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RAGHOONATH RAO

HERE is probably no Indian name more familiar to young and old in all Southern India than that of Dewan Bahadur R. Raghoonath Rao. He was indeed so famous in this part of India that he was often termed simply "Dewan Bahadur", a title which was taken to designate him and no other. His position in society was unique. He was beloved as much by Hindus as by Mahomedans; he was as much the friend of the Government as of the poor ryot; and he was the critic as much of the Government as of the people among whom he lived and moved. His name was synonymous with transparent honesty, with high-minded generosity and with discriminating clarity. A man so full of the wisdom of his race, it would be difficult to name. If he typified all that was best in the Indian of to-day, he also stood for everything that British influence and culture in India have meant. To his Hindu birth and upbringing, he combined the training and experience that he acquired as a public servant in the British service. The life-story of such a man

revenue system of the country. Sir Mark Cubbon in his search for men espied in Rai Raya Rai Venkata Rao the man he stood most in need of. He was requisitioned for without delay and his work as Revenue Commissioner in Mysore won general approbation. Rai Raya Rai Venkata Rao is still remembered in Bangalore, where he lived. A *chaltram* (charitable feeding house) still goes in his name, having been founded by him. It was characteristic of the greatness of the man that he should provide among the staff he nominated for its upkeep a person who should, in the absence of its founder, play the host to the people frequenting the feeding house. He set down the wise rule that every guest should feel he was at home while in the choultry and that feeling, he felt, could not be engendered if there was not one on the spot to play the host. Such was the punctiliousness of Rai Raya Rai Venkata Rao. He belonged to the old orthodox type of Indians, now fast passing away. His wife Lakshmi Bayi was a lady of rare merits. To a knowledge of Hindu sacred lore, she combined all that goes to make up the true Hindu mother. Both husband and wife loved Sanskrit too well to miss even for a day the exposition in their house of the great epics of India. Young Raghoonath slowly but surely imbibed his love for the "Aryan" faith, as he termed

it, in his later life, to this patient hearing of the recital of the ancient epics by the best pandits of the time. His love of Sanskrit of truth and of sincerity of purpose, generally may also be traced to the influence of this holy literature on his youthful mind. To the last, if one thing was more characteristic of Raghoonath Rao than another, it was his simplicity, his straightforwardness and his love of truth for truth's sake. This he owed to his early training in his home, under the eyes of his parents. To this we should attribute his great and singular success in life, whether in the service of Government or in the fields of social and political reform. Sincerity was no mere hollow fantastic sentimentality with him; it was a living virtue. It was, nay, his religion; his daily rule of conduct. To one like him anything like dishonesty, dishonourable conduct and disreputable association seemed always abhorrent. Such is the influence of home life on one's character. And such a home life, be it recorded, young Raghoonath got during the most impressionable period of his life, and such a home life, be it also recorded, many a young man now fails to get. This is a change in conditions of life that one cannot but deplore.

EDUCATION

While his father was still in the Mysore service, Raghoonath began his three R's. He

began his English alphabets in a small Mission School which in those days had its habitat in what is now termed Bangalore Fort. He then passed on to the Madras High School, the precursor of the modern Presidency College at Madras, into which he entered as a student in 1845. Here he came into contact with some young men who in later life became well known in Indian society. To name only a few, here were Sir T. Madhava Rao, Raghoonath's cousin (paternal uncle's son), Dewan Rangachari of Mysore, Sir Amarawati Seshayya and Sir T. Muttusami Ayyar just completing their English education under Eyre Burton Powell, the famous Irish educationist of Madras. Eyre Burton Powell's name is still remembered in Southern India. He typifies to south Indians all that is best in the idea of the old English schoolmaster, fond of his boys and of his profession, and fonder still of the future of the young men going out of his college. Powell's work in Madras at the time cannot be described otherwise than by the word "thorough." He moulded character as no teacher in Southern India since his time has done with the sole exception, perhaps, of the Rev. Dr. Miller. Powell's work bore as much good as Dr. Miller's has and in both cases the result has shown that that school-master does most who tries to fashion the character of the boys who pass under him.

Young Raghoonath could not but profit by his transfer to such hands. He not merely added to his fund of knowledge but also underwent the discipline of an English public school in Powell's High School, as it was affectionately styled in those days. The discipline he underwent here did him good; it made him love the system, the spirit of organization and the fine sense of fellow-feeling that pervades the English as a race. To this he referred in later life on many an occasion. Thus, in the school young Raghoonath completed what he had already learnt under his paternal roof. Prudent, cautious self-control is wisdom's root. What he learnt at home and at school, he learnt so well—rather it sunk so well into his mind—he practised ever after in his life. To him no pleasure was comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth. This lesson he learnt very early in life in his paternal abode and it was reinforced by the teaching of Powell at his school. And to this he stuck to the last, and to it must be attributed the love the people bore him and the success he attained to the last day of his life.

EARLY CAREER

Raghoonath did not wait for his proficient's degree, the highest obtainable in pre-university days in Southern India. He left school to manage his vast paternal estates in

Kumbakonam in 1850. There he stayed for four years or so. This gave him an insight into the revenue system of the country. If he became a champion of the ryot in later days, it was partially due to this early intimate and first-hand knowledge of his difficulties. However, he had no idea of continuing in estate management. He privately read up law and qualified for the bar. In 1856 he obtained a pleader's diploma with Sir T. Muttusami Ayyar, afterwards famous as the first Indian Judge of the Madras High Court.

IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Though he qualified for the bar, Raghoonath Rao had no real liking for it. Government service offered a peculiarly attractive field to one like him. He joined service as Translator in the Collector's Office at Tanjore with his friend Muttusami Ayyar and the late Rai Bahadur T. Gopala Rao, afterwards well-known as Principal of the Kumbakonam College. He next became Sheristadar (Chief ministerial officer) of the Sub-court at Kumbakonam, then presided over by Mr. L. C. Innes, afterwards a Judge of the Madras High Court. Innes was so much struck by the uprightness, the intelligence and sense of duty of Raghoonath Rao that he ever afterwards spoke of him as one of the best Indians he had come across with in his service. When, in 1859, the new scheme sanctioning the entertainment of Indians as

Deputy Collectors was introduced, Raghoonath Rao was selected for one of the first posts created. He was appointed by Sir Charles Trevelyan, then Governor of Madras, and a warm friend of Indians, to his own native district of Tanjore. Raghoonath Rao wished for a change, but so great was the trust placed in him by the Government that they refused to reconsider their decision. The trust reposed in him was fully reciprocated. The Mutiny had given an impetus to railway construction in India. In Southern India, a large railway project had to be pushed through. This project would have covered, if it had been finished as originally conceived, the whole of the country now traversed roughly by the S. I. R. and M. & S. M. railway systems. The project was known as the Great Southern Railway and land had to be acquired for it without delay for laying the line. The line started from Negapatam and was at first to come up to Trichinopoly. To this part—the first part of the great project—Raghoonath Rao was posted to acquire the necessary lands. There were no proper legal facilities in those days for acquiring private lands for public purposes; the Land Acquisition Act had not yet been dreamt of. And it was therefore no easy task to induce the landlords—specially in thickly populated areas and in a tract of country where the land is

long remain at Coimbatore. The Government of Lord Napier and Ettrick saw through the conspiracy hatched up against so dutiful and honest an officer of Government as Raghoonath Rao, and to mark their appreciation of his conduct transferred him to Madras as Head-quarters Deputy Collector. The Income-tax Act had just been passed and come into operation for the first time in Madras. To Raghoonath Rao was entrusted the work of assessing and collecting it in Madras city—a work as difficult as it was delicate. Most taxes are disliked and perhaps no tax is more cordially disliked for its highly inquisitorial character as the income-tax. Raghoonath Rao, however, succeeded in the task to the entire satisfaction of both the tax-payers and the Government. A grateful Government showed its approbation of his conduct by appointing him to the Head Sheristadarship of the Madras Board of Revenue, the highest post then open to an Indian in the metropolis of Madras. Lord Napier himself personally liked him so much that on the eve of his departure he gave him his newly arrived copy of Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* with his autograph signature in it. He asked him further to name any favour that he can possibly show him before leaving Madras—a request, needless to say, Raghoonath Rao gently refused to consider as unbecoming of him and his posi-

tion. But Lord Napier left his good wishes behind him for his success—and this found for him a warm friend and admirer in Lord Hobart, Lord Napier's successor in the Governorship of Madras. Lord Hobart made him a Presidency Magistrate for the City of Madras and a J. P. and would have done more for him in the years to come if Raghoonath Rao had not been called away for work elsewhere.

DEWANSHIP OF INDORE

By this time Raghoonath Rao had attained to something more than mere local celebrity. In fact, he had come to be recognized as one of the ablest Indian officials in the Southern Presidency. His fame had preceded him to Northern India which he toured through in 1873. He visited *en route* Calcutta, Delhi, Agra and Bombay. At Poona he was introduced to the late Maharajah Tukoji Holkar of Indore by his cousin the late Sir T. Madhava Rao, then Prime Minister of that State. The Maharajah, though peculiar in his temperament was so well impressed with him that he appointed him in 1875, with the approval of the Government of India, as Revenue Minister of Indore. And when Sir T. Madhava Rao vacated the Dewanship of Indore in order to assume the Regency of Baroda (in 1875), the then Maharajah selected Mr. Raghoonath Rao for the Dewanship of his State, which at that time was by no means a

sinecure or a bed of roses. The then Holkar was a man of strong character, and had certain very definite notions about his dignity and powers as Ruler of Indore; and relations were not always as cordial as they might have been with the Governor-General's Agent in Central India, Sir Henry Daly. But Mr. Raghoonath Rao won the confidence of the latter, and did as much as his position could to make matters run smoothly.

Mr. Raghoonath Rao's administration of Indore was marked with much ability, zeal and firmness. He was above board in his transactions and was recognised on all sides to be a thoroughly honourable minister. When King Edward VII visited Indore as Prince of Wales he had a long interview with Mr. Raghoonath Rao, and freely exchanged political views with regard to Native States, and presented the Dewan with a gold medal. In 1881 Mr. Raghoonath Rao reverted to the Madras Government service, and in 1887, when the late Maharajah Holkar acceded to the *masnad*, he requested Mr. Raghoonath Rao once more to assume the Dewanship of Indore. Mr. Raghoonath Rao was now in an even more trying and delicate position than on the occasion of his previous Dewanship. The late Holkar—to put it mildly—was a Prince of peculiar temperament. He also held some very distinct views as to his powers

and dignity, and at times would assume an impossible attitude. The Government of India naturally did not view many of his proceedings with approval, and frequently relations became strained with Sir Lepel Griffin, the Governor-General's Agent in Central India. Raghoonath Rao's tact and ability were now severely taxed. Sir Lepel Griffin entertained a high opinion of him and reposed great confidence in him; and Mr. Raghoonath Rao was able to conduct political business and internal State affairs as well as was possible under the circumstances. In 1888, however, he relinquished his Dewanship, and declined to re-accept it on subsequent offers being made to him by the Maharajah. Among the many reforms he introduced into the administration of Indore may be mentioned the introduction of a penal code, a code of criminal procedure and a code of civil procedure, all of which are still in force.

