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THIS FREEDOM

This issue of the Journal represents an unique period in the history of India. After a long period of trials and tribulations, India now enters a new epoch in her history. The devotion, courage, discipline and sacrifice of the people of India make such an end inevitable and now India enters as a free member among the free nations of the world. She will now be able to shake off many of her shackles and burdens which prevented her growth of self-development. Attainment of Independence is a great achievement for which the heart of every Indian has been filled with joy. At long last every Indian can think, speak, write and work like a free man.

In these days of joy and celebrations let us not forget that this freedom brings with it the great responsibility to every one of us. Freedom has got to be maintained and defended. Health is wealth to an individual as well as a nation. On the medical profession in India falls the difficult task of maintaining the health of the people. We have commented on the health conditions of India on many occasions in these columns. Let us repeat the same on this solemn occasion the legacy which the people of India will inherit after 200 years of alien rule. The total deaths amongst children under 10 years, as a percentage of total deaths at all ages was 48.4 in 1937, about 200,000 women die every year from diseases and conditions associated with pregnancy and child bearing. The average number of deaths during 1932-41 from cholera was 144,924, from small pox 69,477, from plague 30,932—all preventable diseases. There are about 2.5 million tuberculosis patients in an infective stage in the country and there is only a total of 6,000 beds to provide facilities for their isolation. The number of doctors

with sufficient experiences of tuberculosis work to qualify them for posts in tuberculosis institutions does not exceed 70 or 80. At least 100 million people suffer from malaria every year and at least 2 million die each year either directly or indirectly as a result of this disease. The number of hospital beds available available for the treatment of general and special diseases is about 73,000 or about 0.24 bed per 1,000 population as against 7.14 in England and Wales and 10.48 in the U. S. A. In the Indian Union there are approximately 47,500 doctors, *i.e.*, one doctor to 6,500 people compared with one doctor to 1,000 people in the United Kingdom. The number of nurses, health visitors, midwives and qualified dentists average about 7,000, 750, 5,000, 1,000 respectively, a ratio of 1 nurse to 43,000 people, 1 health visitor to 400,000 people, 1 midwife to 60,000 people and 1 dentist to 300,000 people. The death rate for the general population in 1937 was 22.4 per 1,000 inhabitants and for infants under one year 162 per 1,000 livebirths. The average diet is ill-balanced, lacking in calories, salts, vitamins and protein. Famine and pre-famine conditions are general. The simplest prerequisite of healthy living such as adequate nutrition, good housing, sanitary surroundings and safe drinking water are lacking in vast tracts of our country and only available to a privileged few living in the large cities.

The responsibility rested on other shoulders before but now the responsibility will be ours. So it is up to the medical profession and the Indian Medical Association to face the situation with courage and enter into a grim struggle to improve the public health of India in the shortest time. The Indian Medical Association is destined to play a great part in the future. We shall have to devote more time to constructive activities with zeal and enthusiasm. At this national emergency laziness is a social crime. We offer our co-operation to the new government in this uphill task.

The task is difficult—so is every noble work in this world. With the co-operation and good will of other free people of the world, we hope to come out successful in this arduous duty. 400 million people are determined to march forward and nothing will stop it.

JOURNAL OF THE INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, 1947, VOL 17, P-218

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

By

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JOURNAL
I. M. A.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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the end came in a natural way others were brutally murdered during the riots that have been prevalent for a considerable period and have tarnished the fair name of our motherland with her ancient civilisation and spiritual cult in the eyes of the world. Our heart-felt sympathies go out to the members of the bereaved families. We genuinely sympathise with those also who have sustained other kinds of losses and material damage and have been rendered homeless as the result of these sanguinary riots and disturbances. To help them in their resettlement and rehabilitation should be our prime duty which should be performed as speedily and generously as possible. The Association has already taken a small step in this direction but a lot remains to be done. Some of the ways of doing the needful are to try to get them suitable accommodation at suitable places to live and work in, to welcome them and to make them feel at home in such places and to find opportunities for their employment by the various Governments, Central and Provincial, Municipalities, District and Local Boards etc., etc. Narrow provincialism which unfortunately has been raising its sinister head for some time, should not be allowed to hamper us in the performance of this noble task. The claims of suffering humanity over-ride all other issues. Abnormal ailments need abnormal remedies. Even the plea of congestion and overcrowding should not be heeded to for wheresoever the carcass is there shall the vultures be gathered together. These medical men and women who have been uprooted and dislodged from their hearths and homes stuck to their posts to the last, as advised by their leaders, and as guided by their sense of duty, until such time as they were forced by the prevailing circumstances to run for their lives leaving all their belongings, including professional equipment, behind. They, you will agree with me, deserve the fullest support of the Association, the profession, the society and the State.

