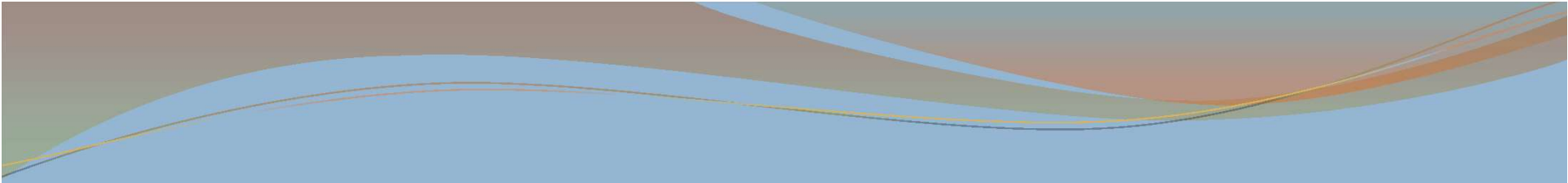


# Re-Reading Some Nationalist Speeches during Freedom Struggle (1888 -1909)



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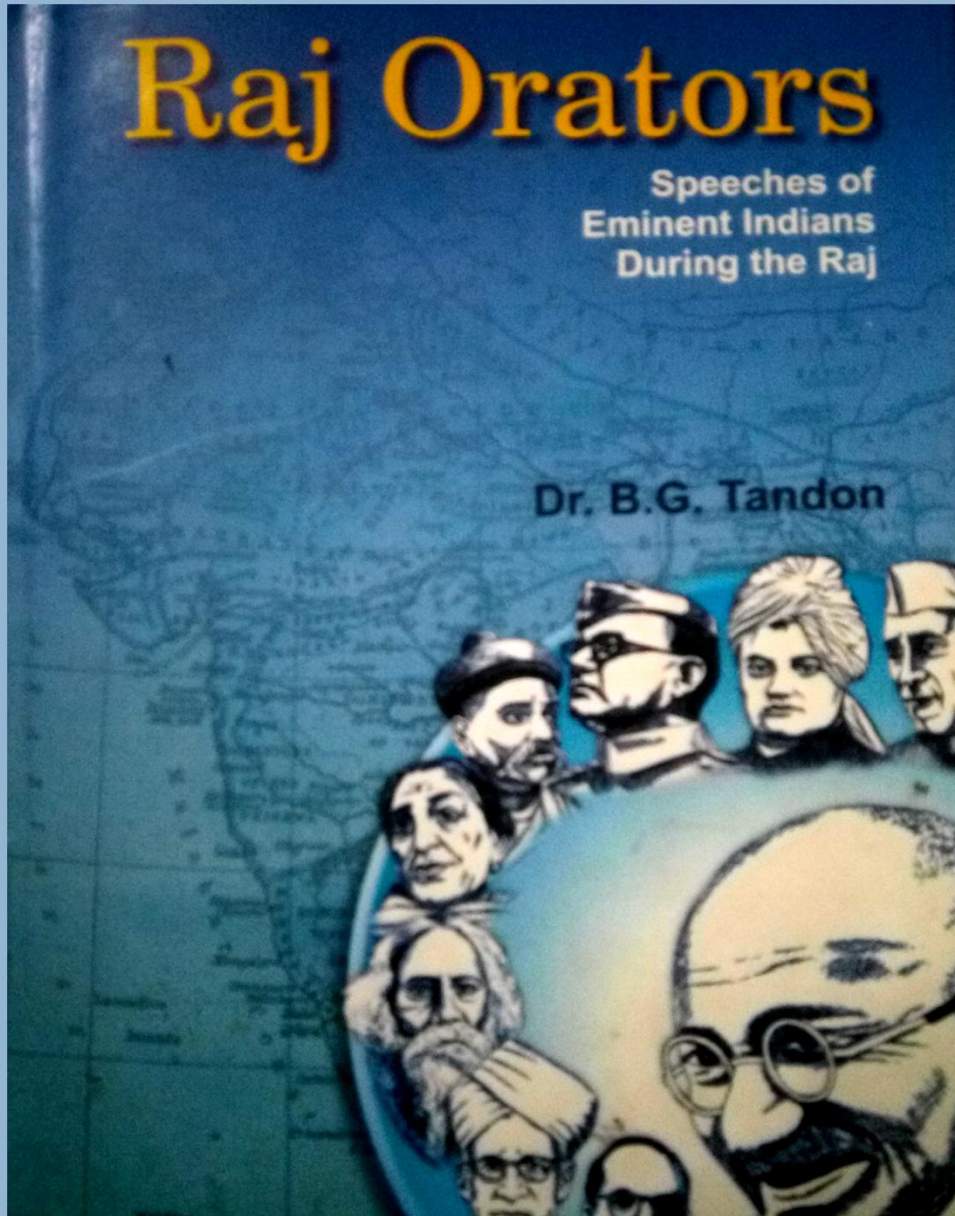


Source- B.G. Tandon's Book *Raj Orators- Speeches of eminent Indians during The Raj* published by Ane Books, New Delhi, 2006.