PUBLIC WORK AT MADRAS

Raghoonath Rao shortly afterwards reverted to the service of the Madras Government but he did not long remain in his old office of Head Sheristadar. In April 1888, he retired from the service on a pension of Rs. 5,000 *per annum*, the highest then allowed to an uncovenanted officer. At this time he was only 57 years of age, and had still much strength and vigour left in him. He

settled down first at Mylapore--Madras--and then about 1894 removed himself to Kambakonam, his family seat, from whence he unceasingly worked for the public good. His work during the next thirty years or so may be described as the work of a man who loved his country. It proved invaluable to its progress in almost every direction. In social matters as in political, in religious as in temporal affairs, he stood for advance. Though a Hindu of Hindus, he was no crude believer in effete dogmas and superstitions. He learned himself in Sanskrit, he probed rampant social evils and found remedies for them in consonance with the received opinions of orthodoxy. Therein he differed from reformers who stand for radical changes of the root and branch type. He was, however, not merely a "national" reformer but also a "rational" reformer. He stood out for common sense in reform matters, while making every allowance for the orthodox to come, if they chose, by the back door of Shastraic texts and formulae. He, however, believed in what he said and did. He was not a radical, if by radical we mean a revolutionary. He was no friend of uprooters of Hindu society or the foundations on which it is built. At the same time, he was not a reactionary of that strange type who loves a thing because it is sacrosanct with age. *Ita scriptum est* had no terrors for him. Vedic texts he could inter-

pret; Vedic examples he could quote; but Vedic mysteries he did not allow to stand in the way of rational improvement. If Vedic texts could help us to win the people to our sides, well and good. If not, let us try the next best course. Let us show them the necessity for the improvement proposed. That was the general trend of his argument. The position he took, we should remember, is still not entirely obsolete. It is true that views once current do not possess their old charm to us; much less do they help us to understand why they possessed that charm at all to those who held them. However, it cannot be gainsaid that as a pioneer in the field of social reform Raghoonath Rao found it both right and necessary to keep as far as possible to the society to which he belongs. That was why he was gentle in his methods, and why he quoted chapter and verse to his opponents. His opponents were of the orthodox type, and it is noteworthy, he retained their respect if he did not always win their approval or adhesion to the cause that lay nearest to his heart. But his spirit was far too indomitable to yield to mere clamour or to interested opposition. The position he took in connection with the Age of Consent Bill shows this in an unmistakable fashion. There he had to meet not merely

orthodox opposition but the opposition as well of genuine leaders of conservative Hindu society as well. The heated controversy which took place over this simple measure shows how far the attitude taken up generally by Raghoonath Rao in regard to Hindu social reform was just in his days. It also shows how cautious he was in his methods as a pioneer. For this the Hindu community owes him a deep debt of gratitude. Raghoonath Rao was convinced of the justice of the Bill. He was opposed by men of greater standing, of greater dialectical skill than himself, and even greater standing as well in Hindu society, but nothing daunted he held to his position as only he could. That was the man as a reformer. Come what may, he said; he would not yield in a matter of that kind. Though his cousin, the great Sir T. Madhava Rao, took a different view, he agreed to differ even from him. It is this attitude that endeared him to progressive India. It is this attitude that we should remember in judging him as a reformer. In later days, some carping critics found fault with him for refusing to dine out. They said, on that account, he was no true reformer. A more silly effusion could not well be conceived of. Huxley had a great dread of dining out. Nobody in his senses ever thought of saying that Huxley, on that account, was not even a social animal. Age, habits of life,

health conditions and a great many other things may stand in the way of a man accepting invitations. A little charity would go a long way in matters of this kind. It is no use trying to answer critics of a particular type, but it does seem right to refer to this matter in the case of Raghoonath Rao as it has been given undue attention in certain quarters.

RELIGIOUS REFORM

Raghoonath Rao was as anxious for religious as for social reform. He lived the life of a typically religious Hindu. He read the holy scriptures of the Hindus and wrote up small catechisms and books for children. He compiled short story books based on the *Bhagavata* for boys and girls. He called his religion the "Aryan" religion. He believed that Hinduism was an all-embracing religion; and that in its fold all persons of every nationality could easily come in. He held too that the fundamental concepts of Hinduism were quite in keeping with science, and that the religious philosophy of the Hindus was something unknown to Europe. He was also of opinion that Christianity, great religion as it is, is at best only one aspect of Hinduism. This, he said, in a philosophical sense. He was no doubt thinking of the personal relationship between God and man when he made this remark. He not only believed these things but had the

boldness to frankly put forward these things again and again in his public utterances. The occasions for public speaking were many for him. Not a day passed without his presiding at some function—religious or social, political or educational—and at these he spoke straight to the hearts of the people what he thought and believed.

POLITICAL REFORM

In politics he was, in modern terminology, a "moderate." But he was no stickler at old things because they were old in politics any more than in religious or social matters and where he felt a change was necessary, he made people in power know it. He was one of the originators not only of the Indian Social Conference but also of the Indian National Congress, in both of which he took an active part for a long time. He wrote on the questions of the day in the papers. Not a day passed, in fact, without a letter from him. In this he resembled his cousin Sir T. Madhava Rao. Both believed in propagandistic work. Both gave out freely their views and experiences for the benefit of their countrymen and the Government. Questions of every kind attracted Raghoonath Rao's attention from single stalk plantation of paddy seedlings to the proposed reforms of Lord Morley and on each of these he wrote to the press. He wrote briefly, clearly and concisely. He was an ideal

newspaper writer. There was little verbo-
sity in what he wrote ; what he wrote was
to the point and went straight to the heart
of the reader. That was one reason why
no newspaper editor rejected his letters, and
why few, if any at all, missed the attention
of the reading public. Though he wrote on
almost every subject of any current interest,
he had specialised, so to speak, in some parti-
cular subjects. These were briefly—the Land
Revenue Policy of the Government of India,
the economic condition of the country, the
education of the people, the establishment of
agricultural banks, the organisation by the
people themselves of their talents and
resources for their own political advance, the
separation of the judicial from the executive
functions, etc. On these he spoke and wrote
with a sanity which won for him approbation
even from Government. It is not possible
to go into all these matters here at length,
but it seems necessary to refer to a few at
least of these to indicate the tenacity of
purpose with which Raghoonath Rao fought
for progress in the political sphere. His
interest in the agrarian question was great. It
started with his career and stood unabated
at his death. When still a young man, he
rendered signal service by exposing the use of
torture in the Southern Presidency and
to prevent the spoliation of minor inams

