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INTRODUCTION.

The first session of the Indian National Congress to be held in Bankipur, the Civil Station of Patna, the Capital of Behar and Orissa was the twenty-seventh. The honour came rather late in the day, but it could not have come under happier auspices. Before the great Delhi changes were announced in 1911, Bengal was privileged to take the lead in matters affecting both interprovincial and intraprovincial interests. Bengal with its great press and manifold social and political activities concentrated in Calcutta had the commanding voice in the then provincial life, and if Behar agreed to play second fiddle, well and good,—if not it had had to make up its mind to be ignored. Not that the sense of local individuality was the less keen on that account. On the other hand, as the progress of the Provincial Conference and kindred movements amply shows, there were continuous strivings for obtaining means of self-expression. In a sense in which the same cannot be said of any other part of the country, Behar had early developed a high degree of cohesion in its public life, and no better preparation could have been made for the great change which took effect in April 1912 than the practical recognition of the community of interests which binds Hindus and Moslems in this Province in unbroken and unbreakable bonds of social amity and common service. It is not necessary here to dwell upon the immense benefits accruing to Behar by its separate constitution under the Royal command: it will be more germane to the matter in hand to note that it was devolved to celebrate our entry into the larger life of the country by inviting the Indian National Congress to hold its twenty-seventh session at Bankipur. The cost in money and the sacrifices in personal service were calculated to a nicety. Looking back, it may truly be claimed for Behar that the arrangements made for the comfort of the delegates and the conduct of the proceedings of the session reflected the highest credit on those responsible.

It was at the Calcutta Session of the Congress in 1911 that Mr. (now Justice) Hassan Imam, on behalf of the Province, extended a formal invitation to the great convention of the Empire to hold its session at Bankipur; and the invitation was accepted. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Hassan Imam's elevation to the bench of the Calcutta High Court deprived this Province of one of its foremost workers in the public cause, and the Congress Committee of one who would have been a tower of strength. The regret at the withdrawal of his virile personality from provincial life was however quenched in the rejoicing that an eminent Beharee, admirably fitted by qualities of head and heart to administer even handed Justice, had been called to higher field of labour in the cause of the motherland. The Reception Committee was formed and immediately set to work with characteristic energy. The composition of that body is, in itself, typical of that Hindu Moslem entente which is so striking a feature of public life in Behar. The Chairman of the Reception Committee was that self-less patriot, Mr. Mazharul Haque, whose tenure of office as member of the Imperial Legislative Council (1910-12) had been rendered memorable, both in an individual and a political sense, by his fearless advocacy of the common interests of Hindus and Moslems. The number of Vice-Chairmen was twenty, and included veteran public workers and representative zemindars. The following is the full list:

- Maharaj Kumar Gopal Saran Narayan Sinha (*Gaya*).
- Rai Harihar Prasad Singh Bahadur (*Shahabad*).
- Babu Ugramohan Thakur (*Bhagalpore*).
- Rai Krishna Sahai Bahadur (*Bankipore*).
- R. A. Baxter Esqr (*Bankipore*).
- Chaudhry Karamat Hussain (*Shahabad*).

Molvi Syed Wazir Hussain (*Chapra*).
 Babu Jugeshwar Prasad Singh (*Mozafferpore*)
 M. S. Dass Esqr. C. I. E. (*Cuttack*).
 W. M. Dass Esqr. (*Bankipore*).
 Keshari Prasad Singh Esqr. „
 Rai Narayan Prasad Sahab (*Patna*).
 Babu Brijanandan Sing (*Bankipore*).
 Hon'ble Babu Brijakishore Prasad (*Darbhanga*).
 Babu Nandkishore Lall (*Gaya*).
 Babu Kalipada Ghosh (*Ranchi*).
 Doctor Ramkali Gupta (*Bankipore*).
 Rai Gajadhur Prasad Bahadur „
 Babu Durga Prasad (*Chapra*).
 Khan Bahadur Doctor Asdar Ali Khan (*Bankipore*).