# Raj Orators

Speeches of  
Eminent Indians  
During the Raj

Dr. B.G. Tandon





This Book is divided into two parts:

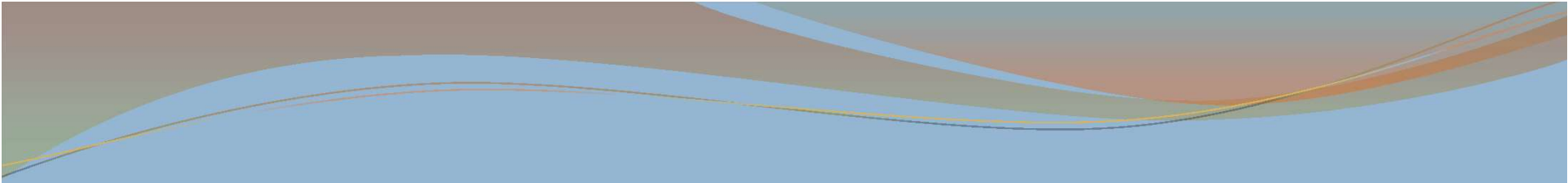
**Part 1** Orators- highlights about predecessors of Gandhi and Gandhi and His Contemporaries

**Part 2** has Orations of 38 great Personalities; I have chosen only 7 speeches

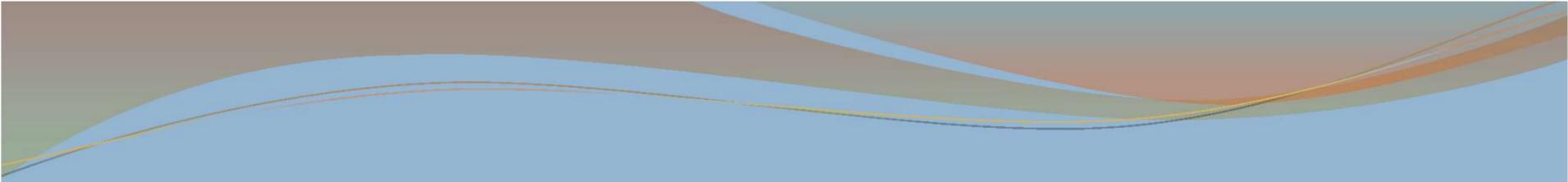
Review of Speeches of **Womesh Chunder Bonnerjee**, “Indian Grievances” (1888), **Dadabhai Naoroji** on “India must Be Bled”,(1900), **Romesh Chunder Dutt** “Social Progress in India” (1901) , **Rash Bihari Ghose** (also spelt **Dr Rashbehari Ghose**)<sup>[1]</sup> “The Sins of Lord Curzon” (1905), **Bal Gangadhar Tilak** “The National Demand”(1906), **Madan Mohan Malaviya** “Swadeshi Movement” ( 1906), **Surendranath Banerjee** “The Situation in India” ( 1909).

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<sup>[1]</sup> An eminent Calcutta High Court lawyer, social reformer and moderate nationalist. see Rachel Surman, *The Government of Social Life in Colonial India*, CUP, New Delhi 2013, p.93



This PPT has only covered a period of 30 years since during this time we see India facing major economic problems which were raised by the leaders in their speeches.



**Womesh Chunder Bonnerjee's** speech entitled **Indian Grievances before a public Meeting at the Town Hall in Northampton on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1888**

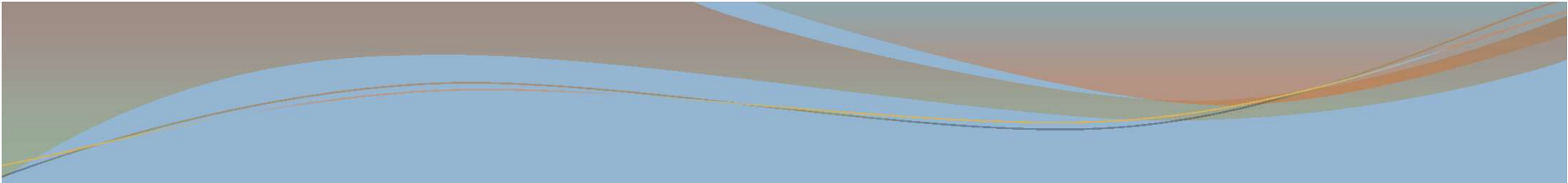
He starts with the grievance that we labour under a no responsible Government for India He says the Secretary of State in India had many times no official knowledge of many matters.

What the official information in India send is different from other sources. Thank goodness, we are ever so much better off than the people in Ireland, but I bring forward the case of Ireland for the purpose of showing you that official information is not in every instance true information. In India the supreme rule is in the hands of the viceroy and his council. They act from the information which they receive from the district officials.

The INC formed at a national convention held in Bombay in December 1885 under the presidency of W.C. Bonnerji he made it clear at the very outset that INC was not a nest of conspirators and disloyalists.<sup>[1]</sup>

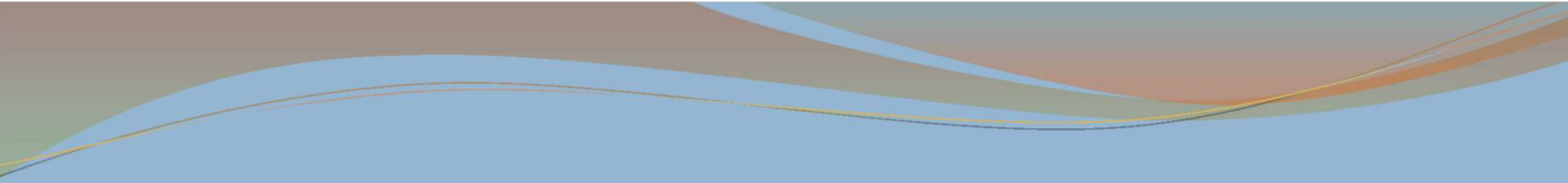
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<sup>[1]</sup> Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition and after*, p.223.

