RAMANATHAN OF CEYLON

THE LIFE OF SIR PONNAMBALAM RAMANATHAN

M. VYTHILINGAM

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SIR PONNAMBALAM RAMANATHAN

BY

M. VYTHILINGAM, B. A. (Lond.)

FORMERLY PRINCIPAL, HINDU COLLEGE, CHAVAKACHCHERI

IN TWO VOLUMES

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We cannot afford wantonly to lose sight of great men and memorable lives, and are bound to store up objects for admiration as far as may be.

—**Lord Acton**

He (Ramanathan) is a man; take him for all in all. We shall not look upon his like again.

—**Dr. Isaac Thambaiyah**

PREFACE

I owe my readers no apology for the belated appearance of Volume II of the Ramanathan Biography. Full six years have glided by since Volume I saw the light, and many a reader has been led to believe that Volume II might not appear at all.

To confess, the fault has not been mine. Rather it has been the fault of the times through which we have been passing. The last seven years have been a period of unmitigated trial for the printer and the publisher no less than to people in other walks of life. Printing-materials of quality could not be had either for love or for money, while inferior ones were scarce, and when available, had to be paid for through the nose.

Moreover, the general reading-public—the patron of the printed-word and the mainstay of the printer and the publisher—has shrunk beyond recognition. Reeling under the impact of unconscionable prices and ever-soaring living-costs and having little to spare for books, it has since turned to the radio, the cinema and the weekly-periodical for entertainment and for literary and cultural nutriment, while the few who look for a richer fare and think they can find it only in books have recourse to circulating-libraries. The upshot of it all has been that the demand for books has in recent decades suffered a sharp decline.

That being so, it was hardly to be expected that a printer or a publisher would place his money on a venture which he knew would prove a sure monetary liability.

In the predicament, I turned to the Ramanathan Trust for succour and the Directors nobly responded to my call and granted me a timely subsidy amounting to half the printing-costs in return for a share of the copies published. A few individual benefactors too aided the publication in their small way. To them and to the Ramanathan Trust, I render my grateful thanks.

My thanks are also due to the Printers, the Thirumakal Press, Chunnakam, in particular to the Manager, Mr. M. Sabaratnam who took a personal interest in the publication and being, moreover, a lynx-eyed proof-reader, saved the book from many blemishes and pit-falls.

79/B, Brown Road,
Jaffna.
November, 1977.

M. VYTHILINGAM

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CHAPTER I

THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN

Lord of the Universe, Supreme Spirit, Beneficent God, at Thy command only, I shall carry on this pilgrimage of life, for the good of the creatures and for Thy glory.

—Vedas

The world-movers, men who bring, as it were, a mass of magnetism into the world, whose spirit works in hundreds and in thousands, whose life ignites others with a spiritual fire—such men we always find have that spiritual back-ground. Their motive power comes from religion.

—Swami Vivekananda

The initiation of all wise or noble things comes, and must come, from individuals; generally at first from some one individual.

—An ancient maxim

A leader's greatest gift to his people is fearlessness.

—Hindu Shastras

I have come into Council entirely for the reason of preserving the interests of the public.

—Ramanathan

THE reformed Legislative Council of Ceylon commenced its sittings on 16th January, 1912 in a mood of buoyant optimism. It did so with good reason, inasmuch as a people who had for long centuries groaned under the heels of alien masters now woke up to the dawn of a new era of freedom and self-rule. They now espied the first streaks of morning light upon the distant horizon, having all these centuries groped and

grovelled in what had appeared to them to be an endless night of alien tyranny and oppression.

The constitution of 1911 opened a new epoch in our political history, the epoch of democratic freedom and popular sovereignty. It differed fundamentally from all its predecessors in this, that it promulgated for the first time after centuries of imperialist absolutism and repression the sovereign principle of popular participation in the government of the State. The first shots had now been fired at the bastions of alien despotism, which now showed deep cracks in its hitherto impregnable frontiers. The tide had now visibly turned and, given time and tenacity, the freedom-fighters would before long be masters of the citadel. The magnitude of the change can be gauged from a speech of Ramanathan in 1918: "For a number of years from 1912, the government acted in matters of legislation, finance and administration as if a new page had been opened for the benefit of the country."

The reformed legislature comprised 23 members, while its predecessor had had 15. Of the 23, 13 were Officials, representing the White bureaucracy and 10 were Unofficials, representing the people. Of the 10 Unofficials, 6 were nominated by the Governor and 4 were elected on a limited popular franchise. The elected members were Ramanathan, representing the Educated Ceylonese, Alexander Fairlie, the European Urban interests, Edward Rosling, the European Rural interests, and Hector William van Cuylenburg, the Burghers. The Reforms, though given in a niggardly and gingerly spirit and in the teeth of very strenuous opposition from British bureaucrats in the Island—Governor McCallum pronounced the Reforms "a colossal blunder on the part of the Imperial Parliament in committing the Government of the Colony to immature and inexperienced Ceylonese hands"—gave the people an immense accession of strength and

vitality and opened up to them a new vista of freedom and self-rule. It increased the number of Unofficial Members in the Legislature from six to ten. But more fundamental and far-reaching than that was the introduction for the first time since the Portuguese occupation of the Island in 1505, of the principle of popular election of members to the legislature, though in a limited measure. So radical and so progressive a measure was not contemplated at any time during the four centuries and more of Western rule. It was the first and most decisive step in the substitution of popular sovereignty for imperialist absolutism in the government of the State, the replacement of autocracy by democracy. Hitherto the people had been told, "You have nothing to do with laws but to obey them," and they had meekly submitted to the decree. But now they had learned to organise their power and exact obedience from the law-makers. It was a victory for the nation, inasmuch as these rights had been won by the concerted action of the nation. The flood-gates of democracy were now opened and the principle that the nation was master in its own house was fast gaining ground.

It was a period of great national awakening after the somnolence and passivity that followed the repressive rule of a succession of foreign powers. Under strong, sagacious and far-sighted leadership, the people had dispelled their fears, regained their self-respect, and waked up to a consciousness of their powers and potentialities, and their inalienable right to live and move and have their being as free citizens of a free country. The mood of tame and docile submission to the dictates of an alien ruler, of weak-kneed acquiescence in his policies and programmes was now superseded by one of inquiry, of active and defiant questioning on all matters of national import. The nation was not, as hitherto, prepared to take things on trust or

authority but was intent on putting all things to the touchstone of national good, to the test of truth, reason and justice, which have through the ages been the prime safeguards and the surest guarantees of strong, efficient and progressive rule, the *raison d'etre* of all government.

The country was firmly set on the high-road to material prosperity, intellectual advancement and social betterment by the joint efforts of the rulers and the ruled. All parts of the Island were linked up by a net-work of roads and, for the most part, of railways too. The agricultural possibilities of the country were widely exploited with a heavy inflow of Western capital and Indian labour. Ceylon tea, coconut, cinnamon and other spices were a byword for quality and excellence in international markets. Native entrepreneurs too joined in the scramble for wealth and enjoyed a goodly share of it. International trade and commerce gained a new potency. Big business houses sprang into existence, did brisk business and brought into the country a great abundance of wealth and social well-being. Colombo, by reason of her strategic position on the main ocean high-way, was much courted by international shipping. Thanks to the persistent efforts of the people's leaders, the traditional, age-old agriculture, the cultivation of paddy, cereals and other food-crops, which from time immemorial formed the back-bone of peasant economy, was freed from its many shackles, viz., the paddy-land tax, high water-rates, etc., and given a new impetus. Old dilapidated tanks and channels were renovated and restored by the State; large tracts of cultivable land which lay entombed in primeval jungle were reclaimed and brought under the plough. Consequently there was an air of material prosperity and social well-being all over the country.

Moreover, there was a rapid expansion of educational opportunity, in the wake of the high

priority given to it in national life. State aid, private philanthropy and missionary zeal, all combined and collaborated to equip the country with a network of good schools and colleges. A movement for the establishment of an autonomous and full-fledged university had already been set on foot and was fast forging ahead. The success of all this educational enterprise was reflected in the high and growing standards of intellectual proficiency which made this Island the envy of other Colonies in the Empire, reflected in the break-up of the Britisher's monopoly of the Executive Service and in the increasing absorption in it of the sons of the soil. It was seen in the persistent clamour on the part of the people for active participation in the governance of the country through the exercise of popular franchise, the control of the nation's finance and the general direction of national affairs.

The religion, culture and tradition of the people, hitherto regarded as of little account by the rulers, were brought to the forefront of State attention. Days sacred to the religion of the people were declared public holidays, and religious endowments, for long the prey of unscrupulous custodians, were granted State patronage and protection. Habits of thrift and orderly, purposeful living were encouraged, with the opening of the Post Office Savings Bank, the spread of education, the strengthening of the national economy and, above all, by the example of great leaders.

The Ceylon of 1879, the year in which Ramanathan first entered public life as nominated Member representing the Tamil-speaking people of the Island was a far cry from the Ceylon of 1911, when he entered it as elected Member for Ceylon.

It is not to be guilty of an over-statement to say that this massive transformation in the government of our country, this happy metamorphosis in our national life was pre-eminently the handiwork of one man of genius and vision who

from his early political career saw the light and, having seen it, announced it with heroic courage and passionate persistencee and, having announced it, worked for it with a pertinacity and dedication rare in the annals of leadership.

What he saw in the mystic depths of his heart was what the great seers and liberators of mankind have seen through the ages, that freedom is man's birthright, life's sole sustenance, that unregenerate man, in his pettiness and ignorance, in the barrenness of the spirit and the poverty of his morals, in his frantic chase of the will-o'-the-wisp of things material and mundane seeks to impose unholy dominion over his fellows and glories in so doing. He little knows that such ill-doing, such wanton outrage upon God's choicest gift to man, namely freedom, is an offence against the divine in man which being unquenchable, reasserts itself in the fulness of time and wreaks vengeance upon its wrong-doers. Rabindranath Tagore says pertinently: "Civilization must be judged and prized, not by the amount of power it has developed, but by how much it has evolved and given expression to, by its laws and institutions, the love of humanity. The first question and the last which it has to answer is whether and how far it recognises man more as a spirit than as a machine. Whenever some ancient civilization fell into decay and died, it was owing to causes which produced callousness of heart and led to the cheapening of man's worth; when either the State or some powerful group of men began to look upon the people as a mere instrument of their power; when by compelling weaker races to slavery and trying to keep them down by every means, man struck at the foundations of his greatness, his own love of freedom and fair-play. Civilization can never sustain itself upon cannibalism of any form. For that by which alone man is true can only be nourished by love and justice."

A passion for freedom, the freedom to live in accordance with his own inner lights, the freedom to live a free and full life in conformity with the laws of natural morality and the demands of a sound social order, untrammelled by the excesses of arbitrary authority is the main thread that runs through Ramanathan's whole career and gives it its unity and strength. He was a lusty wild-fowl that would not brook bondage but beat its wings remorselessly against its prison-bars and would not rest content until it had achieved its emancipation.

Early in life, under the inspiring direction of his spiritual mentor and the benign example of his noble ancestry, conviction had come to him that man's life here is to express the eternal and not the ephemeral, that man's abiding happiness and life's fulfilment lie not in accumulation but in renunciation, in giving himself and his all to causes higher and nobler than his own individual self, the cause of his country and the cause of humanity, which is also the cause of God.

He was imbued with one burning enthusiasm, one over-powering impulse, the impulse to wage unending war against the enemies of human freedom, against all things rank and gross in national life, against social injustice and State oppression, against all elements that impinged on man's right to live a full life unhampered by the hand of man. Fortune plays a great role in the making of a great name, and Ramanathan's was no exception. It is no exaggeration to say that she was lavish in her endowments to him. She gave him all a man could desire and that in a liberal measure. It was as if she had marked him out for a high destiny. And what is remarkable, he perfected these gifts with assiduous and interminable pains. In the whole history of our land, or for that matter in that of any other, it is impossible to discover another who worked out his life so ceaselessly and so remorselessly, who called every moment

of his waking life to such ruthless account as he, all in a supreme bid to improve the quality of human beings, to bring within the reach of every man, woman and child the good life that he had found.

First and foremost, Ramanathan was born to wealth and eminence, born of an ancient and illustrious family steeped in the best traditions of public and political life, and distinguished by reason of its stubborn independence, its piety and philanthropy. He and his two brothers grew up in the lap of luxury. Though their great father Gate Mudaliyar Ponnambalam had emptied himself of all his worldly resources in building temples and endowing them lavishly, in feeding and clothing the poor, and in numerous other acts of piety and munificence, the mother, a rich heiress and only daughter of Gate Mudaliyar Cumaraswamy, the first occupant of the Tamil Seat in the legislature, when it was first constituted in 1835, had left them a goodly legacy of many thousands a year. There was besides a doting grand-mother, a pious and cultured lady to pet and pamper them. Hence neither penury nor toil hampered their early growth. Contemporary records testify that they grew up like princes.

Ramanathan's education at Royal College under Dr. Boake, his undergraduate studies at Presidency College, Madras, under Dr. Thompson and C. W. Thamotharampillai, his study of law under Sir Richard Morgan, his political apprenticeship under his uncle Sir Muthu Coomaraswamy, and his study of religion and philosophy under Arulparananda Swamigal, his spiritual 'Guru', were a boon vouchsafed to few among men. To crown all these came the great Navalar who on his death-bed bequeathed the mantle of religious and cultural leadership to his chosen disciple.

Moreover, he was dowered with a handsome, magnetic, masterful personality, a leonine courage, inexhaustible energy, a princely bearing, eyes bright

and lustrous, countenance highly intellectual and above all the gift and glory of words—all of which marked him out as a born leader of men, born to sway the hearts of millions.

Ramanathan's entry into public life in 1879 opened a new era in our political history not so much by reason of the spate of beneficent and progressive legislation that followed in quick succession, though in itself it was a great achievement, as by the fact that he imparted to this sovereign but torpid assembly a new dynamism, a new vigour and enthusiasm, a new independence, a frankness and forthrightness of speech unknown and unheard of until his day. He imbued it with a new patriotic fervour and a new passion for good government and dispelled that craven fear that had for long held it in thrall to an alien ruler.

This freedom from fear was among the greatest of his gifts to the people, this intrepidity of spirit that defies danger at every turn and from every quarter. It was the one thing they so sorely needed at a time when they lay prostrate under the heels of alien masters, the one thing that was not within the power of every leader to give.

In an age in which the imperialist Englishman was an object of fear and trepidation, when the people instinctively shrank from his presence, here was a man who not merely stood up to him and challenged him at every turn but taught his people to do likewise. Cowards are never free men.

Foreign despotisms, he knew, are founded in fear and thrive on fear. It is by the use of brute and boisterous force that an alien master both imposes and perpetuates his stranglehold on subject peoples.

That was precisely the plight of the children of Mother Lanka during the four centuries of oppressive sway by the Westerner. It was Ramanathan's main contribution to the enrichment of our national life as it was his chief weapon for

the expulsion of the foreigner from the realm that he not merely exemplified in himself this superhuman quality of courage but inoculated his people with it and made heroes out of common clay.

In his undying hatred of foreign rule and his life-long struggle for the liberation of his people, he never appealed to the ruling power. Rather he demanded freedom as of indefeasible right and won that freedom, while yet he was alive. No wonder, Bepin Chandra Pal, the great Indian patriot and freedom-fighter described Ramanathan as "the bravest man in all Asia."

Sir Paul Pieris, speaking at the Ramanathan Centenary said, "For many decades past, two elemental forces, and no third dominated Ceylon. One was British imperialism at the height of its glory and holding absolute sway over an Empire on which the sun never set. The other was Ramanathan who swore undying hatred of imperialism in any shape or form and well-nigh single-handed, waged unending war against it and would not rest content until victory was won." That is how the great ones salute each other as they pass.

It was Ramanathan's peculiar distinction that, more than any other man, he grasped the vision of a Free Lanka and set himself with all the ardour of one who preaches a new religion to make his countrymen share in that vision. It is true that in 1864, a show of resistance to imperial excesses was made when the Unofficial Members resigned in a body on the question of votes for Imperial defence but it proved abortive for lack of unity and cohesion among them and the firm and resolute stand taken by the ruling power. Many and manifold were the questions that engrossed his attention but to none did he give more of himself than to the cause of his country's freedom. The series of speeches he delivered in the legislature and from public platforms, the memoranda he addressed to the Imperial Parliament

from time to time on the reform of the Constitution constitute some of the jewelled pages in the story of a lifetime dedicated to the shaping of his country's institutions. His sturdy independence, his firm and fearless advocacy of popular causes, his stubborn refusal to compromise truth, reason and justice in the handling of public affairs, his trenchant criticism of Government measures when they ran counter to national interests were a conspicuous bar to his success not merely in his brief official life where promotion to high office went by abject servility to the ruler but in political life too where an official steam-roller majority decided all issues at the ruler's bidding and gave the semblance of legality and justice to his worst excesses. It was no small part of his greatness as statesman and leader that he triumphed over all obstacles and transformed a sham and farcical legislature into a potent political force strong enough to withstand the onslaughts of unbridled imperialism and save the country from the depredations of a foreign ruler. It is truer to say that, on his entry, he found the legislature a feudal assembly peopled with the puppets and bondmen of an all-powerful potentate riding rough-shod over them all, and when he left, he left it a parliament of free men, custodians of their country's hearths and homes.

A brief survey of the political scene when in 1879 Ramanathan first entered it will help a better understanding of the forces he had to contend with, the obstacles he had to surmount. The Government was, as has been said, a centralised despotism. Like the Bourbon despots of old, the Governor was the sovereign head of the State, the sole repository of all power over life and death, the fountain-head of all legislative and executive authority.

It has been the characteristic and continuing tradition of despotisms through the ages to centralise

the administration and gather up in their own hands all the strands and skeins of power over all things big and small and by so doing, keep a stranglehold upon the lives and destinies of subject peoples. They reduce freedom at the circumference in order to increase power and conformity at the centre. Colombo was made the hub of the administrative machine, the pivot of all political and bureaucratic activity, from which there went forth edicts to every nook and corner of the country. Local Government institutions existed only in big cities and were subjected to the rigid control of the central authority. The central legislature comprised two categories of members, the Officials and the Unofficials. The former of whom there were 9, were nominees of the Governor chosen from among the governing hierarchy, and the latter of whom there were six were also nominees of the Governor himself, chosen from among the people, and the White planters and business magnates. The Governor was the presiding deity, the autocrat invested with absolute authority. He was the resplendant luminary round whom all his satellites, the Official and the Unofficial Members, moved in obedient and ordered array. The Official Members were there only to do his bidding. They placed their conscience and their honour at his service and had perforce to think and to speak and to vote as his whim dictated. Any departure from the prescribed pattern of legislative conduct and action would be visited upon the transgressor with dire penalties.

Moreover, the Officials formed the majority and in an assembly in which all questions of national import were decided not on their merits—for that would prove disastrous to imperial interests—but rather on the extent to which they would subserve the interests of the ruling power; decided by a majority vote so readily provided by these Officials and so sacrosanct and so dear

to the heart of the Englishman. No imperialist despotism, however vile or fiendish, has ever existed through the ages but has contrived to give its actions, iniquitous and inhuman though they be, a semblance, a veneer, a facade of reason and legality. It is this self-same fetish, that the majority, whatever its complexion or composition, has always the monopoly of wisdom, the wisdom to determine unerringly all questions of right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust that during his centuries of imperial sway the Britisher used with deadly effect on subject peoples, to hoodwink them and maintain his strangle-hold on them, while yet he salved his conscience and justified his most monstrous misdeeds before a credulous and unsuspecting world. It is these self-same *mantras* and *tantras* that on the cessation of his rule, he foisted on them, as his precious legacy, with results that have proved so catastrophic to the peace and security of nations and the happiness of mankind.

These Official members could with perfect impunity, nay, with great acceptance, doze off all the time that matters of high moment were being thrashed out at the council board but subject to the one condition, one all-important, over-riding proviso that at voting time they were not merely wide awake, but voted as His Excellency dictated. Such docility, such utter self-immolation, such abject surrender of one's manhood, though pernicious to the inner man, brought in rich dividends to the outer. A knighthood or a C. M. G'ship, a laudatory entry in the imperial service register, a public farewell—wherein both the rulers and the ruled vied with each another in holding them up to public applause and for the edification of posterity as perfect patterns of His Imperial Majesty's aides, staunch and stalwart bearers of the White man's burden —and a handsome pension to boot were their portion at the time of retirement.

Ramanathan bemoans the pathetic plight to which the self-willed autocrat reduced his minions in both the legislative and executive services and their meek and dumb submission to it so long as it brought them the only thing that mattered to them, worldly aggrandisement and the smiles of the autocrat. They were told, "Yours is not to question why but to do as you are told. You may lose your soul, but you will certainly gain the world." "When I entered the Council in 1879, I saw with great regret that some of my Official friends, whom I knew to be just, independent and loyal, were treated like machines, to register the wishes of the Governor of the Island. I could not understand how intelligent men who had gathered experience in the country after many years of contact with the people of the country, could be expected to sit with gagged mouths in an assembly where it was generally believed every Member had a right to speak. I think it is desecration of humanity to expect the Official Members to sit silent in their seats. They, noble men, have never once expressed their dissatisfaction to the people. I sympathise with them and hope the time will come when Your Excellency, who has given us many a measure of relief will permit them to speak according to their conscience, and do their duty without fear or favour. It will be a very good thing for the country if we have the assistance of such men in the solution of the questions that come before this Council. Both the people of Ceylon and the officers themselves will be glad if an opportunity is given to them to play their parts as well as they can."

Then came the Unofficials who too were the nominees of the Governor but with a difference, in that they were chosen not from the bureaucracy but from among the people. It was notorious that Governors, true to imperial tradition, appointed only dummies to Unofficial Seats and treated them

no better than robots to register their own wishes. Ramanathan in exposing the hollowness of the Britisher's claim that the people were adequately represented in the legislature by Unofficial Members told Governor Sir John Anderson in the legislature: "Governors have been known to appoint dummies as Unofficial Members. Once a man, who was good and wealthy and yet humble, was invited to Queen's House and told, 'Mr....., I want to offer you a seat in the Council. Will you accept it?' The man was quite alarmed. He stammered, 'I cannot speak, Sir,' 'Ah' said the Governor, 'that is the man I want.' He was appointed. The Governor did not know, or ignored the fact that parliamentary government means government of the people by the representatives of the people, by speaking and discussing with each other. The man appointed, not being able to speak, and not knowing his rights and obligations, once seconded a motion with three words, and when the time came for a division, after a long debate, he deserted the mover and the rest of the Unofficials and voted with the Officials. Another Governor found an Unofficial Member a little too outspoken during the term of five years he served in Council; but the people longed to have him back for another term of five years and held a great public meeting at the Town Hall under the presidency of an inoffensive doctor, who, by his amiability and undoubted ability as a surgeon, commanded the esteem of the European residents here. He was a Government official too. The promoters of the public meeting thought his presiding would convince the Governor as to the desirability of the reappointment of their favourite. But the Governor deemed it fit to offer the seat to the peaceful doctor, who, dazzled by the honour, did not consider the morality of his accepting it without reference to the promoters of the meeting. He accepted the offer. Then the Governor wrote a handsome letter to the

retiring member acknowledging his independence and services, but regretting that, as it was not the policy of the Government to re-appoint a retiring member, he was sorry he could not re-appoint him. But when the doctor's term of five years ended, the same Governor re-appointed him for another term of five years. Owing to such malpractices, the people do not care to leave in the hands of the Governor the right to nominate the members who should represent them. It is viewed with the greatest alarm. Often men well-known to be greedy of honours and other favours at the hands of the Government have been shamelessly appointed as the representatives of the people."

—Hansard 1918, December 11

The position of these Unofficial Members was unhappily an unenviable one. They were like men caught between two fires. On the one side, there was the all-powerful Governor who made them and could at will un-make them, if ever by a loud or clamorous espousal of popular causes they forfeited His Excellency's goodwill and confidence; and on the other, there were the people of whose interests they were the ostensible guardians and watch-dogs. They were the Dr. Jekylls and Mr. Hydes of our political history, some of whom, unable to cope with the dual roles, fell between two stools.

They were for the most part men of honour, paragons of virtue who would have made great leaders worthy of their great heritage and tradition, but for one fatal flaw, one unconquerable frailty, namely consuming self-interest which negatived and nullified every virtue they could lay claim to. Self-interest as a rule of conduct, with its hideous progeny, a frantic desire to grind one's own axe at all times and under all conditions, whatever the cost to the nation, a feeble fancy for things that glitter, a craving to show oneself a shade better than one's neighbour, though shared by all mankind,

is marked in the lower strata of human society and most pronounced in subject peoples. It is this quality that an alien ruler exploits unmercifully. And the British were not slow to do this. By official blandishments or by dangling before them the much-prized imperial honours, by holding out hopes of high preferment for them and their kin or by adroitly sowing the seeds of discord and dissension among them or by timely reminders of the five-year rule, which hung over them like a Damoclean sword, in short, by playing all-too-freely and remorselessly upon an all-too-human frailty, self-interest, which, alas! renders subject peoples an easy prey to every passing potentate and unfits them for any kind of manly, generous, disinterested activity, the foreign ruler had his own way with the government of subject peoples. It is this, the appeal to self-interest, that has been the time-honoured strategy, the repertoire of imperialists, the magic wand that subdues and subjugates natures, otherwise noble, high-minded and patriotic, and makes them abject slaves in the hands of imperial masters. Such, alas! is the power of self-interest over the mind of subject humanity that even saints are known to quail before it. And none have known its potency more than imperialists, as none have exploited it more ruthlessly than they.

Exemplars of integrity, pillars of patriotism, pledged to serve their people with every resource at their command, they lose their manhood, their individuality and independence and are by a strange and subtle alchemy transformed over-night into puppets and stooges of the ruling power. Stoogery has since become a fashionable cult, a finished art, and masquerades as a choice accomplishment, a glittering symbol of success and worldly wisdom. No wonder, it has commanded a goodly following through the ages. Saints become sinners, friends become foes, saviours become enslavers, redeemers become renegades; public life becomes muddied and

contaminated, and the people, who in the hey-day of self-rule formed a compact and consolidated unit capable of resisting a foreign aggressor, are through its insidious play broken up into numberless fragments and splinter-groups engaged in suicidal strife, while the enemy at the door contrives and consummates the ruin of them all. Such has been the tragic history of stoogery in the lives of individuals as of nations. As the history of the world is but the biographies of great men, so is the history of imperialism, of human subjection and servitude but the chronicle of great betrayals. Had leaders been true to themselves and their professions, true to the trust their peoples had reposed in them; had they not given self-interest a full career, but worked with sincerity and dedication, as became great leaders, imperialism with all its attendant horrors and iniquities would be non-existent, the ship-wreck of free peoples and nations, the frightful poverty and destitution that stalk the land, the wholesale spoliation and plunder that ensue, the ruin of the people's morale, the hideous attrocities and brutalities perpetrated in the name of law and order, the woes and lamentations of innocents, the cries of despair and anguish that rend the air, the interminable intrigues, wars and conflicts that endanger national peace and security and the happiness of mankind; in short the complete collapse of all things a people hold dear. No people were ever subdued or enslaved but by the perfidy of their professed saviours. Unbridled self-interest in the trusted but often treacherous champions of human rights and liberties and the quick and adroit exploitation of it by imperialist bosses have been the bane of human freedom and the undoing of individuals and nations. Man has through the ages encountered many enemies and triumphed over them all, but in his encounter with self-interest, he has bitten the dust. Mounting materialism and its invariable concomitant, the progressive decline of spiritual and moral values,

which alone give life its purpose and meaning, its fruition and fulfilment, have resulted in the complete overthrow of human civilisation and the fall of man.—

That, alas, has been the tragedy of subject peoples the world over, the wholesale demoralisation, the utter degradation and final extinction of peoples who as free citizens of a free country would be the prototypes of manly virtue and heroic achievement, the proud exemplars of selfless and patriotic endeavour. Such was precisely the plight of SriLanka during the four centuries of Western imperialism. And such indeed would have been the unending lot of subject humanity through the ages, had not a benign Providence in the abundance of His mercy thrown up from time to time godlike men and women with a sense of mission to strike the oppressor down and restore His sovereignty upon earth. In a world wherein many causes have failed, the cause of human freedom alone never did fail.

