedita—*Aggressive Hinduism*.



## CHAPTER THREE

### POLITICAL IDEAS OF VIVEKANANDA AND NIVEDITA

Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission in May, 1897 and it was stated explicitly in its aims and objects that the organisation being purely spiritual and humanitarian in character, "shall have no connection with politics". He tried to avoid any direct reference to political questions in his writings and speeches. But sometimes these cropped up almost involuntarily. For example, in course of his lecture on "The Work Before Us" he said, "Then for good or evil, the English conquest of India took place. Of course every conquest is bad, for conquest is an evil, foreign Government is an evil no doubt."<sup>1</sup> He never cared to elaborate in public the evil consequences of the British rule because that would have hampered his basic work of revitalising the people of India with the message of *Vedanta*. But in a private letter written to Miss Mary Hale on the 30th October, 1899 from Ridgely Manor he regretted the gagging of the Press and the suppression of local self-government. He further wrote, "For writing a few words of innocent criticism, men are being hurried to *transportation for life*, -others imprisoned without any trial; and nobody knows when his head will be off."<sup>2</sup>

Vivekananda did not believe that the appointment of a large number of Indians to the Indian Civil Service or the concession of a few other political demands put forward by the political organizations would bring the political salvation of India.<sup>3</sup> Indians would have to work it out by their own efforts. But that endeavour would prove to be fruitless so long as Indians do not raise the standard of life of the masses and enlist their whole-hearted co-operation. He

<sup>1</sup> C. W. III. 271.

<sup>2</sup> C. W. VIII. 476.

C. W. V. 355.

charged his disciples with the mission to preach the gospel of social uplift, and equality and reminded them again and again that there should be no privilege for anyone, and that equal chance should be provided for all. On the 19th November, 1894 he wrote to Alasinga Perumal: "Our young fools organise meetings to get more power from the English. They only laugh. None deserves liberty who is not ready to give liberty. Suppose the English give over to you all the power. Why, the powers that be then, will hold the people down and let them not have it. Slaves want power to make slaves."<sup>4</sup> He advised his followers to revive society on the old grounds of universal salvation and equality as laid down by the old Masters, such as Sankaracarya, Ramanuja and Caitanya. Thus Vivekananda's programme was a synthetic reconstruction of India on the basis of perfect democratic equality.

In his essay on 'Modern India', he hinted at several fundamental points of Political Science. He did not elaborate any of the points, but laid down aphorisms in the style of Sutrakaras of ancient India. Thus in speaking of Nationalism he said, "A common danger or sometimes a common course of hatred or love, is the bond that binds people together. By the same law that herds beasts of prey together, men also unite into a body and form a caste or nation of their own. Zealous love for one's own people and country, showing itself in bitter hatred against another—as of Greece against Persia, of Rome against Carthage, of the Arab against Kafir, of Spain against the Moor, of France against Spain, of England and Germany against France and of America against England—is undoubtedly one of the main causes which lead to the advancement of one nation over another, by way of uniting itself in hostilities against another."<sup>5</sup> These eight examples cover the period from the sixth century B.C. down to the eighteenth century and it is difficult for a reader not well up in history to understand their significance. He did not even for once say

<sup>4</sup> C. W. IV. 368.

<sup>5</sup> C. W. IV. 471

that to strengthen the feeling of nationalism in India there is need of cultivating the spirit of bitter hatred against the British rulers. He who realises the implications of these eight historical examples would draw the inevitable conclusion himself. His intelligent readers did not fail to do so. That is why his works were so popular amongst the revolutionaries in India.

The second element of nationalism, love for one's own people, Swami Vivekananda tried to propagate in his unique way. He spoke of love as the gate to all the secrets of the Universe. The love of the people, that is, the starving millions of India must be so intense as to make a patriot sleepless. He asks, "Has it gone into your blood, coursing through your veins, becoming consouant with your heart beats? Has it made you almost mad? Are you seized with that one idea of the misery, of ruin, and have you forgotten all about your name, fame, your wives, your children, your property, even your own bodies? Have you done that? That is the first step to become a patriot, the very first step."<sup>6</sup> It is no wonder that such teachings inspired many young men to sacrifice their life at the altar of the Motherland.

Political democracy of the Western pattern did not appeal to him much. He admitted that the people got some education while exercising franchise at the time of election, but it would be a gross mistake to think that the voters exercise real power, which belongs to the politicians, "who, in the name of politics, rob others and fatten themselves by sucking the very life-blood of the masses in all European countries. If you ever saw, my friend, that shocking sight behind the scene of acting of these politicians—that revelry of bribery, that robbery in broad daylight, that dance of the Devil in man, which are practised on such occasions,—you would be hopeless about man!"<sup>7</sup>

His condemnation of liberal bourgeoisie democracy anticipated the similar denunciation of Lenin and his followers.

<sup>6</sup> C. W. III. 225-26.

<sup>7</sup> C. W. V. 461-62.

In "The East and the West" he wrote in June 1900: "They that have money have kept the Government of the land under their thumb, are robbing the people and sending them as soldiers to fight and be slain on foreign shores, so that, in case of victory, their coffers may be full of gold bought by the blood of the subject-people on the field of battle. And the subject-people? Well, theirs is only to shed their blood. This is politics."<sup>8</sup> It should be remembered that he wrote this book a few months before his meeting with the Russian revolutionary Prince Kropotkin (1842-1921) in August, 1900 in Paris.

Other trends of socialistic thought are also noticeable in this book. He explained the exploitation of the masses under an allegory of the struggle between the Devas (Gods) and Asuras (Non-divine people). He showed how the merchants exploited the cultivators and artisans and appropriated to themselves the major portion of their profit as their due. Graphically does he describe further scene of exploitation. "One tilled the ground, a second guarded the produce from being robbed, a third took it to another place, and a fourth bought it. The cultivator got almost nothing; he who guarded the produce took away as much of it as he could by force; the merchant who brought it to the market took the lion's share; and the buyer had to pay out of all proportion for the things and smarted under the burden! The protector came to be known as the king; he who took the commodities from one place to another was the merchant. These two did not produce anything, but still snatched away the best part of things and made themselves fat by virtually reaping most of the fruits of the cultivator's toil and labour. The poor fellow who produced all these things had often to go without his meals and cry to God for help?"<sup>9</sup> He subscribed to the Marxist view that the rich are growing richer and the poor poorer in the present order of things.

Aristotle's theory of constitutions is well-known. Swami

<sup>8</sup> C. W. V. 462.

<sup>9</sup> C. W. V. 514-25.

Vivekananda enunciated a new theory of evolution of society in a cyclic order. He held that in conformity to the law of nature, the four castes, the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra in every society come to exercise the ruling authority one after another in succession.<sup>10</sup> He did not mean by these terms those who are known as belonging to these castes by virtue of their birth. His meaning becomes quite clear when in his usual manner he cites as many as 9 historical examples of the rule of priestly class first among the Chinese, the Sumerians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Aryas, the Iranians, the Jews and the Arabs. As the supremacy of the priests was based on intellectual strength, it tended to encourage culture among their own class. It witnessed the first mastery of spirit over matter. The priestly class was afforded abundant leisure for thinking out higher problems of life. They kept under control even the power of the king by their claim to communion with God. But they tried to keep to themselves all knowledge and all power and this ultimately proved to be the cause of their ruin. They employed their power in monopolising to themselves the objects of self-gratification. So they had to yield power to the military class.<sup>11</sup> Swamiji lays down a general theory regarding the accumulation of power and its diffusion in society. He employs beautiful imagery thus: "The accumulation of blood in the heart is an indispensable condition for life; its non-circulation throughout the body means death. For the welfare of society, it is absolutely necessary, at certain times, to leave all knowledge and power concentrated in certain families or castes, to the exclusion of others, but that concentrated power is focussed for the time being, only to be scattered broadcast over the whole of society in future. If this diffusion be withheld, the destruction of that society is, without doubt, near at hand."<sup>12</sup>

The king was the symbol of the power of the society. During the period of royal supremacy various inventions were made for the gratification of senses. The king with his

<sup>10</sup> C. W. IV. 449.<sup>11</sup> C. W. IV. 452-56.<sup>12</sup> C. W. IV. 458.

monopoly of power claimed in some countries divine rights. Thousands of skilful persons deserted the toilsome profession of cultivation and took to the pleasant work of producing artistic things. It was in this period that cities grew in importance. The kings were like parents to their subjects. But they continued to look upon the subjects as nothing but children. They refused to treat them as adult persons capable of judging what is good for them. Vivekananda observes, "It is the evidence of history that at a certain time every society attains its manhood, when a strong conflict ensues between the ruling power and the common people. The life of the society, its expansion and civilisation depend on its victory or defeat in this conflict."<sup>13</sup> The evil day for kingship came when kings forgot that forces were stored with him so that he might give them back a thousandfold in their potency for the benefit of the community.

The power of the king passes to the merchant class, the Vaisyas. The secret of the power of the Vaisyas lay in their material wealth. They took pride in the fact that the millions of Sudras were squeezing out every drop of honey for the exclusive use and profit of the merchant class. But this could not go on for ever. The Sudras would one day overthrow the Vaisyas.

Then comes the great prophecy of Swami Vivekananda about the ultimate sovereignty of the Sudras, the proletariat of the world: "Yet, a time will come when there will be the rising of the Sudra class *with their Sudrahood*: that is to say not like that as at present when the Sudras are becoming great by acquiring the characteristic qualities of the Vaisya or the Kshatriya, but a time will come, when the Sudras of every country, with their inborn Sudra nature and habits—not becoming in essence Vaisya or Kshatriya, but remaining as Sudras will gain *absolute supremacy in every society*. The first glow of the dawn of this new power has already begun to break slowly upon the Western world and the thoughtful are at their wit's end

<sup>13</sup> C. W. IV. 461-62.

to reflect upon the final issue of this fresh phenomenon. Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism and other like sects are the vanguard of the social revolution that is to follow.”<sup>14</sup> He pointed out that under the supremacy of Sudras physical comforts will be better distributed and ordinary education more diffused, but cultural level will be lowered and the number of extraordinary geniuses will gradually become few.<sup>15</sup>

At one time Vivekananda explained, “I am a Socialist”. He further said, “Everything goes to show that Socialism or some form of rule by the people, call it what you will, is coming on the board.”<sup>16</sup>

Acute controversy has been raised over the significance of this exclamation. His youngest brother, Dr. Bhupendranath Datta claimed him to be the first exponent of Socialism in India, though it had, according to him, no scientific basis. A Russian writer has called him a ‘Utopian Socialist’, because he did not believe in revolution and appealed to the good sense of the educated class to raise them up.<sup>17</sup> Another recent writer has tried to establish the thesis that Vivekananda did enunciate scientific socialism, based on spiritual experiences.<sup>18</sup> In a letter written to Srimati Mrinalini Bose on the 23rd December, 1898, he wrote: “The doctrine which demands the sacrifice of individual freedom to social supremacy is called socialism, while that which advocates the cause of the individual, is called individualism.”<sup>19</sup> Here he was over-simplifying an abstruse political theory to suit the understanding of a simple lady. He was a great champion of individual freedom. He did not like to impose the bondage of too many rules and laws on the individual. “Freedom in all matters, i.e., advance towards Mukti, is worthiest gain of man. To advance oneself towards freedom, psysical, mental and spiritual and help others to do so, is the supreme prize of man. Those

<sup>14</sup> C. W. IV. 468-69.    <sup>15</sup> C. W. VI. 382.    <sup>16</sup> C. W. V. 202.

<sup>17</sup> The Centenary Commemoration Volume, 510.

<sup>18</sup> Santvana Das Gupta.

<sup>19</sup> C. W. IV. 488.

social rules which stand in the way of the unfoldment of this freedom are injurious, and steps should be taken to destroy them specially. Those institutions should be encouraged by which men advance in the path of freedom."<sup>20</sup> The influence of Mill and Spencer is evident when he said that it is our natural right to be allowed to use our own body, intelligence or wealth according to our will, without doing any harm to others. As a Vedantist he could not but advocate the cause of individual freedom, which is a step in the direction of final emancipation from bondage. But it should be remembered that he preached the Advaita or non-dualistic philosophy which is the supreme solvent of the ego, the root of individualism. He, therefore, emphasised the need of sacrificing the individual for the welfare of the whole. Influence of the Hegelian concept is unmistakable when Vivekananda writes: "The individual's life is in the life of the whole, the individual's happiness is in the happiness of the whole; apart from the whole the individual's existence is inconceivable—this is an external truth and is the bed-rock on which the universe is built. To move slowly towards the infinite whole, bearing a constant feeling of intense sympathy and sameness with it, being happy with its happiness and being depressed in its affliction, is the individual's sole duty. Not only is it his duty, but in its transgression is his death, while compliance with this great truth leads to life immortal."<sup>21</sup> He reconciles his theory of individual freedom with that of subordination to the whole through a new type of socialism which may be called spiritual socialism.

The Hegelian doctrine of self-alienation and self-discovery gave rise to Feuerbach's anthropological religion. In his "Essence of Christianity" Feuerbach said that "Christian God is only a fantastic reflexion, a mirror-image of man." When Marx found that God is man, he presented a theory which will make it possible for man to experience himself in world as a godlike being. There is

<sup>20</sup> C. W. V. 145-146

<sup>21</sup> C. W. IV. 463.



some similarity between this theory and Vivekananda's spiritual socialism. Thus does he glorify Man: "No books, no scriptures, no science can ever imagine the glory of the self that appears as man, the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists or ever will exist. Man, after his vain search after Gods, outside himself, completes the circle, and comes back to the point from which he started—the human soul, and he finds that the God whom he was searching in hill and dale, whom he was seeking in every brook, in every temple, in churches and heavens, that God whom he was imagining as sitting in heaven and ruling that world, in his own self. I am He and He is I. None but I was God and this Little I never existed." The service of man, he preached, was the highest form of religion. He raises the most pertinent question: "If you cannot worship your brother man, the manifested God, how can you worship a God who is unmanifested?"

The firm belief in the divinity and essential equality of man led him to deliver the inspiring message: "Forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's Altar; forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim: 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother.' Say, the Ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian is my brother."<sup>22</sup> Those who attempt to depict Vivekananda as an out and out Socialist forget that though he prophesied the coming of the Sudras or toiling masses to power everywhere in the world, yet he did not believe that the undiluted Sudra rule was an ideal thing. He expressed his preference for a social synthesis in which "the knowledge of the priest, the culture of the Military, the

<sup>22</sup> C. W. IV. 480.

distributive spirit of the commercial and the ideal of equality of the last (that is of the Sudra rule) can all be kept intact, minus their evils." But he himself questioned—"Is it possible?"<sup>23</sup> In a letter he wrote, "I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread."<sup>24</sup>

Vivekananda differed from the Socialists on some fundamental points. He did not believe in class struggle, materialistic interpretation of history, nor in bloody revolution. He certainly advocated the establishment of a new social order, based on equality of opportunity for all. But he did not clearly indicate how this social order would be evolved, whether by political revolution or simply by religious revolution or by a combination of both. He is said to have prophesied that the next upheaval—the Socialistic revolution would take place either in Russia or in China but he did not lay down any programme for the re-organisation of State and society after the revolution. Aurobindo in his *Ideal of the Karmayogin* has written: "the work that was begun at Dakshineswar is far from finished, it is not even understood. That which Vivekananda received and strove to develop has not yet materialised." Subhas Chandra Bose also writes in the same strain: "Vivekananda's teachings have been neglected by his own followers—by the Ramakrishna Mission which he founded—and we are going to give effect to them." By this he probably meant the Socialistic teachings of Swamiji.

Vivekananda had no time to build up a self-contained social philosophy. His career as a writer covers a period of less than nine years from 11th September, 1893 to 4th February, 1920. Most of this time he had to spend in lecturing from one end of the world to another. Even if he had time, he would not have cared to propound social and political theories in separate treatises. His chief interest in life was to deliver to the world the message of Indian culture and civilisation. Reviving the glory of India and

<sup>23</sup> C. W. VI. 382.

<sup>24</sup> C. W. VI. 382.

thereby strengthening the self-confidence of Indians were the necessary corollaries of his mission. His love for the country was unbounded. He had a prophetic vision of the independence of India. In his lecture entitled the "Future of India" which he delivered in Madras on the 14th February, 1897, he said: "For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote, this our great mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for the time from our minds. This is the only god that is awake, our own race—everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears, he covers everything."<sup>25</sup> He did not specify thirty or forty years nor sixty or seventy years, but exactly fifty years. And it was exactly after fifty years, in February 1947 that Major Attlee, the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, announced to the House of Commons the policy of allowing India to determine her own political destiny.

Swami Vivekananda is one of the greatest makers of modern India. Because of his synthetic views on the social and political problems of India he may be ranked as the most profound social scientist of his age. It is not a mere coincidence that his works along with the Gita were found by the Police in the possession of many of the revolutionaries in the early nineteenth century. Subhas Chandra Bose freely acknowledged the debt he owed to the influence of the writings of Swamiji. In 1908 Rabindranath Tagore in his masterly analysis of the thought currents of the 'East and West' wrote: "And the *Mahatma*, who passed away from us only the other day—Swami Vivekananda—he likewise took his stand in the middle with the East on his right, the west on his left. His message was not to keep India bound in her latter-day narrowness by ignoring in her history, the advent of the West. His genius was for assimilation, for harmony, for creation. He dedicated his life to opening up the high road by which the thought-treasure of the East may pass to the West, and of the West to the East."<sup>26</sup> This is a

<sup>25</sup> C. W. III. 300.

<sup>26</sup> This is an exact translation of the Bengali passage contained

fitting tribute of the greatest poet of India to the greatest practical Vedantist that the East has ever produced.

The life and works of Sister Nivedita offer a masterly interpretation of the political findings of Swami Vivekananda. She identified herself thoroughly with the people of India. In all her talks and writings she referred to Indians as 'we'. A. J. F. Blair rightly points out she was vehemently, and fanatically anti-British. Having got in her veins both Scottish and Irish blood she disliked the English sovereignty over India from the core of her heart. She made a practical application of the Vedantic doctrine of *Maya* where she compared it to the hold exercised by the British on the mind and body of Indians. Without mentioning British imperialism over India definitely she made her meaning quite clear when she wrote: "There is a saying in India that to see through *Maya*, is to destroy her. But few realize how literally this is true. The disaster or difficulty that has ceased to confuse and bewilder us, is about to be defeated. The evil about which we can think and express ourselves clearly, has already lost its power. To measure our defeat accurately is to reverse it. When a people, as a people, from the highest to the lowest are united in straight and steady understanding of their circumstances, without doubt and without illusion, then events are about to precipitate themselves."<sup>27</sup>

Sister Nivedita tried her level best to translate into action the teachings of Swami Vivekananda regarding Nationalism in India. To her the geographical factor, the idea that the people are living in a distinct geographical area is much more important than race, religion and language

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in Tagore's *Samaja*, *Rabindra Racanavali* (Visvabharati ed.) XII. 266. But it is regrettable that in 1961 the passage has been thus abbreviated: "the great soul, Vivekananda, whose death we mourned recently, took a similar stand. He had the genius to accept, harmonise and recreate and he dedicated himself to the exchange of ideals between India and the West." *Towards Universal Man*, 134.

<sup>27</sup> Nivedita—*Religion and Dharma*, 140.

as symbols of national unity." "Neither race, language, nor religion" she writes in her essay on the *National Idea*, "can divide essentially those who are made one by the supreme organic condition of place. Even the human element of family and society, comes second only in the list of evolutionary influences. But all these, we must remember, are like ourselves or like the whole of the community to which we belong, themselves the product of the birthland."<sup>28</sup> To Nivedita the geographical area is the first and a common economic experience, the next most important element which gives rise to the feeling of nationalism. She explains that the geographical area is to be considered in two aspects as the mother of the folk she sustains and as the offspring of the racial energy. Several years before the publication of Dr. Radhakumud Mookerjee's *Fundamental Unity of India*, Sister Nivedita stressed in a paper, entitled 'Unity of Indian Life' contributed to the *Hindustan Review* the essential unity of this vast subcontinent. With poetic insight she writes: "Around her feet the sapphire seas, with snow-clad mountain-heights behind her head, she sits enthroned. And the races that inhabit the area thus shut in, stand out sharply defined as herself, against the Mongolians of the North-east, and the Semites of the North-West. Within this land, Aryan ideals and concepts dominate those of all other elements."<sup>29</sup> She refused to believe that India was divided either by language or by religion. She was not concerned with building up a system of political philosophy for the learned people. Her heart yearned for seeing the realization of her Master's dream. She appealed to the Hindu and Muslim, both as working comrades: "We are working comrades on no basis so limited as that of creed or language, which after all, would limit us geographically to a province and spiritually to a single line of development. We are working comrades because we are Indians, children of a single root tree, dwellers around one bamboo clump. Our task is one, the rebuilding of Heroic India: to this every

<sup>28</sup> Select Essays, 206.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 214.

nerve and muscle of us tingle with response. Who so foolish is to imagine that a little political petting and pampering can make half a nation forget its kinship with the other half?"<sup>30</sup>

Sister Nivedita's appeal was to the heart, rather than to the head. But she showed her practical wisdom when she insisted that the true signs of the awakening of national life are to be found in co-ordination, co-operation and discipline. She wanted to strengthen the national sentiment through the revival of Art and literature. When Abanindranath Tagore painted the noble picture of Mother India, she hailed it as the 'first' great masterpiece in a new style. She explained that the Motherland is offering in her four hands the four essential requisites of human life—*Shiksha* (education), *Diksha* (initiation into spiritual life), *Anna* (food) and *Vastra* (clothing). She inspired the young men to build up the Maha-Bharata, the great India, by re-vitalizing the villages and re-organising the cities.<sup>31</sup>

She was probably aware of the fact that a nation cannot be built up by words and sentiments alone. National life must be built up on the solid foundation of economic prosperity. She whole-heartedly supported the *Swadeshi* movement. With a view to encouraging the young patriots she reminded them that it was the best way to get themselves respected by the whole world, which would see that there is now strong, intelligent and united action. She, like her Master, was an adept in conveying big ideas by short sentences, pregnant with suggestions. She writes that the world respects that which shows that it is to be feared. She implied that the united action of the people would have the potential power of affecting British industries adversely and therefore the British Government would hasten to come to terms. It delighted her that in contrast to the Congress policy there was no begging for help and no cringing for concessions in the *Swadeshi* movement. She imparted a religious significance to it when she compared the *Swadeshi*

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 157.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 155.

industries to cows which have got to be protected by all means. She went so far as to write: "There will yet come a time in India when the man who buys from a foreigner what his own countrymen could by any means supply, will be regarded as on a level with the killer of cows of today. For assuredly the two offences are morally identical."<sup>32</sup> Swami Vivekananda had spoken of awakening the masses of India by providing full meals for them. Sister Nivedita pointed out that here was a practical means of achieving that object. She was delighted to find that small-scale industries were springing up on all sides and providing jobs to those who had so long remained unemployed or under-employed.

As a true follower of Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita placed freedom in place of *Mukti* in the forefront of the objectives of life in India. When she explained that the essential characteristic of freedom is that it has to be realized in opposition to something, there can be little doubt about its political implication. To her freedom is the repudiation of the control of one's fellow organisms. While the Hegelians considered the complete subordination of the individual to society as the fulfilment of the purpose of life, Sister Nivedita said that society is one of the forces against which the individual has to realize his own freedom—one of the powers from which he has to wrest it.<sup>33</sup> This is a strange conclusion for one who had attended lectures of eminent sociologists in Paris or who had accepted the Hindu way of living and thinking. But the most dominant aim in her life was to secure freedom for India.

It may not be known to many that Sister Nivedita joined the Indian National Congress in 1905 when the organization was just completing its period of legal minority. An eminent researcher like Girija Shankar Roy Choudhury<sup>34</sup> has asserted in course of a lecture delivered in the University of Calcutta that Sister Nivedita never appeared on the

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 77.

<sup>33</sup> *Religion and Dharma*, 7.

<sup>34</sup> Girija Sankar Roy Choudhary—*Bhagini Nivedita O Banglaya Viplava-vada*. 82,

Congress platform as a speaker. But as a matter of fact we find in the Report of the Congress for the year 1905 that she delivered a remarkable speech at the Varanasi session of the Congress.

The year 1905 is a landmark in the history of the Congress for more than one reason. For the first time the enlightened representatives of the whole of India were going to take effective steps against the partitioning of Bengal, which had been effected on July 19, 1905. For the first time in the history of the Congress the session opened with the *Bande Mataram* song. For the first time the Congress supported the boycott of foreign goods by the people of Bengal. A new note was sounded by Lala Lajpat Rai when in course of seconding resolution XIII against the Repressive measures in Bengal he deprecated the policy of mendicancy which, according to him, is hated by the English themselves. But the signs of rift between the two wings of the Congress became quite apparent in the Varanasi session. One wing, led by Lokamanya Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai insisted on boycotting the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales. After a good deal of talks and lengthy negotiations it was decided that the Resolution welcoming the Prince and the Princess of Wales would be moved from the Chair and those who did not like to associate themselves with it would absent themselves at the time of its approval. The official report itself admits that "it was an open secret that there was some difference of opinion over the Boycott resolution in the Subjects Committee. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya said in the open session that he was not in favour of boycott."<sup>35</sup>

Sister Nivedita did not like that there should be any division in the ranks of the Congress. Her master Swami Vivekananda criticised the Congress indeed for merely passing resolution and for not undertaking any work for the uplift of masses.<sup>36</sup> But he said in an interview in 1896 that

<sup>35</sup> R I N C, 1905, Introduction, 25.

<sup>36</sup> C. W. V. 427; VII, 147 and life by Eastern and Western Disciples 574-76.



through the efforts of the Congress a nation was being made out of India's different races and that is why he regarded the movement as significant and heartily wished it success.<sup>37</sup> Sister Nivedita echoed the same idea when she wrote in the *Mysore Review* immediately after the Varanasi Congress: "The Congress represents, not a political, or partisan movement, but political side of a national movement—a very different thing. It is successful, not in proportion as its views are officially adopted, but in proportion to the ability and earnestness with which it conducts its own deliberations, in proportion to the number which it can call together and make efficient in political methods, and in proportion to the information it can disseminate throughout the country on questions of national significance."<sup>38</sup>

A. J. F. Blaer has characterised Sister Nivedita as a reactionary as well as a revolutionary. It is a strange irony of fate that the noble soul who dedicated every movement of her life to the cause of progress and advancement of India in social, economic, religious and political spheres should be described as a reactionary. She did not advocate a radical change in the social system of India indeed. If this be the reason for calling her a reactionary, men like Allen Octavius Hume and Bal Gangadhar Tilak may also be called reactionaries. The Indian National Congress, as a body, kept itself aloof from social questions, though its first President W. C. Bonnerjee wanted that it should concern itself primarily with these.

Sister Nivedita was a friend of Gokhale. As Gokhale was elected President of the Varanasi session, she considered it worthwhile to attend it. She must have been also actuated by the motive of securing the support of the mighty political organisation for the cause of the *Swadeshi* movement. It has now come to light that the highly interesting reports about the Congress in 1905 published in the *Statesman* were from her pen.

In supporting Resolution No. 22, appointing G. K. Gokhale, the President of the Congress as delegate to England for

<sup>37</sup> C.W.V. 199.      <sup>38</sup> Select Essays, 192.

pressing the more important proposals of the Congress on the attention of the authorities there, Sister Nivedita said: "Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I fear that I shall have great difficulty in making my voice heard by this vast audience. I beg you to listen very attentively for the few moments that I shall keep you, for it is my desire to say a few words to you for the moment in the character of a European speaking on behalf of Europe. To my mind the evolution of a great *national sentiment* and a great national voice in India is a necessity to Europe if she is to be saved from the very awful perdition of inhumanity (cheers). All the sacrifices that human beings could make to India many thousands of times are, might well be made in the name of the salvation of Europe. And it is for this reason that I want you to mark specially an aspect of this proposition which appears to be escaping your delegates and escaping your own notice. It is through the English language, if you at this moment will make sacrifices or efforts, that it is possible for you to make them fruitful through the person of this noble man whose power and whose steel you have already put to the test (cheers). If you do this thing, if you will faithfully stand by him, support him and carry your assault in numbers further and further, with every year that goes, if you will do this thing, you will enable history to repeat itself upon a greater scale than hitherto. Remember, my brothers, it is the law that history repeats itself. Look back one hundred years. You see the birth of nationality in Europe; go on for some thirty or forty years; you see that Mr. Nowroji, your old Rishi, Mr. Nowroji, your old Parsee Indian Rishi, spoke the English people with tears in his eyes. Has the England of so many emancipations grievously forgotten her great role; has she grievously dared to trample on her high destinies of late years?

Indian people! stand by and redeem English tradition, re-make it, re-create it; make England true to herself not for the sake of England but that you may eventually redeem the world from the spectacle of a continent in which the impulses that began as an impulse of nationality against the

Napoleonic wave of consolidation and centralization (cheers).

I have not yet finished my sentence, dear brothers, in which the wave that began as an impulse of nationality, the impulse of the worship of humanity thrown aside, was deflected, was degraded until to-day, you see six or seven or eight camps of armed men talking about European peace and British peace. We will redeem England, we will redeem Europe, we will redeem this world from this spectacle. Our dream of an Indian nationality, is not a selfish dream for India, but it is a dream for humanity (cheers) in which India shall be the mother of a great cause; shall be the fosterer and the nurse of all that is noble, humane and great. If you would do this, then India must not be passing passive in the present but be an authorised and accredited representative in the great struggle that is now once more about to open, in which, I trust to heaven the real issues of the English politics will be made clear in which these nonsenses of distinction between the old-fashioned obsolete Conservative and Radical will be swept away for ever, and we shall see the absolute question of English Empire to be Imperialism vs. Nationality, Slavery for Nations vs. Nationality for the peoples of the earth.”<sup>39</sup> No Indian before the advent of Mahatma Gandhi had ever placed such a noble ideal before the Indian National Congress.

Bankimchandra was the first political prophet of modern India to foresee the need of creating a band of selfless Sannyasis for achieving the liberation of the country. A few months after the publication of the *Anandamath* Hume issued on the 1st April, 1883 his soul-stirring appeal to the graduates of the Calcutta University for organising a small band of fifty workers who would devote themselves to the task of bringing about the political regeneration of India. The appeal went unheeded. The Congress could not produce even one-tenth of this small number in the nineteenth century. Swami Vivekananda wrote to Akhandananda on the 21st February 1900: “If there be two thousand people

<sup>39</sup> RINC 1905, 95-96.

like you working in several districts, won't it be the turn of the English themselves to consult you in matters of political movement?"<sup>40</sup>

In 1905 three serious attempts were made in organizing a band of Sannyasi workers. These are associated with the names of Gokhale, Sri Aurobindo and Sister Nivedita. Both Gokhale and Sri Aurobindo were friends of Sister Nivedita. The organization of the Servants of India Society and the writing of the famous pamphlet *Bhavani Manair* most probably owe something to the inspiration of Sister Nivedita. The similarity in the style between Sri Aurobindo's *Bhavani Mandir* and Nivedita's *Kali the Mother*, both published in 1905, is remarkably striking. Seldom has Sri Aurobindo paid such glowing tributes to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda as in this pamphlet, which contains passages like the following: "What was the message that radiated from the personality of Bhagavan Ramakrishna Paramhansa? What was it that formed the lion-like heart of Vivekananda sought to shake the world? . . . . . It was to initiate this great work, the greatest and most wonderful work ever given to a race, that formed the lion-like heart of Vivekananda who sought to shake the world? . . . . . It was to initiate this great work, from exhortation by the writer to the speech of the Goddess in the first person so also do we find in the *Bhavani Mandir* the following orders of Bhavani for erecting her temple: "Because I have commanded it, and because by making a centre for the future religion you will be furthering the immediate will of the Eternal and storing up merit which will make you strong in this life and great in another. You will be helping to create a nation, to consolidate an age, to Aryanise a world."

Sister Nivedita's *Kali the Mother* is really a commentary on Swami Vivekananda's poem of the same name. Swamiji writes thus:

"For Terror is Thy name,  
Death is in Thy breath,

<sup>40</sup> C. W. VI. 427.

And every shaking step  
 Destroys a world for ever  
 Then 'Time' the All-Destroyer!  
 Then come, O Mother, Come!  
 Who can misery love,  
 Dance in destructive dance  
 And hug the form of Death—  
 To him the Mother comes."