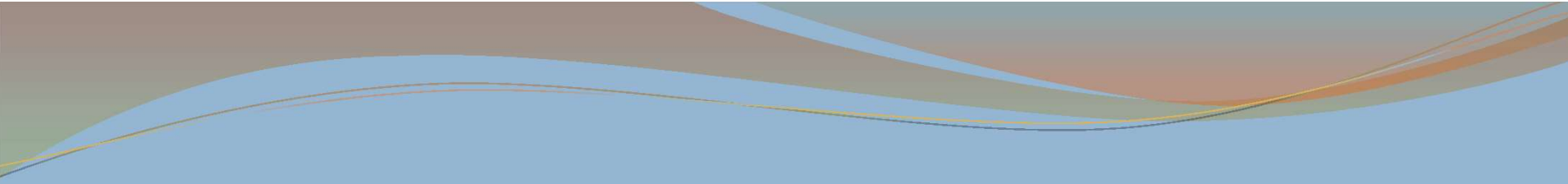


**Dadabhai Naoroji** regarded one of the early nationalists gave his speech before United Methodist Free Church on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1900 in aid of the Indian Famine Relief Fund.

Since his audience were English People he justifies why he had entitled his speech as “India must be bled” which he said were words of Lord Salisbury, Secretary of State for India.



Dadabhai makes a difference between taxing people and bleeding of people. He gives the example to the audience that you in England pay tax whatever you give out you must get back. He then comes to the point by saying 'We Indians are governed by you. You manage our expenditure and our taxes in such a way that while we pay a hundred million pounds of taxation, this hundred million never returns to us intact. Only about eighty million returns to us. There is a continual bleeding of about twenty millions annually from the revenues. He adds further Englishmen and other Europeans that went to India have treated that country in the most oppressive way.



You have formed this great British Empire at our expense, and you will hear what reward we have received from you.....It is at India's cost and blood that this Empire has been formed and maintained up to the present day.

Lord Salisbury declared that the agricultural population, the largest portion of the population of India, was feeble from the want of blood. This was said twenty-five years ago; and that blood has been more and more drawn upon during the past quarter of a century. The result is that they have bled to death;and why? A large proportion of our resources and wealth is clean carried away never to return to us. This is the process of bleeding'.

Finally he concludes when we are reduced by famine and plague you should pay for these dire calamities! You are bound in justice and in common duty to humanity to pay the cost of these dire calamities with which we are afflicted. I will conclude with Lord Salisbury's other true words: "Injustice will bring down the mightiest to ruin."<sup>[1]</sup>

The Grand Old Man of India was also the second President of the Indian National Congress in 1886. When he won the 1891 election to the British Parliament he was offered an epithet by the newspaper- 'Naoroji or Narrow majority'<sup>[2]</sup>. He retained this seat for 4 years.

Since 1855, he had been resident in England and he had built up a name for integrity and honesty.

Naoroji made a remarkable contribution to the study of Indian national income, was also interested in comparing the per capita income in India and England<sup>[3]</sup>.

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<sup>[1]</sup> B.G. Tandon, *Raj Orators Speeches of Eminent Indians During the Raj*, p.175

<sup>[2]</sup> Naoroji won by three votes against Captain Penton.

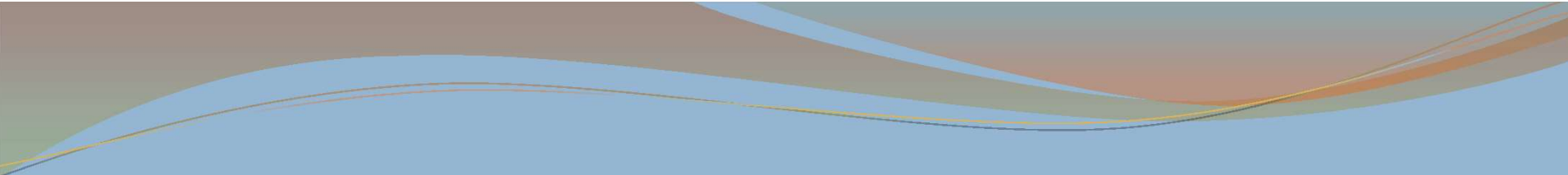
<sup>[3]</sup> Neera Chandhoke, Praveen Priyadarshi, *Contemporary India, Economy, Society, politics*, Pearson New Delhi, 2009, p.5

**Romesh Chandra Dutt** himself faced racial discrimination as a commissioner in 1894. In fact, he took 10 months leave in January 1897 and did not go back in Government Service. He went to England and worked as a lecturer in Indian history at the University College London where he undertook research in India's economic history<sup>[1]</sup>. He became a nationalist of the moderate variety represented by Gokhale and Surendranath and was elected President of the Congress session at Lucknow in 1899.<sup>[2]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> The first volume of *The Economic History of India* was published in 1902.