in the Tanjore district. He was a true friend of the ryot and fought for justice for him all through his strenuous life. On the eve of the departure of Sir Charles Trevelyan (June 1860) he wrote a long and admirable letter to him on the land tenure of Tanjore and the mirasidar's right in the land. This pamphlet he reprinted in 1890 for free circulation. It is a pamphlet full of quaint information drawn up in a historical and argumentative fashion. Raghoonath Rao develops his position in a masterly fashion and shows that *mirasi* right in Tanjore is vested in the mirasidar and not in the sovereign. The genesis of this letter is rather curious. Sir Charles wanted to introduce, if he had continued in office, a settlement in Tanjore by which landed property might be rendered secure, interference of Government servants with the mirasidars avoided and no just opportunity for augmenting the Government revenues lost. He asked Raghoonath Rao for his views. The result was the letter referred to herein. In this letter, which is of great interest even now, he proposed a full scheme of settlement which (is it necessary to state ?) has not so far received the attention it deserves. That is one reason why Tanjore has been losing its name—and what is worse its tenantry as well. "I beg to assure Your Excellency," said Raghoonath Rao in 1860, "that my proposal, if carried out

would not tend to lower the Government revenue, would make it certain and permanent, would make the landlords wealthy and independent and of great assistance to Government." Sir Charles unhappily left the Presidency immediately after the despatch of this letter to him. He got himself stranded over the Income-tax Bill. On his way home, he wrote to Raghoonath Rao a letter which shows what he would have done if he had continued at the helm of affairs at Madras for some time longer. "On your main point," he wrote from Galle on 27th June, 1860, "I entirely agree with you. Where landed property is found to exist I would do all I could to confirm and develop it. And where it does not exist every necessary means should be taken to create it. I see no objection to the arrangements proposed by you for the completion of the land revenue settlement of Tanjore. But I will not enter upon that." If Raghoonath Rao's views had been adopted, Tanjore would have fared differently in recent years.

LAND ASSESSMENTS IN MADRAS

In later days Raghoonath Rao returned again and again to the agrarian question. In the controversy over land assessments in Madras, during Lord Curzon's time, he figured prominently. The letters he published on this subject in the Madras newspapers are typical of the clear thinking and close reasoning he

always displayed in his polemical efforts. He convicted the Madras Government of the utter impossibility of their sticking strictly to the theory of their settlement. Even so stout a champion of official figures and ways as the *Pioneer* found it impossible to defend Government.

Raghoonath Rao returned to this subject again. In 1908, as President of the Tanjore District Association, he thus referred to it in a public address presented to Sir Arthur Lawley then Governor of Madras :—

“While the India Government has relied upon the statement of the Madras reports that the land-tax represents one half of the twenty per cent of the gross produce, the settlement records show that for wet lands it amounts to not less than 26 per cent thereof. Owing to the incorrectness of the estimate of gross outturns of land, the profit calculated is raised considerably higher leaving very little to the agriculturist and disabling him and reducing his staying power whenever there is a failure of rains.”

He referred to the same question in his evidence before the Decentralisation Commission. He there explained his position briefly by saying that the share taken by Government in Tanjore, according to the Re-settlement record, was proved to be 28 per cent. “In reality,” he added, “it is not less than 50 per cent of the gross produce; for, if the gross produce was over-

estimated, cultivation expenses were underestimated and the net profit thereby rose to a fictitious figure and half of it was fixed as the Government share or assessment or land-tax.”

Raghoonath Rao did not leave matters there. He went into the question as to how this had happened. How came this to be? What contributed to this juggling with figures? What was really the cause of the Government of Madras trying to ask people to believe incredible things? “In brief why should the Government of India persuade itself, at the earnest entreaties of a local Government, that black is white? Mr. Raghoonath Rao tried to probe this question. He set it down to the Secretariat system. He thought it was becoming more and more the fashion in the Secretariats to view public questions apart from the interests and feelings of the people whom they vitally affected. “They very often,” he said solemnly, “consider matters, irrespective of the consideration of the results affecting the ~~the~~ feeling and happiness of the people. The Government is certainly impersonal. The result of the administration is judged upon its capacity to raise larger revenues.” He then drives home his argument by a reference to the Tanjore re-settlement operations. It is clear from his reasoning that he

blamed the Government with no unworthy motives. He had no personal interests to serve in the matter. This much has to be observed for he is likely to appear as almost the strongest critic of Government in this matter. If he erred at all, he erred in good company—in company with some of the ablest officers of the Government, Indian and European, whose views will be found fully set out in that famous little book "The Land Revenue Policy of the Government of India" published by Messrs. Natesan & Co. It must also be added that he exonerated Government Settlement Officers, as such, of all blame in the matter. His quarrel was with Government, *qua* Government, in regard to this question. The system which regulated settlement operations was, in his opinion, wholly vicious. That was the child of the centralized Government, which worked as a machine, much as the Roman system of old worked. Governments at a stage of their development become soulless machines, and it is then that they grind the people as machines do the things that pass through them. Raghoonath Rao attacked this soulless, impersonal system of Government—call it what you will. He was so true a friend of India that he wished the Government of India to be not a mere machine but a true king in the land—a king endowed with eyes to see and ears to hear so that it may act

rightly, justly and equitably with the masses of the country, who are among the poorest of the poor in the world.