With the Unofficial Members thus schooled and shaped into fulsome servility, obsequious acquiescence in the Governor's policies and programmes became synonymous with public virtue and private self-interest. His Excellency's smiles were worth them a fortune. Rightly so. Had he not led them out of the obscurity that had been their portion into the limelight of national celebrity? Did they not owe him their seats in that august assembly? Was it not to him that they looked up for their continued hold of that hallowed receptacle? Did not the plums of the public service fall to the lot of those dear and near to them through his benign favour and munificence? If by some stroke of good fortune, they could wend their way to the innermost sanctum of His Excellency's capacious heart, would he not give tangible evidence of his appreciation of their loyalty and devotion to their most Gracious Sovereign the King-Emperor in the award of a knighthood, which with the

recipient, was the acme of human achievement? Would not these honorifics and their concomitant trappings and trimmings, their bands and buckles, their frills and frippery entitle them to the awe and adoration of multitudes, to the seats of honour upon the high dais in any social event, to the pandals and processions, to the garlands and bouquets, to the beating of drums and the blaring of trumpets on ceremonial occasions? Would not their names be inscribed in letters of gold and in the pages of history for posterity to ponder and cherish? Would they not be hailed as the saviours and redeemers of an enslaved people crying for liberation? It was considerations of this sort that dominated their minds and dictated their conduct. It was doubtful if amidst the jostle and stampede of such thronging passions and emotions, patriotism could find breathing room in their parched and shrunken anatomy.

Worldly wise that they eminently were, they knew wherein their safety lay, knew that the only course wisdom dictated was to belaud the Governor's rule at every conceivable opportunity both from public platforms and within the Council chamber, to keep mum if the Governor's proposals ran counter to national interests, and if ever they conduced to the public good, to smother His Excellency with a profusion of praises and platitudes, one extolling his exemplary wisdom and sagacity, another, his vision and statesmanship, and yet another, his single-minded devotion and dedication to the service of a people who stood in dire need of his long-drawn tutelage. Heaven known if ever they spared a thought for the blighting misery and squalor, the privations and hardships they saw around them, for the multiplicity of ills that afflicted the body politic, for the wide-spread feeling of helplessness and despair that undermined the morale of the nation. It was doubtful if ever they turned the pages of the blue-books or made one sincere and

earnest effort to study and examine a bill in all its bearings or consider seriously what repercussions the proposed measure would have upon the fortunes of the nation.

The magnificent and illuminated *pandals* they reared for the reception of His Excellency and retinue, the rich and sumptuous carpets they spread out for the tread of His Excellency's tender soles, the forks and spoons they hammered out of solid gold to quicken His Excellency's dull appetite, the profuse panegyrics with which they regaled his ears, the cart-loads of garlands and bouquets with which they decked and overwhelmed him, the princely pomp and pageantry that marked the event—if these tell a tale, it is that servitude had seeped through every nerve and fibre of their being. Could any prince or potentate, however callous or inhuman, resist the appeal of such solicitude and adulation? Would he not mark them down for choice favours, which meant much in terms of place and preferment both for themselves and their numerous progeny of dependants and hangers-on?

Such was precisely the pattern of manhood that every ruling power from the dark days of Western colonialism down to our own more enlightened times has harnessed to the sublime service of sheltering subject humanity from the inroads of arrogant imperialism. And such was the political scene in which Ramanathan's lot was cast, when in 1879 as a lusty and luminous youth of twenty-eight, with an already enviable reputation at the metropolitan bar, he entered the portals of his country's supreme legislature, in succession to his illustrious uncle Sir Muthucoomaraswamy.

Undaunted, unflinching, with the heart of a lion and the fire of a patriot, with but one lodestar to guide his destiny, namely, service and self-sacrifice, this indomitable youth sped on his impetuous course, unruffled by praise or blame, and

impelled by one supreme ideal, governed by one over-mastering purpose, the expulsion of the foreigner from the realm and the liberation of his people from the thraldom of alien domination.

His maiden speech at the early age of twenty-eight—a tribute to his uncommon precocity, sagacity and staunch independence—was a challenge he flung in the face of the governing hierarchy. It altered radically the whole tone and trend of Ceylon politics from one of tame acquiescence or at best, mild murmur of dissent to one of gallant and vigorous resistance to any Government measure, if in the smallest measure it impinged on people's rights. Its opening words were, "I regret I cannot give my consent to the Bill before the House. Many of its provisions are oppressive to the people." He contended that, while all bills are meant to be palliative, he saw no reason why this should be punitive. It was obviously an inauspicious beginning for a youth on the threshold of his career, but the words are a keynote to his personality and his whole career as spokesman and watch-dog of the nation. To many it seemed incredible that a youth in his twenties could be so forthright, so precipitate and so challenging in addressing an assembly of august elders comprising the cream of the governing hierarchy and the nation's supposed leadership, an assembly in which "I consent to the Bill before the House," was more the hallowed rule than the exception. All looked askance at this unwonted insolence, but, strange to say, Ramanathan saw nothing strange or unbecoming in his speech or demeanour. A spade was always a spade with him. Not for the world would he call it by any other name. He had a case to state and had stated it with the frankness and forthrightness proper to his station. It was for that that assembly was set up, to discover the truth by plain-speaking, by free and unfettered discussion of national problems, not to take things

on trust nor be over-awed by great names or reputations. A trained and resourceful lawyer and a debater of incomparable force and fire that he eminently was, he proved his case to the hilt and won the day. It was evident ere long that the autocrat's path was not to be strewn with roses. There was no question of His Excellency's carrying the whole House before him or of issues, big and small, being decided without ado, amid the beaming smiles and approbations of complaisant and fawning camp-followers. For here was a youth who would not be browbeaten nor bow his head before orthodox opinion or established dignitaries, but would probe every question to its depths with microscopic subtlety, submit every bill to the touchstone of public good, view every issue from the stand-point of the under-dog; a spokesman who cared only for the reign of truth, reason and justice, of humanity and kindly-dealing in the government of human society. He could not have acted otherwise. Born in a family steeped for long centuries in the best traditions of public and political life, shaped and moulded by the choicest spirits of the age, saturated with the best thought of the ages, taught from his tenderest years to regard all governmental activity as but a holy calling demanding the exercise of the highest powers in man, no wonder he was in his day acclaimed the beau ideal of statesman and leader, the epitome of the finest characteristics of a race long since vanished. Unaided, he could stand up to the whole House, he who was master of his subject, a spokesman of shattering, withering force, a patriot with a sense of mission, a crusader in the cause of human freedom, possessed of a courage and intrepidity rare in the annals of leadership. The upshot of it all was that during his first spell of thirteen years as legislator, there was a systematic cleansing, a sort of spring-cleaning in which no dark and dusty corner of national life escaped the watchful eye and

the ubiquitous broom of this radical and resolute reformer. The Statute Book was enriched by an unprecedented spate of beneficent and far-reaching legislation affecting every field of national activity. National life gained a new potency and vigour, when it was purged of the multitudinous ills that had accumulated over the centuries of foreign rule and clogged its blood-stream. The nation now breathed a freer, fresher air and regained greater pride and confidence in its heritage and capacity.

He next proceeded to probe the causes of the malaise that had long afflicted the body politic, undermined the manhood of his country, that had made of men imbeciles ready to bend their knees before insolent might, ready to cringe and crawl, fawn on and adulate an alien interloper, when manhood dictated that they should stand up to him like heroes and resist him at every turn.

With the unerring wisdom and insight of a born seer, he divined the cause of such wholesale degradation, such widespread demoralisation and decrepitude to be none other than subjection to alien rule, the loss of national freedom. He knew that of the many blessings vouchsafed to man by the Lord of All Mercies, by far the greatest, the noblest and the best is liberty. The words of the great historian and political philosopher, Lord Acton, continued to ring in his ears: *"Liberty is not a means to a higher political end. It is itself the highest political end..... A generous spirit prefers that his country should be poor, and weak, and of no account, but free, rather than powerful, prosperous, and enslaved."* Centuries of servitude to Western imperialism had killed the people's souls and reduced men to mere phantoms and puppets of the ruling power rather than full-blooded, valorous and stout-hearted men who would not quail nor quiver before an alien oppressor. It had inured them to the belief that servitude was the law of life, the pre-destined lot of natural man. Like the long-term prisoner who

hugged his prison-cell and would not come out of it even after he had served his term, they too would not merely not shake off the shackles of subjection, but what was worse, were in love with them. Subject peoples, he knew, never grow to their full stature but like plants choked up and smothered on every side by brambles and bushes and bereft of the radiant sun and the vivifying stream, slowly wither away and perish. Had he not learned from the Greek philosopher Longinus, that "Servitude, though it be even righteous, is the cage of the soul, and a public prison-house," or from Lincoln that "No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent," or from Rousseau, that "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains?" It is because we have of our own free will surrendered our manhood and consented to be underlings that the foreigner rides upon our backs. It was the pith and marrow of his political creed, that freedom is man's birthright, God's choicest gift to mortal man, the *raison d'etre* of human existence upon this planet, the sole basis and foundation on which a healthy, strong, vigorous and progressive national society could be built, but that unregenerate man had through sheer stupidity and sloth, through lack of self-respect and manly courage, through ignorance of life's meaning and purpose surrendered it to his fellowmen in other lands with results that have proved the ruin of himself and his progeny and of the happiness of mankind. It recalls Gandhiji's diatribe against British rule in India: "It is satanic in that it has made India poorer in wealth, in manliness, in godliness and in her sons' power to defend themselves."

From that day, he was passionate in the pursuit of his ideal, the expulsion of the foreigner from the realm and the re-establishment of his country's freedom and sovereignty on firm and secure foundations. He told Governors who were intolerant of public opinion and sought to stifle criticism

from Unofficial Members of the Legislature: "It is obvious that the Legislative Council was made for the people of Ceylon and that the people of Ceylon were not made for the glory and the honour of the Legislative Council. Therefore, if the public have taken the trouble to state their grievances, Honourable Members will feel that they, as the custodians of the interests and moneys of the public of Ceylon, should give their best consideration to the petitions and try to find out a remedy for the grievances complained of, even as they would willingly and cheerfully find out a remedy where the welfare of some members of their own family is at stake. It will be a good thing for Ceylon, if the Government will recognise its position as the position of a father to his children in regard to the public. The public are entitled to come before the Government with their wrongs for redress and it is unmistakably the duty of Government to lend its ear cheerfully and patiently to the recitation of their story and to work out a remedy in mitigation of the wrongs they complain of." What high and noble sentiments! How lofty and sublime, his conception of the role of governments, the duties and responsibilities of the rulers of men! To a world whose moral and spiritual standards had sunk so low as to make rulers believe that legislatures and parliaments exist primarily for their own aggrandisement and glorification, that the people are but the footstools of their power and pre-eminence, that brute-force was the best answer to legitimate grievances, he proclaimed the contrary gospel that these institutions exist solely for the ruled; that government should be as a father to his children, should give a patient hearing to the people's wrongs and grievances and spare no pains to bring them redress, that force is no arbitrament in the settlement of national or international disputes. That in a nutshell was his political creed, his political testament. It was

this creed that he assiduously lived up to, and sought all his life to instil in the minds of arrogant and obscurantist foreigners.

But the means be employed for the achievement of his country's freedom were not the ones commonly employed by freedom-fighters the world over, means for the most part negative, nihilistic, unwholesome, the means of coercion or aggression, but rather the positive, the creative, the more wholesome and civilised means of persuasion and conversion, by a friendly appeal to man's finer sense, to man's nobler instincts. By heredity and upbringing, profoundly religious and philosophic, he recoiled from all things that smacked of violence in any shape or form. It was one of his deepest convictions that no man is intrinsically or irredeemably evil but that there is in him a spark of the divine, which, if gently nursed and fanned, can be quickened into a flame, that he would respond to a persistent and moving appeal to reason and good sense, to humanity and kindly-dealing. Acting upon this conviction and placing his reliance on soul-force rather than brute-force, he achieved a measure of success seldom vouchsafed to other freedom-fighters who reposed their trust in the sword or the bayonet. With him, means were as important as ends. He would not soil his hands with the blood of tyrants nor wade through slaughter to a throne. Tyranny and oppression in any form are a negation of life and must therefore be rooted out, if life is to find fulfilment. But the means to achieve this great end is not force or violence, for the remedy would be worse than the disease, but rather enabling the oppressor to see the light by the exercise of love and goodwill and a constant reminder that his position is by no means tenable, inasmuch as it is founded in untruth, unreason and injustice. The long and speedy succession of reforms culminating in the Donoughmore Reforms was a vindication of his ends and means.

On matters political, there was then hardly any collective or concerted thinking. The field was virtually an arid desert. To hoe the land and fertilize the soil, to sow the seed and quicken it into life, he founded the Ceylon National Association, roped in the best spirits of the age, woke them up from their age-old slumber, whipped them up into a realisation of their great and ancient heritage and their present degradation and made national freedom the burning question of the day and the battle-cry of the nation. He had known two recipes for freedom: "Educate that you may be free," and "Organize that you may be strong." His astute mind made a synthesis of the two and evolved a third: "Educate and organize that you may be strong and free." Under the auspices of the Ceylon National Association, he called to his aid the intelligentzia of the nation, gathered them together under one common roof and united them in one common enthusiasm, in one common resolve, the achievement of national freedom and the rehabilitation of Mother Lanka. From day to day, and from month to month, he taught them politics. impressed upon them the primacy of political freedom, its paramountcy in the hierarchy of national values and succeeded, as few could, in rallying them all round one common banner and launching them on a common crusade for national freedom, with himself as its spokesman and spear-head. The great hosts of freedom-fighters and political fire-eaters who filled the first few decades of the century graduated either at his school or at his brother Arunachalam's. The memoranda he submitted to the Imperial parliament from time to time on this vexed question, wherein he made out an unanswerable case for the reform of the constitution and the extension of the people's rights are models of political thought and insight, of close and forceful reasoning, all lucidly expressed. They reveal a mind that had pondered long and

deep on the eternal questions of right and wrong in the government of human society, a mind that was saturated with the wisdom of the ages, a mind in which there burnt the fire of the patriot and the frenzy of the freedom-fighter.

He gave of his best to everything he took in hand—*Nullum tetigit quod non ornavit* was the tribute of Governor Sir Herbert Stanley—but to none else did he give more of himself than to the good governance of his country. For none knew more than he that the one indispensable condition, the sole pre-requisite of a country's happiness and well-being is good government; and good government is possible of attainment only when the best of men are at the helm. By the best of men, he meant the most virtuous, the most honourable, the most enlightened, the most dedicated.

He would wrestle with the problems of State at all hours of the day and night in a library packed with all the latest and the best literature on the subject before him, ponder upon them in the small hours of the morning, all in a supreme endeavour to discover for them the best and most fruitful solution, with but one end to serve, one dominant and over-riding purpose to fulfil, viz, to secure for the people the greatest good that was within the ingenuity of man to achieve. All this he did in days when politics carried with it neither salaries nor emoluments, neither patronage nor pensions, when the scions of great families, for the most part men of talent and learning, of culture and character, of easy means and gallant patriotism sought entry into the councils of state with no expectations of material reward or personal glory but for the mere love of their country, and the service of man. Had he, as a lawyer in the forefront of his profession and in the hey-day of great lawyers and equally great judges, given to its pursuit a fraction of the time and energy that

he expended in the service of his country, he would indubitably have scaled its topmost heights, amassed a princely fortune, lived his days in stately splendour and magnificence, and left his children a lordly legacy instead of the meagre pittance that was their portion. But the gods had not made him for that. Rather, had they marked him for a higher destiny, for service and sacrifice, for incessant and indefatigable toil in the cause of human happiness and well-being, in leaving the world better than he found it, rather than in the vulgar pursuit of wealth, in piling up heaps of filthy lucre and glorying in all that tinsel glitter, which as a man of God, he knew, leads man nowhither but to dusty death and damnation. Accumulation of wealth and wallowing in its immensity had no place in the scheme of life as he conceived it, though paradoxically none earned money more assiduously or lived more frugally, even austerely, or treasured every penny of his earnings more sedulously. In fact, the key-note of his advice not merely to his children but to the many who served him whether in the office or the farm, in his schools or colleges, his many temples or plantations was that they should exercise the most rigid economy in the use of both money and time. None other abhorred extravagance or waste in any shape or form or exercised greater thrift of time or money than he. Waste not, want not, was his maxim through life. Even in his correspondence with persons big and small, he used paper of the commonest quality and that sparingly, with none of the inscriptions or embellishments that proclaim the eminence of the writer. But with all this parsimony, this ruthless elimination of all forms of waste, there went a liberality, a largesse and munificence, a profusion and prodigality in giving away that surpassed anything this country has ever known or for that matter, any other country, if the gift were reckoned in proportion to the wealth of the

giver. Worthy causes, deserving persons found in him a ready and lavish giver.

But why this frantic addiction to money, this incessant toil in its acquisition. To live in regal spendour or to parade it before the world or to gratify the senses? By no means. It would be sacrilege even to suspect that. It was solely and simply to dedicate the wealth so painfully earned and so anxiously and vigilantly husbanded, to the service of his people and his God.

He sought his wealth not in the sordid pursuits of man's commerce with his fellow-men, but rather from Mother Earth's unsullied bounty. From early youth, he was an indefatigable planter and brought several hundreds of goodly acres under coconut and in advanced age, ploughed a thousand acres of paddy, conserved the incomes so derived with meticulous care, after all legitimate calls had been duly answered. But strange to say, he never deemed that wealth his own. "It is Parameshwaran's" he would say. It was God's wealth given him on trust, not to be frittered away in frivolous pursuits, in sense-gratification or self-glorification but rather to be used in the service of his fellow-men and for the glory of his Creator. Not even his worst critics would say that he spent any part of his immense wealth either on himself or the members of his family except to satisfy the barest needs of life. Such frugality, such abstinence, such extreme self-denial, such scrupulous handling of one's resources allied to such lavish giving is rare in the annals of philanthropy or leadership. Great wealth, generally, goes with great attachments and pins man down to the earth and all things earthy and makes him forget the finer graces of life and the higher values of the spirit. It is easier, as Christ said, "for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven." It is extraordinary how Ramanathan

rose superior to all the perils and snares of wealth and would not permit himself to be oppressed or smothered by it. He exercised a supreme detachment, which enabled him to look upon his wealth not as an end, as plutocrats are tempted to do, but merely and solely as a means to an end, the end being the unstinted service of man and the fulfilment of the purpose of God.

The imperialist was at his wit's end to reply to Ramanathan's animadversions upon the wrongs and injustices of foreign rule. He knew that a new situation, potentially perilous to imperial interests was shaping itself. It rankled within him to see this stormy petrel of Ceylon politics, this intrepid fighter in the cause of his country's freedom, far from being content with crossing swords with him over the floor of the legislature, take the extreme step of organising the nation into a political conclave and questioning the validity and legality of his rule over an alien people; and worse still, seeking redress for national wrongs and shortcomings not from British bureaucrats in the Island but rather from Imperial statesmen at Whitehall. It was obviously a challenging, soul-searching situation that had to be baulked if British rule was to endure.

The resourceful imperialist had his own cards to play, and he played them with consummate skill and subtlety. This fire-brand, this arch-enemy of British rule in the Island, had, on the sufferance of the ruler, sat in the legislature for thirteen long years and had done all the damage one could to British prestige and supremacy. It was high time he was shunted out. He hit upon a novel plan, a master-plan at that; he brought in a rule hitherto unheard-of, whereby no Unofficial Member, however talented and popular, could hold his Seat for more than five years. To assuage public opinion which, he knew, would be infuriated, he appointed Ramanathan to the office of Solicitor-General, an

office, as all high offices were, then reserved for the ruling caste.

Ramanathan was trumped out of the political scene by an ingenious artifice of the Britisher. Devoid of such fertility and resource, how could the wily Britisher have administered a vast and far-flung empire? On second thoughts, Ramanathan accepted the offer in the belief that he would be able to come back to the Legislative Council as Attorney-General, which indeed, he did in 1904, 1905 and 1906. But the imperialist had achieved his ignoble purpose. He had had his revenge, pulled the canker from out of the imperial rose-bud, taken the wind from out of the country's political sails. Nay, he could now sit back and relax a little, for he had rid the legislature of the one man who was a veritable thorn in his side, the one man whom he dreaded most.

Ramanathan was too good for the office of Solicitor-General. Governor Ridgeway likened him to a race-horse yoked to a bullock-cart. During the thirteen years that Ramanathan languished at the Solicitor's desk, denied every prospect of promotion but discharging his duties with exemplary efficiency and thoroughness, as was his wont in everything he undertook, though with a fraction of his talent and energy, and devoting all the rest of it to a pursuit that was dearest and nearest to his heart, the passionate study and absorption of the world's heritage of religious and philosophic thought, public life in the country lost its buoyancy and vigour, its exuberant patriotism and joie d'vivre and relapsed once again into its former state of lethargy and stupor.

With Ramanathan's retirement from the Public Service and his return from his extended lecture tour in America, public life once again entered upon a new phase of spirited and beneficent activity. The Ceylon National Association, Ramanathan's creation in the eighteen-eighties, which

had lain dormant for long, was now quickened into vigorous life. Memoranda on constitutional reform poured once again into the offices of the Imperial Parliament in quick succession and constitutional reform came once again into the focus of the nation's attention. The whole of the White bureaucracy pooh-poohed the idea of reform and was firm and unwavering in its opposition even to a small measure of it. But the leaders of the people were equally firm and resolute in their demand for it. Happily for the reformers, a liberal and noble-minded aristocrat, Lord Crewe, was Secretary of State and ministerial leader of the House of Lords. It is worth recalling that Lord Crewe was the younger son of Lord Houghton, Sir Muthucoomaraswamy's friend and host during the latter's lengthy sojourns in England. As a little boy he would spend long hours listening with rapt attention to the many tales and legends of the East, with which this charming and scholarly Oriental regaled him. The lad grew fond of him and, when he grew up, continued to cherish that fondness for Ceylon and her people and counted numerous friends among them. No wonder, the young nobleman, despite the strong opposition of the White bureaucrats in the Island and of his colleagues at Whitehall, took the radical step of opening the road to parliamentary democracy in the Island. In parenthesis, it should in fairness be said of British imperialism that, unlike other imperialisms, it kept pace with the changing times, was never obscurantist nor die-hard but bowed to the popular will. It showed greater tolerance, magnanimity and benevolence in its treatment of subject peoples and adopted timely remedies for the political and social ills it encountered in the Empire. True, there was an element of self-interest in the bargain, as is natural and intelligible in all human concerns. But while other imperialisms throttle subject peoples

by all manner of surreptitious means, insidiously suck the precious life-blood from out of them, the British brand was an admixture of good and evil. It helped subject peoples, while it helped itself. Libertarians to a man, jealous of their political and personal freedoms and resolute to defend them at whatever cost, governed by a sense of justice and fair-play in man's dealings with his fellowmen, swayed by a holy horror of world censure, the British were never despotic nor intransigent but sympathised actively with the aspirations of subject peoples for freedoms which they themselves held dear, and made periodic attempts to meet them as best they could. Lord Crewe's reforms of 1911 were one of many such attempts. The White Sahibs in the Island labelled the reforms a colossal blunder. These reforms were, as has already been pointed out, a novel experiment, a bold departure from the traditional pattern of nominating members to the legislature and acknowledged for the first time after four centuries of foreign absolutism the sovereign principle of popular participation in the government of the State, through the exercise of the franchise. Democracy was now given an auspicious start, a good going. Absolutism and all things arbitrary in the government of the State were given a sound beating. One had no longer any need to look up solely to the Governor for membership of the legislature. One could very well snap one's fingers at His Excellency and woo the people.

Ramanathan described how all this came about in his speech on the Reform of the Constitution delivered on December 9, 1921. He said "A little more than ten years ago, Lord Crewe received memorials from the Ceylon National Association, the Chilaw Association, and also from a body of gentlemen headed by Mr. H. J. C. Pereira. His Excellency Sir Henry McCallum dealt with all these memorials in a despatch dated May 26, 1909. He

objected *in toto* to the grant of the franchise to what he called the native communities, first, because a vote to the vast majority of them would be meaningless, and they would not use their privilege with judgement or intelligence—I quote his own words; secondly, because the candidates who would seek election would be drawn mostly from the body of natives who have received a European training and education, and who, to quote again his own words, would be in no sense truly representative of the native masses, whose ideals, aspirations and interests are all moulded on European models, and are no longer those of the majority of their countrymen; and thirdly, because, to quote his words again, the real representatives of the peasantry of Ceylon are the Government Agents of the Provinces and other Civil Servants who, having spent the best part of their lives in Ceylon, occupy seats in the Legislative Council. Sir Henry McCallum was strongly of opinion that the appointments to seats in the Legislative Council should continue to be made by means of nominations, and the only change he could recommend was a Nominated Member for the Educated Ceylonese, and an additional Nominated Member for the Low-Country Sinhalese. Lord Crewe, to the eternal gratitude of the people of Ceylon, was the first among the Ministers of His Majesty to recognise that the time had come to grant the elective system in respect of the Legislative Council of Ceylon."

Ramanathan had now set the ball rolling and if the game were played valiantly and well, victory would before long be within their grasp. Much depended on what use the reforms were put to, on how far the new electorate justified the trust reposed in them by the liberal and forward-looking Secretary of State, on whether the elected member would measure up to the full stature expected of him. All the while, the White bureaucracy was

on the look out for an opportunity to show the reformers at Whitehall the folly and futility of it all. Happily for the country, the electors of 1911 were responsible and far-seeing men, wide-awake to the realities and exigencies of the situation and resolute to give the lie direct to the derisive White bureaucrats and prove to the hilt the people's fitness for self-rule. They cast about for a genuine patriot of proved mettle, of heroic mould who would be more than a match for that brilliant team of Official Members, the fine flower of the Colonial Service, which Governor Sir Henry McCallum drove with cool and sober confidence. It included among many others, Sir Hugh Clifford, Colonial Secretary, Sir Anton Bertram, Attorney-General, William Henry Jackson, Controller of Revenue and Ponnambalam Arunachalam, Registrar-General, each a master in his own field and above all, skilled in the parliamentary art of the thrust and the parry. Finding in Ramanathan a tried and trusted veteran, freed from official and unofficial shackles, and knowing full well that he placed his country before self, the electors promptly seized the opportunity of appealing to him to re-enter the arena of politics and guide their national destinies. Did not Sir James Peiris caution his countrymen, "If the country is really in peril, we must all vote for Ramanathan"?

This was how Ramanathan was prevailed upon to resume active political leadership in 1911, when on his return from his American lecture tour, he had chalked out for himself a different course of life dedicated to educational work among his people and the pursuit of religion and philosophy so dear and near to his heart, while yet playing the role of Nestor in national life. Plato aptly says, "Philosophers and men of religion are the best of rulers, for they understand the principles of government best, but they, having tasted the sweet fruits of philosophy and religion in happy isolation,

would not consent to come down to the market-square and get mixed up in the rough and tumble of parliamentary polemics, unless pressure were exerted upon them." Moreover Ramanathan's limbs had grown weary with age and the strain of a long and arduous life. His spirits yearned for quiet repose, for calm retreat into the sanctuary of his inner soul—the natural, the invariable propensity, the common aftermath of hard-wrought but religious and philosophic natures. He had the warrant of religion too, which enjoins on man to wean himself from the world, with its many pleasures and pains, its many joys and sorrows, its many snares and pitfalls, its clinging to the home, to wife and children and focus all his energies on God. To quote Plato again, "The ideal philosopher is one whose goal, at the end of a life lived to the full, is always a life of quiet, of indrawn stillness, of solitude and aloofness, in which the world forgetting, by the world forgot, he finds his heaven in lonely contemplation of the Good. That and that alone is really life." Nothing could have induced Ramanathan to change his mind or submit to the rigours of an electoral battle, except his conviction that his return to active politics at this crucial period of his country's history, when she first set foot on the road to representative parliamentary democracy and national sovereignty was an inescapable necessity. Nothing short of that could have made him abandon the delights and ecstasies of religious and philosophic contemplation, and become involved in the rough and tumble of parliamentary polemics. Has not Plato said, "A man whose thoughts are fixed on true reality has no leisure to look downwards on the affairs of men, to take part in their quarrels, and to catch the infection of their jealousies and hates"?

In any attempt to comprehend the man and his work, it is imperative that we fasten ourselves upon this aspect of his nature which is cardinal

and fundamental but escapes the common notice, that he was first and last a man of God, a mystic pitch-forked into active life by a curious destiny, that he found his highest bliss in loving communion with the Universal Soul, in ecstatic contemplation of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. To miss this aspect of his life is but to miss the real man. The lure of worldliness with its many frivolities and fopperies, its vanities and inanities had little hold on one who in early manhood had waked up to the truth that all things material and mundane have but one thing in common, that they are at best transitory and fleeting and that no wise man would place his trust in them. Though his love for his people and the passion to serve them, to share with them the good life that he had found drove him into society, he was at heart a recluse. Popular applause or approbation counted for little with him. In all he said or did, he looked within and not without for his acquittal. It was the people's solid advantage that he sought, not their rediculous patronage.