POLITICAL SITUATION

Ours is a professional organisation. It permits talks and discussions on purely scientific and medico-political subjects. It is not, and it should not be, a forum for general politics, but I can not help making a brief reference to the existing political situation in the country which is of unprecedented nature. For more than 60 years our national organisations fought for independence. The cherished and declared goal was *Purana Swaraja and Akhand Hindustan*. It was something worth fighting for and achieving. People went through untold sufferings and made incalculable sacrifices. But what has been the achievement in the year of grace 1947, which has been the most fateful year, not only in the history of India but in that of the world? Is this *Purana Swaraja* that we have achieved, and is this *Akhand Hindustan* for which so many battles were fought and sacrifices made? *Hindustan* meant the sub-continent from Hindu Kush down to Cape Comorin. "Hindu" bore relation to "Sindhu" (Indus). Now where is Hindu Kush and where is Sindhu? And where is united Bengal and where is the Punjab, the land of the five rivers?

Driven almost down to Beas is it not the last ditch for us from where, if we do not consolidate ourselves firmly enough, we will be thrown beyond Cape Comorin by the next push? These are some of the questions, and pertinent questions, that come to my mind and to the minds of millions of others. It is not for me to try to answer all or any one of them or to question the wisdom of agreeing to division of the country. This is not the occasion for that. I have only mentioned them as thought provokers.

One of our leaders has said "that to accept division was like agreeing to have a diseased limb amputated so that the rest of the body might live." But was not that limb already known to be badly diseased when "no partition at any cost" was proclaimed to be the most fundamental point? Another leader has said that partition was agreed to avoid bloodshed. But has it done that? Has it not led to bloodshed, the nature and magnitude of which are unknown in the annals of the world? Murder, assassination, loot, plunder, house-breaking, arson, butchery, bestiality, savagery, carnage, rape, abduction, forcible conversion, unlawful ejection of owners from their houses and their occupation at the point of the goonda's knife and many other evil deeds for which there are no descriptive terms have been the order of the day for months and months together in the Punjab and N. W. F. P., and in Baluchistan and Sind as well, though may be somewhat on a smaller scale. East Bengal too has not escaped; it was the first to suffer and terribly. Imagination is boundless but even the wildest flights of imagination cannot scan the atrocious nature and magnitude of what has happened. "Things seen are mightier than things heard" (Tennyson). Only those who have seen them can have some idea of them. It would need volumes to describe them and it is not my intention to make even the briefest attempt at that. But may I quote one of the mildest authenticated instances as an illustration: "Passengers by the—Express who arrived in—on—had had experiences which they will never forget and of which they were with difficulty persuaded to speak. After the train had left—a small body of passengers, armed with axes and knives, repeatedly stopped it by pulling the communication-cord and visited each compartment in turn, ferreting out those of another community and ruthlessly butchering them. Sometimes these crimes were committed while the train was moving, sometimes in the presence of parties who rushed towards the line from the countryside whenever a stop was made. Some passengers attempted to save themselves by crawling under the carriages, but these were pulled out and killed. Two leapt from the train and started across the fields. The train was stopped, chase given and the fugitives dispatched. The earlier victims were killed with hatchets, the later ones, more slowly, with knives. A woman and her three small children were among the last to die. Once the train stopped at a wayside station when no more victims remained for the sacrifice and the murderers apologised to their co-religionists on the platform for the zeal which left them no one to kill."

