

THE STATES & THEIR PEOPLE IN THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

BY

D. V. GUNDAPPA



KARNATAKA PUBLISHING HOUSE
BASAVANGUDI P. O., BANGALORE CITY
MYSORE STATE, INDIA

THE STATES AND THEIR PEOPLE
IN THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

You have had enough of military reputation in your own fields; you have gathered large harvests of that commodity, valuable or be it worthless. I invite you to something better, a higher, and holier than that; I invite you to a glory not "fanned by conquest's crimson wing," but based upon the solid and lasting benefits which I believe the Parliament of England can, if it will, confer upon the countless populations of India.—JOHN BRIGHT ON INDIA IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, June 24, 1858.

I do not think one realizes or can ever possibly live in a Native State whilst one stays with the Prince. It seems to be a great deal more servility here than in any State I have been in. Everybody spends all his time in our presence bent to the ground. . . . Progress with these Chiefs is a very thin venter. . . . India is a cheap country for a rich man, although a dear country for a poor one. . . . The right thing to do would be to scrap all their treaties, provided they were willing to do so, and to form a model treaty for all of them.—E. S. MONTAGU ON THE INDIAN STATES.

The Princes are a different proposition. Their acceptance of the idea of Federation was certainly for me a surprise; but, if they will become equal partners in a Federal India, I venture to suggest that, of their own free will, they should advance. An undiluted autocracy, however benevolent it may be, and an almost undiluted democracy, are an incompatible mixture bound to result in an explosion. It is, therefore, I think, necessary for them not to take up an uncompromising attitude and impatiently refuse to listen to an appeal from or on behalf of the would-be partner. If they refused any such appeal, they would make the position of the Congress untenable and even most awkward. The Congress represents or endeavours to represent the whole of the people of India. It recognizes no distinction between those who reside in British India or in Indian States. The Congress has, with great wisdom and equally great restraint, refrained from interfering with the doings and affairs of the States; and it has done so in order not to unnecessarily wound the susceptibilities of the States, but also in order, by reason of the self-imposed restraint, to make its voice heard by the States on a suitable occasion. I think that the occasion has now arisen. May I, then, hope that the great Princes will not shut their ears to the Congress appeal on behalf of the people of the States?—MAHATMA GANDHI in a statement to the Press (Young India, March 12, 1931).

English statesmen would have to dare to let India wander away into the woods through errors. Freedom is not worth having if it does not connote freedom to err and even to sin. If God Almighty has given the humblest of His creatures the freedom to err, it passes my comprehension how human beings, be they ever so experienced and able, can delight in depriving other human beings of that precious right.—Ibid.

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- (1) *The Problems of Indian Native States*, 1917.
(Being in large part the re-print of a series of Letters addressed to H. H. the Maharaja of Bikaner.)
- (2) *The Native States in the Empire*, 1918.
(A Memorial pleading for Federation, submitted to the Rt. Hon. F. S. Montagu.)
- (3) *The Indian Native States and the Montagu-Chelmsford Report*, 1918.
- (4) *The Government of India and the Indian States*, 1926.
(A Draft Scheme of Federation.)
- (5) *The Indian States Committee: A Note on Its Terms of Reference and Their Implications*, 1928.
(Presented to the Butler Committee.)

Etc., etc.

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PRINTED AT THE BANGALORE PRESS
"LAKE VIEW", MYSORE ROAD, BANGALORE CITY

1931

PREFACE

“HE can be bold who hath his quarrel just.” This line of Sophocles, the writer trusts, will suffice as an apology for this tract. He believes that the cause of the Indian States and their People is likely to be strengthened at the present juncture by such a review of its historical and jurisprudential setting as is herein attempted.

The study of the transactions and documents of the past is often easily tempted out of the region of the relevant,—into that of the didactic or the merely interesting. The writer hopes it will be found that he has guarded himself against this tendency, as well as against the opposite one of speaking without book.

He may be permitted to explain that the considerations and proposals he has ventured to submit have for their basis his continuous study of the problem in its several aspects for over twenty years,—by means of contributions to newspapers and journals, discussions with publicists of various schools, and association with popular movements. That his views have not had to undergo any very radical changes in the course of these frequent re-examinations is to him some ground for seeking for them the attention of the public.

This pamphlet is not by any means planned as a treatise on questions of the general administration and development of the States. The organization of their public services, their financial policies, their programmes of economic advancement, their arrangements for the education and upbringing of the Princes, their provision for the unemployed members of the royal households, their schemes for promoting social welfare—these and similar questions have not been touched upon. Their importance, great as it is, is secondary; and one may be sure they will receive due attention when—but only when—the fundamental condition of a popular and responsible constitution is realized in all possible fullness.

To complain that there is nothing new or distinguishing in these proposals would be to blame the writer for lacking a merit to which he never meant to lay claim. The ideas he has tried to express have all been drawn from the world's common stock of civilized political experience and thought. His object is the simple one of showing how it is both needful

and possible to apply those ideas to the Indian States —for the emancipation of seventy millions of the Empire's subjects.

The writer is not unaware of the defects in his manner of presentation. Had he had the advantage of leisure, he could at least have deleted some repetitions and trimmed up the sentences. He trusts the importance of the subject is such that it will not let the defects of his manner obscure the material points of his argument.

No great optimism has nursed this essay. India's recent experiences prove that reason and righteousness are by themselves not enough to bring success to the People's cause. Not until public opinion manifests itself in forms which can bring home to Governments a sense of its practical power in things that matter to them can it be certain of a serious response to its demands for reform. This means mass action; and that is a subject which the writer dare not discuss here. It is for him rather to pray that enough of patriotic pre-vision and statesmanship may be vouchsafed to the Princes,—and together with it, enough of constructive temper and tact to the public workers who may have opportunities of negotiating with them; for, the Princes too deserve to be handled with a measure of sympathy, held in leash as they are by tradition and custom, like the rest of us,—so that they may, sparing mass energy to be organized for the many other tasks of nation-building that are sorely in need of it, build up by their own cheerful and steadfast efforts a polity which will—

“Keep their thrones unshaken still

Broad-based upon the People's will,”

—one in which “Freedom gently broadens down from precedent to precedent.” If they will not bring the change in thus gracefully, it is certain to break in stormily. The times leave us in no doubt about it:

“Our little systems have their day;

They have their day and cease to be.”

So may the People's cause find an early and benign victory and let advocacy like this pass into oblivion.

April 1931.

D. V. G.

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