In his youth, he had drunk deep of the fountains of religious and philosophic thought under the guidance of his illustrious uncle Sir Muthucoomaraswamy, who showed more than an avuncular interest in his nephew's future happiness and well-being; in early manhood, under the discipline of his spiritual teacher and mentor, he had proceeded far into the realms of the spirit; and in advanced age, mysticism found in him a settled home. But the call of his people was insistent and irresistible. It was not for nothing that he had learned early in life the great lesson that disinterested, detached, self-denying service to man is but service to God and the surest path to spiritual liberation. The poverty, the misery and the wanton neglect of the people by the rulers, and above all, the decline of public spirit and social awareness that he saw around him moved him to his depths, and impelled

him to take up the cudgels once again against the persecutors and oppressors of the people. Spiritually and in point of time, a Victorian liberal, he had learnt from that prescient political thinker and philosopher, John Stuart Mill, the great lesson: "Try thyself unweariedly till thou findest the highest thing thou art capable of doing, faculties and circumstances being both duly considered, and then do it." From Gladstone, the great liberal statesman and friend of oppressed peoples, with whom he lived on terms of close intimacy and from whom he imbibed many maxims of life and political action, he had learnt: "Resist the tyranny of self; recognise the rule of duty; maintain the supremacy of the higher over the lower parts of our nature."

Great as were his achievements in the domain of national freedom and social betterment, greater by far lay in this that he spiritualised his country's politics. He made it a holy calling and saved it from the common reproach of vulgarity and venality which impelled the great sage Dr. Johnson to cry out in a moment of utter despair and exasperation, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." No better or more beneficent service can man render to the society of men than this permeation of all public and political activity with spiritual and ethical values in a world which has so lightly and so flippantly turned its back on them and pinned its faith on values temporal or terrestrial, with results that have proved the ruin of man and his estrangement from his Creator. He viewed the State as representing the soul of the nation. Being sacrosanct and inviolable, it should not be desecrated or sullied by impious or unholy hands.

Was Ramanathan ambitious? Did ambition, the commonest and perhaps the strongest motive force in the making of great names and reputations, play its part in shaping Ramanathan's life and work? Such indeed is the question posed in many quarters and therefore calls for an answer. If

ambition means love of power or dominion over one's fellow-men, a craving for external fame or renown, for glitter or decoration, for popular applause or acclaim, he was the least ambitious of men. If, on the other hand, ambition means the conscious possession of great powers and the desire to use these powers in the service of man and the furtherance of human happiness, in brushing aside obstacles that hamper the movement of humanity towards higher and nobler goals, in ushering in the reign of peace on earth and goodwill among men, such indeed was the nature of the ambition of a being at once so strong and so vigorous, so intrepid and so resourceful, so patriotic and so passionate as his. Godlike spirits issue forth in spontaneous acts of love and beneficence for all creation.

The Educated Ceylonese Seat had to be contested at the polls and the candidates, nominated by the Governor. But no Governor who had any knowledge of the history of our legislature during the thirteen years that Ramanathan was in its service could view with equanimity or unconcern his return to it. The White bureaucracy, quick to sense danger, was prompt to thwart it by placing every conceivable obstacle in his path. The Governor refused him nomination on the flimsy ground that, though resident in Colombo during the years 1907 to 1910, he had neither called at Queen's House nor paid his respects to His Majesty's representative in the country. Such a person was not to be deemed worthy of His Majesty's confidence or fit to hold a seat in His Majesty's Councils of State. Ramanathan was the last man to take things lying down. The long and bitter controversy which ensued and from which Ramanathan emerged victor, is recounted in an earlier chapter. Dr. H. M. Fernando, a formidable rival and hot favourite of the Governor and the whole White bureaucracy was pitted against him. Much heat and dust was

raised, as was to be expected, when two powerful combatants were in the ring. However, Ramanathan won by a large majority.

It is worth recalling that Sinhalese leaders, in their vehement plea for the abolition of communal representation and the substitution of territorial representation as the sole panacea for the many ills that beset the government of a multi-racial, multi-lingual society, held up to the gaze of the world and the British rulers in particular the election of Ramanathan to the Educated Ceylonese Seat as a supreme example of their people's complete freedom from all taint of communalism, their ability to transcend all narrow, sectarian frontiers and view all questions solely from the larger standpoint of national interest. Sir Baron Jayatilake, referring to this election in an article "The Constitution of Ceylon" published in the Asiatic Review of July, 1923 and reprinted in the Handbook of the Ceylon National Congress (570) wrote as follows:

"Many instances may be given of this growing spirit of common citizenship which has enabled the people of Ceylon to rise superior to racial and religious differences in public matters. So far back as (sic) 1912, when for the first time the people were given the right to elect a representative, a Tamil candidate (Sir P. Ramanathan) was returned with a large majority over his Sinhalese rival (Sir H. M. Fernando) although the Sinhalese naturally commanded a larger number of votes than all the other sections."

There was truth in what Sir Baron said, for good men and great men they really were, these leaders of an earlier generation, noble-minded, generous, far-sighted, acting on the high principle of human equality and fellowship and the larger interests of the State. Those were the palmy days of old when there was peace and plenty in the land, when racialism, communalism and all their hideous progeny were yet unborn, when one could

walk the streets without fear; when love, amity and goodwill pervaded the land. Happy indeed were these elders of by-gone days.

There were other considerations, equally potent and compelling, that contributed to Ramanathan's victory. The Reforms of 1911, as has already been pointed out, are a landmark in our political history, inasmuch as they enthroned, for the first time after centuries of White absolutism, the sovereign principle of popular control of the State and opened the road to parliamentary democracy. They led not only to a wider liberty than had ever before been known, but to a renewed vigour and efficiency in the body politic. The long and enervating supremacy of the Governor gave place to co-operation between him and the people. These reforms were granted on the initiative of a liberal-minded and forward-looking aristocrat as a bold experiment, in the face of vehement and resolute opposition from the British bureaucrats in the Island.

It was now up to the people to live up to his expectations and give the lie direct to the protestations of the White Sahibs and the fears and misgivings of the Home Government by a scrupulous exercise of the newly-conferred franchise and the election of one who could more than vindicate the fitness of the Ceylonese for a larger measure of self-rule than had been granted hitherto. If they failed, that would be the end of the reforms and even the ones already given would be withdrawn.

The one man then alive who could measure up to these demands, who could wrangle and wrestle with the hostile British bureaucrats, many of whom were tried veterans of the Colonial Service, and establish beyond dispute the claims of the Ceylonese for further reforms was Ramanathan. James Peiris' words of caution continued to ring in the people's ears. Sir Hugh Clifford attributed the decisive role to 'caste'. Moreover, an element of gratitude

came into the bargain. Ramanathan's name was ever in the forefront of the public mind as the pioneer and promoter of the movement for national freedom. He it was that blazed the trail that led to the reforms. It was the Ceylon National Association that he founded and built in the eighties of the last century that held the citadel, and ushered in the Reforms.

There was another circumstance that contributed to Ramanathan's victory at the polls. He had all his life been the staunch friend and ally of the Sinhalese. As an Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council representing the Tamil-speaking population of the Island from 1879 to 1893, as Solicitor-General, and acting Attorney-General and one of the leading lights of the country, he served the Sinhalese people with singular loyalty and devotion. Having lived with them all his life and known them for what they really were, a people generous, warm-hearted and true, heirs to an ancient culture and tradition, he loved them dearly and lost no opportunity of placing himself at their service. There was hardly any question of any importance to them in which he did not play a leading role. Did he not make the cause of Buddhism and Buddhist institutions his own cause? In an age in which imperialists the world over frowned upon all things indigenous and held up to public derision the religions, cultures and traditions of the ruled as all a bundle of heathenish superstitions, here was a man who stoutly stood up for them and told the imperialists in so many words that the religions, cultures and traditions of the ruled were more ancient, more civilized, more scientific and more philosophic than theirs and warned them against entertaining such absurd and fantastic notions about them. He told them, if degradation or decay or abuse had set in among them, it was owing to the neglect and disdain of the foreign rulers.

It was notorious that Buddhism and Buddhist institutions were not accorded any State recognition nor were the days sacred to the Buddha made public holidays. But the religion of the rulers enjoyed the patronage of the State and a monopoly of such holidays. To Ramanathan all that seemed anomalous, arbitrary, and high-handed. Endeavouring to discover a remedy for this unhappy state of things, he initiated an agitation which culminated in the declaration of the birthday of the Buddha and the Wesak days as public holidays.

He fought tooth and nail for the preservation of Buddhist temporalities, which through centuries of foreign rule had been exposed to all manner of malversation and abuse. The result was the passing of the Buddhist Temporalities Bill which secured for these pious endowments the patronage and protection of the Crown. The Hansards and other State Papers of the last century show how, in his enthusiasm for these great causes, he pitilessly arraigned the rulers and in so doing earned for himself their undying animosity and ill-will.

Ramanathan's persistent efforts to impress upon Buddhists the paramount duty and responsibility of educating their children against the background of their religion and culture, his active collaboration with Col. Olcott, as Joint-Treasurer of the Buddhist Education Society and his endeavours to establish a net-work of Buddhist schools throughout the country, chief of which was to be Ananda College, his words of exhortation and encouragement to Buddhist youth, his warning to their elders that "If Sinhalese lips will not speak the Sinhalese language, whose else will speak it?"—these and many other services had left a lasting impression on the minds of all right-thinking Sinhalese that here, if anywhere, was a man who deserved their confidence, their loyalty and support. It was not for nothing that Mr. A. Ratnayake, formerly President of the Senate, called him "The

Father of Ceylonese Renaissance." Moreover, the agriculturist and peasant farmer had good reason to remember him with gratitude for his inestimable services to them. The abolition of the Paddyland Tax which had for long years been a millstone tied round their necks and rendered a great majority of them landless for no fault of theirs; the restoration and expansion of irrigation, the reduction of water-rates and the rehabilitation of agriculture in general; the alleviation of wide-spread suffering caused by the brutal operation of the Road Ordinance—these and many other services had endeared him to the rank and file of the nation.

It was said at the beginning that the reformed Legislature of 1912 commenced its sittings in a mood of exuberant optimism, of buoyant hope and that several factors contributed to that happy consummation. Of these, the principal one was Ramanathan's triumphant return to the legislature from which he had been exiled for thirteen years by the wiles and machinations of an alien ruler and from which he would have been exiled for life, if the choice had lain with him. He was the hardy veteran of Ceylonese politics, the victor of many a political combat, the People's Man, the Great Commoner, the Avenger of the People's Wrongs, the Champion of the People's Rights.

Moreover, he now entered the legislature on a wholly different footing, not as the humble, acquiescent, obsequious creature of the Governor but as the proud representative chosen by the free and willing suffrage of the elite of the nation, the people's accredited spokesman and leader, who could now throw down his glove to any man, be he prince or potentate, and speak out the people's mind with shattering, withering force.

While every other member represented a single community or some single interest, it was Ramanathan's singular distinction, that he represented a whole country, a whole nation, that he spoke

with legitimate authority and pride for every community and every interest in the land and was acclaimed Member for Ceylon. No wonder, Dr. (then Mr.) C. W. W. Kannangara said of him that "he bestrode the political firmament like a Colossus." One may wonder what there was in him to warrant the unshakeable and overwhelming confidence of a whole nation, what the secret was of his phenomenal hold upon the affections of the many millions of his countrymen of all classes and conditions, of all races and creeds. It should be looked for in the man himself, in his inner, deeper, truer self.

The world has known three types of politician, as it has, three types of greatness. The first type is the born politician or statesman, as the world would call him, who by sheer force of genius and vision, by the magnitude and splendour of his services, towers above his contemporaries and gives his name to an epoch of his country's history. His is a species all-too-rare, alas well-nigh extinct, in these days of mounting materialism, the decline of spiritual and ethical values and an ever-growing idolisation of the self. They are for the most part men of high intellectual and moral calibre, of rare wisdom and perception, who see far ahead of their time and their concern is more with the distant future than with the immediate present. They build not for an age but for all time. They know no distinctions of race or religion, caste or class but view all humanity as one confraternity, one brotherhood, though subject to extraneous and superficial differences. They raise their people's mansions not on the ashes of another but on the corner-stones of Truth, Reason, Justice and Humanity. Hence their work gains the quality of endurance and wins the approbation and acclaim of ages. They are dynamic in that they are single-minded; magnetic, in that they are free from spiritual or moral dross. Dedicated spirits they are, who make service

and sacrifice the mission of their lives; no empty dreamers but practical idealists who hitch their wagons to the stars and toil all their days and nights with no thought of personal gain but in response to an irresistible and implacable call within. It is such as they who are the salt of the earth, who give flavour to life's nutriment, beacon lights that guide floundering humanity along the true path of life. But for them, the world would indeed be a poorer place for the habitation of man.

They are for the most part religious natures too, with whom the service of humanity is but one part of their religious activity. All the praise and adulation the world lavishes, all the contempt and calumny an ignorant and misguided generation heaps upon them, leave them unmoved. They persevere in the path they have charted out for themselves, undeterred by praise or blame and indifferent alike to pain and pleasure. They own no master from without but only the one monitor from within. Their work thus gains a fulness and permanence, a richness and elevation seldom within the reach of earthly mortals. And their lives are an enduring example and an unfailing source of inspiration to generations unborn. Of such heroic mould are the Gandhis and the Nehrus, the Garibaldis and the Mazzinis, the Lincolns and the Lenins, the Pitts and the Gladstones—men who may be dead and forgotten but whose names will live for evermore in the pages of their nation's history and in the annals of mankind.

The second type of politician is he who by personal effort and discipline pushes his way to the forefront of political leadership, who feels he has a duty by his country, which he has set out to serve and in doing it, rallies all his faculties to his aid. He believes in the dictum that the labourer is worthy of his hire. He works hard, even honourably, to promote national ends, while at no time losing sight of his personal advantage.

He looks for a return commensurate with his output both in terms of worldly aggrandizement and a niche in his country's Temple of Fame.

The world does not grudge him his meed, for he has done his allotted task as best he could and now looks for his reward. It is this class of politician who, though there is little that is extraordinary or spectacular in his performance, keeps the world moving and saves it from ship-wreck

The third type of politician is the political parasite, the froth and foam thrown up by the wave of mathematical democracy, by the venal crowd the modern State has enthroned. He reaps where he has not sowed, gathers where he has not strawed. He represents a class of political adventurers and self-seekers, alas, all-too-common in the present-day world, since politics ceased to be a calling and became a profession, who strut and fret their brief hour upon the nation's stage and then are heard no more. They are as bankrupt of political principle as of worldly goods and enter public life not because they are rich but because they want to be rich. They creep into the legislature by deceit and stratagem. Once in, they turn their backs on everybody and everything, throw all scruples to the winds and address themselves to the all-important question of feathering their own nests, grinding their own axes, collecting shekels from every quarter often by the basest and most diabolical means. They are fishers in troubled waters, who turn their country's need to ignoble gain. Their one guiding policy, if ever they have any, is: "Everyone unto himself and the Devil take the hindmost." It is this class of political hucksters and self-seekers who have through the ages bartered away the fortunes of great peoples and nations for a mess of personal pottage and drenched the pages of history with the blood and tears of impoverished and down-trodden humanity. Their sole standard by which to judge life is material worth and

no other. Napoleon's question of any man was, "What have you done?" Their question would be, "What have you got?" Consistency is a foolish word with them and should be blotted out from their lexicons. They repudiate their yesterdays with fearless indifference to criticism. They enter the legislature with minds for the most part blank on all matters of legislation and taxation. When they open their lips—which they seldom do—the expectant listeners in the gallery sometimes hiss, but for the most part rub their eyes and look on with contemptuous but silent indifference at the profundity of their rulers' ignorance and the inanity of their output. But when at the conclusion of an important session, they return to their constituencies, their numerous progeny of dependants and hangers-on are there at the railway-station or the air-port with garlands and bouquets to celebrate the triumphant return of their hero after battles won and victory achieved. These political nit-wits little know that politics is not for the many but for the few, that it is the domain of angels and not the sporting-ground of fools nor the haunts of knaves and charlatans, that it demands of its votaries the exercise of the highest powers of head and heart, demands the utmost dedication and self-sacrifice, that more than any other vocation, it calls for intensive study, preparation and forethought, for meticulous handling of details, lest one false step, one little slip should spell the ruin of nations and through it, the peace and happiness of humankind. Blue-books and other State papers are closed books to them. The classics of literature, religion and philosophy which should enrich the minds and elevate the souls of the rulers of men, the great treatises on economics and high finance, on history, sociology and statecraft which should widen their knowledge and strengthen their understanding are unheard-of things. Plato has warned that no man who has not attained to self-knowledge

or the knowledge of good and evil should enter the councils of State or presume to advise his countrymen on matters of life or good government. Nor can any sensible person blame them for it, inasmuch as their focus of interest is not the nation but their own sweet selves.

To many, it is a happy hunting-ground, a sure passport from penury to affluence, a spring-board from obscurity to the limelight. Luxury and ostentation, sumptuous eating and drinking become their bed-fellows, while they thrive in a superfluity of worldly goods they have neither toiled for nor paid for. Longinus, the Greek philosopher, has aptly described the effect of it all on the mind of man: "The love of money and the love of pleasure enslave us, or rather, as one may say, drown us body and soul in their depths. For vast and unchecked wealth marches with lust of pleasure for comrade, and when one opens the gate of house or city, the other at once enters and abides. And in time these two build nests in the hearts of men, and quickly rear a progeny only too legitimate; and the ruin within the man is gradually consummated, as the sublimities of his soul wither away and fade, and in ecstatic contemplation of our mortal parts we omit to exalt, and come to neglect in nonchalance, that within us which is immortal." These politicians are such extreme self-lovers who would without the smallest compunction set a neighbour's house on fire only to roast their eggs, men whom Adam Smith, the world-renowned economist and author of "The Wealth of Nations", pilloried, when he defined a politician as "that insidious and crafty animal, vulgarly called a politician"; whom Dean Swift had in mind, when he described the Irish House of Commons as "a den of thieves"; or whom Dr. Johnson so mercilessly castigated in his celebrated definition of "patriot." They it is that have heaped ignominy and ill-repute upon the noblest calling the world has yet known—

the governance of human society and the furtherance of human happiness—and earned for it the opprobrious epithet "dirty".

He would indeed, be a bold man who would dispute Ramanathan's title to a place in the first rank of world's statesmen, men who lived and laboured all their lives for the good of their kind, and after death achieved immortality. Given a wider, freer field, unhampered by the heavy hand of foreign despots, unimpeded by the jealousy and ill-will of his colleagues, there is no knowing what heights of leadership and achievement he would not have scaled nor what splendid fruits his uncommon talents would not have borne for the nation. To quote Longinus again, "Democracy is the nursing mother of genius and great men of letters flourish and die with it. For freedom, they say, has the power to cherish and encourage magnanimous minds, and with it is disseminated eager mutual rivalry and the emulous thirst to excel. Moreover, by the prizes open under a popular government, the mental faculties of orators are perpetually practised and whetted, and, as it were, rubbed bright, so that they shine free as the State itself. Whereas to-day, we seem to have learnt as an infant-lesson that servitude is the law of life; being all wrapped, while our thoughts are yet young and tender, in observances and customs as in swaddling clothes, bound without access to that fairest and most fertile source of man's speech (I mean Freedom), so that we are turned out in no other guise than that of servile flatterers. And servitude (it has been well said) though it be even righteous, is the cage of the soul and a public prison-house."

Ramanathan was among us the epitome of the finest characteristics of leadership as of the race that begot him, the nearest approach to the ideal of a *Karma-yogin* (man of action), as postulated by political philosophers and sages of old, toiling

indefatigably at all hours of the day and night, in combating wrong and injustice, wheresoever he found it, with service and self-sacrifice for his watchwords, with Truth, Reason and Justice for his lodestars, whose goal was nothing short of the establishment of *Civitas Dei*, the City of God on earth and the brotherhood of man. If according to the Bhagavadgita, *yoga* is efficiency in action, he was pre-eminently our greatest *yogin*, inasmuch as none other among us or for that matter, among any other people, accomplished so much within the span of a single lifetime or, as Governor Sir Graeme Thompson remarked, "touched life at so many points and at every point at which he touched it, he touched it with distinction." His versatility was as astounding as his efficiency and thoroughness in action.

His gentle and serene heart abounded in love and compassion for all created things, melted at the sight of the poverty, the misery and destitution that he saw around him and was impelled by a longing to bring within the reach of all classes and conditions of people the good life that he had found. Sages of old have said that it is this quality, the quality of human love and compassion that makes all the difference between a good man and a bad man. It was love that was universal and all-embracing in its appeal, love that transcended all narrow, sectarian frontiers. It was said of him that no man in need or denied justice ever sought his aid in vain. Herein lay the secret of his enormous popularity and the strength of his hold upon the affections of the nation. He never made the people the footstools of his power and pre-eminence but rather made himself their friend and benefactor ever in readiness to place himself and his all at their service. The words of Thomas A. Kempis best sums up the spirit in which he served man: "Love feels no burdens, thinks nothing of trouble, attempts what is above

its strength, pleads no excuse of impossibility, for it thinks all things lawful for itself and all things possible. It is, therefore, able to undertake all things, and it completes many things and brings them to a conclusion, where he, who does not love, faints and lies down." Had he submitted to the secret longings of his heart, succumbed to the lure of the spirit, he would have spent the rest of his days in monastic seclusion, unaffected by the joys and sorrows of the world, its many hopes and fears, its loves and hates, and tended his soul in the peace and serenity of a sanctuary. But he was cast in a different mould, to make himself one with the people and toil all his days in their service. His sincerity and goodness of heart were so transparent and so charming that, though many often differed from him, and sometimes bitterly, few over doubted the sincerity or the purity of his motives or loved him less for it. His personality, as of all good and godly men, was fascinating, masterful, and magnetically attractive, especially in those intimate personal contacts to which he gave much of his time. He was always ready to advise and counsel in small things as well as great, and was truly the friend of everyone he met.

Mental reservations he had none. What he really felt in the deep recesses of his heart, he spoke out plainly and unequivocally, for he feared none. He acted upon the maxim, "To thine own self be true, and it follows, as the night follows the day, that thou canst not be false to any man." This frankness and forthrightness often got him into scrapes with the rulers, but as a man of courage and a staunch adherent of truth, he faced them manfully and came out of them unscathed. To nurse grievances in secret or entertain feelings of hatred or ill-will or animosity towards any, even of those who gave him cause for it, was utterly foreign to his religious temperament. Once

scores had been settled on the spot, the matter was forgotten there and then, and normal relations were resumed.

His religion was not of the narrower or more circumscribed sort, which sees virtue only in itself, which deems itself the sole repository of spiritual truths or erects walls to hedge in its votaries. He believed in the unity and universality of religions, which, despite their seeming differences, embody one and the same hard core of spiritual and moral truth. Though religions are many, Religion is one. Though a good Hindu, an orthodox one at that, he was perfectly at home in every religion and in every place of worship. Fanaticism or bigotry, the common infirmity of noble but narrow and misguided natures, never warped his judgement nor disturbed the equanimity of his soul. A profound scholar versed in the scriptures of many religions, who had with assiduous pains plumbed their depths for hidden truths, he was not merely tolerant but was in love with all. His love for Buddhism, for Buddhist theology and metaphysics was well-known. His services to Buddhism and Buddhist institutions constitute some of the jewelled pages in the history of his long and illustrious leadership. His Commentaries on the Christian Gospels, which bear the impress of deep spiritual insight, his uncommon erudition, his catholic outlook were the rage of the Western world. It was this universality of spirit, this concept of humanity as one family, one brotherhood, that the woes of one are the woes of another, that won for him the homage of the nation. He was not for the Sinhalese only nor for the Tamils nor for the Muslims nor for the Burghers nor for the Europeans nor for any other single community or class. He was for them all. What he cared for was the reign of Truth, Reason, Justice and Fairplay in man's dealings with his fellow-men and in the government of the State. Sectionalism, provincialism and the

whole host of other isms that vex and torment modern man and cause such universal unrest and anarchy were anathema to him. He stood by the principle that men as men are equal in the sight of the Creator, and artificial distinctions based on race or religion, caste or colour are man-made and therefore unjust and unmoral. In all he said and did, he held himself answerable to no man but rather to that unseen power, that indefinable, ineffable, mysterious entity hidden in the innermost depths of one's being, the infallible judge of one's actions, to whom he looked up for his acquittal. It was this religious quality that gave his leadership a wonderful vitality and vigour, an enduring character, a universality of appeal, that gave him in the face of a thousand buffets and setbacks complete mastery of head and heart.

It was from religion that there welled out in wanton profusion that superhuman courage that enabled him to defy danger at every turn and from every quarter and do what he deemed right. It is said that no man who thought of safety first ever achieved anything great or abiding. No man of greater courage ever lived or none who thought of safety less.

It was religion that blotted out the faintest trace or taint of self-interest and impelled him to place his country before self, to dedicate himself and his all to the service of man and God. He identified himself so completely with the people, more so with the under-dog, in an age prone to take under-doggery for granted, that at no period of his long and illustrious leadership did he think of himself as one apart from them. To a generation, which had not waked up to a sense of social responsibility, which viewed with complaceny and unconcern the sufferings of the poor, the destitute and the downtrodden, he proclaimed the gospel of service and self-sacrifice: "To place the depressed classes any longer in their present condition is surely nothing less than a blot on our civilisation, nay, on our

humanity... We who are feeding fat on our wealth, who roll along in motor cars and fine carriages, can have no conception of the grinding nature of the life which the people whom we have to deal with are labouring under." He did this not to exact homage from them nor enhance his reputation, though all these came his way in such abundant measure as was vouchsafed to few other leaders before or after him, but rather to wake up the sleeping social conscience of his time, to sting a heedless and unthinking generation into a little thought of its social responsibility, a little searching of heart.

He was all through life an idealist who was at once a practical and hard-grained realist. Dreaming philosophers and sages rarely make practical statesmen. In him we see Plato's dream of philosopher-statesman—happy synthesis of the man of thought and the man of action—come true. He dreamt dreams of creating a new social order in which every individual would be immune from political or social tyranny, free from physical want or privation, would live the life of simplicity and virtue, of service and sacrifice, cultivate the inner graces and refinements of life, and liberate himself from the thraldom of rampant materialism, which he regarded as life's foremost foe. He believed that society, however unregenerate, can be reformed by effective State action, by sound education, but more by the living example of great and dedicated leaders whose duty it is to set the social tone and lead the people to the Promised Land. It is hard to realise at this distance of time, how great and lasting was the impact of his personality on the minds of his contemporaries, how deep was the love he inspired in the hearts of his people.

The secret of his superhuman capacity for work—he was engaged in strenuous and high-souled activity for more than eighteen hours of the day—of its stupendous success and achievement lay in this that he worked not as ordinary mortals do

under the harsh dictates of selfish ambition or in obedience to the peremptory demands of human vanity or avarice but rather in response to the pressing need of his inner soul. As the old adage has it, work with him was worship. It was his native element and he took to it as a fish takes to water. Life without work—hard, rigorous, engrossing—was death to him. And none had a greater regard for the sanctity of time. It is inconceivable if ever he frittered away any part of his time in anything other than constructive and creative activity, activity both ennobling and elevating. A vigilant steward of his personal resources, as also of national finance, he was more so in the use of his time. But for this supreme economy in the use of his time, such ruthless and keen-eyed elimination of waste, it would have been impossible for him to accomplish within the span of a single life-time so tremendous and so amazing an output of work in the many fields of human activity in which he was called upon to play, in some a dominant and in others a distinguished role. Though his interests were many and manifold, there was nothing dilettante or amateurish in his pursuit of them. On the contrary, he gave of his best to whatever he undertook to do, bent all his energies to it and would not rest content until he had achieved that degree of perfection which he always kept before his mind's eye.