This song became the gospel of an important section of revolutionaries. Nivedita repeats the voice of the Mother thus: "Ask nothing. Plan nothing. Let my will flow through thee, as the ocean through an empty shell. But this thing understand. Not one movement shall be in vain. Not one effort shall fail at last. The dream shall be less, not greater than the deed. Thou shalt go here or there for some petty reason, and thy going shall subserve great ends. Thou shalt meet and speak with many, but some few shall be Mine from the beginning: with these thou shalt exchange a secret sign, and they shall follow with thee. And that sign? Deep in the heart of hearts of Mine own flashes the sacrificial knife of Kali."<sup>41</sup> Sister Nivedita probably wanted to make these words equivocal, but to us these appear as unequivocal instructions to the members of the Anushilan samiti, whose training she undertook voluntarily. This becomes clearer when we read in her book. "Murmurest thou of need of purpose? Think'st thou the ball is purposeless with which the Mother plays? Knowest thou not that Her toy is a thunderbolt, charged with power to shatter the worlds, at the turn of her wrist? Ask not plans. Need the arrow any plan when it is loosed from the bow? Such art thou where the life is lived, the plan will stand revealed."<sup>42</sup>

The revolutionary fervour in Sister Nivedita's book is stronger than what we get in the current edition of the *Bhavani Mandir*. She plainly told her readers: "Worshippers of the Mother are they from their birth in Her incarnation of the sword. Lovers of death are they—not lovers

<sup>41</sup> Nivedita—*Kali the Mother*, 84.      <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 83.

of life—and of storm and stress.” No word could be plainer and more direct than this. Nowhere in the whole of the Hindu *Agamas* and *Nigamas* has the sword been called an incarnation of Kali. It is astonishing to find that the secret service of the Government failed to grasp its significance. We have tried to show that militant nationalism drew its spiritual sustenance from the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. This does not mean, however, that he himself was in favour of terroristic activities. What he taught was a message of strength. To him weakness and slavery were symptoms of the death of a nation. This was interpreted by a certain section of his readers as an exhortation for liberating the country from foreign bondage. His own brother Dr. Bhupendranath Datta was certainly one of them. He quotes the authority of Prof. Kamakshya Mitra to show that the Swamiji told the latter after his return from the West the second time that, ‘What India needs today is bomb.’ He also quotes the following from Romain Rolland’s *Prophets of the New India*: “The Indian nationalist movement smouldered for a long time until Vivekananda’s breath blew the ashes into flame and erupted violently three years after his death in 1905.”<sup>43</sup> One of his most favourite disciples, Sister Nivedita thought that her Master wanted her to lend a helping hand in securing the freedom of India. Futile attempts have recently been made to show that Sister Nivedita had no active connection with the movement for militant nationalism and that her sympathies with it were confined merely to the intellectual plane.<sup>44</sup> This hypothesis goes positively against the direct testimony of Sri Aurobindo, who described her as one of the active leaders of the revolutionary movement. Her *Kali the Mother* appeared to Sri Aurobindo as a book inspiring people to take recourse to revolution. She approached not only the Gaekwad of Baroda but also the Chiefs of Rajputana with a view to enlisting their co-operation for the cause of Militant Nation-

<sup>43</sup> B. N. Datta—212.

<sup>44</sup> Pravrajika Muktiprana—*Bhagini Nivedita* 292—298.

alism.<sup>45</sup> The character and significance of Militant Nationalism in India will remain an enigma and mystery unless it is studied in the background of the social and political thought of Swami Vivekananda.

<sup>45</sup> Niradbaran's—*Sri Aurobindar sange Kathavarta*, entry dated 21st January, 1939.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE BACKGROUND OF MILITANT NATIONALISM

Subhas Chandra Bose admits that while residing at the Eden Hindu Hostel of the Presidency College, Calcutta, he was greatly under the influence of the revolutionaries who generally followed teachings of Vivekananda.<sup>1</sup> He studied the *Arya* edited by Sri Aurobindo and felt convinced that spiritual enlightenment was necessary for effective national service."<sup>2</sup> This was the conviction of almost all the workers in the cause of militant nationalism. Sri Aurobindo himself was considerably influenced by the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. He wrote in the *Karmayogin* June 26, 1909: "The going forth of Vivekananda, marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake not only to survive but to conquer."<sup>3</sup> He said that in the Alipore Central Jail he heard constantly the voice of Vivekananda speaking to him for a fortnight.<sup>4</sup> This sort of psychic communication with the spirit of the Swamiji at a critical moment in his life indicates the spell which the writings of the Swamiji cast upon him.

Swami Vivekananda raised nationalism to a high spiritual plane. The message of the Upanisad was interpreted by him in an entirely new way. While explaining the Vedanta in its application to Indian life, he wrote: "Everything that can weaken us as a race we have had for the last thousand years. It seems as if during that period the national life had this one end in view viz. how to make us weaker and weaker till we have become real earth-worms, crawling at the feet

<sup>1</sup> Subhas Chandra Bose—An Indian pilgrim—an unfinished autobiography and collected letters ( 1897-1921 ) p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>3</sup> *Karmayogin*, 26-27.



of every one who dares to put his foot on us. Therefore, my friends, as one of your blood, as one that lives and dies with you, let me tell you that we want strength, strength and every time strength. And the Upanishads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energised through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upanishads.”<sup>5</sup> Though Vivekananda does not explicitly mention political freedom, any discerning reader is sure to find it included in the comprehensive term, physical freedom. Swami Vivekananda was never tired of preaching the message of strength to his countrymen. He used the metaphor of the tiny seed of banyan tree hiding within itself the mass of energy which will one day turn into a huge tree covering a large area. With wonderful vividness he brought before the mind’s eye the image of the nation rising up: “Slowly this infinite giant is, as it were, waking up, becoming conscious of his power, and arousing himself; and with his growing consciousness, more and more of his bonds are breaking, chains are bursting asunder, and the day is sure to come when, with the full consciousness of his infinite power and wisdom, the giant will rise to his feet and stand erect. Let us help to hasten that glorious consummation.”<sup>6</sup> Here is a direct appeal to the Indian young men to lend their helping hand in the noble work of making the country free.

Swamiji drew upon the Vedāntic doctrine of *Maya* or illusion to instil courage and strength into their heart. He initiated them into the secret of conquering fear by repeating the words “I have no fear of death: I never hunger nor thirst. I am it! I am it.” He assures them that “Mountain—high though the difficulties appear, terrible

<sup>4</sup> *Aurobindo* 115.

<sup>5</sup> C. W. III. 238

<sup>6</sup> C. W. II. 339.

and gloomy though all things seem, they are but Maya, Fear not, it is banished. Crush it, and it vanishes. Stamp upon it, and it dies. Be not afraid.”<sup>7</sup> To a disciple he wrote: “My child, what I want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel, inside which dwells a mind of the same material as that of which the thunder-bolt is made.”<sup>8</sup> Sister Nivedita relates how an elderly man ‘with a face full of amiable weakness met Swamiji at Almora and asked what were they to do whose *Karma* was to see the strong oppress the weak?’ The Swami turned on him in surprised indignation; “Why, thrash the strong, of course!” he said, “you forget your own part in this Karma—yours is always the right to rebel.”<sup>9</sup> Swamiji’s advice to become fearless had immense effect on all those who joined the rank of revolutionaries. He said: “The earth is enjoyed by heroes—this is the unfailing truth. Be a hero. Always say ‘I have no fear.’ Tell this to everybody ‘Have no fear’. Fear is death, fear is sin, fear is hell, fear is unrighteousness, fear is wrong life.”<sup>10</sup>

In the Alipore Bomb case Mr. Norton said on behalf of the prosecution that religion played a prominent part in the secret societies, as was proved “by the fact that the Gita, the Upanisad and other religious books were found in almost every search.”<sup>11</sup> The Secret Society had three departments, namely—mechanical, intellectual and spiritual. Upendranath Banerjee was in charge of the spiritual department. The type of political work which has got to be carried on by a disarmed subject people requires immense strength of spirit. This can come most easily from the pursuit of the Vedantic religion. The militant nationalists of India drew their inspiration from the following words of Swami Vivekananda: “Religion is the manifestation of the natural strength that is in man. A spring of infinite power is coiled up and is inside this little body, and that spring is spreading itself.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> C. W. II. 403.

<sup>8</sup> C. W. V. 116-117

<sup>9</sup> Nivedita—*The Master as I saw him*, 118-119.

<sup>10</sup> C. W. VII. 136. <sup>11</sup> *Alipore Case*, 283. <sup>12</sup> C. W. VIII. 185.

Swami Vivekananda is the first teacher in modern India to utilise the *Bhagavadgita* for the purpose of building up of the national life in India. Explaining the message of the Gita he wrote: "The weak have no place here, in this life or in any other life. Weakness leads to slavery, weakness is death. There are hundreds of thousands of microbes surrounding us, but they cannot harm us unless we become weak."<sup>13</sup> Romain Rolland rightly holds that Vivekananda's Neo-Vedantism "spread like burning alcohol in the veins of his intoxicated nation."<sup>14</sup> Bhupendranath Datta, a younger brother of Swami Vivekananda played a leading part in the revolutionary movement both in India and abroad. He testifies to the influence of Swamiji's writings on the militant nationalists in the following words: "It is a truism to say that there is a correlation between Swamiji's appeals to his young countrymen and the intensity of revolutionary urge in the mind of the youngmen of later generation. Since the foundation of the Revolutionary Party in Bengal, in which Swamiji's British disciple Sister Nivedita took at first an active part and was a member of the Executive Committee, his works, along with the writings and life of Mazzini as well as the life of Garibaldi, in Bengalee, were the mainspring of inspiration to the youthful mind of India/In every gymnasium, i.e., exercise-club of the Revolutionary Party of Bengal, his work entitled "From Colombo to Almorah" was read."<sup>15</sup> Hari Kumar Chakravarty, a member of the Council of Action in the Yugantar group, writes that it is doubtful if the revolutionary movement would have taken the shape it did without the inspiring teachings of Swamiji. He recounts how in 1918 Lord Ronaldshay asked him, then a prisoner in a solitary cell in the Dacca Jail, whether he was a Vedantist and a devotee of Vivekananda and comments that the Governor of Bengal thus wanted to find out the person whose influence was at work behind the movement.

<sup>13</sup> C. W. II. 3

<sup>14</sup> Romain Rolland—*Prophets of the New India*, 501.

<sup>15</sup> B. N. Datta 213.

He also relates that wherever the Police made a search, they invariably got some works of Swami Vivekananda.<sup>16</sup> The Sedition Committee states: "For their own initiates the conspirators devised a remarkable series of text-books. The *Bhagavad Gita*, the writings of Vivekananda, the lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi were part of the course."<sup>17</sup>

Another book which inspired the young revolutionaries of India was the *Bhagavadgita*. Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna to be a mere instrument in killing the enemies, as they had really been killed already by Himself (XI. 33) seemed to absolve them of the responsibility for murder. On the 19th June 1909, Sri Aurobindo thus explained its implication in the weekly review *The Karmayogin*. The recurrent cry of Sri Krishna to Arjuna insists on the struggle: "Fight and overthrow thy opponents!", "Remember me and fight," "Give up all thy works to me with a heart full of spirituality, and free from craving, free from selfish claims, fight! let the fever of thy soul pass from thee." It is an error to imagine that even when the religious man does not give up his ordinary activities, still he becomes too *sattvika*, too saintly, too loving or too passionless for the rough work of the world. Nothing can be more extreme and uncompromising than the reply of the Gita in the opposite sense, "Whosoever has his temperament purged from egoism, whosoever suffers not his soul to receive the impress of the deed, though he slays the whole world yet he slays not and is not bound."<sup>18</sup> The leaders of the revolutionary movement in Bengal tried to train up the workers in this light. This is why they arranged for teaching the *Gita* every Sunday and induced Swami Saradananda, the then Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission to take the Gita class.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Article contributed by Harikumar, Chakravarty in a book called *Visva-Viveka* (Bak-Sahitya, Calcutta, 1953) pp. 246-47. Harikumar was a close friend of M. N. Roy.

<sup>17</sup> Sedition Committee, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Sri Aurobindo—*The Ideal of the Karmayogin*, 15-66.

<sup>19</sup> Jadugopal Mukhopadhyaya in the *Visva-Viveka*, 253.

Lokmanya Tilak too laid great emphasis on the teaching of the *Gita* for building up the foundation of the character of national workers. His commentary on the *Gita* entitled the *Gita-Rahasya* has become a classic. In one of his lectures he said in 1918: "In order that the action may not bind the actor, it must be done with the aim of helping this purpose, and without any attachment to the coming result."<sup>20</sup> The significance of this remark will be clear if we read it along with what the editor of the *Kesari* wrote seven weeks after the Bomb outrage at Muzafarpur. His comment was: "Neither the Chapekars nor the Bengali bomb-throwers committed murders for retaliating the oppression practised upon themselves; hatred between individuals or private quarrels or disputes were not the cause of these murders. These murders have assumed a different aspect from ordinary murders owing to the supposition on the part of the perpetrators that they were doing a sort of beneficent act."<sup>21</sup> This is an example of how the nationalist made a practical application of the teachings of the *Gita*. Like the Karmayoga, Jnanayoga and Bhaktiyoga of the *Gita*, Tilak applied the term Yoga to an economic measure like Boycott, which he described as the *Bahiskara-yoga*. He wrote, 'If people are resolved to practise this yoga, the more they practise it, the greater fruit would it bear and lead ultimately to the desired ideal.'<sup>22</sup>

The emphasis laid on the development of spiritual character of national workers in the first decade of the present century was a characteristic feature of the national movement. According to Bipinchandra Pal: "The fundamental point of difference between the older political agitations and the new Nationalist Movement is thus (1) its intensely spiritual and religious character as compared to

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Bapitsta—*All About Lokmanya Tilak*. 668.

<sup>21</sup> The *Kesari* 22nd June, 1908, quoted in the Report of the Sedition Committee, 5.

<sup>22</sup> The *Kesari*, 5th Sept., 1905 quoted in *Lokamanya Tilak* by Pradhan and Bhagavat, 162-63.

the absolutely secular spirit of the former and (2) its strong grip on the actualities of Indian life and thought as against the imitative character of the older and earlier social and political activities."<sup>23</sup> Both these factors were largely due to the preachings of Swami Vivekananda.

The earliest symptom of dissatisfaction with the petitioning policy of the Congress is to be found in the series of articles contributed by Sri Aurobindo to the *Induprakash* in 1893. But no serious attempt was made to chalk out an alternative policy for more than a decade. In 1904, Tilak condemned in severe terms the so-called mendicant policy of the old leaders. He wrote: "We will not achieve any success in our labours, if we croak once a year like frog." He added that time had come to give a new direction to the political movement, since "there is today sufficient reason to change the White man's old idea that the people of Asia will always remain slaves of the foreigners."<sup>24</sup> But Dadabhai Naoroji made a personal appeal to Tilak not to run down the Congress and the latter agreed to accept the suggestion for the time being.

The partition of Bengal, however, gave an entirely new turn to the ideas of a large section of political workers. They adopted a fighting creed. There was considerable difference of opinion as to whether the fight was to be non-violent or violent in character. Both Tilak and Sri Aurobindo laid stress on bloodless revolution in their public utterances, but their secret activities indicated a different policy.

It is seldom realised that amongst the Nationalist leaders of India Lala Lajpat Rai was the earliest exponent of militant nationalism in this country. He was the first spokesman of the doctrine of Passive Resistance. Addressing the twenty-first session of the Indian National Congress at Varanasi in 1905 he said: "The method which is perfectly legitimate, perfectly constitutional and perfectly justifiable

<sup>23</sup> Bipin Chandra Pal—*The Spirit of Indian Nationalism* (London, 1910) 29.

<sup>24</sup> *The Kesari*, July 4, 1904 quoted in Wolpert's *Political Ideas of Tilak and Gokhale*.

is the method of passive resistance (cheers). Although I am not at the present moment quoting any social democrat or labour man I must admire them: I have great respect for them. I must tell you that the message which the people of England wanted to send to you through me was the message that in our utterance, in our agitations and in our fight and struggle for liberty, we ought to be more manly than we have been heretofore. An Englishman hates or dislikes nothing like beggary. I think a beggar deserves to be hated. Therefore, it is our duty to show Englishmen that we have risen to the sense of consciousness, that we are no longer beggars and that we are subject of an Empire where people are struggling to achieve that position which is their right by right of natural law. Gentlemen, in every state people are arbiters of their destiny, but we are not so at the present moment. We are perfectly justified in trying to become arbiters of our own destiny and in trying to obtain freedom. . . . . If, therefore, you want to be heard, and you want to be heard with respect, you must approach with determination, with evidence of determination, with signs that you are determined to achieve your *right at any cost* (Italics ours). Unless you do that, the Goddess of liberty is very jealous. She shall never allow you to approach her, and she shall never allow you to enter her portals."<sup>25</sup>

Lala Lajpat Rai himself stated that when he was speaking in this strain the elderly leaders sitting on both sides of the President began to tremble and turned pale with fear. Nothing like this had ever been uttered in course of twentyone years in the life of the Congress. "This was the first speech", writes Lalaji, "of its kind delivered from the Congress platform, and in a way might be said to have laid the foundations of the nationalist wing."<sup>26</sup> To the students of Political Science the use of the expression Passive Resistance is more important than the tone of the lecture.

<sup>25</sup> RINC, 1905, 73.

<sup>26</sup> Lajpat Rai—Autobiography III ( University Publishers, 1965).

There has been some controversy over the claim to the credit for introducing in India the idea of Passive Resistance. As early as 1849 Henry David Thoreau (1817-62), the American poet and essayist, had used the term Civil Disobedience in course of a speech delivered in the United States. Mahatma Gandhi was so much influenced by his 'Essay on Civil Disobedience' that he decided to apply it in the Satyagraha movement in South Africa in 1908. In January, 1910 Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Karmayogin*: "Bipin Chandra Pal is the prophet and first preacher of passive resistance."<sup>27</sup> A series of seven articles on Passive Resistance was published in the *Bande Mataram* from April 9 to April 23, 1907 and it was believed that it was from the pen of Bipin Chandra Pal. Sri Aurobindo, however, contradicted his earlier statement in course of a letter written on December 5, 1944 to Charuchandra Datta, a retired member of the I.C.S.: "I was the writer of the series of articles on the 'Passive Resistance' published in April, 1907 to which reference has been made. Bipin Pal had nothing to do with it. He ceased his connection with the paper towards the end of 1906 and from that time onward was not writing any editorials or articles for it."<sup>28</sup> It cannot be gainsaid, however, that Bipinchandra Pal was delivering lectures in Madras on *Swaraj* and Passive Resistance within a fortnight of the publication of these articles in the *Bande Mataram*. From the short-hand report submitted by the C.I.D. and preserved in the National Archives we find that on the 5th May, 1907, Pal said: "In our campaign of passive resistance we shall, therefore, keep always these two things in view: (1) respect for the law provided the law respects the primary rights of the individuals; and regard for the claims, not of a particular section of the human race, no, not even of one section, but regard for the claims of the whole of the human race irrespective of creed, colour and

<sup>27</sup> *Karmayogin*, 22nd January, 1910

<sup>28</sup> Aurobindo 93.



climate”<sup>29</sup> He was extremely cautious in not trespassing the bounds of law. His brand of Passive Resistance avoided active clash with the Government. He said: “You have political authority over us, we recognise that authority. You are entitled to our taxes, we shall pay them but nothing more than taxes.”<sup>30</sup> He himself had said on the 1st of May that constitutional agitation means agitation which is consistent with the safety of the agitator and that it means agitation within the limits of the Penal Code. Though he tried his level best to keep himself within the bounds of law, the Government regarded him as nothing less than a fire-brand bent upon producing conflagration in the tranquil Presidency of Madras. On the 10th of May, 1907 he was to deliver a lecture in Madras under the chairmanship of G. Subramania Iyer, the veteran journalist. But news reached him that Lala Lajpat Rai had all on a sudden been deported. He cancelled his engagement and the following notice was issued: “As a mark of sorrow at Lala Lajpat Rai’s arrest and deportation Mr. Pal’s lecture announced for this evening is abandoned.” Pal took the earliest available train for Calcutta possibly with a view to averting the fate which had befallen Lala Lajpat Rai.

Sri Aurobindo held up the ideal of non-payment of taxes as a natural and logical result of the attitude of passive resistance. He showed that this was the form of resistance offered by the Dissenters in England to the Education Act of the Conservative Government. He cited the example of no-rent campaign in Ireland and the fight of the American colonists over the principle of ‘no taxation without representation’. He, however, admitted that it was not practicable to employ this stronger sort of passive resistance in India. He exhorted the people to take recourse to boycott which involved no breach of

<sup>29</sup> National Archives, Home, Political, Public 1907 Dec. No. 46-56, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 8

legal obligation or direct defiance of administrative authority.<sup>31</sup>

He classified organized national resistance into three categories. First, following the genius of Parnell, to make administration impossible by an organized passive resistance; secondly, making organized aggressive resistance in the shape of riots, assassinations, strikes and agrarian risings like the Russian movement and thirdly, armed revolt, which is at once the old time-honoured method, which demands the least powers of endurance and suffering and the smallest and briefest sacrifices.<sup>32</sup> He pointed out that under the then existing circumstances in India passive resistance was the most natural and suitable weapon. But he took care to add that this did not mean any condemnation of "other methods as in all circumstances criminal and unjustifiable." He explained his views more explicitly in the following words: "Under certain circumstances a civil struggle becomes in reality a battle and the morality of war is different from the morality of peace. To shrink from bloodshed and violence under such circumstances is a weakness deserving as severe a rebuke as Sri Krishna addressed to Arjuna when he shrank from the colossal civil slaughter on the field of Kurukshetra. Liberty is the life-breath of a nation; and when the life is attacked, when it is sought to suppress all chance of breathing by violent pressure, any and every means of self-preservation becomes right and justifiable—just as it is lawful for a man who is being strangled to rid himself of the pressure which determines the nature of the resistance."<sup>33</sup> All these were written, of course, anonymously.

Some form of passive resistance was preached in India by the revolutionary journal, *Gaelic American*, some six months after the speech delivered by Lala Lajpat Rai at the Varanasi Congress. It reproduced in its issue dated

<sup>31</sup> Sri Aurobindo—*The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, 42.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 27-29.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 30

7th July, 1906 some extracts from the *London New Life* recommending Indians to take no office of profit under the Crown until some form of self-Government was given to them.<sup>34</sup>

Lokmanya Tilak laid down all the fundamental points of passive resistance in course of a speech delivered in Calcutta on January 2, 1907, that is, one year after the Congress speech of Lala Lajpat Rai and nearly four months before the publication of the aforesaid articles in the *Bande Mataram*. He said: "The whole Government is carried on with our assistance and they try to keep us in ignorance of our power of co-operation. . . . 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 the time comes we shall not pay taxes. Can you do that by your united efforts? If you can, you are free from to-morrow."<sup>35</sup> Here Tilak was outlining a policy much bolder than that hinted at by Bipin Chandra Pal and nearly as comprehensive as that explained by Sri Aurobindo. The most dangerous threat was the reference to the withholding of the Indian soldiers from foreign wars. Lala Lajpat Rai was a successful lawyer and he knew how to make inflammatory statements without trespassing the bounds of law. In the Varanasi Congress speech he just threw a hint about the possibility of the outbreak of revolution, but twisted it in such a way that the Government could not prosecute him. He said: "If we were to adopt the methods of revolutionists, if we were to adopt the same secret methods which the Government of Lord Curzon has adopted in pushing forth the Partition scheme, if we were to adopt the same methods that the Government of India and bureaucratic rulers are adopt-

<sup>34</sup> National Archives, Home, Political, Aug. 1907, No. 243-250

<sup>35</sup> *Speeches of Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, ed. by R.R. Srivastava, 189-93.

ing in dividing people against people, in setting the Hindu against Mohamedan, the Hindu against the Sikh, it will be a dangerous game. I say that the Government is giving weapons which are sharp but which are dangerous and which show signs of weakness." He twisted the word 'revolution' and having blamed the Government turned to the Congress and showed what he really meant when he asked: "Is it not a matter of shame for us that this National Congress in the last twenty-one years should not have produced at least a number of political *Sannyasis* that could sacrifice their lives for the political regeneration of the country?"<sup>36</sup> The question of sacrificing life can arise only in connection with the revolution he hinted at.

Bipin Chandra Pal held up before the public the ideal of the Mother as envisaged by Bankimchandra. Bankim wrote that the Mother was originally *Jagatdhatri*, sitting upon her lotus pedestal at the place which was infested by beasts. "She became Kali", writes Pal, "the grim goddess dark and naked, wearing a garland of human heads around her neck—heads from which blood is dripping—and dancing on the prostrate form of Shiva, the God—this says Bankim Chandra, is the mother as she is, dark because ignorant of herself; the heads with dripping blood are those of her own children destroyed by famine and pestilence; the jackals licking these drippings are the symbol of desolation and decadence of social life, and the prostrate form of Shiva means that she is trampling her own God under her feet."<sup>37</sup> The picture of jackals has been added by Pal himself and Lala Lajpat Rai in quoting the passage states that the jackals are the foreign exploiters.<sup>38</sup> Pal informs that the interpretation of the old images of gods and goddesses imparted a new meaning to the current ceremonialism of the country when, people worshipped them with the inspiring cry of Vande Mataram. The Brahmo Samaj

<sup>36</sup> R I N C 1905, 74.

<sup>37</sup> Pal—*The Spirit of Indian Nationalism*, 36.

<sup>38</sup> Lajpat Rai—*Young India*, 190.

and the Arya Samaj do not believe in image worship, but some of the great leaders of militant nationalism came from the rank of these two reformist movements. Sri Aurobindo's and Barindra's father and maternal grandfather were Brahmos. P. Mitra, Barrister, whose full name was Pramatha Mitra and Satish Chandra Mukherjee were disciples of Bijoy Krisna Goswami, who was a prominent Brahmo at one time. The Arya Samaj, being accused of anti-British feeling in 1907-1910 went so far as to repudiate Shyamji Krishna Verma, who was selected as a trustee of the property of the founder of the Arya Samaj by Swami Dayananda himself. But none could deny that Sardar Ajit Singh was an Arya-Samajist at one time and Bhai Parmananda remained an active member and preacher of the Arya Samaj during the major part of his life.

The new religious movements introduced by Rammohan Roy and Swami Dayananda created a congenial field for the production of some revolutionaries indeed, but this does not mean that all the members belonging to their Reformist schools were favourably inclined towards revolution. On the other hand majority of the revolutionaries like Savarkar, M. N. Roy, Rash Behari Bose and Lala Har Dayal came from the orthodox Hindu families. Lokmanya Tilak introduced some novel features like the Shivaji festival and the Ganapati festival in Hinduism with a view to rousing the political consciousness of the people. The Chapekar brothers wrote poems on these occasions exhorting the Maharatta people to take up swords and shields and kill the enemy. Damodar Hari Chapekar gives out in his highly interesting autobiography that it was for the sake of orthodox Hindu religion that he undertook to murder Rand. He recited at the Ganapati festival held in Bombay a poem of his own composition in which he said: "Like butchers the wicked in their monstrous atrocity kill calves and kine. Free her (the cow) from her trouble, die (but) kill the English. Do not remain idle and (thereby) burden the earth. This is called Hindustan. How it is that the English rule here? It is a great shame. Do not forget (your) name.

Dearly cherish patriotism in your minds. Rise, rap your upper arms, encounter (the enemies). May you succeed in slaughtering the wicked.”<sup>39</sup> Religion and politics are closely mixed up here. It is worth noting that to Damodar Hari Chapekar Tilak did not appear to be sufficiently religious. His grievances against Tilak were that Tilak was the dear friend of the beef-eater Daji Abaji Kharc and that nobody has ever seen him performing such pious acts as hearing a *Kirtan* or *Purana* or visiting a temple.

He was so very orthodox in his views that he took a vow to inflict physical injury upon those who dared to keep their daughters unmarried till the age of sixteen. He and his father and brothers earned their livelihood by reciting *Kirtan* song. He had little or no schooling. He read up to the Second Reader in English. His case is rather unique among the revolutionaries.

But barring a few brilliant exceptions like Sri Aurobindo, Har Dayal, Bhai Parmanand and Vinyak Savarkar most of the revolutionaries were not highly educated. Very few of them were graduates. Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai could not pass the First Arts Examination. M. N. Roy was expelled from school, Kartar Singh of the Delhi Conspiracy Case read up to the seventh standard in the Khalsa School at Ludhiana.

The Sedition Committee gives an account of the age, caste and occupation of 186 Bengal revolutionaries convicted of specific outrages, conspiracy etc. From this we find that 68 (31%) were students, of whom 50 were below the age of twenty and 24 (13%) were unemployed persons. Most of them must have belonged to the age group 21 to 30, whose number was 105 (56%). Thus 155 out of 186 persons (83%) were below the age of 31. The period covered by the investigation of the Sedition Committee was from 1905 to 1917. It is worth noting that in 1905 Tilak was 49, Bipin Pal was 47, Lala Lajpat Rai was 40 and Sri Aurobindo was 33 years of age. At the time of the declaration of the

<sup>39</sup> H F M II. 993.

first World War their age was 58, 56, 49 and 42 respectively. According to the findings of the Sedition Committee there was only one person among the Bengal revolutionaries whose age was over 45.

In Maharashtra all the persons involved in the revolutionary movement were Brahmans and mostly Chitpavans. In Bengal, however, there were 87 Kayasthas (46%) as contrasted to 65 Brahmanas (35%) and 13 Vaidyas (7%). The Kaivartas and Mahisyas contributed 3 each, the Saha (merchant) community 2 and the Tanti (weavers), Suvarnabaniks (Goldsmiths), Karmakar (Blacksmith), Barui (Betel-leaf growers), Mudi (Grocers) contributed 1 each. The Revolutionary movement was thus confined mainly to the upper classes in Bengal and Maharashtra.

As regards profession or occupation as many as 20 were clerks or persons in Government services, 23 followed trade and commerce, 16 were teachers and 19 landowners and 5 journalists. Practically all the revolutionaries in Bengal as well as in other parts of India belonged to the lower middle class, Raja Mahendra Pratap of Hathras was possibly the only scion of landed aristocracy to join the movement.

Militant nationalism was predominantly a Hindu movement. Moulvi Obeidulla, who had been converted to Islam from Sikhism gathered a band of followers at the Muslim religious school at Deoband in the Saharanpur district of the U.P. with the idea of promoting a great Muslim attack on India. He cannot be called a nationalist at all. There were only a few Moslem revolutionaries like Barkatullah. The latter was the son of an officer of the Bhopal State and came under the influence of Shyamji Krishna Varma in England.<sup>40</sup> Probably he was the Moslem young man whom Lala Lajpat Rai wanted to help in going to America.<sup>41</sup> He visited America and Japan and became Professor of Hindustani at the Tokyo University in 1909. He lost his job

<sup>40</sup> Sedition Committee 126.

<sup>41</sup> Lajpat Rai—*Autobiographical Writings*, 105.

for his anti-British activities in 1914 and later on joined the Ghadar party in America and rose to be its Vice-President. When the Berlin Revolutionary Committee planned to set up the Provisional Government of India at Kabul with Raja Mahendra Pratap as President, Barkatullah was selected for the post of Prime Minister and Obeidullah as a Minister. The plan, however, produced no tangible result.

As early as 1907 Prithwish Chandra Roy classified the Extremists into three categories. The first of these refused to have anything to do with the British rule and counselled the development of Indian social and political organisations without looking for any help from the State which was under the control of foreigners. Rabindranath Tagore's famous essay on the *Swadeshi Samaj* written at the first stage of the Swadeshi movement was the most uncompromising elucidation of this idea. The Second section, according to Roy, "think that the continuance of the British rule is incompatible with our natural progress, and that we should prepare ourselves for the expulsion of the British from the country, and help ourselves to replace it as fast and as best as we can. The third section are of the opinion that the British must be made to clear out of India at once and leave us to our fate."<sup>42</sup>

It is difficult to state whether Tilak belonged to the second or the third section. Tilak told Henry W. Nevins in an interview in 1908: "Certainly there is a very small party which talks about abolishing the British rule at once and completely. That does not concern us, it is much too far in the future. Unorganized, disarmed and still disunited we should not leave 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. Perhaps our Home

<sup>42</sup> *The Indian World*, 1907, 350-355.



Rule would take the form of Provincial Councils of fifty or sixty members, nominated or indirectly elected at first, but elected by popular vote as education becomes more general". "But that ideal also", he went on, "is far ahead of us—perhaps generations ahead."<sup>43</sup> Did the astute Mahratta statesman really reveal his inmost thoughts and aspirations to the foreign journalist?

In the columns of the *Kesari* Tilak denounced the constitutional method of agitation severely. He wrote: "To insist on a constitutional movement when there is no constitution of any kind in India, is like putting petitions before Government and asking us to rest content with the piece of bread tossed on to our body by the administration.... The people should keep in mind the fact that the beggar's bowl cannot rise upon its own sling, and recognize that this politics of begging is an illusion, and worth rejecting like a mirage, and be careful not to allow such politics to influence the National Congress as in the past."<sup>44</sup> He was not only condemning the constitutional method but also placing before Indians the ideal of the Russian revolutionaries. Thus he wrote in the same paper three months later: "If the rulers adopt this Russian method then the subjects in India will have to imitate the subjects in Russia. The modern histories of Russia, Germany and Ireland are booming out to us that the people's yearning or desire for Swarajya cannot be suppressed by tyranny. The time has now arrived to see whether the subjects of India are less manly than the subjects of these other countries."<sup>45</sup> But he did not like to lose the opportunity of training up his countrymen by being deprived of his liberty. He, therefore, took care to say that what he wanted was a bloodless revolution. Addressing the Shivaji festival at Poona in June, 1907 he said: "It is true that what we seek may seem like a revolution; it is a revolution in the sense that it means a complete change in the theory of the government of India as

<sup>43</sup> Nevinson—*The New Spirit in India* (1908), 72.

<sup>44</sup> *The Kesari*, Feb. 12, 1907. <sup>45</sup> *The Kesari*, May, 21 1907.

now put forward by the bureaucracy. It is true that this revolution must be a bloodless revolution, but it would be folly to suppose that if there is no shedding of blood, there are also to be no sufferings to be undergone by the people. These sufferings must be great."<sup>46</sup> Lokmanya Tilak is known to have sent an emissary to Nepal for setting up an armoury there. It is also known that a copy of the Bomb Manual prepared from Russian sources by Bapat, Hemchandra Das and Mirza Abbas was given to Tilak. All these go to prove that Tilak did not really believe that the revolution in India would be a bloodless one.