Mr. Sachchidanda Sinha was General Secretary and Mr. Kuar Nandan Sahay, Joint General Secretary, while Mr. Krishna Ballabh Sahay was Treasurer. There were ten Assistant Secretaries headed by Mr. Parameshwar Lal (who was also Captain of the Congress Volunteers). The full list of Assistant Secretaries is as follows:

Prameshwar Lall Esqr (*Bankipore*).
 A. Hakeem Esqr., Do.
 M. Yusuf Esqr., Do.
 M. Yunus Esqr., Do.
 G. N. Bose Esqr (*Motihari*).
 Babu Sri Krishna Prasad (*Bhagalpore*).
 Babu Mathura Nath Sinha (*Bankipore*).
 Babu Nalini Ranjan Sinha Do.
 Babu Bhawani Sahay Do.
 Zakaria Gauhar Ali Esqr., Do.

A more representative Reception Committee in a popular sense, and one more efficient, could not possibly have been constituted. The Committee set to work with characteristic energy and it was not long before an organisation was evolved perfect in every detail and fully capable of making the Twenty-seventh Session of the Congress the unalloyed success it proved to be. It would be invidious to mention the names of individual workers, but it may confidently be asserted that there was no laggard in the camp. As already indicated, the generous co-operation of Hindu and Moslems smoothed the way when little difficulties had had to be encountered, especially, in the matter of the selection of sites for the delegates Camps. The Congress pavilion itself was located in the spacious compound owned by Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haque, on Fraser Road. The camps were pitched on suitable (and practically all available) sites on Fraser Road and Exhibition Road, which enabled the Committee to concentrate the entire Congress camp within a few minutes' walk of the Congress pavilion, thus rendering possible familiar intercourse and exchange of thoughts between the delegates from all parts of India and Burma.

Here it may be useful to give a description of the Congress pavilion, which was designed on somewhat unique lines and which has been considered worthy of reproduction (*vide* Appendix B.) It will be readily admitted that the design of the pavilion suffers in no way by comparison with that of any previous Congress. The compound was beautifully laid out and illuminated with rows of Kitson lamps, and the entire arrangements were remarkably satisfactory. The pavilion itself was a thing of beauty. Capable of accommodating five thousand persons, it was tastefully decorated and was draped, within and without. The unique feature of the pavilion was the twenty-

eight gateways opening into it each named after some great personality or event in the ancient or more recent history of Maghada.

The gateways were named and numbered as under :

- I. The Pataliputra Gate.
- II. The Chandragupta Gate.
- III. The Buddha Gate.
- IV. The Vaisali Gate.
- V. The Shershah Gate.
- VI. The Bindasara Gate.
- VII. The Vikarnasila Gate.
- VIII. The Udaya Gate.
- IX. The Nalanda Gate.
- X. The Sita Gate.
- XI. The Parasnath Gate.
- XII. The Jarasandha Gate.
- XIII. The Kapila Gate.
- XIV. The Kalinga Gate.
- XV. The Magadha Gate.
- XVI. The Gautama Gate.
- XVII. The Rajagriha Gate.
- XVIII. The Bimbassra Gate.
- XIX. The Samudragupta Gate.
- XX. The Udantapuri Gate.
- XXI. The Udaigiri gate.
- XXII. The Vidyapati Gate.
- XXIII. The Azim Shah Gate.
- XXIV. The Guru Govind Gate.
- XXV. The Mahavira Gate.
- XXVI. The Chanakya Gate.
- XXVII. The Asoka Gate.

One gate, reserved for the President, was unnumbered, and designated the Mahendru Gate.

The seating arrangements within the pavilion were perfect of their kind. The delegates' blocks were in the centre, the first and second class visitors' blocks being on either side, while the third class visitors' block was placed behind the delegates'. Two separate gateways were reserved for ladies, and similarly the other gateways were reserved for delegates, distinguished visitors, &c. Close to the pavilion were placed the Congress office, the Post and Telegraph offices, &c.