INDIAN FAMINES

Closely connected with land assessment is the question of famines. Raghoonath Rao held the view that "a fixed land tenure and remunerative public works will alone save India from the occurrence of future famines." This view he came to after a wide and varied experience of thirty years' work as a revenue officer in some of the best districts of Madras. To this subject he has devoted a pamphlet of some 26 pages, in which he sets out in his own simple but striking manner his theme. He wrote this pamphlet on the eve of the great famine of 1876, from the effects of which some parts of India have not yet recovered. Twenty-three years later India experienced another famine. Then he turned his thoughts once more to the subject.

In discussing the question at length, Raghoonath Rao reverts to the question of land assessments and shows its bearing on the famine problem. He develops his position in the following paragraphs which deserve to be reproduced here :—

"I hold that until property in land is acknowledged and upheld by Government, the Indian soil will *not* be improved, despite the model farms, the Agricultural Department of the

Government of India, Agricultural Gazettes and similar works. On this point, an eminent English nobleman, Sir Charles Trevelyan, says "Where landed property is found to exist, I would do all I could to confirm and develop it; and where it does not exist, every necessary means should be taken to create it." What has been the practice? The Anglo-Indian Government has been systematically destroying every right in connection with property in land, notwithstanding the repeated orders of the Home authorities to the contrary. The old, wise, Court of Directors wrote in the early part of this century, to the Government in India that "the confidence we should have derived * * of ascertaining and guarding the rights not only of the proprietary ryots but those of the mere cultivators of the soil, has been a good deal shaken by the words in the seventy-third paragraph." They added "as soon as we were apprized by you that individual proprietary rights existed in any portion of the territories under your Government, we were most anxiously desirous that they should be respected and maintained"; but you propose "to act not only in opposition to the principle of the 233rd paragraph of your letter of the 29th February, 1812, already quoted, by which you had professed your intention of being guided, but in disregard of sentiments we had so pointedly conveyed to in August 1804 and November 1805."

The process of extinction of property in land, successfully commenced in the beginning of the nineteenth century, has been steadily progressing and many of the settlements which had been considered permanent, with or without evidence,

has been declared non-permanent. Hence the apathy of every one having anything to do with cultivation, to give back to the soil what is taken from it and the charge against the past generations of "ignorance and recklessness" is not deserved by them. They fully knew, and the present generation fully understands, the theory of the exhaustion of the soil. They certainly know how to manure their field and why they should do so; but they would not apply the remedy, for they do not expect to be benefited thereby.

To remedy this evil, we must strike at the root. The largest source of revenue in India has always been and still unfortunately is land. It should be most openly and solemnly declared to be private property subject only to payment of tax to Government.

The tax should be declared to consist of a fixed proportion of its net produce, that is, a fixed quantity of grain. This fixed proportion should not exceed $\frac{1}{3}$ of the net produce, the other $\frac{2}{3}$ being left to the landlord. The market value of this $\frac{1}{3}$ should be collected as the land-tax. Convert the value of the *fixed* portion of the *fixed* net produce at the average of the market rates of the past as many years as you please, provided you exclude the extraordinary years. Fix the average rate thus obtained, as the rate of commutation for the coming year. Omit the first year's rate out of the last series of years, and add in its place the rate of the last year. Then, again, find out the average. If this average does not considerably differ from the last average,

make no alteration in the commutation rate for the coming year; but if it materially differ, then adopt the average rate as the rate for the next year. This done, the ryot will know what he has to pay to the Government and will feel a desire to increase the produce of the land in hopes of appropriating all the increase to himself which he obtains by his labour and investment. Inconsiderable fluctuations in the market price should be omitted from calculation. What is inconsiderable should be once for all declared by Government. I would declare any fluctuation within 25 per cent either way as inconsiderable."

If this is so, why do natives of India invest their money in land? To that Raghoonath Rao has his answer to give. They invest in land not for profit but simply to secure it against robbery. Investment in stocks and shares is still foreign to this country and the reason for it the want of credit facilities, which, again, is due to want of a sense of security in the people in anything other than land, which is tangibly immovable and cannot be lost. If this reasoning is not correct, "why," asks Raghoonath Rao, "why is not British capital expended in the purchase of large tracts of land in Madras and Bombay?" If assessments were really as light as stated this would have been the case, but as they are not, the thing has never come to pass. Coffee and tea lands, it is needless to add, stand on an altogether different footing.

Still another subject in which Raghoonath Rao took much interest was forest administration. Times without number he referred to this subject in his letters to the press. He held the view—the view promulgated by the Government of India—that minor forests are intended for communal and agricultural purposes and ought to be conserved by the Revenue Department quite independently of the Forest Department as such. This simple and just rule has not been maintained in most districts much to the detriment to the rights of the agricultural community. Its rights and privileges have been, he says in one place, systematically ignored, its pasture lands taken away, its cultivation implements have been taken away and its communal property denied to it. The result has been, he adds in another pathetic sentence, very great injury to the agricultural population in the state of loss of cattle, fuel, grass, green manures, etc. A juster view has prevailed in Madras, and the Forest Panchayat system has been the result of the persistent agitation carried on in the matter by Raghoonath Rao and men of his stamp in the years gone by.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Upon other subjects he held views equally definite. The following sum up many letters of his to the public press during half of a century of his retired life:—

"The land assessment is too heavy. The penal provisions of the salt-tax are cruel to the poorest of the people. For the sake of the Abkari revenue, drunkenness is increased. The income-tax is badly administered. The water-rate laws are not just and are enforced unduly harshly. The Land Encroachment Act is a piece of legislation believed by all people to be perfectly unnecessary and subversive of all the rights of people long enjoyed by them. The rules for the management of Hindu religious institutions require modification as shown by the experience of the past half a century.