Soon after the release of Tilak from the Mandalay Jail, Bipin Chandra Pal wrote: "Mr. Tilak never was a revolutionary. His temperament, his superior native intelligence, his very liberal education, his grasp of the actualities of the political situation in his country, all these are absolutely inconsistent with the very idea of any sort of real revolutionary patriotism."<sup>47</sup> Sri Aurobindo was not inferior to Tilak in respect of the qualities referred to by Pal. C. R. Das also put forward the plea that if the court believed him to be a highly intelligent man it was inconsistent to hold him responsible for a toy revolution. The Judge also wrote in his judgment: "In his favour we have the fact that he has in the columns of the *Bande Mataram* deprecated violence; there is such an article dated 28th May, 1907. And so late as 10th April, 1908, there is an article saying that the national movement cannot be allowed to be driven inward and made an affair of a secret society, as it would if outward expression were stopped."<sup>48</sup> Sri Aurobindo, however, told his disciples of Pondicherry after the achievement of independence that if he "had not believed in the efficacy of violent revolution or had disliked it, he would not have joined the secret society whose purpose was to prepare a national insurrection.....In his public activity he took up non-co-

<sup>46</sup> *The Mahratta*, June 30, 1907.

<sup>47</sup> Bipin Chandra Pal—*Indian Nationalism—Its Principles and Personalities* (Madras, 1918) 69.

<sup>48</sup> *The Alipore Case* 176.

operation and passive resistance as a means in the struggle for independence but not the sole means and as long as he was in Bengal he maintained a secret revolutionary activity as a preparation for open revolt, in case passive resistance proved insufficient for the purpose."<sup>49</sup> Is it unreasonable to hold that what is true about the role of Aurobindo in the revolutionary movement is also true of Lokamanya Tilak?

J. Keir Hardie, an early leader of the Labour Party, having come in close contact with the nationalist movement in India, found in 1909 that the basic cause of unrest in India was the repressive policy of the Government. He thus puts all the cause at work succinctly: "The growth of an educated middle-class, the deepening and growing poverty of the ryots, the prevalence with monotonous continuance of plague and famine, the irksome restrictions imposed by Government, and the growing alienation between East and West, all had their share in producing the discontent which journalists and officials classed as sedition. But more than all these put together was the growth of the military spirit, which is yearly becoming an increasing factor in the administration of Indian affairs. Freedom and militarism are naturally antagonistic forces and where the former flourishes, the latter cannot thrive. Not only is this the case, but the military forces neither knowing nor understanding the spirit of Civil freedom take alarm at the slightest display thereof."<sup>50</sup>

Bipin Chandra Pal attributed the revolutionary movement to the harsh punishment of political workers, many of whom were detained in prison even without trial, to the gagging of the press and to the prohibition of public meetings. He, however, condemned the revolutionaries as 'immature, impatient, irresponsible men, without any real appreciation of the culture of their country, or an intimate knowledge of the real character of their people.'<sup>51</sup> He refuses to identify

<sup>49</sup> Aurobindo 33.

<sup>50</sup> J. Keir Hardie—*India—Impressions and Suggestions* (1909) 57-58.

<sup>51</sup> Bipin Chandra Pal: *The Spirit of Indian Nationalism* (London, 1910), 49-50.

Militant Nationalism with the New Movement, which, according to him, turned the eyes of its leaders from the Government House to the "starving, the naked, the patient and long suffering 300 millions of our people." He adds: "We view them now with an eye of love,—which we have had felt before, and in the teeming, toiling, starving and naked population of India we find possibilities, potentialities, germs that have given rise to this New Movement."<sup>52</sup> Here we find a distinct echo of the famous exhortation of Swami Vivekananda. Pal fails, however, to indicate how the condition of the starving and toiling population of India is to be ameliorated. The militant Nationalists believed that the foreign domination was the fundamental cause of their misery and that the quickest way of extricating them from it was through revolution.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MILITANT NATIONALISM IN MAHARASTRA

It has become customary to begin an account of militant nationalism in Maharashtra with the activities of Wasudeo Balwant Phadke. But the Sedition Committee did not attach any importance to his attempt and is absolutely silent over him in their report dated the 15th April, 1918. His birth-place, Shirdhon, however, was visited by Vinayak Savarkar in February, 1943 as a place of pilgrimage and it is now honoured as such by the Maratha patriots. When Phadke was arrested the Government of Bombay consulted the Legal Remembrancer about the charges to be framed against him. He opined that Phadke could not be charged with 'attempt to wage war against the queen' as 'no overt act of any kind was ever committed by him against the Government'. 'All he did was to molest his own people.'<sup>1</sup> Had he not written his Diary from February 15 to May 29, and his autobiography between April 19 and 26 in 1879, he would have been considered as an ordinary dacoit. The idea of manufacturing bombs did not occur to him. He was able to collect 1 gun, 1 pistol, 2 swords, 3 spear heads and 2 single sticks. Later on, he was able to purchase 4 more guns. He tried to collect money by committing dacoity. But the villages he looted must have been exceptionally poor. Thus on the 23rd February, 1879 having raided the village Dhamari with 45 men he got only 3 seers of broken silver and a sum of Rs. 95/- in cash. On March 5 he looted Walleh and got Rs. 300/- in cash and Rs. 100/- in cloths; on the 14th March he received Rs. 50/- worth of property by looting Harue. Next day he looted another village, Nagdarri but got absolutely nothing. His associates had neither patriotism nor moral integrity. He found that they

<sup>1</sup> H F M I 76.

cheated him. He wrote in his Diary on the 25th March: "On the road there was a Chowkey of the English and I wished to attack it, but the people with me said they would run away."<sup>2</sup> This is certainly not the type of conduct expected of militant nationalists. There can be no doubt about the iron determination and sincerity of purpose of Phadke himself, but he failed to enlist the services of a single nationalist. His associates were nothing but mercenaries.

Phadke was hailed as a great patriot by a section of people. When he was being carried to the prison from the courthouse after his conviction they shouted out "Success to Wasudeva." But the editor of the *Indu-Prakash* commented that 'from the publication of his diary, and the facts which came out during the trial, it is clear that the man is demented.'<sup>3</sup> Another paper, the *Shivaji* wrote on November 21, 1879: "It is, therefore, to be hoped that no one will be idiotic enough to follow the mad designs of Wasudev, but in these days we very much feel the need of individuals possessing his disinterestedness and self denial. A real patriot ought to endeavour to bring the grievances of the people to the notice of Government." The *Bodha Sudhakar* wrote on December 3, 1879: "Wasudeva wished to establish a republican government but the accomplishment of this object was no easy matter unless all the people were of the same mind with him. . . . . The attempts of Wasudeva to commit dacoities deserve condemnation, and he was rightly punished for them, and we are glad that in this matter he received no assistance from his countrymen." All these journals had to keep themselves within the bounds of the Press Act of 1878 and it is, therefore, difficult to say how far their condemnation of Phadke was sincere.

Within a year of the failure of Phadke's attempt the *Shivaji* for the first time threw a mild hint about passive resistance in the issue of the 26th November, 1880. It wrote: "If the natives were to withdraw themselves from Government service altogether, the Government would be unable

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 93.

<sup>3</sup> *The Indu-Prakash*, Nov. 24, 1879.

to move forward one inch." V. K. Chiplonkar (1850-1882) writing in the *Nibandhamala* for the month of June 1881 regretted that under the British Government "the condition of the nation is not better than that of the lower animals... A man who is accustomed to servility loses by degrees self-respect, courage and shame and contracts various vices." Physical weakness and imbecility of Indians pained Lokmanya Tilak so much that he wrote in the *Kesari* on the 6th June, 1882: "The people are prohibited from using arms of any kind, and hence from want of practice they do not know how to handle a sword or to fire a gun. The English from selfish motives and in utter disregard of the interests of natives, have disarmed the whole population and persons of the higher and middle classes are denied admittance into the army. Owing to the exclusion of respectable natives from the administration and from the army they have become merely sensualists. Should the English ever leave India as the Romans were obliged to leave Britain, they will have the satisfaction of knowing that before their departure they had effected the thorough ruin of the people. Tranquillity is a good thing in itself, but too much value ought not to be attached to it."

It is well known that Lokmanya Tilak took steps to impart physical education, especially training in the arts of fencing with sticks from 1893 when the Ganapati festival was introduced. The militant spirit of the Mahratta was invoked by the introduction of the Shivaji festival in 1895. On the 12th of June 1897 Tilak delivering his presidential address on the occasion of the Shivaji festival said: "The Divine Krishna teaching in the Gita tells us we may kill even our teachers and our kinsmen, and no blame attaches if we are not actuated by selfish desires. Shivaji did nothing from a desire to fill his own belly. It was in a praiseworthy object that he murdered Afzal Khan for the good of others. If thieves enter our house and we have not strength to drive them out, should we not without hesitation shut them in and burn them alive? God has conferred on the *mlechhas* no grant of Hindustan inscribed on

imperishable brass. Shivaji strove to drive them forth out of the land of his birth, but he was guiltless of the sin of covetousness. Do not circumscribe your vision like frogs in a well. Rise above the Penal Code into the rarefied atmosphere of the sacred Bhagvad Gita and consider the action of great men.”<sup>4</sup> This speech formed practically the basis of the charge of sedition brought against him after the murder of Rand and Ayerst by the Chapekar brothers on the 22nd June, 1897.

Like Phadke, Damodar Hari Chapekar (1870-1898) has given us the benefit of access to his inmost thoughts in his autobiography. But it is worth noting that while Phadke's memoirs were written entirely according to his own free will without anybody's request a few months before his arrest, Chapekar was induced by the Police authorities to write his reminiscences in the jail. Chapekar was, however, shrewd enough to understand their motive. In his petition to the Governor in Council, dated 9th March, 1898 he wrote: “Why did Messrs Kennedy and Brewin make me live in a princely style (in the prison) for four months? Was it because I was their son-in-law or because I did an excellent thing in killing Mr. Rand? If that be the case, that will be an encouragement to criminals. The treatment of prisoners in this jail is worse than that accorded to brutes.....The police desired me to mention the names of (some) prominent and respectable persons in Poona. Say that these persons belong to your company. Say that you murdered Mr. Rand because you were exasperated by the strongly worded articles in the newspapers. Say that the Natus and Mr. Tilak are your friends. But being a true and high born Hindu I told them plainly “Though I were to lose my life, I shall not falsely mention the names of other persons.”<sup>5</sup> It is highly regrettable that in the face of such categorical statement a publicist of the standing of Valentine Chirol wrote: “The murderer of Rand and Ayerst—the same young Brahman who had recited the *Sloka* which I have quoted above,

<sup>4</sup> The *Kesari*, 15th June, 1897.

<sup>5</sup> H F M II 357-58.



at the great Shivaji celebration—declared that it was the doctrine expounded in Tilak's newspaper that had driven him to the deed."<sup>6</sup> Chapekar has written in his autobiography that he did not like Tilak because of what appeared to him to be the unorthodox conduct. It is possible that he wrote all these just to ward off any suspicion of Tilak's association with him. He knew the history of the movement of the efforts of Phadke. He read the *Nibandhamala* and the works of *Lokhitawadi*.<sup>7</sup>

Chapekar was bent upon receiving military training. He applied in vain several times for being enrolled in the army. His petition was rejected on the ground that there was no Brahmana regiment in which he could be placed. He, thereupon, offered to recruit all the 400 soldiers from the Brahmana community but the Government was averse to the employment of a single Brahmana not to speak of 400. Tilak recommended a high-spirited Brahmana youth for employment as body-guard at Junagad to Shyamji Krishna Varma, who was then employed there as the Dewan. It has been suggested that this youth was none else than Damodar Hari Chapekar. The fact that Shyamji Krishna Varma left India soon after the arrest of Chapekar lends support to this hypothesis. Damodar made an earnest effort to get military training. In his Confession recorded on October 8, 1897, he said: "About two or three years ago I wished to enter into the cavalry and made enquiries from natives in the Risala but was told I could not be employed as I was a Brahman. Therefore I petitioned the commander-in-chief at Simla and got a reply that I could not be employed. I was told before that the Risala was divided into Companies of different castes and as there were not enough Brahmanas there was no Company of Brahmanas and I could not be employed. I offered to collect 400 Brahmanas and form a Company but they would not accept the proposal." The real reason for refusing him was that he happened to be a Chit-

<sup>6</sup> Valentine Chirol—*Indian Unrest*, 448.

<sup>7</sup> H F M II 989 Autobiography of Damodar Hari Chapekar.

pavan Brahmana. Damodar writes in his autobiography: "After our hopes of getting enlisted in some regiment were completely destroyed, we became implacable enemies of the English."

The British rulers considered it dangerous to allow either the Chitpavan Brahmanas of Maharashtra or the upper castes of Bengal any opportunity of getting military training. It is remarkable that about this time Jatindranath Banerjee also failed to secure admittance into the army. He, however, was able to get military training in the cavalry regiment of Baroda under the surname of Upadhyaya, probably with the help of Sri Aurobindo. This shows that in the closing years of the last century some youngmen realised the importance of military training both in Maharashtra and in Bengal.

Patriotism and the spirit of nationalism are supposed to be the products of English education in this country. The career of Damodar Hari Chapekar belies this theory. His father along with his sons used to earn their livelihood by singing *Kirtan* songs. Damodar did not learn English in any school but picked up an elementary knowledge of it at home.<sup>8</sup> In 1895 he and his brother Balkrishna organised at Poona a society under the name of the "Society for the removal of obstacles to the Hindu Religion" with the ostensible object of imparting physical and military training to young men, but its real purpose appears to have been the removal by any means of the British."<sup>9</sup> They were able to collect about 125 members; but very few of them attended regularly. Some 25 or 30 of them became fairly proficient in stone-slinging. These were organised into two companies of which the two brothers became captains. They practised mock-fighting and when any one was wounded he was taken care of by the "medical officer" of the company, who had a few simple indigenous medicines and

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 351.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 482. report of the Intelligence Department. Damodar in his autobiography calls the club "Rastra Hitechhu Mandali" ( 976 ).

instruments in their haversack. During the absence of the Chapekar brothers, for four months the members of the club collected three old muskets, six swords and some sword-sticks. When they returned to Poona they found that some members had abused them. They, therefore, dissolved the club.<sup>10</sup>

The Chapekar brothers wanted to collect arms. They were too poor to purchase them. The failure of Phadke had shown the undesirability of committing dacoity for the sake of collecting money. They, therefore, tried to achieve their object by stealing. They stole a five-chambered revolver from a shop at Bid in the Nizam's territory and consoled themselves with the thought that "it was not culpable to steal anything required for a religious purpose."<sup>11</sup> Later on they stole two Martini Henry Rifles and one bayonet from the two sepoys who used to sleep in the Maruti temple near Lakadipool Bridge, Poona.

The Chapekar brothers took the vow of liberating the country. Balkrishna composed and recited during the Shivaji festival a verse which implied: "Listen! we shall risk our lives on the battle-field in a national war. Do not look upon our utterances in the presence of many people as a mere farce. We shall assuredly shed upon the earth the life-blood of the enemies who destroy (our) religion. We shall die after killing only." Damodar Hari Chapekar composed a song for recital at the Ganapati festival in Bombay. It runs thus:

"Fools, what is the use of your being men? Of what use are your big moustaches? Alas, you are not ashamed to remain in servitude; try, therefore, to commit suicide. Alas! Like butchers the wicked in their monstrous atrocity kill calves and kine. Free her (the cow) from her trouble, die (but) kill the English. Do not remain idle and (thereby) burden the earth. This is called Hindustan (land of the Hindus). How is it that the English rule here? It is

<sup>10</sup> H F M—Autobiography of Damodar Hari Chapekar, 970-977.

<sup>11</sup> H F M. 969.

a great shame. Do not forget (your) name. Dearly cherish patriotism in your minds. Rise, rap your upper arms (like a fighter in a wrestling bout), encounter (the enemies). May you succeed in slaughtering the wicked. How valiant were our forefathers on the battle field. They died after winning glory in the defence of their country. We who have sprung from them are like Saturn whom the Sun has produced. We are not ashamed though our kingdom has been wrested (from us)."<sup>12</sup> Here we find a clear proof of the nationalist spirit of Damodar Hari Chapekar. Though religion was his primary motive, yet the influence of nationalism was not less strong on his mind. The Ganapati festival takes place in September, while the Shivaji festival occurs in June. The Chapekar brothers had made up their mind to sacrifice their lives at least nine months before the celebration of the Shivaji festival on June 12, 1897, when Lokamanya Tilak said in his presidential address: "Srimat Krishna's advice in the *Gita* is to kill even our own teachers and our kinsmen. No blame attaches to any person if he is doing deeds without being actuated by a desire to reap the fruits of his deeds."<sup>13</sup> The Chapekar brothers killed Rand and Ayerst exactly ten days afterwards on June 22, but the songs of the Chapekar brothers quoted above show that they had taken the vow to kill Englishmen much earlier. Damodar was arrested in October, 1897 and Balkrishna in January 1899. The former was executed on April 18, 1898. When the death warrant was being read he refused to hear it and began to repeat "Narayan, Narayan, Jai Govind Hari and Narayan, Narayan, Jai Gopal Hari". He held the *Gita* in his hand at the time of his execution.

Mr. Lamb, the District Magistrate of Poona held that 'the murderous outrages were the result of a widespread cons-

<sup>12</sup> The Sedition Committee Report quotes only the first half of this song, up to "this is called Hindustan, how is it that the English rule here". The Autobiography of Chapekar, H. F. M. 993 gives the full song.

<sup>13</sup> *The Kesari*, June 15, 1897.

piracy of the Poona Brahmanas and the Native Press and the Shivaji movement had helped a good deal to bring about this state of things. Nay, even the educational institutions were responsible for turning out a generation of students imbued with nihilist ideas.”<sup>14</sup> Attempts were made by the Indian Press in Poona to prove that there was no political motive behind these murders and that these were the outcome of the determination of the Chapekars to avenge the pollution of sacred places and the breaking of idols by the European soldiers at the time of searching the houses in Poona for plague cases.

Damodar Hari Chapekar said in October 1897 that he was 27, Balkrishna was 24 and Wasudeo was 17 or 18 years of age. In April 1899 too the age of Balkrishna is given as 24 and of Wasudeo as 19. There must be some mistake about the age of Balkrishna. In any case they were all young men. One Ganesh Shankar Dravid, who was sent to jail on charges of forgery in the early part of 1896 gave information which led to the arrest of the two younger Chapekars. He received a reward of Rs. 10000 but had to pay an Income tax of Rs. 262. He along with his brother were murdered in 1899. Chief Justice Parsons held that there was clear proof against Wasudeo Hari Chapekar and Mahadeo Vinayak Ranade, but there was not a scrap of evidence to connect Balkrishna with the murders except the statements of the three accused persons themselves. But Justice M. G. Ranade in his judgment dated April 4, 1899 held all the three equally guilty. He wrote: “We know that Damodar persistently said that his active accomplice in his crime was his brother Balkrishna. We know also that Wasudeo who voluntarily returned home (whereas Balkrishna did not) when interrogated by the Police, made a statement to the same effect, and this statement he subsequently confirmed on oath before a Magistrate. It was not until afterwards, when he found himself in the predicament of having to go in to give evidence which could not but be fatal to his

brother Balkrishna, that he took upon himself the responsibility for the crime, and then partly out of vengeance on account of his elder brother Damodar, he set the seal on his doom by his murder of one of the Dravids and his attempt on the life of the Chief constable, 15th April, 1899". The associate of Wasudeo in murdering Dravid was Mahadeo Ranade, a nephew of the historian Rajwade. It is curious to note that as Justice Ranade confirmed the sentence of death in the first case of political murder, so Justice Asutosh Mookerjee had to deliver judgment confirming the conviction of some of the accused in the Alipore Bomb case and Justice Chandavarkar in the Nasik conspiracy case.

The Sedition Committee came to the conclusion that if a comparatively small body of impressionable young men of the Chitpavan community had imbibed revolutionary ideas and carried their ideas to the point of political assassination, it must not therefore be supposed that the community as a whole was disaffected. The Committee also held that the Chapekars "had no definite political aims." The Chapekars spoke much about achieving independence for India indeed, but they failed to build up any political organisation. The club which they started for imparting physical and possibly military training lasted only for a few months. Beyond composing and reciting some patriotic poems they could do nothing to promote the cause of militant nationalism. They showed exceptional courage and made tremendous self-sacrifice indeed, but it cannot be denied that there was some childish element in their activities. For example, they formed an association called *Dandapani* with "the fixed determination to die and kill (others) for the sake of our religion". But all that this association with its high-sounding name and objective did was to put a garland of shoes round the neck of the statue of Queen Victoria and to blacken her face. Setting the pandal for holding the Matriculation Examination on fire was another mad prank of theirs.

Lokmanya Tilak was the leader of the opponents of

anti-British movement in the concluding years of the last century. It was due to his efforts mainly that Arthur T. Crawford was removed from Civil Service on March 29, 1889. Crawford brooded over his discomfiture for long and at last published a virulent attack on Tilak in 1897 in his book entitled *Our Troubles in Poona and the Deccan*. He must have written this work before the Rand murder, because there is no reference to it in this book. He wrote that sedition was widely prevalent in Maharashtra. According to him, "the sedition-mongers of the Deccan—the Poona, Satara, Wai rattle snakes, have hatched out on the Congress dung heap within the past quarter of a century."<sup>15</sup> He attributed the blame specially to the newspaper *Mahratta* which he caricatured in a Chapter of his book under the title 'The Scourge of the Deccan' and nicknamed Tilak as Dustee Rao Pajee Bancootekar. This is typical of the feeling entertained by a section of the British officials in Bombay towards Lokmanya Tilak. They could not forget that one of them lost his job on account of the charges levelled against him by Tilak.

The active phase of militant nationalism began in Maharashtra in right earnest in 1904 with the transformation of the *Mitra Mela* into the *Abhinava Bharata Society*, a name suggested by that of Young Italy Society of Mazzini. The object of the Society was to put an end to the domination of the British and to achieve independence.

Vinayak Damodara Savarkar (b. May 28, 1883) was a boy of 15 when Damodar Hari Chapekar was executed. He was so much affected by the news that he approached the family deity Durga, the *Asta praharana-dharini*, in the sanctuary and took a vow to fulfil the incomplete mission of the martyr Chapekar and to make India free.<sup>16</sup> In 1899 he organised a Patriots' Group with three members. It developed into the *Mitra Mela* or the Friends' Union in 1900. It preached patriotism, arranged physical training and

<sup>15</sup> A. T. Crawford—*Our Troubles in Poona and the Deccan*, 78.

<sup>16</sup> Dhananjoy Keer—*Savarkar and his Times*, 6.

occasional debates and encouraged the writing of national poems and songs. A lame unlettered Maratha poet, Govind Trimbak Darekar by name, was tutored by Vinayak Savarkar and he became the famous revolutionary poet of Maharashtra. Vinayak entered the Fergusson College in January 1902 and passed the B.A. examination in December 1905. One of his contemporaries in the College was Mahadev Bhat, an original member of the *Mitra Mela*. The Secret Police Report states that at the meetings of the *Mitra Mela* biographies of revolutionaries like Mazzini were read again and again and discussions were held with regard to the means of attaining independence for India. "At these meetings the methods advocated were the education of the public by means of lectures, books and songs, and the preparation for rising against the British Government by collection of arms and ammunition."<sup>17</sup>

Vinayak Savarkar convened a special meeting of some two hundred important members of the *Mitra Mela* in Poona in 1904 and it was decided to rename their organization as the *Abhinava Bharata*. Within a short time it became an influential organization. It was able to attract as members persons like J. B. Kripalani, then a student of the Deccan College and Bal Gangadhar Kher, who rose to be the first Premier of Bombay in 1937. Vinayak got a scholarship from Shyamji Krishna Varma on the recommendation of Lokmanya Tilak and set sail for England in the middle of June, 1906. He continued to direct the revolutionary movement from abroad. He wrote a biography of Mazzini in Marathi and sent it to his brother Ganesh who got it published by a Poona Press in April 1907. In the Introduction to the book he emphasised the importance of elevating politics to the rank of religion and pointed out how Mazzini relied upon the youth of the country to attain independence. The Secret Police report on it runs thus: "The suggested methods of preparation for war are the purchase and storing of weapons in neighbouring countries to be used when

<sup>17</sup> H F M. II, 395.



opportunity should occur ; the opening of many very small but secret factories at some distance from one another, for the manufacture of weapons clandestinely in the country ; seeking independence, and the purchase by secret societies of weapons in other countries to be secretly imported in merchant ships."<sup>18</sup> All the two thousand copies of the first edition of the book were sold out within three months.

The revolutionary movement in Maharashtra was distinguished from its counterpart in Bengal in three respects. First, there was lack of centralised organization. The Maharrattas preferred to have a number of independent societies as it was considered safer than a number of branches directed from one centre. Thus there sprang up separate units at Nasik, Bombay, Poona, Kolhapur, Aund, Satara, Gwalior, Baroda, Amraoti, Yeotmal, Nagpur and many other places. The leaders of the *Abhinava Bharata* tried to keep themselves in touch with the different organizations but they did not always succeed in their efforts. Secondly, the revolutionary societies in Maharashtra did not, as a rule, take recourse to political dacoity for raising funds. They were often seriously handicapped for lack of funds. Those who sympathised with them promised to give handsome donations only when some spectacular work like the assassination of some important government officials was done. But the necessary arms and ammunition for undertaking such a work could not be collected on account of paucity of financial resources. Thirdly, with the execution, deportation and imprisonment of a few prominent workers in the cause of the revolution after the trial of the Nasik conspiracy case, the movement practically died out. There was no terroristic activity in any part of the old Bombay Presidency from 1912 to 1927. In Bengal there was no such lull.

But there are indisputable evidences to show that in 1907-1908 there was close collaboration between the militant nationalists of Bengal and Maharashtra. Barindra Kumar

<sup>18</sup> H F M, II, 401.

Ghosh states in his Memoirs that he convened an all India meeting of the revolutionaries at Surat at the time of the meeting of the Congress in December 1907. This is corroborated by the Memoirs of Dr V M Bhat who writes "I told Karve that we had settled at Surat a joint programme with the Bengal revolutionaries of simultaneous murders of English officials in at least three provinces, and blowing up the bridges and railways and government offices." But Karve in Maharashtra and the party of Barindra in Bengal precipitated matter by their rashness.

The Maharashtra revolutionary Bapat met the Bengali worker Hem Chandra Das in Paris and both of them along with Mirza Abbas learnt the art of bomb-manufacturing. A pamphlet entitled "Bande Mataram" issued from London probably by Savarkar in 1909 made the following exhortation "Terrorise the officials English and Indian and the collapse of the whole machinery of oppression is not very far. The persistent execution of the policy that has been so gloriously inaugurated by Khudiram Bose, Kanailal Dut and other martyrs will soon cripple the British Government in India. This campaign of separate assassination is the best conceivable method of paralysing the bureaucracy and of arousing the people. The initial state of the revolution is marked by the policy of separate assassination."<sup>1</sup> The Bombay Police found in the possession of Kashikar a member of the *Abhinava Bharata* a composite photograph in which Khudiram Bose, Prafulla Chaki and the Chapekar brothers were grouped as Patriots. Secret collaboration between Maharashtra and Bengal is proved by the simultaneous outbreak of terrorism in both the regions in April 1908. On April 11, 1908 an attempt was made to murder the Mayor of French Chandernagore with bomb and on the 30th of the same month the Muzaffarpur outrage took place. It was also on the 2nd April of the same year that Anderson, the Assistant Collector of Poona was assaulted. On July 15, 1908 a bomb was sent from Poona to Kolha

pur to kill Col. Ferris. The revolutionary movement in Maharashtra was at its height during the year 1909. On January 16 a coconut bomb was found in Connaught Road, Poona. On November 13 two bombs were thrown at the carriage of the Viceroy at Ahmedabad ; but these did not explode. On December 21, A. M. T. Jackson was murdered at Nasik by Anant Laxman Kanhere. Jackson was a learned Indologist. He contributed many interesting papers on Indian history and culture and was popularly known as Pandit Jackson. His fault was that he had committed Ganesh Savarkar to trial and acquitted an Engineer named Williams of the charge of killing a farmer by rash and negligent driving. He was not harsh in punishing people charged with sedition. W. S. Khare, a pleader of Nasik delivered some seditious speeches. Jackson ordered him to execute a personal bond of Rs. 2,000 and to be of good behaviour for one year with two substantial and respectable sureties of Rs. 1,000 each. But the Bombay High Court, having been requested by the Bombay Government suspended him from practice for one year. It is interesting to note that the order was signed on July 16, 1909 by Justice N. G. Chandavarkar, an ex-president of the Indian National Congress.

Anant Laxman Kanhere (1891-1900) was a young man of only 18. The leader of the group was Krishnaji Gopal Karve, a youth of 23, who having passed the B.A. examination with Honours was studying law in Bombay. He was an expert in the manufacture of bombs. He advised Kanhere to commit suicide in case he found it impossible to escape after committing the murder. He failed to carry out this instruction. When he was captured in the theatre hall where Jackson was murdered he gave out his real name and address. The Police were able to trace out his associates. Three persons, Kanhere, Karve and Vinayak Narayan Deshpande were sentenced to death. Shankar Ramchandra Soman, Ganesh Balaji Vaidya and Waman *alias* Daji Narayan Joshi were transported for life.

On February 28, 1909 Ganesh Savarkar was arrested and

he was sentenced by the Sessions Judge to transportation for life on a charge of abetment of waging war against the King in June. Ganesh appealed to the High Court but Justice Chandavarkar and Justice Heaton concurred with the Sessions Judge and confirmed the sentence on November 18, 1909. Ganesh Savarkar did not manufacture bombs, nor did he commit any violence, though papers connected with bomb making and explosives were found in his house. His chief crime was that he had published some poems under the title "*Laghu Abhinava Bharata Mala*". These were intended to be sung at the festivals of Ganpati and Shivaji. One of the poems asked the people, 'Pray tell, whoever got political freedom without a war?' This was the type of war he was accused of waging against the King. But there is no doubt that he was not thinking of waging a non-violent war. His brother, Vinayak, had informed him of the despatch of some pistols from London and he made arrangement for taking delivery of these before he was arrested. Various groups of revolutionaries at Nasik, Poona, Pen and other places were engaged in manufacturing bombs and collecting firearms. When Ganesh was arrested the paper about explosives which had been sent to Patankar by Vithoba Maratha of Pen was destroyed. The materials for picric acid were removed from Nasik and concealed. Similarly following the arrest of Kanhere the bombs which had been manufactured and stored at Basai were thrown into the sea. In Nasik Conspiracy Case Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was transported for life, Keshav Shripat Chand Wakdar was transported for 15 years and 25 others were sentenced to imprisonment for various terms ranging from six months to ten years.

In 1910 Simcox, the Collector of East Khandesh and Machnochie, Collector of Nasik were threatened with murder but the threat was not followed by any action. On June 4, 1910 it was discovered that a secret society existed at Aundh in the district of Satara. Four young men were sent up for trial and three were convicted.

A secret society styled as the Nav Bharat Society existed

in the Gwalior State. Its members were mostly Brahmins who were in close co-operation with the members of the Abhinava Bharata Society. In the fourth section of the rules of this organisation occurs the following passage: "There are two ways of carrying out the advice of obtaining liberty—education and agitation. Education includes *Swadeshi*, boycott, national education, entire abstinence from liquor, religious festivities, lectures, libraries etc., while agitation includes target-shooting, sword exercise, preparation of bombs, dynamite, procuring revolvers, learning and teaching the use of weapons and missiles. Should an occasion for a general rising in any province at a proper time arise, all should help that cause and attain liberty. We are fully confident that the Aryan Land is quite able to recover its independence. In order to face the yellow peril we shall have to be doubly prepared because the red peril is just rising on our breast. Confidence itself is a means to shake off servitude; we are fully convinced that if thirty crores of people are prepared to fight, none can thwart them in their desire. First, education will be given to prepare the mind and then a rebellion raised; the war of independence will be carried on by resorting to cunning and craft." The talk about confidence reminds one of the teaching of Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita.

The Bombay Police proved to be exceptionally vigilant. They rounded up the different groups of revolutionaries in time. Only three Europeans, Rand, Ayerst and Jackson were assassinated during the period of twenty years between 1897 and 1917. A large number of valiant young men had to sacrifice their lives for this.

The former state of Baroda was a centre of considerable activity of the militant nationalists. Out of 167 revolutionary books and pamphlets proscribed in British India at least 17 are known to have been printed in Baroda Presses. One of these books was euphemistically called "Vegetable Medicines" written by Narsinghai Patel. It contained such phrases as "To slay white officials is a merit, not a sin." He was also the author of a life of Garibaldi and the publisher of a

Gujarati translation of the speeches of Sri Aurobindo in 1908. In 1902 a secret society was discovered in Baroda at an *Akhara* maintained by a Mahanta named Manek Rao. Sri Aurobindo and his friend K. G. Deshpande were engaged in revolutionary activities in Baroda. Sri Aurobindo admits that while serving in the Baroda state he joined in 1902-1903 a revolutionary society started in Western India by a Rajput nobleman. There was a Council of five persons with its headquarters in Bombay at its head and several prominent Mahratta politicians were its members. The Rajput nobleman, not a ruling chief, worked principally among the Indian Army and is said to have won over two or three regiments. Sri Aurobindo states that he himself took a special journey into Central India to meet and speak to Indian sub-officers and men of one of these regiments. He, however, writes that he joined the secret society in Western India "after he had already started secret revolutionary work in Bengal on his own account."<sup>20</sup>

It has already been noticed that there was no revolutionary activity in the Bombay Presidency between 1912 and 1927. On the 1st of January, 1913, just after the attempt on the life of Lord Hardinge in Delhi, a leaflet styled "A Call to Maharashtra brethren" bearing the words "Bengal Revolutionaries" in place of signature was circulated. It said "have the Mahrattas given up attempts for winning liberty as soon as a few patriot stars, that shone in Maharashtra two years back had set? The whole country was in hope that Maharashtra would be renowned for some special achievement; was the hope to prove fruitless?"<sup>21</sup> At least one Mahratta patriot, Vishnu Ganesh Pingle, a product of the Samrath Vidyalaya founded by K. G. Deshpande, responded to this call after his return from America in 1915. He became a trusted lieutenant of Rash Behari Bose.

