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THE NEW INDIA

A SIMPLE EXPLANATION OF THE REFORMS

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By

SIR NARAYAN CHANDAVARKAR, Kt.

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INTRODUCTION

In the following pages I have attempted to explain in simple language the political reforms making by gradual stages for full responsible Government in India as an integral part and partner of the British Empire.

I have traced briefly the main and straight lines of the growth of the Indian political constitution since the time of the East India Company.

I have endeavoured to show how each step of those lines has served, in spite of cross-currents, to lead to the growth of the constitution in the direction and towards the goal of responsible Government and how it has led to the present reforms as the first substantial stage of that Government.

My object in these few pages is two-fold: (1) to explain the nature and value of the reforms and the conditions necessary for the constitutional growth of responsible Government and its stability, and (2) to awaken in the minds of the masses of my countrymen and the youth of India a living sense of duty to make the reforms a success by constructive work and criticism, instead of wasting energy over unprofitable controversy and the bitterness of party strife.

N. G. CHANDAVARKAR.

PEDDER ROAD, CUMBALLA HILL,
BOMBAY.

April, 24th 1920.



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CHAPTER I. THE NEW ERA.

I wish in these pages, to give you, my dear reader, a plain talk about the Reforms in the Government of this country. Those Reforms will come into force early next year (1921). His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, eldest son of His Majesty the King-Emperor, George V, will come to India on behalf of His Majesty to bring the Reforms into operation.

What are these Reforms? How are they going to benefit India? What good will they do to the people? What will the *ryots*, the great bulk of the masses of the population in India, and the poorer classes in particular gain by them? What is expected of us as lovers of our country and as citizens of the British Empire, so to use these Reforms as to get all the good we can out of them and so attain, as the years pass by, their real end and final object?

These questions are of importance. In simple language I will try to answer them. What these Reforms are, what benefit to India is intended from them I will tell you as I go on with these plain talks. But before I tell you that in detail, let us understand first the general aim and object of the Reforms. That will enable us to understand each of the reforms better than if I at once explained the principal reforms one by one.

In November last His Majesty the King-Emperor sent a gracious message by means of a Royal Proclamation to the Princes and the people of India. In that Proclamation His Majesty said that these Reforms in the Government of India would open a new era for this country.



What is this new era ? It is a *nava yuga*, as we should call it in our vernaculars. It means the beginning of a mode of Government which is new and better than that one which has prevailed till now. His Majesty calls the time which will begin from next year a new era because the Parliament has passed a new law. That new law contains the Reforms which will come into force then. His Majesty has set his royal seal upon that law by giving it his assent. Having sanctioned the law and the Reforms, His Majesty has proclaimed to the people of India that that law and those Reforms mark the beginning of a new age for India, because, says His Majesty, the law containing the Reforms, is "for the better Government of India and for the greater contentment of her people."

How is that ? You ask.

Let me explain.

From the time British rule was introduced into India, several British statesmen, who have held the responsible office either of Prime Minister, or Cabinet Minister in England, or of Viceroy or Provincial Governor in British India, or other high office, have from time to time publicly declared what the aim of the British Government in India is and should be. They said that the aim is and should be to train the people of India and fit them to govern themselves. I need not name all or many of the British authorities who have at some time or other said so. But I will just name as examples two or three. There was Sir Thomas Munro, who as Collector of a District and afterwards Governor of a Province became very popular with the people he governed, especially the ryots. He loved the people and the people loved him and called him "Father Munro" to express their deep affection for him. He wrote 120 years ago that England should look on India not as a temporary possession but as one which



is to be maintained permanently until her people shall become sufficiently enlightened to frame a regular Government and to conduct and preserve it. Then there was Sir John Malcolm, who as administrator in Central India, and afterwards in higher office became popular. He too wrote similarly. So also Gladstone who was for some years Queen Victoria's Prime Minister. He said England should go on steadily and steadfastly in the path of associating the people of India with the administration of their own country so as to enable them to rule it themselves.

Though this was said, the declaration of self-government for the people of India as the aim of the British Government and final goal of those people was never made part of the laws passed by that Government. In short, the aim was not authoritatively declared by the British Parliament and by the King as the final arbiters of the British Empire. But now in the Reform Act which the Parliament has passed as law this year, and to which the King-Emperor has given assent, that aim has been in clear terms set up as the preamble of the Act. Hitherto there used to be discussions about the said aim. Some used to admit it; others denied it. But all doubt is now set at rest. By the new law India starts on her first step of a new career—a career of Government of the people, by the people, for the people.

That is why His Majesty speaks of it as India's new era "for the better Government of India and the greater contentment of the people". That is to say, for the first time since the introduction of British Government in India, that Government has bound itself solemnly by law to take the first step to give power to the people of India to govern themselves. Hitherto they have been governed by British officials, and those British officials have been



ance with what is best in her ancient civilisation, and with the new spirit created by the British Government itself all these years. The new era, the new reforms, the new law declaring the reforms to be the first substantial step towards the goal of complete self-government for the people of India as a part and partner of the British Empire, are the natural result of that spirit and therefore a tribute to that Government.

Having said so much, I will now put into two sentences the general aim and object of the Reforms in the Government of India, which will come into force from November next.

First, those reforms mark the beginning of self-government for India, as an integral part of the British Empire.

Secondly, those reforms in making that beginning expressly declare that the self-government intended is the government of India by *the people*, meaning by the word *people*, not any particular caste, sect, race, or rank but people representing all castes, sects, ranks and races, including the villagers, the *ryots*, the wage earning urban labourers and the depressed classes.

Just realise what that means and what a gain it is to India. India is not to be governed hereafter by the whim or caprice of any single ruler, however well intentioned, as an arbitrary despot. Nor is she to be governed by any ruling caste or class. But the power to govern India is to be with *the people of India*—the vast masses of her population. It is on that bright career with complete self-government of the people by the people for the people as the goal, that the Reforms will set India advancing. It is the first step, the beginning. If the beginning is well made, if this first step is well taken by the people, the further steps will be easy. Says the proverb: "Well begun is half done."



CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST STEP.

I said in the last chapter that the Reforms giving power to the people of British India to govern themselves are the beginning of the first substantial step to the goal of self-government within the British Empire.

Now that naturally raises a question. The question is, why have the British Parliament and the King-Emperor given only the first step of the power of self-government? Why have they not given now full self-government? Why do they say that we should advance to full self-government step by step and not by one bound?

It is necessary to answer these questions, because it will enable you to see clearly the benefit to India from the first step towards self-government made by the Reforms in the Government of this country.

In answering these questions let me first ask you to remember that these Reforms are called "Constitutional reforms".

What is a "Constitutional reform"?

A constitutional reform is a reform or change for the better, an improvement in the *constitution* of the Government.

The word "Constitution" means a building or settling together of the different parts of which any object is made. A simple and familiar example of "Constitution" is the human body. The human body is made of its organs which are its parts. All these parts are so joined together as to form one whole, which is called the body or human constitution. The different organs act in union and give health and strength to the body. If they do not so act, the body gets disease and the man dies.



Note also how the body grows from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood or full growth. It does not grow at once. It grows step by step, slowly, steadily, quietly, peacefully until from a small baby it grows to a full man. The changes which take place in the body in this manner are called changes in the human *constitution*, because being changes taking place step by step so as to make the different organs act together and grow to full manhood, they keep those organs settled together. These are therefore constitutional changes or reforms in the human body—gradual and peaceful.

The word *Constitution* is applied to Government, because Government is like the human body or constitution. Government means a body of officers appointed to govern a country. The officers are the different organs which together make the whole body called Government. Changes in the mode of government to be healthy, lasting and for the good of the people must be like the growth of the human body or Constitution.

Therefore the well-known maxim: “Constitutions” for the good government of a country, “are not made but grow”. This idea that the Constitution of a good, progressive Government does not change all at once but changes and grows reasonably step by step has been familiar from ancient times in India. The science and art of Government has been called from those times in India *Rajya Niti Shastra*, which translated into English, means: “The law of the political growth of a Kingdom”. The word *Niti Shastra* is important. It means literally: “The law of lead to political growth”. *Niti* which means *polity* or *politics* is derived from the word *nita* led. Therefore, *niti shastra* means the law that *leads* to a people’s political growth. Now, mark the word “leads”. *Leading* is not *driving* but advancing step by



step. As the proverb says:—"It is leading, not driving that leads to the goal". So a Constitution which grows advances gradually by successive stages. If it grows at once and at a bound, it does not last but dies from premature growth. To become lasting, durable, and healthy, it must be like the growth of the human body.

