

FATHER OF THE NATION

India's Debt to Mahatma Gandhi

ON this day of joyful liberation from foreign rule, it is no wonder that all minds turn in veneration and gratitude to the little old man of Wardha, the one man, who more than any other, has been the author and architect of the freedom that it is our good fortune to celebrate to-day. Gandhi has been the country's trusted pilot and the dictator of its premier political organisation, the Indian National Congress, almost continuously for a period of three decades—but the dictator has been not a tyrant, but a father—the beloved Bapu. His leadership has permeated every phase of the people's life—moral, social and political—and has transformed as it were a nation of timid slaves, grovelling under the foreign heel and beset with a corrupt, anachronistic social order, into a dynamic and disciplined force for self-assertion. He has re-kindled in a torpid generation a passion for freedom and social justice and a sense of self-respect that it had all but lost.

The notable contribution that Mahatma Gandhi has made to India's freedom struggle is writ large across the last three decades of our turbulent history. And yet, when he came back to this country, on a January morning in 1915, after twenty years of trial and "Experiments with Truth," though many felt that a new kind of leader had arrived on the Indian scene—a man to reckon with—his novel doctrine was pecked to be regarded as but the eccentric vision of an impractical person. But his early skirmishes with organised power in South Africa had already given him that steadfastness of purpose and inflexible conscience in the purity and strength of his means to match the justice of his ends. He had already acquired the self-knowledge and conviction necessary to be able to enlarge on his doctrine. And in less than four years after his arrival in India, he had arrested the nation's attention, captured the leadership of national politics and routed the "old guard" of Indian nationalism, the Besants and the Pals, who could not see eye to eye with him and were inclined to regard him as an impractical blunderer on the political arena. His daringly outspoken speeches of those days and the object lesson that he gave India in individual Civil Disobedience at Champaran and Kaira and the success that attended these as well as his experiment with the hunger-strike as a political weapon of securing redress at Ahmedabad, where he led an industrial strike in 1918—all these had won for him steadfast, if select following. When the Indian National Congress met late in 1919, "under the conflicting shadows of the Montford Reforms and the Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy," Gandhi seized leadership by the sheer strength of his personality. Of course, a group of dissidents walked out of the Congress, but he had won the allegiance of giants like Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das and Lajpat Rai.

GANDHIAN ERA

From that to the special session of the Congress at Calcutta in August 1920 was easier sailing. It was perhaps the most significant session of the Indian Congress. For it was here that the Mahatma secured acceptance of his new creed of non-violent Satyagraha to combat imperialist repression. The gos-

pel of Swadeshi, the khadi programme, non-payment of taxes, surrender of titles, boycott of law courts, legislative councils, Government schools and functions and all the rest of the Gandhian technique of direct action were accepted and approved. In that session, it may be said, the Gandhian era in Indian history was born.

The new creed had earned recognition, but the new weapon had yet many a trial to face. The amorphous Indian masses, that raw material of our history, could not be converted overnight to the mighty discipline that non-violence in direct action demanded. Gandhi withdrew his first Civil Disobedience Movement in haste, because violent scenes had broken out at Bombay, when the Prince of Wales landed there. It is one of his greatest strengths, that in the face of defeat, he did not prevent him from owning it, nor would he compromise on his principles for reasons of political expediency. It was this basic honesty of the man and his insistence on non-violence as the sine qua non of Satyagraha that also made him the leader of the next campaign in 1931 in Bardoli taluka in Gujarat. After the incident at Chauri Chaura where an angry mob lost control and burnt a few policemen in their fury, Gandhi confessed to have made "a Himalayan miscalculation." He again owned defeat—in the short-sighted exasperation of even his followers—and sought to atone for the violence with a penitential fast.

CONGRESS AND COUNCIL ENTRY

With his historic trial and incarceration for sedition in 1922, Gandhi apparently passed out of the political scene. When he was released after two years for reasons of health, the Congress was inclined to toy with the so-called Swarajist programme of wrecking the constitution from within the legislatures. Gandhi true to his fundamental creed, retired to his ashram, to meditate upon and perfect his philosophy, followed by his band of "non-changers." They had to bide their time, because the nation was not yet ripe for the super-moral ordeal of Satyagraha. The retirement was not one of quiet seclusion but of dynamic preparation. His influence on public life was all the time there. When he returned to his experiment with the second Bardoli campaign in 1928 and demonstrated by a miracle of organisation and discipline—with the Sardar as his lieutenant—the efficacy of his creed, the nation was all but ready to take refuge in the Mahatma.