<sup>20</sup> Aurobindo 14-15 and 29.

<sup>21</sup> Sedition Committee, 9.

## CHAPTER SIX

### MILITANT NATIONALISM IN BENGAL

IN the sixties of the nineteenth century attention of the Bengali people was drawn towards the urgent need of imparting physical training to the youngmen with a view to building up a nation. Under the inspiration of Rajnarayan Bose, Naba Gopal Mitra started a gymnasium at 1, Sankar Ghosh Lane near the site of the present Vidyasagar College. Bipin Chandra Pal states that in his College days he was a member of this club. Rabindranath Tagore relates in his autobiography *Jibana-Smriti*, how Rajnarayan Bose enlisted him and several other selected people as members of a secret society in the seventies of the last century. This society, however, had little else than secrecy and solemnity of procedure to show as evidence of its activity. Rajnarayan Bose's grandsons, Aurobindo and Barindra Ghosh, and his nephew (brother's son) Satyen Bose, were destined to give a practical shape to his visionary scheme.

There appears to have been three different organisations in Calcutta in 1902 for training up young men as believers in physical force. The first was called the *Anushilana Samiti* after the name of a book of Bankimchandra entitled *Anushilana tattva*. The name was suggested by the Headmaster of the New Indian Institute, Narendra Chandra Bhattacharyya, though its leader was Pramatha Mitra, a Barrister-at-law practising in the High Court of Calcutta. Mitra was a resident of Naihati, the birth place of Bankimchandra and he is said to have been initiated into national activities by Bankimchandra himself. The Samiti had its first habitat at Madan Mitra Lane, near the present Vivekananda Road. The Samiti was organised, according to its old members, in 1902.<sup>1</sup> It imparted both physical and

<sup>1</sup> Jadugopal—196 & 203, gives the date as 1902. This is corroborated by *Anushilana Samitir Samkshipta Itihasa*. But Dr. R. C.

mental training to its members. It tried to organise a band of strong, vigorous and fearless workers, ready to sacrifice their self-interests for promoting the larger interests of the nation. But it is doubtful if in its initial stage it had any idea of preaching violent action or committing dacoity. Men like Sir Gurudas Banerjee and Swami Saradananda used to take weekly classes in the Samiti. It is most unlikely that they would have associated themselves with it if they had known that it proposed to commit dacoity or murder officials of the Government. But there is no doubt about the fact that the *Anushilana Samiti* became the principal centre of revolutionary activities after a short time.

The second organisation was under the inspiring guidance of Sri Aurobindo. One notable contributor to the Bengali monthly journal *Udbodhana* asserted that Sri Aurobindo brought the seed of secret society from Maharashtra to Bengal.<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, however, contradicted the statement, when he said that in 1902-1903 he joined the revolutionary society of Thakur Saheb after he had already started secret revolutionary work in Bengal on his own account.<sup>3</sup> This is corroborated by Hemchandra Kanungo and Barindra Kumar Ghosh. Kanungo was then employed as the Inspector of Pounds under the District Board of Midnapore. Kanungo writes that Sri Aurobindo went to Midnapore in 1902 and initiated him as a member of the secret society.<sup>4</sup> He had to repeat some Sanskrit hymns and swear by the Gita that he would do everything for liberat-

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Majumdar records the date as 1901 in his *History of the Freedom Movement in India*. 1. 460. His authority appears to have been the *Reminiscences of Satish Chandra Basu* who, however, writes that a week after the foundation of the society, P. Mitra sent for him and said that a group of people had arrived from Baroda who held the same view as his own and were prepared to impart military training. It is well known that Jatindranath Banerjee came from Baroda in 1902.

<sup>2</sup> Girija 317.

<sup>3</sup> Aurobindo 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> Hemchandra Kanungo—*Bangalaya Viplava Prachesta*, 10-11.



ing India from foreign domination. He further adds that Aurobindo's secret society had no connection with religion excepting swearing by the Gita during the first two years of its existence.<sup>5</sup> Barindra Kumar Ghosh writes that he was initiated by Sri Aurobindo with a sword and the Gita and had to take the following vow: "So long as I live and so long as India does not become free, I will maintain the vow of Revolution. If I let out any information or do any harm to the secret society, death will ensue at the hand of a secret murderer."<sup>6</sup> This must have taken place some time before the middle of the year 1903, when Barindra came to Bengal from Baroda to strengthen the movement ushered in by Jatindranath Banerjee.<sup>7</sup> Barindra passed the Entrance Examination in 1900. After some time he came to Patna and got himself admitted to the first year Arts class in the Patna College. He studied there for about six months. Later on he opened a Tea stall in a room opposite the Patna College. And he got tired of this sort of business and he went to Baroda to his elder brother. Sri Aurobindo had been pondering over the best course of emancipating India ever since his return from England in 1893 and after a long period of deliberation hit upon the idea of starting a revolutionary society. The first emissary he sent to Calcutta was Jatindranath Banerjee some time in 1902. Barindra admits that he (Barindra) was sent to Calcutta six months after the departure of Jatindra.

Jatindra's group and the *Anushilana Samiti* agreed to coalesce or work in close collaboration. P. Mitra used to make a monthly contribution of Rs. 30 to Jatindra. Many other large-hearted persons also used to subscribe.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 58.

<sup>6</sup> Barindra, 39.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 40. It is worth noting that while Barindra himself writes that he came to Bengal from Baroda in the middle of the year 1903. The Sedition Committee holds that he came in 1902 (p. 11) and Dr. R. C. Majumdar states that the event occurred in 1901 (History of Freedom Movement, III, 268).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 33.

Jatindra went round the houses of subscribers on horse back collecting subscriptions. Sister Nivedita donated some two hundred volumes from her collection of revolutionary literature to the library started by Jatindra and Barindra.<sup>9</sup> One of these books was the autobiography of Mazzini. The Chapter on the method of carrying on Guerilla warfare was copied and circulated to various other centres which sprang up soon afterwards. One of these was the Suhrid Samiti of Chandernagore organised by Charu Chandra Roy. Rash Behari Bose joined this Samiti at the age of fifteen probably in 1902.<sup>10</sup> Another young boy who was recruited as a member of the *Anushilana Samiti* in 1903 was Jatindranath Mukherjee, who was introduced to P. Mitra by Hiralal Roy. He became the political disciple of Jatindranath Banerjee.<sup>11</sup> Barindra and Jatindra Banerjee, however, could not pull on well. Both complained against each other to Sri Aurobindo, who came to Calcutta in 1904 to settle their difference. But Jatindra Banerjee had to retire from the organization. He was initiated into Sannyasa by Soham Swami and was given the name of Niralamba Swami. He, however, continued to take active interest in the Independence movement. He was always available for consultation by Jatindranath Mukherjee.

The third organisation was started by a highly talented Bengali lady, Sarala Devi (1873-1945). She was the bridge between the thought currents on Militant Nationalism between Maharashtra and Bengal, on the one hand and between Bengal and the Punjab on the other. Sri Aurobindo sent Jatindranath Banerjee (1877-1930) to Calcutta in 1902 with a letter of introduction to Sarala Devi with a view to organising revolutionary movement in Bengal. Like Damodar Hari Chapekar, Jatindra was eager to get himself trained as a soldier for the national cause. But the door of the British Indian army was closed to the Bengalis as well as to the Chipavan Brahmanas of Maharashtra. He

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. P. 63.

<sup>10</sup> Rash Behari 578.

<sup>11</sup> Jadu Gopal 643.

tried to get himself enlisted in the Bharatpur army but could not succeed. Somebody advised him to try his luck at Baroda, where the Gaekwar might give him a chance if he was recommended by his young private Secretary, Aurobindo Ghosh. Sri Aurobindo helped him to be enlisted but Jatindra had to assume the surname of Upadhyaya.<sup>12</sup> From an ordinary soldier he became a cavalryman and was promoted to the post of a Bodyguard of the Gaekwar. His was an exceptionally tall well-built figure. Such was the person sent by Sri Aurobindo to the young maiden Sarala Devi, daughter of Janaki Nath Ghosal (1840-1913) and Swarna Kumari Devi (1855-1932), the elder sister of Rabindra Nath Tagore. One cannot but be curious to know how old was Sarala Devi at that time and why of all persons Sri Aurobindo sent Jatindra to her. Sarala Devi contributed a series of her reminiscences to the well-known Bengali weekly *Desh* from 1944 to 1945, a few months before her death which occurred on the 19th August, 1945. These have been published in the form of a book with valuable appendices written by Jogesh Chandra Bagal.<sup>13</sup> But neither the authoress nor her annotator gives the slightest indication of the date of her birth. She states that she was seventeen years old when she graduated from the Bethune College.<sup>14</sup> From the Calcutta University Calendar of 1891 we learn that Sarala Ghosal passed the B.A. examination with second class Honours in English (standing fourteenth in order of merit) in 1890. She was thus about 29 years of age in 1902. Her maternal uncle Satyendra Nath Tagore, I.C.S., was posted at Sholapore, where she had gone with her mother for a few months. She was highly impressed by the physical demonstrations including play of sword and *lathi* at the Dusserha festival. The movement for imparting physical training to young

<sup>12</sup> Jadugopal, 194-197.

<sup>13</sup> Sarala Devi Chaudhurani—*Jibaner Jharapata* ( Sahitya Samsad, 1957 ).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 103.

men had then taken root in Maharashtra under the inspiration of Lokmanya Tilak. Sarala Devi took the lead in organising a similar movement in Bengal about the year 1897. She admits her indebtedness to Maharashtra in this matter.<sup>15</sup> She found that in every age physical weakness in a people had been despised. It had been responsible for the decline of Greece and Rome and subjugation of India. Physical strength was necessary even for ensuring a high moral standard. She appointed Prof. Martaja a famous gymnast of Goa to train up the members of her Gymnasium in sword and *lathi* play. In imitation of the Shivaji festival she introduced a festival in honour of the memory of Pratapaditya and his son Udayaditya of Jessore, in which a sword was worshipped in lieu of their picture or statue.<sup>16</sup> She also revived an old festival called Veerastami, in which young men had to perform some arduous physical feats. She was pretty familiar with Sister Nivedita and the Gaekwad of Baroda. The latter agreed to take tea once in her house in Calcutta and was immensely pleased on seeing the sword play of the members of her Physical Training Club. She had got a picture of Goddess Kali painted specially by a Japanese Artist. Her own photograph along with those of her parents were also on the wall of her room. When she asked the Gaekwad to look at the picture of Kali, he cast a glance at her own photograph and replied "which Kali; this one or that one?" The remark of Gaekwad was most significant, though Sarala Devi took care to re-iterate again and again in her book

<sup>15</sup> Ibid 143.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 130. In the Calcutta session of the Congress Sarala Devi sang a national song composed by herself. The song shows that it heralds the National Anthem composed by Tagore, her maternal uncle. Its English translation is as follows—"Orissa, Bihar, Bengal, Oudh, Punjab, Nepal, Madras, Bombay and Rajputana, Hindi, Parsee and Jain, Sikh, Christian, Mussalman, Let every voice in concord ring. In every tongue the burden sing. All hail to Hindustan". (RINC 1901-1912)

that she was dead against the cult of terrorism. She writes that one day Jatin Banerjee informed her that some people would murder an old woman living near Diamond Harbour and bring her immense hoard of wealth. When Sarala Devi made vigorous protest against such a cowardly and unclean action, Jatindra is said to have told her that such was the direction of Tilak Maharaj. Sarala Devi hurried to Poona to ascertain the views of Lokmanya Tilak. Tilak was then busily engaged in preparing his defence in the Thai Maharaja case and a number of spies were stationed near his house. Sarala Devi, therefore, asked N. C. Kelkar to invite her as well as Tilak to a luncheon so that she could have her doubts clarified by the Lokmanya himself. She reports the result of her talk with Tilak thus: "Tilak told me distinctly, he did not approve of the dacoities, much less authorise them, if for nothing else simply on the score of their being practically useless for political purposes. But looking to difference in human nature and the varying processes of evolution suited to different temperaments, he did not condemn openly." The meeting with Tilak took place in September, 1902. Sarala Devi, as usual does not mention the date but it can be surmised from her allusion to Tilak's engagement with the case of Thai Maharaj. No political dacoity, however, was committed in Bengal before 1906.

Lala Lajpat Rai availed himself of the opportunity of one of his visits to Calcutta in meeting Sarala Devi. She writes that when Lajpat Rai called on her on the first day she was not at home and yet Lalaji waited for her return for two hours. He succeeded in seeing her next day. Lala Lajpat Rai found in her a kindred spirit. In 1905 Sarala Devi married Rambhuj Datta Chaudhuri, a high class Brahmana practising in the Lahore Chief Court. He appeared on the Congress platform for the first time in 1900 and since 1905 was a familiar figure there. Jatindra Banerjee, according to Jadugopal Mukherjee, went to the Punjab and the North West Frontier Province in 1906 to propagate revolutionary ideas and he was able to convert Ajit Singh

and his brother Kissen Singh, father of Bhagat Singh to his cult.<sup>17</sup>

A section of the Bengal revolutionaries, led by Jadugopal Mukherjee devised a plan of a five-pronged attack<sup>18</sup> on the foreign government for liberating India. Active efforts were to be made to preach the message of freedom not only amongst the educated middle class people but also amongst students, peasants, industrial workers and soldiers. They attached greatest importance to the winning over of the peasants and soldiers in the Punjab. Jadugopal got himself admitted to the Medical College with a view to practising in the Punjab, so that he might get full opportunity of doing propaganda work in the chief recruiting ground for the Indian army.

From the report of the Special Branch of Police preserved in the National Archives we learn that several reprints of the inflammatory speeches of Ajit Singh and Sarala Devi were made in Urdu and Hindi respectively in the *Punjabee* Press secretly at night. Lala Lajpat Rai founded the paper *Punjabee* and its press. The Police report states: "Ajit Singh's speeches are reported to have been sent to the general public and on the top of the reprints there is notice recommending the recipients to destroy (them) after perusal. The lectures of Sarala Devi are distributed to school girls and women folk generally."<sup>18</sup>

This shows that Sarala Devi agreed to marry a Punjabee gentleman, a step very unusual at that time, for securing ample scope for preaching the message of freedom in the Punjab. Her husband started a weekly in Urdu under the caption 'Hindustan'. The Lahore Chief Court, however, ordered him to withdraw his name from its editorship on pain of cancelling his license for practising as a lawyer. Sarala Devi came forward to shoulder the responsibility of editorship. She had previous journalistic experience in edit-

<sup>17</sup> Jadugopal 30.

<sup>18</sup> National Archives, Home, Political, August, 1907 Nos. 243-250, 9.

ing the high class Bengali monthly, *Bharati*. She brought out an English edition of the paper too.

During the great agitation against the Rowlatt Act, Rambhuj Datta Chaudhury and Sarala Devi took a prominent part along with hundreds of others. Rambhuj was sentenced to transportation for an indefinite period. There was talk of arresting Sarala Devi too, but as the Government had not arrested any lady till then she was spared; when Mahatma Gandhi visited Lahore after the Jallianwalabagh Massacre he put up with Sarala Devi. Her son was then studying at the Wardha institution under the care of Mahatma Gandhi. Sarala Devi's residence in the Punjab from 1905 to 1923, when she became widowed, was a fruitful period in the history of militant nationalism in that province.

The *Anushilan Samiti* was silently preparing the ground for the use of physical force for achieving the independence of the country. But it could not achieve much success before the announcement of the scheme of partitioning Bengal in July, 1905. The leaders of the Congress, poets like Rabindranath Tagore and Rajanikanta Sen, as well as the votaries of revolution came forward to make a huge agitation against the scheme, which became a settled fact in October of the same year. Pulinbehari Das of Dacca was recruited as a member of the *Anushilan Samiti* at this time. Das had his initiation in Calcutta under P. Mitra. A copy of the Gita, with a sword above it was placed in his hand and he had to take the vow of liberating the country in front of the sacrificial fire. Others were similarly initiated before the image of goddess Kali. The number of members of the Samiti ran into several thousands, though Barindra in his statement before the Court said in 1908 that he had collected together, 14 or 15 youngmen. He further stated: "We are always thinking of a far-off revolution and wish to be ready for it, so we were collecting weapons in small quantities. Altogether I have collected 11 revolvers, 4 rifles and 1 gun. Among other young men who came to be admitted to our circle was Ullaskar Datta. He said that as he wanted to come among us and be useful, he had learnt the prepara-

tion of explosives. He had a small laboratory in his house without his father's knowledge and he experimented there. I never saw it. He told me of it. With his help we began preparing explosives in small quantities in the garden-house at 32, Muraripukur Road. In the meantime another friend of ours, Hem Chandra Das,<sup>19</sup> after, I think, selling part of his property, went to Paris to learn mechanics, and, if possible, explosives. When he came back he joined Ullaskar Datta in preparing explosives and bombs. We never believed that political murder will bring independence. We do it because we believe the people want it." It is, however, difficult to place much reliance on the last two sentences, quoted above. Jadugopal Mukherjee says that there was considerable difference of opinion between his group and that of Barindra who became impatient to achieve some spectacular result by committing dacoity and murdering European officials. Mukherjee, however, preferred to make steady preparation in enlisting the active sympathy of students, soldiers, industrial workers and peasants.

Upendranath Banerjee was also in favour of making a long preparation. He imbibed from Vivekananda's works the idea that some people of India would not be ready to do any work except through religion. He was in search of some *Sadhus* who would undertake the training of young men. But as he could not get such persons he himself took up the task. In his statement before the Alipore Magistrate he said: "Since then I have been mainly engaged in teaching boys about the state of our country and the need of independence and to start secret societies in different parts of the country to propagate ideas and collect arms and rise in rebellion when the time shall be ripe. I know that Barindra, Ullaskar and Hem were engaged in manufacturing bombs with a view to do away with the lives of those Government officials who by repressive measures hampered our work, viz., the Lieutenant-Governor and Mr. Kingsford."

The Bengal group of militant nationalists made success-

<sup>19</sup> The same as Hemchandra Kanungo of Midnapore.



ful propaganda through a number of journals they published. The earliest of these was *Sandhya* started in 1904 by Brahmabandhava Upadhyaya, who wrote in one of its issues: "We want complete independence. The country cannot prosper so long as the veriest shred of the *Feringhi's* supremacy over it is left. *Swadeshi*, boycott,—all are meaningless to us, if they are not the means of retrieving our whole and complete independence." The *Yugantar*, started by Barindra, Bhupendra Datta and Abinash Bhattacharyya in March, 1906 was much more outspoken about the means to be adopted in achieving independence. It openly preached the cult of bomb. But more important than that was the fact that it exhorted upon the national workers to seduce the Indian army from their loyalty to the British. Citing the cases of the Russian and the French army which joined the revolutionaries it wrote on August 12, 1907: "The revolutionists have additional advantages where the ruling power is a foreign power, because the latter has to recruit most of its troops from among the subject people. Much work can be done by the revolutionists very cautiously spreading the gospel of independence among these native troops. When the time arrives for a practical collision with the ruling power, the revolutionists not only get these troops among their ranks, but also the arms with which the ruling power supplied them. Besides, all the enthusiasm and courage of the ruling power can be destroyed by exciting a serious alarm in its mind." The means which the Bengali revolutionaries adopted was to wreck trains and murder important officials.

In July 1907 Bhupendranath Datta was prosecuted for preaching sedition through the columns of *Yugantara*. Anticipating the line of action of Mahatma Gandhi he refused to defend himself and made a written statement before Kingsford, the trying Magistrate: "I have done what I thought to be my duty to my country. You may mete out any punishment you like. I will bear it cheerfully." On reading this Kingsford exclaimed "What things are coming to". A similar line of action was adopted on August 31, 1907 when

he was prosecuted for preaching sedition in an editorial article in the *Sandhya* in course of which he said: "First free the Mother from her bondage, then seek your own deliverance." This sort of neo-Vedantism was also preached by Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita. Addressing the British rulers he wrote: "Can you intimidate us? Our power is more than human. It is divine. We have heard the voice telling us that the period of India's suffering is about to close, that the day of deliverance is near at hand. It is because we have heard the voice that we have left the forest-home and come to town." The forest-home probably refers to the Shanti-niketan, where he served as a teacher in the school of the Poet for some time. The conviction with which he wrote about the divine call could not but produce a response in the heart of his readers. In conclusion he wrote: "Are we afraid of your canons and guns? Arm brothers, arm! The day of deliverance is near. We have heard the voice, though we may fail to see the chains of India removed before we die."<sup>20</sup> He refused to employ any lawyer in his defence and boldly submitted a written statement in the court in course of which he said: "I accept the entire responsibility of the paper and the article in question. But I don't want to take any part in the trial, because I do not believe that in carrying my humble share of this God-appointed mission of Swaraj, I am in any way accountable to the alien people who happen to rule over us and whose interest is and must necessarily be in the way of our true national development." He died before his so-called trial in the court ended. But many of his contemporaries lived to see the fulfilment of his prophecy forty years later.

Bipin Chandra Pal too refused to recognise the authority of the British court in September 1907. He was the editor of the *Bande Mataram* for ten weeks from August, 1906 when it saw the light for the first time. For the next eighteen months Aurobindo edited the paper, though his name did not appear as Editor. The Government cited Bipin Chandra Pal

<sup>20</sup> 'Sandhya' translated in Animananda's *The Blade*, 170-171.

as a witness in the case instituted against Aurobindo for writing seditious article. Pal appeared in the Court but refused to open his mouth. He was sentenced to imprisonment for six months indeed, but by his actual silence he was able to save Aurobindo for the time being, because it could not be proved that he was the editor of the paper.

The fiery writings in the papers like *Sandhya*, *Yugantar* and *Bande Mataram* as well as the organised preachings of the *Anusilan Samiti* gave rise to a series of terrorist activities in the last quarter of the year 1907. Two unsuccessful attempts were made near Chandernagore and Mankundu in October to blow up the Lieutenant-Governor's train but their effort was partly successful on December 6 when the train in which he was travelling was actually derailed at Narayangarh near Midnapore on the B. N. Railway by a bomb. But the explosion merely caused a hole 5 feet wide by 5 feet deep and no body was injured. On the 23rd December, 1907 Mr. Allen, formerly District Magistrate of Dacca, was fired at by Sisir Guha in the Goalundo station in the Faridpur district. Allen was wounded but not killed. The revolutionaries had been procuring firearms from Chandernagore, but the Mayor of Chandernagore issued an Ordinance prohibiting the traffic. A bomb was, therefore, thrown into his house on April 11, 1908. It exploded but no one was injured.

The next important event took place on the 30th April, 1908 when an attempt was made at Muzaffarpur on the life of Kingsford. He had formerly been the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta but he had incurred so much unpopularity on account of the severe punishment he awarded to young students accused of sedition that the government considered it prudent in his own interest to transfer him to the small town of Muzaffarpur in the Tirhoot division of Bihar and also to place him in the judicial department as a District Judge. During the trial of Bipin Pal in September, 1907 there was a tremendous rush in the court room. A sergeant struck a blow on a young student named Sushil Sen and Sushil too retaliated. Kingsford thereupon sentenc-

ed Sushil Sen to fifteen stripes of the lash.”<sup>21</sup> Jadugopal Mukherjee records that a Bench of the revolutionaries consisting of Aurobindo, Charu Datta and Subodh Mallick sentenced Kingsford to death. Khudiram Basu a young man of 19 and a disciple of Satyen Basu of Midnapore and Prafulla Chaki, another young man of tender age were deputed to put an end to the life of Kingsford. Kingsford used to live at Muzaffarpur with extreme caution. The only place he used to go to was the Planters’ club. On the 30th April the wife and daughter of Mr. Kennedy had gone to the club and were returning in their own carriage which looked like the carriage belonging to Kingsford. Khudiram and Prafulla had climbed a tree on the road and as soon as they saw the vehicle approaching they threw the bomb on it. The two innocent ladies lost their lives. It is worth noting that Mr. Kennedy was a Premchand Roychand scholar of the University of Calcutta, a lawyer and Editor of the *Tirhoot-courier*. He was closely associated with the Indian National Congress from 1888 to 1891 and pleaded for a National Army for India from the Congress platform. Though Khudiram and Prafulla made a sad mistake and failed to carry out the mission they had been entrusted with, yet they have become national heroes on account of the sacrifice they made of their lives for the national cause. Prafulla shot himself dead when arrested and Khudiram was hanged. The Sub-Inspector who arrested Prafulla was shot dead on November 9, 1908.

Within forty-eight hours of the Muzaffarpur outrage the Police searched the Muraripukur garden of Maniktala.

<sup>21</sup> Sir Henry Cotton thus describes the mechanism of flogging thus : “The way of flogging was and is to tie a man up by his hands and legs to a wooden triangle so that he cannot move and then inflict the punishment on his bare buttocks with a rattan. I have often seen men with their skin cut to pieces where the rattan had fallen. I have seen men faint away insensible from pain and I have heard of authenticated cases of men who have died under the lash” ( *Indian and Home Memories*, 79 ).

where they found bombs, dynamite cartridges and some correspondence. This led to the arrest of Barindra, Upendra, Banerjee, Ullaskar Datta, Nalinikanta Gupta, and eleven others in that garden. Aurobindo, Abinash Bhattacharyya and Sailen Bose were arrested in a house at 48 Grey Street and Hemchandra Kanungo at another house. Satyendranath Basu was arrested at Midnapore. In all 56 persons were charged with conspiracy. Of these Naren Gossain of Serampore became an approver. While the mother of Kanailal Datta heard of this at Chandernagore she casually asked whether there was none who could remove this traitor from this world. A few days later her son aged 21 who was also standing trial as an accused, along with Satyen Bose, shot Naren Gossain dead with two revolvers supplied within the jail by Srisch Chandra Ghosh and Basant Kumar Banerjee of Chandernagore. Charuchandra Roy is said to have asked Kanai, "Were you very much excited at the time of shooting? Why did you exhaust all the shots on him when he had already fallen dead? Why did you not keep one for yourself?" Kanai replied that he was not at all excited but previously many of the victims of revolutionaries had narrow escape and he did not want a repetition of the same. Had he not murdered Naren it would have been difficult to save Sri Aurobindo from long term imprisonment. The Alipore bomb case continued for nearly two years. Ashutosh Biswas, trusted lieutenant of Surendranath Banerjee and Public Prosecutor in the case was shot dead by Charu Bose, a coadjutor of Jatin Mukherjee on February 10, 1909. Birendranath Datta Gupta of Dacca, a young man of 19 years of age, another disciple of Jatindranath Mukherjee, shot dead Shams-ul Alam,<sup>22</sup> a Deputy Superintendent of Police who was attending the hearing of the appeal in the Alipore case in the High Court in broad daylight.

<sup>22</sup> The accused in the Alipore Bomb case had a wonderful sense of humour. While the trial was going on in the court they looked at Shams-ul and made a pun on his name and sang in chorus—Thou art Shyam ( dear ) to the Government but Shul ( spike ) to us. When will the day come on which you will lose your life and property ?

During the trial an unpublished essay on "The Morality of Boycott" written by Sri Aurobindo was produced on behalf of the prosecution. The document shows how the Nationalists considered Boycott as a measure of economic war against Great Britain. It also reveals how Sri Aurobindo conceals carefully his attitude towards the application of physical force. He wrote in it, "The Gita is the best answer to those who shrink from battle as a sin and aggression as a lowering of morality." He takes up the question of use of violence in the furtherance of boycott and states: "This is in our view purely a matter of policy and expediency. An act of violence brings us into conflict with the law, and such conflict may be inexpedient for a race circumstanced like ours. But the moral question does not arise . . . The morality of the Kshatriya justifies violence in times of war and boycott is a war. Nobody blames the Americans for throwing British tea into Boston Harbour, nor can anybody blame similar action in India on moral grounds."<sup>22</sup>

Thanks to the wonderful advocacy of C. R. Das, Sri Aurobindo was acquitted. But some of the most active workers in the cause of militant nationalism like Barindra, Ullaskar, Upendranath Banerjee, Hrishikesh Kanjilal, Abinash Bhattacharyya, Hemchandra Kanungo were transported while Satyendra Basu and Kanailal were sentenced to death. Thirty-nine of the accused were awarded punishment while seventeen were acquitted. One belonging to the latter category was Charuchandra Roy of Chandernagore. On the evidence of Birendra Datta Gupta, Jatindranath Mukherjee was charged with murder but as Jatindra did not allow his lawyer to cross-examine his disciple Birendra, the evidence of the latter was considered inadmissible from the point of law and Jatindra was acquitted. Another person who narrowly escaped detection was Rash Behari Basu. Two of his letters were found by the police during the search at the Muraripukur garden. But he was sent to Dehradun as the guardian tutor of the children of Raja P. N. Tagore. Jatindra

<sup>22</sup> Alipore case, 160.

dranath Mukherjee and Rash Behari Basu played the most important part in the revolutionary activities for the next eight years.

On his acquittal Sri Aurobindo felt rather isolated. He changed the tactics and openly condemned violence. In course of the speech he delivered in the College Square on the 17th July, 1909 he said, "If we are persecuted, if the plough of repression is passed over us, we shall meet it not by violence, but by suffering, by passive resistance, by lawful means. We have not said to our young men, 'When you are repressed, retaliate'. We have said, 'suffer'."<sup>23</sup> His emphasis on the adoption of peaceful means is also reported thus by the C.I.D.: "He and his party had all along taught the people that they could attain independence by peaceful means by building up their industries, building up their own schools and colleges and settling their own disputes. There was another limit in their policy that they would not co-operate with the Government unless it gave them their rights. Lastly, if they were subjected to repression they would not retaliate, they would suffer and employ only the method of passive resistance. They were showing the people that this is the only way in which they can satisfy 'their legitimate aspirations without violence. The Government could co-operate with them by respecting the right of a free press, of free public meeting and of free association and then the movement would advance on peaceful lines.'"<sup>24</sup> Neither the Government nor the revolutionaries were inclined to adhere to the policy outlined by him.

In the latter half of 1908 there were four cases of bombs being thrown into railway carriages near Calcutta. These bombs being enclosed in cocoanut shells did not cause much serious havoc excepting in one case when a European gentleman was badly wounded. Probably Hume, the Public Prosecutor was the target but he escaped. On the 7th November, 1908 Jatin Roy Chaudhuri attempted to shoot down Sir Andrew Fraser, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal but he

<sup>23</sup> Sri Aurobindo—Speeches, 120.

<sup>24</sup> National Archives—Home, Political, October, 1909, Nos. 230-48.

did not succeed. In November, 1908 Pulin Behari Das was deported. In January, 1909, Swadesh Bandhab, the Anusilan Samiti of Dacca, Swadesh Bandhab Samiti of Bakerganj, Brati Samiti of Faridpur, the Suhrid Samiti and the Sadhana Samiti of Mymensingh were declared unlawful associations. But this measure too, failed to curb the revolutionary activities. The Sonarang National school in the district of Dacca was a centre of these activities under the leadership of Makhan Lal Sen, Jatindranath Mukherjee and Narendra Bhattacharya, who later became famous under the name of M. N. Roy, committed several dacoities. They were implicated in the Howrah Conspiracy case in 1910. One of the charges against Jatindra Mukherjee was that he had tampered with the loyalty of the 10th Jat regiment. It could not be proved and Jatindra and his associates were acquitted. But the Government considered it prudent to disband the 10th Jat regiment. A boy of sixteen threw a bomb on the 2nd of March, 1911 into the motor car which was believed to have been occupied by Denham, a prominent officer of the Calcutta C.I.D. but really one Mr. Cowley was its occupant. The bomb did not explode. In November, 1912 the Additional District Magistrate of Dacca discovered in the box of his son, Girindra Mohan Das, a large number of gun and revolver cartridges, powder, shot, bullets and a large number of revolutionary documents. The father handed over the son to the police.

The main reason for the failure of the Government to suppress the revolutionary activities in Bengal, as they had successfully done in Maharashtra was the wonderful organization of the Anusilan Samiti and the magnetic personality of leaders like Jatindranath Mukherjee, Rash Behari Basu and Jadugopal Mukherjee. The Sedition Committee Report states that there were 500 branches of the Society at one time. Satish Chandra Pakrashi, a member of the Samiti writes that in 1907 the Dacca Anusilan Samiti had 15000 members trained as military volunteers.<sup>25</sup> The rules and the

<sup>25</sup> Satish Pakrashi—*Agnidiner Katha*, 142.



code of conduct prescribed by the Anusilan Samiti, were designed to create a band of workers entirely devoted to the cause of militant nationalism. Justice Asutosh Mukherji wrote in his judgment in the Dacca conspiracy case that the members of the society were not permitted "to write letters to their friends and relations without the permission of the leader, and all letters for and from the members were to be shown to him. Members were also to cut themselves off completely from their relations and friends, and if they obtained any money from them, it was to be regarded as the common property of the Samiti and the circle." He further adds, "Every member was bound to bring to the notice of the chief whatever drawbacks he might notice in any of the other members, and if the concealment of the fault of the member by another should be detected, both of them were to be punished." These were not simply laid down on paper. There are many cases on record in which the members who were suspected of indiscretion and in one case at least of immorality were ruthlessly put to death. Thus Sarada Chakrabarti was shot, his head was cut off and then thrown into a tank for an act of faithlessness.

