

*The Editor of the Dnyanaprakash
for favour of review.*

SHIVAJI AND THE INDIAN PROBLEM.

R. G. Pradhan



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**AN ADDRESS
DELIVERED AT THE SHIVAJI CELEBRATION IN
TOKYO, JAPAN**

under the Presidency of His Excellency Count Okuma,

Sometime Prime Minister of Japan.

BY

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PREFACE.

The foregoing address, delivered at the Shivaji Celebration held in Tokyo, Japan, in April 1907 under the presidency of His Excellency Count Okuma, prime-minister of Japan in the eighties and one of her greatest makers, and attended by a large number of Japanese and Chinese, among whom may be specially mentioned His Excellency Yang Shoo, the Chinese Ambassador at the Imperial Court of Japan besides many American ladies and gentlemen, is published with the hope that it may be of some help in promoting the great Indian movement for freedom and progress that has, thank God, already made considerable advance among the people. I was travelling in Japan when the patriotic Indian students and merchants resident in that country resolved to celebrate the anniversary of Shivaji, and I gladly welcome the opportunity they gave me to speak on the life of the great Indian National hero, and to show to the distinguished audience assembled that the Indian Nation was not altogether unworthy of the sympathy and consideration of the civilized world. I am glad to say that my humble attempt was much appreciated and among the generous notices it received was that of an American professor at the Imperial University of Tokyo, who wrote to me to say that he wished hearty success to my countrymen's efforts "to further the noblest self-realization of India".

I have no doubt that India has a very bright and glorious future. The Nationalist movement is a god-sent movement, and it is destined, in the fulness of time to regenerate her, and make her what she ought to be—a free, united, powerful

nation ever in the van-guard of true and harmonious progress. At such an important time, it is the bounden duty of every true son of the country to have no thought save that of serving her, however humble the service may be, and it is in this lowly spirit of disinterested service that I have ventured to publish the following pages. I claim for them no other merit than that they are an humble tribute to the memory of a national hero whose life and career is destined to have no small influence in shaping the destinies of this great but now alas ! fallen country.

Through such souls alone
God, stooping, shows sufficient of His light
For us in the dark to rise by.

R. G. PRADHAN.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

The brilliant English essayist and historian, Lord Macaulay, has remarked that human progress is like the ebb and flow of the waters of the sea. Those who think that the progress of man goes on continuously without any break will find no historical evidence in support of their position. On the other hand, there is much in history to show that periods of brilliant progress and prosperity are followed by years of decline which, again, only herald succeeding epochs of growth and advancement. The net result is, no doubt, gain in progress, but the various steps by which it is achieved, partake of the nature of light and shadow, of growth and decay. Why such should be the case, why the onward march of man in the path of civilization should take place, as it were, by fits and starts, is one of the great mysteries of life. This much, however, is certain that such breaks and relapses are useful in training character, developing the power of resistance, and thus helping to evolve a complete type of manhood. To quote the eloquent words of President Roosevelt :—

“The law of worthy national life, like the law of individual life, is fundamentally the law of strife. It may be strife military; strife civic; but certainly, it is only through strife, through labour and painful effort, by grim energy and resolute courage that we move on to better things.”

The history of India fully illustrates the truth of these remarks. At a time when the bulk of the human race was yet in infancy, she succeeded in evolving a civilization which, by its lofty moral ideals, sublime spiritual thought, by its harmony of life, by the excellence of its achievements in

