

THE LATE HON'BLE
Mr. JUSTICE M. G. RANADE.



Born 1842.

Died 1901.

"It is study that made him an independent thinker, a cautious guide, and a sane philosopher. There was more light than heat in his utterances, more of sweet reasonableness than impulse."

The Indian Spectator,
12, April 1913.

THE
MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS
OF THE LATE HON'BLE
MR. JUSTICE M. G. RANADE.

PUBLISHED BY
Mrs. RAMABAI RANADE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY
Mr. D. E. WACHA.

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INTRODUCTION.

Some time ago wish was expressed by Mrs. Ramabai Ranade that I should write an introduction to this volume which embodies a well selected collection of papers and articles on public affairs which the late Justice Ranade had, during his lifetime, from time to time contributed to the press and some important organisations. I gladly responded to her request, deeming it a duty that I owed to that good man and true, of such vast and varied erudition, and great versatility who had in his generation strenuously worked, through good report and evil, for the greater moral and material progress of our countrymen with a disinterestedness and sterling patriotism which are the theme of universal admiration and eulogy.

To write a comprehensive introduction which could explain the occasion that called forth Mr. Ranade's literary assiduity, unfeigning and unsurpassed, and to expound and analyse the deep thoughts embodied in the contributions is not possible. Such a stupendous task would need a separate volume by itself for a comprehensive treatment. In the anniversary address on Mr. Ranade which I delivered in 1908 before the Hindu Union Club, I have, in the briefest of brief outline, attempted to offer my own humble views on his most important writings. But for a complete and exhaustive exposition of Mr. Ranade's voluminous and valuable utterances, there should be found a younger man, of the rising generation, of gifted talents, and great leisure, one who could enter into the true spirit of Ranade, uninterruptedly devote

* This address of appreciation along with others will appear in the volume to follow.—Editor.

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his whole time to that quality of work, and render full justice to the ability of that great Teacher.

Meanwhile I am glad that Mr. V. V. Thakur has with infinite toil, conscientious care, and judicious discrimination garnered the rich collection and compiled it in a thorough-going manner which will very well serve the purpose of the general student and the critic. He has, in reality elaborated a syllabus of the writings classified under different heads, (1) Literary, (2) Social, (3) Educational and (4) Historical, which will be found of great utility to the general reader and the ardent publicist. None will dispute the estimate he has formed of the great Guru as a scholar and thinker. Few indeed are the Indians of the present generation who have read so widely and deeply as Mr. Ranade, and fewer still who having digested the pabulum he so voraciously swallowed, assimilated it to his own bent, and reproduced it in form which could be hardly differentiated from that of an original thinker.

Some outstanding features of Mr. Thakur's syllabus may, however, be referred to in passing. The papers on Marathi literature had their genesis in official duty imposed on Mr. Ranade at the very threshold of his career as a Government officer as Marathi Translator. He had to read a mass of publications. These writings are marvels of the ability, industry, discrimination and historical perception.

His two historical papers in the present volume were read before the local branch of the Royal Asiatic Society after the publication of his earlier contributions on the Rise and Progress of the Maratha power. As he himself observed his object was "To present a clear view of the salient features of the history from the *Indian* standpoint, and of removing many misapprehensions which detract much from the moral interest and the political lessons of the story." It is notorious that there is a school of Anglo Indian writers on Indian history whose vocation seems primarily to deprecate, if not altogether run down, all that is valuable politically, socially and morally,

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in the India of the period antecedent to British rule, rather than give a faithful portraiture; and, secondly, to persist in relating the history itself in a distorted fashion, in face of well-known facts, and pervert an impartial judgment by a dissertation on motives which existed in their own imagination. In short, the persistent effort of this vicious school is to debase all Indian history by hyperbolically exalting that of British rule. So far Mr. Ranade has rendered valuable service in placing the Maratha history in its true perspective. Mendacious histories on India are worse than useless.

Mr. Ranade was above all an educational reformer. His love of the vernaculars was great. He wished their study for their own sake and not as a substitute for the English or any other languages. Mr. Ranade has observed "The object which the Government had in view in organizing the Educational Department and the University was expressly stated in the Despatch of 1854." It was "the diffusion of European Knowledge and this was to be accomplished by careful cultivation by the students of our University of the English and Vernacular languages. The cultivation of the Vernacular languages was to be fostered by founding professorships of those languages." The battle of the Vernaculars is not over yet, though it has been fought several times. There are the Goliaths of the Vernaculars and there are Davids of the English. But it is much to be wished that a *via media* may be established which shall solve the controversial problem of the last quarter of a century. The very best way is the one suggested by Mr. Ranade. By all means let there be diffusion of knowledge by means of the English and the other important European languages. But let there be side by side with such diffusion professorships for the purpose of the cultivation of the Vernaculars merely as Vernaculars. The true teaching Indian University shall be that which firmly and broadly takes into its cognisance the importance of this subject.