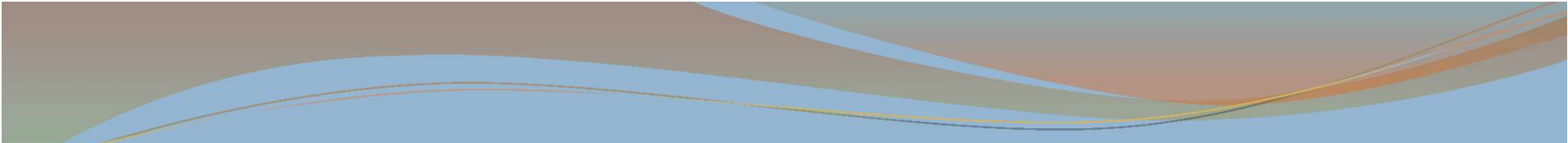
<sup>[2]</sup> S.P. Sen (ed) *Historians and Historiography in Modern India*, Institute of Historical Studies Calcutta, 1973, p.321



His speech at the Annual Meeting of the National Indian Association in England on 25 March 1901.

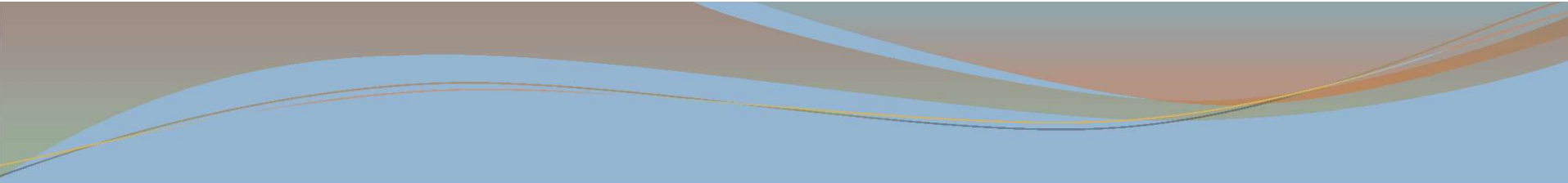
He seconded the resolution for making increased efforts in support of the Association's funds with the object of promoting female education in India. It is well-known- speaking at least for the part of India from which I come and with which I am most familiar- that for the last thirty or forty years or more, a great deal has been done by the people of India themselves in the cause of social progress and of female education.....mention of names of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Keshub Chunder Sen of Bengal and of Justice Ranade of Bombay given. They were prominent men in India who, in spite of various duties which they had to perform, devoted a great part of their time to the cause of social progress and social reform, and were careful to adopt methods which were consistent with our Eastern life, because they knew that all reforms in order to be abiding, must be consistent with our Eastern Customs and life.

**Rash Bihari Ghose** long Speech entitled **The Sins of Lord Curzon** given at **Calcutta Town Hall** on **March 10<sup>th</sup> 1905** (this was a response to Curzon's Convocation Address at Calcutta University in which he had denigrated Indians)



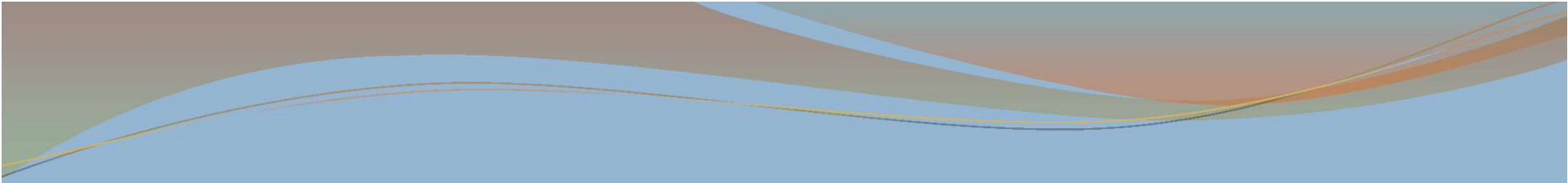
I honestly believe that Lord Curzon is lacking in that breadth of vision, tactfulness and flexibility of temper which we naturally expect in one occupying the unique position of an Indian viceroy.

It is with Indian coolie labour that you exploit the plantations equally of Dametora and Natal, with Indian-trained officers that you irrigate Egypt and dam the Nile, with Indian forest officers that you tap the resources of Central Africa and Siam; with Indian surveyors that you explore all the hidden places of the earth." In this picture drawn by the hand of no mean artist, the Indian stands in the foreground, it is true, but only you will notice, as a tiller of the earth, making it flow with milk and honey for strangers.