Anxious fore-thought and meticulous planning would precede everything he set out to do, and once decision was taken, no obstacle, however formidable, would deter him. A bulldog tenacity and courage in the pursuit of objectives to which his inner lights pointed him, a desperate clinging to them despite detraction and even ridicule characterised all he did. He worked with a beneficent mind, worked for no selfish ends but rather to redeem man from the slough of despond into which he had fallen through State neglect and

his own ignorance, through stupidity and sloth. Such men work with an energy that may well be called demoniac and find their supreme joy in work. Work as an offering to his Creator, free of the taint of selfish ambition, and shorn of all sordid purposes, far from being a strain on the worker, becomes a relaxation, a source of solace and comfort amidst the ordinary tumults and turmoils of life. Nay, it leads to the illumination of the soul. It gains a strength and vitality, a fulness and splendour seldom within the compass of those who work for selfish ends. It was in that spirit of utter selflessness and dedication that Ramanathan laboured all his life. Rabindranath Tagore says appositely: "Activity is the play of joy. He whose joy is in Brahma, how can he live in inaction? For must he not by his activity provide that in which the joy of Brahma is to take form and manifest itself? That is why he who knows Brahma, who has his joy in Brahma, must also have all his activity in Brahma—his eating and drinking, his earning of livelihood and his beneficence. Just as the joy of the poet in his poem, of the artist in his art, of the brave man in the output of his courage, of the wise man in his discernment of truths, ever seeks expression in their several activities, so the joy of the knower of Brahma, in the whole of his everyday work, little and big, in truth, in beauty, in orderliness and in beneficence, seeks to give expression to the Infinite. Our day of work is not our day of joy—for that we require a holiday; for, miserable that we are, we cannot find our holiday in our work. The river finds its holiday in its onward flow, the fire in its outburst of flame, the scent of the flower in its permeation of the atmosphere; but in our everyday work there is no such holiday for us. It is because we do not let ourselves joyously and entirely up to it, that our work overpowers us."

There was another faculty that served him well. He was an orator *par excellence* whom contemporary opinion acclaimed "the silver-tongued orator of the East" and British statesmen hailed as "the most accomplished speaker of the Empire." His was a voice of incomparable fulness and felicity, flexibility and charm, ever delightful to the ear. He was never known to die for words or ideas; rather they came unasked, came crowding upon him like jostling suitors solicitous of his favour. His speeches were the finest things ever heard in our legislature, no empty rhetoric but language charged with high thought, words fused with faith and fire. They were the essence, the quintessence of his rich and varied learning, the distilled wisdom of years devoted to deep and anxious reflection on the manifold problems of human destiny, on man and his relation to the universe. It is no exaggeration to say that no other statesman or leader of this country or for that matter, of any other, related transient questions to first principles, to values that hold good for all time or enriched the annals of his country's parliamentary history with such a roaring torrent of words, such an irresistible flood of noble and sublime eloquence as he did during the half century of public life or filled his country's Statute Book with such a wealth of beneficent and far-reaching legislation. All this he did for the mere love of his people, to rescue them—whatever the sacrifice to himself—from the horrors and iniquities of foreign despots, armed to the teeth and placing all their trust on naked force, deaf to all pleas for reason, justice and humanity, callous to human suffering, and resolute to work their wanton will upon an unarmed and defenceless people. Subject peoples are as flies to wanton boys; they kill them for their sport.

Yet, paradoxically, this copious, fluent, impassioned, inspiring rhetorician in the legislature and

on the public platform, this charming and delightful talker at the dinner-table and in the drawing-room was also the most taciturn of men. Empty raillery, idle, frivolous chatter, light-hearted drollery or mirth were utterly repugnant to his religious and philosophic temperament. Whenever he spoke, it was to some good purpose.

Forsooth the man himself was greater than the work he did, great though it was. It was not so much in intellect or in his capacity for prompt, effective and decisive action,—though admittedly they were of the first order—that he excelled. It was above all the sense of character, the grandeur of character that he conveyed to those who enjoyed the inestimable privilege of his friendship or encountered him briefly in public or private life. It was the patriotism, the philanthropy, the love of justice, liberty and light which ever burnt with an intense but subdued flame within him, the sense of living habitually in the rarefied region of high thought, of selfless and heroic endeavour that left an indelible impression on the minds and hearts of his contemporaries and made them his thralls. In the make-up of that character, courage was the most dominant quality, not merely that physical courage that enabled him to spurn danger at every turn and from every quarter, but the moral courage that impelled him repeatedly and consistently in the half-century of his leadership to resist whatever he regarded as wrong; to say, irrespective of the consequences to himself, inacceptable things to those in power; to refuse, even in the slightest degree, to compromise what he held to be wrong, shabby or mean. Search as we may, we shall find few dark spots in the broad and crowded canvas of his leadership and little evidence that he sinned against the Light.

To the great majority of persons now living, Ramanathan is only a name, a legend at best. Many acknowledge his greatness, but few can at

this remove of time comprehend the true stature of the man, the prince among men, the terror of tyrants but the friend of the oppressed, the champion of liberty in an age of arbitrary power, the man of God in an age of godless men.

CHAPTER II

THE GOVERNOR IS NOT THE KING'S REPRESENTATIVE

> It is a well-settled principle in Ceylon that there is only one body which can legislate, which can make laws and rules for the people of Ceylon, and that is the Legislative Council of Ceylon.
>
> —*Ramanathan*

> I cannot think with the freedom of the wild ass. My mind is so constituted that it labours hard to find for itself authority for its guidance. The mind of man is man himself. If he disregards the law, if he does not endeavour to find out what principles ought to guide his mind, why, then, he becomes a creature of his own corporeal likes and dislikes.
>
> —*Ramanathan*

> Who is poor Ramanathan? He may sink into the grave tomorrow. But what about the Privy Council? The Privy Council is not going to sink into the grave. It is not the Ceylonese Member who is speaking now, but it is the spirit of the law that was promulgated from the Privy Council that is speaking today.
>
> —*Ramanathan*

IRONICALLY enough, the first question of any importance that Ramanathan raised on the floor of the reformed legislature, the question which, when solved, would solve a multiplicity of other major questions, was whether the Governor of a British Colony was a representative of His Britannic Majesty, the King-Emperor, or merely a paid functionary of the Colonial Office in London. He maintained that the Governor, far from being the King's representative, was only a paid official of the Colonial Office in London; to call him the King's representative was to be guilty of a

misnomer, and to invest him with an authority to which he had no claim, was to be guilty of a violation of the Constitution. It was a bold question to pose, in view of the long and widespread tradition of regarding His Excellency as the representative of His Britannic Majesty and paying him the homage due to the British sovereign. It was a question that went to the roots of British Colonial administration and would, if the answer were in the negative, materially limit the Governor's powers and pretentions, while enhancing the people's. In posing such a question, Ramanathan disturbed a hornet's nest, raised a storm of protest from every quarter. The whole hierarchy of British officials rose in arms against what they labelled 'an unmitigated and unpardonable heresy.'

A knowledge of the background of this momentous question will help a better understanding of it. During his long leadership which lasted more than half-a-century, Ramanathan left nothing undone to uphold the supremacy and sovereignty of the legislature over that of any individual or institution in the land. The British bureaucracy, on the other hand, confronted him with the view that His Excellency was the sovereign head of the State, that he derived his authority from His Majesty, the King-Emperor and was therefore supreme in all matters of legislation and taxation. It was a far-reaching question that involved the basic principles of Constitutional Law governing the Empire and not easy of settlement. The people's representatives in the legislature either overawed by the Governor's authority, or through an unholy desire to be *persona grata* with His Excellency or through ignorance of constitutional law and history swung to the side of the British bureaucracy. Ramanathan found himself the solitary advocate of a forlorn cause, the lone fighter in an unpopular battle in which the whole might of the White bureaucracy reinforced by the clamorous support of the champions of people's rights and liberties

was ranged against him. But Ramanathan was never known to flinch or run away from a conflict, however unequal or hazardous, if he was convinced his cause was just. His was a mind too original to be subdued by its surroundings. He knew he stood on firm ground. A critical study of Constitutional Law and History of the British Empire convinced him of the grave limitations on the powers and prerogatives of the Governor, and made it clear that the Governor's claim was mythical and untenable. He felt that the earlier that myth was exploded and His Excellency, brought to his tether, the better would it be for the good governance of the country and the furtherance of the people's rights and liberties.

The issue that sparked off the conflict was this. It was customary with the Governor in Executive Council to frame certain rules and then at an early date, refer them to the Legislative Council for statutory sanction. The rules were tabled, and if no objections came from the House, the rules in question had *ipso facto* the force of law. With a view to strengthening the hand of the legislature further, Ramanathan suggested that in place of this negative action, it would be appropriate to adopt a more positive procedure viz. that, after the rules had been tabled, some member of the Council should introduce a motion in confirmation of the rules and if such motion was duly seconded and passed by a majority vote, those rules would then become law. His suggestion was accepted and adopted.

It was also the practice that, whenever there was a difference of opinion with regard to the rules in question, they were then subjected to a discussion and were either amended or annulled. In such situations, it was the practice with the Council to address a 'prayer' to the Governor seeking the annulment or amendment of the rules on the lines proposed by the House. Ramanathan objected to

the Council's practice of addressing a 'prayer' to the Governor. His objections were based on purely constitutional grounds. If the Legislative Council of Ceylon was supreme in all matters of legislation and taxation, as he contended it really was according to the Constitution, he saw no reason why it should address a 'prayer' to the Governor, whose office, he contended further, unlike that of the King sitting in Parliament and making laws, was akin only to that of the Speaker in the House of Commons. He proceeded to add that the authority accorded to the Governor in Executive Council to frame rules was only 'delegated authority' and the rules framed had no force of law until they were subsequently ratified by the legislature. Moreover, while the King had the power to refuse a prayer addressed by the House of Commons, the Governor had no such power. Willy-nilly, he had to abide by the decision of the legislature.

Ramanathan said *inter alia:* "My objection is purely on constitutional grounds. It is a well-settled principle in Ceylon, that there is only one body which can legislate, which can make laws and rules for the people of Ceylon, and that is the Legislative Council itself. This Council, armed with such an authority, does delegate its power to the Governor in Executive Council or to Municipalities or Local Boards in regard to the making of laws, which laws could not be conveniently made owing to the complexities of the situation by the Legislative Council itself. That being a constitutional principle, it also follows, and it is, as a matter of fact, true, that the same body which makes laws has the power to annul or to repeal them. Now it happens in this particular case that power was given to the Governor in Executive Council to make rules upon a variety of questions, and if these rules, after being tabled in the Legislative Council, are found to be, in the opinion of the Legislative Council, inconsistent with its own wishes or with

any of the rules actually in vogue in the Colony, the proper course is, I submit, for the Legislative Council itself to take charge of the rules under objection, and to amend them or annul or repeal them. There can be no doubt that the principles that I have stated now are correct, and I am perfectly certain that my honourable friend the Attorney-General, who knows the constitutional laws of this Island thoroughly, will agree with me that I have not understated or overstated the constitutional principles. If, then, it is the Legislative Council that can alone make laws and unmake laws, it seems to me to be odd, on constitutional grounds, that a body which possesses the power of making and unmaking the laws, and which has delegated its powers formally as regards the making of laws, should 'pray' to the body to which it has delegated its powers—it may be the Municipal Council, it may be the Local Board, or it may be His Excellency the Governor himself—to repeal them. I have not heard from my honourable friends who were pioneering this part of the Bill in Committee any substantial reason for departing from the constitutional principles that I have enunciated. It was stated, when I asked if there was a precedent for this procedure, that there was an Ordinance passed in 1910 containing the word 'praying', and I at once pointed out that the word must have come *per incuriam*, as it were, into the Bill, because such a procedure was needless in Ceylon. But I was told—a thing that I already knew—that in England it is the custom to introduce this word 'praying' where the King, sitting in his Privy Council, has made rules, and I replied that a distinction should be drawn between the King making rules as King and the Governor of this Island making rules as Governor. The King does not dabble in politics. He does not sit in the House of Commons. He sits in the House of Lords only to open the Parliament. He takes care that every-

thing connected with politics should be left in the hands of the Speaker of the House of Commons or the Speaker of the House of Lords, who is the Lord Chancellor. The Governor corresponds to the Speaker, and not to the King. So there is no analogy or parallelism between the state of things in Ceylon and the state of things in England. It is no doubt necessary that, when the Parliament desires an amendment of any rules that the King in Privy Council has made, it should 'pray' to the King to annul the laws to which it objects.

"I would further point out an anomaly here. While the Council 'prays' to His Excellency the Governor to annul or repeal a law, the Governor is not given an opportunity of saying 'no' to it. It enacts that the law in question must stand annulled, whatever the Governor may wish."

It was certainly a challenging, disconcerting situation for the White bureaucracy, inasmuch as all their claim to superiority over the people they ruled hinged on the Governor's pretended supremacy. The lustre the King's name shed on His Excellency lit up his minions too—the White bureaucrats. That was why they, with the asinine acquiescence of the people's representatives, had set up so tall and exalted a claim for the Governor and were making desperate efforts to uphold that claim. Now here was a man who challenged that claim, and on good grounds. The Colonial Secretary, Sir Hugh Clifford, a formidable antagonist in debate, finished master of words and spinner of telling phrases, made heroic efforts to evade the issue by laboured circumlocution and ingenious sophistry. But Ramanathan was not the man to be overawed or put off his scent by all this subterfuge. He firmly stood his ground. No 'prayer' should, in matters of legislation, be addressed to the Governor, he contended.

In sheer exasperation, he asked, "What is the good of that circumlocution? The Governor is not

given the power to exercise his own judgement. What are we conserving by such circumlocution? The Governor is the President of the Legislative Council, and the members of the Executive Council are all members of the Legislative Council. Then, what is the object of upholding a dignity that does not require to be upheld? What are we to be afraid of? It appears to me, Sir, that the word 'praying' only should be omitted. The Section would run quite smoothly without any further alteration."

He read the Section as it would read without the word 'praying' and said, "I simply say that if the word 'praying' which means nothing here, be omitted, the constitutional grounds upon which I object will not apply. I therefore move, Sir, the omission of that word 'praying' in that Section."

The Colonial Secretary, though he knew full well that he was fighting a losing battle, that the ground from under his feet was crumbling, was yet resolved not to give in but to resist to the last man and the last ditch. He said, "As Chairman of the select Committee, Sir, I should explain that this matter was discussed at some length before the Select Committee, and my honourable friend, who has just spoken, urged at that time that the word 'praying' was objectionable on constitutional grounds.

"*The matter was eventually put to the vote, and I and all my colleagues on the Select Committee, with the exception of the Honourable Member, were in favour of the word,* not because we attach very much importance to that word, Sir, but because we understood at that time the Honourable Member's chief contention was that the Governor of Ceylon was not the King's representative in this Colony, and it was that contention which we individually disputed and collectively declined to adopt. The matter is one of such importance that I am not prepared to discuss it to-day. I must leave that to gentlemen learned in the law, like

my honourable friend who has just spoken and my honourable friend the Attorney-General. But the actual practical importance is, I think, very slight. The word used here refers only to rules which are passed by the Governor in Council in moments of emergency, and which would have the force of law only until such time as this Council has had an opportunity of pronouncing upon them. This Council is declared by this Section to have complete power in this matter. It can annul or modify or amend the rules laid before it by passing a resolution, and if the Council wishes to do so, it has then politely to request the Governor to give effect to its wishes, and to declare the rules are annulled or modified or amended according to the resolution of the Council. The Governor is not given any option in the matter. But in this particular instance, it will be seen that he is the authority who originally frames the rule, and it seems only polite to the framing authority that he should be requested, or 'prayed' to give effect to the modification or to disallow the rule in accordance with the wishes of this Legislative Council. Personally, I have no strong feeling in the matter, and if Honourable Members consider it would be better to leave that word out, I am perfectly ready to accept the proposal; but I do not think we could accept it on the ground upon which the Honourable Member originally rested his contention, namely, that the Legislative Council should not address a 'prayer' to the Governor of the Colony, because he is not the King's representative in our midst; because that would be something which I should be very sorry to see subscribed to; and because it is not, I think, in accordance with the general feeling or impression of the position the Governor occupied in our midst, and in all Crown Colonies. But for the rest I do not wish to press at all for the inclusion of the word, only if the amendment is to be made at all, I would suggest

it might read as follows: 'If within forty days of the date upon which such rules are laid before the Legislative Council a resolution be passed deciding that all or any of such rules be modified or annulled, such rules or rule shall thenceforth be modified or annulled accordingly.' I do not think it will read very well if we have no verb at all."

The main plank on which the Colonial Secretary took his stand was that the subject had already been discussed in the Select Committee and decided by a majority vote in favour of retaining the word 'pray'. He brushed aside the solemn pronouncements of eminent constitutional pundits, the weighty judgements of the Privy Council and the Supreme Courts and took shelter under that notorious majority vote provided by none other than his own henchmen, the British Officials who, it should be remembered, had not the freedom to vote otherwise, and by a band of spineless, nerveless retainers plumed as the people's representatives, men whom the ruling hierarchy could lead by the nose whithersoever it chose, if only it could assure them of their seats. Ah, the tyranny of the majority vote! It tramples under-foot not merely all moral laws but even the laws fashioned by the wisdom of man.

The Attorney-General, Anton Bertram, while accepting the correctness of Ramanathan's position, pleaded that the Council would not suffer any loss of dignity by the use of the word 'pray'. He said, "I might add a few words only to what the Hon. the Colonial Secretary has said. I think the principle is perfectly clear, and it will be apparent if Honourable Members will compare the two paragraphs. The first refers to rules which, if I may say so, are made provisionally. The Governor in Council does not make final rules, but makes rules subject to confirmation by this Council. In that paragraph, there is no prayer.

The rules have no force of law until they are submitted to this Council and confirmed by this Council. The second paragraph relates to rules which are finally made and promulgated as part of the law of the land, and the word 'prayed' is here appropriate, because the Council is asking the rule-making authority to annul the rule that it has made. I think the Hon. the Ceylonese Member was perfectly correct in one principle, which he laid down, and that is that the same body which makes the laws should have the power to annul them. I do not think, Sir, it would be proper that this Council should by a resolution annul a rule made by another body—the Governor in Executive Council. The proper body to annul a rule made by the Governor in Executive Council is the Governor in Council himself. That is entirely in accordance with the principles followed in the Imperial Legislature. I do not know whether the clause in the Municipal Councils Ordinance, to which the Honourable Member referred, is the first clause of this kind which appears upon our Statute Book. I am not in a position to say that without more exhaustive examination of the legislation of the past years, but in any case it is entirely in accordance with the models of the Imperial Legislature. There, when His Majesty in Council makes a rule, it can be annulled by His Majesty in Council upon an address being presented by the House of Commons. The word 'prayer' is used, and the same procedure is used, and, personally, I trust this Council will prefer to follow the Imperial precedent, which it has adopted in the Municipal Councils Ordinance, and in two other Bills now before the Council, and the other day in the Public Performances Ordinance passed by the Council at the last meeting. I cannot see that this Council loses in dignity by following the example of the House of Commons, or by adopting a polite, a courteous, a gracious formula, instead of an imperative one. I think

it would be well to use the word that is used in the House of Commons, although, as the Colonial Secretary has said, the matter is of no great practical importance. But I should like the House to understand the principle upon which the formula was framed, and the reason why it was adopted both in England and in this Colony."

To the Controller of Revenue it was outrageous in the extreme that the Governor should be regarded as anything short of being the representative of His Majesty the King in the Colony and stigmatized Ramanathan's contention as "a piece of pernicious heresy." He added, "It is a position of great value, because the humblest villager derives great comfort from the feeling that he has at the head of the Island a representative of His Majesty the King."

Ramanathan listened in patience to these passionate outbursts of wounded vanity, these fierce protestations and when his turn to reply came, said, "I carefully avoided making any remark on the question whether the Governor is the representative of the King or not. I thought I shoud like to be relieved of the responsibility of stating in public what I have felt myself free to state in the privacy of a sitting of the Commitee. My honourable friend the Controller of Revenue speaks of my action, perhaps unintentionally, as "a pernicious heresy." Perhaps, my honourable friend does not know that I am standing upon a well-known decision delivered by His Majesty's Judges sitting in the Privy Council, and I am also standing upon a judgement delivered by our own Supreme Court. The Judges in England, and the Judges of the Supreme Court here, following that decision, have observed authoritatively that the Governor of a Crown Colony is not the representative of His Majesty the King. Can I treat contemptuously a judgement delivered by His Majesty's Judges of the Privy Council, and a judgement of the Supreme

Court of Ceylon? Are these Judges, eminent in constitutional law, employed by His Majesty the King himself, propounding pernicious heresy in stating to the world at large, and throughout the length and breadth of the British Empire, that the Governor of a Crown Colony is not the representative of the King?

"I submit, Sir, that my honourable friend has been carried away by his most laudable feelings of loyalty to Your Excellency. I appreciate that loyalty, and I for one would not yield one inch to him in regard to my being loyal to the Governor as the President of this Council, and loyal also to my King. That being so, Sir, it seems to me strange that my honourable friend should speak of popular opinion prevailing throughout Ceylon. What have we to do with popular opinion, when the law is quite incisive on the point? It is also strange to me to hear that I shall not be supported in Ceylon by a large class of people in regard to the authoritative opinion expressed by His Majesty's Judges that the Governor is not the representative of the King.

"It is now my duty to ask whence this proposition arose, that the Governor of the Island is the representative of the King?

"I know where that doctrine comes from. It is to be found in one of the rules made by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in regard to the employees of the King. His Majesty the King is not only our Sovereign Lord, but, for purposes of Government, he is an employer of labour of different kinds. He is the greatest employer of labour. All the luminaries of his Empire delight to serve him, and he himself, the great powerful personage that he is—I may say, the holy personage that he is—cannot be in every part of the Empire. He, therefore, tells the Secretary of State to make rules for the guidance of all those paid officials who have to be employed for purposes

of Government; and the Secretary of State issues those rules, not for the citizens of the Empire in general, but only and purely for those officials who consent to serve His Majesty for pay. Discipline must be observed between an employer of labour and the employee. Where there is an absentee employer, it is right on his part to say to all the employed that they should consider the man of his choice in a particular place to be like unto himself, or to be his representative; and that if they do not pay that proper respect and obedience expected of them, they would forthwith suffer the punishment enjoined in the rules published by the employing authority. On this principle of discipline it is, I take it, that the Secretary of State has issued rules to all paid officers of the Crown Colonies. He declares to them: 'Beware that you look upon the Governor of the Colony as the representative of the King, and if you do not do that, and do not give him all that obedience and all that respect which he deserved at your hands, you do it at your peril.' I say, therefore, that the Colonial Regulations which my honourable friend has relied upon are no more than regulations to be observed by those officers who serve the King for pay; and I say further, that those Colonial Regulations cannot by any means over-ride a decision so formal and so authoritative as the decision of the Privy Council presided over by His Majesty's own Judges. Sir, I cannot think with the freedom of the wild ass. My mind is so constituted that it labours hard to find for itself authority for its guidance. The mind of man is man himself. If he disregards the law, if he does not endeavour to find out what principles ought to guide his mind, why, then, he becomes a creature of his own corporeal likes and dislikes. I systematically live down my likes and dislikes. I take care to inform myself what principle the law dictates to my mind, and I compel my mind

to obey the law. Whatever the body's likes or dislikes may be, I subject my mind to the law. I say to my mind, 'You shall not break the law. You shall obey the law. You shall execute the law, and shall not act in any way but according to the behests of the law.' Thus have I lived, Sir, for very many years without the freedom of the wild ass. Abiding in the law, I am free from pernicious heresies. I say that, knowing the principle of the law enunciated by His Majesty's Judges, it is my duty to stand by that law.

"And, after this explanation, I am sure Honourable Members will pardon me for reminding them that they dare not swerve from the law by enacting in our own Legislature a principle that is not consistent with the declarations of the Privy Council and the Supreme Court on the constitutional position of the Governor of a Crown Colony.

"Though I admire the loyalty and the great esteem with which the servants of the Crown look upon the Governor of this Colony, and though I myself like to follow that example, and do follow that example, yet when it comes to the enunciation of a constitutional principle, when it comes to the making of legislation for the benefit of Ceylon, which must be revised by the Secretary of State himself, I say it is my duty to tell my honourable friends that there is a violation of constitutional law in this Section. That is my excuse, Sir, for pressing on the attention of the Government some remarks about this unfortunate word 'praying.' My honourable friends say that they have no great inclination to preserve the word 'praying' and nevertheless they insist upon keeping it, owing to a 'pernicious heresy' they heard in Committee from me. Well, Sir, push me out of the case altogether. *Who is poor Ramanathan? He may sink into the grave tomorrow. But what about the Privy Council? The Privy Council is not going to sink into the grave. It is not the Ceylonese Member who is speaking now, but it is the spirit of the law that was promulgated from the Privy Council that is speaking today.* What am I? I may be dead to-night. I may drop dead as I am speaking. But think of the principle which I enunciate, and if my honourable friends want to show respect to the Privy Council and the Supreme Court of Ceylon, let them consent to delete this word 'praying'. I ask their forgiveness for pressing these remarks upon their attention, but, Sir, it is not of my own seeking. I carefully avoided this part of this subject, but my honourable friends have forced me to speak, and I have spoken. I hope, Sir, better counsels will prevail in regard to this word 'praying'.

The Attorney-General, making a last bid to save His Excellency, who had for long years been sailing under false colours, cited a dispatch of the Secretary of State of 1868 defining the position of the Governor-General of Canada, which said, 'He is the representative of the Queen, of the highest authority in the Dominion in question,' and added, "I know of no distinction between the Governor of Canada and the Governor of Ceylon". This attempt on the part of the Attorney-General to hoodwink Ramanathan into believing that the Governor of a Crown Colony was officially of the same status as the Governor-General of a Dominion, provoked Ramanathan into retaliating: "He is a Viceroy."

The Hon. the Attorney-General whose enthusiasm for His Excellency's *amour propre* got the better of his judgement, of his concern for constitutional law and procedure, said, "The positions are exactly the same..."

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: "Of course not; he is a Viceroy."

The Hon. the Attorney General: The Honourable Member says that he is a Viceroy. I question that. I do not know by what Act of Parliament

the Governor-General of Canada is created a Viceroy. On the discussion of the position of the Governor, I should like, if I may do so, to recall to this House another function of the Governor. We know that the Sovereign is the Fountain of Honour. In whom is the power of distributing honours in this Colony?

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: "Native honours."

The Hon. the Attorney-General: "It is vested in you, Sir, if I am not mistaken. The Honourable member was himself the recipient of a distinguished honour through this very source. But I say, the point requires no argument. I would apologize to this Council for arguing the matter. I say that the source of the Governor's position as the King's representative, lies in his Letters Patent and in the Royal Instructions, which are ratified by the instinctive and enthusiastic loyalty of every member of this Council and every man in this Colony." Whatever the Attorney-General might say, Ramanathan's position was unassailable. He took his stand on the solemn pronouncements of great constitutional experts, the unimpeachable authority of the Privy Council and would not give in.

All the while this storm was raging with a virulence rare in parliamentary polemics, this tumult and turmoil, rocking the House with unwonted fury, over an issue of paramount importance to the nation, the accredited spokesmen of the people, the custodians of their rights and liberties sat mute and motionless, watching in dumb dismay. Not a hum nor a whisper of protest came from that quarter.

Could a member of a subject race muster so much courage as to bandy words with the rulers, question their powers and pretensions? Was it not brazen impudence? Would it pay to antagonise the ruler so wantonly? Would it not bring in good dividends to 'bask in the sunshine of His Excellency's smiles, to be courted by Officials

as men who say pleasant things to their ears'? These were the thoughts that flitted through their minds as they sat there and beheld the unhallowed spectacle.

These craven leaders of an enslaved people, these chicken-hearted saviours decked in borrowed plumes and cushioned up in their seats of honour were utterly incapable of understanding the secret springs of Ramanathan's power, the courage that knew no fear; the unconquerable will never to submit or yield; the patriotism that burned like an undying flame within him; the philanthropy that knew no limits to self-sacrifice; that passion for justice that never was quenched. Goethe's saying: "I love the man who wants the impossible," provides the *motif* of his whole life and work. It was the impossible that Ramanathan strove all his life to do single-handed and strangely enough, accomplished. Paradoxically, the impossible became the possible; it bowed to his magic and masculine touch. If he was to cross swords, it was to be with the highest in the land; if he was to be a builder, it was to be on a magnificent and massive scale; if he was to be a giver, it was to be in regal bounty; if he was to be a planter or farmer, it was to be on the lordly plane; if he was to espouse a cause, it was to be no less a cause than the cause of human freedom; there was a stateliness and splendour, a magnificence and massiveness in all he attempted and did.

The Governor in whose presence this question was debated, felt so miserable and so embittered that he asked Ramanathan in apologetic and appealing tones, "Are you pressing the motion, Mr. Ramanathan?"

