

BHAWANI DAYAL SANNYASI

A PUBLIC WORKER OF SOUTH AFRICA



PREM NARAIN AGRAWAL, M.A.

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BY

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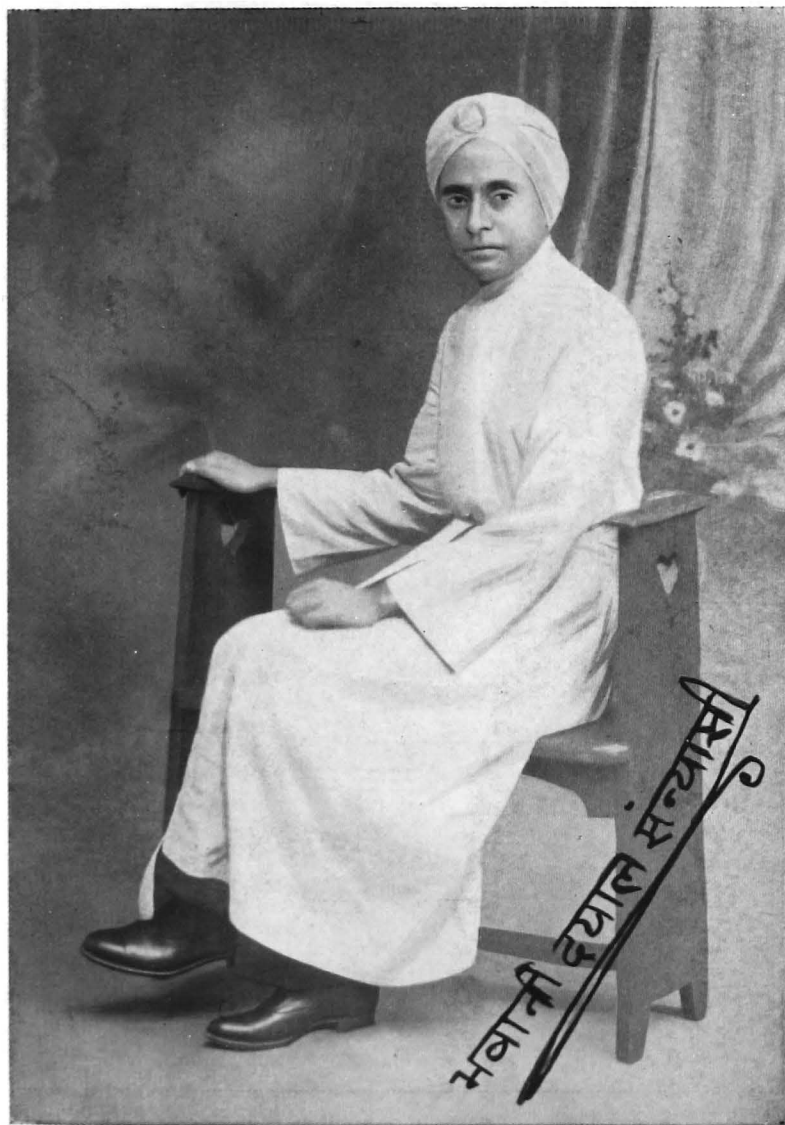
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SWAMI BHAWANI DAYAL SANNYASI

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CONTENTS

PART I

	PAGE
Introduction	iii
Appreciations	vii
CHAPTER I Parents	1
II Birth	3
III Education	6
IV In Motherland	8
V Unwelcomed in the Union	12
VI Great Indian Strike	26
VII Imprisonment	32
VIII Settlement	34
IX Literary Enterprise	37
X Amritsar Congress	40
XI Death of Jag-rani Devi	42
XII Gaya Congress	44
XIII Natal Indian Congress	47
XIV British Guiana Scheme	49
XV The Prince and Congress	52
XVI Class Areas Bill	54
XVII Deputation to India	56
XVIII In the Order of Sannyasis	67
XIX Back to Natal	69
XX Congress Tribute	72
XXI Hardship of Deck-Passengers	74
XXII The Sutlej Scandal	76
XXIII Non-Violent War of Independence	79
XXIV First Indians Overseas Conference... ..	82
XXV Two more Important Conferences	84
XXVI Repatriation	85
XXVII Honoured in the Union	89
XXVIII Colonisation Epoch	93
XXIX Fiji Government and Swamiji	99
XXX Agitation in India	107
XXXI Bhawani-Bhawan	121
XXXII Congress as a Mass Organisation	122