literature, science and art, still commands our admiration. Her past reveals as that eminent statesman of this country, Count Okuma, our distinguished president, once remarked, "all that is noble and yet simple, all that is mighty and yet well-balanced." But in course of time, this grand fabric of civilization began to show signs of decay, and, in the long run, gave way, before the resistless tide of Mahomedan aggression. Be it said, however, to the credit of the Mahomedan rulers, that unlike their present successors, they did not monopolize all power to themselves, and aim at keeping the sons of the soil in perpetual subjection. Nevertheless, their rule was never cheerfully accepted and efforts were made from time to time, to vindicate the divine right of national freedom. The names of the Rajputs, the Sikhs and the Mah-rattas will ever remain memorable in our annals, as of those who strove, might and main, to retrieve the lost fortunes of their country. But India is a vast country, almost a continent, and there were then no such facilities for communication as human ingenuity assisted by the developement of science has brought into existence to-day. Consequently, these different movements for independence did not chrySTALLIZE into a universal and united expression of patriotism, and when the English appeared on the scene with their superior organization, their more astute statesmanship, and their more disastrous weapons of warfare, again the tide of Hindu civilization was turned back, and India lay prostrate at the proud feet of her alien victors. But foreign conquest can never succeed in uprooting the innate love of freedom, which is, as it were, ingrained in the human constitution and signs are now clearly visible that in the fulness of time, a higher destiny—higher than our ancestors ever dreamed of—may dawn upon the great mother of Asia.

It is to revere the sacred memory of the founder of the most powerful and widespread of these national movements that we have met here this evening. I have said 'national' and said it deliberately, for the conception of nationality lay at the root of every one of these movements, though owing to the peculiar circumstances of the time, that conception was not large enough to embrace the whole country. The love of hero-worship is a universal and elevating sentiment of the human mind, and forms, indeed, one of the most abiding and pleasing features of Japanese life. The great heroes of history—and I am using the word 'hero' here in the sense in which Carlyle has used it, as denoting men of mighty thought and action—are the beaconlights of humanity; they are the soul of the human race, and from them, the common people derive warmth and instruction and inspiration. Such being their potent influence, it is most befitting that we should, from time to time, commune with their departed spirits, and seek, from such communion, glimpses of truth and guidance for the future. Let us then, on this solemn occasion, transport ourselves into the blessed region of the spirits and reverently sit at the feet of the great Shivaji, to learn from him the lessons that are so badly needed to-day for the uplifting of our country.

What was the condition of India prior to the advent of this great hero on the national stage? Politically, indeed, India was a mere geographical expression. Besides the great Mughal empire in the north, there were a few Mahomedan and Hindu kingdoms in the south. The Mahomedan Power had become supreme in the land, and though the Hindus continued largely to influence the political, civil and military administration of the country, the hostile attitude which

many of the representatives of that power adopted towards the Hindu faith alienated their sympathies, and sowed the seeds of its ruin. A religious revival had taken place, and through the soul-stirring teachings of many religious teachers the dignity of human life had been brought home even to the poor and the oppressed. Men sighed at the recollection of their past glory, and wept at the thought of their present humiliation. They saw their liberties destroyed, and their sacred heritage menaced. A spirit of patriotism and religious zeal swept over the land, and men waited with longing eyes for a genius who would unite them, guide them, and lead them on to victory.

That genius appeared in the person of Shivaji in 1627. His father was an influential figure in the Mahomedan kingdom of Bijapur in the south, and had Shivaji chosen to follow in his footsteps, there is no doubt, he would have risen to the highest position in the state. But a born patriot as he was, even in his early days he realized that his mission was to liberate his country from the crushing thralldom of foreign rule, and thus help in ensuring the further growth and development of the Hindu civilization. An anecdote of his boyhood shows the study spirit of independence that animated him from his earliest days. His father once took him to the court to be presented to the king. Shivaji went, though very unwillingly; but when he arrived at the palace, he took his seat without making any obeisance to the king. Nay, on his return home, he washed his body and changed his clothes, as if a visit to the Mahomedan ruler was an act of pollution to be expiated in due form. His early education was conducted under the guidance of his mother Jijabai and of an old pious preceptor named Dadoji Kondadev. They both exercised very