Chief Justice Jenkins held in the Alipore conspiracy case that the accused were "for the most part men of education, of strong religious convictions." This was true, more or less, of all the revolutionaries in Bengal. The members were admitted to the Samiti only after they had taken the most solemn vows in the presence of the image of goddess Kali. They used to refer to the outrages committed by them as *Mayer Lila*, the playful wish of the Mother.<sup>26</sup>

Lord Hardinge, who was the Governor-General of India from November 1910 to April 1916, describes the period between the arrival of George V in India in December 1911 and the attempt on his life on the 23rd December 1912 as one of absolute peace, "not a single political murder having occurred in the interval while during the three or

<sup>26</sup> Sedition Committee, Appendix (1), IX.

four years immediately preceding the Durbar the average had been one political murder every fortnight."<sup>27</sup> This is, however, nothing but a hyperbole. In the year 1912 at least two political murders took place—of Sarada Chakravarti in June and of the Head Constable Ratilal Ray in September. According to the Sedition Committee Report, the total number of murders in 1908 was 9, in 1909 3 including one in London, in 1910 1 in Bengal and 1 in Bombay, and in 1911, 6 in Bengal and 1 in Madras, totalling 21 murders in four years.<sup>28</sup> in place of 104 as described above by Lord Hardinge.

The revolutionaries considered the bomb attack on Lord Hardinge as their greatest triumph. A sober and scholarly person like Hardayal is known to have danced with joy on hearing this news. But the Sedition Committee Report dismisses the whole affair in half a line—"Lord Hardinge's life was attempted and one of his attendants was killed."<sup>29</sup> The Government tried to minimise its importance with utmost care. Two months after the incident the Secretary of State offered to sanction the Viceroy a leave for six months in London, Lord Hardinge declined to accept it, though he "was very feeble and still very ill with neuritis and deafness from a broken drum in his ear." The reason he assigns for his refusal to take leave is: "I did not wish my would-be assassins to realize that they had so far succeeded by compelling me to relinquish even temporarily my office."<sup>30</sup> On the 23rd December, 1912 while he was proceeding on an elephant from the Delhi Railway station to the Chandni Chowk in a huge procession a bomb struck the *howdah* on which he was sitting with his wife. He writes: "My wife looking behind saw that I was badly wounded and that the servant who had been standing behind me holding the State umbrella was dead and that his body was entangled in

<sup>27</sup> Hardinge, 79.

<sup>28</sup> R. C. Majumdar—History of Freedom Movement, II, 298.

<sup>29</sup> Sedition Committee, 60.

<sup>30</sup> Hardinge, 83.

the ropes of the *howdah*. She told me about the dead man and I stopped the elephant at once. While the poor man's body was being removed I fainted from loss of blood and on recovering consciousness found myself lying on the pavement and receiving first aid. I heard afterwards that the elephant being too frightened by the bomb to kneel, it had been necessary to pile up wooden cases and that my A.D.C., Hugh Fraser, had lifted me down like a baby."<sup>31</sup> It is noteworthy that the Bengali revolutionaries had up to this time of occurrence of the Delhi bomb outrage killed as many as 22 Indians but all their attempts to murder any European official had ended in failure. The only success they achieved in this direction was to wound Allen on the 23rd December, 1907. It was exactly five years after this date that Rash Behari Basu carried out the plan of throwing the bomb on the Viceroy. His success became all the more spectacular because the Government with all their resources failed to detect him. The bomb was thrown in broad daylight before the eyes of thousands of people and a huge concourse of police officers and yet the latter could not find out for a number of days as to who had committed the crime. Rash Behari had brought the bomb to Delhi and instructed his associate Basanta Kumar Biswas to throw it on the *howdah* of the Viceroy. Basanta was dressed up as a Muslim lady. Sir Michael O'Dwyer writes that one of the accused in the Lahore conspiracy case, a Bengali was sentenced to death and he informed the Criminal Investigation Officers a few days before he was hanged that "It was he who, disguised as a Mahomedan lady heavily veiled, and standing in front of the Punjab National Bank in the Chandni Chowk had thrown the bomb."<sup>32</sup> He has not mentioned the name of Basanta. C. R. Cleveland, the Director of C.I.D., however, has recorded a different version of the story. He writes that on March 31, 1915 Pingley told Mula Singh of Niran Kot, Amritsar, that one Bengali named Chuchendra Nath Dutt,

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 80.<sup>32</sup> O'Dwyer, 170.

fat and short-statured with shallow complexion and prominent eyes with bushy moustache, aged 40, admitted that he was the man who threw the bomb. But he said that the bomb was thrown from the street and not from a house, and that he was dressed up like a Marwari."<sup>33</sup> No Bengali could have borne the name, Chuchendra Nath; moreover, it was easier to conceal oneself as a Muslim lady than as a Marwari.

Rash Behari (1886-1945) was an adept in disguises and highly skilled in the art of fooling the authorities. He was employed at that time as a Head clerk in the Dehradun Forest Research Institute. Lord Hardinge relates how Rash Behari posed as an extremely loyal person after the Delhi Bomb case. The Viceroy went to Dehradun some ten weeks after the incident for recouping his shattered health. He writes: "When driving in a car from the station to my bungalow, I passed an Indian standing in front of the gate of his house with several others, all of whom were very demonstrative in their salaams. On my enquiry who these people might be I was told that the principal Indian there had presided two days before and carried a vote of condolence with me on account of the attack on my life. It was proved later that it was this identical Indian who threw the bomb on me."<sup>34</sup>

Rash Behari showed greater ingenuity and daring in getting himself employed as a C.I.D. informer. He was intimate with many national workers at Chandernagore and as it was from this place that Sri Aurobindo had gone to Pondicherry assuming the name of Soumen Tagore. Denham, the C.I.D. Officer employed him to supply secret information. He was in the good books of the Police.<sup>35</sup> In the Judgment on the Delhi conspiracy case M. Harrison, the Additional Sessions Judge, quoted from the Diary of Petric, dated 1st February: "On my return to Mr. Hadon's house I found wire waiting for me from Mr. Denham saying that

<sup>33</sup> National Archives—Home, Political, B. May, 1916 P. 430-450.

<sup>34</sup> Hardinge, 83.

<sup>35</sup> Jadugopal, 659.

Rash Behari Bose had been previously employed as an informer by an officer of the department of the Director of Criminal Intelligence, and that his reports were in Director's Office." Harrison comments: "The only conclusion to which all this leads is that Rash Behari made use of his connection with the Police to further the ends of this conspiracy."

When the Police found out that Rash Behari was the brain behind the Delhi Bomb case they circulated a description of his physical appearance along with a photograph of his holding a cycle in hand and offered a reward of Rs. 7,500 to any one giving information leading to his arrest. When he came to know that the Police had come to suspect him he went underground. With exceptional daring and amazing skill he continued to direct the revolutionary movement in the Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab and collaborated with the other revolutionaries in Bengal in hatching an all-India plot for overthrowing the British Government in this country. One of his most trusted lieutenants was Sachin Sanyal, an inhabitant of Shantipur but who resided at Benares. He joined the movement in 1908 when he was a student of the topmost class in the Bengalitola school at Benares. He tried to prepare the ground for revolution amongst the students in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. He organised a branch of his Samiti at Bankipur and placed Bankim Chandra Mitra, a student of the Bihar National College in charge of its activities. A fellow student of Bankim describes his work thus: "He formed a society where he used to give instruction in the works of Vivekananda. I was the master. An oath was taken on entering the society by name of God and priests, not to divulge the secrets of the society to any outsider. We were told that we should strive against the British Government, that they should be driven out of the country. We must make preparations, so as to be in a position to turn them out."

Raghubir Singh, one of the members of this society migrated to Allahabad and obtained the post of clerk in the depot office of the 113th Infantry. He used to distribute

the revolutionary *liberty* pamphlets amongst the soldiers.<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note in this connection that when Bankim Chandra Mitra was rusticated from the Bihar National College, and could not get any shelter anywhere at Bankipur, Prof. Jadunath Sarkar, the great historian, appointed him a private tutor for his sons.<sup>37</sup> Under the instruction of Rash Behari, Sachindra specialised in carrying on propaganda amongst the soldiers in Northern India.

Rash Behari's success in the Delhi Bomb case inspired the Bengal revolutionaries to emulate high achievement. Three young men shot Head Constable Haripada Deb dead on the edge of the lake in College Square in the midst of a throng of people on the 29th September, 1913. The reason why Haripada was murdered was that he had succeeded in getting into touch with a revolutionary section. None of his assailants could be traced or arrested. Next evening Police Inspector Bankim Chandra Chaudhuri was killed with a picric acid bomb in his house of Mymensingh. He had taken a prominent part in arresting some accused in the Dacca conspiracy case. Here, too, the persons responsible for the murder could not be traced. But in one case the worker himself was killed by the explosion of the bomb he was carrying for killing Gordon, I.C.S., at Maulvi Bazar, Sylhet, in March, 1913. The latter was unhurt.

The revolutionary movement took a new turn all over India with the outbreak of the first World War. We shall describe it in a subsequent chapter.

<sup>36</sup> Sedition Committee, 89.

<sup>37</sup> W. Sealy—"Connections with the Revolutionary organisation in Bihar and Orissa, 1906-16", printed by the Bihar Government in 1917.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### LALA LAJPAT RAI AND MILITANT NATIONALISM IN THE PUNJAB

LALA Lajpat Rai was one of the earliest leaders to denounce the mendicant policy of the Indian National Congress and to emphasise the importance of taking recourse to militant nationalism. But his connection with the revolutionary movement is still shrouded in mystery. The *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore described him in May, 1907 as "a rebel busily immersed in the affairs of his insurrectionary enterprise with a hundred thousand desperadoes at his command."<sup>1</sup> The *Englishman* openly charged him with having tampered with the loyalty of the Indian army.<sup>2</sup> But Lajpat Rai filed a suit of libel against the newspaper in the Calcutta High Court, which awarded him a compensation for Rs. 15000, realised from the *Englishman*.

In his days of youth he evinced great interest in studying the lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi and the history of secret societies in Europe. In his autobiography, originally written in Urdu in 1914 and translated into English in 1965, he relates how one Rai Mul Raj had borrowed from a library a history of the secret societies of Europe in two volumes and how Lalaji having read some portions of it in the house of the borrower eagerly solicited the favour of taking it on loan. He was refused. He tried to secure a copy from the booksellers in India but having failed to do so wrote to a Punjabi friend in England to send it to him. When he got the book at last he became over-joyed.<sup>3</sup> He knew fully well that in those days the possession of such a book was

<sup>1</sup> The Civil & Military Gazette, quoted in the Akbar-E-Soudagar, dated 13 May, 1907, H F M II. 935.

<sup>2</sup> The *Englishman*, 10th Sept., 1907 and *Young India* 182.

<sup>3</sup> Lajpat Rai—*Autobiographical Writings* (Delhi, 1965), 82.

almost sure to bring down the wrath of the authorities on one's head. He wrote biographies of Mazzini and Garibaldi in Urdu. The Director of Public Instructions of the Punjab issued circulars to schools and colleges prohibiting the use of these books. "In a big town of the province", writes Lajpat Rai, "the Inspector of schools found a copy of *Mazzini* in a student's box in the boarding house, and an explanation was demanded of the headmaster." The Government wanted to prosecute him for this book, but as their legal experts disagreed among themselves the idea was dropped.

Throughout his life Lala Lajpat Rai mixed freely and intimately with prominent revolutionaries in India, Japan, Europe and America. When he went to England for the first time in May, 1905 as a delegate of the Indian Association, for placing the claims of India before the English people on the eve of general election, he stayed in the India House started by Shyamji Krishna Varma. The inaugural function of the India House was performed in his presence. Varma had left India soon after the arrest of Damodar Hari Chapekar on the charge of murdering Rand. His revolutionary ideas were well-known. Lala Lajpat Rai admits in his autobiography that Varma's "political ideas were very much like my own though I did not share his acerbity towards the Congress and its leaders."<sup>4</sup>

He appears to have been influenced by Sister Nivedita, whom he met early in 1905. Their acquaintance must have ripened into a sort of friendship because we find her taking Lala Lajpat Rai to S. K. Ratcliffe, editor of the *Statesman*. Rai writes: "I can never forget the things I heard on the way from her lips. She was a great hater of British Raj and a great lover of Indians. In politics she stood for the principles for which Mazzini stood. In short, this interview further confirmed me in my beliefs, and gave me profound joy."

The influence of Sister Nivedita and Shyamji Krishna Varma became apparent in the speech which he delivered on the 26th of November, 1905 four days after his return

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 103.



from London at the anniversary of the Arya Samaj. He said that though the political horizon of India looked apparently clear, he saw blood raining from the national sky. He comments: "In 1905 nobody had anticipated even in imagination the things that the nationalists did later on, but a student of history could ascertain in which direction the wind was blowing."<sup>5</sup>

When the Congress met at Varanasi a month after the delivery of this speech Lala Lajpat Rai took the lead in opposing the proposal of welcoming the Prince of Wales at the meeting of the Subjects Committee. He was supported by Lokmanya Tilak, but the Moderate leaders managed to get it passed by a majority of votes. He then threatened to re-open the question at the open session. Gokhale had to make a personal appeal to him to desist from such a course. He agreed to be absent at the time of moving the resolution, but certain young delegates from Bengal refused to do so. "They had to be kept out by force" so that the resolution could be passed unanimously.

At the next session of the Congress an Exhibition was inaugurated by Lord Minto. He had displeased the Nationalists by his denunciation of the boycott movement and by his praise for what he called "honest Swadeshi". They arranged a public meeting to show their dissatisfaction with the Viceroy's speech and Lala Lajpat Rai was prevailed upon to preside over this gathering. He delivered a fiery speech on this occasion. Coming back to Lahore after the conclusion of the Congress session he began to educate public opinion in favour of the Swaraj resolution. He admits that the political storm was intensely fierce in the Punjab during the months of January and February, 1907. "Public meetings were organised spontaneously and resolutions were passed against the Government. I also visited several places and addressed audiences on Swadeshi and Boycott and on Patriotism."<sup>6</sup> The movement became more intense with the passing of the Punjab Alienation of

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 109.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 115.

Land (Amendment) Bill on 21 February and the Punjab Canal Colonies Bill on 28 February, 1907. These two Acts increased the economic burden of the cultivators. Politicians like Ajit Singh, Syed Hyder Reza and many young agitators asked them to withhold the payment of Government revenue, water rates and other dues. They emphasised the advantages of passive resistance and also the helplessness of the few Europeans living amidst the millions of Indians. On the 9th May, 1907 a few hours before his arrest Lala Lajpat Rai wrote a signed letter for publication in *The Punjabee* stating that 'no thoughtful and responsible man could possibly bring himself to believe that the country was at all ready for a political cataclysm'.<sup>7</sup>

The Secret Police report, however, held Lala Lajpat Rai responsible for the agitation. The officiating Director of the C.I.D., C.J. Stevenson-Moore wrote the following on the 16th July, 1907: "On the 7th April Ajit Singh spoke at the meeting in Lahore which was one of the most dangerous and seditious held and at which thumb impressions were taken on an agreement not to pay the enhanced canal rates. My Lahore agent says that Ajit Singh received Rupees one hundred a month from Lajpat Rai. Lajpat Rai gave him notes for his speeches and paid his expenses out of the political fund which was placed at his disposal."<sup>8</sup> The C.I.D. discovered in 1909 two letters written by Lala Lajpat Rai in the possession of Bhai Parmanand along with a copy of the bomb-manual used by the revolutionaries implicated in the Alipore Bomb case. The first letter, dated the 28th February, 1907 asked Bhai Parmanand to request Shyamji Krishna Varma to place at his (Lajpat Rai's) disposal a portion of his gift of Rs. 10,000 for "political missionaries", and also to send "a number of books containing true ideas on politics" for the use of the student community at Lahore. The second letter, dated the 11th of April, 1907 stated: "The people are in sullen mood. Even the agricultural classes

<sup>7</sup> *The Punjabee*, 11 May, 1907.

<sup>8</sup> National Archives—Home, Political, 1907 Dec. Nos. 44-56, 7.

have begun to agitate. My only fear is that the bursting out may not be premature." The significance of these words is unmistakable, though Lala Lajpat Rai told the Court that he meant nothing else than his apprehension that the agriculturists, not being accustomed to political agitation, might not be able to carry on the movement peacefully.<sup>9</sup>

Gokhale was fully aware of the fact that Lala Lajpat Rai had lived in the India House while he was in London and that the revolutionary paper the *Indian Sociologist* was published from this very place. Yet he believed that Rai was not a revolutionary. He exerted all the influence he had to get the deportation order rescinded. He wrote the following letter to the Private Secretary of the Viceroy on 10 June, 1907. "I am getting up now an influentially signed memorial to the Viceroy about him (Lajpat Rai) and I will come personally to Simla with the memorial about the end of July. The memorial will be signed by all non-official members and ex-members of Viceregal and Provincial Councils, by all ex-presidents of the Congress and ex-Chairmen of Provincial Conferences. To bracket Ajit Singh with Lajpat Rai is monstrous injustice to the latter. When I was in Lahore in February last, Ajit Singh had already begun to denounce Lajpat Rai as a coward and pro-Government man, because Lajpat Rai would have nothing to do with Ajit Singh's propaganda."<sup>10</sup> Here we find Gokhale stating that Ajit Singh denounced Lajpat Rai in February while the Police report is that Ajit Singh was in the pay of Lajpat Rai in April. Lala Lajpat Rai himself writes that he noticed at the meeting of the Extremist section in the Calcutta Congress in 1906 that Ajit with the help of Sufi Amba Prasad founded a new Society called the *Bharat Mata* and preached the doctrines of the extreme wing. "About this time Ajit Singh approached me several times for financial aid, but I laid down certain conditions which he did not keep up" (Autobiography, p. 119). This implies that for some time

<sup>9</sup> Sedition Committee, 100.

<sup>10</sup> National Archives—Home, Political, 1907, Deposit No. 3

at least he did make payment to Ajit Singh but as the latter did not abide by the terms imposed by Lajpat Rai no further payment was made.

Lajpat Rai himself in course of a letter published in the *Punjabee* on the 9th May, 1907, attributed the Punjab unrest to the Colonization Bill, the Land Alienation Act Amendment Bill, the increase of Canal rates of the Bari Doab Canal, the abnormal increase of Land Revenue in the Rawalpindi District and to the appalling mortality from Plague. The most important feature of this letter is that here he regards Ajit Singh as voicing popular opinion: "Sardar Ajit Singh and Syed Hyder Riza really represent," he writes, "a solid bulk of public opinion which it will be madness to ignore or treat with contempt." Lala Lajpat Rai sent a memorial to the Secretary of State for India from Moultmein on the 22nd September, 1907 in which he wrote "that he had never done nor attempted to do anything which caused or was likely to cause commotion in the Dominions of His Majesty the King Emperor of India."<sup>11</sup>

W. S. Blunt met Lajpat Rai in London on the 2nd October, 1908 and wrote in his Diary: "It was difficult to see in him anything that the Indian Government could possibly have been afraid of, or that Morley can have thought it necessary to arrest by a *lettre de cachet* and deport him without trial as a danger to India."<sup>12</sup> Blunt was not conversant with the antecedents of Lalaji, who was clever enough to assume the guise of a lamb, though he was really a lion. J. M. Chatterjee in his brief autobiographical memoir states that Lala Lajpat Rai helped their Secret Society a great deal.<sup>13</sup>

The deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai was followed by the arrest of Lala Pindidas, editor of an Urdu newspaper, *India*. The charge against him was that he exhorted upon the Punjab regiments to expiate their sin of having supported the government in suppressing the Sepoy Mutiny.

<sup>11</sup> Lajpat Rai—*The Story of My Deportation*, 211.

<sup>12</sup> Blunt—*My Diaries*, II., 219-21.

<sup>13</sup> R. C. Majumdar—*History of Freedom Movement*, II. 305

Ajit Singh was also deported soon afterwards. The Government claimed that the punishment of these leaders restored peace and quiet in the Punjab. But Lala Lajpat Rai states that the "result was the consequence of the vetoing of the land laws by the Government of India."<sup>14</sup>

At the Patna session of the Congress in December, 1912 the constitutionalist leaders brought forward a resolution condemning the Delhi Bomb outrage. Lala Lajpat Rai supported the resolution and said: "I know that the heart of this country is entirely against this cult of bomb and if there are any people in this country who believe that by propagating this cult of bomb they can advance the future political progress of the country, they are not only mistaken but they are doing a great wrong not only to the past of this country but to the future of this country because they are placing obstacles untold in the way of those who are trying their level best to raise the social, moral and political status of their country, and work in the public life becomes almost impossible in this state of things when bomb after bomb is in this way thrown at persons who are doing their level best to redress our grievances, to make us hopeful, and to put us on a platform of confidence. We are bound to express our detestation of and abhorrence at such deeds and do all that lies in our power to counteract those influences which may be tending towards that direction, though I don't believe those influences are very many, very great or very serious. As was pointed out by my illustrious leader Babu Surendranath Banerji, this act may be the act of a lunatic but whoever he may be—of course we can rely upon the good sense of this country—all of us will do every thing in our power to undo the mischief that is being done by such atrocious deeds."<sup>15</sup>

It is difficult to state how much reliance should be placed on such speeches as conveying the true sentiment of the speaker. Rash Behari Basu himself convened a public meeting and condemned the outrage. Lala Lajpat Rai himself

<sup>14</sup> RINC 1912, 40.

<sup>15</sup> RINC 1912, 40.

wrote in 1919: "Public speeches denouncing the revolutionary propaganda and the revolutionary activities or public condemnation of the latter in the press are good in their own way, but they are not quite effective. The revolutionist may ascribe it to fear, timidity or hypocrisy."<sup>16</sup> It is just possible that being over 47 years of age he was expressing his sincere convictions. But sitting down to write his autobiography in Urdu in New York on November 28, 1914, he disclosed his inmost thought in the following words: "For fear of Englishmen or even of certain Indians, or for other like considerations people may conceal their feelings, but it is impossible to deny that the young Bengalis who conspired to murder Gosain and successfully carried out their resolve have earned immortality. A day will come when people will take wreath of homage to their statues. The man who threw a bomb on Lord Hardinge on the occasion of the Delhi Durbar in 1910 did a memorable deed unique for its valour. What is even more remarkable is the fact that all the resources of such a great empire proved of no avail in finding out the courageous culprit."<sup>17</sup> He had forgotten both the date and the place of occurrence of the outrage but his sense of admiration for the revolutionary crimes is unmistakable.

In 1915 Lala Lajpat Rai met in Tokyo Rash Behari Basu, who was then living under the name, P. N. Thakur, and was under orders of deportation. Rash Behari is said to have entreated Rai to take charge of a sum of 21,500 yen, though the latter did not believe in Basu's programme. The tenor of Rai's writing gives the impression that he did not know that Thakur was Rash Behari. But Rai came to know that he was a terrorist who did not believe in the possibility of absolute independence for India in the near future. He further informed Rai that he had no faith in the Germans, yet he was prepared to use them for terroristic purposes. "I begged of him", writes Rai, "to

<sup>16</sup> Lajpat Rai—*The Political Future of India*, 186.

<sup>17</sup> *Autobiographical Writings*, 9.

give me no secrets and he gave me very few.”<sup>18</sup> Basu was not the man to entrust secrets and party funds to one who had nothing to do with the revolutionary organisation. Ramchandra, the Ghadr leader, also handed over to him 3,500 Dollars during the very first month of their acquaintance in America for defraying the expenses of defence of Bhai Parmanand in the First Lahore Conspiracy case in 1915. Ramchandra had so much confidence in Rai that he gave him the amount though Rai could not give him an assurance that it would ever reach its destination. Ramchandra also gave 600 Dollars to Rai for the publication of his book ‘Young India’. Is it not permissible to conclude from all these facts that Lala Lajpat Rai was in the confidence of the Revolutionaries?

Between November 1914 and January 1920 while he was in the USA and Japan he came in contact with various types of revolutionaries. Some of them were in favour of collection and manufacture of firearms and bombs for assassination and other terroristic activities. But men like Bhai Parmanand, Jadugopal Mukherjee and Hardayal did not like to collect money by committing dacoity on their fellow-countrymen or to murder individual British officers. They tried to tamper with the loyalty of the Indian army by skilful propaganda, raise the standard of revolt and carry on guerilla war. But when the first World War broke out most of them were in favour of securing German help for the liberation of India. Lala Lajpat Rai could never believe that freedom secured with foreign help was worth having. At a reception organised in his honour by the Hindustanee Association of America on the premises of the Vedanta Society of New York he said: “I am an Indian patriot and I wish freedom for my country. I have no sympathy with the Germans nor I have anything against them. Considering our present circumstances we will rather stay in the British Empire as a self-governing part of the latter, than go out to be governed by another nation.”<sup>19</sup> On another occasion he told some agents of

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 209.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 198.

Ramchandra that he had no doubt that the Germans would grab India and suck the life blood out of her even more mercilessly than the English had done.<sup>20</sup> He had nothing but hatred for Prussianism. In his presidential speech in the special session of the Congress in September 1920, he condemned Michael O'Dwyer's method of governing the Punjab as Prussian in conception, Prussian in aim and Prussian in execution.<sup>21</sup>

According to the testimony of M. N. Roy, Rash Behari Basu's plan of freeing India was with the help of Japan, which he believed was destined to free Asia from white domination.<sup>22</sup> With reference to such schemes Lajpat Rai said in his presidential speech in the Congress: "I do not desire the destruction of some Empires for the benefit of others."<sup>23</sup> M. N. Roy states that Lala Lajpat Rai went to America from London in 1915 and with his great oratorical power won the sympathy of liberal-minded Americans for the cause of Indian independence. While he was returning to India via London he was refused permission to proceed further which practically meant that he would be arrested if he dared to return to India. "It was suspected", writes M. N. Roy, "that while in America, he had established some conspiratorial contact with the enemy. Like all colonial nationalists, he was, of course, pro-German; but he was too cautious a man to be actively connected with any clandestine arrangements."<sup>24</sup> If we are to believe these words we have to take all the anti-German statements made by Lala Lajpat Rai in 1919 in his autobiographical notes and in 1920 in the presidential speech as mere after-thoughts written with a view to warding off any suspicion against him. But possibly M. N. Roy was attributing his own ideas to Lala Lajpat Rai.

Lalaji had a peculiar fascination for the revolutionaries. When M. N. Roy landed penniless in America it was he who gave him food and shelter. Lala Lajpat Rai had with

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 204.

<sup>21</sup> Lajpat Rai— *The Call to Young India* (S. Ganesan), 168.

<sup>22</sup> M. N. Roy, 5. <sup>23</sup> *The Call to Young India*. <sup>24</sup> M. N. Roy, 26.



him considerable amount of public funds but he would not spend this over his own comforts and even on necessities. He used to cook his own food, cleanse his own room and wash the dishes himself. M. N. Roy helped him in cooking and one day prepared Rasgolla which delighted Lajpat Rai very much. M. N. Roy admits that he got his first acquaintance with the works of Karl Marx and other socialist classics through the perusal of books purchased by Lala Lajpat Rai.

Towards the close of his biographical notes he wrote on June 6, 1919: "I have lost almost all faith in secret work and in secret organisations." This shows that at one time he had faith in them and that faith had not yet vanished completely. The standpoint adopted by him can best be seen from his observations on those advocates of constructive nationalism who wanted independence but not till Indians were able to protect themselves against the outside world. Such people would like to make use of both the Congress and the bomb. He explains this point thus: "They would not advocate the use of the bomb and the revolver; in fact they might in all seriousness dissuade people from using them, but when they are used, they would not give up the offenders even if they knew who they were. They would approve the use of the bomb and the revolver against individual tyrants or against people who insult Indian manhood and womanhood, as in the present state of racial and political feeling in India no other way is open to bring them to book and get justice against Englishmen, but they do not like the use of the bomb and the revolver for general political purpose or for terrorising. These people believe in a propaganda of selfless social service. The people must be approached and won over by service and love, before any political upheaval is attempted."<sup>25</sup> All the contradictions which appear at first sight in the various utterances of Lala Lajpat Rai can be reconciled in the light of this observation. But here too he was careful enough to be silent on his personal attitude.

<sup>25</sup> *Young India*, 213.

His most significant contribution to the history of political thought in India lies in his penetrating analysis of the causes of revolutionary movement in this country. He starts from the fundamental proposition that political institutions are nothing but reflection of the national mind and national conditions. Indians want to have freedom to live according to their own conception of what life should be and to pursue their own ideals in an independent state free from the interference of others.<sup>26</sup> The British rulers do not allow Indians to live such a life. This is the root cause of the revolutionary movement. The other contributory causes were the insolent conduct of Europeans in India, the distrust of the Government towards the educated classes, who were not allowed to express their opinion freely. The elderly leaders could have dissuaded hot-headed young men from taking recourse to terrorism; but Lajpat Rai regrets that any close association with them was likely to get one into hot water, if sometimes or other any of their friends does anything violent. He also attributes the revolutionary movement to the entirely theoretical type of education imparted in India. He, therefore, advised the Government to make education practical, foster industries, open all posts to the sons of the soil, reduce the civil and military expenditure, allow the people to determine the fiscal policy of the country and he hoped that the revolutionary movement would subside. But he assured the British authorities that the movement would not die so long as there was foreign domination. Even if India attained Home Rule it would not die, because revolution was in the air all over the world.<sup>27</sup> He categorically states: "The revolutionary struggle through which we are now passing has been brought to our shores by our rulers."<sup>28</sup> He elucidates it by showing that the whole structure of social life in India has been changed by revolutionary economic changes, which were introduced for the

<sup>26</sup> *The Political Future of India*, 197.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 162-63.

<sup>28</sup> *The Call to Young India*, 162 (The Congress Presidential Address, 1920).

benefit of the rulers. Indian outlook on life has been changed by the Western system of education, law courts and newspapers. India would like to keep her connection with Britain on a basis of mutual friendship and reciprocal interest. But a section of the ruling race claims the right to rule Indians by sword. Thus there arises a struggle between the forces of democratic changes and reactionary militarism.<sup>29</sup> The Government drives disaffection underground by its policy of persecutions. The younger party, according to Rai, felt so much exasperated that they made several attempts on the lives of high officials. Publications which had been suppressed were published and circulated secretly. Arms were smuggled and stolen, attempts were made to wreck railways and otherwise terrorise the Government throughout the years 1908 and 1909. From all these Lajpat Rai draws the following conclusion: "The country is in such circumstances now that every step which the Government takes to repress and crush the movement or to punish the offenders, strengthens the spirit of revolt, adds to the volume and intensity of the desire for revenge, adds to the number of those who are prepared to suffer or even die for the cause. From the classes, the movement has spread to the masses; from the non-fighting masses it is now gaining and winning adherents among the fighting classes."<sup>30</sup>

This was really the feature which distinguished the revolutionary movement in the Punjab from its counterparts in other provinces. The virile Sikhs, Jats, Raputs and Moslems of the Punjab formed the backbone of the Indian army. They were, however, educationally and economically backward—some of them tried to better their lot by emigration to different parts of the British empire. They were treated in such a humiliating way that they came easily under the influence of Hardayal and Barkatullah. Lajpat Rai says that the Sikhs had nothing in common with these leaders. "In language and religion, by habits and associations, they were poles apart from each other."<sup>31</sup> Had not

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 163.

<sup>30</sup> *Young India*, 125.

<sup>31</sup> *The Political Future of India*, 168.

their grievances been genuine they would not have accepted the leadership of Hardayal. Many of their friends and relatives were employed as soldiers in India and through them it was possible to spread disaffection in the Indian army. Similar opportunities were not present either in Bengal or in Maharashtra.

When the War broke out in 1914 it was found that one-half of the Indian army was drawn from the Punjab, less than one-third from the rest of India and over one-sixth from the Gurkhas and the Frontier and trans-border Pathans.<sup>32</sup> Altogether there were one lakh Punjabi soldiers in the army. During the war as many as 110,000 Punjabis joined it out of a total of 192,000 fighting men raised in India.<sup>33</sup> This is why the revolutionaries selected the Punjab as the special field for carrying on their propaganda.

Hardayal (1884-1938) was the most outstanding leader of the revolutionary movement in the Punjab. He belonged to a Kayastha family of Delhi, which remained a part of the province of the Punjab till 1911. He was educated in a Mission school and later on in the St. Stephen's College, Delhi. But the influence of education under the Christian missionaries could not *Anglicize* him in any way. He carried on his post-graduate studies in the Government College, Lahore and obtained the M.A. degree in 1903, standing first in first class in English literature. Next year he took his M.A. degree in History. He secured a State Scholarship in 1905 and joined the St. John's College, Oxford. He came under the influence of Shyamji Krishna Varma and gave up his scholarship in 1907. He devoted all his energies to the cause of liberation of India. When he came back to the Punjab in 1908, Principal Rudra of the St. Stephen's College, his old teacher, called on him. But by that time he had given up European dress and had become so much hostile to European civilization and the Christian religion that he did not ask him to take his seat in his room lest it got polluted by the touch of an Indian Christian.

<sup>32</sup> O' Dwyer, 214.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 217.

Michael O'Dwyer writes: "He was back in Lahore in 1908, and stayed for some time with Lajpat Rai with a party of young men, whose characters he was forming by preaching passive resistance and boycott, thus anticipating Gandhi by the years."<sup>34</sup> But the *Reminiscences* of his disciple, J.M. Chatterjee, of Saharanpur reveals that Hardayal like Sri Aurobindo did not rely on Passive Resistance alone. He and his disciples made arrangements for collecting arms and manufacturing bombs. Hardayal found that Sri Aurobindo in Bengal and Lokamanya Tilak in Maharashtra had been arrested and many of the revolutionaries had been rounded up. He was persuaded by his well-wishers to go abroad again, in the middle of 1908. Before his departure he entrusted the responsibility of carrying on the revolutionary work to J. M. Chatterjee.