Duped and disappointed, the Congress leaders were at their wit's end when the all-white Simon Commission sought to impose the British will on the country. We know how, coming back to leadership, Gandhi launched the fateful movement of 1931, marked by the Dandi March, he taught a timid people to face repression with a smile and awoke the conscience of humanity itself with his non-violent protest in the face of the armed might of an Empire. The movement was undoubtedly a triumph and succeeded in raising men, women and even youngsters in their teens to heights of heroic sacrifice. The phenomenon of stalwart Pathans meekly taking the lathi blows of the police, without retaliation and without complaint, has few parallels anywhere in the world. The

economic boycott was also telling in the very heart of Britain, in the cotton centre of Lancashire. It was the first big effort of the country under Gandhian auspices to overthrow the foreign yoke and the moral and political pressure exerted upon the rulers may be gauged by the fact that the Rebel and the Viceroy were closeted together soon after, in friendly negotiation.

The resultant Round Table Conference—the second one of its kind—did not fulfil the hopes entertained by the country. But it gave Gandhi, who went as the Indian Congress's sole delegate to the Conference, an opportunity to present India's case to the average Englishman and to the world. Gandhi told the Indian story, simply but uncompromisingly. His genial personality, his good humour, outspokenness and obvious friendliness for the English people, as different from the imperial system—all these won for the Indian a new esteem and understanding and focussed the world's attention on the just demands of the Indian people.

To seek to assess individually the results of each of the many campaigns that Gandhi launched would be to miss the cumulative achievement of Gandhism as a whole. Lord Willingdon, the then Viceroy, apparently crushed the Civil Disobedience Movement that was launched soon after Gandhi's return from the Round Table talks. But in jail or out of it, each succeeding step in his political career was a step forward.

In 1934, he again retired from the Congress, after calling off Satyagraha, but though officially out of it, his finger was always on the pulse of the nation and when the short-lived experiment in office-acceptance came to a fitful end with the outbreak of war, Gandhi was there to take on the reins. Even while in office, Gandhi was the mentor and guide of the Congress, who canalised the activities of the Provincial Ministries on Gandhian lines. His basic programme of Khadi, Prohibition, rural reconstruction and the removal of untouchability formed the major concern of the Congress in office.

The end of the popular Ministries with the onset of the war, the individual Satyagraha of 1940 that he had conceived in characteristic fairness to an opponent in trouble, the Cripps Offer and the subsequent "Quit India" Resolution of August 1942—all these marked his endeavours to place negotiations before direct action, the Government plunged the country into an orgy of violence by precipitate repression. And that last battle for freedom was perhaps his most trying experience, most confined in jail and powerless to check the violent outbursts all over the country, he had to be a silent onlooker of all that was most abhorrent to his cherished creed. The sad bereavements caused by the death of his wife and Mahadevi Desai, his faithful Secretary and the untimely death of his son, Harilal, on the 21-day "fast unto capacity" that nearly cost him his life, certainly made it all the more bitter.

But the life-long sacrifice and purposeful struggle on the highest plane conceivable, had not gone in vain. If to-day an Empire is being wound up, by almost spontaneous transfer of power by the ruler to the people, such a conversion can be but the fruit, in a very large measure, of Gandhian strategy and idealism.

MANY-SIDED EFFORT

Thus what looked at first like the caprices of a visionary has come to have the abiding and triumphant place in practical politics. With unswerving faith in his cause and his methods, Gandhi has brought the Indian vessel to the haven of freedom. But in the evaluation of his inestimable services to the country, the political victory is but one aspect of a myriads of efforts. With his deep sympathy and compassion for the common man, the poor and the oppressed in society, his restless genius has left the Gandhian touch in many phases of our national life. To-day, the curse of untouchability, that dark blot on our social fabric, has been almost removed. The Gandhian constructive programme which in a measure the Congress Governments in power are implementing are the main hope of the masses, as the means of translating political liberty into social well-being. The Basic Scheme of education, the Hindu-Muslim Talim Sangh, the Village Industries Association, the All-India Spinners' Association, the Hindi Prachar Sangh and other such organisations are the leader's priceless gifts to the common man in India.