One other thing deserves to be noted in this connection. Both study and habit had made him a constructive critic. He never tried to pull down for the mere fun of doing so; he also tried to build on the vacant spot. If he said that desire for increased Abkari revenue increased drunkenness, he also pointed that the revenue may be got without recourse to heroic remedies. He held that customs and excise duties may be raised to prevent as much drunkenness as to augment revenue, while local option may be allowed to the people. He strongly held to the view that shops near places of worship and public instruction should not be allowed. These are yet far too common, and if that is so, there seems to be point in his observation that local option is necessary to check this unfortunate

tendency of allowing the haphazard location of shops. Before leaving this subject, it might be well to add that Raghoonath Rao's letters and correspondence show that he felt fairly often that the British Government in India ran its machinery on absolutely safe lines, though always timid and afraid, in consequence, of change. It is inferable also that he felt that it somewhat partook of the character of a "soulless bureaucracy" so much so that he often sighed for the good old ways of the "defunct East India Company." He was no "impatient idealist" of the modern type. He felt far too keenly all the same that things must change fast enough for progress all round, if Government was to keep abreast of the growth of public opinion in the country. While he was strong in his loyalty to his Sovereign, he was stronger even in pointing out how it might be made even more secure with the masses. Justice and equity, he felt, were needed as much in the administration as a desire to maintain efficiency and to exact obedience to the penal laws of the land.

GOVERNMENT BY THE PEOPLE FOR THE PEOPLE

This brings us to a rather important point. How far did Raghoonath Rao believe in representative institutions? Did he believe in anything like "a democratic government for India?" Did he think that the educated classes did not

represent the masses? Did he want class or communal representation or a representation based on wider grounds or principles, such as a high property qualification, etc.? Did he think that Christians and Mohammedans should be swamped by Hindus or the latter should invariably yield to the clamours of the minority? These are all interesting questions for the single reason that answers to them would show what an old world Indian friend of the British Government and an unsparing critic of his own countrymen thought of them of all. Raghoonath Rao, to start with, never thought that the Government of his time was caring as much for the opinion of respected Indian leaders as he thought they should. On one occasion he said:—

“At present, the Government of India has great difficulty in making their measures and motives generally understood and in correcting erroneous opinions of people thereon, a fact well known to the people as well as to the rulers. It is absolutely necessary that this difficulty should be removed as speedily as possible. The best means to remove it, is no doubt, to obtain the opinions on administrative measures and proposals for action of those qualified to advise Government. Government used to do so invariably about 30 years ago. This process has fallen into disuse of late. The formality of this process may have continued partially, but the weight which used to be attached to the opinions elicited has been

vanishing. Hence the difficulty above referred to has been on the increase. I entirely agree with the sentiment expressed in paragraph 4 of the said letter, viz. “Such advice and opinion as are thus obtained are the indispensable foundation upon which good administration is built up, and the regular consultation of persons qualified to give them is part of the necessary procedure of Government.” This is no new idea. It was the principle of the ancient Hindu rulers, well known to the people and fully appreciated by both the rulers and the ruled. With the crusade against the village governments, systematically commenced a generation ago and against the *Mirasi*, the tie which used to bind the ruled and the rulers has been loosened and they now do not know each other.”

There is considerable truth in that grave complaint of his as any one who knows the ancient history of this land can bear testimony to. He criticised for the same reason the Indian National Congress organization severely for beginning at the top instead of at the bottom. He was for councils from the village upwards to the central Government. He was not for communal or class representation as such, though he was for “making liberal concessions to Mohammedans and Christians”. He was for a high property qualification and he favoured the election of “specially literate” men. So high a value he set on education that he was prepared to declare a graduate of

any University qualified for voting, irrespective of property qualification.

In the highest council of all, the Legislative Council, he did not favour an official majority. He was one of the few who severely criticised paragraph 20 in Sir Harold Stuart's letter as Secretary to the Government of India on Lord Morley's reform proposals to the local Governments. In that paragraph the Government of India's view is thus expressed :—

The general principle to be borne in mind is, as already stated, that the widest representation should be given to classes, races and interests, subject to the condition that an official majority must be maintained.

This paragraph caught the eye of Raghoonath Rao, who thus cauterised it :—

I am unable to understand the principle, the necessity and the wisdom of the official majority in the Legislative Councils. Rather than maintain it and make the Council a farce, it is better to make a rule that in cases in which the Government may not have a majority of votes, it shall carry out the views of the minority on the responsibility of the head of Government. Such a rule would be a valuable one releasing several important officers of Government from attendance at the Council, neglecting their own duties for which the people pay them handsome remunerations, and sitting in the Council room, imprisoned and directed to hold up their hands, when called

upon by the Government to do so. We have no party government in India. The majority do not get the plums of service. The declaration now made that a law was passed by the Legislature is a misnomer and is really not true.

Latter on in the same letter he adds :—

The Governor may have the option to adopt the views of the majority or of the minority as he thinks fit. In this scheme, the contrivance for having an official majority disappears and the stigmas that Legislative Councils are nothing but a farce will disappear.

The Bengal Legislative Council has survived the shock of the abolition of an official majority, and there is no reason why it should be restrained in other Councils, Provincial or Imperial. Its abolition deserves to receive continued attention. Raghoonath Rao's shrewd observations had thrown doubts on its utility. The experience of Bengal has thoroughly discredited it. Persistent agitation is likely to result in its end.