Chatterjee came in contact with Rash Behari Basu in 1909 at Dehradun where he had gone with a marriage party. The two kindred spirits became close friends. Chatterjee introduced Rash Behari to Dinanath and other followers of Hardayal in the Punjab. In an ordinary exercise book he wrote out in elaborate detail of a plan for attacking the arsenals of the Government at various centres simultaneously and handed it over to Sardar Ajit Singh and Sufi Amba Prasad. One day they left the plan with the editor of a Urdu journal and the Police seized it from him. This led to the arrest of many persons. Ajit Singh and Sufi Amba Prasad considered it safe to go abroad. They left for Persia and Chatterjee went underground. Rash Behari was asked by Chatterjee to take charge of the revolutionary activities in the Punjab. In 1910 Chatterjee went to England to qualify as a Barrister-at-law.

The first move of Rash Behari was to organise a Central Working Committee of the different revolutionary organizations then working in different parts of Northern India. In

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 185 Lala Lajpat Rai, however, says that Hardayal did not live in his house, but he along with Chatterjee used to come to his house frequently. Lajpat Rai—*The Political Future of India*, 165.

1911 the prominent workers of the Committee were Bhai Balmukund, Basanta Kumar Biswas, Balraj Bhalla, Hanu-mant Sahai and Sachindra Sanyal. Rash Behari used to undertake tours to Lahore and other important centres to guide the activities of the members of his party.

Another prominent worker was Amir Chand, a teacher in the Cambridge Mission High School in Delhi. Chatterjee had instructed Dinanath to seek instruction from Amir Chand. Dinanath found useful collaborators in Abad Behari and Balmukund. They made intensive propaganda amongst the student community. They distributed in 1913 a leaflet extolling the attempt on Lord Hardinge's life in such terms as these: "The *Gita*, the *Vedas* and the *Koran*—all enjoin us to kill all the enemies of the motherland, irrespective of caste, creed or colour. Leaving other great and small things, the special manifestation of the Divine force at Delhi in December last has proved beyond doubt that the destiny of India is being moulded by God himself."<sup>35</sup> On the 17th of May, 1913, Basanta Kumar Biswas was commissioned by the revolutionaries to place a bomb on a road in the Lawrence Gardens at Lahore where many Europeans used to take a stroll in the evening. Basanta actually placed the bomb there with the intention of killing or injuring some Europeans. But the only person who was killed was a poor orderly who ran over it in the dark on his bicycle.

Copies of Hardayal's newspaper the *Ghadr* were surreptitiously sent to the Punjab in 1913. It openly preached revolt. In the summer of that year three Sikh delegates came from Canada to the Punjab. They were the advance agents of the Ghadr Party. Their ostensible purpose was to educate public opinion in India against the Canadian immigration laws, but they often preached against the British Government. On being warned by the Government they sought an interview with the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. Sir Michael O'Dwyer had a long talk with them and he found that one of them was a

<sup>35</sup> Sedition Committee, 101.

"dangerous revolutionary." They returned to Canada about the beginning of 1914.

It transpired in course of the famous San Francisco Trial in 1917 that "for more than a year prior to the outbreak of the European War (4th August, 1914), certain Hindus in San Francisco and German agents were preparing openly for war with England." At a meeting held at Sacramento on 31st December, 1913, Hardayal told the audience that "Germany was preparing to go to war with England, and that it was time to get ready to go to India for coming revolution."<sup>36</sup> Some of the revolutionaries began to come back to the Punjab for carrying out their mission even before the outbreak of the war. Bhai Parmanand, (1874-1948) a prominent member of the Arya Samaj and a Professor of History was one of them. He was an accused in the First Lahore Conspiracy case. While he was standing his trial, Ramchandra, the leader of the Ghadr Party in America handed over to Lala Lajpat Rai the sum of 3500 Dollars for meeting the cost of defence of Bhai Parmanand and his fellow-prisoners. He promised to give him a larger sum in case of need. But Lala Lajpat Rai was not able to send the money to India. In June, 1919, while he was still in America he wrote in his Autobiographical Notes: "I don't think that money was ever paid to anyone in India. It is still with me."<sup>37</sup> Bhai Parmanand was sentenced to death along with twenty-three others by the Special Tribunal. There could not be any appeal from its judgment to a higher court. But an appeal could be made to the Viceroy. Lord Hardinge consulted the Law member of his Council and was told that eighteen of the convicted persons could not be awarded death sentence under the clause of the penal code under which they had been convicted. Lord Hardinge writes: "I went to Lahore to see the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir M. O'Dwyer and told him categorically that I absolutely declined to allow a holocaust of victims in a case where only six men had been proved to

<sup>36</sup> O' Dwyer, 187.

<sup>37</sup> *Autobiographical Writings*, 205.

be actually guilty of murder and dacoity. He recommended that only six of the twenty-four should have their sentences commuted."<sup>38</sup> But the Viceroy assumed the responsibility of commuting the sentences of eighteen. He adds, however, that "it was impossible on political grounds to show up publicly the mistake made by the Special Tribunal." Its lesson, however, was lost on the Punjab Special Tribunal, which continued to inflict hardest punishment on an inordinately large number of persons suspected to have been revolutionaries. Lala Lajpat Rai made a vigorous protest against such punishment in the address which he delivered as the President of the special session of the Congress in September, 1920. He pointed out that in no other province was the punishment meted out so severe. He was absent from India during the Jalianwalabagh Massacre but he devoted practically the whole of his long Presidential speech in condemning it most forcefully.

<sup>38</sup> Hardinge, 130.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### MILITANT NATIONALISTS ABROAD PRIOR TO 1914.

THE earliest Indian apostle to preach militant nationalism from abroad was Shyamji Krishna Varma (1857-1930). He was born at Mandvi in the former State of Cutch on October 4, 1857. He became proficient in Sanskrit language and literature in his college days. This love of Sanskrit language must have been one of the factors which attracted him in 1875-76 to the most distinguished son of Gujarat in the nineteenth century, Swami Dayananda, who used to deliver his lectures in Sanskrit before he adopted Hindi for the purpose. The Arya Samaj, which the Swamiji founded, produced a large number of militant nationalists like Shyamji Krishna Varma, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bhai Parmanand. Sir Michael O'Dwyer writes that nearly all the District Magistrates of the Punjab had reported to Sir Denzil Ibbetson that "Wherever there was an Arya Samaj, it was the centre of seditious talk".<sup>1</sup> Swami Dayananda had so much confidence in the ability and integrity of Shyamji Krishna Varma that he made him one of the trustees of the Arya Samaj before his death in 1884. Having completed his University education in Bombay he joined Balliol College, Oxford, in April 1879 and graduated in 1883. He was engaged as a research assistant by Professor Monier Williams at Oxford. Having passed the B.C.L. examination from the Inner Temple in 1884 he got himself enrolled as an advocate in the Bombay High Court in 1885. He was offered the post of the Dewan of Rutlam State in 1886 and held it with distinction for more than two years. He became subsequently the Counsellor in the States

<sup>1</sup> O' Dwyer, 184.

of Junagad and Udaipur. Soon after the murder of Rand and the arrest of many important persons in the Bombay Presidency he left India for England in 1897. In 1905 he instituted six scholarships, each of the value of Rs. 1000 per year, for Indians studying in England. His object was to train up a band of highly educated young men for preaching militant nationalism. On the recommendation of Tilak he awarded one of these scholarships to Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Another Indian who collaborated with him in this work was Sardar Singh Rana who also instituted three travelling scholarships of Rs. 2000 each. In London Shyamji Krishna Varma took three other steps in the year 1905 in furtherance of his plan. First, he organised the Indian Home Rule Society on February 18. Secondly, he started a journal entitled the *Indian Sociologist* and thirdly, he set up the India House for providing accommodation to the Indian workers for the national cause. Lala Lajpat Rai was present at the opening ceremony of the India House in London.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of securing Home Rule for India must have occurred to Shyamji as early as 1884 because we find the Gujarat Gazette dated the 14th February of that year writing: "So long as foreign rule is not converted into or assimilated to Home Rule, the grievance must remain unredressed. If Ireland succeeded in getting Home Rule, we shall succeed in getting one like it." When Shyamji Krishna Varma began to press forward the claim for Home Rule for India through the columns of the *Indian Sociologist* he got ready response from the American Irish community. In the issue of their paper, the *Gaelic American*,

<sup>2</sup> Lala Lajpat Rai—*Autobiographical writings*, 105. He states here: "His political ideas were very much like my own though I did not share his acerbity towards the Congress and its leaders". In his opinion Varma had an imperious disposition and recognised no man's right to differ from him. He adds: "To say that Hardayal and Savarkar were his 'disciples' would be to belittle these two great men, but there can be no doubt that Shyamji's ideas did influence them."

dated December 9, 1905 direct incitement was given to the Indian army to mutiny and advice tendered to educated men to preach sedition among the Indian troops.<sup>3</sup> The paper thus urged the Indians and Irishmen to make a common cause: "Ireland and India have a common enemy, which has succeeded in holding them down, robbing and starving them, by sowing division, race hatred and religious animosity among the people. Without the help of Irishmen in England's service no Irish effort for freedom has ever yet been put down, and the Indian soldier in England's pay is the chief obstacle to the emancipation of his own country. The Irish soldier of the British Army contributed largely by his valour to the conquest of India and to the suppression of Insurrection and it is well-known that the English Government intends to use Sikhs, Gurkhas and Pathans against Ireland in her next struggle to shake off the yoke of England." In the issue dated May 26, 1906 the *Gaelic American* published headlines as follows: "Indians declare openly for Republic—Proclamation exhorts the people to assert their rights; Shake off the English Yoke and assume control of their own destinies. Victims of British Vampires held down by force can only overthrow their oppressors by the same means."<sup>4</sup>

On the 11th of May, 1907 the paper wrote: "Millions of people have perished from artificially created famine during the last decade. Sixty or seventy thousand are dying a week from plague, a disease resulting from insufficient nutriment. The time for open revolt has not yet come. Conditions are not yet ripe. What is needed is missionary work among the weaker and organisation, so that when the time comes, the weight of all the three hundred millions of people may be thrown against the enemy." Next week (18th May), however, it advocated openly the adoption of violent means: "In Eastern Bengal the rising has assumed the character of an insurrection in which

<sup>3</sup> National Archives—Home, Political. August 1907 No. 243-250.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. from the report submitted by C. J. Stevenson-Moore, Officiating Director, Criminal Intelligence, dated 12.7.1907.

Hindus and Muhammadans have combined against the hated Feringhees. It would, therefore, be nothing surprising if with the introduction of Russian methods of repression we should have some day of the beginning of Russian methods of resistance. Under the circumstances they would be justifiable and we might add we would wish to see them successful.”<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that at this time a large number of copies of the *Gaelic American* were circulated in India as is known from the report of C. J. Stevenson-Moore, Officiating Dector of Criminal Intelligence, Government of India, who writes on July 12, 1907: “The circulation of the paper appears to have increased considerably in India and a large number of private persons in the Punjab, Bengal, Bombay and Madras subscribe to it.”<sup>6</sup>

Shyamji Krishna Varma did not originally advocate violence. He at first preached a comprehensive type of boycott—not only of British goods but also of British personnel and institutions. He warmly took up the cause of Passive Resistance. But as the degree of repression increased in Bengal and elsewhere, his tone changed. Like the *Gaelic American*, he too, began to exhort his countrymen to take to violent measures. When Lala Lajpat Rai was deported in May, 1907, he organised a protest meeting in London in which he said: “There were some sections in India alone who would not stop at driving the English from this land but would like to invade England to recover the untold wealth carried away during the century.”<sup>7</sup> The

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 2.

<sup>7</sup> H. F. M., II, 892. The idea of invading England has been caricatured by the Bengali humorist, Rajsekhar Basu, who writes in a story that the Indians having conquered England began to teach Englishmen how to eat mangoes. But it has got its parallel in the description of Sahadeva's conquests on the eve of the Rajasuya ceremony of Yudhisthira in the *Mahabharata*, which states that having conquered the Pandyas, the Dravidas and others in India Sahadeva subdued Antakhi and Roma by the despatch of political missions only (Sabhparvan, 28. 49. Critical edition published by the BORI, Poona). Antakhi is Antioch and Roma is the exact

Government of India did not like the *Indian Sociologist* to be circulated in this country and advised the Postal authorities to seize and destroy the packets containing issues of this paper despatched from London. Shyamji Krishna Varma, therefore, hit upon the device of printing the *Indian Sociologist* in the form of a letter.<sup>8</sup> His writings, however, provoked strong criticism in England. A member put a question in the House of Commons enquiring whether Government proposed to take any action against him. Shyamji Krishna Varma, therefore, left England and made Paris the headquarters of his propaganda work.

At that time Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was residing in the India House. He became the leader of the group in England after the departure of Shyamji Krishna Varma. He wrote the life of Mazzini and a history of the Sepoy Mutiny under the caption of *Indian War of Independence*. He organized in England the "Free India Society" on the same line as the *Abhinava Bharata* of Maharashtra. Members had to take the following oath: "In the name of God, in the name of mother Bharat and in the name of my ancestors I, convinced that without obtaining the absolute political independence my country cannot obtain the glorious space amongst the Nations of the world and convinced also that political independence cannot be obtained without waging a bloody and relentless war, do solemnly declare that I shall from this moment do everything in my power even at the cost of my life to crown my country with her *Swaraaj* and solemnly swear that I shall ever be faithful and true to this society. If I betray the whole or a part of this oath, may I be doomed to death. Bande Mataram". The object of the society was to assassinate high officials and thereby create terror and confusion. The members hoped that if they could carry on such work for two or three years revolution would break out in India.

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Latin feminine form of the city of Rome. This could not have been written before the second or first century B. C. It is an instance of wishful thinking.

<sup>8</sup> National Archives—Home, Political, August No. 243-250, 7.

Vinayak Savarkar obtained from Paris a parcel of 20 Browning automatic pistols with ammunition and he sent them out to Bombay concealed in the false bottom of a box forming part of the luggage of Chaturbhuj Amin who had been employed as a cook at the India House. But Ganesh Savarkar was arrested a week before the arrival of Amin at Bombay on the 6th of March, 1909. He had, however, told a friend that the pistols were on their way. A typescript consisting of sixty pages of a manual for the manufacture of bomb along with 45 sketches was discovered at the house of Ganesh Savarkar in course of a search by the Police. It was the same manual which had been found in the Maniktala Garden of Barindra Ghosh and his party nearly a year earlier, though it contained fuller details. A copy of "*Secret Societies of the European Revolution, 1776-1876*" by Frost was also found during the search at Ganesh's house. Ganesh Savarkar was sentenced to transportation for life on the 9th June, 1909. This harsh sentence was one of the factors which induced Madanlal Dhingra, an associate of Vinayak Savarkar to shoot down Sir William Curzon-Wylie on July 1, 1909 at the meeting of the Indian National Association held at the Imperial Institute of London.

Dhingra came from a Hindu middle class family of the Punjab. Having passed the First Arts examination of the Punjab University from Amritsar he went to England in 1906 and studied Engineering. He had practically completed his course and was due to return to India in October, 1909, when Savarkar organised a meeting on May 10, 1909 in honour of the martyrs of 1857. Dhingra wore a badge commemorating the self-sacrifice of the heroes. He went to his class with the badge on. He was ordered to remove it but he refused to do so. Sir William Curzon-Wylie was a retired officer of the Indian Army. He was employed as Political A.D.C. to the Secretary of State for India in 1901. He was also appointed a member of the Committee which looked after the Indian students in London. Madanlal Dhingra's elder brother, who was a Barrister-at-law,

wrote to Curzon-Wylie to dissuade him from associating with the revolutionaries. But Madanlal peremptorily told him not to interfere with his private affairs. He murdered Curzon-Wylie not out of any personal grudge but as a symbolic protest against the persecution of patriots in India. When he was arrested as a murderer he said: "I am a patriot working for the emancipation of the Motherland from the foreign yoke. I object to the use of the term 'murderer' to me because I am perfectly justified in what I have done. The English would have done the same thing had the Germans been in occupation of England."

At the time of his execution on August 17, 1909, Dhingra had in his pocket a written statement giving the reasons for taking this step. This reveals the psychology of the young men who took to violence. It ran thus: "I admit that the other day I attempted to shed English blood as a humble revenge for the inhuman hangings and deportations of patriotic Indian youths. In this attempt I have consulted none but my own conscience. I believe that a nation held down by foreign bayonets is in a perpetual state of war. Since open battle is rendered impossible to a disarmed race I attacked by surprise; since the guns were denied to me, I drew forth my pistol and fired. As a Hindu I feel that wrong to my country is an insult to God. Her cause is the cause of Sri Ram. Her service is the service of Sri Krishna. Poor in wealth and intellect a son like myself has nothing else to offer to the Mother but his own blood and so I have sacrificed the same on her altar. The only lesson required in India at present is to learn how to die and the only way to teach it is by dying ourselves. Therefore, I die and glory in my martyrdom. My only prayer to God is that I may be reborn of the same Mother and may re-die in the same sacred cause till the cause is successful and she stands free for the good of humanity and to the glory of God."<sup>9</sup> Referring to the heroism of Madanlal Dhingra, Vinayak

Savarkar wrote in a pamphlet entitled *Bande Mataram*: "Young India has once more shown her hand and the world is lost in wonder and admiration. The scene of action is transferred from Bengal to England. Once more the heroism of young India has struck terror into the heart of Britain." Virendra Chattopadhyaya, brother of Sarojini Naidu, started in November, 1909 a paper named *Talver*. The front page of this short-lived journal carried a portrait of Dhingra.

Savarkar's *Bande Mataram* contained exhortations like the following: "Terrorise the officials, English and Indian, and the collapse of the whole machinery of oppression is not very far. The persistent execution of the policy that has been so seriously inaugurated by Khodiram Bose, Kanailal Datta and other martyrs will soon cripple the British Government in India. This campaign of separate assassination is the best conceivable method of paralysing the bureaucracy and of arousing the people. The initial stage of the revolution is marked by the policy of separate assassination."<sup>10</sup> This sort of propaganda produced the natural effect. A. M. T. Jackson, the Magistrate of Nasik who had committed Ganesh Savarkar to trial, was shot dead on the 21st of December, 1909 at a theatre where a drama was to be staged in his honour on the eve of his transfer.

Vinayak Savarkar was arrested in London in April, 1910. The charges against him included the sending of pistols and seditious pamphlets to India. Another charge was that in 1908 he with the help of residents in the India House manifolded in type a number of copies of a work describing minutely the manner of preparing explosives and bombs. He despatched these copies to various addresses in India. Another charge was that he delivered a speech at the Guru Govind Singh memorial meeting held in London on January 8, 1909 "inciting the Sikhs to rise against the Indian Government."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> HFM ( Bombay ) II. 401.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 441.



While Savarkar was being transported to India he escaped from the Water Closet through the porthole. He jumped into the sea at Marseilles and had to swim some 10 to 12 feet. Reaching the quay he ran about 200 yards but was seized by a number of persons. Shyamji Krishna Varma, Madam Cama and other Indians in Paris had arranged to give him shelter in the French territory and thereby save him from prosecution by the English. But the plan miscarried.

Madam Bhikaji Rustam K. R. Cama (1876-1935) was the solitary representative of the peaceful Parsi community to take a leading part in revolutionary activities. She was the daughter-in-law of the famous Parsi social reformer, K. R. Cama. Her husband was a well-to-do solicitor. She herself was a highly educated lady and could fluently speak several European languages. She left India in 1902 and visited various countries in Europe and America. She herself says that she was a peace-loving person, abhorring violence till 1906. In a message to the people of India in 1909 she wrote: "Three years ago it was repugnant to me even to talk of violence as a subject of discussion; but owing to the heartlessness, the hypocrisy, the rascality of the Liberals, that feeling is gone. Why should we deplore the use of violence when our enemies drive us to it? If we use force, it is because we are forced to use force. How is it that the Russian Sophy Pervoskai and her comrades are heroines and heroes in the sight of Englishmen and English women while our countrymen are considered criminals for doing exactly the same thing for the same cause? If violence is applauded in Russia, why not in India? Tyranny is tyranny and torture is torture wherever applied. Success justifies any action. Struggle for Freedom calls for exceptional measures. Successful rebellion against the foreign rule is patriotism. What is life without Freedom? Friends, let us put aside all hindrances, doubts and fears. . .

Show self-respect, Indians, and set to work. The days for calling meetings and passing resolutions are now over. Do silent but solid work. A handful of foreigners, a few English-

men, have declared war on us, who can wonder if we millions accept the challenge and declare war on them? The price of liberty must be paid. Which nation has got it without paying for it?

Thank God that our people have learnt that it is a sin to tolerate despotism. They have learnt to combat without pause; they have learnt rather to die fearless than perish like worms. We are awakened to the sense of our power, and in the name of our ancestors and our glorious country we defy our oppressors.

The lives of four young men who are done to death, are burnt away just like incense on the altar of Motherland, *Bande Mataram*! On the altar of truth, justice and liberty, these noble lives are sacrificed. This flag of *Bande Mataram* which I waive before you was made for me by a noble selfless young patriot who is standing at the bar of the so-called court of justice in our country. What a mockery to talk of justice and jury? We have seen such a travesty of justice in cases of Tilak and Pillay.”<sup>12</sup>

Madam Cama may be said to be one of the pioneers of the movement for using a distinctive flag for India. Her idea is all the more striking because the flag she used was a tri-coloured one in green, yellow and red. We find her delivering a speech at Stuttgart in August, 1907 under this flag. She moved in this conference the following Resolution: “That the continuance of British rule in India is positively disastrous and extremely injurious to the best interests of India, and lovers of freedom all over the world

<sup>12</sup> H.F.M. II. 524-25. In April, 1911 issue of the *Bande Mataram* occurred the following :

“In a meeting, in a shop or in a church, in a garden or at a fair, wherever an opportunity comes, Englishmen ought to be killed. No distinction should be made between officers and private people.” On the 17th June, Dr. Ashe, Magt. of Tinnevely was shot in a railway carriage at a junction station.

In an article dated July 1911 Madam Cama tried to show that the recent assassinations were in accordance with the teachings of the *Gita*.

ought to co-operate in freeing from slavery the fifth of the human race inhabiting that oppressed country, since the perfect social state demands that no people should be subject to any despotic or tyrannical form of Government." Here was an attempt to harness socialism with nationalism. But on technical grounds the President of the Congress did not allow her Resolution to be put to vote, though she was allowed to make a fiery speech.

Soon after the Congress, she went to the United States on a lecture tour. A representative of a newspaper called *Martha Washington* of New York interviewed her in October 1907 and she told him that her aim was Swaraj, self-government and that she hoped India would become free within ten years. On her return to London in 1908 she said in course of a speech before the Indians assembled at the India House: "Successful revolution against the foreign rule is patriotism." As she apprehended persecution in London she settled down in Paris in May, 1909. She became a leading figure in the revolutionary circle of Indians in Paris. She started a monthly journal named *Bande-Mataram* and managed to send its copies surreptitiously to India through Pondicherry. The Government of India attached her property worth about a lakh of rupees in 1910, because it was learnt that she along with S. R. Rana and Shyamji Krishna Varma helped Govin Amin, an associate of Savarkar, to study the process of manufacturing arms and explosives.

When Savarkar was recaptured at Marseilles on 8th July, 1910, she induced two socialist papers to take up the cause of the Mahratta hero. One of these papers, *The Action*, published on July 23 a sketch of the life and character of Savarkar and acknowledged that the information was supplied by Madam Cama and Hardayal.<sup>13</sup>

Attempts were made to organize the Indian students and Sikh working men in Canada and the U.S.A. into a political organisation from July 1906 when Tarak Nath

<sup>13</sup> H.F.M. II, 527

Das, a member of the Anusilan Samiti reached Seattle via Japan. Ramnath reached the U.S.A. a few months later and started editing a weekly paper in Urdu, called the *Circular Freedom* early in 1907. As it failed to attract either funds or readers it ceased to exist within a year. The next paper started by Indians was the *Free Hindusthan*, published by Tarak Nath Das in March, 1908. He openly preached through it the need for winning over the Indian Army to the nationalist cause. The Government of India having learnt of the dangerous nature of its propaganda began intercepting it from July, 1909. Tarak Nath Das in collaboration with Pandurang Khankhoje and Adhar Chandra Laskar, students in California organised the 'Indian Independence League' in 1907. It had two branches and the number of their members ran to some 400. Its object was to preach revolution both in America and India. Some of the leaflets sent by this organisation were found in the house of Lala Pindidas of Rawalpindi and he was sentenced to jail for seven years. From the note of the Director of Criminal Intelligence, Government of India, dated 29.12.1914, we learn that Harnam Singh of Vancouver used to receive written instructions and bomb manuals from Tarak Nath Das and S. N. Bose. Bhupendra Nath Datta writes that some of the Indian leaders in America secured military training privately from an ex-serviceman, Diaz.<sup>14</sup> The painstaking researches of a young scholar have now brought to light the fact that most of the leaders of the Indian community in America utilized their stay there in learning the art of bomb-making and some of them even joined the U.S. Military Academies to train themselves for an armed revolt.<sup>15</sup> Towards the end of the year 1910 Taraknath Das and G. D. Kumar set up at Vancouver the *United India House*, in imitation of Shyamji Krishna Varma's *India House* at Highgate in London. The Government of India

<sup>14</sup> *Aprakasita*, 55.

<sup>15</sup> *Indian Nationalist Agitations in U.S.A.* contributed by Arun Coomer Bose in the *Journal of Indian History*, April, 1965, 239.

suspected that the Gaekwad of Baroda, who was then touring the U.S.A. financed this project.<sup>16</sup> But it had to be closed within a few months. The movement in America did not gather much strength before the arrival of Hardayal there. Apprehending arrest for his revolutionary activities Hardayal (1884-1939) left India in the middle of 1908. He re-joined Shyamji Krishna Varma in France and it was during this period that the Savarkar incident took place. He found that Shyamji Krishna Varma was not willing to take active steps in furtherance of the idea of liberating India. He, therefore, went to Algiers, Martinique and California. He was appointed lecturer in Philosophy and Sanskrit at the Stanford University in 1912. He was also thoroughly conversant with the French and German languages. But he could not retain the post because, as Bhai Parmanand writes, his thoughts turned to socialism, communism and anarchism.<sup>17</sup> He started an open campaign against the institutions of marriage, property and government even in his classes which consisted of young men as

<sup>16</sup> The Gaekwad Sayaji Rao was the patron of Sri Aurobindo and Keshavrao Ganesh Rao Deshpande and he met Madam Cama in Paris in 1910. In this connection it is worth noting that when George V held the Delhi Durbar in December, 1911, the Gaekwad had to attend it, but his inmost spirit must have revolted against the humiliating obeisance made by his brother princes. Lord Hardinge describes his behaviour in the following words: "The Gaekwad of Baroda had on his arrival at the Durbar appeared in the usual Mahratta dress covered with princely jewels. Immediately before the arrival of their Majesties he was seen to take off all his jewels and when he, the third Maharaja in rank, approached to make his obeisance to the king it was noticed that he was wearing the ordinary white linen everyday dress of a Mahratta with only a walking-stick in his hand. He made a very inadequate obeisance and turning round abruptly walked back to his 'seat'. (*My Indian Years*, 51.) The other princes having performed their deep obeisance moved backward with their eyes on the king as it was considered improper to show their back to him.

<sup>17</sup> Bhai Parmanand—(Lahore, 1934). 60.

well as women. He was, therefore, relieved of his post.<sup>18</sup> Bhai Parmanand gives an idea as to the mode of life led by Hardayal during the early period of his stay in America: "He used to sleep on the hard ground, eat some boiled grain or potatoes and be engaged the whole day, except for a short time devoted to study, in meditation. When I asked him he said that he wished like Buddha to give a new religion to the world and was preparing himself for it."<sup>19</sup> The enthusiasm of Hardayal for the ideal was infectious and Bhai Parmanand, too, began to live according to that plan. Such is the background of the life of the two prominent revolutionaries of the Punjab. Lala Lajpat Rai states that Hardayal was loved and respected by hundreds and thousands of his countrymen, including Gokhale who, however, did not agree to his view.<sup>20</sup> According to him, Hardayalism deprecated the attempts for social, religious and even educational reforms as frittering away of energies. It denounced the type of peace established by the British in India because it had emasculated the people. The tremendous energies of Hardayal found an appropriate outlet in the activities of the Ghadr Party. He wanted to utilize the services of Indian emigrants whose number rose to 6656 in the Western States of the U.S.A. in 1913.<sup>21</sup> They formed the *Hindi Association* of America on the 1st of November, 1913 in San Francisco with Baba Sohan Singh as President and Hardayal as Secretary. The name of the organization was soon changed to the *Hindustan Ghadr* (Mutiny) Party. Most of its members were ill-educated, agricultural and industrial labourers but its top-most leaders, of course, were highly educated men. Hardayal edited a weekly paper named, the *Hindustan Ghadr* in Punjabi, Urdu and

<sup>18</sup> Dr. R. C. Majumdar states ( *History of Freedom Movement*; II. 393 ) that the reason for Hardayal's dismissal is not known. But Bhai Parmanand who was his associate at that time furnishes the reason.

<sup>19</sup> Bhai Parmanand. 50

<sup>20</sup> *Young India*, 199.

<sup>21</sup> Arun Coomarr Bose—*Journal of Indian History*, April, 1965, 232.

Marathi for the benefit of its members as well as for making some propaganda amongst the masses in India. The aims and objects of the party were stated to be "to encourage the establishment and maintenance of a system of Government in India which shall be free from all foreign control and which shall have as its aim the greatest good of the greatest number." From the very beginning there was a vague reference to socialistic principles, which broadened into communistic ideas later on. Among its objectives one was: "It shall guarantee freedom of thought, speech, press, organization and ensure the minimum necessities of life to all." There were two grades of members—inner and outer. Those who belonged to the former group were allowed to participate in all the secret activities of the party. The very first issue of the *Hindustan Ghadr* declared on November 1, 1913: "Today there begins in foreign lands, but in our country's tongue. a war against the British Raj. What is your name? Mutiny. What is your work? Mutiny. Where will it break out? India. The time will come when rifle and blood will take the place of pen and ink." Subsequent issues of the paper also suggested the winning over of officials, looting of treasuries, procuring of arms, manufacture of bombs, destruction of railways and telegraphs and propagation of seditious literature.

The Ghadr Party attracted a large number of members very soon. The outbreak of the first World War within a few months of the starting of the party seemed to afford them an opportunity of realising their aim of freeing India from foreign control. But Hardayal was arrested on March 23, 1914 more than four months before the commencement of the War. He was released on bail, but instead of courting deportation by the U.S.A. he absconded to Switzerland with Barkatullah.

Barkatullah was the son of an officer of the former Bhopal State. In 1909, he became Professor in the University of Tokyo. He started there a paper called the *Islamic Fraternity*. He was in communication with Shyamji Krishna

Varma in 1911. This was probably responsible for making his paper anti-British in tone. The Japanese Government suppressed the paper in 1912 and deprived him of his post in 1914. Thereupon he went to San Francisco, where he became a trusted lieutenant of Hardayal in the Ghadr Party.



## CHAPTER NINE

### IMPACT OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR ON MILITANT NATIONALISM IN INDIA

WHEN the first World War broke out on August 4, 1914, the rivers and rivulets growing out of the revolutionary currents in Bengal, Maharashtra, the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madras all converged into the sea of a world-wide movement which threatened to sweep away the British power in India. The revolutionaries had been looking forward to the outbreak of the war ever since the publication of Bernhardt's *Germany and the Next War* in 1911. We have already referred to the speech in which Hardayal told his Indian audience in America on the 31st December, 1913 that Germany was preparing to go to war with England and that it was time to get ready to go back to India for the coming revolution. During the Hindu Conspiracy Trial at San Francisco which began on July 7, 1917, Herambalal Gupta admitted that his interest in Germany began before the war. In opening the case the District Attorney said in the Court that 'for more than a year prior to the outbreak of the European war, certain Hindus in San Francisco and German agents were preparing openly for war with England.'<sup>1</sup> The militant nationalists knew that their opportunity would come when the British authorities would be compelled to send out the major portion of their forces stationed in India to the theatres of war in Europe. They had been making preparations a few months before the declaration of the war. Jadugopal Mukherjee records -- that Dhiren Sarkar, the

<sup>1</sup> Microfilmed proceedings of the Hindu Conspiracy Trial of San Francisco in 1917 are available in the National Archives of India, New Delhi, in seven rolls. The trial lasted for 156 days till May 1, 1918.

brother of the famous Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar, informed Satish Sen in 1913 that Germany would help India on the outbreak of war.<sup>2</sup> The Germans had collected a surprisingly accurate account of the activities of Indian militant nationalists in India and abroad in 1911 and they kept it up-to-date as is clear from an article published in the *Berliner Tageblatt* dated March 6, 1914.

It must be said at the very outset that the motive of the Germans in helping the Indian revolutionaries was far from philanthropic. By posing as the friends of Indian national aspirations they wanted, in the first instance, to make the Indian soldiers fighting for the British in Europe lukewarm in the cause of their masters. Secondly, they hoped that being threatened with a rebellion in India, the British Government would send back a substantial portion of the army that had been brought from India to Europe and thus relieve the Germans from their pressure. The Indian revolutionaries, on the other hand, thought that if they could once drive out the English, no other foreign power would be able to set up their domination here. They hoped that the Indian soldiers would come over to their side in a body and defend India's Independence. Like the British Government, the Revolutionaries maintained an efficient Intelligence Service. They got information about the depletion of British forces in India. After the achievement of Indian independence the *Reminiscences of Lord Hardinge*, the Viceroy of India from 1910 to 1916 were published in 1948 and we find in it a corroboration of the facts collected by the revolutionaries regarding the military condition of India during the first year of the war. Lord Hardinge writes that within six months of the outbreak of war seven divisions of infantry and two divisions and two brigades of cavalry were sent overseas from India. Within the first few weeks of the war India Government sent out in all 80,000 British officers and troops and 2,10,000 Indian officers and men together with 70 million rounds of small arms and ammunition, 60,000 rifles and more than 550

<sup>2</sup> Jadugopal, 421.

guns of the latest pattern. Lord Hardinge admits that "it is a fact that for several weeks before the arrival of some untrained Territorial battalions from England the total British garrison in India, a country bigger than Europe and with a doubtful factor on the North-West Frontier, was reduced to less than 15,000 men."<sup>3</sup>

Three of the most prominent Revolutionary leaders, Jatindranath Mukherjee, Rash Behari Basu and Amarendra Nath Chatterjee met at the precincts of the Kali temple of Dakshineswar, the temple in which Vivekananda was initiated by Ramakrishna Paramhansa, and held a long discussion on the plan of their work during the War. Jatindranath Mukherjee who was older than Rash Behari Basu by nearly seven years asked the latter whether he would be able to arrange for the occupation of the Fort William. Rash Behari immediately agreed and went to carry on talks with the Indian soldiers stationed in the Fort William.<sup>4</sup> This incident shows that the revolutionaries were aware of the position of the defensive forces in India and that they were determined to take advantage of it.