It is true that the Gandhian programme has had its defeat and setbacks, which, one hopes, are but temporary. The leader's unceasing endeavours to promote Hindu-Muslim unity and preserve national solidarity, have for the time, ended in failure. To-day, the nation has got rid of two, after months of senseless bloodshed, almost by the forces of hatred. The critic will no doubt point out, that Gandhi's methods promised more than they could perform, but if men had never promised more than it was possible for them to perform, the world would be the poorer, for "the achieved reform is the child of unachieved ideal."

"We are fortunate and grateful that fate has bestowed upon us so luminous a contemporary—a beacon for generations to come," wrote Albert Einstein, the scientist, in a birthday tribute to Gandhi, and we in India have indeed greater cause to be grateful to a leader that gave us such significant leadership in our hour of need. Non-violence in politics is no longer a beautiful dream—a dream too beautiful to be true. The Gandhian doctrine stands to-day as the main hope for a world in mortal peril of the atom bomb.

INDIA WILL LEAD THE WAY

By EMANUEL CELLAR

AUGUST 15th is a red letter day for the whole world. It marks the severance of a cord that has bound India to Great Britain for nearly three centuries. This cord should have been severed many many years ago. India by virtue of her geographic, cultural, historic and economic position was entitled to resume her sovereignty long since.

The British ruling families and politicians have long drained resources from India. Henceforth India will be on its own.

As a country re-born, India will lead the way, particularly in Asia, so that everyone and woman will be allowed to live in peace and dignity.

Prince and pauper, man and woman, rich and poor, high and low caste all shall henceforth have equal rights and protection before the law.

"Every man shall now sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid." Although this sentence is from the Bible, I believe it also embodies the teachings of the great saviours of India.

The new Tri-colour Flag of India now unfurled shall never more be lowered to any man or nation. The inclusion in this flag of saffron, white and green the wheel of Asoka is most significant. As one of India's greatest leaders he showed a view-point that proved to be world-wide and unparochial or national.

India's present leaders might well be termed modern Asokas.

The dawn of ultimate victory and independence now rises on India's Horizon.

GREATNESS OF BHARATI CONTRIBUTION TO CULTURE

By PROF. K. SWAMINATHAN

SUBRAHMANYA BHARATI, who died in 1922, his 38th year, would be 64 if he were alive to-day. It is too late yet to assign him his due place in Tamil literature or in world literature. His contemporaries—V. O. Chidambaram Pillai, P. S. Nelliappa Pillai, T. V. Kalyanasundaram Mudaliar and Desiyavinaiyappan—spontaneously welcomed and followed his modernity of outlook and simplicity of style and younger men like Suddhananda Bharati, Ramalingam Pillai and Bharati Dasan were proud to call him Master. He opened a new epoch in our poetry. His prose still remains little known and little used.

Bharati was occasionally a propagandist in verse, an improviser of simple songs in popular tunes in furtherance of public causes. His few periods and personal satires have had their vogue and are best forgotten. But the proportion of genuine poetry of permanent literary value is, even in *Desiya Gitangal*, astonishingly high. In centuries to come it may well be that the followers of T. K. C. (the founder of aesthetic criticism in Tamil) will study Bharati's National Songs as "the occasional verse" of the immortal author of *Kuyil* and the *Kannan* songs. But those who see nothing wrong in the direct didacticism of our traditional poetry and believe in "poetry for the people" rather than in "poetry for the sake," may pause at this turning point in our country's history to ask and answer the questions: "What does Bharati owe to India? And what does India owe to Bharati?" For Bharati deserves as conspicuous and honourable mention in any general history of India as in the history of Tamil literature.

The claim of Shelley—that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world—has always been conceded in practice by the cultured peoples of India and China, whose simple lives are regulated, by plenty of poetry and little legislation. Bharati, who in his nonage wrote under the pen-name of "Shelley-dasan," asserted this claim, not only in the serene realms of religion and family morality, but in the grim fight for social equality and national independence.