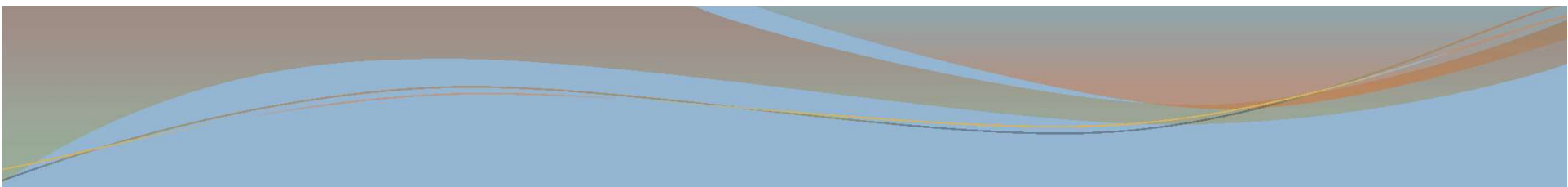


The proposed partition of Bengal is also an “unsuggested check”. The alarm which the proposal created is, I can solemnly assert, perfectly genuine and has spread even to those who are ordinarily in the habit of regarding Government measures as the dispensations of a mysterious power. The grounds on which our opposition to the threatened partition is based were so fully discussed by Sir Henry Cotton in this very hall, a short time ago

The Viceroy, however, seems to have made up his mind and is determined to divide Bengal.



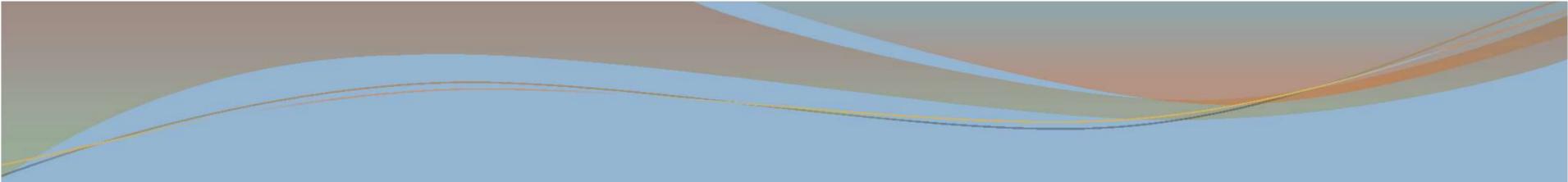
The speech was also critical of Curzon's University Act and The Official Secrets Act. In the course of the Convocation speech Lord Curzon said, "of course, in India it is very difficult to create or to give utterance to a public opinion that is really representative because there are so many different classes whose interests do not always coincide-, for instance the English and the Indians, and the Hindus and the Mahomedans, the officials and non-officials, the agriculturists and the industrialists."



If Lord Curzon is right, there can be no such thing as true public opinion even in England, for there are many questions on which controversies between different classes of the community must arise from time to time. To make one example out of many, the interests of the capitalists are frequently in conflict with those of the working man. Is it therefore to be said that public opinion in England is merely sectional. So in this country questions may arise on which the Englishman may be divided against the Indian, the Hindu against the Mahomedan, the agriculturist against the industrialist, but surely where there is no conflict the Government cannot ignore the opinion of the educated classes as an altogether negligible quantity.

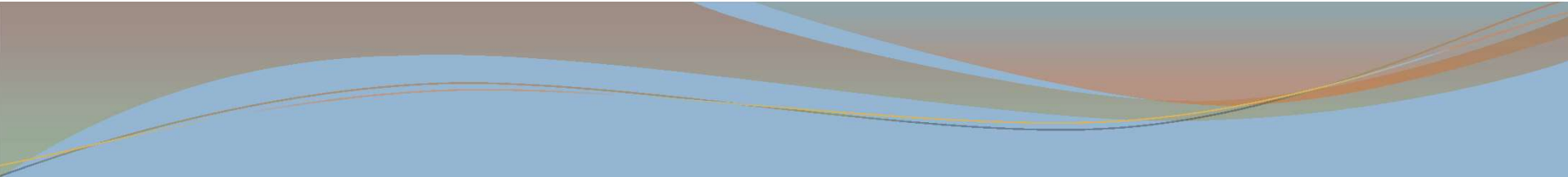
The Convocation speech betrays the limitation of His Lordship in a manner not to be mistaken.

I liked the end part of this speech I trust I have not done any injustice to Lord Curzon, indeed, I think I might without any difficulty have made out a case; but the half is sometimes better than the whole. I have not said aught in malice and have carefully avoided rhetoric. Gentlemen, it is always disagreeable to have to speak of ourselves, but I am bound to say that I am not one of those who purchase their opinions for an anna or less a day, nor am I in the habit of calumniating my opponents who consist exclusively of my learned friends at the Bar. I have also never taken part in the manufacture of public opinion, but if, in spite of my best endeavour to guard myself from those vices against which Lord Curzon raised his warning voice the other day, I have done my injustice to His Lordship, I can only console myself with the reflection that there are some infirmities from which the average man cannot altogether free himself.

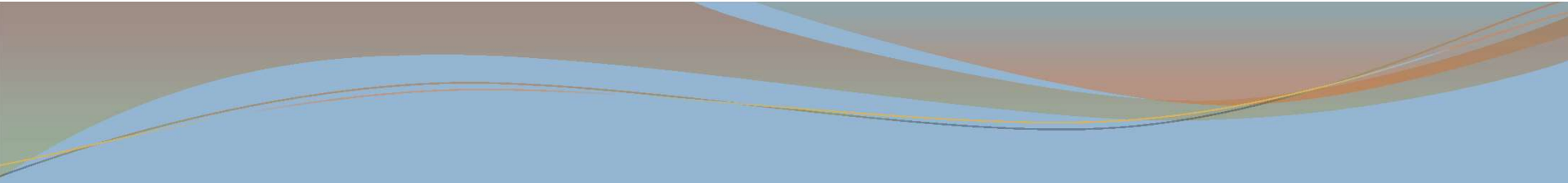


**Bal Gangadhar Tilak's** speech at the Calcutta Session  
of the Congress in 1906

Supporting the Resolution on Self-government.