Our wise ancestors in India saw this so well that because the growth of constitutional reform, to be good and durable must be step by step, not sudden, they called a constitutional Government by various names such as *Samstha*, *shirastha*, *mamul*, *rajaniti*. *Samstha* means a settled established form of Government. "*Settled*" not in the sense of something fixed rigidly and unalterably once for all but *settled* in the sense of *durable*, and therefore adaptable to gradual changes required by changing time. A settled form of Government becomes settled when it "grows from a root by gradual process of development". Therefore it is called *Shirasta*, usage. The great Shivaji, when he established his Maratha Empire, framed, according to his own ideas a political constitution for his Government and called it *Shirasta*, i.e. a constitution based on the precedent of usage but altered without any violent change so as to make it grow step by step.

That is how the British Constitution has grown by a process of gradual development. Its changes in the direction of popular government have been, never sudden never hasty, always a *niti* as we in India should call them—a *leading* from step to step, not a *driving* from mile to mile. It is in that way that the goal of full self-government is safely, securely, beneficially reached. Gladstone, than whom there has not been a warmer supporter in England of the cause of self-government and of the rights and liberties of human races, held that



sound opinion. Lord Morley in his *Life of Gladstone* tells us that that great statesman "always kept before him that in political life you must be prepared to *do what you can*, not what you want, and that as much wisdom is required in the choice of time and occasion as in the choice of subject. He fulfilled the counsel of Marcus Aurelius: *Be content with ever so small an advance and look even on that as a gain worth having*".

This advice of Gladstone's, proved sound by the history of the growth of popular government in England and, as I have pointed out above, by the wisdom of our Indian ancestors, ought to be our guide in the use of the Reforms passed into law by the British Parliament, because Gladstone always was friendly and sympathetic to India and her people and said that the question of who shall govern India is a question for the people of India.

I am pressing this point on your attention, my kind reader, because there are those among us in India, who say that the Reforms do not go as far as they ought to have gone, that they do not give us all we wanted and that they ought to have given us much more, because (they say) the people of India are fit for full self-government.

Now, I desire to answer that argument first by saying that I respect it. I respect it because when you strive to get any right, it is human nature to contend that you want the whole of that right at once on the principle that if you do not ask for the whole bread, you may not get even half of it. But it is one thing to ask for a whole bread and say that you are fit to digest it *at once* and it is quite a different thing to digest by steady, healthy exercise, and proper mastication what you have got and ask for more by proving that you can digest



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more. Apply that law of our life to the responsible work of Government. Government means exercising authority over others in the interests of peace, order, and liberty. The exercise of authority over others becomes beneficial when by experience, practice, and time wisdom is gained by gradual stages.

How difficult it is for a man even to govern himself, let alone governing others ! What does that sacred work, the *Bhagawad Gita*, which we Hindus worship as our Bible and which many great and learned men of even other countries have praised for its insight into human nature, tell us on that point ? It advises that each man ought to become fit for the proper and disinterested performance of his duty to others by first becoming fit to *govern himself*; and that to become fit to govern himself, he must practise the art of Self-government—government of himself—by steady, gradual, continued exercise and effort not by rapid strides. That, says *the Gita*, constitutes *fitness*. In the words of Shri Jnaneshwara, justly regarded as the father of Maratha nationality, “What makes a man fully fit for the exercise of power over himself or others is this, that whatever work falls to his lot to do, he *begins* by applying himself to it faithfully, thinking that he is fit for it and more. Then only what he has begun well fructifies and shows he is fit.” Is not that the same as what Gladstone has advised in the extract I have cited above from Lord Morley’s *Life of that statesman* ?

Say not then because the new reforms are only the first step to full self-government, not all the steps rolled into one heap, that therefore they are not important, and that they are disappointing and unsatisfactory. In all great efforts, especially in those relating to the political growth of a people, the first step is the most im-



portant because it is the first step taken well, loyally, and joyfully that determines the fate, good or evil, success or failure, of the advance. Our easy and rapid realization of full self-government as the goal of these reforms must, therefore, depend on what we make of this first step of those reforms by a willing spirit of steady effort, co-operation, mutual confidence, constructive work and not mere destructive criticism, of all of which the late Gopal Krishna Gokhale has left us the precious legacy of a noble life and example. Hitherto we, the people of India, have had to be merely the critics of Government. Now we are enabled to begin bearing the burden of the responsibility of Government. Let us show that the first burden of responsibility and authority placed on us sits on and suits us so well that we can bear more as one year follows another and time ripens our experience.

CHAPTER III. EVOLUTION.

In the two previous chapters I have tried to show the general importance of the Reforms. I have explained why they were not introduced before now. I have described how and why as the first step to the goal of self-government for India they are so important as to make it the duty of all of us to understand their great value. I have accordingly pointed out how it is our duty for the future of self-government in India to work them harmoniously and faithfully, instead of treating the new reforms as more or less worthless. Now I think, my dear reader, you are prepared to follow me as I proceed to point out how these Reforms are the inevitable result of the successive stages of administration



in India from the time of the introduction of British rule up to now. I call that the history of *the evolution* of the present Reforms. That history is valuable to understand and appreciate the real nature and benefit of these. When a reform comes, it does not come by accident. It comes bearing the fruits of the past. It has its roots in the past. The past leads to and merges in the present and the present makes the future. That is the silent law of progress towards full self-government.

For the root of these reforms we must go back to the time of the East India Company which governed India until 1858. During that period the seed of self-government for the people of India was sown. There can be no self-government unless it is based primarily on the principle of equality of all men before law. Lord Cornwallis's constitution, known as the Regulation system of Government, gave to the people that basis, "the safeguard of equal law." As declared by His Majesty the King-Emperor in his Proclamation of November last. "The Acts of 1773 and 1784 were designed to establish a regular system of administration and justice under the Honorable East India Company. The Act of 1833 opened the door for Indians to public office and employment."

That was the first stage preparatory to self-government. The second stage began in 1858 when the East India Company was abolished and the Crown took over direct charge of the Government of this country. Queen Victoria, who then reigned, issued her Royal Proclamation regarded as the Great Charter of the Indian people's rights and liberties. Till 1858 laws were made by the Executive Government. After the transfer of the Government to the Crown, Legislative Councils were established and on those Councils Government nominated a few



Indians as representatives of the people to make laws. When those Councils were first opened in 1861, it was distinctly declared that Government nominated a few Indians as members of the Legislative Councils to represent the people of India in making laws, with the object of allowing the people after some years to elect their own representatives. This went on for 30 years until 1892.

In 1892 the third stage began. The Legislative Councils were enlarged. The number of members of those Councils were increased. Certain bodies such as the Chambers of Commerce, the Universities, landholders, municipalities, and local boards were given the right to recommend non-officials for nomination to the Legislative Councils by Government. Thus the right of indirect elections to the councils was for the first time allowed. The Members of Legislative Councils were given liberty to ask questions and obtain answers from Government regarding the administration. Discussions of the Budget were allowed.

So things went on till 1909 when came the stage of what have been called the Morley-Minto reforms. Those reforms began by the appointment of one Indian as a member of the Government of India ; and one Indian as a member of each of the Provincial Governments. The Legislative Councils were given a more real and substantial elected element. The Governor-General's Legislative Council was enlarged to consist of 60 members, of whom not more than 28 could be officials. Special constituencies were formed for the purpose of recommending representatives for nomination by Government to the Council and 27 seats in the Council were shared by them. The Provincial Legislative Councils were also enlarged. Certain constituencies were formed to recommend



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representatives for nomination by Government to these Councils. These constituencies consisted each of land-owners, Mahomadans, Sikhs in the Punjab, the Municipal Corporations of Presidency towns, the Universities, Chambers of Commerce, and constituencies formed out of municipalities and district boards.

Official majorities in these Provincial Legislative Councils were abandoned. The right was given to members of Legislative Councils to discuss and move resolutions on questions of public interest, though, if the resolutions passed, the Government were not bound to give effect to them.

These are the four leading stages of progress through which the country has marched since the introduction of British rule. Each of those stages was a preparation for the new reforms which are to come into force from next year. Each stage was a step to advance to the next stage. You will mark that most clearly if you note the following broad features of each stage.

First Stage: Laws affecting the people made by Government officials who were all British and none of whom was an Indian.

Second Stage: Laws began to be made by Government officials who were all British and by a minority of non-officials, who were appointed by Government to take part in making those laws. A few of these non-officials so nominated were Indians.

Third Stage: The Legislative Councils which had been merely law-making bodies got the right to criticise the Budget and to ask questions about the administration. So the Legislatures began to be *critics* of the Government, though to a very limited extent. Besides that, some of the non-official members of the Legislative Councils came to be appointed by Government not by



direct nomination but on recommendation by election by certain interests. So the principle of election was recognised.

