

# THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF INDIA

A Study of the  
Aspirations of  
Educated Indians



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OF INDIA

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A STUDY OF THE ASPIRATIONS  
OF EDUCATED INDIANS

A PRIZE ESSAY

BY

H. P. MODY

BOMBAY

WITH TWO OTHER ESSAYS COMMENDED BY  
THE ADJUDICATORS

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LONDON MCMVIII

## PREFACE

THE leaders of current political movements in India focus their aspirations upon SELF-GOVERNMENT, and all thoughtful people—except a few who, prompted by personal or what they conceive to be British interests, find it convenient to trample upon all aspirations—ask themselves if it be possible that the heterogeneous races of India can be welded into one community capable of successful autonomy. If so, how and when? Recent deplorable events prompt the further inquiry how violence and outrage, the greatest hindrances to progress, can be effectively suppressed. With a view to obtaining expressions of opinion on these points from all sections, I offered, while on a recent visit to India, a prize of two thousand rupees to be competed for under the conditions stated on another page.

The essays received in accordance with these conditions were carefully read and adjudicated upon by the following gentlemen:—

Mr. James Kennedy, formerly of the United Pro-

vinces Civil Service, Treasurer of the Royal Asiatic Society, and well known for his Indian historical researches. He was a contributor to the recently published historical volume of the "Imperial Gazetteer of India." (14, Frognal Lane, Finchley Road, London, N.W.)

Mr. C. E. Buckland, C.I.E., formerly Chief Secretary to the Bengal Government, author of "Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors," and compiler of "The Dictionary of Indian Biography." (61, Cornwall Gardens, South Kensington, London, S.W.)

Mr. F. H. Brown, who has been in Anglo-Indian journalism in connection with leading papers both in this country and India for many years. (Dilkusha, Westbourne Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.)

My own views as to newly-awakened aspirations in India are of little moment, and I do not propose here to define them in any detail. I would only say that I have lived too long in the Dependency to approach these difficult problems otherwise than as a humble inquirer. I have known something of our great Indian Empire at first hand for over thirty years, and many of its people with whom it has been my lot to come in contact I shall ever regard with feelings akin to affection. I have from an isolated position been able to watch impartially

the working of the Government machinery on the one hand and the lives of the people on the other. In all lands and in all ages education has given a broader outlook to its recipients, and with an enlarged horizon has come a keener sense of power and a fuller and juster estimate of personal and collective possibilities. India is no exception to this rule. The "movement" which we find in India to-day, in common with other countries in the East, is closely connected with a very natural development of the human mind. It is but the awakening to self-consciousness of minds emancipated from the darkness of ignorance, minds brought into the glare of noonday, with the whole world, past and present, suddenly brought within their ken. The map of a new world has been spread before the East. The movement inspired by this new world vision has been mothered by education and vivified by the flash of the Japanese sword which repelled Russia, and is fanned by uplifted hands that stretch out after liberty and progress in China, Turkey, Persia, and Egypt.

We cannot go on turning out thousands of highly educated men from our schools and colleges without rendering inevitable far-reaching changes in the social and political life of the people. The man with his back to the wall ready to thrust aside

all progressive movements must be regarded as hopelessly blind and deaf to all the teachings of history. There can be no justification for a desire to keep the Oriental for ever in swaddling clothes just because he is an Oriental, or because the enlightened and capable are a mere fraction of their race. The existence of millions of illiterate Indians is no reason why we should be oblivious to the claims of the literate! It is hard to say which is the more dangerous amongst our countrymen—the man with his back to the wall, or the warm-hearted enthusiast who would travel towards great constitutional changes in a sixty horse-power motor regardless of the condition of the road or of the many gardens destroyed by dust.

There is ample room between these extremes for moderate men both in this country and India to help forward great reforms on safe and permanent lines, and it must be a great satisfaction to all such to find that the hand of the present Secretary of State is neither being forced nor hindered by extremists. Our business in India to-day, while suppressing crime, is not to check political movements, but to guide them into proper channels. "Wise men hasten slowly," but has not the time fully come for us to discard the *ekka* and the bullock-cart? A fifteen horse-power car may

suffice for the present to carry us safely along the path of progress, and before we attempt to exceed the speed limit we must be sure that there are no awkward bends in the road and no obstructions in the way.