Before we undertake to give a fuller description of the activities of the Indian revolutionaries in various parts of the world, it would be useful to describe in broad outline the main features of these on the basis of the judgment in the third Lahore Conspiracy Case and the account written by Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab during the War. It is needless to say that the latter tried to belittle the work of the revolutionaries as far as possible. He could see nothing in the immense awakening of India save the intrigues of politicians, the reckless activities of a small urban intelligentsia amidst a vast ocean of dumb peasantry, and the graceless discontent of a negligible minority against a wholly beneficent despotism. To him the only significant fact about the Province he ruled was the recruitment of half a million fighting men from the Punjab during the war. Even such a person had to admit that the

<sup>3</sup> Hardinge, 102-103.

<sup>4</sup> Jadugopal, 412.

Hindu-Sikh Ghadr movement "was by far the most serious attempt to subvert British rule in India. It took many forms. One was to stir up a rebellion in Bengal, the leaders, arms, and ammunition being imported through Batavia and Siam. Another was to start a rising in Burma (then almost denuded of British troops and guarded mainly by Sikh military police who were to be incited to revolt) by the returning Ghadr immigrants from America, working into Burma through Siam."<sup>5</sup> He further states: "In the first year of the War, we have the centre of the conspiracy against British India firmly established in Berlin with Hardayal as the leading figure.<sup>6</sup> He was in close touch with all the outlying branches—in Lahore, Delhi, Calcutta, through his Punjabi and Bengali associates, in Canada and the United States through the Ghadr Agency—his own creation; in the Far East, through Barkatulla and others; in Kabul through Mahendra Pratab (Pratap) and Barkatulla."

According to the judgment of Special Tribunal in the third Lahore Conspiracy case the leaders of the Indian Revolutionary Society in Berlin were Hardayal, Barkatulla, Chandra Kumar Chakrabarti, Birendra Chattopadhyaya and Champakraman Pillai. "This Society, which aimed at establishing a Republic in India, held constant meetings attended by Turks, Egyptians, German officials and most noteworthy of all, German ex-professors and ex-missionaries.....Hardayal and Chattopadhyaya were in daily communication with the German Foreign Office. To carry out the revolution in India there was an Oriental Bureau for

<sup>5</sup> O' Dwyer, 189. Here O' Dwyer does not give the whole picture. Jadugopal Mukherjee writes (383) that his brother Kshirode Gopal Mukherjee and Jatin Hui went from Bengal to organise revolution in Burma. The important part played by the revolutionaries in the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh has also been omitted in the summary quoted above. Lord Hardinge refers to the conspiracy to rob the armoury and magazine of certain regiments at Lahore, Pindi and Ferozepur only ( My Indian Years, 117-118 )

<sup>6</sup> Bhupendra Nath Datta in *Aprakasita Rajnaitik Itihas Ek Adhyaya* belittles the part played by Hardayal.

translating and disseminating inflammatory literature to the Indian prisoners of war in Germany. Inflammatory letters drafted by the German Government and addressed to the Indian Princes, were translated and printed, and meetings were held in which the common objects of Germany and India were dilated upon, these meetings being sometimes presided over by highly placed German officials." All these go to show that the militant nationalists of India made preparations for overthrowing the British domination throughout the world.

The British authorities have depicted the members of the Ghadr Party in the blackest colour. But many of them were men of deep religious conviction and endowed with marvellous courage and dexterity. Seva Singh was one such man. He wanted to avenge the murder of two Sikhs who had been shot dead by a British spy named Bela Singh inside a Gurudwara at Vancouver while they were engaged in prayer in August, 1914. But somehow or other he was acquitted by the trying court. Seva Singh considered William Hopkinson, the British Intelligence Officer as the instigator of the murder. One day while Hopkinson was having a shave in front of a mirror, Seva Singh appeared all on a sudden from behind with a revolver in his hand. His reflection in the mirror warned Hopkinson and while he was attempting to overpower his assailant, the latter with ready wit said that he had come to surrender his revolver to him and thus removing the suspicion he shot him dead. He was arrested promptly and sentenced to death. He wrote before his execution on January 11, 1915—"I, performing the duty of a true Sikh and remembering the name of God, will proceed towards the scaffold with the same amount of pleasure as the hungry baby does towards its mother. I shall gladly have the rope put around my neck thinking it to be a rosary of God's name. I am quite sure that God will take me into his blissful arms because I have not done this deed in my personal interest but to the benefit of both my people and the Canadian Government." The similes of the hungry baby and the rosary of God's name cannot but remind one of the

parables and metaphors frequently used by Ramakrishna Paramhansa.

The Ghadr Party decided to organize revolutionary centres in the Indian armed forces. It issued a leaflet, entitled 'Message of Love to the Military Brethren' in which it exhorted the Indian soldiers fighting the war "not to be tempted by medals and badges of slavery but to throw them away, wash out the old stains of servitude and adorn their breasts with the insignia of freedom." Thousands of propaganda leaflets urging the Indian troops to desert the British forces and join the German army were dropped from the air behind the trenches in France and Mesopotamia.

The Canadian Government did not like to have more Indians in their country as there were already about 4000 there. They passed an immigration law under which an Asiatic had to satisfy them that he was in possession of 200 dollars and that he had travelled by a continuous journey on a through ticket from his native country to Canada. It was difficult for the poor Sikhs seeking employment in Canada to satisfy any of these two conditions. There was no provision for any ship going directly from India to Canada. To circumvent this provision Gurdit Singh, a rich and influential contractor of Singapore, chartered a Japanese ship named *Komagata Maru* through a German agent at Hongkong. He took 351 Sikhs and 21 Punjabi Moslem passengers from the Far Eastern parts of Vancouver. He was aware of the Canadian law but hoped to get over it through political pressure. He told some of the passengers that if the Canadian Government refused admission, they would return to India to expel the British. None but a few of the passengers were admitted into Canada and the ship was compelled to start on its return journey on the 23rd of July 1914 with almost all the passengers. Many of them had staked all their possessions on this venture and naturally they were greatly annoyed. The hardship and privations which they had to undergo during the return journey made them inimical to the British Government. At Yokohama they had been told that as the war had

broken out they would not be allowed to land in Hongkong. Gurdit Singh said that he was willing to take the ship to a port in India if provisions were supplied. This too was refused. Famished and exhausted the passengers arrived at Budge Budge on the 29th September, 1914. They were so much exasperated that they became ready to take violent action. Many of them were in possession of arms and ammunition. Though the Government of Bengal made arrangement for searching them, yet the Sikhs were able to conceal revolvers and ammunitions on their person or among the cloths covering the Granth Sahib. They were to be carried by a special train to Punjab where, however, the Government had passed the Ingress Ordinance on the 5th September with a view to rounding off suspicious Indians returning from abroad. The Sikh passengers refused to enter the train and marched in a body towards Calcutta. They were turned back by a strong military force. In the scuffle that ensued several British officials and Indian Policemen were wounded, while eighteen Sikhs were killed. The rest ran away but most of them were arrested in the course of a few days. Some thirty, however, including Gurdit Singh, escaped. The cruel attack on the Sikhs increased the animosity of many towards the British Government and gave a powerful stimulus to the Ghadr propaganda.

The Ghadr movement was strengthened by the arrival of some important workers in Calcutta on October 28, 1914 by the Japanese ship *Tasu Maru*. The Government of the Punjab received information that many of them entertained a feeling of bitter hatred against the British and openly said that the downfall of the British Raj was impending. The Government, therefore, interned all the 173 passengers in the Central Jails of Montgomery and Mooltan. After some time 100 were detained in jail without trial and 73 were released as they were considered to be less dangerous. But some of these released persons took an active part in committing dacoities, and murdering persons suspected to be spies or strong loyalists. In the Lahore conspiracy case six of these were hanged and six were

transported for life. During the first two years of the war some 8000 persons returned to the Punjab from abroad. Of these some 400 were interned in jail and 2500 restricted to their villages. This sort of punishment meted out on a mass scale failed to keep the Punjab quiet. In the words of Sir Michael O'Dwyer: "From October, 1914 to September, 1915, there was a constant series of explosions. All over the central Punjab, police were murdered; loyal citizens, especially Sikhs known to be assisting the authorities were shot down or killed by bombs; gang robberies, sometimes with murder, of wealthy Hindus were carried out to raise funds for the cause; several attempts were made to derail trains or blow up bridges; factories for the preparation of bombs were established in various places; bombs and material for bombs were received from the revolutionary depots; *Caches* of revolvers and guns were made in British districts and Native States; an attack was made on the Indian military picquet guarding a railway bridge on the main line close to Amritsar, the guard was murdered and their rifles taken; plans for seizing the arsenal at Ferozepur and the magazines at Lahore and other cantonments were formed; and persistent attempts were made, not in all cases without success, to tamper with the Indian troops in at least a dozen stations in the Punjab and United Provinces."<sup>7</sup>

Bhai Parmanand relates that some persons persuaded the revolutionaries to commit dacoity in the house of persons against whom they had private grudge. He mentions a case in which the house of a Brahmana *sowcar* was looted because some of his Jat *sowcar* debtors had some relatives amongst the America-returned revolutionaries who were set against the money-lender. A common blacksmith who had accompanied the dacoits was caught and it was he who gave out the whole story.<sup>8</sup> Much reliance, however, cannot be placed on the story of an approver.

<sup>7</sup> O' Dwyer, 197.

<sup>8</sup> Bhai Parmanand, 72.



The same leader gives out another romantic story regarding the leadership of the Punjab movement. Some sections of revolutionaries believed him to be its leader. But he says that the real leader was Kartar Singh, a young man of only 19 years belonging to the district of Ludhiana. He had left for America when he was 15 and was studying in the seventh standard in the Khalsa school at Ludhiana. He read in a school and earned his livelihood in America. There Bhai Parmanand explained to him one day the true significance of the history of India. Kartar Singh was so much moved that he took the vow then and there to dedicate his life to the cause of the country. From that time he regarded Bhai Parmanand as his leader. Coming back to India after the outbreak of the war Kartar Singh organised a band of followers, most of whom were his class-mates at Ludhiana. He used to tell them that such and such were the orders of Bhai Parmanand, though in reality he used the name just to add greater weight to his own command.<sup>9</sup> If true, the whole incident must be considered an extraordinary one from many points of view.

Bhai Parmanand appears to have played an important part in the revolutionary movement in the Punjab. But the movement was guided by the master-mind of Rash Behari Basu, who moved from Benares to Amritsar and made it his headquarters.

It is difficult to ascertain the degree of cooperation and collaboration between the different groups of revolutionaries working in different regions. Some leaders were of opinion that decentralised organizations were safer, because the detection of one group would not endanger the existence of others. But if advantage was to be taken of the pre-occupation of Britain with the War, some amount of concerted action was absolutely necessary. It was this necessity which prompted the revolutionaries to select some person as the chief. M. N. Roy states that Jatindra Nath Mukherjee (1879-1915) was the commander-

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 81.

in-chief of the revolutionary forces working in different parts of India.<sup>10</sup> He is expected to know the full significance of the term and there is no reason to disbelieve his statement. This implies that Rash Behari Basu agreed to work under his direction.

Jatindranath lost his father at the age of five. He showed great courage and marvellous strength of mind and body even when he was a student at school. At the age of sixteen he joined the Central College, Calcutta, in 1895. He also learnt shorthand and typewriting while prosecuting his studies in the college. He came in close contact with Swami Vivekananda after 1897. He gave up his studies at the age of eighteen and served as a stenographer under an English Barrister-at-Law for some time. He joined Government service and rose to be the stenographer of Mr. Henry Wheeler, the then Secretary to the Government of Bengal.<sup>11</sup> On one occasion while he was going to Darjeeling he had some altercation with some European military men at the Siliguri railway station. As one of them caned him, he struck a severe blow on him. Then all of them simultaneously attacked him but he overpowered them all. He was himself severely wounded. The Europeans considered it a matter of shame to acknowledge in the court that one Bengali youth had beaten up all of them. They did not institute any case but they exercised all their influence to harass Jatindra in various ways. He found it difficult to continue in Government service. He resigned and began to devote the whole of his time in promoting the cause of militant nationalism. He came to prominence after the arrest of Barindra Kumar Ghosh and his associates. It is said that it was on his orders that Charu Basu murdered Ashutosh Biswas and Birendranath Dutta Gupta shot down Shams-ul Alam. He was arrested in 1910 in connection with the Howrah conspiracy case. One of the charges against him was that he had esta-

<sup>10</sup> M. N. Roy 3

<sup>11</sup> Later on he became Sir Henry Wheeler, the Governor of Bihar and Orissa. The Patna University Senate Hall is named after him.

blished revolutionary contact with the 10th Jat regiment. As the charges could not be proved he was released in April, 1911. In 1913, he rendered excellent service in relieving the distress of the people of North Bengal, which was devastated by flood. Religious and humanitarian traits were highly developed in him. He took spiritual initiation from Bhola Giri, the famous saint of Hardwar in or about the year 1906.

Soon after the declaration of the War, Jatindranath Mukherjee, Rash Behari Basu and a few other top-ranking leaders of the Revolutionary organization drew up a comprehensive plan for a general rising in India. First of all they applied their mind to the procuring of arms and ammunition and then to the collection of funds. The first step they took was to get hold of 10 cases containing 50 Mauser pistols and 46000 rounds of Mauser ammunition out of a consignment of 202 cases sent to the Calcutta firm of gunmakers, Rodda and Co. On August 26, 1914 the clerk of the firm, whose duty it was to clear imports of arms and ammunition at the custom office cleared 202 cases, but having brought only 192 cases went to bring the remaining ten. When he did not return even on the third day the matter was reported to the Police. From the memoirs and reminiscences of the revolutionaries it is learnt now that while these arms were being transported from the custom office to the Vansittart Row in four bullock carts, these were looted by Bipin Ganguly, Sisir Mitra, Anukul Mukherjee, Jadugopal Mukherjee and a few others. Naren Bhattacharyya (later on famous as M. N. Roy) was entrusted with 20 of these pistols. In the Report of the Sedition Committee we find the following: "The authorities have reliable information to show that 44 of these pistols were almost at once distributed to 9 different revolutionary groups in Bengal and it is almost certain that the pistols so distributed were used in 54 cases of dacoity or murder or attempts at dacoity and murder subsequent to August, 1914."<sup>12</sup> The Revolutionaries utilised the premises of a

<sup>12</sup> Sedition Committee, 44.

cloth shop named *Sramajivi Samabaya* for storing the arms collected in various ways.

They sent emissaries to different parts of the world. Satyen Sen was sent to the United States to establish contact with the Ghadr Party. When he was returning after the successful completion of his mission in November, 1914, he had as his fellow-travellers in the ship men like Vishnu Ganesh Pingle of Maharashtra and Kartar Singh of the Punjab. He introduced them to Jatin Mukherjee who sent them to Rash Behari Basu. Bholanath Chatterjee was sent to Bangkok to get in touch with the revolutionaries in the Far East. Jitendra Nath Lahiri went to Germany and brought down information early in March, 1915 that two shiploads of arms and ammunition would come from America. The Sedition Committee came to learn that the Germans asked the Bengal revolutionaries to send an agent to Batavia to cooperate, and that Naren Bhattacharyya was sent in April, 1915 to discuss plans with the Germans there. But M. N. Roy writes that he made his first trip to Java for German arms before the end of 1914.<sup>13</sup> It is worth noting that Rash Behari Basu, Sachin Sanyal, Pingle and others did not wait for the arrival of foreign help. They selected 21st of February, 1915 as the date of general rising all over India.

Pingle, a resident of the Poona district had gone to America in 1911 after finishing his education at the Samrath Vidyalaya, a national school. He assured Rash Behari that 4000 men had come from America for the purpose of rebellion and 20,000 more would come when the rebellion would break out. From December, 1914, he made intensive propaganda for revolution under the direction of Rash Behari. Sometimes he disguised himself as a Bengali, assuming the name of Shyamlal, sometimes he took the Punjabi attire and passed under the name of Ganpat Singh. The Sedition Committee reports that after Pingle's arrival in the Punjab a meeting was held at which the rising up in revolution, the plundering of Government treasuries, the

<sup>13</sup> M. N. Roy, 3.

seduction of Indian troops, the collection of arms, the preparation of bombs and the commission of dacoities were all discussed. Pingle's offer to introduce a Bengali bomb expert was accepted.<sup>14</sup> This was none else than Rash Behari Basu. He or his associates must have helped the Punjabis to manufacture a considerable number of bombs, because the special Branch of the Bombay Police reports that Pingle was arrested on the night of 23rd March, 1915, in the cavalry lines, Meerut, with ten bombs of the pattern used in the attempt to assassinate Lord Hardinge in Delhi. These bombs are said to have been sufficient for annihilating half a regiment.

The most daring plot to overthrow the British Government and seize power was hatched by the revolutionaries in the Punjab. Arrangements were made "for a general rising on the 21st of February of which Lahore was to be the headquarters. He (Rash Behari) went there and sent out emissaries to various cantonments in Upper India to procure military aid for the appointed day. He also tried to organize the collection of gangs of villagers to take part in the rebellion. Bombs were prepared; arms were got together; flags were made ready, a declaration of war was drawn up; instruments were collected for destroying railways and telegraph wires."<sup>15</sup> It was decided to prevent the Punjab Mail from starting and its non-arrival at Howrah was to be the signal for the rising in Bengal. Sachindra Sanyal states that it was planned that on the night of 21st February sepoys in the cantonments all over North India would suddenly attack the English soldiers, loot the treasuries and release the prisoners from jail. Sir Michael O'Dwyer writes that in January and February the emissaries of revolutionaries were tampering with the troops from Jhelum to Benares. "They had met with some success in certain battalions lately returned from the Far East and also in a Sikh squadron of a cavalry regiment at Lahore. . . . . We also got information that a general rising had been planned for the night of 21st February, when in various cantonments of

<sup>14</sup> Sedition Committee, 107.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 108.

Northern India certain troops would mutiny, murder their British officers and combining with the Ghadr adherents from outside, who were to be ready on the spot would seize the magazines, arms and ammunition and bring about 'a general rising.'<sup>16</sup> The Bengal revolutionaries contacted the Sikh troops stationed at Dacca through letters of introduction sent by the Sikh soldiers of Lahore, and succeeded in winning them over.<sup>17</sup>

The Government managed to secure information regarding the date of rising through one police informer named Kripal Singh, who had cleverly enrolled himself as a member of Rash Behari Basu's party. Basu trusted him because he had come from Sanghai as a Ghadr Party worker. Basu came to know of this leakage and changed the date of rising to the 19th February, which, too, was divulged to the Government by the same Kripal Singh. Thus the plot miscarried. Thirteen of the revolutionary leaders were captured at Lahore with arms, bombs, bomb-making materials, revolutionary literature and four flags of their own design. Rash Behari and Pingle escaped. The former returned to Benares and the latter continued to work among the troops. He was arrested on the 23rd of March in the lines of the 12th Indian Cavalry with a tin trunk containing ten bombs. He was hanged. Rash Behari went to Japan on May 12, 1915 assuming the name of P. N. Tagore.

The failure of Rash Behari's plot did not dishearten Jatindra Mukherjee and his co-workers. Early in 1915 Jatindra asked his followers to collect one lakh of rupees under the leadership of Bipin Ganguly and Narendra Bhattacharya. They procured a sum of Rs. 40,000 by committing dacoities at the Garden Reach on the 12th January and at Beliaghata on the 22nd February. The Police made a vigorous attempt to arrest the persons responsible for these dacoities. One C.I.D. officer, Nirod Halder was murdered on the 24th February because he happened to go to a room where Jatindra with some of his associates was seated

<sup>16</sup> O' Dwyer. 201.

<sup>17</sup> R. C. Majumdar—History of Freedom Movement. II. 458.

and he accosted the leader by name. On the 28th February Jatindra got Inspector Suresh Chandra Mukherjee murdered because the latter having noticed some absconding revolutionaries attempted to arrest them. The leaders of militant nationalism considered it absolutely necessary to send Jatindra to a safe place outside Calcutta. Sometime in March, 1915 he went to Balasore. The reasons why this place was selected were mainly four. First, that when the foreign ships would bring arms and ammunitions a substantial portion was to be kept at Rai Mangal in the Sundarbans and the rest to be delivered at Balasore. Secondly, Balasore was adjacent to the industrial and mining area of Singhbhum and the arsenal of Chakradharpur.<sup>18</sup> Thirdly, at Balasore itself there was a secret magazine of the Army and fourthly, the forest in the adjoining Mayurbhanj state would afford a safe refuge to Jatindra.

In April, 1915 Narendra Bhattacharyya (M. N. Roy) was sent to Batavia and he adopted the pseudonym of C. Martin. The subsequent history of the plan is outlined thus in the Report of the Sedition Committee: "On his arrival at Batavia, "Martin" was introduced by the German Consul to Theodore Helfferich, who stated that a cargo of arms and ammunition was on its way to Karachi to assist the Indians in a revolution. "Martin" then urged that the ship should be diverted to Bengal. This was eventually agreed to after reference to the German Consul-General in Shanghai. "Martin" then returned to make arrangements to receive the cargo of the *Maverick*, as the ship was called, at Rai Mangal in the Sundarbans. The cargo was said to consist of 30,000 rifles with 400 rounds of ammunition each and two lakhs of rupees. Meanwhile "Martin" had telegraphed to Harry and Sons in Calcutta, a bogus firm kept by a well-known revolutionary<sup>19</sup> that "business was helpful." In June, Harry and Sons wired to "Martin" for money, and then began a series of remittances from Helfferich in Batavia to Harry & Sons in Calcutta between June and August, which aggregated to Rs. 43,000 of which the revolutionaries received

<sup>18</sup> Jadugopal, 427.

<sup>19</sup> Harikumar Chakravarti.

Rs. 33,000 before the authorities discovered what was going on.

"Martin" returned to India in the middle of June, and the conspirators Jatin Mukherji, Jadugopal Mukherjee, Narendra Bhattacharyya ("Martin"), Bholanath Chatterji and Atul Ghosh set about making plans to receive the *Maverick's* cargo and employ it to the best advantage. They decided to divide the arms into three parts, to be sent respectively to (1) Hatia, for the Eastern Bengal districts, to be worked by the members of the Barisal party, (2) Calcutta, (3) Balasore. They considered that they were numerically strong enough to deal with the troops in Bengal, but they feared reinforcements from outside. With this idea in view they decided to hold up the three main railways into Bengal by blowing up the principal bridges. Jatindra was to deal with the Madras railway from Balasore, Bholanath Chatterjee was sent to Chakradharpur to take charge of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway, which Satish Chakravarti was to go to Ajay and blow up the bridge on the East Indian Railway. Naren Chaudhuri and Phanindra Chakravarti were asked to go to Hatia, where a force was to collect, first, to obtain control of the Eastern Bengal districts, and then to march on to Calcutta. The Calcutta party under Naren Bhattacharyya and Bipin Ganguly, was the first to take possession of all the arms and arsenals around Calcutta, then to take Fort William and afterwards to sack the town of Calcutta. The German officers arriving in the *Maverick* were to stay in Eastern Bengal and raise and train armies.

In the meantime, the work of taking delivery of the cargo of the *Maverick* was apparently arranged by Jadugopal Mukherji, who is said to have placed himself in communication with a Zamindar in the vicinity of Rai Mangal, who had promised to provide men, lighters, etc. for the unloading of the vessel. The *Maverick* would arrive at night and would be recognised by a series of lamps hung horizontally. It was hoped that the first distribution of arms would take place by the 1st of July, 1915."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Sedition Committee, 82-83.



The plan, however, could not be kept secret. Lord Hardinge writes that after the failure of the rising of February 19/21 he received several warnings from various sources of a projected rising in Bengal within three months.<sup>21</sup> Various causes prevented the ships, *Annie Larson* and *Maverick* from arriving in India. The secret about the plot leaked through Kumudnath Mukherjee, a lawyer practising at Siam.

Harry & Sons opened a branch at Balasore under the name of Universal Emporium, which was nothing but a small shop dealing in cycle, accessories and doing watch repairing. It served as the connecting link between the revolutionaries in Bengal and Jatindra, who was then hiding at Kaptipada. On the 4th of September, 1915, Sir Charles Tegart, Commissioner of Police, accompanied by Mr. Bird and Mr. Denham of the Central Intelligence Department went to Balasore and surrounded the shop at 4 a.m. They could not get anything of importance excepting a scrap of paper with the word 'Kaptipada' written on it. This furnished a clue and they proceeded there in three cars. As the cars could not proceed through the muddy road they procured two elephants and reached Kaptipada very early next morning. Jatindra, who was living there in the guise of a Sadhu, escaped on hearing the sound of bells attached to the elephants. For forty-eight hours he and his associates travelled incessantly but they were pursued by the Police party. Ultimately, Jatindra with his four associates selected a big anthill on the bank of a silted up tank to give a brave fight to their pursuers. Jatindra opened fire on them. The Police party along with the District Magistrate and Mr. Rutherford of the Balasore Proof and Experiment Range had to take cover by lying down in the paddy fields. "Rutherford observed from his position that Monoranjan and Niren were loading the pistols sitting and Jyotish was taking them and handing them over to Jatin and Chittapriya who were then firing them. Observing this he advanced crouchingly as near as

<sup>21</sup> Hardinge, 118.

possible and fired at the two standing figures unnoticed. One of his bullets smashed the jaw bone of Chittapriya who immediately dropped down dead at the spot. A second blow hit Jatin on the wrist and in the abdomen. Jyotish was also hit on the shoulder. The latter two were thus disabled."<sup>22</sup> The heroic Jatindra Mukherjee died at the Balasore hospital on September 9, 1915.

The departure of Rash Beaari for Japan and the death of Jatindra certainly weakened the Revolutionary organization which, however, continued to pursue its aim. Lord Hardinge writes that the documents found at Balasore proved conclusively that Jatindra and his associates were in the German conspiracy. "It was ascertained that the proposed rebellion was to take place on Christmas Day (1915), when all British military and civil authorities would be merry-making. . . . From information given by conspirators and others, about 300 persons were arrested on the 15th December, and detained while their cases were being investigated and by this prompt and decisive action the conspiracy was entirely scotched."<sup>23</sup>

Indian revolutionaries residing outside India made serious efforts to send arms and ammunition to India. The Indian Independence Committee was organized in Berlin in the middle of this year (1915) with Hardayal and Birendranath Chattopadhyaya as its leading figures. The agent of this Committee in America was Heramba Lal Gupta who went to Siam to organize depots on the Siamese frontiers of Burma for the training of revolutionaries by German officers. Bhagwan Singh was sent to Japan, China and Manila to collect recruits from among the Indians serving there. He writes in 1964: "I was the commander of the Revolutionary forces in the Far East already, as such I had an army of over 1000 brave and patriotic men and women, many of whom had been sent to India on desperate and difficult missions."<sup>24</sup> He claims to have sent Kartar Singh and

<sup>22</sup> History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol. III, 32.

<sup>23</sup> Hardinge, 128.

<sup>24</sup> Rash Behari. 516-18.

Pingle to the Punjab. M. N. Roy, however, makes some damaging remarks about his courage and conduct.

Heramba also went to Japan in the same year but failed to secure any assistance. Thereafter Chandra Kumar Chakravarti was made the head of the revolutionary movement in America in place of Heramba in February, 1916.

He organized a Pan-Asiatic League and tried to rouse the sympathy of the Indians living in the West Indies. He despatched some 200 pistols to India but whether these ever reached their destination is not known. He was arrested on March 6, 1917 and he made a frank confession of the part he played in the revolutionary plot. He received a nominal punishment—30 days' imprisonment and a fine of 5000 dollars, though he is known to have received 50,000 dollars in May, 1916. Ramchandra, the leader of the Ghadr Party, used to get one thousand dollars per month from the Germans. The Indian community, and especially the Sikhs donated substantial amounts to the fund of his party. But he did not render accounts to anybody. He was suspected of being a grafter.<sup>25</sup> He was shot dead by one of the members of his party during the trial in the Hindu conspiracy case at San Francisco. Neither the Berlin Committee nor its branch in America was able to send any substantial assistance to the revolutionaries in India.

M. N. Roy says that after the failure of the German ships to bring arms to India he went abroad for the second time with the alternative plan of bringing arms overland from China. They were to be smuggled through the north-eastern tribal area. But the Germans did not pay him the money with which the arms were to be purchased. He claims to have made another attempt to bring arms from Indonesia. "The plan was to use the German ships interned in a port at the northern tip of Sumatra, to storm the Andaman islands and free and arm the prisoners there and land

<sup>25</sup> Lala Lajpat Rai writes : "Among the Punjabis the worst cases were of Ramchandra and Harishchandra. The Sikhs on the whole proved to be purer, more unselfish and disciplined. The worst possible

the army of liberation on the Orissa Coast.”<sup>26</sup> But like all other grandiose schemes it could not be translated into action.

M. N. Roy has called the efforts of the Indian revolutionaries abroad as “the thrilling but not very edifying story of the Indian Revolution outside India.” There was a good deal of jealousy, animosity and struggle for leadership amongst the revolutionaries. Some of them were mean enough to lead a life of ease with the funds placed at their disposal for furthering the cause. Many were suspected as secret agents or spies of the British Government. The reminiscences which have been published after the achievement of Independence by some of these revolutionaries contain too much of mutual bickerings and vituperation.

The eminent German Indologist Dr. Von Glassenapp visited India several times and wrote to Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta on the 25th January, 1952: “I was astonished to see that Hardayal is almost venerated like a saint. It seems that his apostasy in Sweden in 1918 is quite unknown.” Hardayal was a sincere man who had the courage to live according to his own conviction. He wrote in 1919: “I now believe that the consolidation of the British Empire in the East is necessary in the best interest of the people of India . . . . Imperialism is always an evil, but British and French imperialism in its worst forms is a thousand times preferable to German or Japanese Imperialism.” This view was also shared by Lala Lajpat Rai.

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case among them was that of Bhagwan Singh but even he was infinitely superior to Ramchandra or Chakravarty or Gupta—*Autobiography*, 218.

<sup>26</sup> M. N. Roy, 4.

## CHAPTER TEN

### CONCLUSION

It is significant that the Sedition Committee began their report on the revolutionary movement in Bengal with an account of Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda. They quoted words of the Swamiji to the effect that India must secure freedom by the aid of the Mother of strength (*Sakti*). In a footnote to the report they quoted thus the actual words of Vivekananda: "Wouldst thou attain, by means of thy disgraceful cowardice, that freedom deserved fully by the brave and heroic?.....Oh, Thou Mother of strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and make me a man." Hundreds of revolutionaries have admitted both in writing and in conversations that they were inspired by the lofty idealism of Swami Vivekananda. The *Bhagavadgita* and the works of Swamiji were studied carefully by almost all the revolutionaries. They learnt from these the lesson of self-sacrifice and imbibed the spirit of performing work without any attachment for the result. Many of them suffered the severest punishment with smiling face. They did not lose heart even when their plans failed.

It is, however, extremely doubtful if Vivekananda himself or even his disciple, Sister Nivedita, ever supported secret assassination. The latter welcomed a revolution in India no doubt, but she positively refused to lend her pistol for the purpose of committing a dacoity.

The revolutionaries had not the patience to carry out the suggestions of Swami Vivekananda regarding the uplift of the masses. One of the reasons why he disliked the type of work carried out by the Indian National Congress was that it did not take any step to educate the masses in political affairs. He would have levelled the same charges against the

revolutionaries, who alienated the feelings of the general body of villagers as well as some urban people by committing dacoity. All the revolutionaries, however, were not in favour of collecting money by dacoity. Bhai Parmanand, for example, writes: "I could never understand their policy of committing robbery in the name of the country. Much better were it for those young men to rob their own homes first or work for money if they needed it, or beg it from others. What lessons in patriotism were taught to the inhabitants of the villages or towns where dacoities were committed?"<sup>1</sup> The group of Barindra of course tried at first to raise funds by collecting monthly subscriptions from well-to-do people, but the amount they could thus collect was too small to be of any use. The Mahratta revolutionaries, as a rule, did not like to commit dacoities.

From a superficial point of view it may be said that militant nationalism failed to achieve any success in India between 1897 and 1917. It could not liberate the country from foreign domination as some of its promoters hoped to do. Terrorism did not succeed in keeping away the young men of Great Britain from joining the Indian Civil or the Indian Police Service. Indian soldiers did not rise in rebellion on a mass scale in any part in India. According to Sir Charles Tegart some 360 terrorist outrages were committed in Bengal alone from 1905 to 1931 and in these 112 persons were killed. But up to 1917 all excepting the two innocent European ladies of Muzaffarpur were Indians and between 1918 and 1931 the revolutionaries succeeded in killing 5 Europeans.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, all

<sup>1</sup> Bhai Parmanand, 71.