He gives a very simple definition of Home Rule which any of you, including a peasant, can understand is that I should be in my own country what an Englishman feels to be in England and in the Colonies. He discussed in the use of words "Responsible Government, not Home Rule or self-government. He also discusses the Congress-League scheme. We have had experience of governing Empires and Kingdoms in the Past. We have learnt those principles and how to use those principles, having watched them so far in civilized countries. Are we not capable of carrying on the Government of India from to-morrow if the Government is given into our hands? When we say that Responsible Government should be granted to us by stages we cannot be meant to suppose that we should have training in Municipalities first, in District Boards afterwards, Provincial Legislative councils next and then in the Supreme Legislative Council. There is no parallel between the two.



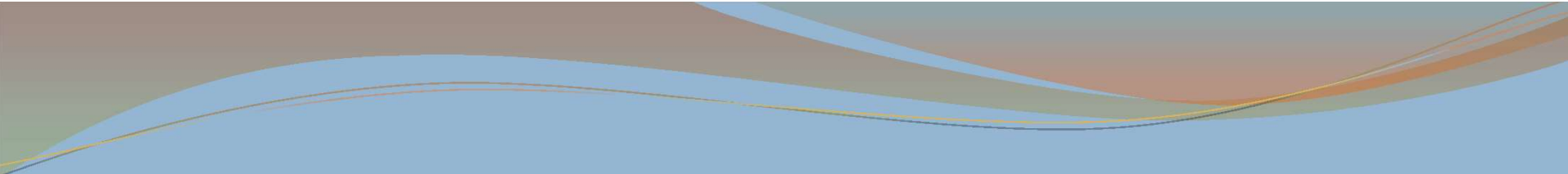
The case of India is like that of an emasculated man who had lost or was made to lose all his nervous power. In the case of a nervous disease, there is emasculation of the whole body and you have to begin the treatment with the brain and not with the toe. If you want to restore a man to health at once you give tonic to the brain, the centre of all nervous system. So it is with India. If the present Government is unfit for the administration of the country in the best interests of the Empire, the best remedy is to give tonic to the brain and that is Simla or Delhi. Unless that centre is made sound soon you cannot expect that any local remedy applied to the different parts of the body- to the foot or hand or other parts of the body-would be of any avail.

## **Madan Mohan Malaviya's<sup>[1]</sup> Speech in Calcutta in 1906 in seconding the following Resolution of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Indian National Congress.**

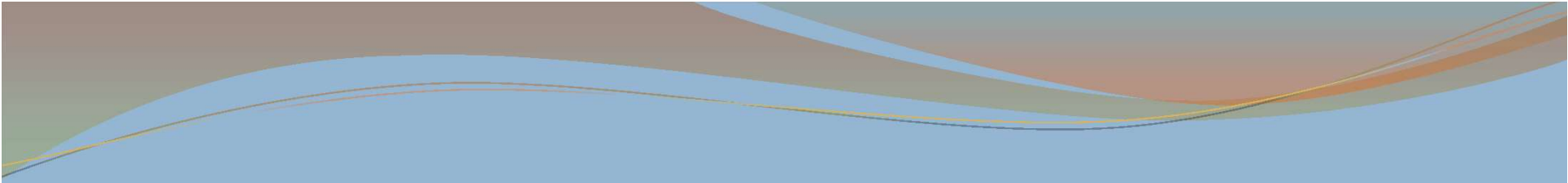
This Congress accords its most cordial support to the Swadeshi movement and calls upon the people of the country to labour for its success by making earnest and sustained efforts to promote the growth of indigenous industries and to stimulate the production of indigenous articles by giving them preference over imported commodities even at some sacrifice

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<sup>[1]</sup> Leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel and Madan Mohan Malaviya always promoted majoritarian tendencies within the congress. See Pearson p.321



The above resolution was seconded by him. The Swadeshi movement is an old movement in this country. It is not born either of Partition or after Partition and it is extremely desirable that this should always be looked upon as entirely independent of any political considerations. When political considerations come in, you pass your resolutions without mincing matters; but where you deal with a question which is more of economic importance than political, bring a mind free from all other considerations to a consideration of this. What is swadeshi? The Swadeshi movement is a movement to promote the use of manufactures of our own country and to promote the growth of the manufactures of our own country. How does it arise, and why does the movement arise? It is born of our poverty. It is born of the industrially weak and deplorable position which we are placed in. Prosperous countries like England, will not for a moment think of starting a Swadeshi. The condition of our people is deplorable.



Millions die of famine; millions fall victims to plague; millions never attain to manhood, but die slow, premature deaths by reason of not being able to get sufficient to live upon. That is the condition of the people! Deaths from famine and plague are all the results of poverty. How is that poverty brought about.? You know that 20 crores have to be paid every year in the shape of salaries, and pensions, etc. That is one large drain, no doubt, of the country's wealth; and you know that there is a much larger drain in the shape of the price that is paid for manufactures. Now, the total exports of the country are about 120 crores; the total imports are, roughly speaking 85 crores. You will find, then, that articles of foreign manufacture, of great and immense value, are flooding the markets of the whole country.