The questions propounded, with conditions of competition, are followed by an able and interesting report by the adjudicators. The essay of Mr. Mody, the prize-winner, is published with two others of special merit. It should be explained that while the arguments adduced are unchanged, the essays have all been subjected to editorial revision by an expert, and repetitions or redundancies and points of altogether minor interest have been eliminated or curtailed, while misconceptions or mis-statements of fact have been editorially noted. In this slightly abridged and revised form the essays are published in the hope that they may help in some small degree to enlighten inquirers in this country as to the nature of the great problems which are to-day agitating the minds of so many of our educated fellow-subjects in India, and that they may encourage those of the latter who believe that good political progress can be obtained on strictly constitutional lines.

R. LAIDLAW.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,  
*December 5, 1908.*



## THE COMPETITION

The following notice was sent to intending competitors :—

A prize of Rs. 2,000 is offered for the best reasoned answers to the following three questions :—

1. Is it possible for the diverse races of India to become one united self-governing community ?
2. By what steps and in what period of time can this consummation be attained ?
3. How can encouragement best be given to legitimate political aspirations, and sedition most effectively suppressed ?

### RULES AND CONDITIONS.

1. Papers must not exceed sixty thousand words. Must be typewritten on one side of the paper only, and must reach the undersigned not later than July 1st next.

2. Papers must not be signed by the writer, but bear a *nom de plume*, and a sealed envelope containing the full name and address of the writer must be securely attached to the paper.

3. The papers will be judged and award made by three Europeans of long Indian experience and of no specially pronounced political views. Their decision to be final.

4. The undersigned will be at liberty to publish the successful paper in book form or otherwise; the name of writer will, however, not be disclosed without his permission. No other papers will be published without the consent of the writers, and in any such case a fee will be paid. No unsuccessful manuscripts will be returned.

5. Decision of the judges will be announced in the *Pioneer*, *Times of India*, *Madras Mail*, and *Statesman*, Calcutta, at earliest possible date.

## REPORT OF THE JUDGES ON MR. LAIDLAW'S COMPETITION

The competition has elicited nearly 50 essays, but only 35 of these have complied with the prescribed conditions and been considered by the judges. The essays range from 2,000 to 50,000 words, and vary as greatly in ability as in length. One is exceptionally able ; several are excellent ; others are merely dull ; a number are confused in thought and defective in expression.

The value of the essays consists in their illustration of the currents of political thought which are at work among certain sections of Indian and Anglo-Indian society. The identity of the essayists was, of course, unknown to us, but they usually state or betray their nationality, and it is easy to infer from the technical use of words or the special knowledge displayed with what part of India the essayists are acquainted. Fifteen appear to be Englishmen or Eurasians, while the twenty Indian writers include three Mahomedans, one or two Parsis, three Theosophists, a follower of the Arya-Samaj, and at least one Indian Christian. Some

of the Indian essayists are thoroughly Anglicised, but the majority belong to the less educated middle class which knows some English. The Bombay Presidency and Hindustan proper contribute the larger number. The fighting clans have no representative. Burma is excluded from the discussion. It is therefore apparent that while Anglo-Indian opinion is well represented, the expression of Indian opinion which is reflected in these essays must be taken with some reservations.

The competitors are all agreed on certain points.

1. With the exception of a single Extremist writer, not one of them intentionally desires to be revolutionary. The more simple-minded expressly say that they do not propose to drive all Europeans from the country, and one essayist who thinks all railway employés should be natives propounds a scheme for turning Europeans into agriculturists, to be settled at Lyallpur in the Punjab under the supervision of the clergy.

2. All are agreed that any form of government which may supersede the present "bureaucracy" must be maintained in its place by the British army.

3. All are very loyal to the Crown. We are assured that the Hindus are king-lovers by nature, and worship their kings as deities. One gentleman naïvely says that when the millennium (shortly to be expected) comes, "the only thing the people will have to do is to adore the Sovereign, not as a ruler, but as a deity who does not interfere with

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men's thoughts, words, or actions." A Theosophist remarks that "the population (of India) are reforming themselves as brethren of one united family under one common white king of England, the emblem of the blessed Vishnu"; and he looks back with gratitude to the day when "Bharat Varsha, under the inspiration of her divine patron, Vishnu, threw the garland of her espousals round the neck of England." A third gentleman, more practically minded, proposes a handsome contribution from India to the King's civil list.

4. Even the best of the essayists, European and Indian, display remarkable political inexperience. They draft paper constitutions lightheartedly, without any recognition of the difficulties in the way or any conception of how their schemes would work.

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With these preliminary explanations we proceed to summarise the answers to Mr. Laidlaw's questions.

I. The first question deals with three things—the idea of Indian nationality, the possibility of political union with or without it, and the idea of autonomy.

The European and a number of the Indian essayists deny the possibility of Indian nationality, of Indian political union, or Indian autonomy. It is argued that the peoples of India are separated from each other by creed, caste, language, history, and inherited antipathies; they have nothing in common except submission to British rule and Asiatic prejudice against foreigners.

