

PART I POLITICAL & EDUCATIONAL

SPEECHES AND WRITINGS
OF
DR. (SIR) S. SUBRAMANIA IYER

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

BY

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Editor, The KARNATAKA, Author of the "Problems of
Indian Native States," etc.

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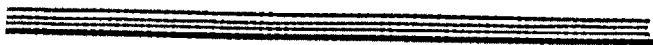
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Chimanlal H. Setalvad



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Author

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AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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PREFACE

The idea of publishing my reminiscences originated on board the S. S. Narkunda in December 1931, when myself and some other delegates to the Second Round Table Conference were returning to India. One afternoon at lunch, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, Mr. G. N. Joshi and myself were talking about law and law courts and I narrated to them some of my experiences and recalled certain notable occasions on which the High Court and its predecessor the Supreme Court protected the liberty of the subject. My friends assured me that my reminiscences of the Bar would be very interesting and they desired that I should write them. When I reflected on the suggestion I felt that I could not confine myself to the field of law and that my reminiscences should extend to various other spheres of public activity in which I had taken part for many years—the University, the Municipal Corporation, legislatures and politics.

I soon realised the very arduous nature of the task for two reasons. I had no recorded diaries, nor any regular file of letters and papers. It meant taxing my memory to recall incidents and experiences extending over a period of more than five decades and further there was the difficulty of verifying my recollections by reference to available records and other sources. I naturally hesitated to take up the work. But some of my friends prevailed upon me not to give up the idea. Mr. G. N. Joshi often reminded me about it and so did Mr. (now Justice) M. C. Chagla. Sir Sajba Rangnekar as recently as 1941 very kindly offered to be my biographer if I furnished him with the relevant material. This was, of course impossible in view of the non-existence of connected documents or recorded notes. Therefore, the only alternative left was to attempt the task myself. I am conscious of the shortcomings of the production under the circumstances and I crave the indulgence of the reader for

the same. It has been remarked that writing reminiscences can be a dangerous occupation. I have scrupulously tried to avoid pitfalls and it has taken me nearly two years to give effect to the suggestion so kindly made by my friends. My narrative includes an unvarnished story of a busy and active life embracing different fields of activity apart from the legal profession and contains my own views of men and matters during the most eventful and exciting period of the history of the motherland. My consolation is that I have always served my country, according to my lights and without malice to any one. If the readers think that on the whole—barring inevitable and unconscious mistakes—I have produced a realistic and instructive record of my life I shall feel amply rewarded.

I take this opportunity to thank several friends in the various branches of the legal profession who have assisted me in the verification of facts and events. Mr. G. N. Joshi was particularly helpful to me. My thanks are due to Mr. Frank Moraes of the *Times of India* who went through the tedium of correcting a part of the proofs.

Last but not least my grateful thanks are due to Mr. V. R. Bhende, Assistant Secretary of the National Liberal Federation but for whose devoted, sincere and intelligent help during the whole period of the preparation of this volume, I would never have been able to produce it.

Bombay,
February 1, 1946

C. H. SETALVAD

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CONCLUSION

My task is done. As the title of the book implies, I have narrated my recollections of facts and events in the spheres of law, politics, legislatures, education and local self-government in which I have played my part for more than fifty years, and my reflections on such facts and events. With the latter some of my readers will agree and others might disagree but I can assure all that those reflections are the result of honest convictions and balanced thinking. If this volume helps the younger generation to form a correct estimate of events and to guide their thoughts in the right directions, I shall feel amply repaid.

What a marvellous change has come over Indian thoughts and views during this long period. I remember in the eighties of the last century, sitting on the verandah of my house at Ahmedabad, hearing two persons in the street vehemently arguing regarding some business dispute that had arisen between them. One said to the other: "You cannot get away with it like that. Remember there is no longer Peshwa rule here, it is the rule of the British Queen." This was symbolical of the faith people had in those days in British justice. Leaders of the Indian National Congress till as late as 1915 talked of the British connection as a benign dispensation of Providence. Now we are in the days of slogans like "Quit India" and "Quit Asia."

Wise statesmanship of Macaulay and Elphinstone who dreamt of the proud day for England when India would demand and be given self-government gave place to narrowness of vision and subordination of Indian interests to British interests as reflected in the administration and the

CONCLUSION

Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935, creating as their sequel the demand for the complete severance of the British connection.

India is determined to be free within the British Commonwealth if she is accorded an honourable place in it, or without it if that is the only alternative left to her. It is distinctly in the interests of India that she should remain in the British Commonwealth with full freedom like that enjoyed by Canada and Australia. This is so because India would take considerable time to build up adequate naval and air forces and in the meantime it is to her advantage to have the protection of the Commonwealth navy and Air arm.

Unfortunately, however, the unity among all the Indian peoples that existed at one time and gave fair promise of continuance has given place to distrust and antagonism between different sections and communalism has given place to nationalism. One shudders to think of the ultimate consequences of this state of things. The causes of this unfortunate position and the possible ways of resolving it have been referred to in previous pages.

One can only pray that Providence will give wisdom, tolerance, spirit of adjustment and compromise and statesmanship to those in whose hands the shaping of India's future destiny lies and that India in the fast changing world will occupy the position and influence in the counsels of the World Federation to be, that her history, culture and noble traditions entitle her to.

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