<sup>2</sup> Several Europeans were murdered in Bengal between 1930 and 1934. Of them the most notable were Lowman, Inspector-General of Police and Simpson, Inspector-General of Prisons in 1930; Peddie, District Magistrate of Midnapore, Steves, District Magistrate of Comilla and Garlick, Sessions Judge of the 24 Parganas in 1931. Douglas, District Magistrate of Midnapore, and Ellison, S. P. of Tippera in 1932; Burge District Magistrate of Midnapore in 1933 and two Europeans at Chittagong in 1934. Some Bengali girls too took prominent part in terroristic activities in this period.

the plots to wreck trains failed. All the attempts made on the life of important personages like Lord Minto, Lord Hardinge, Sir Andrew Fraser, Kingsford and Mr. Gordon ended in failure. The serious injury received by Lord Hardinge was kept a close secret by the officials for a long time.

The task which the votaries of militant nationalism set before themselves was a herculean one. A vast country, entirely unarmed and emasculated by subjection to foreign rulers, who lost no opportunity of setting one community against the other and the non-Brahmins against the Brahmins was to be emancipated. It required not only self-sacrifice of individual workers but also a closely-knit organization with iron discipline. The Anusilan Samiti of Dacca succeeded in building up such an organization in East Bengal indeed, but its leaders refused to cooperate with Jatindra Nath Mukherjee and Rash Behari Basu. The latter was fully aware of the arrangement made by the revolutionaries abroad for sending shiploads of arms and ammunition from America. But probably he entertained little hope of materialisation of the scheme. This is why he did not wait for their arrival and fixed the date of general rising in India on the 21st February, which had to be changed to the 19th February, 1915 on account of the treachery of one of his supposed followers. The memoirs and reminiscences of eminent revolutionaries published after 1947 disclose that every one of the writers of these claimed to be the most important and the most far-seeing personage. There was good deal of jealousy and scramble for leadership among those who planned the revolution from abroad. In India, too, these were not totally absent. For example, Bārandra could not tolerate the leadership of Jatindra Banerjee.

A movement, however, should not be judged by its immediate results only. The ultimate effects of Militant Nationalism were far-reaching. The splendid example of heroic self-sacrifice of the revolutionary workers made all classes of Indians intensely brave, patriotic and intolerant

of foreign domination. Prison and even the gallows lost their terror. But for their example, it would have been difficult for Mahatma Gandhi to get thousands of persons ready to court imprisonment for the sake of their Motherland. Neither the excellent proposals for constitutional reform made jointly by the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, nor the war services of loyal Indians would have been sufficient to induce the British authorities to promise the introduction of responsible government in India. Commenting on the murder of Sir Curzon-Wylie by Madanlal Dhingra, W. S. Blunt writes in his *Diaries*: "People talk about political assassination as defeating its own end, but that is nonsense. It is just the shock needed to convince selfish rulers that selfishness has its limits of impudence. It is like the other fiction that England never yields to threats. My experience is that when England has her face well slapped she apologises, not before."<sup>3</sup> This statement was as much true in the first decade as it was in the fourth. Rash Behari Basu proved the connecting link between the two periods of militant nationalism, when on July 3, 1943 he declared at a meeting of Indian patriots at Singapore: "Friends and Comrades-in-arms! In your presence today I resign my office and appoint Subhas Chandra Bose as President of the Indian Independence League in East Asia." The independence of India has been achieved as much by constitutional agitation and non-violent non-cooperation as by militant nationalism. The heroes who dared to think of liberating an unarmed nation and sacrificed their lives for effecting the purpose are entitled to eternal gratitude of successive generations of Indians. It is also worth remembering that many of them sincerely considered themselves as mere instruments in the hands of God. Some of them attained high spiritual life and are revered today as great saints.

<sup>3</sup> W. S. Blunt—*Diaries*, Part II, 288.





## APPENDIX

### ANANDA MATH AND PHADKE

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Ananda Math* is as much an epoch-making work as Rousseau's *Social Contract* and Karl Marx's *Das Capital*. "The Secret Societies", writes Lord. Ronaldshay, "modelled themselves closely upon the society of the children of Ananda Math. 'Bande Mataram'! the battle cry of the *children*, became the war cry not only of the revolutionary societies, but of the whole of nationalist Bengal."<sup>1</sup> Romesh Chandra Dutt states that the *Ananda Math* "was published in 1882, about the time of the agitation arising out of the Ilbert Bill."<sup>2</sup> The book, however, began to appear in the famous Bengali monthly Journal, the *Bangadarsana*, from Chaitra 1287 B.S. corresponding to April, 1881, and its last chapter was printed in May, 1882 in that journal. It was not written in the heat of the controversy of the Ilbert Bill. Akshoy Chandra Sarkar, a close associate of Bankim Chandra records that while the author was posted as Deputy Magistrate at Hooghly he allowed Sarkar to read the manuscript of the novel describing the last battle between the Santanas or the dedicated children of the Motherland and the forces of the Government. The Calcutta Gazette states that Bankim Chandra was transferred from Hooghly to Howrah and joined the post at the latter place on February 14, 1881. *Ananda Math*, therefore, was practically completed in 1880 before his transfer to Howrah and not just begun, as has been imagined by the editors of the Centenary edition, published by the Bangiya Sahitya Parisat. The same writer informs that Bankim admitted to him that he had taken the theme from the Sannyasi Insurrection, but had wilfully changed the place of its occurrence to Birbhum and the banks of the river Ajoy.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ronaldshay—*The Heart of Aryavarta*, 114.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, article on Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.

<sup>3</sup> *Bangadarsana*, ( new series ) Bhadra, 1319, i. e., August—September, 1912.

No one has as yet cared to enquire why he shifted the scene from North Bengal and Bihar to West Bengal. There must have been weighty reasons for this change. A detailed comparison of the original reading of the novel as published in the *Bangadarsana* with that of the first edition and the current fifth edition, 1892, the last during the author's lifetime, reveals the secret of this as well as of many other significant changes. The editors of the Centenary edition have taken infinite pains in comparing the variations in readings of the first three editions, which show little change, with the fifth edition, but they have not compared the version published in the *Bangadarsana* with that of subsequent editions. This, however, is highly important, especially in view of the fact that the date of composition of the book is strikingly contiguous to the date of conviction of Wasudeo Balwant Phadke (1845-1883), who has been described as the father of militant nationalism by an eminent historian.<sup>4</sup>

Phadke was arrested in the Nizam's territory on July 2, 1879 by Major Daniel and Syed Abdul Hak, Police Commissioner of Hyderabad, on the charge of raising an army of 200 men for looting the Khed Treasury. The looting was designed with a view to equipping himself with men to raise an army for "destroying the English". At the time of the arrest he was dressed as a Sannyasi and was known as a "*Kashikar Buwa*", a hermit of Benares. The Legal Remembrancer advised the Government of Bombay to prosecute him for "exciting feelings of dissatisfaction to the Government", and for the "collection of men, arms, ammunition or otherwise preparing to wage war with the intention of either waging or being prepared to wage war against the queen". He also wrote that charges could be framed against Phadke for individual robberies committed by him, but he could not be punished with death because no death occurred at any of the dacoities. He further opined that Phadke could not be charged with "attempt to wage war against

<sup>4</sup> Dr. R. C. Majumdar—*British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, Part I, 913.

the queen" under Section 121, as 'no overt act of any kind was ever committed against the Government.' The common people were sympathetic towards him. Very few persons appeared before the Court to give evidence against him. But the autobiography he had written between the 19th and 26th April, 1879 and his Diary from February, 15 to the 27th May, 1879 fell into the hands of the Police and furnished the clearest proof of his intention of freeing India from the British Government. The Diary was published in the Bombay Gazette on November 1, 1879. Bankim Chandra was a keen student of contemporary affairs and it is not unlikely that he came across this Diary, which gives an insight into the high patriotic character of Phadke. In any case, Phadke's case created a great sensation at that time and the newspapers published vivid account of his reception at the Poona railway station at the time of his transfer from the Yarwada prison to the Thana jail. On the 23rd November, 1879 the *Deccan Star* wrote that in the eyes of his countrymen Phadke did not commit any wrong and that all true Englishmen must sympathise with him. It added: "This is evident from the fact that an English lady thought proper to present Wasudev with a nosegay at the railway station when he was carried away from Poona." The editor compared Phadke's conduct with that of Dean Tucker, who wrote a pamphlet advocating the separation of the American colonies from England and stating that such a measure would be a clear gain to the latter. In conclusion it was said: "Wasudev deserves the highest praise not only from all natives, but even from Englishmen who wish for the prosperity of Her Majesty's Eastern Empire. By sacrificing himself he has averted a danger which sooner or later must follow intolerable oppression. We consider him as the harbinger of a bright future for India."<sup>5</sup> The *Indu Prakash* wrote on November 24, 1879, that when Wasudev was carried from the court house after his conviction.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted from the Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India, collected from Bombay Government Records I, 127-28.

some people in the crowd, which had assembled to witness his trial shouted out 'success to Wasudev'. This paper used to be quoted in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. There is no direct evidence to show that Bankim Chandra was aware of the life and writings of Phadke. But there is strong circumstantial evidence to show that he had the knowledge of the fruitless attempt of Phadke to liberate India and that the unsuccessful attempt of the Santanas of *Ananda Math* bears to a certain extent the impress of this event.

The question can be discussed from the standpoint of the positive factors and that of negative evidences. The latter implies that there exists no proof to show that the leaders of the Sannyasi Insurrection had even the remotest idea of patriotism or nationalism and as such they could not have supplied the model to Bankim. This side of the problem will be discussed fully later on. On the positive side there are five points to consider. First and the most important is that of date. Phadke was transported for life in November, 1879,<sup>6</sup> and we have already adduced proof to show that Bankim completed writing his *Ananda Math* in 1880. Secondly, the immediate cause which drove Phadke to take the vow of 'destroying the English', was the terrible famine of 1876-77 which took place in Western India and caused unbearable sufferings to the people. "The spectacle of their sad plight confirmed Wasudev in his belief that all that evil was a direct consequence of a foreign rule; and he decided to end that rule as quickly as possible." The background of Bankim's *Ananda Math* is the devastating famine of 1768-69. Thirdly, Phadke went about preaching against the British domination in the garb of a Sannyasi. He writes in his autobiography:

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 102, giving the account of the Judicial proceedings from the note of J. R. Naylor, the Legal Remembrancer, dated September 27, 1879 and 77, letter dated December 16, 1879 stating that the High Court rejected the appeal of Phadke. The editor of the volume is evidently mistaken when he writes on 74 that Phadke was sentenced in Nov., 1880.

"Having hung the mendicant's bag over my shoulder and allowed my hair to grow long I went to Nasik, Nagar, Khandesh, Berar, Nagpur, Indore, Oojein, Kolhapur, Tasgaon, Miraj, Sangli, Baroda etc., and strove hard."<sup>7</sup> He was intensely religious. He spent much of his time in prayers. Having failed to collect adequate number of men, he determined like Bhavananda and Jivananda of *Ananda Math* to sacrifice his life. Going to the altar of Parvati at Sri Shaila in the Karnul District, Phadke decided to put an end to his life and wrote: "Finding there is no success to be obtained in this world, I having gone to the world above should plead on behalf of the people of India." On the 20th April, 1879 he wrote in his autobiography: "I have only seven days to live, so I think, therefore, I bow before the feet of all you my brethren, inhabitants of India, and give up my life for you and will remain pleading for you in the just Court of God . . . . I pray to God that He may take my life as a sacrifice for your welfare, and of you all I take farewell." The Santanas of *Ananda Math* bear a much closer resemblance to Phadke than the Sannyasis of the Insurrection who went about naked, were mostly illiterate and caused nothing but havoc and depredation in the areas through which they passed in large bands of several thousands.

Fourthly, these Sannyasis are not known to have made any attempt to loot the treasury, whereas Phadke writes: "If I had assembled 200 men I would have looted the Khed treasury and got much money, as at this time the revenue was being collected, and had I got more money I could have got the assistance of 500 horses." Bankim describes the looting of the Government revenue in Chapter VIII of the first part of his book, *Ananda Math*. This depicts the fulfilment of an unrealised desire of Phadke. Fifthly, the novel relates in Chapter XVIII how the Santanas broke open the prison, killed the guards and released the prisoners. We do not find any such incident

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 97.

in the history of the "Sannyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal" compiled from official records by Jamini Mohan Ghosh. Phadke, on the other hand, discloses his plan of action in the following words: "Having obtained Rs. 5000 from a Sowkar I proposed to send to all sides three or four men a month in advance that small gangs might be raised by them from which great fear would come to the English. The mails would be stopped, and the railway and telegraph interrupted, so that no information could go from one place to another. Then the jails would be opened and all the long-sentenced prisoners would join me because if the English Government remained they would not get off. If I obtained 200 men, even should I not be able to loot the treasury I should carry out my intention of releasing criminals." Here too, Bankim Chandra appears to have satisfied the desire of Phadke in fiction, if not in fact. It may be mentioned in this connection that M. N. Roy relates in his Memoirs how the Revolutionaries during the First World War made an attempt to attack the Andaman island and release the political prisoners there. He writes: "I made yet another attempt to bring help overseas from Indonesia. The plan was to use the German ships interned in a port at the northern tip of Sumatra, to storm the Andaman islands and free and arm the prisoners there, and land the army of liberation on the Orissa coast."<sup>8</sup> It may not be wholly illogical to come to the conclusion that Phadke's plan of action inspired Bankim Chandra to describe some of the incidents in the *Ananda Math* in the way he has done and this again spurred on the militant nationalists to conceive heroic, though fantastic, plans for driving out the English.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee served the Government in the capacity of a Deputy Magistrate continuously for a period of more than 32 years, from 1858 to 1891.<sup>9</sup> He had

<sup>8</sup> M. N. Roy—Memoirs (1964) 4.

<sup>9</sup> Lord Ronaldshay is evidently under-estimating this fact when he writes: "for some time he was in Government service." Op. Cit. 106.

to be extremely careful in his writings, especially in view of the fact that the Press had been effectively gagged by Lord Lytton. Srish Chandra Majumdar, an intimate friend of Rabindranath, came in close contact with Bankim Chandra. He writes that Bankim published the first edition of *Ananda Math* after a good deal of deliberation. As has been pointed out before, the last instalment of the book was published in the *Bangadarsana* in May, 1882. The first edition of the book must have been published a little earlier, because we find that the *Liberal* dated April 8, 1882, published a review which was nothing but an attempt to convince the English people that the book was entirely loyal in tone. Bankim took care to quote it *in extenso* in his Preface to the second edition. The major portion of the so-called review consists of the translation of the Apologia Bankim wrote in the last chapter of his book. The importance of this review, the earliest to be published, justifies its quotation in full. It ran as follows: "The leading idea of the plot is this—should the national mind feel justified in harbouring violent thoughts against the British Government? Or to present the question in another form, is the establishment of English supremacy providential in any sense? Or to put it in a still more final and conclusive form, with what purpose and with what immediate end in view did Providence send the British to this country? The immediate object is thus briefly described in the Preface—to put an end to Moslem tyranny and anarchy in Bengal;<sup>10</sup> and the mission is thus strikingly pictured in the last chapter: "The Physician said, Satyanand, be not crest-fallen. Whatever is, is for the best. It is so written that the English should first rule over the country before there could be a revival of the Aryan faith. Harken unto the Counsels of Providence.

<sup>10</sup> The Preface to the First edition did not contain any reference to the Moslem tyranny. It, however, stated that revolutions are generally processes of self-torture and rebels are suicides and that the English have saved Bengal from anarchy. "These truths are elucidated in this work."



The faith of Aryas consisteth not in the worship of three hundred and thirty millions of gods and goddesses ; as a matter of fact that is a popular degradation of religion—that which has brought about the death of the true Arya faith, the so-called Hinduism of the Mlechhas. True Hinduism is grounded on knowledge, and not on works. Knowledge is of two kinds—external and internal. The internal knowledge constitutes the chief part of Hinduism. But internal knowledge cannot grow unless there is a development of the external knowledge. The spiritual cannot be known unless you know the material. External knowledge has for a long time disappeared from the country, and with it has vanished the Arya faith. To bring about a revival we should first of all disseminate physical or external knowledge. Now there is none to teach that ; we ourselves cannot teach it. We must get it from other countries. The English are profound masters of physical knowledge, and they are apt teachers too. Let us then make them kings. English education will give our men a knowledge of physical science, and this will enable them to grapple with the problems of their inner nature. Thus the chief obstacle to the dissemination of Arya faith will be removed, and true religion will sparkle life spontaneously and of its own accord. The British Government shall remain indestructible so long as the Hindus do not once more become great in knowledge, virtue and power. Hence, O wise man, refrain from fighting and follow me.” This passage embodies the most recent and the most enlightened views of the educated Hindus, and happening as it does in a novel powerfully conceived and wisely executed, it will influence the whole race for good. The author’s dictum we heartily accept as it is one which already forms the creed of English education. We may state it in this form: India is bound to accept the scientific method of the west and apply it to the elucidation of all truth. This idea beautifully expressed, forms a silver thread as it were, and runs through the tissue of the whole work.”

Nobody will question the Reviewer’s conclusion regarding

the acceptance of the scientific method of the west. He, however, did little else than render into English the Preface and the conclusion, both of which seem to have been written as a coating to hide the real intention of the author. To make the book still more acceptable to the British authorities he added in the second edition another sentence after the line predicting the indestructibility of the British rule as follows: "Subjects will be happy under the English rule—they will be able to practise religion without any obstacle." This also has been put in the mouth of the great Physician. But the question is: Did Bankim really condemn the revolutionary activities of the Santanas? He depicts their idealism, heroic deeds and nobility of character not only with genuine sympathy but also with great enthusiasm. In the last but one chapter he exclaims at the departure of Santi and Jivananda 'Oh Mother! Will such persons come back again? Will you ever bear in your womb a son like Jivananda, a daughter like Santi?' This does not look like a condemnation of the work of the Santanas, whose activities have been described as suicidal in the preface. As a matter of fact the beauty and symmetry of a perfect work of art was marred by the lengthy didactic lecture of the Physician and the brief Preface of the author, explaining the so-called object of the book.

Bankim Chandra once told Srish Chandra Majumdar that he would like to write a book on the Rani of Jhansi, but he refrained from doing so because the English officers had already become cross with him for writing the *Ananda Math*.<sup>11</sup> Bankim tried to save the situation by toning down the remarks which might be interpreted as a reflection on the conduct and character of the English. The following examples will illustrate this point. In the *Bangadarsana* (Ch. X) Bankim's Bhavananda told Mahendra that in all the states the duty of the Raja was to protect the subjects, but our Raja did not protect the people.<sup>12</sup> In the fourth edi-

<sup>11</sup> Suresh Chandra Samajpati—*Bankim Prasanga* and Somen Basu—*Kachher Manus Bankim Chandra*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Bangadarsana* 1287, 587.

tion he added the word 'Moslem' before the term 'Raja' thereby absolving the English from all responsibility for misgovernment.<sup>13</sup> In the *Bangadarsana* Thomas was described as enjoying the charm of the Santal maidens.<sup>14</sup> This was dropped in the second edition and in its place was written that Thomas devoted his time in enjoying the cooking of the Moslem cook, who was as expert as Draupadi.<sup>15</sup> In the *Bangadarsana* a small band of Santanā soldiers are described to have defeated a few English and Telangee soldiers.<sup>16</sup> But while publishing the first edition the word 'English' was substituted by the term 'Sepoys'.<sup>17</sup> The reason was obvious. Then again fifty or sixty English soldiers were described in the *Bangadarsana* as being overpowered by the Santanas.<sup>18</sup> While publishing the first edition the number was changed to twenty or thirty.<sup>19</sup> For a small number of British soldiers like 20 or 30 it was considered no disgrace to be defeated by Indians, but not for 50 or 60 soldiers. Then again in the *Bangadarsana* the Santanas were described as cutting jokes with Watson who was being fired at from the tree. One of them told him: "Just wait a little Mister; it is said that Jivananda will embrace Christianity; there! he comes". Five thousands of the Santana soldiers hotly pursued the fleeing battalion of Watson. Jivananda exhorted the Santanas to destroy the army, wearing red, black, blue and multi-coloured uniforms and composed of Foujdari, Badshahi and English soldiers all of whom were to be offered as sacrifice to the Vaisnavas.<sup>20</sup> The last sentence was omitted in the first edition and the rest from the second edition. The *Bangadarsana* as well as the first edition referred to the opponents of Jivananda as the English,<sup>21</sup> but in the second

<sup>13</sup> *Ananda Math*, Sahitya Parisat ed. 23, line 16.

<sup>14</sup> *Bangadarsana*, 1288, 154, 4th line.

<sup>15</sup> *Anandamath*, 72.

<sup>16</sup> *Bangadarsana*, 1282, 250.

<sup>17</sup> *Anandamath*, 91.

<sup>18</sup> *Bangadarsana* 1288, 256.

<sup>19</sup> *Anandamath*, 94.

<sup>20</sup> *Bangadarsana*, 1288, 252.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 252-255.

edition it was changed to Yavana and in one place to *Nere*, implying low class Moslems.<sup>22</sup>

The changes introduced by Bankim Chandra served their purpose. The book was not proscribed and the English officers were pacified. Their attitude towards it may be illustrated from the writings of Lovett and Ronaldshay. In describing the contents of the book Lovett writes that the Sannyasi rebels became "victorious against Mussulman sepoys, even though led by Englishmen. They bring Muslim rule to a close." Among the concluding passages of the book are the following: "Satyananda", said the physician, "grieve not! In your delusion you have won your victories with the proceeds of robbery. A vice never leads to good consequences and you may never expect to save your country by sinful procedure. Really what may happen now will be for the best. There is no hope of a revival of the true Faith if the English be not our rulers. . . . The English are a friendly power; and no one, in truth has the power to come off victorious in a fight with the English."<sup>23</sup> Lord Ronaldshay also quotes with approval these very words and observes: "The essence of the story is a Hindu revival, necessitating the overthrow of the enemies of Hinduism—at the time of the events narrated, Mussulman rule—which was to be achieved by a body of men pledged by solemn vows to the service of the Motherland. It provided the revolutionaries with an ideal which made a strong appeal to their imagination, and with the framework of an organization admirably designed to meet the circumstances of their case. For the Mussalman rule of the novel they substituted British rule,<sup>24</sup> and by so doing they ignored the conclusions drawn

<sup>22</sup> *Anandamath*, 93-94.

<sup>23</sup> Lovett: *A History of the Indian Nationalist Movement*, 260-61.

<sup>24</sup> Lord Ronaldshay did not know that Bankim Chandra himself had originally written the 'British rule' at some places and substituted them by 'Mussalman rule' later on. When Lord Ronaldshay ( Marquis of Zetland ) was the Secretary of State for India he read the present writer's *History of Political Thought from Rammohan to*

by Bankim Chandra Chatterji at the close of the book on two points—the benefits of British rule, and the fallacy underlying the assumption that the attainment of any particular end justified the employment of any means.”<sup>25</sup> But a tree is known by the fruit it bears. *Ananda Math* is to be judged by the effect it produced not on the mind of a few Englishmen but on that of the thousands of Bankim Chandra’s fellow countrymen.

Bankim Chandra has used the name of some historical persons like Mirjafar, Warren Hastings, Reza Ali Khan, Captain Thomas, Lieutenant Watson and Captain Edwards in the *Ananda Math*. The story is related in the background of the famine of 1769. The current version of the book, printed from the fifth edition, does not indicate the year of the last battle between the Santanas and the British army under Thomas. In the *Bangadarsana* as well as in the first three editions there occurred a sentence at the end of the first chapter of Part Three that in 1180 B.S. corresponding to the year 1773-74 the name of the Santanas resounded throughout Birbhum. This was dropped in subsequent editions.

*Dayananda*, Vol. I and wrote to him on January 7, 1935: “I had always supposed that the famous poem “Bande Mataram” appeared for the first time in his romantic story, ‘Ananda Math’, but I now learn from your book that it had actually been published sometime before.” The editors of the Sahitya Parisat edition mention this fact as a hearsay. But Purna Chandra Chatterjee, the youngest brother of Bankim Chandra gives conclusive proof of this fact when he writes that one day the Pandit in charge of the printing of *Bangadarsana* came to Bankim and said that he wanted one page of writing to fill up a page which was vacant ; he saw the Bande Mataram song lying on the table and suggested that it should be used for filling up the gap. But Bankim did not allow him to do so and said that the value of this song would be properly appreciated after his ( Bankim’s ) death. The incident took place when Bankim was the editor of the *Bangadarsana* ( Vide *Kachher Manus Bankim Chandra*, 108-109 ). He resigned the editorship in March 1876, so the song must have been composed before that date.

<sup>25</sup> Ronaldshay—*The Heart of Aryavarta*, 114.

Government records reveal that Captain Thomas fought against 1500 Sannyasis near Rangpur town on the 30th December, 1772. The Sannyasis at first gave way and the Captain pursued them in a jungle where the sepoy's spent all their ammunitions in vain. When the Sannyasis found that the sepoy's had no more ammunition, they surrounded them from all sides and then rushed upon them. Captain Thomas ordered the sepoy's to charge upon the Sannyasis with their bayonets, but they refused to do so. At this juncture the orderly of the Captain requested his master to flee away on his horse, but Thomas declined to do so. Charles Purling wrote to the President of the Council on the 31st December, 1772, that is, the day after the battle as follows: "Captain Thomas received one wound by a ball through the head which he tied, and next he was cut down. The ryots gave no assistance but joined the Sannyasis with lathis and showed the Sannyasis those whom they saw had concealed themselves in long grass and jungle and if any of the sepoy's attempted to go into their villages they made a noise to bring the Sannyasis and they plundered the sepoy's firelocks."<sup>26</sup> This letter is important for more than one reason. Firstly, it shows that the Sannyasis had the sympathy and support of the rural people behind them. Warren Hastings in his letters and despatches described the Sannyasis simply as bandits and wrote that they burnt and destroyed many villages. Some of these have been quoted by Bankim Chandra in an Appendix to the third and subsequent editions of his book. Secondly, Thomas is known to have fought against 1500 Sannyasis according to the letter referred to above; but Hastings wrote to Sir George Colebrooke on February 2, 1773 that Thomas encountered about 3000 of them near Rangpore.<sup>27</sup> Bankim Chandra magnified the number to ten thousand in the ninth Chapter of Part III of his book. Thirdly, the

<sup>26</sup> Jamini Mohan Ghosh—*Sannyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal*, 50-51.

<sup>27</sup> Gleig's *Memoirs*, Vol. I, 282 quoted by Bankim Chandra himself.

letter proves that Bankim Chandra deliberately shifted the scene of occurrence from North Bengal to Birbhum. We find in the *Bangadarsana* as well as in the first two editions of the book the name of the British Commander as Major Wood; but in the preface to the third edition Bankim Chandra wrote that his real name was Edwards and also admitted that the battle took place in North Bengal and not in Birbhum. He said that these variations are not important, because he was writing a novel, and not a historical work. In 1884 he wrote in the Preface to his *Devi-Chaudhurani* that in his *Ananda Math* he did not attempt to write a historical novel but he would like to add a brief account of the Sannyasi Insurrection in the future edition of the work as many persons had asked him whether the book was based on any historical fact.

In Chapter IV of Part IV of his book Bankim Chandra describes the fight of the Santanas against Edwards, whom he calls Major, but the contemporary official records call him Captain.<sup>28</sup> In the *Bangadarsana* he made Birbhum the venue of the fight and wrote that it went out of the control of the English and the Moslems. In the second and third editions, he dropped the word English. In the 4th and subsequent editions the venue was changed to North Bengal, which is described as having slipped away from Moslem control. Bankim does not mention the date of this fight. In the *Bangadarsana* he wrote that it took place on the bank of the river Ajoy on the full moon day in the month of Magha (January) when the famous fair associated with the name of the poet of *Gitagovinda* is held at Kenduli in the district of Birbhum. He dropped this reference and described the fair as being held on the bank of a river. He had a purpose in making this change.

The fighting against Edwards took place on the 1st of

<sup>28</sup> Letter of Warren Hastings to the Collector of Midnapore, dated June 22, 1773. The *Army List* by Dodwell and Miles gives the following information: "Timothy Edwards—Captain 1st Sept. 1769; drowned, March 1st, 1773 in a nullah at Barrypore," which place has been identified with a hamlet of the same name near Serajganj.

March, 1773. He had been directed by the Committee of Circuit, then at Dinajpur, to march against the Sannyasis in January. He reached Ulipur in the district of Rangpur on the 17th January with three companies of sepoys. He could not meet them but marched from place to place in hot pursuit. Hastings had not much confidence in the sepoys and was apprehensive of ill consequences on account of smallness of their number. He, therefore, sent orders recalling Edwards. The latter made delay in complying with them as he learnt that the Sannyasis had re-entered the district. Hearing that they were stationed only at a distance of two miles, he formed his detachment into a division but as soon as he approached them he was fired at. He moved away a little. Captain Williams thus describes the fight: "When Captain Edwards thought himself within a proper distance for engaging he rode to the head of the column and beat to arms intending that the divisions should double upon the left of the leading division as they came up; but the men mistaking the orders wheeled to the left and formed in battalion which laid their right flank open to the enemy, he galloped to the left in order to draw them into line fronting the Sannyasis whilst Douglas exerted himself on the right for the same purpose; but it was too late for the enemy, perceiving the confusion, rushed in upon them with their swords and spears and dispatched a few, put the rest to flight. Douglas was the first that fell but the fate of Captain Edwards was not known, his hat was found in the Nulla before mentioned, but the body was never discovered."<sup>29</sup> This is the small incident which is supposed to furnish the model to Bankim Chandra's description of the battle of the Santanas with Edwards and his army on the full moon day. The *Ananda Math* (Part IV, Ch. 6) relates how Satyananda attacked Edwards with twenty-five thousand Santana soldiers and massacred the British army.

<sup>29</sup> Capt. William—*Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Native Infantry* (1817), 132-34.



Bankim Chandra wisely omitted the line giving the date 1180 B.S. because it betrayed the absurdity of his plea that the Santanas were fighting against the Moslems and not the British. The Directors of the East India Company resolved "to stand forth as Dewan" and directed the Company's servants to take upon themselves the entire care and management of the revenues. They communicated their decision to the President and Council at Fort William in their letter dated August 28, 1771. Warren Hastings became the Governor of Bengal early in 1772. He held that the cession of the Dewani in 1765 "had been merely a solemn farce, that the company had in fact conquered Bengal, and that the emperor could not give what it was not in his power to bestow." According to the official records Thomas lost his life on the 31st of December, 1772 and Edwards on the 1st of March, 1773. Both these dates fall during the period of Governorship of Warren Hastings, who had already taken steps to discharge the duties of administration directly through the officers of the Company. Bankim Chandra was not unaware of these elementary facts of history. But he could not write that the Santanas took the vow of liberating their Motherland from the clutches of the British. He made the Moslem rule a convenient scapegoat. It was well known to all intelligent people that political authority had passed from the hands of the Moslems to those of the British as soon as Mirzafar was installed on the *masnad* for the second time after the defeat of Mirkashim.

Originally Bankim Chandra selected Birbhum as the centre of the events described in the *Ananda Math* because of some peculiarity in the status of that region. He himself explained in the seventh chapter of the book as published in the *Bangadarsana* that—while the rest of Bengal was nominally under Mirzafar, Birbhum was under the administration of the Muslim Raja of that place, though its revenue was sent to the English. The East India Company had appointed their officers at other places for supervising the collection of revenue but none was

appointed in Birbhum. This is why Bankim Chandra considered it safe to make Birbhum the place of occurrence of the main events of *Ananda Math*. He could say, he thought, that the Santanas were fighting against the Moslem power and not the English. But while bringing out the third edition he considered this sort of veil almost transparent and frankly admitted that the fights took place in North Bengal and not in Birbhum. He added in that edition an appendix (in English) on the Sannyasi raid from the letters and despatches of Warren Hastings. As the book was becoming popular and attracting the attention of the Government he considered it safer to introduce in the fifth edition many sentences in praise of the British rule.

But his attempt to connect the *Ananda Math* with the incidents of the Sannyasi raid was not very successful. Relying on the version of the fifth edition Romesh Chandra Dutt wrote in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: "The story deals with the Sannyasi rebellion of 1772 near Purnea, Tirhut and Dinajpur. Bankim Chandra could not make a thorough change in the readings of the novel." In Chapter twelve of part three the "bank of Ajoy" still remained. We have already shown that the fight against Edwards took place in 1773, when the East India Company had assumed direct charge of the administration. From all these we may surmise that on reading of the heroic resolution of Wasudeo Balwant Phadke to rescue his countrymen from the domination of the British, whose misrule had, according to him, produced the terrible famine of 1876-77, Bankim Chandra conceived the idea of depicting the exploits of the Santanas on the canvas of the famine of 1769. Being a Government servant thoroughly conversant with the trend of thought of the British Indian bureaucracy he tried to veil the patriotic efforts of the 'heroes of his novel by identifying these with the Sannyasis of a century earlier. He knew that the Sannyasi raids did not come to an end in 1772-73 as one would imagine from the conversation of the Physician with Satyananda. The Hindu Sannyasis and

the Moslem Fakirs continued to make depredations on Bihar and Assam till the last decade of the eighteenth century. Neither Phadke, nor the Santanas of *Ananda Math* could achieve success in their plan. But Bankim Chandra with prophetic vision observed at the end of the book: "The fire which Satyananda kindled was not extinguished easily. If I can, I will relate that later on." These two sentences occurred in the *Bangadarsana* and in the first edition but as the significance of these was ominous for the British rulers, he considered it prudent to omit them in subsequent editions.\*

\* This paper was read at Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta, on Wednesday, the 1st of June, 1966.

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