"MOST AUTHENTIC SINGING VOICE"

Dr. C. R. Reddi has aptly called the Gandhian era "the heroic age" of Indian politics. But before this era and separated from it by the four years of the first World War was a less chivalrous and less noble age, the age of the "heroic" dominated by Lajpat Rai and Tilak and Chidambaram Pillai and which incidentally gave to Pondicherry its world-religion as a sanctuary for poetry and religion. Of both these ages Bharati's was the most authentic singing voice, and of the latter the most powerful operating force. The transition from terrorism to Satyagraha, the recognition by the country that Gandhi was more essentially Indian than its earlier heroes, was not merely paralleled, it was in a measure brought about, by Bharati's own inner progress from politics to pure art and yoga. The lines "Love thine enemy, heart of mine" provoked by a C.I.D. official were Englished by Bharati himself and sent to Gandhi and published in *Young India*. In poem after poem Bharati extolled Gandhi as the preacher of a new Gita, and this while he and the *Madras* were still alive and overshadowing the little, brown Bania from South Africa. In a marching song sung a dozen years before Dandi, Bharati says:—

"Sword, spear and dagger, bow, mace and missiles—all these are weapons for fools. Renunciation, Love are the arms of the army of spirit wielded by great ones, godly, immortal." And he ends with these words the *Pennad* on Gandhi:—

"To reckon dear as your own life the life of your foe would kill you. To look at all men as God's own images, God's own children—This courage of true faith you dared to bring into politics. Where lay writhing the worms of war, murder and vengeance. You scorned to tread the way of war, the way of much murder."

But the manner way of dharma, the way of the wise and saintly. You showed to India and proved it more fruitful too—That so the world may forget its hate and see its own future in virtue."

For thirty years Tamil Nad has stood steadily and calmly by Gandhi and Gandhism and has escaped the backslidings and disruptions which some other provinces have suffered. The credit is due not a little to the continuity and sweet reasonableness of Tamil literature and to the life-giving and unifying quality of our language, classic in its simplicity, yet with power to bring to meet our recurrent needs the wisdom of long past ages and lands afar off. Bharati was first the servant and then the master of this language, very ancient and ever young, and through him he spoke to her children and had them in thrall. How often has one noticed that at crowded mass-meetings "anti-Congress" groups threatened disturbance and a Bharati song was sung by K. B. or D. K. or M. S., or by an ad hoc volunteer, or even a woman, and a record of it was played, and lo and behold, peace was restored as if by magic. Our poet has been handier than a legislator; he has served as a posse of policemen and prevented riots.

RELIGION AND POETRY

All this would be incredible to outsiders. They might well ask, "How can poetry do so much and such varied work in the world?" Nevertheless, it can, and it truly justifies Bharati's praise of Tamil, loud though it sounds. Religion and poetry are still live forces in Tamil Nad and Bharati was their joint product. Between religion and the people, a divorce has come about everywhere else in the world, but not in India. Henceforth here in India, every day, a seeker of Ultimate Truth was accepted as a political leader and did work in the world—much to the chagrin both of professional politicians and whole-time hierophants. Again, between mythology and poetry and between poetry and the people, a divorce has come about everywhere else and strange gods are sought after and never found; but not in Tamil Nad. Our temples and their festivals, our poet-saints in an unbroken line from the Sangam age to Ramalinga Swami, our mighty masterpieces on the story of Rama and the thousands of folk-songs in infectious tunes on Rama and Krishna, Sakti and Kumara, have provided for us a precious heritage of dramatic situation and of stimulating and directive emotion, of poetic patterns and musical modes, followed by age and enriched and refined by each succeeding generation, colouring and coloured by the speech of the people and shared in common by the learned and unlearned. Such a wealth of poetic resource, such an orchestra of instruments with which to stir the people and to lead them to the heights of idealism never had and Bengal in her Brahmo age shook off with scorn, but Bharati commanded and knew well how to use. By the side of Bharati, with his full-blooded emotion, his daring imagery, his racy speech and haunting song-music, his up-to-the-mi-

nute modern significance and all-comprehensive acceptance, Dr. Iqbal, seems proud and provincial and Tagore aloof and anaemic.