Fourth Stage: For the first time an Indian became a member of the Government of India and of each of the Provincial Governments. The power of the Legislative Councils to criticise the Government was enlarged; and the official majority in the Provincial Legislative Councils was given up. Indians like the late Mr. Gokhale were able to influence the administration by criticism, advice and suggestions more effectively than before. Certain constituencies were formed for electing representatives to the Legislative Councils.

So you see how from "the principle of the safeguard of equal law" in the time of the East India Company nearly 150 years ago down to now the British Government has steadily moved forward. It has moved forward to bring the people of British India to the initial step of the right to govern themselves. At each stage the demand of India's political leaders for further political progress increased. Their criticism of the policy of Government became as years passed keener. "Their demands" (as is said in the report on the Reforms) "became steadily more insistent for a form of government which would leave Indians free to rule India in a manner consistent with Indian ideas. The spirit of liberty was abroad and active." The war which began in August 1914 gave vigour to those demands and that spirit by the splendid loyalty to the British Throne and Empire which it evoked from the Princes and people of India. That led to the present new law guaranteeing by gradual stages complete self-government to the people of India as an integral part of the British Empire.



CHAPTER IV.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT.

The immediate events which ushered in the first substantial step of responsible government during the last five years deserve our attention now. They form one of the brightest chapters in the history of India. They have bound India and Britain together by a new connecting link more closely than before. They have proved how each is and can be helpful to the other. They show how India is waking up under the British flag.

You are aware that in the last world war which waged from August 1914 to November 1918 the British Empire joined France and its other Allies and fought and defeated Germany and Prussian militarism. The British Empire went to war to support the cause of the weaker nations such as the people of Belgium. Germany had marched her soldiers in spite of treaties and in spite of Belgium's protest, into Belgian territory for the purpose of invading France first and then England. Germany, intoxicated by power, threatened the cause of liberty, democracy and the rights of other nations to live their own lives and mould their own destinies. The British Empire joined its Allies in the war to save and support that cause in the interests of the world and civilisation. When war was declared, His Majesty the King-Emperor, George the Fifth, issued a Proclamation inviting the Princes and People of India to stand loyally by the Empire and help it to victory. The response was given most readily and loyally. By liberal contributions of men to the Army and of money to the War Fund, and in other ways the Princes and people of India helped the Empire materially to wage and win the war. Lord Hardinge, who was then



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Viceroy of India, sent Indian soldiers to the war front in France. That was a masterly stroke of liberal policy for India. It touched the hearts of Indians and the British alike. It moved India, forward by a rapid stride. The Indian soldiers were sent to join the British soldiers and fight the German army in Europe. These Indian soldiers came from the martial classes of India, such as the Punjabis, Marathas, Mahomadans, Sikhs, Rajputs, Jaths, Gurkhas. Several Indian Princes themselves joined the Army, went to the front, and took part in the war as soldiers. The martial deeds of Indian soldiers on the battlefield, their loyalty to the British Crown, their sense of sacrifice to the British cause, their power of endurance and heroism, their capacity to face danger and risk life for the sake of duty—all this won great credit for their country and their people. The loyalty of the people in India and the way they helped to maintain internal peace and order during the war added to that credit. The British Government selected two of the most prominent men of India to represent India at the Imperial War Conference in London. They were His Highness the Maharaja of Bikanir and Lord Sinha, who was then Sir S. Sinha and has since been created by His Majesty a Peer of the British realm, a member of the House of Lords and appointed Under Secretary of State for India. That was a great honor to India and her people. All these demonstrations of loyalty, and the desire to help in the war plainly shewn by the Indian princes and people naturally, brought India to the front more than ever before. The British Government felt it ought to respond to the demand which had gone from India for steps in the direction of self-government for her people as an integral part and partner of the British Empire. Accordingly Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, on behalf of His Majesty



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the King-Emperor, the British Parliament, and the British people, made a historic announcement in the House of Commons on the 17th of August, 1917. I will now quote the most important portions of that Announcement. They are as follows :

(1) "The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. They have decided that substantial steps in this direction should be taken as soon as possible".

(2) "Progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages".

(3) "The British Government and the government of India, on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples, must be guided by the co-operation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility".

Now, these three portions which I have quoted from the Announcement must be explained to make their meaning and effect on the future of India quite clear.

The first part of the quotation guaranteed to the people of India *self-governing institutions by way of responsible government.*

The meaning of that is, that India is to have that form of self-government, which shall be responsible to and controlled by the people.

Self-government is not necessarily *responsible government.* If it is a Government of the people ruled by a despot



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or a particular caste or class belonging to the race and country of the people, it may be called *self-government* as distinguished from a *foreign* government. But it is not *responsible* government, so long as the ruling person or class is arbitrary and is not *responsible* to the people, that is to say, if he is not removeable from authority by the people in case he exercises power over them arbitrarily.

The Announcement quoted above guaranteed to the people of India that form of self-government which empowers them to control that Government and hold it responsible to them and them alone.

The second part of the Announcement, which I have quoted above, said that the full power of responsible government shall be granted step by step, not all at once. In Chapter II I have explained why that is so and should be so in the interests of the people themselves to make responsible government secure and not a failure.

Accordingly, to make each step taken to reach the goal of responsible government sound, safe, and successful, the British Government invites the co-operation and confidence of the people of India, on whose loyal, sober, steady efforts the success of it all will mainly depend.

Such was the Announcement made in Parliament. To devise measures to give effect to it, the Secretary of State for India came to this country from England in November 1917. The Viceroy and he visited different parts of India, interviewed, consulted, and held discussions with all representative associations and men of all races, religions, castes, and classes. Then they both submitted a Joint Report to the British Parliament, suggesting measures to give effect to the terms of the Announcement quoted above. A Committee appointed by Government went round India, took evidence and made



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proposals to form constituencies from among the people of India to exercise the power of responsible Government by electing members to the Legislative Councils. The Secretary of State introduced a Bill into the Parliament containing those measures to be passed into law. The Parliament appointed a Committee to report on the Bill. The Committee submitted its report, approving of the Bill on the whole, and suggesting some alterations which made it more liberal. The Committee recommended that in taking this first step of responsible Government care should be taken to give the power of election to *the people as such, i.e.*, not only to voters chosen from the educated classes and the higher castes or the landed aristocracy or merchants, but also to those chosen from the *ryots* in villages, the urban workmen, and other classes, who have hitherto been left without any power or voice in the Government of the country. The Committee recommended and the recommendation has been accepted, that "from the beginning the people must be given an opportunity, and all political wisdom points to its being a generous opportunity, of learning the actual business of Government and of showing by their conduct of it to some future Parliament that the time has come for further extensions of power." When the Committee speak of *the people*, they pointedly and specially mention the rural population, the urban wage-earning class, and the depressed classes. These recommendations are going to be the principal features of the Reforms. Their importance is that they open the first chapter of *democratic responsible Government* in India. They bring the first measure of political power, to the *ryot* and the *mazur*, the peasant and the labourer, and so set India on the path of and towards the people's Government, instead of a Government by a small section or class, however rich or powerful.



CHAPTER V.

REFORM IN LOCAL BODIES

On the lines of the recommendations of the Joint Parliamentary Committee referred to in the last chapter, the British Parliament passed a law in December 1919. The King-Emperor has given his assent to it.

I have already said in a previous chapter that that law guarantees in its preamble full *responsible* Government to the people of India. I have explained in that chapter what a solid benefit it is to the people to have their right to such Government recognised by law, instead of by mere promises, whether made by Government or by individual officials, however high, without the sanction of law.

I have explained also in previous chapters what responsible Government means. That explanation I will now make more clear.

Responsible Government means that the people control the Government of their country. How do they control? They control the Government by sending representatives elected by the people themselves to the Legislative Councils. Those representatives, pass laws and appoint officers to execute those laws. If the laws passed by the representatives of the people or if the officers appointed by those representatives are not liked by the people, then the people elect other representatives and send them to the Legislative Councils to make better laws and appoint better officers. So you see how under a responsible Government, the people formed into electoral bodies exercise power in the matter of making laws and of appointing officers to execute those laws so as to make the people happy and contented.

Till now the people of India have possessed no such



power. That power has hitherto been exercised by the British people through the British Parliament. To that Parliament the officers of the Government in India have been responsible. Everything has been done for the people by the British officials in India as a father does for his children.

Now what the Reform Act passed by Parliament and assented to by His Majesty the King-Emperor says in effect is this:—"The people of India are no longer children. They have grown in intelligence and in public spirit. They have learnt to act together for the good of their country. They are no longer dumb voiceless millions. Politically they have arrived at years of discretion just as a child grows to be a youth able to think and act for himself, and therefore, fit to govern himself so that by gradual stages of experience and power he may attain at last to full manhood".