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I. M. A.

XXIV ALL-INDIA MEDICAL CONFERENCE, BOMBAY, 1947

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In the remote past, the Jews staged an exodus from Egypt. Scholars have cast a shadow of doubt on the historical accuracy of the complete narrative of this exodus. They are also supposed to have staged another at one period of their history from Babylon, but very little of this is known. Little need be said of their exodus from Germany under Hitler's regime. An exodus in olden times which was forced by the Bulgarians and which took a large mass of people from their settlements on Volga, in Southern Russia, almost to the Arctic Zone, where now Finland is, was that of the Finns about the end of the 7th century. In modern times, the Treaty of Lausanne saw an exodus of non-Turkish population from Turkey on a scale which transformed three countries in Europe—Turkey, Greece and Thrace. But the exodus from the two newly created parts of the Punjab has been on a scale much larger than any in history. Its nature and magnitude and its concomitant sufferings are unprecedented and unparalleled. One convoy alone on foot was reported to be about 60 miles long and it took more than 36 hours to cross a given point. Let us pray that the exodus from East Bengal will continue to be peaceful and orderly.

Man, in self praise, has styled himself as the noblest of all creatures perhaps simply because the other members of the animal kingdom do not possess a spoken speech as we understand it. But he has proved himself to be the basest, at any rate in the recent happenings. For the deeds of animals, or beasts as he likes to call them, he has coined the word "bestiality" but for his own deeds in the light of which the deeds of animals pale into insignificance he has coined no word at all. In his misdeeds, as they should be termed, he has shown a spirit of frightful competition for retaliation, revenge and vengeance. Without going further one might ask what has all this been due to? To me at least it is evident that it is the bitter and inevitable fruit of the hymn of hate, the two-nation theory and violence which were preached incessantly and venomously for a number of years.

In this drama, the Britisher has played his part remarkably well. He used to say that before quitting the country will be smashed into bits and he has been true to his words. In the Punjab the riots broke out suddenly and simultaneously in Lahore, Amritsar, Multan and Rawalpindi, the four biggest districts which were administered by British officials. They, like Nero, fiddled while the districts they ruled over burnt. The other districts administered by Indian officials remained at that stage largely, if not entirely, peaceful. This could not have been without significance or a mere coincidence. The Britisher who had all along been known for his conscientiousness and humaneness suddenly turned callous and casual. Approached by the afflicted and the terror-stricken for succour he said, "We are quitting, why come to us, why not go to Gandhi or Nehru or Patel?" I do not know if he ever said "why not go to Jinnah"? Verily it is hard to understand and fathom the depth of an Englishman. A writer is perhaps right when he says, "The English have been on the whole either ruthless adven-

turers, or suave swindlers, or simple pioneers, or prosecutors, or smart alecks, or insufferable fools".

In the light of all these happenings it is no wonder that independence finds Indian people in a mood that is averse to rejoicings at this consummation of their wishes. It looks as if, at its best, they are inclined to accept the cherished fruit of their long and arduous labours not with zeal and relish but unenthusiastically, almost apathetically. But independence is not a small gain. It is our national liberation, notwithstanding the adverse conditions in which it has come enveloped and the fact that certain communities in certain parts of the country are ruined, it seems for ever, and that it is on their ruins that the Indian Union is being built. It has given us our own Government. Let that Government soar not so high as to lose contact with



COL. AMIR CHAND DELIVERED HIS PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT THE 24TH ALL-INDIA MEDICAL CONFERENCE, BOMBAY

the people, and let it do something striking for the people and especially for those communities, if it is to retain their goodwill and support on which alone it can exist. The people also should realise that it is no use crying over spilt milk, bemoaning their fate or counting their losses. The time has come for calm and dispassionate consideration of their future course of action and for so shaping their conduct as to bring glory to their country. They must support their popular Governments and these Governments, in turn, must prove that they are worthy of their support and are the best. "For forms of Government let fools contest, what is administered best is best". At this crucial moment when the foundations of our nation