Ramanathan, among whose many virtues respect for others' feelings and susceptibilities was certainly one, was more than visibly moved. It was no part of his nature to trample on a fallen foe. Moreover, an astute politician that he eminently

was, he knew that if he persisted in his stand, the ruler would ruthlessly unleash the atom bomb of the majority vote—that deadly missile in whose name and under whose shelter he was working iniquity on subject peoples—which would make short work of the structure he had so laboriously built on the rock of constitutional law and practice and give him the *coup de grace.*

So Ramanathan gracefully agreed to withdraw his motion. He had, nevertheless, pricked the bubbles of the Governor's pretended authority and established beyond dispute that the Governor, far from being the King's representative, was no more than an employee of the Colonial office in London, and that the practice of regarding him as the King's representative and paying him the honour due to the British sovereign was altogether unwarranted and illegal.

It was a victory for the people and a severe limitation of the powers and prerogatives of the Governor.

It was notorious that Governors were often impatient of criticism of Government by Unofficial Members. Consequently, the Unofficials, for fear of giving offence, maintained a discreet silence and the views of the people on many important national issues went unheard and unheeded by the rulers. This was certainly autocracy disguised as democracy.

No man saw more clearly or more intensely than Ramanathan the anomaly and shocking absurdity of the people's professed spokesmen in the legislature watching helplessly with gagged mouths, while matters of great national import were being thrashed out and laws enacted. Deciding to take the imperial bull by the horns and obtain from His Excellency a categorical declaration as to the position and powers of Unofficial Members, he asked on 31st May, 1912: "May I rise to a point of order, in reference to your Excellency's ruling

from the chair on April 16, last, that an Unofficial member should not animadvert on the Government of the Colony? Might I ask whether, in future, Unofficial members on this Council will be debarred from doing so?"

His Excellency the Governor: "My ruling, which the Honourable member refers to, must be interpreted with reference to its context and the circumstances to which it was directed. It must not be divorced from that context and those circumstances. Every member of this Council is entitled to criticise the acts and policy of the Government with the same freedom that a member of the House of Commons is entitled to criticise the acts and policy of the Imperial Government. The ruling on the occasion was, I think, fully understood by this Council; nor can it be construed as being intended to limit the freedom of speech of Honourable members." It was by such a cumulative process, by availing himself of every conceivable opportunity, that Ramanathan progressively advanced the rights and liberties of the people, while he wore down the powers and pretensions of the rulers.

CHAPTER III

"THE CEYLONESE"

> One of the objects of a newspaper is to understand popular feeling and give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects.
>
> —*Mahatma Gandhi*

> Various wants we have. A press that may not degenerate into a hireling is a great want for the country. Shall we not aim at a press for the Tamils, if only to combat calumny and vile misrepresentation? For days, weeks, months and years, we have suffered at the hands of an unscrupulous press.
>
> —*Sir P. Arunachalam*

IT was one of Ramanathan's long-cherished ambitions to found a daily newspaper, which would at once be truly national and exemplify the highest concepts of journalism—dedication to truth, absolute freedom from all taint of racialism or communalism or from servility to vested interests, a wholesome frankness and a complete subordination of all things else to the larger interests of the State. As a life-long fighter in the cause of national freedom and sovereignty, he knew that a free and virile press, shorn of all sordid purposes, whose supreme concern would be the furtherance of national happiness and well-being, is the prime need of any people, more so, of a subject people. He also knew that a servile press is the chief weapon of the despot, that a people who battle either to regain their lost freedom or safeguard the freedom they already enjoyed, must, first and foremost, arm themselves with a free press, for a free press is a tremendous political and social power, the surest

bulwark of civilisation and the ultimate pledge of constitutional freedom. It is through the instrumentality of such a press that a subject people can hold up to the gaze of the world the injustices and iniquities of a foreign ruler, refute or repudiate the wanton profusion of falsehoods and half-truths the despot serves out from day to day to a simple, unsuspecting and credulous people and the world outside, can spotlight their grievances and press for their redress, and enlist world sympathy. A subject people must before all things be enabled to know the truth, to know what vile stratagems and subterfuges the alien ruler employs to justify or whitewash his darkest crimes and most monstrous brutalities.

The example of the world's great leaders and freedom-fighters was before him. During thirty strenuous years Gandhiji edited four weeklies, using them as his chief weapon in his fight against British rule and in the making of a new India. Sri Aurobindo, Gangadhar Tilak, Bepin Chandra Pal and a host of other Indian leaders used the press freely as a convenient platform from which to fulminate against the horrors and atrocities of foreign rule and to wake India's manhood and the sleeping conscience of civilised man to a realization of India's great and glorious past and her decline and decadence under the heels of foreign masters.

Ramanathan knew the infinite possibilities of the printed word in informing and educating the public mind, in enforcing truth, in suppressing falsehood and moulding public opinion, particularly in an age of growing literacy and comparative leisure, when newspapers are delivered at the door of almost every household. He also knew that he could use the press without let or hindrance, inasmuch as British rule, despite its many blemishes and shortcoming, rarely tampered with the basic freedoms of subject humanity. The press was not

subject to state control or censorship, nor were personal freedoms unduly interfered with.

The daily press, as it then existed, distressed him profoundly. It was a period in which the press, in the exuberance of its freedom and the littleness of man, had abdicated its legitimate role of being the nation's guide, philosopher and friend, a vital agent in the building up of a healthy, strong and vigorous national life. On the contrary, it pandered to the passions of the hour, to the whims of individuals or clans or coteries, sought to pollute the stream of national consciousness by sectarian jealousies, by fierce partisanship, by intemperate and irresponsible attacks upon the nation's trusted leaders. The larger or more abiding interests of the nation counted for little with it. It set in motion fissiparous forces, the forces of national disruption and disintegration rather than those of consolidation and cohesion. It was profit-oriented and sought to reach the masses by dishing out cheap sensation. Sobriety, restraint and good sense were not among its virtues. From hour to hour it treated the nation to half-truths and untruths without the smallest qualms of conscience. It misled the people and perverted the national taste. Instead of being an agent of immeasurable good, it had become an instrument of incalculable harm.

A. G. Gardiner, the veteran author and publicist, has aptly described the malady that, under the baneful influence of Lord Northcliffe, afflicted the British Press. He says, "It is this absolutely commercial conception of journalism which is Lord Northcliffe's contribution to his time. Journalism was a profession; in his hands, it has no more moral significance than the manufacture of soap. The old notion in regard to a newspaper was that it was a responsible adviser of the public. Its first duty was to provide the news, uncoloured by any motive, private or public; its second, to present

a certain view of public policy which it believed to be for the good of the State and the community. It was sober, responsible and a little dull. It treated life as if it was a serious matter. It had an antiquated respect for truth. It believed in the moral governance of things.

"Lord Northcliffe has changed all this. He started free from all convictions. He saw an immense, unexploited field. The old journalism appealed only to the minds of the responsible public. He would appeal to the emotions of the irresponsible. The old journalism gave news; he would give sensation. The old journalism gave reasoned opinion; he would give unreasoning passion. When Captain Flanagan, from the calm retreat of the debtors' prison, was drawing up the prospectus of the *Pall Mall Gazette,* he said proudly that it 'would be written by gentlemen for gentlemen.' Lord Northcliffe conceived a journal which, in Lord Salisbury's phrase, was written 'by office-boys for office-boys.' It was a bitter saying; but Lord Northcliffe has had his revenge. He, Lord Salisbury's office-boy of journalism, was raised to the peerage by Lord Salisbury's nephew."

The Times of Ceylon, then the most popular daily, was European-owned and designed to promote the interests of the European planters and business magnates in particular and the European community in general. It knew that the interests of the White community lay with the White rulers and was therefore pro-Government. Contemporary records show that in any clash of opinion between the rulers and the ruled, it invariably threw its weight on the side of the rulers and denounced the people and their leaders. It was openly hostile to the cause of national freedom and deprecated all attempts to reform the constitution and extend the people's rights.

When an agitation for reforms was very much in the air and certain British parliamentarians

were known to be in sympathy with it, all that seemed so utterly outrageous that the paper lent itself to the preposterous comment editorially, "There has never been and, we believe, never will be any widespread desire for self-government among the inhabitants of Ceylon; but there are plenty of politicians in Great Britain who are anxious and even eager to believe that such a demand exists. We, therefore, base our hope that what we should regard as an unmitigated misfortune to the Colony may be averted, not on the indifference of the inhabitants as to a radical change on the methods of government, but on the active hostility on the part of the thinking educated Ceylonese to any further step in the direction of what is known as popular or representative government." Its stintless support found its reward in the patronage of the Government and a monopoly of State advertisements.

The Ceylon Independent was a paper of the Burghers which had then swung from opposition to the Government to support of it. It was common knowledge that Governor McCallum was vehemently opposed to the grant of the Reforms of 1911. But in belauding His Excellency, the paper said, "His Excellency's sympathy with the aspirations of the educated portion of the population was shown in the reform of the Legislative Council, through which the elective principle has been introduced into that body partially." That was the sort of ludicrous travesty in which the press revelled.

The Ceylon Observer, owned by the Fergusons, was, after a hectic career lasting many decades, now in the doldrums. Once a great admirer of Ramanathan, it became actively hostile to him ever since he instituted a libel action against it. *The Morning Leader* was a family paper owned by the de Soysas, to promote their own interests. It is worth remembering that it was this paper

that, during the election of the Educated Ceylonese Member, carried on a vigorous and sustained campaign of detraction and vilification against Ramanathan, in its endeavour to win the Seat for Dr. Fernando, a kinsman of the de Soysas. It will thus be seen that popular journalism was at its lowest ebb. Adherence to truth, an objective statement of facts as opposed to fancies and fiction, a settled and clear-sighted national policy, a devotion to national ends were virtues unknown to the contemporary press. Expediency, self-interest, sensation-mongering, whipping up base passions, gratuitous and intemperate attacks upon public personalities of repute, venality, vulgarity, a wanton abuse of the freedom of the press characterised much of what the press said and did. Instead of being an agent of immeasurable good, it was fast degenerating into an instrument of incalculable national harm.

It was to combat this national menace that Ramanathan founded *The Ceylonese*. It was as an antidote to this foul poison that was being dished out from day to day and contaminating the national consciousness that Ramanathan, along with a few friends of his, founded *The Ceylonese* in 1913. It was to be a full-fledged national organ reflecting the national will, as its name denoted. Nothing sectional or parochial, communal or racial was to hamper its working or disturb its even tenor. It is noteworthy that Ramanathan in all his long and eventful career, thought of all things in terms national and never in terms communal or sectional. It was to foster national unity, the spirit of nationhood, to forge a single nation out of its many disparate elements, that he strove with such indomitable persistence. He gave the name 'Ceylonese' advisedly, so that every Ceylonese citizen could look upon it as his own representative organ, be inured to that name and derive pride from it. All narrow sectional, communal interests

and loyalties should be subordinated to this supreme national purpose, all varying terms and designations should yield pride of place to this one common appellation.

To make the paper truly national and broad-based, to guarantee for it the spirit of sturdy independence and freedom from corruption either though the channels of power or by the pulling of financial strings, he vested its ownership in the people, not in a few plutocrats, as had hitherto been the fashion, but in two hundred share-holders representing every community and every interest, and launched an island-wide campaign to sell these shares (each priced at a thousand rupees) and extend to as many as possible the pride of ownership. On the occasion of the ceremonial opening of Ramanathan College on 20th January, 1913, Ramanathan made a fervent appeal to the Tamils "to give their enthusiastic support to this national venture by buying shares in the company which would be its proprietor." He further told them, "The paper would be the true exponent of the views and interests of the Ceylonese community without distinction of caste or colour or creed under an editor of great culture, wide sympathies, proved abilities and vast experience."

The Ceylonese first made its appearance on 5th March, 1913 amidst much fanfare and trumpets, carrying with it the hopes and expectations of a whole country. To take the paper above the plane of local and sectional pulls and to render it truly national, to raise its quality and content, journalists from abroad were recruited to its service. H. H. Marcus and Tom Wright, both Americans of great ability and experience, were appointed the first Manager and the first Editor. In his prefatory statement of policy, the Editor said, "My policy will be simply that of a democrat anxious at all times to be truthful and honest and fair and careful for the greatest good of the greatest

number." He exhorted them to "abandon class-thinking in favour of community-thinking. Let all people think in terms of Ceylonese. The new paper would put that in the front row of its principles."

Nevertheless, Ramanathan had reckoned without the host. Things went on well for some time, but before long, differences crept in among the Directors, who began pulling in different directions. The original policies were lost sight of and personal and communal interests began to assert themselves. It became evident the Directors would not see eye to eye on many matters and Ramanathan thought it best to secede. Accordingly he resigned from the Directorate in the early part of its career.

The rot had set in. The remaining Directors resorted to desperate remedies to sustain the paper but hardly anything could be done to save it. In a world teeming with self-interest, in which every man is striving to further his interests and those of his own community at the expense of every other, Ramanathan's ideal of a well-knit and firmly united Ceylonese nation appears to have been a Utopian dream. H. A. J. Hulugalle, the doyen of Ceylonese journalism and an author of no mean repute speaks of the rise and fall of *The Ceylonese* in words that cannot be bettered. He says, "Their (Americans') methods of publicity, news presentation, sales promotion and reporting were distinctly American and contrasted strongly with the more conservative practices of Colombo newspapers modelled on English and Scottish journals of the day. The management of *The Ceylonese* sometimes hired a band to play in the premises to attract passing crowds.

"For a time it looked as if the new paper would catch on. It had a vigorous policy and breezy style. It published a Sunday edition. The display of news stories was frequently sensational. But there were always too many cooks. Each of the Directors thought that it was his duty to give

orders to the Editor. Shareholders claimed the right to have news items published or kept out, when they were personally concerned. The income of the paper was never adequate to pay the expenses. Percival Deutrom, the last Manager of *The Ceylonese*, who wrote an account of the changeover from *The Ceylonese* to *The Daily News* has said: 'The degrading manner in which we had to collect money from advertisers to meet the daily needs had made the paper cheap and worthless in their eyes.'

"There was a succession of Editors in the few years of the existence of *The Ceylonese*. One of them, Lawrie Muttukrishna, also ran a shorthand and typewriting institute and was a hand-writing expert. He had a flamboyant style and was involved in many libel actions. To the defects of internal administration were added the difficulties of wartime censorship and the prohibitive cost of newsprint, ink, types and machinery. It was not surprising that the paper was moribund and groaning under a lord of debt."

American methods of publicity, staffing and payment might succeed in mammoth organisations such as one finds in a vast and wealthy continent like America, with their production and sales of papers by the million, their immense income from big advertisements and their advanced technology. But in a small island with a few thousand readers and a meagre income from advertisements, American methods would not pay.

Moreover, corporate concerns seldom succeed in Ceylon. Everybody's concern become nobody's concern. Everybody is conscious of his rights but nobody is conscious of his duties. No wonder, corporate concerns have a chequered existence. Ramanathan was far too busy a person to give the new venture the personal direction it sorely needed. No wonder the great organisation, which at first promised so well, came to a premature and

ignominious end. It met the fate common to corporate concerns.

But we have little reason to grieve over the demise of *The Ceylonese*, for out of its ashes, there sprang into existence a mammoth organisation, the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon which, under the dynamic and inspiring leadership of a single man of genius and vision, spread its ramifications throughout the Island and became a tremendous force in the national life of the country.

When the auctioneer's hammer fell on the firm of The Ceylonese & Co., Ltd., Wijewardene who with his lynx-eye saw in the wreckage infinite possibilities, stepped in and bought it lock, stock, and barrel.

CHAPTER IV

EXCISE REFORM

According to sages, who are our guides both in worldly life and in spiritual life, it is our paramount duty not to touch intoxicating liquor of any kind, and that if we do, we shall certainly estrange ourselves from the Lord of all Mercies .....Having a full sense of responsibility, both to man and God, and having been forced into this chair by the wishes of my countrymen, I am bound to look into this matter from all points of view.

—Ramanathan

Taverns are places where madness is sold by the bottle.

—Jonathan Swift

It is the Government's bounden duty to the people, whose destinies have been entrusted to their hands, not to force on them this foul poison in every nook and corner of Ceylon. My Hon. friend speaks of a right to do that. I say: 'No. You have no right to do it.'

—Ramanathan

If you destroy the population of the country, there will be no good in possessing the country. We may project various schemes for improving the country, but if we destroy the strength of the nation by allowing the people to imbibe freely alcohol poison and nicotine poison, what good can come of measures of public utility?

The habit of drinking and eating poison every day of our lives, our religion condemns it—Hindu religion, the Buddhist religion, the Mohammedan religion and I am sure the Christian religion also. It is essentially wrong in moral principle, if the Government of Ceylon brings within the grasp of villagers opportunities for drinking—opportunities for poisoning themselves and vitiating their system altogether. I do hope the principle insisted upon by many, who are devoted to temperance,

will be adopted by the Government of Ceylon, just as it has been adopted in many of the United States of America.

—Ramanathan

I appeal to Your Excellency and Your Excellency's Government not to expose the people of the country to the temptation which is laid before their doors to take to drinking.

—Ramanathan

How then will the position of any Government be, when it deliberately proposes to sell alcohol for purposes of revenue and carry alcohol to the very homes of the people with a fiat that it is God-given food? I say that, instead of being a God-given food, it is a devil-given poison."

—Ramanathan

THE reform of the excise was a subject of far-reaching national importance taken up by the Government of Sir Henry McCallum in the newly-constituted legislature of 1912. The subject had for many years been engaging the attention of earlier Governments but none would venture upon a remedy for fear of its immensity, its many complexities, the passions it would arouse and the many vested interests it would disturb.

The drink-habit was fast becoming endemic and the free and unrestricted consumption of toddy and arrack was fast throttling the nation, by undermining its health, brutalizing its manhood, ruining many careers and wrecking many homes. He knew that of the many evils that afflict frail humanity, there is none more devastating or more blighting in its effects than man's bondage to pernicious brews. Left to himself, he would with one stroke of his pen have banished this demon, this heinous traffic in drink once and for all. But a foreign ruler whose prime concern was a bloated exchequer, who would purchase it even at the price of a nation'a health and happiness, nay, at the price of its very existence, was

determined to wring the last penny from this fertile but noxious source. It is notorious that imperialists have through the ages given free rein to the drink-habit by an unconscionable multiplication of taverns and liquor bars and a rapid expansion of the means of production and distribution of liquor. They have done so as part and parcel of their imperialist policy to bring as near the door of every man, woman and child an abundant and unrestricted supply of diverse poisonous brews as their ingenuity and resourcefulness have enabled them, inasmuch as none other has known the truth more clearly than they that imperialism thrives on the soil of demoralized and decadent humanity. While a people's own government makes frantic efforts to build factories and workshops, open agricultural and industrial centres to stimulate production and increase the nation's wealth and through it, the means of human happiness and well-being, a foreign ruler busies himself with building up taverns, liquor-bars and distilleries in plenty, stately picture-palaces, ball-rooms and gambling-houses, all of which serve a dual purpose—swell the State coffers, while they debase, degrade and stupefy subject humanity and by so doing, strengthen the heavy hand of the foreign despot. There is reason to believe that the conduct of the Britisher was not above board, in that it was incomprehensible why a government ostensibly committed to a policy of progressive reduction of the drink traffic should seek to increase the existing number of taverns rather than reduce it. An attempt was made to justify it on the ground of the employment it gave tappers and distillers and the handsome earnings it brought them. But it is extremely regrettable that whoever made it had not the simple wisdom to understand that all this employment was directed towards an activity which, far from being beneficent, heaped untold misery and suffering on the nation.

Moreover, owing to the absence of an efficient machinery for the effective control of production and distribution, illicit brews of all kinds were rife. A good deal of revenue, which should normally flow into the national exchequer, was finding its way into the pockets of illicit-brewers and bootleggers. This was undoubtedly a disquieting situation, which neither the governing hierarchy nor the leaders of the people could view with complacency or unconcern. But the problem was a massive one.

However, under the pressure of public opinion and the urgency of the need to discover a satisfactory remedy, the Government of Sir Henry McCallum, aided by a Colonial Secretary of the talent and stature of Sir Hugh Clifford, addressed itself to it. It sought to separate the sale of toddy from that of arrack—though hitherto it had been the practice to sell them both in the same tavern—and replace the renting system then in vogue, which had given so much room for abuse, with the system of excise followed by the Government of Madras.

On 3rd April, 1912, the Government framed an Ordinance "which affirmed the expediency of altering the existing system of arrack and toddy renting and introducing a system of Excise on the lines followed in Madras, or an adaptation of them to local conditions." It further stated "that the Government should secure more complete control of the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquor than it at present possesses." On 15th April, when the second Reading of the Bill was taken up, the Colonial Secretary in a speech more eloquent than thoughtful, more plausible than convincing, outlined the purport of the Bill, condemned the existing system as "bad and pernicious" and proposed the remedies.

Both the Official and the Unofficial Members applauded the speech and acclaimed the Bill. But

Ramanathan did not share their view. He was not to be taken in or overawed by all this magniloquence, this torrent of facile speech. Lynx-eyed, an astute judge of things, a consummate parliamentarian, above all, a passionate patriot keen to see that every legislative measure, big or small, was subjected to the closest and most microscopic scrutiny, he saw through the many chinks in the Colonial Secretary's armour, saw through the many blemishes and shortcomings in the scheme propounded by him and sought clarification on many points, before he could give his adherence to the Bill.

He delivered a series of speeches that breathed fire and passion, speeches remarkable for their union of patriotic fervour, moral elevation and persuasive force, for a complete mastery of the multitudinous facets and details of a highly complicated and nationally momentous question, speeches whose dominant note was a supreme endeavour to rescue man from subjection to this giant evil. He took the governing hierarchy to task for propounding a scheme which was ill-prepared, ill-baked and ill-digested. The speeches are too long to bear reproduction here. Brief extracts are all that can be given. He questioned the correctness of the statement made by the Colonial Secretary that the Excise Question had not engaged the attention of earlier governments, deplored the progressive and alarming expansion of the drink-traffic as revealed by the phenomenal increase in the revenue from excise and the appalling rise in the rate of licit and illicit production and sale of liquor, the heavy toll of human life and happiness it was taking from day to day and year to year, while the rulers sat smugly in their seats and watched complacently. He emphasized at some length the enormous importance of manning the Excise Department with men of high calibre and integrity equal to the immensity of the task that lay before

them, and of formulating a scheme only after careful study and forethought, if any tangible and abiding success was to be achieved. Hasty remedy would be worse than the disease. "It is not correct," he said, "as has been supposed today, that previous Governors have not given their close attention to the study of this important question. I have had opportunities, and ample opportunities, of being in touch with the government of the country during the last forty years, and I must say that from the days of Sir William Gregory up to the time of Sir West Ridgeway, the attention of the Government has been directed, not only to the manner in which the arrack revenue may be augmented, but also to the supervision of illicit sales. During the days of Sir William Gregory the revenue from arrack and toddy was not anything like the revenue which we have at the present day. Honourable Members will be interested to hear that in 1870 the revenue from that source was only Rs. 1,280,000, whereas at present, in the year 1910, the revenue has risen to Rs. 4,700,000. But the question of the consumption of arrack and toddy was not of such pressing importance in the days of Sir William Gregory as at the present day, when the revenue from that source amounts to as much as one-ninth of the whole revenue of the Island. If the previous government of Sir William Gregory, Sir James Longden, Sir Arthur Gordon, Sir Arthur Havelock, Sir West Ridgeway, and Sir Henry Blake have not thought it their duty to take up this very complicated question, it is not because they did not recognize the existence of this problem, but because they thought it was a dangerous subject to handle; they thought it was a very ticklish subject, and that interests varied and multiplied were at stake, and that, unless those governments were fully prepared with the necessary information to deal with the subject on all points, it would be in the highest

degree dangerous to meddle with it. In fact, I have had it from the lips of important administrators before now that this is a case to which the old adage would apply, namely, that fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

The good husbandman that he was in the handling of his own personal and private resources, he was a more vigilant and resourceful steward of national finance. "Give unto Cæsar what is Cæsar's and unto God, what is God's"—that was his maxim through life. He was profoundly distressed to learn that a good part of the revenue from liquor which should normally flow into the coffers of the State, found its way into the pockets of boot-leggers and illicit-brewers. "I, however, recognize, Sir, the importance of the subject at the present time, because, as Your Excellency and my honourable friend the Colonial Secretary have repeatedly said, it is impossible to determine how much of the revenue from this source is being missed by the Colony. The income from arrack is now as much as Rs. 4,700,000, and from an administrator's point of view it is essential to find out once for all, if it is possible to do so, how much of the revenue goes into other hands than the public exchequer. I estimate from information I have received from different sources that as much as three millions of rupees are diverted from the public exchequer by the renting system. That is a practical problem indeed; and I think the thanks of the Colony are due to Your Excellency and to your advisers for sitting assiduously over this question, and devising methods by which so much money can be diverted into the public exchequer. I have no doubt that if a system could be found out by which three millions of rupees can be gained for the public exchequer we should all try and support it. Now, great pains have been taken to find out whether a system superior to the renting system is to be found or not, and the choice of

the Government has fallen upon the excise system; and it remains to be seen whether the excise system is the panacea which it is hoped it will be. I, Sir, would be very glad if it answers the question."

Ramanathan contended that any tinkering at a problem of such national magnitude and moment, any half-hearted, half-fledged, piecemeal measure, any attempt at patchwork would only spell ruin and disaster to the nation. What was necessary was a comprehensive and thorough-going scheme formulated after careful study and strenuous thought, if this great national menace was to be brought under rigid and effective control. He was vexed at the complacency and light-heartedness, with which the Government set about the business, its failure to study the subject in all its bearings, and its inability to furnish the Unofficials with the data necessary to enable them to examine the scheme and proffer the advice it sorely needed. He said, "Now, the success of the excise system in the Madras Presidency is due entirely to its completeness, to the effective manning of the department, which is necessary to control the whole system. Unless the Government are prepared to formulate a complete department, and to place at the head of it a most skilful officer upon a pay consistent with the importance of the office, I feel from my knowledge of things existing in India and elsewhere that the proposed excise system, instead of being a blessing to this country, will bring nothing but harm. Now, Sir, I desire to have upon this question a lot of information from the Government. The Government have told us that they were not prepared to face the Legislative Council of Ceylon earlier than now because of want of information. They admit that they went to the Secretary of State with information of a kind, and managed to persuade Lord Crewe to give his support under certain conditions. They say that

they also succeeded in obtaining the assent of Mr. Harcourt to this scheme, to the excise scheme. But when I go over the papers from the beginning to the end, I see there is a complete absence of information upon the very vitals of the question—the nature of the department with which you propose to work the system. I look in vain for information on this part of the subject. What is the size of the department to be? How many officers will there be in the Excise Department? What are their respective duties? How do they stand correlated? Into how many divisions are you going to divide the Island? What about the distilleries, without which an Excise Department cannot stand?"

The Government had no answer to these questions but took shelter under the plea that it was merely copying the Madras System. Strangely enough, it had neither studied the Madras System in its entirety nor worked out the details for its adoption. It was merely groping in the dark and was content with half-measures and piecemeal implementation. That for Ramanathan was not the manner in which questions of national import should be handled by the rulers. On the other hand Ramanathan had with assiduous and interminable pains mastered not merely the Madras System but those of many other lands outside. He had all the relevant details at his finger-tips. One thing is worth repeating about Ramanathan's statesmanship as about every other act of his life viz. that he never nibbled at a problem, big or small, nor toyed with it, but rather delved deep into it, probed ever detail of it and would not rest content until he had plucked the heart out of it. Dabbling in anything or skirmishing with matters of moment was never his way in all his long and illustrious life. He had in him the Midas touch. Every thing he touched turned to gold; it became suffused with a new glow, shed a rare lustre and excellence.

Not to speak of the fashionable, high-brow callings of statecraft or law or scholarship or philosophy, even the humdrum, common-place pursuits of planting or agriculture or building-construction or the management of his manifold interests gained a new dignity, a new potency under his magic touch. Anxious fore-thought, meticulous planning, and sound execution characterised all things he undertook and accomplished. That was the secret of his phenomenal success in his long and versatile career.