So saying in effect, the Reform Act provides the first substantial step of responsible Government to the people of India.

How that first step is beneficial and substantial to the people of India you will see clearly, if you understand the leading changes or reforms made by the Act and contrast them with the mode of paternal Government which has prevailed in India till now.

Government, as I have told you, is a *Constitution* and Constitution is like the human body made of different organs rising from feet and legs up to the head or brain, which finally controls the body. So the constitution of the Government in India is made of different parts. These parts, ascending in the scale like the human body rising from feet to head, are as follows. First there is the Government of the villages, talukas, and districts. These are like the feet of the



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constitution in India. That village and district Government is controlled by the Provincial Government. The Provincial is controlled by the Central Government, called the Government of India. The Central Government is controlled by the Secretary of State for India and his Council. The Secretary of State for India in his turn is controlled by the British Parliament. The British Parliament is controlled by the electors among the British people.

From this description you will see that the British electors are the final governing authority in the Government of India. Now the Reform Act transfers the control of the British electors to Indian electors as the first substantial step. That step, as years pass, is to lead to full control by Indian electors over the Government of their own country.

How that is and how this first substantial step confers power on Indian electors representing the people of India I will explain by taking each of the different organs of the Government constitution mentioned above.

First I take the mode of administration of villages, *talukas* and *zillas* or districts, called local self-government.

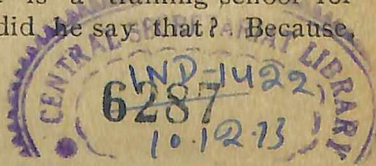
These have their local affairs, such as primary education, sanitation, the making of roads, conducted by municipalities and local boards, which are formed partly of representatives selected by electors from among the people and partly of those the rest nominated by Government. Under the Reforms, full responsible Government to those electors is assured. That is to say, there will be under the Reforms, as far as possible, complete control by the people of villages, *talukas* and *zillas* in the Government of their muni-



cipalities and local boards. There will be the largest possible independence for them from outside control. They will be hereafter their own masters as far as possible.

Do not think that this assurance of the largest possible independence in regard to the Government of their municipalities and local boards is trifling. Its importance will be obvious if you bear in mind certain considerations. *First*, villages make *talukas* and *talukas* make districts. So the villages in India are India's life-blood. The real India is village India. There are upwards of nine lakhs of villages in India. Only $\frac{1}{15}$ th of the people of India live in towns. The remainder live in villages. Villagers till the soil and give food to the country. They supply labourers and soldiers to India. It is the villages which have been the saving of India in the midst of wars and conquests and invasions. There is a proverb in India which defines Government as the rule by a *rai*, meaning King, for the good of his *ryots*, meaning agriculturists. That shows how the very idea of Government has been from ancient times that the village *ryot's* welfare should be the first care of Government. Hence the word *ryot* has come to be applied to all people as the subjects of Government. So, therefore, it is not a light thing but a very important matter that under these Reforms the *ryot* in villages, *talukas* and districts is made his own master, as far as possible, in the management of his local self-government.

Secondly, for a people to become quite fit to exercise power over the Provincial Government and over the Central Government, local self-government is the best and most efficient training ground. The late Mr. Gladstone has said that local government is a training school for imperial government. Why did he say that? Because,





“the forms and habits of the local government enable the country to find men who are fit to carry on the Government of the whole country.” Lord Ripon, than whom India has not had a more popular Viceroy, spoke of local government as an instrument of political and popular education. Local government has been the corner-stone in the British constitution, because “the people in their own neighbourhoods learn what self-government means as their own Councils and Boards make them happy or unhappy.” It is a substantial step, therefore, that the Reforms have taken to give to the people in villages, *talukas* and districts complete popular control, as far as possible, in their municipalities and local boards. That means that *full responsible government* is secured in this field of the administration.

Not only that but more. Hitherto the *ryot* in the villages and the *coolie* or wage-earning labourer in the *taluka* towns have been without any voice and power in the higher government of the country *i.e.*, the Provincial Government. Hereafter they will be qualified as electors, if they be *ryots* paying a certain amount or more of land revenue, or labourers earning a certain amount of yearly wages, for the purpose of exercising power over the Government of the whole of their Province, and not merely their village, *taluka*, or district. They will stand on the same level as electors with rich landholdings or Graduates of a certain standing of the Universities, or men paying a certain amount of rent as tenants of houses.



CHAPTER VI.

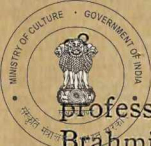
REFORMS IN PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURES.

Having explained in the last chapter the nature of the advance of responsible government provided to the people in local government, let us now go to the next higher organ of the Indian Constitution. That organ is the Provincial Government. That Government is made of two parts, one legislative, the other executive. The Legislative called the Legislative Council makes laws for the Province. The Executive carries on the administration of the Province according to those laws.

Let us first see how and to what extent responsible government is introduced into the Legislative Council.

At present that Council consists of three kinds of members, viz., (1) Government officials, (2) non-officials European and Indian, nominated by Government and (3) members nominated by Government on the recommendation of a few select bodies such as Chambers of Commerce, the Universities, landowners, Mahomedans, millowners, Associations, Municipalities and District Boards. This third class of members is the only class which can be said to consist of *elected* members. But it is election merely in name. It is really nomination by Government in the guise of election. The members who are chosen by the few select bodies in question are only recommended by them. Government may or may not accept the member recommended. It is for Government to nominate him or not. So you see that the present constitution of the Provincial Legislative Council is really official.

But now from next year under the Reform Act it will be no longer so. Seventy per cent of the members of that council will consist of representatives of the people elected by a large number of electorates. These electorates will include agricultural, labour, trading, mercantile,



professional and other interests. Besides that, Non-Brahmins in the Presidency of Madras, the Marathas in the Presidency of Bombay, and the Sikhs in the Punjab will each constitute a separate electorate, like the Mahomedans, for the purpose of electing a member to represent their respective interests in the Council.

By thus providing a clear and decided majority of members elected by popular constituencies of a wide character, including people of almost all castes, trades, professions and interests in the Provincial Legislative Council, the Reform Act changes it substantially into the people's Legislative Council from the *official* Legislative Council which it has been hitherto.

What will be the effect of that popular majority in the Legislative Council on the administration? How will it benefit the people? The effect will be great and that in this way. Laws hereafter will be passed affecting the interests of the people not as officials choose but as the representatives of the people in the Council choose. The representatives of the people will pass laws which the people who elected them consider good and beneficial to the country, or else their constituencies will not elect them again.

Further, hitherto the Governor of the Province has been the President of the Legislative Council. Hereafter under the Reform Act he will cease to be President. For the first four years after the Act comes into force, the Governor will appoint a person to preside over the Council. After those four years, the Council itself, like the British Parliament called the House of Commons, will appoint one of its own members as President, subject to the Governor's approval.

Why, you may ask, does the Act give the Governor the power of appointing the President of the Council?



Why has not the Act given at once from the beginning the power to the Council to elect its own President?

The reason is that it is not an easy task to preside, keep order, settle points of dispute, get members to observe the laws of debate and decorum in such a large assembly as the new Legislative Council will be from next year. Its President will have to be a man of great experience, coolness of head, presence of mind, prompt in deciding points of order, and checking irrelevant debates in the Council. Such a man will be available from among the members of the Council itself after those members have gained experience from work in the Council for the first four years after the Council's creation under the Act.

But, you may further ask, why has the Act provided that, even after those four years, the Council's election of one of its own members to be its President shall be subject to the Governor's approval?

The answer is obvious. In the last resort the Governor is responsible for the administration. He is the overseer as it were of the Council. He is, therefore, given that power for the present. But though the law gives him that power, we may be sure that he will as a rule approve the man whom the Council elects as its President. Experience derived from the past justifies that assurance. For instance, for the last 27 years, under the law relating to the Legislative Council, certain select bodies have been electing members to the Council, subject to the approval of the Governor and his Executive Council. The Governor and his Executive Council have as a rule approved the members elected by these bodies.

I have so far explained the important reforms introduced by the Act in the constitution of the Provincial Legislative Council and its power to make laws for the



good government of the Province.

Now, mark the vital and vast change made by the Act so as to give power to the Council over the *Executive* and the actual administration.

Hitherto the Provincial Legislative Council has been a merely *advisory* body. It has at present power only to advise Government. The Government is at liberty to accept that advice or not. But the Reform Act changes the Council to a *partial extent* from an *advisory* into a *dictating* body, in relation to the Executive Government.