wholesome influence upon the life and ideals of Shiwaji. His mother, indeed, was his guardian angel throughout his life, and nothing can exceed the high devotion with which he cherished her. Like the old Samurai women of Japan, the Mahra-tta women of those days were brave and ambitious women, skilled in the art of horsemanship and in the use of the sword and the spear. Jijabai early discerned the greatness of her son and gave him every encouragement in his sacred struggle. Once, as she was looking through a window of her palace in one of the hill forts captured by Shiwaji, her eyes lighted upon a distant fort not yet captured. Next time she met Shiwaji, she said to him, "My dear son, as I look round about this fort, there is one place at which I am ashamed to look. If you are my true son, you must not fail to capture that place." The injunction was obeyed, and in a few days, to the great joy of Jijabai, Shiwaji became master of that fort also. Under such inspiring guidance, Shiwaji received the education of a warrior, besides due instruction in morals and religion. He possessed an ardent disposition, and his young, vigorous imagination used to delight in the exploits of heroes and warriors described in our national epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata—the noble teachings of which are to us what the Bushido to which some of them have a wonderful resemblance is to the Japanese.

Thus born in a high family, the recipient of sound education suited to his position and aspirations, Shiwaji began to realize his mission more and more vividly, and set about putting his plans into execution. Gifted with a wonderful discernment of character, he collected around him a devoted band of young followers with the same aims and aspirations, and in a few years, his powerful personality transformed the simple peasants of Maharashtra into a strong, powerful body of soldiers. It may be mentioned here that Maharashtra, the

principal field of Shivaji's work, is a hilly country with a mild climate peculiarly conducive to the growth of an independent spirit among its inhabitants. The people are strong, hardy, tenacious and faithful, and their position as peasant proprietors and their training in local self-government, as handed down from times immemorial in the village communities of India, corresponding, by the bye, to the *Kumis* of Japan, have imparted to them a sturdiness of character and a love of freedom, which no vicissitudes of national fortune have succeeded in destroying. Shivaji discerned their possibilities, and organized them into a devoted army of patriot-soldiers.

The public career of Shivaji extends over nearly a period of 37 years, from 1643 to 1680 A. D. That period, though not very long, is so much crowded with events that it is impossible to do justice to his eventful career in a short lecture of an hour's duration. I shall, therefore, content myself with describing the principal events of his life and setting forth its lessons.

Shivaji's public career may be divided into four periods 1) 1643-51 A. D. when he strengthened, improved and enlarged his hereditary fiefs (2) 1652-61 A. D. when he was engaged in a conflict with Bijapur, (3) 1662-71 A. D. when he fought with the Mughal Power in the north and (4) 1672-80 A. D. from his coronation till his death.—a period employed in organizing and consolidating his dominions. To understand this division clearly, I must premise that Shivaji had two great forces to contend against, before his dream of independence could be realized, namely, the kingdom of Bijapur in the South, and the Mughal empire in the North. He wisely commenced his operations first against the smaller Bijapur Government, and then having undermined that power, boldly proceeded to deal

a death-blow to the more powerful Mughal empire. He formally and openly unfurled the banner of independence by taking the fort of Torna at the young age of 17 when hardly out of his teens. From that age till his death, his career was a continued series of triumphs resulting in the establishment of the Hindu empire which, at one time, promised to bring all India under one common indigenous rule.

The capture of Torna was followed by the seizure of many other forts. In about ten years, his conquests had become so considerable and his power so great that the Bijapur Government who had at first despised him, sent a large choice army under Afzul Khan, a very able general, to capture him. But Shivaji foiled their designs, Afzul Khan being killed and his army thoroughly routed. It was an extremely critical moment in Shivaji's life, and in the life of the country. Afzul Khan was a very superior general, and the Bijapur Government was quite confident that his mission would be crowned with complete success. Had Shivaji been captured his scheme of Hindu independence would have been nipped in the bud, and the Mahomedan Power would have been stronger than ever. It was one of those supremely critical moments in the life of a nation when its fate trembles in the balance. Shivaji realized the gravity of the situation, and acted with consummate ability, care and caution. The almost superhuman success which he won confirmed his faith in his great mission and increased his influence among his countrymen who now thought him a God-sent deliverer, and joined his standard in large numbers. The war with Bijapur lasted for three years more, and that Government suffered such heavy losses and was so much demoralized, that it was glad to purchase peace by entering into a treaty with Shivaji, recognising all the conquests hitherto made by him.