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Lastly as to Social Reform. On this subject, a veritably thorny one, full of pitfalls and subterranean mines, Mr. Ranade's guiding principle might be quoted in his own words. "National prejudices, national customs and national habits cannot be swept away in a day or a year. We could not break with the past if we would. We must not break with it if we could." To put into a nutshell, the principle which ought to guide those aspiring to be Social Reformers was, according to Mr. Ranade, to go slowly, cautiously and on the lines of the least resistance. Those who would wholly break with the past would certainly find themselves in a quandary. However ardent they may be in their enthusiasm, they will find themselves confronted with chain after chain of Ossas and Pelions. The past could only be gradually modified, and no more, by the conditions of the present on clear and well defined lines. History has many examples where the attempt to break with the whole past fabric of Social order, raised step by step during countless ages, is mid-summer madness. It has only ended in grave discomfiture and something appallingly worse. Caution, moderation, a respect for the past which has in it all the elements of the good and the altruistic, a balance of mind and a consummate statesmanship—all these are essential factors. And they rely on a broken reed who venture to sweep away all the past and raise on it a modern superstructure but without a solid foundation. Well had Mr. Dadabhoy Nowroji given the counsel of perfection and so did Principal Wordsworth and Sir William Wedderburn when they observed that Hindu Social Reform was "a Himalaya to cut." Enthusiastic social reformers would do wisely and well to bear firmly in mind this colossal task of cutting the social Himalaya before them. Listen to Mr. Ranade's conception of a Reformer. "The Reformer has to infuse in himself the light and warmth of nature, and he can only do it by purifying and improving himself and his surroundings. He must have his family, village, tribe, and nation recast in another and new mould,

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and that is the reason why social reform becomes our obligatory duty and not a mere pastime." As a French poet has observed, "Let us paint the thoughts that throng the present with the colours of the past." The old, which is valueless, must be slowly put into melting-pot. That which is valuable should be put into the crucible, along with the new which may be equally valuable, so as to form an amalgam which shall be acceptable and which shall endure.

As a Junior class-fellow of Mr. Ranade in Elphinstone College (1858-1861), I well remember the amount of solid reading he went through in the College Library room. Apart from the labour needed to pass the Collegiate term and Scholarship Examinations which to him was child's play, such was his natural talent and power of grasping the meaning of the most difficult text books, his unquenchable thirst for knowledge and great power of assimilation that they led him to devote almost the whole day-time of leisure in running through them time after time. The syllabus of Examination, though difficult, was not so irksome and grinding as exacted for years by our University—a grinding which, it is to be feared, leaves little or no time to read books other than the text books and has no inconsiderable tendency to squeeze out all mental capacity of the average scholar by the time he gets through his graduation. To us Mr. Ranade's juniors, he was the veritable *enfant terrible* of literature. None of us could rival his patience, his endurance and avidity for extensive reading. The patience and endurance were, no doubt, a part and parcel of the Maratha character. The hard soil of the native ghats where most of the men of the Deccan have been nurtured, demands patient labour as we see every day passing by the fields where the agriculturist tills his patch of land. In Mr. Ranade this native endurance was to be discerned at the College in a phenomenal degree. Some of us humorously called him "The infant elephant." His somewhat rugged physique and elephantine stature for an adult of his age ap-

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appropriately called forth this epithet. And we all agreed at the College that Mr. Ranade was destined to be a brilliant scholar in his post-collegiate life. The lineaments which were discerned in him in his public life were all to be noticed in his career as an indefatigable student. Simple in his habits, frank by nature, and above all filled with a spirit of shyness which never left him till the day of his death he was the very idol of his class-fellows. Unconscious himself, and unsophisticated in urban manners, he would sit on one of the benches with his massive legs stretched on the desk opposite, and would, turbanless, go on reading in a loud voice, from noon to dewy eve. He took no breath and no pause. His reading so absorbed him that he did not know what was passing around him. Dress or food never troubled him. His youthful stoicism was such that the veritable stoic of the Hellenic type might have borne him away to his own academic grove with the greatest pride and satisfaction. That this youthful Ranade of my early collegiate days should have blossomed and ripened into the great Ranade as the world of India knew him is no surprise. The stars, in their course had cast his literary horoscope and destined him to be a profound scholar of varied attainments, sobriety of thought, and true literary culture. The muses would have claimed him as their own, in any clime and in any age. He seemed to have been literally cast in the Hellenic mould; and there is, to my mind, no doubt that that great Hellenic scholar of world-wide fame, no other than Sir Alexander Grant, who was the principal of the College and Professor of History and Philosophy, had vastly influenced his scholastic career. In Mr. Ranade there was all through a Socratic spirit of humility and a Socratic bent of mind which always argued in the well-known method of that great Hellenic philosopher. Indeed, I do not hesitate to say that he came near to those lines of Tennyson in which he enjoins us all that "while knowledge in us may grow from more to more, more of reverence should in us dwell." Never aspiring to loom large and grand in