How does the Act make that change? In this way. The Governor of the Province will appoint Ministers, not being members of his Executive Council or any other officials. To these Ministers will be given the power of administering certain subjects such as education, sanitation, and abkari. These are called *transferred subjects* as distinguished from other subjects of administration which are called *reserved subjects*. *Transferred subjects* are subjects transferred to the Ministers for administration. *Reserved subjects* are subjects reserved for administration by the Governor and his Executive Council. These Ministers will not hold office for a longer period than six months unless they are already or unless they become elected members of the Provincial Legislative Council during that period. That means the Governor's appointment of these Ministers shall have to be approved by the Council. As seventy per cent of the Council will consist of members elected by the people through the popular electorates, it is almost certain that the Council will approve only those persons appointed by the Governor as Ministers who are the people's friends and sympathisers. These Ministers will administer the subjects transferred to them. The Governor will be guided by their advice as to those subjects. If he does not accept their advice,



he may act as he thinks best. Then the Ministers may do one of two things. They may continue in office if they do not care to hold their own against the Governor's action. Or they may resign office if they are men of independent spirit. If they do the former, they will become unpopular with the Council which contains a large and decided majority of the people's elected representatives. Those representatives can in a variety of ways compel them to resign office instead of slavishly clinging to it after the Governor has refused to follow their advice. If they resign, the resignation will be tantamount to the removal of them from their *executive* office as Ministers by the people's elected representatives in the Council. That is the power and extent of responsible Government given to the people by the Reform Act.

That Act further provides that, if the said Ministers resign office, the Governor may under rules framed take steps for the *temporary* administration of the transferred subjects. That is to say, until new Ministers are again appointed by the Governor and approved by the Council.

So you see how these Ministers will obtain their office and hold it by the will of the elected representatives of the people in the Provincial Legislative Council and how they will be removeable from office by that will.

That shows the first step of responsible Government taken by the Act as to that Council and the Executive Government. That power of responsible government is given to the people by the Act only as to the *transferred* subjects for the present. But when the new Councils have gained experience and worked well, the extent of that responsible Government will be enlarged so as finally to give the full goal of the power of responsible Government to the people as to all the subjects of administration.



CHAPTER VII.

REFORMS IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCILS
OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS.

Then see how the Act enlarges the powers of the Legislative Council with reference to the Governor and his Executive Council. The most important function of Government is the way it collects revenue from taxes collected from the people and how it spends that revenue for the benefit of the tax-payers. The people from whom and for whose benefit the revenue is collected have at present no power to decide how the revenue shall be collected and spent by Government. Under a responsible Government there can be no taxation without representation. That is to say, the people through their elected representatives have in such a Government the right to control the revenue and expenditure. At present the members of the Provincial Legislative Council can only discuss the annual revenue and expenditure of the Provincial Government. The Council as a body has no power to vote upon them. But the Reform Act has changed that. It provides that the Council shall have power to assent or refuse its assent every year to the estimated annual expenditure and revenue of the Province. The Council is also authorised by the Act either to reduce the total amount of the revenue or expenditure or any particular item of it.

It is true that this power given to the Council is subjected by the Act to a restriction. The restriction is that the Governor of the Province is given power by the Act to refuse to carry out the decision of the Council. This restriction is in the nature of the power of veto which generally is given in such cases to the head of the Government in constitutionally governed countries.



The head of the Government, is the authority finally responsible for the administration. Therefore, the power is given as a safeguard against wrong decisions made by the Council. But the long experience of responsible government in other countries, especially in Great Britain shows that, although this power of veto continues as the law, yet in practice it is rarely exercised; when it is frequently exercised, it leads to difficulties; and so in either case in course of years it becomes practically obsolete, a dead letter. This power of Veto found in all self-governing councils of constitutional government is regarded as a safeguard necessary especially during their earlier years until those Councils have gained experience.

The last point I wish to refer to about the changes made in the Provincial Government by the Reform Act is also important.

Until 1910 that Government consisted of three officials, all British; *viz.* the Governor and two members of the Indian Civil Service. They constituted the Executive Council of the Governor. In 1910 only one Indian was added to that Council. At present, therefore, that Executive Council consists of three British officials and only one Indian official.

The Reform Act improves the Indian element in that Council. It provides that instead of two as heretofore, one member of the Executive Council shall be drawn from the Indian Civil Service. That leaves it open to Government to appoint Indians to the remaining number of seats on the Council.

This provision of the Act must be read with the recommendation made by the Joint Parliamentary Committee. Under the old law still in force, the number of members of the Executive Council shall not exceed four.



That law is not altered by the new Act. But the Joint Parliamentary Committee has recommended that the Executive Council should as a general rule consist (besides the Governor) of not more than two members, one of whom shall be a member of the Indian Civil Service. The Committee has further recommended that if in any case the Executive Council consists of four members two of whom are drawn from among officials, the remaining two members of the Council should be unofficial Indians. This recommendation, which has been accepted by the British Government, will, if carried out, strengthen and improve the Indian element in the Executive Council of the Provincial Government. That is a great gain to the Indian cause from the Reforms.

Here a question arises naturally.

True (you may say), the Reform Act gives the first step of responsible government in the Provincial Administration by entrusting to two Indian ministers certain subjects called *transferred subjects*. True also these Indian members will be members of the Council elected by the people as their representatives. True also that these Ministers' tenure of office and removal from office will be practically in the hands of the Legislative Council which will have a clear and decisive majority consisting of the people's elected representatives. All this is no doubt responsible self-government. But, while giving that benefit to the people with one hand, does not the Act take away that benefit, or at least, reduce its value by giving powers to the Governor to override both the Ministers and the Council?

In answering this question I will admit that the Act does give the Governor those powers.



REFORMS IN THE PROVINCIAL GOVTS. 35

But let us calmly and dispassionately consider why the Act has given those powers and whether those powers really reduce the benefit of responsible government so far as the Act has given it.

It is no new thing in the history of responsible government for the head of Government to possess such powers. Take the case of the history of responsible government in the United States of America. I cite that case because the Government of America has been regarded as the Government of the people, by the people for the people. It has been spoken of as the land of liberty, popular rights, and democracy. But what really happened when the Americans first drew up their Constitution of responsible government giving power to the people to govern themselves? It was so hedged round with restrictions on that power that in the words of the present President of the United States (Dr. Woodrow Wilson) it was "not by intention a democratic government". He says that "in plan and structure" it was meant to check the sweep of popular majorities". Washington, the first President [of the American Government and others who had a hand in drawing up the Constitution and getting it passed, were on that account described as conservatives and "old-world politicians". Even now the President's powers given by the law are autocratic in some respects.

What led the framers of the law of responsible government in America to give those autocratic powers to its President and restrict the independence of action and power of the people's elected representatives in the American Legislative Councils?

It was this.

Responsible Government of a people means a Government carried on by officials appointed by the people



and removable from office by the people through their elected representatives in the Legislative Councils. Now, a Government of the people carried on in that way by the people is subject to one peculiar danger. That danger is this. In the language of the framers of the American Constitution of responsible Government, history teaches us that "a dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people than under the forbidding appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of Government". A majority of the people may and often do combine and oppress minorities of the people. That is called the tyranny of majorities over minorities. It has, therefore, become proverbial to say that popular governments commence demagogues and end tyrants. Against such tyranny the law gives power to the head of the Government to protect the interest of minorities. The test of a free country is the amount of security enjoyed by minorities against the tyranny of majorities. That is one reason for the power.

A second reason is that experience derived from the history of government of the people, called *popular government*, has proved that at some period or other that Government has shown itself "restlessly busy and meddlesome". That is why the Constitution of Canada began without responsible government.

Therefore, we should not belittle the power of responsible government given to the people of Provinces because that power is restricted by powers given to the Governor. The Governor will use those powers either wisely or unwisely. He will use it wisely, if he uses it rarely, not frequently, and if he uses it with due regard to the wishes of the people expressed through the generally recognised channels of public opinion. If,



on the other hand, the Governor use the powers frequently, disregarding the people's wishes, he will not only run the risk of unpopularity but the Council itself through wise use of the powers it has can make the task of Government unbearable to him. A Governor will think twice before crossing swords with the Council except where it is a clear case of justice on his side, and public opinion outside the Council supports him.

CHAPTER VIII.

REFORMS IN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

After the Provincial Governments the next higher power of the Indian administration is the Central Government, called the Government of India.

That Government is called *Central* because it is the centre round which all the Provincial Governments move. It controls the Provincial Governments.

The first point to notice is that the changes made by the Reform Act in the constitution of the Central Government do not contain any measure of responsible Government.

This is because the British Parliament has thought that such Government should advance gradually and by steps, not all at once. That was the announcement made in the Parliament by the Secretary of State for India on the 17th of August, 1917. Accordingly, Parliament decided that responsible Government should begin at present as the first substantial step in the Provincial Governments. With the experience gained by years it is to advance further. So ultimately it will become complete in the whole sphere of the Indian administration.