At the end of the war, Shivaji found himself in possession of a large territory, and an army consisting of 50000 foot and 7000 horses. Thus he became a power in the land.

The war with the Mughal Power lasted for nine years. The Moghal Emperor was a man of great ability and energy, but very proud, suspicious, bigoted and oppressive. In the pride of his power, he despised Shivaji, called him a mountain rat and thought his conquest easy and certain. It was not until his first efforts to capture Shivaji were foiled that his eyes were opened, and he recognised in him a foeman worthy of his steel. Two powerful armies commanded by brave and tried generals were sent against him, and they invested an important military station. The siege lasted long and the garrison defended themselves with great courage and tenacity. But the Mughal force was formidable, and Shivaji thought it prudent to enter into a treaty with the emperor. Next year Shivaji went to Delhi at the emperor's invitation, but was treacherously put in prison, from which, however, he made a miraculous escape. His imprisonment and escape is a very touching incident in his life, and brings out his resourcefulness in strong relief. On his return, he renewed his operations with fresh vigour, and conquered large tracts of territory. His power became so great, and his name was so much dreaded that the two principal kingdoms of the south agreed to pay him tribute. In 1674 he was formally crowned king with great pomp and ceremony. In 1677 he made a successful expedition against the Carnatic, and brought that southern province of India under his control. In 1680 he died prematurely at the early age of 53. His kingdom at his death included practically the whole of Western India, besides large possessions in the South. There is no doubt that if God had given him a longer life, he would

have made still more conquests and built up with his own hands the mighty fabric of Hindu empire upon the ruins of Mahomedan domination. But the war of independence which he began, but which, owing to his premature death, he was not able to complete, he bequeathed to his descendants, and they carried on the struggle with indomitable energy and zeal, till they succeeded in practically bringing the whole of India under Hindu rule. His spirit lived after him, and the living example of a life of patriotism, self-sacrifice and strenuous work which he left behind him, not only influenced his immediate descendants, but is bound to inspire his countrymen at all times and under all circumstances. A nation that has produced Shiwaji and the great galaxy of heroes and warriors who worked shoulder to shoulder with him, or carried on the heroic struggle after his death, cannot die; and though in the inscrutable dispensation of Providence, its fortunes may at times be depressed, still, in the long-run, it is bound to assert itself and emerge with fresh laurels of glory on its brow.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have tried to the best of my ability, to give you a succinct account of Shiwaji's life and career. But I am only too conscious that this very very brief outline of his eventful and strenuous career, cannot give an adequate idea of the mighty task that lay before him, and the marvellous energy, courage, initiative and resourcefulness which he brought to bear upon its performance. Nevertheless I hope, I have made it clear that his was no ordinary personality, that he was one of those leaders of men and champions of freedom, whose glorious deeds are the common heritage of mankind. And now let me say a few words about his character and the lessons we may derive from his rich life at the present critical moment in our national history.

Shiwaji's character was what might be called a complete character. Judge him in every relation of life, and he will not be found wanting. A dutiful son, a faithful and loving husband, a generous brother, an affectionate but strong-minded father, a true friend, a kind yet strict master, an able general, a sound diplomatist, a skilful strategist, a brave warrior, a far-sighted statesman, and above all a patriot to the core, he combined in his wonderful character, all those qualities of the head and the heart, which make a man preeminently a great hero and leader of society. His filial piety is shown by the uniform respect and attention which he never ceased to pay to his parents; his brotherly love, in the generous treatment he gave to his step-brother Vyankoji. His sense of the sanctity of the marital relation, and in fact, of the dignity of womanhood was so keen that during his long military career, he took particular care not to disturb women. One of his generals once presented him with a beautiful Mahomedan lady whom he had captured in war, thinking that the present would be appreciated by his master and bring him reward. But on seeing her, Shiwaji simply said "O revered lady, I wish that my mother had been as beautiful as you are," and sent her home with proper escort and presents. He was true to his friends who deemed it a privilege and an inspiration to work with him for the national cause. To his subordinates he was kind and generous, but very strict in maintaining discipline and punishing any neglect of duty. He was great not only in war but in the more difficult art of organization and government. His civil and military administration, his regulations for the dispensing of justice, his system of revenue collection, his establishment of various departments of state, and of a cabinet of eight ministers—all these (into the details of which, I regret I have no time to go here) show his high genius for government no less