PRE-MUTINY AND POST-MUTINY TIMES

Closely connected with orderly self-government based in the last resort on the village as the unit of political life, as it is of the religious and social, was his scheme for the proper administration of communal property. Tanjore, the district to which he belonged, was at one time the seat of the ancient Chola kings. It was pre-eminently the district which was directly

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administered under the very royal eyes. It therefore enjoyed the fullest rights of local self-government. The relics of this have survived to our days in the *Mirasi* right and in other matters. These attracted the attention of early British officers who served in the district, the chief among whom was Mr. Stokes, who wrote at length on it in one of the journals of the day. British administrators, however, took a long time to understand the principles involved and when they did, the time had passed by for the resuscitation of the old-world system. This was an unfortunate effect of the growing spirit of centralization which followed the consolidation of British rule after the Mutiny. Personal rule had to yield its place to the bureaucratic rule of the post-Mutiny times. Civilians of the pre-competition days soon died out and their successors lost the thread of the old governance. They were not at fault. The system had been displaced; their recruitments varied; their trainings varied; and the environments under which they were brought up varied. The result was what it has been: a new sort of rule came to exist in place of the old East India Company's, for which men of the type of Raghoonath Rao panted on occasions. This sighing for the old times was an unconscious tribute to the mighty builders of the East India Company's Government in India. Whatever may be

said of that Government—and there is a great deal that might be and has been said against it—it cannot be denied it tried to understand the native of India, his system of Government, his habits, customs, manners, religion, etc., and tried to enter into the spirit of Indian life and thought. Its officers tried, in the words of one of its best exponents, to get into the skins of the natives of the land. That cannot be said of the officers of the post-Mutiny period. The times had changed, and new men for new times is, perhaps, the true explanation of the thing. But that the change has been fraught with immense consequences to India cannot for a moment be gainsaid. “What might have been” may be left out of account. There is no contemplating altogether unreal, if not impossible, situations. But this much seems involved in the position: If the Company rule or the spirit pervading it had continued, is it or is it not possible that it would have evolved a better India than the bureaucratic rule that took its place? That is a question that admits of no halting answer. The process of evolution is verily a slow one, but that process would have been hastened, not retarded, by the spirit of kindness, of the gentleness, of true inward sympathy which underlay the Company system of governance. Much that is admirable in the post-Mutiny epoch of British Government in

India is due not so much to the mode of government that supplanted Company rule but despite it. It has been due not to bureaucratic genius but to action altogether independent of it. It has been due, in a word, more to individual officers of Government than the Government they collectively represented, whether in India or England. That is an aspect of British rule in India which deserves attention at the present moment when discussion on devolution of governmental powers is in the air. Raghoonath Rao's contribution to it is the persistency with which he refers to this aspect of post-Mutiny British rule in India. Raghoonath was no admirer of extreme modes of thought. But it is no exaggeration to say that he deplored the continuance of a system of government—whatever else may be said about it or said in defence of it—which allowed the perpetuation of this want of order in the most vital matters affecting the people. People, after all, are human beings with cherished beliefs and notions, with social and religious sanctions binding them to particular views and with ideas of right and wrong. To them the idea of a government tolerating a condition of affairs the reverse of orderly in one sphere while exacting the strictest obedience to a codified penal law on the other was a totally confusing, if not a wholly understandable one. Such, however, has been the policy of the British in India

during the post-Mutiny period. It doubtless arose in the idea of tolerating native usage and religion but has nearly succeeded in taking away the rationale from both. Here certainly was an imperfect generalisation of uncertain validity based on a misreading of the signs of the times. This was the reason why Raghoonath Rao asked for the remodelling of the Legislative Council on the only lines on which it should be done. He was not for making it a battle ground for easily counterpoised forces; a place for talking over unnecessary matters; a forum for making oratorical speeches to men who never cared to listen but only to find fault with; and a plaything for the official majority to occasionally have an unwilling chat with their non-official colleagues in Council. It was to be, in his opinion, truly representative of the people where they can deliberate for their good in serious fashion and where, if the officials disagreed with them, with their knowledge of the country and the people whom they had chosen to serve faithfully according to their covenants, the King's representative—the Governor of the Presidency—may have the final voice in the matter, subject in case of need to the revisionary jurisdiction of a still higher authority or the King himself. Such was his ideal of a legislative council, a council which is not impossible of creation and which would be

more in consonance with the requirements of the time.

INTEREST IN EDUCATION

Raghoonath Rao's interest in education was great. He was the friend of the aspiring student. He was the guide of the helpless youth who knew none in the city to guide him. He was the monitor of many a promising boy. When he saw a boy on the beach, at school or at play, he tarried a while and spoke to him. That was a habit he shared with his great cousin Raja Sir T. Madhava Rao. He was the founder in reality of what is now the Kumbakonam College. It grew out of a small class which was opened by Raghoonath Rao for giving instruction in English to the sons of his friends and neighbours. An English public hospital was also established at Kumbakonam, mainly through his exertions. In after life, he never declined an invitation to preside at a school function. He religiously accepted such duty and discharged it faithfully and conscientiously. He preached the gospel of duty for duty's sake even to the young. He described it as the highest ideal to be striven for in this world; the highest religion that the Indo-Aryans had evolved. The boy that passed under his eye never forgot him. His spell was cast on him for ever; it never broke. Such was his influence on successive generations of the youth of Southern India that it might, with

justice be said that he moulded it to no small extent. Much of the social advance that Madras has seen during the past thirty years may be set down to some extent at least to Raghoonath Rao's influence on its youth.

GOVERNMENT'S APPRECIATION

One like Raghoonath Rao could not but catch the eye of the rulers of the land. They showed marked regard for him and his opinions. Special interviews were accorded to him; special visits were paid to him and special requisitions for his views on current questions were sent to him by the highest in the land almost throughout the whole period of his retired life. He was made a "Dewan Bahadur" a title which fitted him admirably and stuck to him admirably too. For once the title fitted the man and the man the title. He was invited to give evidence before the Royal Commission on Decentralisation, which he did in a strikingly original manner. The distinction of C. S. I. was then conferred on him, a distinction which was as rightly bestowed as deserved. The *Pioneer* which published a special biographical sketch of him, commended his long and honourable career. The Madras papers, Indian and Anglo-Indian, spoke in the highest terms of his zeal, his sincerity and his enthusiasm for public good.