On the other hand, a small and able minority of the essayists contends that an Indian nationality is already in existence and the possession of a party, few indeed in numbers but full of self-confidence, and prepared to act as the political leaders of the people. The members of this party are united by European education, English ideas, and the habitual use of the English language; also by a common faith in the future of India, a common colour, and a common Asiatic origin; above all, by opposition to the present form of government. They argue that the disruptive factors of caste and religion are falling into the background and becoming mere secondary matters—matters of private life and personal belief; and they add that the Mahomedans have much more reason to unite with them than with the English. The Mahomedan essayists take up a somewhat different position, but they are not quite agreed among themselves. They, too, have an enthusiasm for the future of India, and would certainly prefer Mussulman rule to the rule of a foreigner; but since that is impossible, they have no belief in Indian autonomy, and are somewhat sceptical of parliamentary institutions. One essayist in particular points out that since the days of Lord Ripon the party of Young India is much more divided than it was formerly, and that the prosperity of Mysore and Baroda and the successful working of the Bombay municipality are due to



the energy and tact of individuals, and not to any corporate form of government.

So far we have followed the Anglicised Indians, who are mainly dwellers in the Presidency towns. But the essays also show that, scattered throughout the country, there are many individuals whose English is imperfect, whose thoughts are crude, but who are true patriots after a fashion, each with his favourite nostrum. These we need not here discuss; sufficient to say that all competitors, high and low, are agreed on certain facts. It is admitted that the upper classes, the Rajas, *Raises*, big landholders, and *Darbaris*, are conservative and averse to any national movement. One essayist goes so far as to say that their action will always be retrograde, and that they should therefore never be entrusted with real power or get beyond the status of an advisory council. It is further universally admitted that British rule suits the masses, and that there is no enthusiasm for either municipal or local self-government. The demand for self-government comes from a small but growing number of professional men who have sprung up under British rule and British training. One Indian writer points out that they gain their importance by their access to and power of appeal from those very "bureaucrats" whom it is their object to replace, and without whose help it is impossible that they should succeed. They do not reflect that they are not the natural heirs to the authority which they would overturn.

II. The second question is virtually determined by the first. The majority are agreed that Indian nationality is a chimera, and autonomy under British suzerainty an impossibility. On the other hand, one hopeful gentleman guarantees Home Rule in a couple of years, if the English are subjected to a firm, though friendly, boycott. Another points out that it may easily be obtained by passing a law, whereby only Indians shall be eligible for Government appointments. The Congress essayists think that autonomy may be obtained in a couple of generations, the Theosophists in a thousand years.

There is a general agreement that education must be the chief instrument for improving the condition of the people, and the preliminary of any possible union. On this subject, of which they have had experience, the Indian essayists usually talk excellent sense. They dwell mainly on three things—religious, technical, and vernacular education. The chief want of India at the present day is the encouragement of native industries, and the writers urge the importance of technical education.

European and Indian competitors are agreed that the neglect of religious training has done much harm, and they would make religious teaching at school and college compulsory. Several demand a minimum age for conversions—a man should not have independent religious convictions of his own until he is thirty. Lastly, the more thoughtful essayists dwell

on the importance of vernacular literature, and the study of the vernaculars. Of course, even here we have an instance of the shoemaker and his last. A Bombay schoolmaster advocates the suppression of all grants in aid, the abolition of most vernacular schools, and the establishment everywhere of free English schools, secondary as well as primary. It is noteworthy that the only Government department which Indians do not profess a desire to monopolise is the educational.

III. The third question deals with the measures to be taken for improving the political position of the people and the suppression of sedition. This last must come first, since suppression of disorder must not follow, but precede or accompany reform. Sedition is easily got rid of, says one writer ; it is due to the fact that the discontented are not granted what they want ; satisfy, therefore, he says, their demands, and repeal the Acts of Lord Morley and Lord Minto. The moderates of the Congress camp part from the extremists with some apologies, and desire a very tender treatment of the vernacular press. The majority, however, of the essayists, Indian even more than European, call for firm government, and approve of drastic measures towards the press. The vernacular press has admittedly been the chief instrument in bringing about the present agitation and inflaming popular passions ; it ought therefore to be bound over in heavy securities, and be subject to severe penalties.

For the rest, we have a number of suggestions which may be classified under three main heads.