PART II

CHAPTER I	The Late Jag-rani Devi	...	...	...	129
II	Swamiji—the Man	...	...	...	134
III	As a Builder of Greater India	...	...	...	137
IV	As a Speaker	...	...	...	142
V	As a Writer	...	...	...	143
VI	As a Propagandist	...	...	...	146
VII	As a Political Worker	...	...	...	148
VIII	As a Social Reformer	...	...	...	150
IX	As an Aryan Missionary	...	...	...	151
X	As a Propagator of Hindi	...	...	...	161
XI	As an Advocate of Repatriates	...	...	...	168
XII	As a Sincere Friend	...	...	...	172
XIII	As a South African	...	...	...	175
XIV	Personal Reminiscences	...	...	...	177

PART III

APPENDIX I	The Books	...	...	...	i
II	The Statement	...	...	...	ii
III	The Vedic Conference in South Africa	...	...	...	vii
IV	First Indians Overseas Conference...	...	...	...	x
V	All-India Hindi Editors' Conference	...	...	...	xvi
VI	Bihar Hindi Literary Conference	...	...	...	xxi
VII	Hindu Conference in Natal	...	...	...	xxx
VIII	Natal Indian Conference	...	...	...	xxxvii

INTRODUCTION

I have often heard it being said by some of our distinguished countrymen that there is a dearth of biographical literature in India and that we have not been able to perpetuate the memory, ideals and services of many of our Indian luminaries in various spheres of life. This has prevented us from paying them deserved tributes for their great sacrifices and excellent public work. Apart from this question, there is one more aspect of this, that the posterity would lament the dearth of biographies, which act as stimulus to those, who wish to engage in similar works. Also the experiences, as recorded in them, of those people, who now adorn the history of the country, help them to guide and control their own line of work. In fact, it is the most important and valuable part of the literature of every country. I should, therefore, be happy on being able to add my mite to enrich this branch of our literature.

Swami Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi, whose life and work I have tried to describe in so many pages, is an Indian, born and brought up out of India—in South Africa, of the Indian parents, who reached there under the Indenture Labour System. Himself a colonial born, he got numerous opportunities to see the sad plight of his countrymen in South Africa, and all this led him to decide to devote most of his time in the service of the Indian people settled in Overseas countries like South Africa, East Africa, Dutch Guana, British Guana, Trinidad, Fiji, Mauritius, etc., and he was successful in bettering their lot to a great extent. While working for them Swamiji did not forget his responsibilities as a builder of greater India and for this purpose he carefully co-ordinated all of his activities and also

of those whom he guided, to push the cause still further. I venture to think, his services to greater India are unique, and that he is first among the colonial born Indians, perhaps Indians in general also, who has constantly and consistently worked to build greater India on a solid foundation. His service to Overseas Indians in general, and his contribution to the building of greater India entitle him to be placed in the rank of National Workers, and as such he deserves to be written down in a biographical sketch.

The life of Swamiji will serve one more immediate useful purpose of arousing greater interest in the cause of Overseas Indians, which is not receiving due attention from the Indian public at the present moment. It will throw, I am sure, a good deal of light on many of the facts as to how Indians are being treated in South Africa and elsewhere and how by dint of their hard labour they had been able to improve their conditions of life and work.

While my main occupation was to deal with various phases of Swamiji's life, I have taken liberty at places to go in a little detail about certain facts and events, just to show the trend of events in South Africa and other countries so far the problems of Indians Abroad are concerned; and many others I have to ignore after having made a touching reference to them mainly because of the vastness of the problem. These digressions may seem unjustified, but they will, I am sure, arouse a little more interest in the questions of my countrymen settled abroad, among the Indians, particularly my readers, which the life of this public worker of South Africa is bound to kindle. It is but one object of writing out this biographical sketch. His life is also so very closely connected with the events there that it becomes necessary to refer to them to enable the readers to get a realistic view of his life and work.

Swamiji has been leading a dedicated life in the cause of his country. In order to render greatest possible services to it he decided to carve out an entirely different career for himself in a sphere, which was not very well cared for by other prominent Indian nationalist workers. To do his work almost single-handed, he has had to utilize each and every opportunity and all resources. Much of the work was done by himself in various capacities. As a journalist and author he wrote to the press extensively. He also made use of the pulpit and thus tried his best to awaken the people to the needs of Overseas Indians, and successfully championed their cause. He joined and opened societies with the same end in view and worked in various spheres—political, social, religious, etc.