It is no wonder after this that Sir Arthur Lawley should have, at the investiture

ceremony, unhesitatingly described him as, in the opinion of European and Indian, official and non-official, "the true friend of India."

He was also nominated a member of the Madras Legislative Council. As a legislator, he did in a short while much useful work by drawing the attention of Government to certain anomalies, for which due attention was secured, if not exactly promised. His colleagues in Council treated him with the utmost respect and the Government felt that in him they had a true friend of the people and an honourable critic of Government.

GENERAL TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Kind and courteous, accessible alike to the rich and the poor, the cultured and the uncultured, Raghoonath Rao led a simple and unostentatious life. Rising at 3 A. M. every day, he performed his self-appointed tasks with a regularity which, perhaps more than any other, kept up the vigour of his body and mind practically unimpaired to the last day of his life. Besides discharging his various public duties—including in later days the duties of President of the District Association of Tanjore, Vice-President of the Agricultural Association at Kumbakonam, etc.—he managed a large estate on which he paid Rs. 10,000 annually to Government, besides a large number of charitable institu-

tions, some founded by his father, and some by himself and consisting of chattrams, travellers' bungalows, temples and aghaharams. He spent annually a large amount on public and charitable purposes. His charity was non-sectarian. He was the true friend of the needy and the indigent of every caste, creed and community. He was, in a word, mindful alike of the Hindu, Mahommedan, Panchama and the poor White.

AS PREACHER, TEACHER AND CITIZEN

Raghoonath Rao preached as he went and taught as he spoke. He was a true citizen of the world. Though he said hard things, there was no rancour behind his words. There was the true ring of sincerity about what fell from him. Throughout his long career, there was never the slightest suspicion against his integrity. His private life was a simple, unblemished one, and he was held in the highest esteem by people everywhere in Southern India. He had age, experience and wealth at his command, and his habits of life gave him ample opportunities to be of benefit to his fellow-beings. He fought their battles for them in the social, religious and political fields. He stood out for their rights with a tenacity of purpose which surprised those who had known him only in his gentler moments. And he argued the case for them with a wealth of detail and a richness of illustration that

anticipated the objections of their adversaries. One like him could not but be the beloved of his people. He was their "Grand Old Man of Southern India,"

AS PUBLICIST AND AUTHOR

Raghoonath Rao could never sit idle when there was need to act. He spoke, wrote, and acted as and when required. Early in life he cultivated the habit of writing what he thought worth keeping a record of. Some of his pamphlets contain shrewd observations, some others show the close reasoning he employed in fighting his case. One on *Organization* is a most impressive one. On the religious side, he wrote commentaries on the *Bhagavat Gita*, the *Bhagavat* and the *Rig Veda*. Pamphlets on social reform he wrote many. One of these on *Hindu Marriages* attained more than local fame. Others on sea voyage, widow remarriage, infant marriage, etc., created great stir. His connection with the Madras press was an honourable one. He was one of the first to start a weekly newspaper in that town. It was the one that in later days developed into the *Hindu* of to-day. He wrote in a simple, chaste and crisp style. He hithard when the occasion required it. When on the contrary praise was deserved, he never denied it to any one—no, not even to Government. He wrote daily, nay hourly, to the Madras press on every conceivable topic. He was one of the

most hard working, thinking politicians that India possessed in recent years. He was never wearied of work. He would have been most miserable if he had nothing to do. But that was a contingency that never occurred in his case. For he worked as he sat, walked or talked. In conversation, he was wise, witty and polite. He could give a point to any one in any walk of life. He was ready with shrewd observations. He was rarely outwitted. Though frank himself to a degree, he never could be taken in by the pretended frankness of an opponent. He could see through such game quickly and make short work of him by a few sharp questions going to the root of the matter. As a magistrate he was as much feared as respected and loved.

HOME LIFE

In his home life, he was simple. A more loving husband there could not have been in Hindu India during his time. Mrs. Raghoonath Rao was a lady rich in resource, full of the gentleness of her sect, and equal to the best that was expected of her by her husband. They were a couple universally liked. They both lived to a long age and both died universally mourned. The wife predeceased the husband by a year or so. Raghoonath Rao, though he lost in her his helpmate, took the event as became a true Indian. He was far too good a Hindu to mourn for those who though

they go away from us are not yet lost to us. His philosophy had taught him that those who die, do not die but live for ever. He himself continued in his customary mode of life till he was called away. He died, full of honours and years, in the plenitude of his fame, universally respected and deeply mourned by all who knew him.

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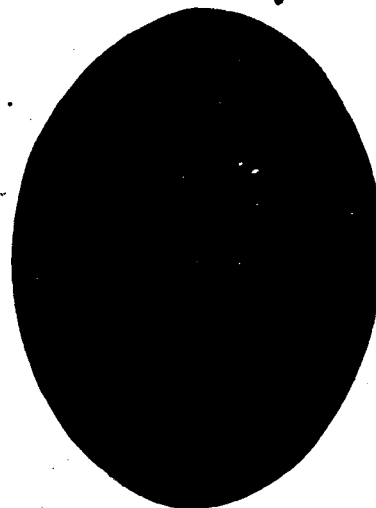


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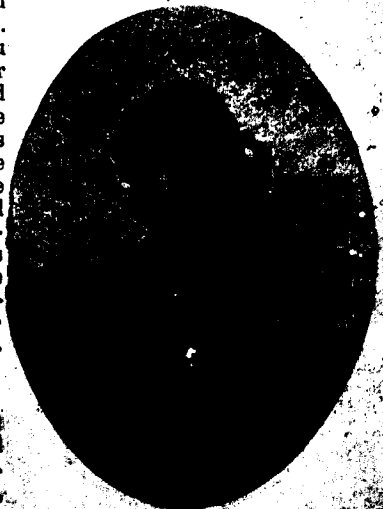


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