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vulgar eyes, he worked hard but most unostentatiously in the field he had chalked out for himself or was driven to by the exigencies of his life career. Whatever the activity surrounding him, whatever the hum and buzz of the busy world in the midst of which he lived and moved, for himself he seemed to be to have lived the even tenor of his life in his old sequestered vale. If he has been known as a Rishi of our generation, I for one gladly endorse that verdict. In the midst of the life he lived, he really was a recluse, but a genuine one. In Ranade was a Rishi of the ancient, original type, simple in his simplicity, pure of heart, innocent of all worldly varieties, and absorbed in one great thought, in an altruistic ideal, how to render good to his hapless fellow-countrymen, how to restore them to that greatness from which they had fallen. An ever pondering mind but observant, and full of experience from youth to middle age and from middle to ripe manhood, he was incessantly reflecting in how many ways that condition of debasement in which India had fallen, by reason of successive waves of conquest, indigenous and foreign, might be removed, and his countrymen, from stage to stage, be restored to their former pinnacle, but in harmony with the spirit and civilization of the age. Hope was eternal in his breast. He lived, moved and had his being in Hope, Hope divine which one day may make India regain her place in the front rank of the great nations of the world. Inspired by that one thought, the under-current of which can be discerned in almost in all his weighty and important contributions, be they on politics and economics or on history and sociology, his heart was full of hope for his country's regeneration by steady step and slow degree. Living in that hope, so well fortified by his glowing but unobtrusive patriotism his writings have a touch of abiding optimism. He never was depressed, aye, not even when depression was deep all around him and gloom overshadowed the country at different times. His stoic philosophy, but of a practical character, taught him never to be depressed but to

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overcome each depression, so as to go bravely forward, keeping the eye straight to the summit of the goal. To me he appeared, as if to say after the poet, that Indians may have no wings to soar, but have feet to climb, and that those feet, step by step, can march to the summit of our times. It was in this spirit of hope and abiding faith that he worked. It was in the same spirit of reasoned optimism, serene and sober, that he wrote and in the same spirit that he gave his counsel of perfection to those who approached him for advice. Whether he preached from the pulpit of the Prarthana Samaj or from the platform of social, political or educational reform, his theme was full of this inspiring spirit. That was which made him a Teacher, a consummate Teacher, who endeared himself to communities and societies of all castes and creeds in the country. The teaching was sound, wholesome, and above all full of that innate modesty which was one of the eminent traits of his character. Perhaps none knew more than he that the India of his life was just emerging from the sleep of a thousand years and more, the sleep which for the masses was undisturbed while legions of divers Caesars of divers nationalities thundered forth. Steeped for ten centuries in a kind of cimmerian darkness of her own, India was but emerging into the dawn of light, shed by the lustre of the British civilization. The genius of the Anglo-Saxon race, first in arms as it is first in the art of the government of alien races over the wide world where waves the British flag, has been slowly but steadily holding before our countrymen the torch of knowledge, illuminating it from East to West and North to South, galvanising into life the moribund spirit of ages, and holding aloft the standard of British Freedom. Mr. Ranade, with his vast historic erudition and political experience, realised what the genius of that race would accomplish for the regeneration of his country. He thoroughly appreciated its value and understood its potentialities for our greater moral and material progress. Thus appreciating and understanding, he donned the white robe of the Peaceful Teacher

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and strenuously strove, with all the great ability at his command, to enlighten his less enlightened countrymen in their arduous and herculean work of regeneration. As such he was indeed as a beacon light, shedding its light far and wide and shewing his straight path which should, in the fullness of time, bring all to the great goal of national unity and national progress. It is as a Teacher that Mr. Ranade will be best known and his memory cherished by many a generation to come. He was one of those brave but unassuming standard-bearers in the vanguard of the early Indian patriots who held aloft the banner on which is inscribed in letters which are imperishable the motto of Liberty and Progress.

1 st December 1914.

D. E. WACHA.

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