Bharati belongs to the central tradition of Tamil literature; in this sense he is a freak or a rebel. "Wine and fire and wind and the wide expanse of heaven—compounding these together, our lucid Tamil poets make their sweetest songs," he says; and applies the dear, familiar words and figures and tunes to the life new themes of to-day. If Liberty and Mother India and Mother Tamil were new additions to our pantheon, so in their time were Siva and Sakti, Kumaran and Kannagi. The true poet exploits and, with the willing collaboration of the people, expands his country's mythology. The poet is no superior birth, but a man among men; only, he is more quick and sensitive in apprehending, and more bold and happy in articulating, the changes in the general mental climate. And he and his people, together, in some golden epoch of history create new gods for love and worship and service. In Bharata Mata's "Palli Ezhuhi" and "Sacred Dasanga" we watch an old outworn convention filling with substance and coming to life again; and like Madeline who hoped to see the figure of her lover in a dream and beheld before her waking eyes young Porphyro in flesh and blood, we rub our eyes and thrill with rapture. The real merges in the ideal and history and geography in vision; for verily the name of our Beloved is music; hilly her mountain, river and city; and her drum-beats proclaim the triumph of Truth and Righteousness.

In Bharati's love of Tamil as in his love of India there was nothing narrow or fanatical. He dreams of boating in moonlight on the Indus, in the company of Kerala damsels and singing old Telugu songs. His nationalism was no soul-destroying fever; it respected and reconciled the supreme claims of the individual for self-realisation and of all mankind for peace on earth and material happiness. He prays to Saraswati for sweetness and light for every Indian in every home in every street in every village; and in the very next breath prays to her for the same rich gifts for Huns, Greeks, Japanese, Chinese, Persians, Turks and Egyptians. For Belgium defying Germany, like a gipsy girl threatening a tiger with a winnow in her hand, for the fall of the Czar before Communism, like Hiranyas before Narayana, for Mazzini's self-dedication, for the Love of Jesus and the Peace of Allah, he finds the right poetic measures and figures; just as he does for Tilak and Lajpat Rai, for Sivali and Guru Govind. He accepted Sister Nivedita as his "Guru" for the gospel of the New Woman, who is but the Virgin of the Vedic Dawn reborn. Because he knew and enjoyed English literature, Sanskrit, Hindi and Telugu, and because he was and sympathised with the movements of thought and feeling in other lands, in and through him our ancient language and culture have gained new life and vigour.

By bringing the Tamil people in vivid contact with their own glorious past and with the pulsing life of the modern world and by keeping them in good form in the forefront of freedom's battle, Bharati has earned for Tamil Nad and left to her her rightful place, which is a high and honourable place in free India working in Truth and Love for a free and happy world.

S. India's Share in Victory

By T. VISWANATHAN

There may be streaks of cloud across but still the rising moon going up the horizon is a thing of beauty; there may be clouds of division hiding the fullness but still independence is a thing of pride. August 15th is a forward mark in the limitless expanse of time. It sees the freedom of a country; it sees also the hope of Peace for a Continent.

Those who flung themselves heart and soul into the fray, those who responded when Gandhi made the clarion call, always felt that they lived in great times; for great were the possibilities of Satyagraha. In 1921 we had a burning passion for freedom, but we knew not the shape of its coming; in 1930 the call of independence drew the masses into the struggle; for they knew they had the power to shape the thing that was destined to come. And hence those that fought nobly and well as satyagrahis had an added strength and confidence. In 1941 we vacillated; but in 1942 we struck and struck with all our might. We said to the English Ruler: "Quit India" and he has now quit.

It is true that a great many who had talent were a little away; it is true that a few more tried to stem the inevitable; but yet the voice of the Congress was the Voice of the Nation; its marches in the struggle were for the Nation and the fruits of Victory were intended for the Nation and now really they are so, as one may see.

In the hour of Victory no one, however, need say it was due to him alone. Let all those who claim a share in it, for they too put in a twig of fuel in the fire; they too fanned the flame. Let all rejoice in one voice.