For the purpose of that advance the Reform Act provides for the appointment by His Majesty the King-



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Emperor of a Commission at the end of ten years after the passing of the Act *i.e.*, at the end of the year 1929. That Commission will examine the working and effect of the present Act. It will then report to His Majesty on the question of extending or modifying the measure of responsible Government granted under the present Reform Act.

Though no responsible Government is conceded to India by the Act, so far as the Central Government is concerned, yet the Act has made substantial changes in the constitution of that Government. Those substantial changes are improvements on the present constitution of that Government.

Those changes and improvements I will now mention.

The Central Government of India consists of two branches. One branch is called the Executive Department of the Government of India. The other is called its Legislative Department.

First let me take the Executive Department.

At present it consists of the Executive Council of the Governor-General and Viceroy of India. That Council contains six members (excluding the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army), of whom only one is Indian.

The Reforms will begin from next year with no less than three Indians as members of that Executive Council. So far it is a gain to India.

The Parliamentary Committee, which has made that recommendation says that as time goes on the Executive Council is more and more likely to be of Indian rather than of European extraction.

Further, till now the law passed years ago by Parliament required that the Legal Member of that Executive Council must be a lawyer who has qualified himself as a



Barrister-at-Law in England. That restriction made by law disabled even the ablest of Indian lawyers who have not been to England from attaining to that office. The Reform Act removes that bar. It will be open hereafter for a Pleader of a High Court in India to become the Legal Member of the Executive Council of the Central Government.

So much for the Executive Department of that Government.

Now as to its Legislative Department.

At present the Legislative Council of the Governor-General consists of sixty-eight members, of whom officials form a majority. The minority of non-official members is made partly of members nominated by the Government and partly of members nominated by the Government on the recommendation of a few select bodies, such as certain landholders, Mahomedans, merchants, manufacturers and the non-official members of the Provincial Legislative Councils.

But under the Reform Act the legislative function of the Central Government will be discharged by two Chambers. That is to say, laws for the whole of British India shall be considered passed when agreed to by both chambers. One of these chambers will be called the Council of State and the other the Legislative Assembly. Both form, as it were, the Indian Parliament. At this beginning stage they do not yet contain some essential features of the two British Houses of Parliament. But they start with provisions which, in course of years, may be expected to grow into a system of Government like the two British Houses of Parliament. The Council of State is the Upper House like the British House of Lords. The Legislative Assembly is like the British House of Commons. Here we have got for the present



the nucleus of Parliamentary Government for India.

The Legislative Assembly will consist of 140 members nominated or elected according to rules to be framed for the purposes of nomination or election. The number of elected members will be 100. Their election will be direct. That is to say, they will be elected directly by primary voters, not as heretofore in the present Legislative Council by representatives chosen by those voters to elect members for them. The Act says that the number 140 may be increased. But the Act also provides that in case of such increase, at least five-sevenths of the total number of members shall be *elected* members, and that at least one-third of the total number of the nominated members shall be non-officials.

That means that from the start the Legislative Assembly shall have a clear non-official majority, and a majority of elected members in the proportion of 5 to 2.

So under the Act this Assembly gets rid of the official majorities which have till now prevailed in the Legislative Council of the Government of India.

The Act also provides that the Governor-General and Viceroy shall not preside at the meetings of this Assembly. The President will be a person appointed by him for the first four years. After that the Assembly will elect its own President, subject to approval by the Governor-General.

The Council of State will consist of not more than 60 members, elected or nominated according to rules to be made in that behalf. Not more than 20 of those 60 members shall be officials. In this Upper Chamber, which *in status* resembles the British House of Lords, there will thus be a non-official, though not an elected, majority. One good feature of it which gives it an advantage over the British House of Lords deserves particular notice. The members of the House of Lords



are all Peers created by the King on the recommendation of the Prime Minister who carries on the Government at the time of such creation. So they are virtually members nominated by the British Government. In any case, they are never elected. In fact, there is no election at all in the case of the Upper Chamber called the House of Lords in England. Here in India, under the Reform Act, we start with an *elected* element in it. That in itself is a good beginning. The British House of Lords is as concerns the greater part of its members a hereditary Chamber. Everyone who has become a Lord because his father or other ancestor was a Lord is entitled to sit in it as a member. Here in India we begin with an Upper Chamber, which rejects the idea of hereditary right. No one can become its member unless he is either nominated by Government or elected by a popular constituency. What is more, the *elected* members of the Council of State will be elected, as in the case of the Legislative Assembly, by *direct* election by the primary voters, not for them by others.

In the case of this Upper Chamber (called the Council of State) the Reform Act provides that the Governor-General and Viceroy shall not preside at its deliberations. In its case he has power to appoint its President from among the members of the Council of State.

Both these Chambers are given by the Reform Act the right to discuss the annual Financial Statement or Budget of the Central Government. The Legislative Assembly is given the additional and more important right to vote upon the Budget and to assent or to refuse its assent to any item of demand for expenditure made by Government in it. That is a new right not possessed at present or up to now by the Legislative Council of the



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Government of India. That makes the Legislative Assembly resemble the British House of Commons, which alone holds the purse of the British Exchequer in its hands. Certain items of the Indian Budget are no doubt excepted by the Reform Act from that right of vote given to the Legislative Assembly. They are also kept out of the right of discussion of the Budget given by the Act to both the Chambers. But those items so excepted are of such a character that the interference of either Chamber with them at the present stage of the Indian administration would be either useless or injurious. But the items of the Budget which do come within the right of vote of the Legislative Assembly are all such as materially affect the interests and daily lives of the people of India. That makes the right of vote on the Budget given for the first time to the Indian Legislature extremely valuable.

As in the case of the Governor of a Province, so also in the case of the Governor-General of India, the Reform Act gives him powers such as the power of veto and action in cases where he considers the vote of the two Chambers injurious to the administration and country. Those powers rest on the same considerations of caution which I have stated at the end of the last chapter. The same considerations apply to the powers given to the Governor-General also with reference to his relation to his two Legislative Chambers.

CHAPTER IX.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA AND HIS COUNCIL.

After the Central Government, higher in the scale of administration and controlling it, comes the Secretary of State for India. He is responsible to Parliament which



through him controls the Government of India. He is drawn from the party which for the time being is in power and forms His Majesty's Government.

The Secretary of State is assisted by a Council called the India Council. He has an office in London called the India Office. The pay of the Secretary of State, the pay of his Councillors, and all the costs of his India Office have been hitherto paid out of the revenues of India. That has been considered by Indian leaders as unjust. The National Congress has complained of its unfairness since it came into existence in 1885. It has been complained of as unfair because a similar officer called the Secretary of State for Colonies, who represents the Colonies of England in the British Parliament just as the Secretary of State for India represents India in it, is not paid his salary and the charges of his office out of the revenues of the Colonies.

The Reform Act has removed this. Hereafter the pay of the Secretary of State for India (£5000 a year), the salaries of his Under Secretaries and other expenses of his department will not be borne by the people of India. They will be paid out of the British treasury.

This means a large annual saving to India.

Further, until 1908 there was not a single Indian on the Council of the Secretary of State. All the members were British officers or others who had retired from India. In 1908 two Indians, one Hindu and one Mahomudan were appointed. In 1917 three Indians were appointed members of that Council.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee has recommended the introduction of more Indians into the Council. That recommendation is to be given effect to. India will hereafter have more than three of her own people to



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advise the Secretary of State on Indian affairs. What is more, the Indians so appointed will not only be paid the salary of their office as members of the Council of the Secretary of State for India but also and in addition an annual allowance of six hundred pounds to provide for their cost of living in London far away from their country.

Again, where the Legislative Councils and the Government of India agree in any matter of purely Indian interest, the Secretary of State will not interfere and use his power of Control. He will intervene only where those Councils and that Government differ.

The value of this reform will be best understood if we look to the experience hitherto. The Secretary of State has often interfered to the prejudice of Indian interests and against the protests of the Government of India, backed up by strong and united Indian public opinion. For instance, in the matter of cotton duties, the question of fiscal autonomy, and the charges of certain wars unjustly thrown on India, the Secretary of State has in the past acted contrary to India's wishes and the Government of India's repeated remonstrances. Such action once led a Viceroy of India (Lord Northbrook) to resign his office, rather than suffer the wrong done to India.