The laying out of the delegates' camps entailed considerable labour not to speak of the expense, and as will appear from the sequel, the arrangements in this regard gave the greatest satisfaction to the delegates. A brief description of the Provincial camps may not be out of place here. Of these were four, the Bengal and Burma Camp to the north-east of the pavilion; the Bombay, Madras and Central Provinces camp to the south-east; the Upper India camp to the south; and the General Camp (intended for the accommodation of delegates living in the European style) far off to the east. Some idea of the labour entailed in the laying out of these several camps may be gathered from the fact that nearly 320 tents had had to be pitched, besides accommodation provided for delegates in the private residences, on Fraser Road and Exhibition Road, of Messrs. Sinha, Krishna Sahay, Parmeshwar Lall, M. Yunus, K. P. Singh, and Behari Lall Bhattacharya. Thus, the President and party were put up at Mr. Krishna Sahay's, Messrs. D. E. Wacha and D. A.

Khare, the General Secretaries at the Behar Club, both on Fraser Road, while Mr. Surendranath Banerjea stayed at Mr. Bhattacharya's palatial mansion on Exhibition Road. The Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale was Mr. S. Sinha's guest.

Here it seem appropriate to refer to the recorded opinion of that experienced Congressman and veteran critic, Mr. Dinshaw E. Wacha, as to the efficacy and excellence of the arrangements made for the comfort of the delegates. This Congress veteran wrote :

The first thing that impressed me when I had gone round the pandal and the delegates' camps, beautifully and systematically laid out amidst sylvan scenery and under mango topes, was that some one with a master mind for method and manner had a very clear conception of what was wanted. He had conceived how the ground should be laid out, how harmony and order, as in nature, should be evolved, how utility must be attained at any cost and how beauty might be made a handmaid to that utility, without being subordinated.

Mr. Wacha goes on to describe the Congress pavilion in enthusiastic but not undeserved terms,—"the mind which conceived it and gave it body and form was certainly a methodical mind chastened by experience, refined by native talent." Elsewhere he says : "That kind of conception (of harmonious blending of beauty and utility) and method has been rarely seen at other Congress camps which I have visited these many years. All through, I repeat, there was order and harmony, utility and simple beauty combined. Again I could well take a mental note that the same mind had also an economic eye. So that if there was harmony and order outside, it was evolved at the least expense which was in striking contrast with the costly and fantastic surroundings I have marked elsewhere." No apology is needed for the following further quotation. After referring to the excellent arrangements made for creature comforts, Mr. Wacha concludes.

So far all these features we are bound to give out unstinted praise to the chief organisers and the workers. So I say, "Wah ! Wah !! Sabash Bankipore where the Congress was on virgin field. But was not there the veteran, though young, who *knows* what Congress organisation means. There was the genial Beharee who rejoices in the name of Sachchidananda Sinha. Let the Congress give him and that stately and majestic Grand Master of Ceremonies Mr. Haque, our own Congress side, K. M. C. O., our Knights of the Meritorious Order of Congress Organisers. You have Asoka's pillar near Bankipur. Why not have a Minor on the very site where the pandal is, to commemorate the first Congress ever held in the ancient capital of the Great Chandragupta and Asoka Empire ? I say Floreat Behar ! Attribute as generous on the part of the giver as deserved by its recipients.

The limit set to this Introduction precludes any reference to the proceedings of the Congress,—the brilliant address delivered by Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haque which, among other things, contains a forcible statement of the case for Hindu-Muslim *entente* ; the encyclopædic survey of Indian politics by the President, Sao Bahadur R. N. Mudholkar, C. I. E. ; the masterly review of the South African question by Mr. G. K. Gokhale ; and the skilful handling of the difficult questions bearing on Indian administrative problems by the speakers on the resolutions passed by the Congress, and notably on Autonomy for India, by Mr. Surendrath Banerjea ; on the Public Service Commission by Mr. N. Subba Row Pantulu Garu, on the the Swadeshi movement by Mr. Ambica Charan Mazumdar, and last, not least, on the constitution of the Legislative Councils by Mr. S. Sinha. A pathetic personal touch was added by the heartfelt tributes paid to the memory of the Congress Budda—Allan Octavian Hume—

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward
 Never doubted clouds would break
 Never dreamed though right were worsted wrong would triumph
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
 Sleep to wake.