Yet I should say something about the glorious part of South India in this glorious struggle. The fight had many fronts; in no part did South India, the South India of Andhras, Tamils, Keralas and Kannadigas lag behind. I well remember how in 1931 in the A.-I.-C.C. one of the greatest of Indians had to withdraw his report when it contained a discourteous reference to the South Indians' share in the struggle. Satyagraha or Elections, Khadi or Constructive programme, Harijan uplift or Hindu-Muslim Unity, Parliamentary debate or Legislative output, whatever it may be, South India produced heroes, rare and daring personalities, perfect example of selflessness and courage, talent and intellect. South India has a harmonious blend of those qualities that in a due proportion go to make Greatness what it is,—yet we feel. I have always felt, that there is still some undefined something that gives us visions but stifles achievement that is supreme. May be it is the will of Destiny! May be it is a historical necessity that will in future create something real and lasting to the credit of the Tamils, to the credit of the Andhras, to the credit of the Keralas and to the credit of Kannadigas.

But now has come the need for realism. In Politics, now has come the need for realism in Economics and the need for realism in the shaping of the social fabric. We fought for a freedom that would give food, clothing and housing in an adequate measure, learning of a high order, health and cultured leisure of a superior degree, for all that are subjects of our realm and for removal of gross inequalities; we fought for Independence that it may help us to realise our fullness with opportunity for all and with none to be victims of exploitation. We fought for a solid nation and united society. We fought for a time when favouritism and nepotism would cease to be and when communalism and other "isms" that disintegrate are at rest. We fought for an order in which the landlords would not grab and the tenants and tillers would produce and be prosperous, where the capitalist would not tyrannise and the labourer would have his due. We fought for these things. We shall not be told "No" by those that get into power and we shall brook no denial nor shall the fruits of our victory be snatched away by others. May God help us to work out in peace what we got by war.

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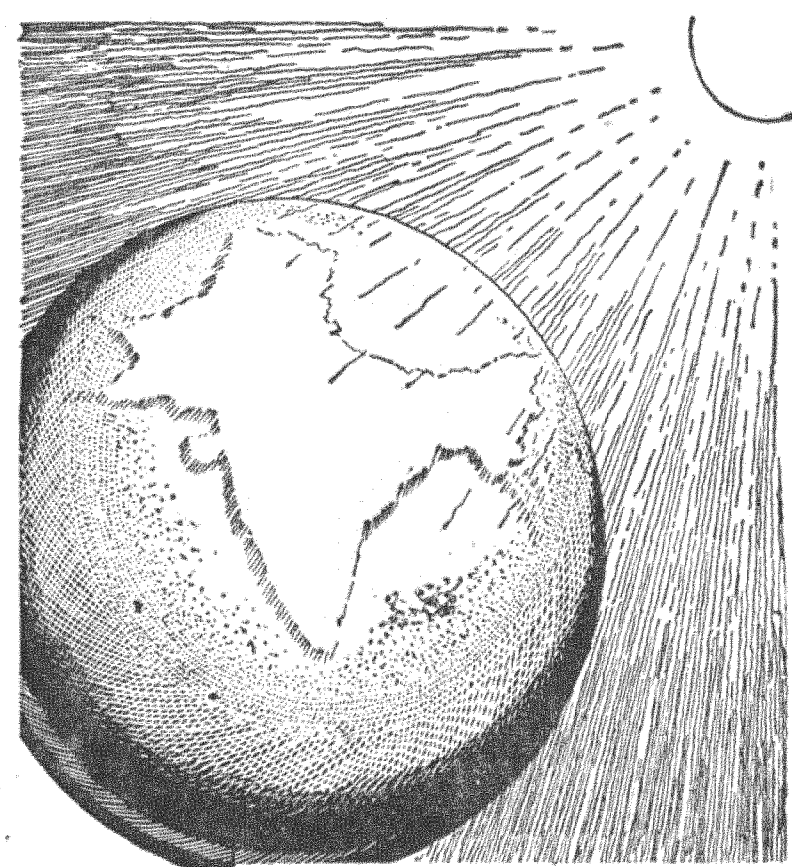
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