than for conquest. And over all these great qualities of the head and the heart, shone as a brilliant crown his unbounded faith in God, and in a well-ordered religious life. From his childhood, he was imbued with the sense of God which his mother and tutor, both persons of deep piety, had done much to foster; and it received great impetus, as later in life, he came under the powerful influence of two great religious teachers, Ramdas and Tukaram, names honoured in our religious history. At one time, indeed, his enthusiasm for a religious life rose to such a pitch that he wished to renounce the world and seek the realization of God in quiet strenuous meditation. From this purpose he was dissuaded only by the above mentioned teachers who taught him that his mission lay in a different direction and that a strenuous public career was not necessarily inconsistent with the acquisition of Divine knowledge. Nevertheless he made Ramdas his spiritual preceptor and the story goes that once when the royal preceptor presented himself at the palace to ask for alms, Shiwaji made him a gift of his whole dominions. Ramdas returned the gift which, however, Shiwaji took back only as a sacred trust given him by his revered *Guru*. This high religious sense of Shiwaji invests his character with unique charm and grace. It was the soul of his soul, and animated and sustained him in the performance of his stupendous task. His patriotism gave him an object to work for, his resourcefulness and discernment of character supplied him with means for its attainment, whereas, his living faith in God impressed him with the sacredness of his mission and with the consciousness of its ultimate triumph. There may have been in history greater warriors and statesmen, but taken all in all, I am not aware of any historical character, leaving aside, of course, the great founders and teachers of religion who might be deemed his peer.

And now what are the great lessons of his rich and immortal life? First and foremost is his burning patriotism which gave him no rest till he had won the freedom of his country. He stands as one of the highest representatives of a vital principle of universal application, a principle the sacred preservation of which is absolutely necessary for the harmonious development of the human race. The whole of mankind is one single organism, and the law of its growth is freedom in every sphere of life. When the operation of this basic principle of life is interfered with in any quarter of the globe or among any section of mankind, the whole humanity is bound to suffer in the long run. The forcible imposition of artificial and unjust inequality by one man upon another or by one country upon another, results in the disturbance of the social equilibrium and brings in its train manifold evils fatal to the permanent and all-round progress of the human race. Shivaji fully realized this, and felt that in uplifting his country from the slough of serfdom, he was promoting the cause of civilization in its noblest and highest aspect. In venerating him we are venerating this sacred principle and the deeper our devotion to that principle, the better for the peace and progress of mankind. We, people of India, form nearly one-sixth of the human race, and we cannot be indifferent to the interests of peace and progress. And those interests can be best promoted only if we bear in mind the great lesson of patriotism and freedom, which Shivaji's life so eloquently inculcates.

But mere sentimental patriotism is ineffectual in changing and improving human affairs. Patriotism ought not to be a mere platonic sentiment; it ought to be a living force seeking expression in concrete action. Just as knowledge is

useless unless actualized in conduct, so patriotism is impotent unless translated into action. As the great Chinese philosopher Wan Yang Ming truly says "To know and to be are one and the same thing," and it is the realization of this most important principle that is to my mind the true secret of Japanese greatness. The Oyomei School, the doctrine of which was action has played no small part in the rise of this great land. And this principle is also the keynote to Shiwaji's wonderful achievements. He was essentially a man of action, and though he appreciated thought, it was only as leading up to action and not as a mere abstract truth. This is, as I conceive, the second great lesson of Shiwaji's life.