These have to be paid for. The raw-material of the country is exported and after being finished in other countries, it is brought back and we have to pay tremendous prices for it! That is another very large drain. It is eating the vitals of the Nation. Our position is easily understood when you find that the annual income of our people per head of population is only 2 pounds a year, as against 40 pounds in England. That being so, the question arises what are we to do? Of course, if we had a potent voice in the administration of the country, I am sure, we should have rejoiced to introduce Protection. We have it not. England did so when it was necessary to do so. The United States of America did so, Australia did so, Germany did so and every country has adopted Protection in order to let its nascent industries grow. But we are situated differently.<sup>[1]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup> Tandon, p.333

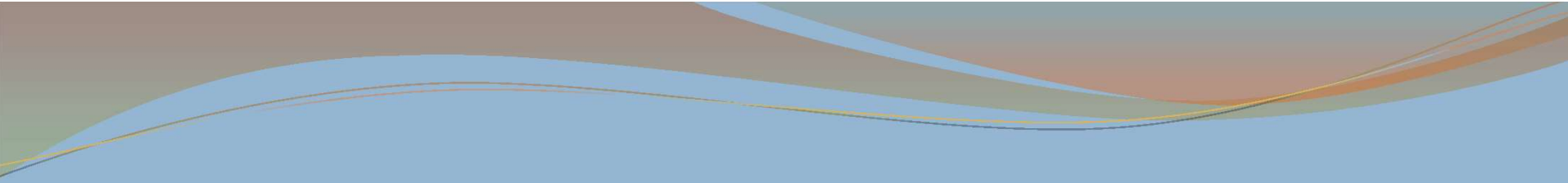
## **Surendranath <sup>[1]</sup>Banerjea's speech at the Caxton Hall in Westminster on July 13 1909**

The speech begins with a praise for late Marquis of Ripon<sup>[2]</sup>(later to be known to Indians as Ripon the Righteous) whose place is most illustrious.

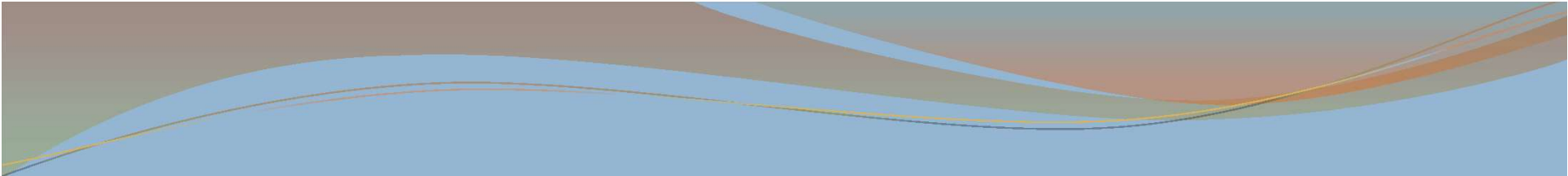
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<sup>[1]</sup> Surendranath one of the earliest architects of this modern Indian nation used the phrase “a nation (was) in making. He was elected leader of the Indian Association and Edited *Bengalee*.

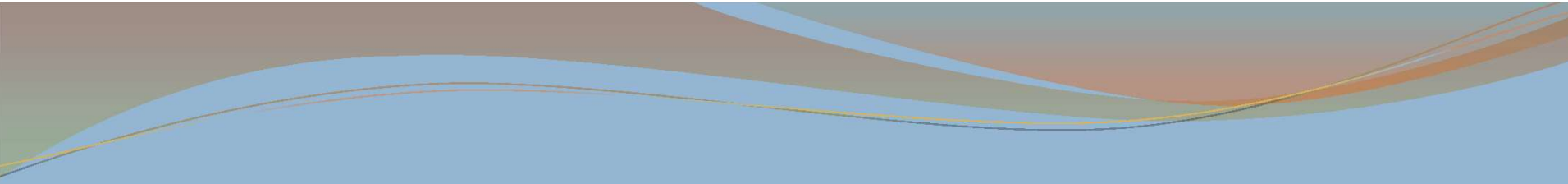
<sup>[2]</sup> Became the Viceroy of India in 1880, due to his effort in 1882 for the first time in its history, the Calcutta High Court had an Indian Chief Justice Romesh Chandra Mitter officiating for two months. See K.R.N. Swamy, *Mughals, Maharajas and the Mahatma*, HarperCollins Publishers , New Delhi 1997, p.211



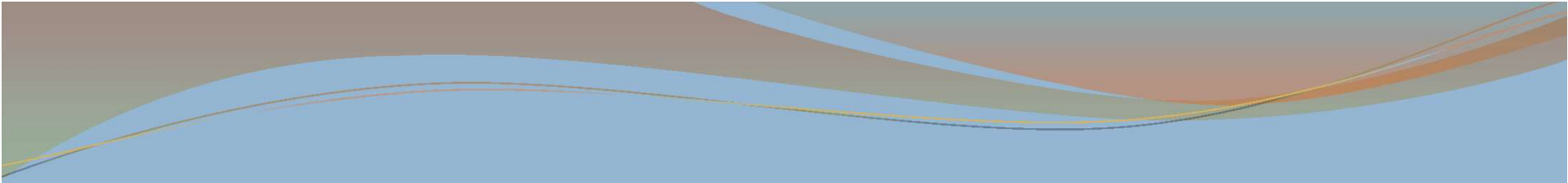
There you have the beginning of Indian unrest, which has now assumes such vast proportions. Can we overlook the wondrous change which has taken in Asia; changes have been brought about by the victories of Japan over Russia, which had strengthened the confidence of Asiatics in themselves. We have a mighty wave sweeping over Asia which carries with it high ideals and aspirations. India would be false to herself, her ancient culture which she so largely imbibed, and the education she has received if she did not feel revived in the example of oriental nations struggling for consideration and self-government.