He now asked pointedly certain specific and clear-cut questions which the Government spokesmen were utterly powerless to answer. His first question went to the root of the matter. He asked categorically the whole House comprising 13 Officials and 10 Unofficials "if any of them had read—let alone ponder and digest—any paper connected with the working of the excise system in the Madras Presidency." The House was assembled that day to pass a bill for the adoption of the Madras excise system in Ceylon. But strangely enough, none of the 23 members knew exactly what the Madras system was. That was how cavalierly the local bearers of the White Man's Burden, ably assisted by the accredited champions and watch-dogs of the nation, were going about the sublime task of legislating for a subject people in sore need of their protecting-hand. Proceeding to explain the Madras system, he said, "It is a huge department, and the chief Commissioner of the Department is paid as much as Rs. 3,275 a month. He occupies a place on the Board of Revenue, together with the Commissioners of Finance, Land Settlement, and so on, and this Board of Revenue is carried on under the aegis of the Governor and his Executive Council. Consider, Sir, the importance of the supervision of the complicated department by the Excise Commissioner. Your Excellency admits that the work to be done in the department will be as complicated as it will be far-reaching

in its effects. What sort of man are we going to have in Ceylon as the Chief Excise Commissioner? An officer analogous to the Chief Excise Commissioner of Madras? Are you going to pay anything like Rs. 3,275 a month to him; because he is a civilian of the highest importance, and a civilian considered to be fit to enter the Executive Council, and becomes even the Governor of the Madras Presidency? There are two persons at the present time, if I remember rightly, Sir Harvey Thompson and Mr. Hammick, who have been Governors of the Madras Presidency, after being Excise Commissioners. The chief excise officer you choose should have a clear grasp of this important branch of revenue, and he must have very superior abilities. I do not think it right to draft off from the Civil Service a person occupying a post in the Second Class to administer the affairs of an important department, which brings into the coffers of the public revenue as much as Rs. 5,000,000, one-eighth of the revenue of Ceylon. Now, Sir, this civilian, the Chief Excise Commissioner in Madras, is a man grown old in the service of India, is a man who has risen by force of his intellect and executive capacity to this high position. It seems to me that by the experience afforded to us by India that an officer of the Second Class of the Civil Service receiving a pay of perhaps Rs. 10,000 a year.....

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: "Might I remind the Honourable Member that Mr. Horsburgh is an officer of the First Class?"

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: "Very well, Sir, an officer of the First Class. I thank my honourable friend for that correction. But, Sir, among officers of the First Class there are different orders of men. What is needed is a man whose mental calibre is on a par with that of my honourable friend the Colonial Secretary, or on a par with that of the Excise Commissioner in Madras.

If such an officer cannot be found, I think, Sir, there is every chance of this excise scheme going astray. It is insisted by the authorities who have written upon the Excise Department that there must be the brightest intellect and the keenest activity displayed in the chair of the Chief Excise Commissioner to make it a success. If you do not have such a man, you will be sorry for it in the end. Economy in this respect will never do, and the revenue from arrack and toddy, which is so necessary for Ceylon, will be endangered thereby. But that is not the only thing. The Chief Excise Commissioner is not the sum and substance of the Excise Department. Sir, I have not had from the Government any description whatever of the new Excise Department. Now, the Presidency of Madras is divided for the purposes of the Excise Department into three large divisions, each under a Deputy Commissioner, one of whom is a Civil Servant qualifying for the office of Chief Excise Commissioner, and even for that of Governor of the Madras Presidency. These divisions are divided into subdivisions, each under an Assistant Commissioner, who draws from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000. Each subdivision again is divided into ranges, each under a Sub-Inspector drawing a salary of from Rs. 30 to Rs. 70. When the circle is large, there is an Assistant Inspector on Rs. 125 to Rs. 175. So that a man, as the present system is worked, has an opportunity of rising from a salary of Rs. 125 to Rs. 1,400; and at present there is a Deputy Commissioner drawing a salary of Rs. 1,400, who is none other than a native gentleman, Rao Bahadur Krishnaswamy Iyengar. He rose from the small salary of Rs. 25; and there is an Assistant Commissionership which is now held by a Muhammadan gentleman, and he rose from a clerkship in the Post Office. Now, Sir, the majority of the Inspectors on Rs. 250 to Rs. 400 are natives. Thus Sir, you will see

how important it is to offer inducements enough for gentlemen to be honest and trustworthy in this difficult department. If you make your pay low, if you put in a man who will readily yield to temptation, the scheme is bound to be a failure. That is well recognized in India. Up to the present date all that we have done in regard to the Excise Department, so far as my inquiries go, is to send out about 20 Sub-Inspectors on the poor salary of Rs. 50 to Rs. 70 a month for gathering information....."

The Government had tabled a bill for the adoption of the Madras Excise System, but surprisingly enough, they had neither studied the System nor worked out the details for its implementation. As such, they were utterly powerless to furnish the Unofficial Members with the information indispensable to a consideration of the Bill. Ramanathan asked for information on various aspects of the proposed system, but the Government's spokesmen, not having equipped themselves, tried to be evasive, saying that the speaker would be provided with the information he needed, when he had finished speaking. In sheer exasperation, he cried out, "*How is it possible for us, Sir, members of the Legislative Council, to help you in the difficult task of administering the Government of Ceylon without the needed information? I ask 'Will you tell me what your conception is of the Excise Department? What is the proposal to be? What is the distribution of work in regard to its numerous officers? What inducement are you going to hold out to keep them away from corruption and indolence?' And I receive but one answer: 'We are as much in the dark as you are.' Is this not true, really? Is this not the present situation of the members of the Legislative Council? You say, 'Let us set up an Excise Department. Let us knock down the renting system, which is bringing us a revenue, as Honourable Members know, without any effort on our part. Let us knock it on the head and institute an*

Excise Department.' I say you are past masters in the art of government, and we are mere neophytes. We are willing to learn at your feet. But if we raise the question, 'Will you tell us what is the nature of your department to be?' you say, 'That is a question we have yet to consider.' I say, Sir, that the principle of the Madras Presidency is well ascertained to be that unless the executive government is formulated in all its details in the best possible manner, and unless it is officered and supervised in the most efficient manner, it is bound to fall. If the Government had given me the information I want, my responsibility this day would have been easy. Having a full sense of responsibility, both to man and God, and having been forced into this chair by the wishes of my countrymen, I am bound to look into this matter from all points of view. But go where I may, I cannot get any information about the Excise Department. So what am I to do under the circumstances? My heart aches. I am all in a tremor for the safety of the arrack revenue."

This is hard-hitting, hard-pounding of a sort from which the ruling hierarchy was happily immune, since that memorable day in 1892 when the evil genius of alien rule conspired to remove Ramanathan from the country's supreme legislature by taking the unprecedented step of limiting the term of Unofficial Members to five years and henceforth took the extreme precaution of appointing only docile, servile, acquiescent men to Unofficial Seats. It was blistering, withering indictment of the Government's apathy and brash indifference to questions which, besides being exceptionally difficult, vitally affected the fortunes of a whole nation; and the delinquents were not small fry but the big-wigs of the legislature, the helmsmen of the State. The Governor, the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney-General were often the objects of his lashing, slashing, eloquence. His instinct, both in public and private life, was for the big foe. He was reputedly the hunter of big

game. "Don't waste your powder and shot on the small animals. Go for the lion,"—that was the principle that dictated his conduct through life.

Where he was so earnest, so resolute and so pains-taking, the rulers were lukewarm, half-hearted and smugly complacent. It was all in line with imperialist behaviour all through the ages. Alien rulers make wanton sport of the lives and destinies of subject peoples and do so without the smallest twinge of conscience. They had failed signally in their primary duty of providing the Unofficial Members with the relevant details of a scheme they sought to foist on the nation; moreover, a scheme, which, if ill-formulated or ill-executed, would have disastrous consequences for the whole nation. Unofficial Members, too, were equally lukewarm and complacent. What did it matter to them, even if the whole country was drowned in liquor or the entirety of the population, turned overnight into a nation of topers and ne'er-do-wells, so long as their Seats and the trappings and trimmings thereof were secure? Ramanathan proceeded, "Then, I ask, Sir, whether the Government have considered and settled another important point round which the whole system moves. You say 'Abolish the renting system.' Well and good. But the renting system moves, hinges on a system of out-stills. From Panadura to Dondra Head we have as many as 240 stills, contributing each its mite to the maintenance of the renting system; that is to say, supplying the renter with the stores necessary for the sale of arrack, and so bringing in revenue to the Colony. Now, Sir, I want to know what you are going to do with these distilleries in different parts of the country. The part of the country from Panadura to Dondra Head where toddy may be drawn is only 20 miles wide and less than 100 miles long; and that country is dotted over with out-stills, and toddy is being taken from each centre to its own distillery; and

distillation takes place in each distillery, and then the arrack passes under the control of the renter. Well, with one cry all the Members of the Legislative Council, including the members of the Executive Council, at the head of whom stands Your Excellency, declare, 'Knock all these distilleries on the head.' I shall also join in the cry, simply to keep company with the rest. Well, in the place of these, what other distilleries will you have? To Madras we have to look again for the solution of this question. You say, 'We shall have Government distilleries; we shall have central distilleries as in Madras.' And the question arises—How many central distilleries are you going to have? No answer. How are you going to work them? Let me know the details of the scheme. No public question, no domestic question, can be solved satisfactorily unless you have answers ready to questions of detail. To let one's imagination run riot on imaginary outlines is easy enough. But the practical man wants to see the actual details. Let us talk of each detail upon its own merits. Let us see the relation which one detail bears to another, and see all the details standing together in the aggregate. Let us see if it can be most effectively carried out. Nothing of the kind is furnished to me or to Honourable Members in regard to the details of the system, or the difficulties besetting this part of the subject. Now, supposing that central distilleries were brought into vogue, what is to be the cost of each distillery? Somebody said Rs. 78,000, I think in the Excise Commissioner's Report. That is a small distillery, capable of distilling only a limited number of gallons which may or may not be enough for carrying on the system we are engaged on. But if we want a larger distillery, the amount must run to over Rs. 100,000 or so. I ask now how many distilleries are there going to be on the ground from out of which 240 little stills are to be chucked away? Have

we got any information on the subject, Sir? *Will my honourable friend enlighten me upon this point for the purposes of this debate now?"*

The Colonial Secretary, were he worth his salt, should have met the questions fairly and squarely, and provided the answer, for he was in duty bound to do that. But being a member of the ruling caste, he burked them with impunity, as well he might who belonged to that charmed circle. All he said in reply to these animadversions was that it would be well if he furnished the speaker with the necessary details, when he (the speaker) had finished speaking. Heaven knows what purpose all his information would serve him (the speaker) when once he had finished his speech. The Governor too shared the same view. Not that they were so obtuse as not to see the folly and the futility of their reply, not to see how difficult, nay impossible, it was for the speaker to advise the Government on a scheme so complex and so massive, unless the Government had told him in advance what their proposals were for the implementation of the Scheme; but that they did not want to make the simple, plain, straight-forward admission that they had failed in their primary duty of working out at least the main features of the scheme, and furnishing the House with such details as it would need, if it was to proffer its advice, before they sought the House's approval. It was autocracy naked, unalloyed, but it had passed muster in days gone by when Unofficial Members, in reality boneless wonders, stuttered and stammered in the presence of the autocrat and his haughty lieutenants and accepted without a hum or a murmur any ruling he might care to make. But now conditions were totally changed, for there appeared in the political firmament a new phenomenon which would not be baulked or subdued, not be bamboozled or browbeaten or silenced by anyone, be he sovereign or autocrat, but would

stand up for his rights as the accredited spokesman of the nation, look every man full in the face and demand as of indefeasible right, to be furnished with every detail of a measure the Government proposed to take, before he would give his adherence to it.

The Excise Bill was, as has been pointed out, a half-baked measure. Its implications had not been fully studied, and its details, not been worked out. Hence, the inability of the Government to provide the details he asked for. Such rash irresponsibility, such brash indifference on the part of the highest executives of the Government in a matter so momentous and so far-reaching cut him to the quick.

In sheer despair and seething indignation, he asked, "How can I go on?"

All that the Governor said was, "The Honourable Member has possession of the House."

It was now Ramanathan's turn to tell the Governor and his overweening lieutenants what he really felt about them and their mode of government. And he did not mince his words.

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: *"I cannot be effaced in that way. You would not give the public any information. You would not give the Honourable Members any information. What are we here for? To trifle with us? That is not the way to govern the country. We want precise information before our time is taken up for the purpose of the public. If you would not give us that information, I say that is an act of misgovernment which ought not to be repeated."* The whole House looked aghast and speechless at what they regarded as an act of brazen impudence and irreverence. But Ramanathan was perfectly in order in making these strictures and well within his rights. Had he not on an earlier occasion asked for and obtained from His Excellency a categorical declaration that the Unofficial Members had as much freedom to criticise the actions of the Government as any Member of Parliament in the House of Commons? It is

noteworthy that in all his parliamentary career, Ramanathan never over-stepped the limits of his powers or prerogatives nor slighted the decencies or the decorum of the House.

The Colonial Secretary who was more concerned about Unofficial Members being critical of the Government than conscious of its obligation to furnish them with the information necessary to enable them to play their parts worthily and well took objection to Ramanathan's use of the words *"an act of misgovernment which ought not to be repeated here"*, and moved for an apology from him. He said, "I question whether the Honourable Member is in order. It is quite foreign to the tone of any Member of this Council to address Your Excellency in the manner in which the Honourable Member has spoken. Personally, I think, that an apology is called for. If an apology is not offered, I propose to move for the suspension of the Honourable Member."

His Excellency the Governor, who would merely echo the views of his chief lieutenant rather than go into the rights or the wrongs of the case, said, "The Colonial Secretary is perfectly right in a matter of order. The Honourable Member has taken the extreme measure of animadverting on the way in which the Colony is governed by the Governor. You have just called it *'misgovernment'*. In these circumstances, I must call upon the Honourable Member to withdraw his remarks and apologize."

It was the hey-day of British Colonial rule, when the Governor, panoplied in power and prerogative and armed with a brutal, steam-roller Official majority, held the Unofficials in a cleft-stick. He could by merely invoking the aid of his Official majority vote, order a Member out of the House. Moreover, he was surrounded by a band of obsequious Unofficials, who thought of safety first and knew all-too-well wherein that safety lay and acted with promptitude and decision. It is noteworthy that

on an occasion such as this, when the rights and privileges of the people's representatives were being brazenly assailed, and matters of the highest national importance, handled in such a perfunctory fashion by the arbitrary might of an alien autocrat, not one of these champions of the people's rights and liberties lifted his voice in defence of either. They rather swung to the side of the oppressor, with whom they knew their own interests lay. Moreover, mutual jealousy and ill-will split them into rival factions. They rarely saw eye to eye on many issues. The history of imperialism bares one harsh truth, that peoples and nations were subdued and led into subjection and servitude not by the superior might of an alien conqueror, but, rather by the mutual jealousies and rivalries the rancorous discords and dissensions that kept as,under the men who posed as the people's leaders and saviours. "United we stand, divided we fall," is a self-evident truth that could hardly seep through the adamant stone of jealousy and greed that marred their whole career and earned for them the derision and the execrations of the multitude. It is sad to reflect that from the commencement of his great career right up to its end, many of Ramanathan's constructive and creative efforts were thwarted and set at naught rather by the congenital inability of the people's professed leadership to work in harmony and goodwill than by the strong hand of an imperial power. Much mud continued to be slung on him to the end of his days and ingratitude worse than serpent's tooth followed him through life. One need not shed tears over it, inasmuch as the world has from the beginnings of time spared everybody and everything except its greatest and noblest sons. Such alas! has been the tragedy of subject peoples from the very dawn of imperialism down to our own day to be led by persons unworthy of their great trust persons who, in the words of Plato "live fighting

one another about shadows and quarrelling for power, as if that were a great prize; whereas, in truth, government can be at its best and free from dissension only where the destined rulers are least desirous of holding office."

Ramanathan was perfectly right in his strictures, in denouncing a bureaucracy which failed in its fundamental duty, which sought to rush through a weighty and far-reaching Bill, not knowing what it was about. But he knew the Governor had the whip-hand of the business, which he would wield with deadly effect on whomsoever crossed his path, nor had Ramanathan one lieutenant among the praetorian bands of Unofficials to lift a finger in his support.

If reason and argument prevailed, he could unaided, single-handed have held at bay the whole phalanx of British Officials and the Unofficials too. But where a dumb and servile majority in the grip of an arbitrary potentate ruled the roast and decided issues of life and death, he knew reason and argument would not avail. Moreover, it was part of his lifelong political creed always to respect and uphold the supremacy, the dignity and decorum of the legislature, strengthen its hand and not make it the scene of unseemly squabbles and bickerings. So he bowed to the will of the House.

The Hon. Ceylonese Member: Does your Excellency mean to say.....

His Excellency the Governor: I call on the Honourable Member to withdraw the remark and apologize.

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: Sir, I am in an unfortunate position, Because.....

His Excellency the Governor: Excuse me. I call on the Hon. Member to withdraw the remark and apologize, and until he does so I cannot allow the Honourable Member to proceed with his remarks.

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: *I am compelled then by the power that your Excellency has, to make an apology* for using the words *'act of misgovernment'* on the part of Your Excellency."

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: "I do not think, Sir, that is quite what will satisfy the requirements of my colleagues on this Council. We require an apology for the last few sentences addressed to the Chair by the Honourable Member, and for the manner in which they were addressed. I very strongly feel that it is altogether repellent, and I believe no less to the Unofficial than to the Official Members, that the Governor of this Colony and His Majesty the King's representative amongst us, should be addressed in that manner by any Member of this Board. It is entirely opposed to all the traditions of this Council, and I feel perfectly certain that I have the whole sense of this Council with me when I say we require an apology for the words."

The Hon. the European Rural Member: "May I as one of the oldest Unofficial Members support every word that has fallen from the Colonial Secretary?"

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: "I withdraw the words 'act of misgovernment'. I say, Sir, that it pleases the Unofficial Members of this Council....."

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: "Sir, the Honourable Member has not made the apology which I, as Senior Official Member of this Council after my friend the Brigadier-General, have the right to demand, and unless that apology is made, I have no alternative, most painful as the action will be, but to move and *put to the division* that the Honourable Member be suspended."

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: "Will the Honourable Member tell me the words of the apology?"

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: "The words that I would suggest are that 'I, Mr. Ramanathan, very much regret that in the heat of the moment

I should have allowed myself to be carried away, and to have made use of words and of expressions and to have adopted a tone in addressing the Chair which does not meet with the approval of my colleagues on the Legislative Council'."

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: "I may certainly say this much, Sir, that in view of the expression of opinion made by Your Excellency and my honourable friend the Colonial Secretary, I regret very much that I should have given offence to them by the use of the words they think I ought not to have used."

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: "I do not think that will do. It is simply a question whether the Honourable Member is prepared to apologize, or not. I do not wish to dictate terms, but the apology must be full, ample, and complete. We cannot receive any qualified apology addressed to His Majesty's representative in this Council."

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: "My honourable friend is not correct in saying that I have made a qualified apology. I am not qualifying it by any terms. I see that I have caused offence to the Hon. the Colonial Secretary and to His Excellency the Governor."

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: "To the Council, I submit, Sir."

The Hon. the Treasurer: "To the Council."

His Excellency the Governor: "To the Council."

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: "To the Council? Very well, Sir, I have no hesitation in withdrawing all those remarks unreservedly. Will that do?"

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: "It is not for me but for the Council to decide."

The Hon. Ceylonese Member: "And I apologize for making those remarks."

His Excellency the Governor: "Proceed, Mr. Ramanathan."

Active hatred of wrong and injustice, of cruelty and oppression was perhaps his master-trait. Yet though indignation burned within him like a scorching flame, none exercised greater restraint than he or was more chary of saying or doing anything incompatible with the decencies or the proprieties of cultivated society.

The incident was not without advantage to the nation. Commenting on it, the press said, "The incident, however regrettable it may be, will serve one useful purpose, namely, it will remind the Government that the old order of things has passed and that high-handedness and autocracy will not be tolerated in future, but will be thoroughly exposed, unless the authorities will govern the country on constitutional and enlightened principles, taking the representatives of the people into their confidence and supplying them with all the required information."

Ramanathan proceeded, "Now, it is only right, I put it to you, it is only right that if my opinion is required upon a vital subject before the Legislative Council, I should be given the information for me to form my opinion. I say that neither my honourable friend, not any paper put before the Council, has yet given me information in regard to the distilleries. Let us then assume that there are going to be 15 or 20 distilleries. Now, if the cost of those distilleries is to be Rs. 100,000 each, that will run into two millions of money. In the Madras Presidency I have ascertained that distilleries are not constructed by the Government, nor are they worked by the Government. I may be wrong—my honourable friend must correct me, if I am—and I shall be glad to be corrected on that point with regard to the distilleries. If there are no Government distilleries in Madras established at a cost of so many millions of rupees, it is clear that it must be for good reasons that the Madras Government has not established its own distilleries. What does the

Ceylon Government propose to do? I think, Sir, that it is going to establish distilleries at its own expense, and pass on the distilleries to private parties. Now, if that be so, Sir, at once a difficulty arises. Have we the men in Ceylon drawn from the class of present distillers who are able to work the distilleries constructed by the Government upon scientific lines? And if there are not many of the class from which the distillers are drawn who could take these establishments on a lease, then I wish to know whether the Government are prepared to do all the distillery work which they find it impossible to be done by local distilleries? I have no information upon that point either; but now we are pretending to adopt the Madras excise system without adopting the best part of it, namely, central distilleries run by contract suppliers.

"In another important respect the excise system proposed is different from the Madras system. It is certainly true that in Madras it has been found that distilling arrack from palm toddy has not succeeded. In the Godavery district and the Kistna district and the Malabar district distillation from palm toddy was being prosecuted, but the Government of Madras has found it impossible to keep up that system of distillation. In the Kistna, Godavery, and Malabar districts it has been abandoned. Now, Sir, it is important to know what the reasons were for abandoning it. I think it was due to the difficulty of separating the trees that are producing toddy for arrack purposes from the trees that are producing toddy for consumption as food. In view of this difficulty the Madras Government has given up its system of distillation from toddy in those districts. We have here toddy drawn for jaggery, and Your Excellency has already told us through the Colonial Secretary that there shall be no interference with the jaggery industry. Then, where does the analogy between the Madras system and the Ceylon system come in? We have no information, as I have already said, upon this part of the question, but it is also a vital part of the subject. Without, then, information upon these two important points, we are asked to give up the renting system, which gives us certain revenue without any difficulty, and to support another system, the particulars of which have not been furnished by the Government for the information of Honourable Members. Government says, *'We are now ready for the excise scheme, and Honourable Members must be prepared to accept it at present'.*"

It was this arbitrary and autocratic attitude of the White ruler that Ramanathan in no uncertain terms condemned and combated all his life. He upheld the cardinal, eternal, unvarying principle that government is by the consent of the governed, that no ruler has reason to force anything, however salutary or beneficent, on the governed, against the latter's will. He further proceeded to enunciate another enduring principle, the principle of human trusteeship, that whoso seeks to lead a people, becomes *ipso facto* their trustee and as such, should exercise the utmost care to ensure that everything possible is done to fulfil the trust, to promote by every means in his power, the happiness and well-being of those placed in his trust.

He went on, "Now, Sir, *I have a great stake in the welfare of this country, and am anxious that there should be no bungling in the management of this question,* that we should not rush into any scheme about which we have still no complete information. At the time Your Excellency went before the Secretary of State in 1908, I believe, Your Excellency said that you had fully considered the excise system, and condemned the renting system; but at that time Your Excellency had no details about the working of the system, not even the Report of the Excise Commissioners, nor any information about the working of the distillery system. Lord Crewe said: 'I am disposed to concur with you,

but let the opinions of the Honourable Members of the Legislative Council be taken on the subject, and then I shall know better about it.' Thereupon the Legislative Council committed itself to an expression of opinion in favour of the excise system, about the details of which it was very much in the same state of ignorance that the Government was, and its resolution was sent to the Secretary of State. Mr. Harcourt said: 'In view of the expression of opinion on the part of Your Excellency and the Legislative Council, I concur with the recommendation that the excise system should be adopted.' About a year afterwards Your Excellency placed some information before the Legislative Council in the Addresses that you delivered in 1911 and 1912. But it has been admitted by my honourable friend the Colonial Secretary that a full statement in regard to the abolition of the renting system and the institution of a new excise system could not be made earlier than yesterday. I hoped, Sir, for information upon the vital parts of the question, namely, the nature of the Excise department, the correlation of its officers, the distribution of work among them, and the distilleries which were to supplant the present unsatisfactory network of stills, but I was not lucky enough to get that information, and I say that to introduce an excise system without full knowledge of the particulars of the Excise Department and the distillery system to be adopted in all its details would be like acting the play of Hamlet without Hamlet in it. Now, Sir, in passing these criticism I have evoked the anger of Your Excellency and of my honourable friend the Colonial Secretary..... "

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: "The Honourable Member has not aroused my anger by passing any criticism."

His Excellency the Governor: "Neither has the Honourable Member evoked my anger, nor the sense of a violation of duty."

There was another abiding principle of leadership which he kept ever in the forefront of his mind's eye, a principle which leaders have been all-too-prone to forget, that whoso chooses to play the role of leader is answerable for everyone of his actions at the bar of history, that whoso fails to play the game with a lively sense of his high responsibility runs the risk of being branded as traitor and malefactor by posterity.

Ramanathan continued, "But, I was speaking, Sir, of the vast complications which may arise hereafter, and for which we of the present day will be held responsible. When speaking about the evils of the renting system, we should take care not to rush in the establishment of a new excise system. I say, be cautious, gather more information about the nature of the Excise Department needed for the controlling of the system, and make up your mind leisurely and calmly about the distillery system which is needed for Ceylon, and then come to the Legislative Council for the advice of the Unofficial Members; and then, in the exercise of their privilege, they will be able to give you the advice which the subject deserves.

"Sir, with regard to illicit sale, that is also an important part of the question. I, for one, have no hesitation in condemning the present illicit sale which is going on in all parts of the country."

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: "Hear, hear."

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: "And that every possible attempt ought to be made to suppress the illicit sales, both for the sake of the people and for the loss of revenue which takes place by such sales. Now, the illicit sale takes place under cover of the distilleries and under cover of the taverns. The distilleries are all in the maritime parts between Panadure and Dondra Head; and I have been assured by competent men who live in the neighbourhood of the distilleries, and who, occupying responsible positions in life, are true in regard to what they

say, and they say that the illicit sale in the case of these stills is very little indeed, because no more than one, two, or three bottles can be smuggled out of the distilleries, and that, too, for purposes of consumption in the same neighbourhood. The principal place where illicit sale occurs is in the outlying districts between two taverns. Usually one tavern is distant from another by about four to eight miles. It happens that respectable people who do not wish to be seen in taverns are yet anxious to have a supply of arrack for their own use. To help them the tavern keepers on either side send out a supply of arrack from their taverns to be sold illicitly. In that way there is a large supply of illicit sale going on throughout the country. Undoubtedly it must be stopped."

He vehemently repudiated the view expressed by the Government that illicit sales of liquor were an index to a legitimate demand and that the opening of new taverns in places where such illicit sales existed would be an effectual remedy. He was of the view that, while every effort should be made to suppress illicit sales, new taverns should not be deemed a remedy. On the contrary, the remedy would be worse than the disease, inasmuch as increased proximity of taverns would only whip up a craving for drink. It should be the Government's endeavour to reduce the existing number of taverns. The oftener people catch sight of them and the easier of access they become, the greater will be the temptation to drink. He continued, "The great remedy which is suggested by the Government in respect of these illicit sales is, 'Let us take the illicit sale going on in the country as a measure of a legitimate want in the country.' Now, Sir, my honourable friend who represents the European Urban population has struck the correct note when he said that that principle was radically wrong. The illicit sale cannot be measured as a standard of legitimate demand. His illustration was apt to

the system; and it would be well for the Government to ponder over his remarks. We do not long to buy anything unless we have a great and continuous want for it; but certainly we may be tempted to buy, if anything that is pleasing, shining, or good in some way is constantly thrust upon us. My honourable friend says it is like the newspaper; a man has a half-penny in his pocket, and he keeps turning it over in his pocket and wants to know on what he may spend it. Then comes a news vendor and puts a newspaper before him, and says, 'Will you have it? Only a half-penny, a half-penny!' and out goes the half-penny. We know another example of this temptation in shops. When we are at home we put away many a desire to buy new things. But if by any chance we go into a shop, we feel at once our imperfections in the form of desires, and they create a demand which insists upon being satisfied. We want this and that, and we go out of the shop poorer than when we went into it, knowing very well that the one hundred rupees which we have spent on that occasion could have been better laid out on an object of charity or some other worthy end. Even so is the position of a villager as to the establishment of a tavern in his village. It is considered wrong to drink intoxicating liquor, and therefore when a man wants to take drink, he takes it on the sly, and then from that first effort comes a habit of drinking which ends in lifelong misery, even as a young child takes to nicotine poisoning. He handles a cigarette or cigar, and puffs away in artistic fashion, and he becomes sick, and he swears that he will not do it again. But this fashionable vice tempts him again and again, and he becomes all the worse for the habit of smoking acquired. The masses of people are so ignorant of the laws of hygiene, that if they are offered at their very household, so to speak, an opportunity for indulging in the drink habit, what will be the result? Every man

would go into a tavern and take the liquor which he could not get before except by walking three or four miles for it. I say that the remedy for illicit sales is not the establishment of taverns in the place of illicit sale. The principle upon which the Government of Ceylon is going, that the extent of the illicit sales may be taken as the measure of the legitimate demand, is utterly wrong in principle. It would not stand analysis for a moment. It is to be condemned both upon grounds of policy and upon moral principles. The habit of drinking and eating poison every day of our lives, our religion condemns it—the Hindu religion, the Buddhist religion, the Muhammadan religion, and I am sure the Christian religion also. Sir, it is essentially wrong in moral principle if the Government of Ceylon brings within the grasp of villagers opportunities for drinking—poisoning themselves and vitiating their system altogether. I do hope that the principle insisted upon by many who are devoted to temperance will be adopted by the government in Ceylon, just as it has been adopted in many of the United States of America. It is the opinion of all sound observers that the habit of drink is fast extending, despite what my honourable friend Mr. Van Cuylenburg has said. The Sinhalese and the Tamils are being attracted by that habit in an awful manner, and the revision of the renting system should not be seized upon for giving further opportunities for the practice of a vice which is well known to be spreading. The extent publicly and privately it is going on around us in cities, and in fact all over Ceylon, is something terrible. Any one who knows how rapidly the constitution is undermined by this habit will not be a willing party to the extension of taverns. So far, Sir, for illicit sales."