1. The establishment of Parliaments, Imperial and Provincial, with certain reservations regarding the army, foreign policy, and finance, but with a non-official majority. Regarding the details there is no unanimity—some doubt the advisability of an Imperial Parliament, and would have provincial Parliaments tried as an experiment in one or two selected provinces. Some would provide the provincial Parliaments with a cabinet, subject to the Governor's control and veto. Others wish the district officer to be regarded as the Parliament's executive. Most of the Indian competitors, including those of the Congress, regard it as the future Parliament's chief business to put a curb on the Collector. One writer proposes a representative from every district in order that he may report on the Collector's doings; and another proposes to reduce the Collector to the rank of "a simple citizen." The ablest of the Congress essayists says: "All our efforts are concentrated towards breaking down the ramparts behind which the bureaucratic forces are at work."

Although there is much talk of Parliaments, there is the greatest diversity of opinion as to their composition. The Congress writers resent every restriction which would prevent them from getting all power into their own hands. The claim of the Congress men to be the leaders of the people

is vehemently denied by others. They insist on the representation of every class by genuine members of that class, and the recognition of the rights of minorities, including native Christians; they declare that the rule of a small educated and Anglicised class would be intolerable, and tantamount to the enslavement of the whole body of the people; that the civilisation of India is in its own way as great as that of England, and for Indian purposes the more important; and they deny that an English education gives any right or ability to rule. We may add that the protesters are not Mahomedans, but Hindus. It is the protest of the non-Anglicised against the Anglicised party.

2. The second suggestion put forward by several essayists is the redistribution of the present provinces into smaller groups. This redistribution should be based on the historic nationalities which exist, and the administrative arrangements should be suited in each case to the character of the people. Much may be said in favour of this proposal, but only one writer has worked it out in detail. He gives an outline sketch of a model State, with an English Governor and a few European administrators, an executive recruited almost entirely from the province, an official language which every one can understand, and an impartial representation of minorities, the English element to be reduced in proportion as the province advances in civilisation and capacity for self-administration. Moreover,

every attempt of any one province or party to interfere with its neighbour should be severely repressed. For instance, racial and religious disputes often take the form of a dispute over the official language, and our essayists afford an illustration. Those who are Anglicised desire English, the Mahomedans advocate the use of Urdu, some half a dozen wish to make Hindi compulsory, and only one stands up for the local language.

3. The great majority of the essayists argue in favour of a much larger employment of Indians in the higher official posts. On this subject little need be said, since the principle has been conceded by the Government of India. Some writers look only to the Civil Service, and demand that one quarter or one half of the appointments over Rs. 1,000 a month should be reserved for Indian officials. Others desire a larger share in all the Government services except the army and education. Several essayists, both Europeans and Indians, urge the appointment of an Indian Legal Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council.

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We do not consider that it comes within our province to criticise the suggestions which we have surveyed in this report, and we must expressly dissociate ourselves from implying approval of, or, indeed, any opinion on the views put forward by the

writers whose essays we recommend. In making our award we have looked to sanity of judgment, moderation of tone, general practicability of suggestion, cogency of argument, literary merit, and careful and exhaustive treatment. Judged by these standards, we are unanimous in considering the essay which bears the signature of "*Dum spiro, spero*" to be the best. It is a singularly able presentation of the views of the moderate party in the Congress. On its publication some small mistakes of fact should be corrected. But although it is certainly the most powerful and "best reasoned" of the essays, it is scarcely advisable to publish it without any indication of other points of view.

It appears to us to have much special pleading, many false analogies, assumptions which will not hold, and obliviousness of some fundamental facts, while the writer appears to know little of India outside certain limits, and much of what he asks is impracticable. The chief value of these essays consists in their evidential and educative significance. We would therefore recommend that with the prize paper some others be published which represent a different standpoint. We have selected "Moghal" and "Action Front" as representatives of two opposite schools. "Moghal" has a wide, but not, we think, a very profound or always practical, grasp of the question, and is somewhat wordy. "Action Front" displays a much surer knowledge of Indian ways, but he ignores too much

the position of "Young India" and the force of English sentiment. Along with these we have placed a very different paper by "A. M. I.," written in halting English, and far down the list as a literary composition. We have selected it because of its obvious sincerity, its pathetic pessimism, and its grasp of certain elemental facts overlooked by the writer's more brilliant compatriots, which make it the best representative among these essays of the large and voiceless class of conservative Hindu patriots.

Among the remaining essays "Garuda's" is the most noteworthy; as an essayist he is equal to "Moghal" or "Action Front"; he appears to occupy a position midway between the Mahomedan and the moderate Congress party, but his views are covered to a considerable extent by those of "*Dum spiro, spero.*"

F. H. BROWN.  
C. E. BUCKLAND.  
J. KENNEDY.



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BY H. P. MODY

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