The appalling infamy of the Delhi outrage was a poignant memory when the Congress met, and it will not be considered an impertinence if the deliberate opinion be recorded here that the greatest of Indian orators touched the loftiest level, even of his eloquence, when he gave expression to the universal sentiment of horror and indignation at the crime and of sympathy with the illustrious sufferers.

This brief *resume* will not be considered adequate if it does not incorporate the notable message sent to the Congress by that Grand Old Man Dadabhai Naoroji. The following is the text of the Message:—

THE SANDS VEVOVA, AUDHERI.

has been published in the *Times* of the 20th December, 1912.

To

THE HON'BLE MR. M. HAQUE,

Chairman of the Reception Committee of the
Bankipore Congress.

My dear Sir,

I am very much obliged for your kind letter, inviting me to attend the Bankipore Congress, but I am sorry I shall not be able to take any part in the work of the Congress.

The Congress has done much good work in the past. But it has to do far greater work in the future. It says so in its constitution. The objects of the Indian National Congress are the attainment by the people of India of a system of government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire and a participation by them in the rights and responsibility of the Empire on equal terms with those members. These objects are to be achieved by constitutional means by bringing about a steady reform of the existing system of administrations.

These are great objects and will need most earnest and devoted efforts. All I can say is that I wish from the bottom of my heart, equal success in the future as has been achieved in the past. The Bankipore Congress has to commence this very work. You refer, in your letter, to the Public Service Commission as the most important Indian question. It is the sole and whole remedy for the prosperity of Indian. Even to-day in the year 1912 our able and sympathetic Finance Minister says: "It was also a striking lesson of how narrow is the line in India between plenty and want." What is it that the Indians ask? In the blessed year 1833, the British people and Parliament achieved most glorious deeds. No nation on earth ancient and modern have achieved this glory. It is peculiarly and essentially British glory. The two great glorious deeds were the emancipation of the slave and the emancipation of the people of India from an unnatural anti-British and unfair system of Public Service—the system of remote foreign dominion with inseparable evils. The slave obtained his emancipation at once and became a free man. But the unfortunate British Indians are struggling for nearly the past 80 years; for the emancipation and the right which they obtained by the highest of all British rights, the right of a deliberate act of Parliament—this act of Parliament was not the result of any efforts, agitation or claims by the Indians themselves. It was the spontaneous result of the sense of the justice, of humanity and righteousness of the British people themselves and a deliberate decision after a spontaneous careful enquiry. This result was that famous clause—as Lord Macaulay called it—that wise, that benevolent, that noble clause.

The Indians are not asking any new reform. They had their reform of the public service granted to them by a deliberate act of Parliament long ago. They have been kept out of the right they already possessed for nearly 80 years. They

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are asking only the right of an act of Parliament. His Majesty the King Emperor has bestowed upon us the precious gift of hope and with that hope I trust that the present British statesmen and people will unreservedly and fully give us with every grace and good-will, and according to the report of 1860 of the Committee of the India Office Council what we have already possessed by right for past 80 years, but what has been withheld from us all this long time. The Court of directors at the time the clause was passed in 1833 interpreted the clause "that there shall be no governing caste in British India &c. &c." In short we are asking what has already been our right and property for more than three quarters of a century.

I express my hopes again that we will not be again disappointed and that we shall be granted now what has been our own right for all this long time.

I sincerely wish every success to the Bankipur Congress till their objects are attained, to the glory of the British nation all their own and to the satisfaction and devoted loyalty of Indians, to British supremacy and Empire.

With best wishes,

Yours truly,

(Sd.) DADABHAI NAOROJI.