Ramanathan reiterated his view that it is the inescapable duty of the government to arrest by all the means in its power, if it is not feasible

to do away with it completely, this heinous traffic in liquor which has proved itself so utterly disastrous to the nation's health and happiness; that it had no reason whatsoever to add to the existing number of taverns. But if any was found to be absolutely necessary, it should be set up only after local option had been exercised, that is, after the consent of the people inhabiting that area, wherein the tavern was sought to be opened, had been obtained. But an alien Government with which revenue was all that mattered, which, moreover, throve and gloried in the demoralisation and decadence of the ruled, would not concede that but would invent all manner of paltry excuses to silence opposition. However Ramanathan was not to be put away by any bureaucratic prevarication. He who was master of his subject, who had made a close study of the excise systems in vogue in the various important countries of the world and had ready to hand all relevant facts and figures; who, moreover, was resolute to tighten the control of, if not banish once and for all this deadly national curse, this withering blight on the whole race of humankind, was not to be led away by a bureaucracy which was accustomed to trading for the most part on the ignorance, the stupidity and the supineness of the people's representatives.

It is here that Ramanathan differs from the common run of politicians, who scramble for parliamentary honours, who gate-crash into the legislature and having gained entry, sit smugly in their tabernacles, completely oblivious of their duties and responsibilities to the people, utterly unwilling to face the pains and hardships that leadership demands. The least that a parliamentary representative should do is to study in all their bearings the many questions that come up for disposal by the House, master their many complexities and subtleties, their many snares and pit-falls, face the House with courage and confidence, like a trained

swordsman meeting a formidable adversary in combat, or a learned counsel, his antagonist in a court of law and secure a just and equitable solution beneficial to the nation.

He said, "Now for the remedy. We cannot abolish altogether the income from spirits; we cannot ask for the suppression of the trade in intoxicating drinks. We therefore, appeal to you and ask you at least not to establish new taverns except where the people of the country want them. The Government say, 'Local option is not possible; it has been tried in many countries, and it will lead to nothing but tyranny by a small minority;' and my honourable friend, if I remember rightly, also said that the system is not in force in India. I think my honourable friend has made a little mistake. For, Sir, I have ascertained that the Excise Commissioner in India always, when there is an application for the opening of a liquor shop, consults various bodies. Now, turning to England, we find local option conceded in 32 and 33 Victoria c. 27 § 7 and 33 and 34 Victoria c. 29 § 4. It is that same principle which we find in India and in England that has been introduced into Ceylon by our own Ordinance No. 12 of 1891, that is, the Licencing Ordinance. The principle is this, that where a man desires to open a liquor shop in Ceylon, he must send in his application to the Government Agent, is bound to notify the same in various public places, so that the opinion of the parties concerned in the neighbourhood may be ascertained as to whether it is to be granted or not. Now, Sir, this is a paraphrase of the popular term 'local option', and it is this 'local option' which is current in different countries, such as England, the United States of America, and India, and Ceylon. It cannot be said that this system does not exist in those different countries, or that it develops into petty tyranny. Nor can it be said that we are not used to such a system. We are quite used to

local option. How is it to be enforced, my honourable friend wants to know. He says that the circumstances of England are different from the circumstances of Ceylon, and that therefore the thing is entirely out of place here. I deny this *in toto*. The people of this country are quite capable of expressing their opinion on such questions. I will give him an instance from the Irrigation Ordinance in our midst. Now, a study of the Ordinance will show that a machinery exists for inviting all landholders and cultivators to come and express their opinion as to whether their district should be brought within the operation or not of the Irrigation Ordinance. As a matter of fact, those qualified to speak will tell you that that system works well. The Ordinance says two-thirds of the cultivators and land-owners must agree before the Government Agent can bring into force the Irrigation Ordinance in that particular district. Why not do that here? Every father and mother, every brother and sister, every kinsman is interested in the welfare of his family. Why not give them all—man and woman of marriageable age—an opportunity of expressing their opinion regarding the establishment of a tavern in their midst. *If you destroy the population of the country, there will be no good in possessing the country.* We may project various schemes for improving the country, but if we destroy the strength of the nation by allowing the people to imbibe freely alcohol poison and nicotine poison, what good can come of measures of public utility? The arguments which have been urged around this table adversely to the introduction of local option have not conduced to show that it is impossible to put it in force here.

"Now then, Sir, with regard to one other question, and one I was startled to hear, and that is this. Mr. Thurley I understand to be a man of high character, efficient and facile, and a master of the excise system. He comes here on an engage-

ment for three years, and he has gathered a large experience of the country; and that period of service expires in August next; and he is going to be sent out of the Colony, without a stain or a disgrace on his character, before the system has been put into operation. I ask—Iwant to know for what reason is he being sent away—a man who has had the advantge of co-operating with a gentleman so able as Mr. Horsburgh, a man who has been in every nook and corner of the Island, a man who has a good store of local experience and executive ability, why is he being sent away before this far-reaching and very complicated measure has been fully inaugurated? Why is he going to be sent out of the country, and why is another man of less experience going to be brought into the Colony? Is it on the score of expense? If it is economy that the Government is trying for, I am sure that the Honourable Members who have voted Rs. 40,000 for the extension of the Government House grounds in Nuwara Eliya, who have voted over 4 millions of money in connection with the lake system, who have done so much in the way of voting away public moneys for schemes which many people say are unnecessary, will be glad, I am sure, to vote any sum of money for inducing Mr. Thurley to stay in Ceylon until the due completion of this most complicated scheme.

"That is almost all I need say, in view of many of my objections having been disposed of by the most able, earnest, and clear speech of the Colonial Secretary yesterday. It was a great triumph for him, when storms of all kinds were gathering in Ceylon, and when Unofficial Members of this Council were agreed to present a solid flank of opposition in respect of this scheme; it is a great triumph that by a judicious explanation and by concessions, my honourable friend should have been able to remove their fears and to take them with him. Notwithstanding the rebuff I have received

at his hands and at the hands of His Excellency the Governor, I am now prepared to go into Committee upon this Bill in order to listen more fully to any further explanation which my honourable friend may give in Committee, and I shall help the Government of Ceylon in arriving at a right solution of a subject which has rightly been pronounced to be far-reaching in its consequences."

The Colonial Secretary, in his reply to Ramanathan's strictures on the Bill was more conciliatory. He said, "My Hon. friend Mr. Ramanathan said that he had not yet got sufficient information, and it was, I think, a mistaken impression that it was Your Excellency's or my intention to withhold from him, as a Member of the Council, information which he had a right to expect, which betrayed him for a moment into a passing loss of self-command, which I feel sure that on reflection he will as most deeply deplore, as I myself most profoundly regretted the necessity which made it seem to be my duty to call him to order. I feel sure that Mr. Ramanathan will accept from me the assurance that nothing but a sense of duty induced me to perform that most unpleasant duty, and that nothing but the respect which I have for His Excellency as the King's representative in this Colony, and nothing but the respect which I have for this Council of which we are all proud to be Members, would have caused me to take action so profoundly distasteful to myself. The duty has been discharged, and the less any of us think or say about it the better. I feel sure that Mr. Ramanathan will agree with me that the incident now be left to oblivion, and that it will never make any difference in either our personal or official relations in the future. But, Sir, I must confess that my honourable friend took me somewhat by surprise this afternoon. He was absolutely within his rights, and perhaps I am to blame in not being prepared to answer him on the spur

of the moment, as I should have wished. But I think my honourable friend, although his official relations with me have been only for a short period, and certainly all honourable Members who have been associated with me all these years will agree with me, that when any information is required by them, I, as Colonial Secretary, am only too delighted to place that information, if it is possible, at their disposal. I cannot recollect any occasion during the last five years when any Member has asked for information, even of the most private character, except such as has been entrusted to me for secret keeping—information of the most private and confidential character, I should say—that he has not been immediately satisfied by my placing the file in his hands."

On 19th August, 1912, Ramanathan returned to the Excise Question, moved for "a return showing the number of arrack and toddy taverns established or to be established that year in the different districts of the Island in connection with the Excise Ordinance," and proceeded to ask "what opportunities will be offered to the adult population residing in the neighbourhood of each such tavern to express their local option, in terms of the understanding arrived at between the Government and the Unofficial Members of this Council, upon the footing of the unanimous recommendation contained in paragraph 31 of the Report of the Select Committee of this Council appointed to report upon the Excise Ordinance."

He was firm and uncompromising in his resolve that the new Excise System enforced two main principles, namely that the number of taverns, far from being increased, should be restricted to the lowest number possible and that, when a new tavern was sought to be set up, it should be set up only after the exercise of local option. He insisted on these two principles being unequivocally laid down in the Bill and scrupulously observed. He had

a lurking fear that the Government might, after giving him the assurance, act behind his back in increasing the number of taverns. It was this fear that impelled him to ask for the precise number of taverns sanctioned and the villages in which they were to be sited. The Colonial Secretary could provide details district-wise and not village-wise. But Ramanathan was of the view that there should not be the smallest doubt or uncertainty in the matter. Every detail of the scheme should be clearly and specifically worked out and nothing left to chance in a matter of life and death for the nation.

He proceeded, "In asking for this information, Sir, I may state that those who are interested in this great subject would be glad to know, in the first place, how many taverns have been sanctioned by Government, and in the next place how many of these have been established or are intended to be established. We who are interested in seeing that the drink habit is not augmented in this country feel that we have a great responsibility as regards this question. We already see signs that toddy is being sold at low prices. I believe, speaking from information we have received from certain quarters, that toddy is now to be had at about six cents a bottle, and it is feared that not only would healthy labourers indulge in the purchase of toddy before going to their labour, or during the time of their labour, but even women and youths will resort to it, as if it were a useful beverage, not knowing how bad the habit of toddy-drinking is to the body and mind. I tried some weeks ago to get the information from my honourable friend the Colonial Secretary, that is about the time that a great meeting held at the Public Hall took place. But my honourable friend was not able to tell me exactly what taverns were going to be established, and he referred me to the Excise Commissioner. I had a conference with him, but he,

too, was not able to give me that information. He said that certain arrack taverns had been sold, but as regards toddy taverns there was very little information to give at the time. You know, Sir, perfectly well that the Unofficial Members of this Council would not have agreed to the passing of the Excise Ordinance except for the concession made by the Official Members on the Excise Bill Select Committee that local option would be given in all cases in regard to the establishment or disestablishment of taverns. For that promise we are thankful. But so many months have elapsed since the passing of the Bill, that it is strange to us that the very information upon which the vast body of the people had decisively set its heart is not forthcoming even at the present day. Those who are engaged in the cause of temperance do like to know what facilities the Government are going to give in order to enable the parties interested to express their option on the subject of the establishment or disestablishment of taverns. I understood that all these facilities would be mentioned in the rules which Your Excellency was empowered to make, and we who were on the Committee were anxious that those rules should be formulated in the Bill itself which was before the Legislative Council. But we were told that would be inconvenient, and that at the earliest possible opportunity rules would be made by the Governor in Executive Council to give effect to the unanimous recommendations passed by the Select Committee. Whether the rules have been framed or not, I think it is time that the public should be taken into the confidence of the Government. At least the public have the right to know, in view of the recommendations of the Committee of the Coucil, in what way these facilities are going to be given in respect of the taverns to be established and already established. The locality in which each tavern is going to be established is of importance. Without knowing

the locality there can be no local option expressed by the people in the neighbourhood. My motion speaks of the establishment of taverns in the districts. That means we would like to have information about the locality in which each tavern is going to be established. We are now nearing the end of August. There are only a few months more before the conclusion of the year, and it is very important that we should have early information upon the subject of the motion."

The Colonial Secretary furnished the information, giving only the districts and not the villages where the taverns were to be located. Ramanathan protested.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: "I am afraid I have not got the names of the villages. Do you want them?"

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: "Yes, the villages at any rate."

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: "I have given the Honourable Member the districts. If you want the villages, we must refer to the Government Agents, who will be able to give them; but whether any of us as a Council will be very much the wiser after we have got the names of the villages, I for one am inclined to doubt."

This confession of ignorance from the highest functionary and spokesman of the Government in a matter of such magnitude and moment roused him to bitter indignation. He demanded maximum efficiency and dedication to duty from public officers whose salaries and emoluments were wrung from the sweat and toil of a poverty-stricken people and whose sole concern should be to serve them with every resource at their command. He who served his people with the utmost solicitude and dedication for no remuneration whatsoever, saw no reason why public servants who were handsomely remunerated should fall short of the highest ideals of service and self-sacrifice.

He said, "That is quite a justifiable observation, Sir, on the part of the Colonial Secretary, who has no knowledge of the actual localities in which illicit or licit sale is going on. Most of his information is hearsay, which he believes, no doubt, to be quite correct, as he thinks it comes to him from untainted sources, but the information that I ask will be of the greatest use and importance to those persons who know the people and the places where they live. What is the good of promising local option to us, if the Government.....?"

The Colonial Secretary who sensed danger, intervened and said that he would obtain the information and be only too glad to place it in his hands.

The Hon. the first Low-Country Member, more to win Official applause than to throw light on the issue, interposed, "The establishment of toddy-taverns in the districts, I think, is a move in the right direction and is not to be checked," and proceeded to insinuate motives to those who protested against the opening of additional toddy-taverns: "I do not believe in the *bona fides* of very many of those clamourers against it." Ramanathan ignored the interruption, as was his wont when he had reason to doubt the motives of the interrupter and proceeded to add: "Your Excellency will see that it becomes our duty to raise our voices against the augmentation of the number of toddy taverns. The government was quite clear in its promises as regards the establishment of toddy taverns, and it said that it would establish—sanction—a toddy tavern only in the event of proof being forthcoming as for the demand for toddy in any particular spot. Now, it is all-important that the Government should give us forthwith the names of the localities in which they intend to establish taverns, because it would then be competent for those who fight against intemperance in this country to ascertain for themselves whether there is a demand in that particular locality for toddy or not. It would

seem that hitherto the taverns established by the Government have not gone upon the principle of proof being forthcoming as to the demand for toddy, but only because it is possible that those taverns might be needed in certain places. The theoretical idea, Sir, is one that is inconsistent with the promise offered by Government, namely, that no toddy tavern shall be established in the Island of Ceylon unless there is a proof that there is a demand in the locality for toddy. I have heard of memorials being sent to Your Excellency upon this particular subject, and I know Your Excellency has given your consideration to this matter, but the opinion is rampant in this country that, even in the cases of many of the villages where toddy taverns have been established, there is absolutely no proof that a demand exists in those parts of the country. On the contrary, there is proof that the people of the villages in which those taverns have been established do not want the taverns, and they have raised their voice and said: 'Now ruin is threatening in this country owing to the establishment of these taverns.' Now, Sir, whether these are facts or not, still to us who stand in the position of disinterested persons it becomes very important that we should have at least at the present time all such information as may lead us to inquiry and to a proper conclusion. *If my honourable friend says that he himself does not know what the localities are where the taverns are to be established, I say, Sir, that it is a confession that is appalling in its character. He, the mouthpiece of the Government—he, the person who is charged with this Excise Reform, and who is under a promise to the people of Ceylon to do what is just and proper—confesses publicly, without seeing the enormity, of that confession, that he does not know what the localities are where the taverns are going to be established. From whom else are we to get this information?*"

It was a harsh note on which he closed. Unsparing of himself in all matters, particularly in

the discharge of public duty, he was equally unsparing of all those around him. No bureaucrat ever got on smoothly with him. He demanded of them the highest standards of performance. The smallest lapse or omission would bring down upon them the shafts of his censure. One charge commonly levelled against him was that he was a despot and a heartless one at that, where matters of public duty were concerned. Yes and rightly so, for he knew, as few other men did, that the smallest laxity or remissness on the part of public officials would have serious and far-reaching consequences on the fortunes of a whole nation. No wonder, men in high office during his time were at great pains to equip themselves with all the details of administration, with all the latest statistics on matters of national concern, lest they be found wanting when called to furnish them. Keen-eyed on all matters, big and small, he was more so in matters of public duty and national well-being.

The Colonial Secretary, whose *amour-propre* was wounded by such fulminations, who was long accustomed to taking things easy in days when Unofficial Members sat mute and motionless, expressed surprise that such a question should have been put to him. He said: "May I rise, Sir, to a matter of personal explanation? I defy any person in the position of Colonial Secretary of this Colony to know the name of the various villages in which every tavern is situated. It is no more part of his business than it is to know the name of every star which shines in the heavens, or the number of the pebbles on the beach. The Hon. Member says I have made a confession which is appalling in its character. He either does not appreciate what the duties of a Colonial Secretary in this Colony are, or he is saying something which is wilfully misleading."

The matter was simple and the Colonial Secretary could have obtained the information without

much ado, if only he had cared to. There was little reason for exaggerating its difficulty or likening it to knowing the stars in the firmament by name or counting every pebble on the seashore. Ramanathan would not flinch but met the charge boldly. He said, "I am afraid that my honourable friend has been irritated by my remarks. I did not mean to irritate him. If the Excise Commissioner had a seat in the Legislative Council, I would ask him for the information. It is perfectly true that the Colonial Secretary has not such a memory as would enable him to bear in mind the name of every village where toddy taverns are going to be established, but he ought to have on paper from the Excise Commissioner the information that I want. Can he tell me now whether he called for such information, or whether such information exists in the hands of the Excise Commissioner? And if so, why he does not produce that paper which everyone can read? Why, Sir, I esteem highly the position of the Colonial Secretary. I know that no man is more hard-working in this country than the Colonial Secretary. I know the inner wheels of the Government, and have worked with the Colonial Secretary in the Executive Council myself, and have found every opportunity to protect him from unnecessary attacks. But my point is quite different. I say it is the bounden duty of the Colonial Secretary, who moved this Excise Bill, to be furnished with information, and to give that information when called for."

The Governor objected to Ramanathan's referring to the Colonial Secretary personally and said that it would be better to use the word "Government" in place of the words "Colonial Secretary" and to say, "It is the duty of the Government....."

Ramanathan would not accept the Governor's ruling. He said, *"I must say that I, as an Unofficial Member, must be permitted to refer to the Colonial*

Secretary personally or to the Governor or any other officer of the Colony in the course of my speech," and added, "I am thankful to the Hon. the Colonial Secretary for promising us this information, and therefore it is unnecessary for me to continue this subject any further today."

It is worth remembering that at the outset, the Government was extremely obdurate and uncompromising in regard to its excise policy. It knew excise was a fertile source of revenue and was determined to wring the last penny out of it, however vehement public opposition might be. It was armed with absolute powers in excise matters and His Excellency Sir Henry McCallum had said in his Address to the Legislature: "The Government has already been openly threatened with a stand-up fight. It accepts the challenge."

It was amidst this arrogant display of unbridled imperial might—a ruler resolute to do his worst and armed with absolute powers; a whole body of Official and Unofficial Members too, ready to do his bidding—that Ramanathan launched his frontal attack upon the Excise Bill. The Government's declared policy was the increase of the existing number of taverns, the taxing of palm-trees producing sweet-toddy and the denial of local option in regard to the establishment of taverns and liquor shops.

At the conclusion of an unprecedentedly long and impassioned debate in which feelings ran high and mutual recriminations were fierce and frequent, Ramanathan won everyone of his demands. The speeches he made on the Bill during several stormy sittings will in themselves make a handy volume and provide excellent and edifying reading. Small extracts are all that are given here.

The press commented, "Through Ramanathan's trenchant criticism of the Government's Excise Policy, a vast change came over the Government's attitude towards the Unofficial Members; and this is evident from the very valuable concessions made

by the Government to the representations of the Unofficials in connection with the Excise Bill. The number of taverns, far from being increased, was to be substantially reduced; sweet-toddy producing trees were exempted from all taxes, and local option was granted."

It was primarily a one-man achievement, a triumph of indomitable will-power and resolution, of intrepid courage that enabled him to defy single-handed the whole hierarchy of British officials and his colleagues, the Unofficials; a triumph of pertinacity that impelled him to sustain the struggle until complete victory was won; a triumph of patriotism that would not brook to see his people decimated by liquor.

CHAPTER V

RAMANATHAN AND NATIONAL CULTURE—TRANSLATION OF THE BHAGAVADGITA

> There is no tracing the connection of ancient nations but by language; and therefore I am always sorry when any language is lost, because languages are the pedigree of nations.
>
> —*Dr. Johnson*

> I find a solace in the *Bhagavadgita* that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the *Bhagavadgita*. I find a verse here and a verse there and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies—and my life has been full of external tragedies—and if they have left no visible, no indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teachings of the *Bhagavadgita*.
>
> —*M. K. Gandhi*

> The *Gita* is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the Perennial Philosophy ever to have been made. Hence its enduring value, not only for Indians, but for all mankind..... The *Bhagavadgita* is perhaps the most systematic spiritual statement of the Perennial Philosophy.
>
> —*Aldous Huxley*

MANY have known of Ramanathan as a great patriot and statesman who dominated the political life of his country for half-a-century and more; as a lawyer and jurist in the forefront of his profession, to whom the Inns of Court did special honour by calling him to the English Bar *honoris causa* for his signal services to the cause of legal education and the administration of justice; as a philosopher and man of religion who carried his message to distant shores and earned the undying gratitude of many Western peoples; as an educational thinker and benefactor who gave his country's education a new vigour and a new orientation; as a philanthropist who dedicated both himself and the whole of his immense wealth to the service of his people and his God. But few have known of him as a scholar, one of the foremost of his time in many branches of learning, both ancient and modern, secular and divine.

He was a master of many languages and many literatures, notably classical. Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Sanskrit he loved with a scholar's love for their wealth of political, philosophical and religious thought and for the ineffable beauty of their literature. But to none did he give more of himself than to his mother-tongue, Tamil. Tamil language and literature were with him a lifelong passion. They were to him an inexhaustible reservoir of spiritual and moral nutriment and he took long and deep draughts of them as often as the press of duty permitted him. His library was his dearest possession. It was stocked with the choicest masterpieces in many fields of learning and was acclaimed the best of its kind in the country. It was to the library that he retired after the many storms, political and professional, that assailed him with a fury and vehemence rare in the annals of leadership, there to heal the wounds and assuage the soul in loving communion with the master-spirits of many ages and many climes.

This passion for Tamil learning was more inherited than acquired. It was part and parcel of a long-standing family tradition. Mudaliyar Ponnambalam, the father, found his chief solace after a day of weary toil, in the study and enjoyment of classical Tamil poetry. His home was surrounded by scholars and saints whom he treated with reverential awe and on whom he bestowed lavish gifts. Ramanathan's maternal grandfather Mudaliyar Coomaraswamy was above all things

a great lover of Tamil learning. In days when printed copies of Tamil classics were few and far between, he had many of them in manuscript. These manuscript copies were cherished possessions of the family and were handed down from father to son as a precious heirloom. A manuscript copy of the *Thirukural* used by him and later by Ramanathan himself is yet to be found in the family archives. It was by his brilliant and persuasive exposition of Hindu literature and philosophy that his son Sir Muthucoomaraswamy won his way to the hearts of Western peoples.

Ramanathan's elder brother Coomaraswamy was not merely a profound Tamil scholar held in high esteem by his compeers in other lands but was also a great patron of Tamil learning. It was his generosity and munificence that enabled three of our greatest classics *Chinthamani, Silapathikaram* and *Manimekalai* to appear in print. Records indicate that when Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Aiyar was digging up the manuscripts of many ancient Tamil classics, which had lain entombed for centuries in dusty, musty archives, and was editing them for publication, it was Coomaraswamy that aided the learned editor in clearing many doubts and ambiguities that assailed him. It was, moreover, Coomaraswamy who founded an academy for the higher education of Brahmin priests in Tamil, Sanskrit and priestly duties. Ramanathan's younger brother Arunachalam, though a scholar in the best traditions of Western learning, found his chief delight after a day of arduous toil in the office or on the bench in the study and enjoyment of classical Tamil poetry. His *Studies in Tamil Poetry* and his translation of choice extracts into superb English verse for the benefit of English readers reveal what a passionate lover of Tamil poetry he was.

It will thus be seen that all the members of the Ponnambalam family were steeped in Tamil learning. They were on many occasions invited

to preside over the Annual Conferences of various organisations designed to promote Tamil learning and culture and the Saiva religion. It was a signal honour conferred on persons of acknowledged eminence in their respective fields.

In 1905, Ramanathan presided over the First Annual Conference of the Saiva Siddhantha Maha Samajam held at Chidhambaram. In 1912, he was invited to preside over the 13th Annual Conference of the Madurai Tamil Sangam, an institution that traces its origin to the hoary past. A press report says, "The 13th Annual Conference of the Madurai Tamil Sangam opened here today. The Hon. P. Ramanathan, Member, Ceylon Legislative Council, the President elect, arrived at noon and was accorded an enthusiastic reception by the Raja of Ramnad, the President of the Sangam, Pethatchi Chettiar and a host of others in the Reception Committee. The President elect, on alighting, was garlanded and presented with *Poorna Kumbam* and conducted in procession to his residence with elephants and temple honours. Delegates from all parts of the Madras Presidency arrived for a sitting due to last for three days."

In 1917, he presided over the Annual Conference of Thiruvalluvar Maha Sabai, held at Mylapore, Madras. These conferences were attended by the elite of the Tamil-speaking world. To have presided over them and won ecstatic tributes is a testimony to his deep and unimpeachable scholarship and his devotion to Tamil learning.

In an age when imperialists the world over held oppressive sway over many lands and over many peoples, and in the intoxication born of irresistible brute force, sought to throttle and exterminate all the precious heritage of the ruled, their living language, their age-old culture, and enthrone theirs in their stead, when subject peoples, in the degradation, debasement and impotence that spring from servitude to alien rule, in their

ignorance of the true values of life, in their scramble for place and power spurned all that was theirs and competed among themselves in hugging and embracing all that was their masters', here was a man who in early life saw the writing on the wall, saw the peril that threatened to overtake the whole race, and heedless of unpopularity or ridicule, announced it to a benighted generation that a people's language and culture are the people's life and soul, their raison d'etere, their sole hope of survival. What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Nay, he made it the mission of his life to combat this giant evil, this mighty flood, this all-corroding, all-devouring denationalisation that threatened to engulf the whole land.

First and foremost, he set about the task of opening the eyes of the people to the folly and futility of their ways, shattering the illusions of smug and complacent leaders who, in their ignorance and short-sightedness, believed all was well with them and their people. He warned his brethren the Sinhalese, "If Sinhalese lips will not speak the Sinhalese language, who else is there to speak it.....? How is a nation to be lifted out of error, reformed and advanced into plains of higher knowledge except by its own language?" He collaborated actively with Colonel Olcott in reviving ancient Sinhalese Buddhist culture which lay moribund under the successive onslaughts of Western imperialists and giving it a new life and a new vigour. He impressed on the foreign ruler that his primary duty was to foster and cherish the language, the culture and the religion of the ruled, not to foist on them what was his. In the wake of his lead, there followed an island-wide awakening, an upsurge of nationalism that has gained momentum through the years and become a vitalising force in the life of the country. It is only those who are acquainted with the political and social history

of the country during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth that can know how ceaselessly and untiringly he laboured to bring about a national and cultural renascence, and how much hostility and ill-will he earned of the Westerner in the process. But hostility or ill-will never daunted him. Rather they steeled him to greater and more spirited efforts.