Under the Reforms, the chances of such injustice will be more or less remote. The Act not only relaxes in that respect the control of the Secretary of State but the Joint Parliamentary Committee, which got that Act passed, has recommended that India should be left free to make laws regulating her fiscal arrangements. The following remarks of that Committee open a new and brighter chapter in the history of India as an integral part of the British Empire:—



“Nothing is more likely to endanger the good relations between India and Great Britain than a belief that India's fiscal policy is dictated from Whitehall in the interests of the trade of Great Britain. That such a belief exists at the moment there can be no doubt. That there ought to be no room for it in the future is equally clear. India's position in the Imperial Conference opened the door to negotiation between India and the rest of the Empire, but negotiation without power to legislate is likely to remain ineffective. A satisfactory solution of the question can only be guaranteed by the grant of liberty to the Government of India to devise those tariff arrangements which seem best fitted to India's needs as an integral portion of the British Empire. . . . It is quite clear that she should have the same liberty to consider her interests as Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa”.

This is a liberty of value, and, rightly used by India, it will benefit her industries and her people considerably.

I have said above that the Secretary of State for India is responsible to the British Parliament for the control which he exercises on the Parliament's behalf over the Indian administration. So the final controller of the Indian administration is the British Parliament.

Therefore, let us see now what change by way of benefit to India the Reform Act has made with reference to the power of Parliament as the final arbiter of India's Government, according to the Indian Constitution.

It has been a long-standing complaint that, though the British Parliament is the paramount authority over Indian administration, it has more or less neglected India and rarely interfered to assert its authority to redress



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India's wrongs. It has become proverbial to say that Indian debates in Parliament have been before "empty benches". That is natural. The British Parliament has its own local affairs (of Great Britain and Ireland) to attend to. Most of its members have never been in India. India is so far away for them that it is but human nature that they should feel little interest in Indian affairs unless some grave crisis like a war or other great sensation takes place to draw their attention and disturb their minds.

Though that has been so, yet it must be admitted that, speaking generally, India owes such liberties as she enjoys to the British Parliament reflecting the genius of freedom of the British people, their inbred sense of fair play and justice. It is said that though India has been under British rule for over 150 years, yet it is only now that the Parliament has thought of granting responsible Government to India and that too to a limited extent. But just consider how many centuries the British Parliament has taken to make the right of responsible government in the case of its own people—the British—real, substantial, and wide so as to extend it to the rural population and labour classes. The fact is that the British Parliament and the British people have alone among the nations of the world, ancient or modern, developed the spirit of true liberty and real responsible government. In developing it in their own country they have moved by gradual, cautious stages, remembering that sudden changes defeat their own purpose. Therefore, Great Britain has in history become "the Mother of Parliaments". That is to say, other nations have copied her Parliamentary institutions. We complain in India that the British Government has passed laws restricting liberty. The



complaint is just; but, on the other hand, we should remember that whenever there has been a going back on the part of that Government, the backward step has been followed by a forward step, making for India's advance to the goal of self-governing, Parliamentary institutions. While we criticise severely what we consider to be lapses on the part of the British Government in its administration of India, let us not forget the lines of the main current of that Government. Nay, it is the lines, the tendency of the main current, which lead to the goal. Just look at our Mother-River, the sacred Ganges. Her flow is zig-zag. If you thought only of that zig-zag course you would think that Mother Ganges was lapsing from the straight policy of her main current to reach her goal—the great Ocean. But while the tortuous course seeming like a lapse from the straight course in the direction of the goal, makes mother Ganges look a defaulter, a reactionary river, the forces of her main current are all the same slowly and steadily moving towards the Ocean. We do not see them so clearly as the forces of the zig-zag current, because the straight current works unseen quietly as the lasting life and genius of the river. Such is exactly the current of the river of the British Parliament and Constitution. As Herbert Spencer said, when things seem to go wrong with it, you may be sure they prove the birth of reform, progress and people's rights. Study the constitutional history of India of the last 150 years, not with the eye of a party politician, but a sober, careful judge. That is the proper way to study the political constitution of India as it has grown from the time of the East India Company to now. The main current of the growth has been towards responsible government. Our very agitations have been due to the forces of that current created by British influences. So



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now by the Reform Act the British Parliament relaxes its control on India, and takes the first step of direct Parliamentary government for and in this country itself.

In short, the British Parliament has said to India :—
“Begin from now with a Parliament of your own which as years pass will be like myself.”

CHAPTER X.

HIS MAJESTY THE KING-EMPEROR.

As sovereign of the British Empire, stands His Majesty the King-Emperor, George the Fifth. He has put his Royal Seal of assent to the Reform Act passed by the British Parliament. My treatment of the benefit of that Act to India would be incomplete if I did not before closing, tell the reader how much we, the people of India, owe to His Majesty in point of progressive Government.

All parties, all classes, all races, all shades of political opinion in India, however harshly and even violently critical of the Government in this country, hold His Majesty in loyal reverence and pay homage to his person as their Sovereign. When in 1918, by appointment by the Government of Bengal I enquired with the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Beachcroft of the Calcutta High Court, into the cases of 806 persons interned as anarchists under the Defence of India Act, I had occasion to meet officially one of those anarchists in Jail. He had before internment been one of the most violent leaders of the anarchist party. I asked him how it was that though, both before and after



His Majesty's visit to India for the Coronation Durbar in 1911, the anarchists committed dacoities, murdered policemen, and disturbed the Province of Bengal, yet so long as His Majesty was in India anarchists were quiet and gave no trouble. The anarchist to whom I asked that question replied : " When the King came to India, anarchist leaders gave orders to their followers that so long as His Majesty was in India, there should be no anarchism. And the orders were faithfully carried out."

That shows how deep, abiding and sacred is the sentiment of loyalty to His Majesty as Sovereign among all classes in India.

What is it due to ?

It is due to the fact that since Queen Victoria's reign British monarchy has touched the heart of India by its affection and sympathy for India's people. Queen Victoria's Proclamation couched in the royal words of her motherly heart has become sacred to their people as their charter of liberties. Her son, as Edward Prince of Wales, visited India in 1875 and won golden opinions. When he succeeded Queen-Empress Victoria as King-Emperor, his reign became the reign of King Edward the Peace Maker. He sent his son the Prince of Wales, who is now King George the Fifth, to India in 1905 and the Prince attracted all hearts in this country by his message of " Sympathy " to the people of India. When the Prince became King in 1910 and visited India for the Coronation Durbar in 1911, His Majesty as King-Emperor George the Fifth, moved amongst the masses, and dispensing with Police guards, the masses felt drawn to him by a fresh bond of attachment. His Majesty before returning to England gave to the people of India his Royal Message of " Hope."

And now by the Proclamation issued to the Princes



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and people of India in December last His Majesty has given his fresh inspiring message of "co-operation, confidence and fellowship" to the people of this country for the new era of Reform under the Reform Act to which he has given his Royal assent.

Great Britain's is a limited monarchy. That is to say, the King's power is not absolute as that of a despotic King or Emperor, but it is limited by the Constitution. He is bound by the laws of the Constitution though personally, being King, he is not subject to those laws.

That leads people to think that the British King is sovereign in name and not in reality, and that his Kingship serves merely as the visible symbol of the British Empire. In other words, one is apt to suppose that the doctrine of "the Divine Right of Kings" does not apply to British monarchy.

That is an erroneous notion. The doctrine in question, traced to its origin, and understood in its true sense, does not apply to an absolute monarch whose arbitrary will is law for his subjects. It applies only to a constitutional monarch such as that of the British Empire. A constitutional King is a limited monarch.

Let me explain how that is. When we speak of "the Divine Right of Kings" we mean that a King is the representative of God on earth, having the same right of rule over his subjects that God has over men. In short, a King has the same power over his subjects that God has. How does God exercise His power over men? Not arbitrarily but by certain fixed laws which He has made. These laws of God we call the laws of nature, the laws of health, the laws of morality and justice. God, though all powerful, has limited His right to rule men by those laws for the good of men. An all-powerful God, ruling men as he likes arbitrarily, would be a despot, a



tyrant. But God is not a tyrant. He rules by laws and serves by love. Therefore He has limited His power over men by the constitution of law and the service of love. God's rule on that account is limited divine monarchy.

Further, both according to the Christian and the Hindu religion, God became *man* to show by his own example to men how to live and save themselves by obeying and observing Divine laws. That is the meaning of the doctrine of incarnation whether in the Christian or the Hindu religion. God became *man*, He mixed with men. He laboured for their good, He suffered sorrows for their sake, He became "The King of Kings" by becoming the servant of servants. He showed by His human life that to serve is to reign. Service is Sovereignty. In that way God, by becoming man and imposing on himself the *limitation* of man, showed how the human can be divine." That is to say, He showed that God rules men not only by limiting Himself by his laws but also by human sympathy.

So "the Divine Right of Kings" means the right of a King limited, like the right of God by laws and humanised by sympathy, and love for and service to his subjects.