The third supreme lesson of his glorious career is the resistless power of a life of sacrifice, constancy in sacrifice. Great things are not accomplished without infinite suffering; on the other hand, it is no less true that when a people earnestly seeks a full expression of its life, and is ready to make the necessary sacrifice, nothing in heaven or on earth shall stay its onward career. Had Shiwaji preferred to play a subordinate role, he would have been able to lead a life of ease and comfort. But he sacrificed everything at the altar of his country's freedom and greatness; his coworkers and followers made the same sacrifices; and these sacrifices bore fruit in course of time, and Maharashtra became free and great, and an inspiration to all parts of India. Let us all remember that there is an unspeakable holy joy in striving and suffering for a noble cause, and that a nation's capacity and readiness for sacrifice is the measure and guarantee of its greatness.

Gentlemen, the vast problem that confronts us to-day is the formation of a free, strong, vigorous, progressive national

life. We must not only revive our ancient greatness, but carry it to the highest possible limit in the light of modern progress. Our constant aim ought to be to raise ourselves to the highest pinnacle of glory and become the peer of the most advanced nations in the world. God has made all races fundamentally equal and there is nothing peculiar in the constitution of any, much less in the Aryan race to which we belong whose achievements even today testify to a perennial source of vitality, which can prevent the full expression of its national life. Any custom or institution or usage or prejudice or belief that may work as a barrier to the realization of this great destiny must be mercilessly swept away. Fortunately all that is vital in our civilization is perfectly compatible with the conditions of modern progress, and it is not impossible for India, as it has not been found impossible for Japan, to engraft the best methods and institutions of the West, on the ancient venerable stock of our indigenous civilization. The central teachings of the West are union, organization and free constitutional government and surely it is not impossible to incorporate them in the national life of India, or for that matter, of any other Asiatic country. Japan has proved to demonstration that the best elements in the civilization of the west can be fused with the best elements in the civilization of the East, and we may legitimately aspire to afford another striking illustration of the reality and power of such fusion. Just picture to yourself for a while, a free, united, vigorous India with all her various races animated by a common national purpose, carrying on her government on the enlightened principles of the west, taking her legitimate place in the comity of nations and having a potent voice in the affairs of the world. And add to this, her superior sense of personal and social purity, her high moral and spiritual ideals.

and you will have a type of humanity, a state of human evolution which will be as near perfection as anything in this imperfect world can be. India, unified, renovated and transformed is bound, once more, to be the centre of the world's attention, and this time the attention would be not of covetousness but of respectful admiration and appreciation. Her immense area, her vast population, her boundless resources, her lofty morals, her sublime religion—all these will give her a unique place among the nations of the world, and hers will be a potent voice which will have to be reckoned with. Let us, as we contemplate the life of Shiwaji to-day, lay to heart the grand lessons it teaches, and I feel confident that the day will dawn when our highest aspirations will be fully realized.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for having given me a patient hearing. And I offer my special thanks to our distinguished guests who have been pleased to grace this occasion by their presence. It is a great pleasure to me to sing the glories of a hero of my country in this land of heroes; it is a rare opportunity and the sweet memory of it shall abide with and inspire me for ever. I would not, indeed, wish any country to injure her own national interests by a morbid sense of international sympathy. But I feel confident that a nation's struggle to rise and reassert itself is such a gain to humanity that it is sure to receive the sympathy of every highsouled person in the world. Let not the great nations of the world forget, in the pride of their power, that humanity owes not a little to India for its civilization, and if therefore, they sympathize with and help her in her present struggle towards freedom and progress, they will be doing

not only an act of chivalry but also of gratitude. And, though we are fully aware that a nation, like an individual, is an architect of its own fortune, and must work out its own salvation, yet modern life has become so complicated and international interests so intermingled that outside sympathy will never be superfluous. May God bless our work, may the spirits of heroes like Shiwaji animate our lives, and may the torch of freedom and progress ever illumine the path of every country in the world!