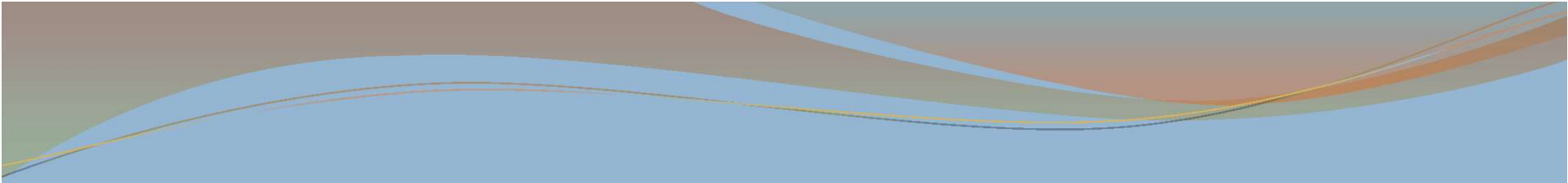
On the top of all this excitement came a period of reaction, in which the legitimate aspirations of the people were ignored and trifled with. The people were counted as nothing, we were counted as nothing, we were good for nothing, and we were to do nothing; everything was to be done for us. The generous policy of Lord Ripon was reversed. Local self-government was modified, and the universities, centres of humane and beneficent influence, were officialised, despite the protests of the people. Then on the top of all came the crowning piece of folly-the partition of Bengal.



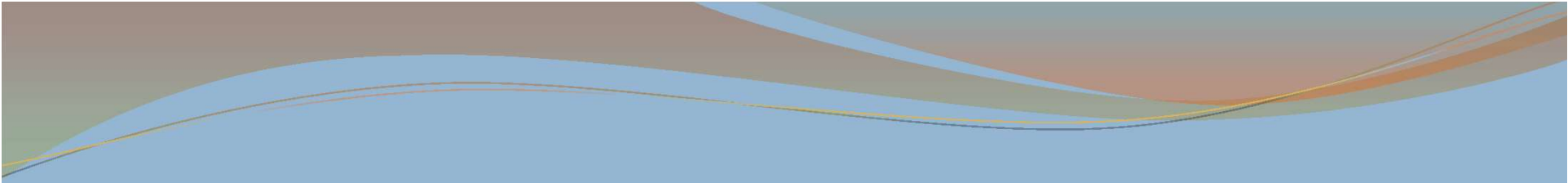
His speech also focus dissatisfaction of Lord Morley's reform scheme. We want definite control at least over some of the great departments of the State; over sanitation, education, and the public works department. Are you not aware that hundreds of thousands of my countrymen die every year from preventable diseases, such as malaria and cholera? ("Shameful") Yes, I think it is very shameful indeed. We have been pressing the importance of the matter upon the Government for years. We have cried aloud, but who will listen to us? If we had some effective control over finance, or at least over sanitary measures to be employed, I am convinced that we could present to some extent the appalling rate of mortality which desolates homes in Bengal. The expenditure on education is inadequate.



The great bulk of it is not being spent for education at all but upon inspection. As for elementary education, well, the less said the better. If we had any control over finances in regard to education we should devote the money to a useful and profitable purpose. We want the power of the purse and a definite and effective method of self-government. This we have not got; all the scheme does is- and let me be perfectly candid in the matter- to provide machinery by which representatives of the people would be in a position to bring to bear upon the Government not a direct influence but an indirect moral pressure.



His speech speaks partition as greatest grievance He says 'It is four years since the partition was accomplished, but the wound today is as fresh as if it were only inflicted yesterday.' Bengal he says is a bankrupt province, unable to meet its demands, and compelled to rely upon subsidies from the Government of India in order to supply its most urgent needs. If Bengal remained united she would have been financially prosperous and financial prosperity means prosperity all round.



For generations, the Hindus and Mahomedans have lived together in peace, but the partition has thrown the apple of discord into their midst, and has created an alienation of feeling which has led to great disturbances and breaches of the peace. Lord Ripon, of blessed memory, strongly condemned the partition on the ground that it had caused deep discontent among the population- meaning the population of which I have the honour to belong. ....

My countrymen are suffering, and in their name and upon their behalf I urge you to do all in your power to bring about a modification of the partition of Bengal. I am sure my appeal will not fall upon heelless ears, but will go forth from this meeting accompanied by a volume of sympathy which will have the effect of redressing our grievance and restoring many millions of my countrymen to contentment.<sup>[1]</sup>

Nationalist leaders made strategic interventions in various fields is visible from the above speeches.

**Plight of Indians clearly visible in speeches above.**

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<sup>[1]</sup> Tandon, p.267