It was in this sense that the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings was applied to Kings on earth by the earliest Christian divines and the ancient Hindu religious books. But in process of time despotic Kings, ruling their subjects as they willed arbitrarily and not by law and by a settled constitution of Government, perverted that doctrine for their own selfish purposes. We see now how through that perversion, the Kingship in many countries in Europe has been torn up by the roots. But British Kingship has endured. It has not only endured



but it has grown in popularity with the growth of popular, that is democratic government. That is because the King has become one of his people.

It is the glory of the British Constitution that it has restored to the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings its original and true meaning. British history has become famous as the history of Liberty. Other nations have taken it for their model. It has also made Great Britain the mother of Parliaments. But equally shines British history for its model of limited monarchy exercising the Divine Right of Kings. Our King-Emperor, George the Fifth, limited by the constitution, ruling by law, has won sovereign power over his subjects by his wide spirit of commonalty. He moves among his people; he visits slums and cottages; he spares not himself in labour for and service to them. In short, the sovereign rules by service and has become the first servant of his people. And his eldest son, the Prince of Wales, who is to visit India very shortly to inaugurate the Reforms, has been following His Majesty's *human* and therefore *divine* example. It is an example of "sympathy," "hope," "co-operation," "confidence" and "fellowship" which His Majesty has set to the people of India in his gracious message. Those words point to our duty as to the Reforms. How they point will form the subject of my next and last chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

DUTIES OF ELECTORS.

The various reforms which the new Act will introduce into the system of administration in India from next year for "the progressive realisation of responsible Government" may be summed up as follows :—



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(1) Complete responsible Government in local boards and Municipalities ; (2) partial responsible Government in Provincial administration ; and (3) better representation of the people in the Central Government and more power of criticism of that Government by the representatives of the people than is possessed now.

Upon the careful and efficient exercise of these new rights by the people and their elected representatives in the administration will depend the people's own welfare and the acquisition by them of more rights of responsible Government.

Let us consider what is required of the people who will be electors and get votes to make these Reforms successful. The conditions of that success are :—

(1). Every one who gets a vote to elect a member to the new Councils must regard that vote as given to him not for his own selfish interest or the benefit of his caste or sect. He must treat it as power given to him for the good of the whole country. His vote is a trust ; it is a power given to him to make Government beneficial to the people—the ryots as they are called.

(2). So treating it, he must take particular care to use his vote, never waste it by indifference to it. He must not say when there is an election: "What is the use of my taking all the trouble to leave my home and my business? Why should I go all the way to the polling booth simply to give my vote? What good can it do to me?" If he says so and refrains from voting he betrays his trust. He breaks faith with his country. He becomes responsible if Government goes wrong and if the people are not contented and happy.

(3). Though the particular candidate, for whom an elector wishes to vote has no chance of success at the election, the elector should not refrain from voting for



that candidate. The exercise of the vote keeps the voter's interest in public affairs active. It makes him intelligent. It renders him useful to his country for its good. He must follow the example of a great Englishman, Henry Sidgwick. That gentleman once happened to be away from England in Switzerland for the benefit of his health. When a general election was announced in the former country, he made up his mind to return England at once to give his vote to the candidate of his choice. His friends in England wrote to him that the candidate's chances of election were few. They also informed him that the political party to which he belonged was sure to be defeated at the election. Nevertheless Mr. Sidgwick, leaving all considerations of his own interest aside, travelled back to England and recorded his vote. When his friends asked him why he had taken all that trouble for nothing, when his vote had not helped either his candidate or his party, he replied that his vote was a sacred duty which he owed to his country for the public good and that, therefore, he was bound to perform that duty, whatever the result.

(4). Every elector, whoever and whatever he be, should not only record his vote at every election but he should also take care to vote for a proper candidate. What is a proper candidate? At every election several candidates come forward and ask for votes. It becomes a difficult task for an elector to choose between them. Candidates for election to win votes and succeed are likely to confuse the elector, especially if the elector be a poor man or a man not well acquainted with the intricacies of Government. The candidate may try to secure the elector's support by bribing him with money or by other favour. If the elector be a man who does not care for bribes, a candidate, to gain his



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and may flatter the elector and make all sorts of promises as to how he will discharge his duty in the Council, if elected. He may pose as a man of independence; he may promise to lighten the burden of the taxation on the people. He may assure the elector that, if elected, he will bring Government officials on their knees. An elector should be as careful about candidates who try to win the support of electors by such talk as they should be about candidates who are flatterers of officials in power and, therefore, self-seekers. Every elector should, therefore, take care to give his vote to that candidate only who is *a man of character*. That is to say, "refuse the counsellors who flatter and bribe, whose words are always pleasant and therefore cannot always be true. Choose those who bring their intelligence and their judgment as well as their sympathy to the national service; who insist on being, as long as their service is permitted, not the pledged delegates of a party or a class, but the free and trusted representatives of the people. In England, in France, in Russia, Kings who put courtiers in the place of statesmen went the way of destruction. If the people do the same, they will suffer the same fate." Let the electors make this counsel of the *London Times* their political guide.

(5). Every elector should remember that government, like everything in life, is the result of compromise. Government means governing a people by a harmony of the conflicting interests of the various castes, sects, trades and professions into which the people are divided. Those conflicting interests can be reconciled for the good of all the people only by a policy of sane compromise. "All wise political practice"—says an English writer who is a democrat in politics—"involves compromise and a simultaneous allegiance to opposite



principles, each within the limits of its application to the facts and needs of human nature ”.

(6). Therefore when the electors have selected a candidate and have sent him as their representative to the Council, they should watch how he does his duty there. Is he given merely to criticising Government or is his criticism also constructive? Is his criticism made merely for criticism's sake without a careful study of facts and a real insight into the people's condition and wants? Does he indulge in vague talk and abuse of officials or his opponents or does he advocate the people's cause by sober, definite, and intelligent criticism and proposals? Does he oppose Government merely to catch popular applause to show to the people that he is their advocate or does he oppose it by sound, sure reasoning and sure facts?

(7). The great advantage of the Reform Act is that it brings the people of India as electors into power over the Government of their own country. The Act, in fact, is an Act introducing the first substantial step or stage of what is called *popular government*. It is *popular government* because the *people* as such are given the power to elect their own representatives to govern them. By the people are meant not merely the rich landlords, the big merchants, the educated classes, or high caste Brahmins; but also the village *ryots*, the town labourers, and the depressed classes, hitherto neglected and left out of account both socially and politically in India. That is the real good of this Act. It gives power as electors to men belonging to the classes of people held as socially and politically inferior, ignorant, and not worth importance. Therefore, the Act is an Act of the people's Government. Let the people—the classes regarded hitherto as inferior—be vigilant to use their power of vote wisely. Let them



not blindly give away their votes to candidates without character, and men who talk big, flatter the passions and prejudices of the electors, and hanker for popularity for popularity's sake. Popular government failed in ancient Greece and in ancient Rome and gave place to the despotic rule of tyrants, because the people to whom the power of vote was given, elected as their representatives to carry on the government men who sought popularity and flattered the people merely to gain power to enslave the people, and became tyrants themselves. Let not that history be repeated in India. It is a worthy ambition for a candidate seeking the electors' vote to stand up for the people to support their cause, to plead for their rights, liberties and interests. Such a man deserves popularity and such a man becomes rightly the peoples' man, only if he is a real and honest friend of the people and is not afraid to tell them frankly when he sincerely thinks they are wrong. He must be a truthful man, who has the courage of his own sincere convictions, and does not conceal them or barter them away merely to please and so get the electors' vote, and by that deceitful means secure the power of office. Let the electors in India take a lesson from the following example. Nearly 60 years ago John Stuart Mill came forward as a candidate for the British Parliament. He was a friend of the poorer classes of people in England. He had by his writings and speeches advocated their cause, especially the cause of the workmen or labourers. He was, however, a truthful man, who never flattered anybody to get a vote. He plainly told the working classes, whose interests he befriended, what their faults were. He publicly told them that they were given to lying. That irritated the working classes. So when he sought their votes at a public meeting, the indignant workmen



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present asked him whether he had said they were given to lying and if so, why he asked for their votes. Mill was not afraid to tell them what he felt to be the truth. He courageously replied that he had said that the workmen were given to lying, that he even then thought so, and that he would not flatter them to get their votes but would tell them when they were wrong, because he was their true friend, not their eye-pleaser. That frank and honest reply was so respected by the workmen that they voted for him and elected him as their representative in the British Parliament. It is a valuable saying that "no one can really govern who cannot afford to be unpopular". Here is a lesson with a warning to Indian electors who wish for the success of these Reforms and the speedy attainment of full responsible Government.

END