There may be mistakes in the book, both in language and in the method of presentation of the facts of his life for obvious reasons. In fact, I have had little time to remain with Swamiji to study him from close quarters. The distance of thousands of miles stood in my way since he was in South Africa at the time of writing the present book. However, I shall be grateful to my readers if they will kindly bring to my notice any omission or error that might have crept in. This, I hope, to rectify in the second edition of the book and in the Hindi edition of this, which is expected to be published for the Hindi-knowing section of our people.

I must also acknowledge with thanks the information, suggestion and help given to me by Shri Brahamadutt, the youngest son of Swamiji in the preparation of this book.

I shall deem my labour amply awarded if my readers begin to take greater interest in the affairs of our nationals settled abroad, in whose cause Swamiji has been working and which is so dear to him, and which, by the way, is also dear to me.

New Year's Day
1939.
AJITMAL,
ETAWAH, (U. P.), INDIA.

} PREM NARAIN AGRAWAL



THE AUTHOR
SHRI PREM NARAIN AGRAWAL, M. A.

APPRECIATIONS

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Indian National Congress:—

I have personally known Swami Bhawani Dayal now for many years and since my knowledge of the history of South African Indians—prior to my personal acquaintances with him—I have known of his name and services. Close contact has deepened that intimacy, and my affection and respect for him have increased as I became further aware of his qualities and activities.

When Swamiji visited India in 1930 and took part in the *Satyagrah* movement in the District of Arrah, we found out what an indefatigable worker he was inspite of his ill-health.

Swamiji, as the representative of Indians abroad, had often visited India and he never spared himself in the service of the South African Indians, and during these visits he obliges us with his cordial and mutual relation.

Apart from his political and social work, he had played a great part in the propagation of Hindi. We Biharis are proud of the fact that he belongs to our Province and although living miles away from us he has not forgotten Bihar.

I believe that Swamiji's biography should be an inspiration to the youths in moulding their lives; and his sacrifices, services, activities and patriotism should ever serve as an ideal and guide to them.

(Translated from Hindi)

*Mr. Hy. S. L. Polak, Honorary Secretary,
Indians Overseas Association, London:—*

I well recall Swami Bhawani Dayal's arrival in Natal, when I was myself resident there, and it fell to me to help him through the immigration formalities. Naturally, it was impossible to estimate then the value of the services that he would render to the Indian community in the course of the years to pass. I am glad to know that an appreciation of those services is to be written and I add this brief testimony of my own recognition of the usefulness of Swami Bhawani Dayal's career in South Africa and elsewhere in advocating the cause of his countrymen in the Union and particularly in Natal. The latest tribute to his character and qualifications is his recent election as President of the Natal Indian Congress.

I wish him many more years of useful service.

Mr. C. F. Andrews, the great and sincere friend of India and Indians abroad:—

I have known Swami Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi for very many years ever since I first came out to South Africa in 1913-1914. He has been of the greatest service not only to the Indian community in South Africa where he has lived for the last 26 years, but also to Indians Overseas in other parts of the world. I have lived with him at his Bhawan at Jacobs outside Durban and have had the greatest pleasure in sharing his hospitality. It is good that he has been at last elected President of the Natal Indian Congress in appreciation of the many services which he has rendered to the Indian community in that country. I am very glad that a biography is now being written in English about him and it is a pleasure to me, even at this time when I am forbidden by the doctors to do much work, to send these few lines of appreciation about him.

Kunwar Sir Maharaj Singh, C. I. E., former Agent-General for India in South Africa and Ex-Home Member for the Government of United Provinces, India:—

Swami Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi was one of my most valued friends in South Africa. He is a gentleman of high character and possessed of modesty and a spirit of sacrifice which is beyond praise. He has also great ability and experience. His devotion to the interests of Indians not only in South Africa but in other parts of the world has made his name an honoured one in India. Natal Indians are to be congratulated on electing him as the President of their Congress.

The Swami's valuable services were always at my disposal when I was Agent General for India in South Africa and for this I owe him a deep debt of gratitude. Long may he live to help the cause of India and Indians in South Africa.