He did likewise for the Tamils too. He epitomised in himself all the finest characteristics of his race. He lived and moved and had his being in strict conformity with the ancient and time-hallowed ideals and traditions of his race and expected his people to do likewise. In an age when the Tamils went crazy with all things Western, gloried in Western learning, in Western attire, in Western ways of life and thought, to the neglect of their own, it was the great Navalar and he that stemmed the tide, and held the citadel of Tamil and Hindu culture unbruised. It is most poignant, most touching to reflect on what the fate of things Tamil would have been if these two stalwarts had not been born in time to dam the flood and save the race from what would otherwise have proved cataclysmic. They both acted on the principle that every racial or religious group should be firmly rooted in its own heritage and tradition, which time has sanctified, and not become an amorphous, innominate mass without identity or an independent existence. When the University College was being built and the Catholics moved for the establishment of a Catholic hostel, he strongly defended their claim on the ground that every racial or religious community should have the freedom to educate its children against the background of its religion and culture.

Ramanathan's services to Tamil learning constitute one of the glorious pages in the history of a lifetime dedicated to the shaping of his country's

institutions. When Tamil Grammar was a hard and unwelcome terrain which none but hard-grained scholars would tread, he set to work, cleared all its verbiage, in short simplified it and made it accessible and acceptabe even to small children. The result was the publication of *Senthamil Ilakkanam*, a book much courted by schools and colleges. His *Commentaries on Aathi Soodi* and *Konrai Venthan*, part of the ethical poetry of the divinely-inspired poetess Auvai was another. These ethical precepts, embodied in simple, sweet and rhythmic verse, formed the basis of the education of Tamil children in their early formative years and were a lasting possession of theirs through life. Under the impact of foreign influence on education this ethical poetry ceased to occupy the place it did in earlier days. Endeavouring to remedy this unhappy state of things and knowing full well how beneficent it would be to the young, he wrote detailed commentaries and annotations to it in simple Tamil prose and caused it to be restored to its former place in the education of Tamil children. To instruct them in the basic truths of Hinduism, he published *Dharma Shastram* and *Ramanatheeyam*.

In 1914, there appeared his monumental translation of the *Bhagavadgita* in Tamil, enriched with copious notes and commentaries. A life-long student of this great religious classic, he longed to make it available to the Tamil-speaking peoples in their mother-tongue. Every page of the book is replete with evidence of deep scholarship and deeper spiritual insight and illumination. In twentyone Sanskrit couplets, a distinguished Brahmin scholar, Mahamahopathiyaya Sarveswara Sarma pours out his hard-felt adoration of the Almighty for the grace He had bestowed on him in bringing him into the presence of a great sage and seer and enabling him to see the light of Truth hidden in the *Gita*. He says he had spent a whole life-time in the study

of that great spiritual classic, and had mastered not merely its contents but the many commentaries of great sages and saints like Sankara, Ramanuja and a host of others; that in his pride of knowledge thus begot, he went about the country challenging reputed scholars to debates and discourses. While thus engaged, learning that there lived in Sri Lanka a man distinguished for learning and spirituality, a teacher of true spiritual illumination besides, he betook himself to him. The great man received him with warmth and cordiality, and beholding a book in his hand, sought to know what book it was. On being told it was the *Bhagavadgita*, the great man asked him if he understood the message of the *Gita*. With overweening pride, he told his interlocutor that he had made a close study of not merely the text but all the great commentaries at least ten times and known all there was to know in them. However, when he learned that the great man was then engaged in expounding the *Gita* in a series of discourses to a chosen band of disciples, he decided to avail himself of the opportunity thus afforded and spent many evenings in listening to the discourses. It was then that it dawned on him that, although he had loaded himself with all the minutiae of scholarship, he had not got anywhere near the central message enshrined in the great classic. It was to the great teacher that he owed it, that his pride was humbled, that the darkness that had long shrouded his soul was dispelled, that he beheld in all its glory the light of Truth that the *Bhagavadgita* holds out for all ages and for all peoples.

The translation of the *Bhagavadgita* was hailed as a great classic by scholars and saints in all parts of the Tamil-speaking world. Had the translation been done in English, which he was equally qualified to do, it would have won him world-wide acclaim, as did his *Commentaries on the Christian Gospels* or his *Culture of the Soul among Western*

Nations or his series of lectures and discourses on religion and philosophy to distinguished audiences in the West. Had he eschewed politics and the service of man in his many fields of activity and given his time whole and entire to the teaching of religion and philosophy, he would rank among the great teachers of all time. But service, selfless, dedicated, single-minded, was his religion. To that he gave all his time and resources and in it he found his supreme solace and fulfilment.

CHAPTER VI

THE SUPREMACY OF THE LEGISLATURE—THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY

> The Legislative Council of the Island and the legislature of every part of the world must be a pattern unto all men as regards regularity of procedure and as regards a bitter aversion to lawlessness.
>
> —*Ramanathan*

> I do not want the Legislative Council of the Island to be brought into greater disrepute than it has been by proceedings of this kind that have occurred during the past administration.
>
> —*Ramanathan*

> I do not want the people of the country to think that a lawful action may be done by unlawful means.
>
> —*Ramanathan*

> I do not think how it is possible to ask the legislature of the country to interfere with two litigants who had sought for remedies in our Courts of Justice, so as to abate their suits.
>
> —*Ramanathan*

> We cannot too severely condemn the intermeddling of the legislature with cases actually brought in our Courts of Justice. It will not be tolerated in free England and it ought not be tolerated in any of the Colonies.
>
> —*Ramanathan*

RAMANATHAN, as has already been observed, was through life a stern and relentless upholder of the supremacy of the legislature and the independence of the judiciary against the inroads of arbitrary power. He contended that no potentate, be it His Excellency the Governor or any of his lieutenants, should ignore or override the absolute

supremacy of the legislature, or transgress the rules of its procedure, however beneficent or salutary his object, or however compelling the circumstance. Anything done to impair that supremacy or deny the members their freedom to express their views on any matter appertaining to it was but a brazen violation of its sanctity and supremacy and would call forth his severest condemnation. With him, means were as important as ends. The British bureaucracy, in the arrogance of power and the failure of the people's representatives to curb them, were often prone to ignore the legislature and do things behind its back under the plea of expediency, and having done so, ask the legislature to give them covering sanction. At such moments, he would promptly and peremptorily call them back to their tether. He insisted that all forms of legislative procedure should be meticulously observed before anything could be done in its name. It was by such anxious and keen-sighted vigilance that he would restrain the hand of a bureaucracy which often smarted under such restraints.

In 1913, when Sir Henry McCallum retired from the governorship of the Island, it was decided at a meeting of the Finance Committee to present an address to the retiring Governor. The address was accordingly presented to His Excellency on January 22, in the name of the Legislative Council of Ceylon. Having done that, the Colonial Secretary, Sir Hugh Clifford, at a subsequent meeting of the legislature, tabled the Address and His Excellency's reply and moved that they be adopted and entered in the minutes of the legislature. All this was wholly irregular and meant a high-handed and unabashed repudiation of the supremacy of the legislature. All the members including the Unofficials subscribed to the Colonial Secretary's motion, Ramanathan alone excepted. He knew his was a lone voice in this conflict, but would not give in, because he knew his cause was just. Moreover,

what was really at stake was the supremacy of the legislature and the unquestioned right of the Unofficials to discuss and express their views freely and fully on any matter appertaining to the legislature. He would not under any circumstance surrender that right to anyone, however great one's pretensions might be. He knew the legislature was the palladium, the bulwark, the sole safeguard of the people's rights and liberties, and anything done to abate or diminish that safeguard even by one jot or tittle should be resisted with every resource at his command. He who pondered long and deep on how best he could liberate his people from the thraldom of foreign rule, from bondage to an alien master, would not, without the deepest pangs of regret, suffer those rights to be whittled away by the machinations of that alien bureaucracy.

If an address was to be presented to the Governor or to any other potentate in the name of the Legislative Council of Ceylon, the proper course should have been to introduce into the Council, a motion to that effect, to have it seconded, then discussed, every member having been given the right to express his views freely, and then to take a decision by a majority vote. The next thing to do would be to discuss the contents of the Address and submit the draft of the Address for final sanction by the House. Ramanathan was of opinion that, however grave the urgency, however extenuating the circumstance, a bad precedent ought not to be set. Once set, it might give rise to many such irregularities and the supremacy of the legislature would progressively be jeopardized.

The Colonial Secretary, as was his wont, made out a plausible case and apologised for what he called 'a technical irregularity.' But Ramanathan was not to be satisfied or pacified by any bureaucratic white-washing. In a long and trenchant speech, he exposed the illegality of it all and took to task everyone of the transgressors. He mercilessly

pricked the bubbles of bureaucratic pretensions, and though they smarted under it, they were utterly powerless to reply, because they knew they had erred. *Inter alia*, he said, "I am glad to hear, from my friend the Colonial Secretary the admission that he was guilty of a 'technical irregularity' in connection with this Address. I for my part was then in Jaffna, and I received from my honourable friend on my right (the Hon. the European Urban Member) a telegram asking me whether I approved of the Address proposed to be given by the Legislative Council to the departing Governor. That was on January 14 last. On the same day he appears to have written a letter which I received about two days later, in which he informed me that it was the intention of the Legislative Council to present an Address to the Governor, and that a draft of that Address would be submitted to the Members of the Finance Committee, who were expected to meet on the 17th of that month. I wired to him immediately that that was an irregular course of action, and pointed out to him what the proper course should be. I said that no Council Meeting could take place unless due notice of that meeting was given, and the subject to be discussed at the meeting should also be named, and every member should be given individual notice of that sitting. I further pointed out that the Finance Committee of the Legislative Chamber could not possibly deal with the draft of an Address, or with the putting through of that Address, and that if due notice was given of a meeting of the Legislative Council, I would be glad to be present here to consider the merits of the draft; and I appealed to my honourable friend, also by telegram, to conserve to the Unofficial Members the right of free discussion in the Legislative Council upon this point. I heard nothing after that; but I was informed of His Excellency's illness, about which I had the keenest regret, and of the injunction of the medical officers attendant

upon him that no Address should be presented to the Governor. I also learned that on the 17th instant, there were present at the meeting of the Finance Committee only seven members, that is to say, my honourable friend the Colonial Secretary, my honourable friend the Treasurer, together with five Unofficial Members, in all seven members; and I was also informed by my honourable friend on my right that my telegram about the impropriety of this procedure was laid before the Unofficial Members who were then there. *After the warning I had given, it surprised me very much to hear that seven Members of the Legislative Council took it upon themselves to play the role of the Legislative Council of the Island. The thing was absurd from beginning to end;* but I could not help respecting their wishes about the presentation to the Governor who was going away under such distressing circumstances. If they had devised an Address in their own names, and even spoken of themselves in the Address as Members of the Legislative Council of the Island, and signed the Address themselves, and presented it to the Governor, there would have been no difficulty of any kind. But what they did was this. They said that they, the Members of the Legislative Council, were anxious to Address the Governor upon certain points, and then the Address concluded with these remarkable words: 'By order of the Council, A. G. Clayton.' *Now, the Legislative Council of the Island and the Legislature of every part of the world must be a pattern unto all men as regards a bitter aversion to lawlessness.* What do we find here? After I had warned my Unofficial brethren, and through them, the Official Members of the Council, about the irregularity of the action they were proposing to take, they seem to have persuaded the Clerk of the Council, who ought to have known better, to perpetrate on this document a thing I cannot help characterizing as false. The Council itself

did not meet at all for the purpose of this Address, and it did not pass any resolution about the presentation of the Address; and how in the name of goodness could the Clerk of the Legislative Council lend himself to the perpetration of such a falsehood as 'By Order of the Council, A. G. Clayton?' Sir, it is a high contempt of the Legislative Council, and I do believe that if matters were pressed, he would get into serious trouble about it, because in other parts of the world the clerk of the Legislature is a custodian of all that is regular and proper, and would not lend himself to a proceeding of this kind. I pass that, however.

"Having perpetrated this farce, my honourable friend ought, on mature reflection, to have dropped the matter, to have left the matter where it was. He does nothing of the kind. *He now invites the Legislative Council rightly assembled to perpetrate another farce, or to help him into the perpetration of another farce.* The Legislative Council hitherto has done nothing wrong. In his first comedy of errors the Legislative Council took no part. It was the seven members of the Finance Committee who misbehaved. Now, when he invites the Legislative Council to support him in his most irregular procedure, he endangers the dignity of the Legislative Council, and brings it into disrepute. Sir, my objection is this. How could the Legislative Council record the Address and the Reply of the Governor in its Minutes when there is a staring untruth at the bottom of the Address: 'By Order of the Council, A. G. Clayton'? Does my honourable friend expect this great body of Honourable Members to be a party to a falsehood? I cannot assent to his motion owing to the objectionable words there. If the Legislative Council will now record its opinion that the Clerk of the Council and the members who got up the Address to His Excellency the Governor were grievously mistaken as regards the engrossing of the words 'By Order of the Council, A. G. Clayton', if the Legislative Council will now condemn that procedure and order those words to be deleted, I for one have no objection to the Address and to the Reply being taken notice of in our proceedings.

"You will understand me Sir, that it is with great pain of mind that I have to speak on this subject. I do not want the Legislative Council of the Island to be brought into greater disrepute than it has been by proceedings of this kind which have occurred during the past administration. I do not want the people of the country to think that a lawful action may be done by unlawful means. Every lawful action is worthy of being undertaken, but when a person attempts a lawful thing by unlawful means, we characterize him as unprincipled and dangerous. How has my honourable friend acted in this matter? *He, the Colonial Secretary of the Island, has made six other Members of the Legislative Council, personate the Legislative Council, and in addition set down in the document a false statement.* Well, Sir, I have explained myself sufficiently, and I leave the solution of this question, difficult as it is, to the good sense of the Members of the Council. I would add that, had I been present here at the time the Address was proposed, I would have assented to the granting of an Address to the departing Governor upon certain lines, and I am not at all sure whether the lines proposed in this Address would not have suited me, if a few words here and there had been toned down. But I would have told them that the proper course, in view of the difficulty of having a meeting of the Legislative Council, was not for this minority of seven to play the role of the Legislative Council, but for those present to put down their individual names under the Address and present it to the Governor, and let it go forth for what it was worth; and the Governor would then have replied to such of us as subscribed to it, and everything would have ended straightly.

But so long as the untrue words 'By Order of the Council, A. G. Clayton' are there, I do not think any member who intends to respect the proper dignity of the Council, and to conserve it from passing into disrepute, will agree to my honourable friend's motion as it stands now."

It was obvious that if Ramanathan was endeavouring to do anything, it was to keep intact, first, the supremacy of the legislature wherein resided the rights and liberties of the nation and secondly, the rights and privileges of its Members to express freely their views on all matters appertaining to the legislature. One would normally have expected the Unofficials, if not to put up a stout resistance to such high-handed inroads on the powers and prerogatives of the legislature, at least to back him and give him their moral support. But the unfortunate part of it all was that, regardless of the vital and fundamental nature of the issues involved, and unmindful of the fact that the act in question was a brazen invasion of their legitimate rights, they went so far as to back up the foreigner, to applaud and acclaim his act. It was the tragedy of Ramanathan's whole career that he was often caught between two fires, that he was called upon to wage war on two fronts, on the one, the Officials, stalwarts all, the pick of the British Colonial Service, men of talent and experience entrusted with the Government of this Premier Colony, who would fight their ground inch by inch and would not yield as long as one man was left alive; and on the other, the Unofficials, a band of boneless, nerveless men permeated by self-interest and suffused with a false sense of pride and prestige, whose dominant passion was to pay court to the foreign potentate, bask in the sunshine of his favour and ensure their continued hold of their Seats in that hallowed assembly. Many of them, actuated by insensate jealousy and ill-will, envious of Ramanathan's growing reputation and the strength of

his hold upon the affections of the people, would lose no opportunity of discrediting him in their eyes by encompassing the defeat of many of his measures, however beneficent and salutary to the nation.

The Low-Country Sinhalese Member said, "We Easterns have been always remarkable for our sense of gratitude, and we, therefore, would have been giving an opportunity to others to criticise, and to set us down as a nation of ingratitudes. I think Sir Henry McCallum deserved more at our hands, and I hope that hereafter steps will be taken to show in a marked way the deep sense of gratitude the people of this country feel for him." What the Hon. Member failed to remember was that Ramanathan questioned not the propriety of presenting an Address to Sir Henry McCallum, though on that too he had his differences, but the illegality of the process whereby it was done.

Ramanathan lost. He knew he would. His adversaries knew he would, for they would readily call in to their aid the brutal weapon, the majority vote, which they always had ready to hand, which would make short work of any edifice he would laboriously build and give the varnish of legality and justice to the basest and most diabolical acts of unregenerate rulers. But amidst the gloom that enveloped the political horizon, there was one gleam of light to cheer the heart of the nation. On representations Ramanathan had repeatedly made, the Home Government had given the Unofficial Members a solemn assurance that in matters not affecting imperial policy and defence, the views of the Unofficials, acting in concert, would prevail. On the basis of this assurance, if the Unofficials had pulled together in matters such as the one before the House, they could have scored a victory over the Officials and progressively strengthened their position. But that was not to be, for with them, their Seats mattered enormously, mattered

much more than the nation whose ostensible champions they were.

In 1912, Ramanathan took up the cudgels in defence of the independence of the judiciary, which the Government sought to stifle by interference with pending legislation. A conflict arose between the Kandy District Committee administering the Buddhist Temporalities and two trustees of the properties of two of the largest temples, the Maha Devale and the Kataragama Devale, which led up to the dismissal of the two trustees by the committee. The trustees refused to recognise the dismissal and challenged it in the District Court of Kandy claiming a declaration that the persons who called themselves the District Committee were not entitled to call themselves the District Committee and had no authority whatsoever. They asked the Court to declare that the Committee was not a Committee and that it had no legal status, inasmuch as the formalities prescribed for their election had not been strictly observed. The action threatened to be a protracted one, in view of the 352 witnesses the plaintiffs cited.

The Government without going into its merits, characterised this legal action as "mischievous and useless litigation, which has too long distracted the religious life of the district and which is a mere abuse of the forms of justice", and intervened to put an end to it by enacting a special Ordinance to amend the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance of 1905, validating the election of the Committee and all its proceedings.

Ramanathan contended that this was an act of unwarranted interference on the part of the legislature with pending litigation and an attack upon the independence of the judiciary. The Attorney-General who moved the Amending Ordinance took shelter under the plea that the litigation in question would take a good deal of the time of the Courts or necessitate the appointment of a separate Commissioner to inquire into it, in view of the long list of witnesses to be examined. He also cited a parallel case which had arisen inside the Scottish Church and said that "the case was carried to the House of Lords, and there judgement was given in favour of that small minority, which vested in them the administration of the whole of the vast funds of the Church."

The House was inclined to accept the explanation of the Attorney-General and permit the Amending Ordinance to pass through. But Ramanathan opposed it. He said, "It was urged by the Government that the plaintiffs in the two cases that we have in view were pressing their suits for actions in a manner that was both 'useless' to themselves and to the country at large; that they were abusing the forms of the Courts of Justice and that they were actuated by a mischievous spirit. This is a formidable array of charges against the two plaintiffs in the cases, and it was supposed that an abnormal state of circumstances had developed, calling for an abnormal remedy. The abnormal remedy proposed was nothing short of an abatement of the suits in regard to certain aspects of the case. When the Bill was published for the first time, I could not understand how it was possible to ask the Legislature of the country to interfere with two litigants, who had sought for remedies in our Courts of Justice, so as to abate their suits, and I really hoped that this legislation would not be pressed forward and that wiser counsels would prevail. My honourable friend, the Attorney-General shelters himself under an English case which he thinks applies to the present case, and that is the case which arose between two factions of the Scottish Church. But it is clear that that case has no manner of application to the present case. There was a schism in the Scottish Church about certain doctrines and a small minority said that they were right and a large majority said that

they were right. They went to law over the matter, and even to the House of Lords, and the House of Lords finally decided that the contention of the minority was quite right. The litigation came to an end in the highest Court of Justice. The Legislature of England did not interfere with the course of litigation in this case, which provoked the acutest of feelings on either side and rent in two the country from one end to the other end; nor did the English Government use its tremendous power to invoke the aid of the House of Commons or the House of Lords to stamp out the litigation which had been instituted in the English Court of Justice. My honourable friend, therefore will see that this case does not apply to the Kandy case."

He now goes on to inveigh against the Government for intermeddling with cases actually brought in our Courts of Justice. "*Now, then, we cannot too severely condemn the intermeddling of the Legislature with cases actually brought in our Courts of Justice. It will not be tolerated in free England, and it ought not to be tolerated in any of the Colonies.* If the Secretary of State had known exactly how matters stood in Ceylon, I for one think that he would be the last person to allow the introduction of an Ordinance for the purpose in question. He was assured that the litigation was useless but the Select Committee have found that the litigation would be most useful to the plaintiffs in the cases in the matter of re-establishing their character and their good name in the eyes of their countrymen. The Secretary of State was told that the forms of the Courts of Justice were being abused by the plaintiffs in this case, but the Select Committee have found, on the contrary, that there was no abuse at all by the plaintiffs, but that the pleadings were drawn up by eminent counsel—by the King's Counsel, Mr. de Sampayo—and that it was he who took the legal objections that were

available to the plaintiffs under the existing state of the law. The Secretary of State was further told that the litigation was being conducted in a mischievous spirit; but the Select Committee finds that there was no mischief at all, but that, acting in accordance with the forms of the law, the eminent counsel was doing his best to win back the just rights, and guard the fair name of his clients. So that the assertion of the Government, made here and before the Secretary of State, that the plaintiffs in the case were conducting 'useless litigation, and were utilising the forms of the Courts of Justice in the most mischievous spirit,' utterly falls to the ground. What then is the necessity for the Legislature interfering with this litigation? I say, Sir, there is no reason whatever for the introduction of this legislation into this Council."

The Attorney-General contended that if the Court upheld the plaintiffs' contention that the election of the committee did not strictly conform to the requirements laid down by the law and therefore declared the election null and void, it would give rise to a multiplicity of fresh problems. All the leases of temple property granted by them would *ipso facto* become invalid. Ramanathan pointed out that that would not be so, inasmuch as the grantors of lease were not the committee but rather the trustees themselves. He said, "If you examine the case not superficially, but fundamentally, on its own proper merits, Your Excellency, I think, will be the first to confess that the Government of the country had been stalking a phantom in this matter. What is the phantom? It is the pure assumption that district committees have the power to grant leases of temple lands. It is said that, except for this legislation, the proceedings of the District Committee would all be vitiated, invalidated. Now, what are these proceedings that would be invalidated? We have never been told in

Committee nor have we been told in the Legislative Council, nor has the Secretary of State been told specifically, what the proceedings are that were going to be invalidated? There is a clear mistake on the part of those who invoked the aid of the Legislature about these proceedings of the committee. You see, Sir, the proceedings of the committee which are spoken of as going to be invalidated by this case on the part of the plaintiffs are nothing more than the leases which only the trustees had the power to grant. It cannot be contended for a moment that committees have the power to lease properties belonging to the temples. The law of the land vests all temple lands in the hands of trustees. They are practically the owners, for the time being, of the properties. The lands having been vested by the law in their hands, it is open to them to lease the lands to anybody they like, subject to the sanction of the committee. It is they who should collect the rents and profits of the land, it is they who should lay out the expenditure in a proper way in regard to the many items that may come up for payment, and it is they who have to keep and render accounts. Now, Sir, the committees are not the trustees, and the committees are not the proper persons to recover or expend moneys by their own hands. If that be so, what are the proceedings of the committee which will be vitiated so as to work harm to the country? I believe, Sir, that by some sort of confusion, the mind, instead of fixing its attention upon the trustees and their proceedings, has run off at a tangent and has fixed itself on the proceedings of the district committee, who have nothing to do with the granting of the leases. If the committees had the power to grant leases, and if they did in pursuance of that power, grant leases, I can quite understand that such leases would be upset if the elections of the committee members were questioned, impeached, and nullified.

That is not the case here. Why did not the Government ascertain particularly what proceedings it was that were going to be invalidated if the Legislature did not interfere?

"The fact of the matter is this, that the work of the trustees had been wrested from their hands illegally and unjustifiably by the committees, and taken into their own hands. Instead of the trustees making leases to the parties whom they thought fit under the sanction of the committee, the committee has grasped all the power of the trustees and granted leases itself. After doing these illegal things, they had the hardihood to come to the Government and say, 'The plaintiff-trustees have behaved unlawfully and mischievously, and unless you interpose with a new Ordinance, all our acts, good and lawful as they are, would be invalidated.' This is a pure phantom. The Government, having superficially examined their statement, went to the Secretary of State and revealed a situation of affairs which did not really exist and the Secretary of State seems to have said, 'Very well, you can introduce a Bill if you like, and if the legislature passes it, it is well and good.'

"The real situation of affairs has been missed by the Government. It is perfectly clear to those who have examined the whole subject in all its bearings that the original devastation of temple property was attributed to the priests. The Ordinance No. 3 of 1889, passed twenty-two years ago, was an Ordinance in which I myself took part, because I moved the second reading of it in this Council. The crux of the situation was this: How were the temple lands to be protected against the devastation of the priests? That Ordinance found a remedy for it. It said, 'We will divest the priests of their right to the temple lands and invest trustees elected by the people with the right to deal with these properties, and we shall appoint a committee in order to supervise the work of

the trustees.' How has the condition of things changed now? The scandal which was immensely distasteful to the whole country in the years preceding 1889 and which the legislature attempted to put an end to has assumed another form during the course of the last five or six years. It stands at the present day in the form of another scandal, and that is, that the trustees who had been invested with holding and leasing temple property are being persecuted, pressed down, and made slaves of by the committees for their own purpose. This is a scandalous situation which the Government ought to have seen, because it had the opportunity of seeing it. The new condition of affairs was pressed upon the attention of the Government several times by responsible persons in the Island, but the Government was so sure that everything was going on swimmingly and rightly, that it did not appear to it to be necessary to give its attention to the reported new developments. Sir, I could dwell upon many phases of this subject, but now I shall confine myself to what has happened in the case of those very persons on whose behalf the Government of the country has invoked the aid of the Legislature."

He explained at some length the manner in which a new scandal had crept into the working of the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance, how two members of the Committee had usurped the powers of the trustees and turned the whole thing to their own personal advantage. It was all a sordid story that he narrated, from beginning to end. He went further to add, "The Government of Ceylon has been made a cat's-paw of by some members of the district committee. I say, if the Government viewed the matter carefully and earnestly, it would find that a new scandal had arisen, which makes it truly impossible for the Buddhists to carry on their religious life without an amendment of some of the clauses of the Ordinance No. 8 of 1905.

It is no doubt true that an administration report, as it is called, has been written in very plausible terms by one of these gentlemen and presented to the Government. What is more natural than that the Government should read it and say, 'Well, here is good work, indeed.' That is all very plausible. It is all good on paper; but if you go into the country and inquire what is the true situation of affairs, you will hear a very different story, and such a situation calls for an immediate investigation on Your Excellency's part. The administration of the Ordinance was made easy by Mr. Crawford being appointed to go to each of the temples and vihares in the Districts of Kandy and Matale and other places in the Kandyan territory, and make a register of the temple property. He succeeded in doing this. It is a most interesting report. He says he visited more than five hundred temples and vihares and registered all the lands and other valuable property belonging to them. Now, Your Excellency knows that no such registration has taken place in regard to the vihares and temples of the Maritime Provinces. In the Colombo District, there are a number of temples and vihares, and one of them is called the Kelani Vihare. Well, the Colombo district committee, though elected some three years ago, has not been able to get from the Kelani Vihare priest a list of the lands belonging to that vihare. The priest defies the trustees and the committee members elected by the people. He says, 'I shall not give you any idea of the properties held by the temple.' The committee and the trustees have no money of their own to go into the courts. They are now standing out, and the priest says truly enough, 'The law provides for a fine of Rs. 500 for failing to give the information as to the lands possessed by the temple, but I would sooner pay every fine than give you possession because I get Rs. 500 more as income than I would have to pay as fine".

He further added that there were "a series of other difficulties which affect this subject seriously" and made a passionate appeal to His Excellency "to take it in hand and do something for the people of Ceylon, especially as the Secretary of State gives you a free hand in regard to Government assistance." He moved for the appointment of the Government Agent in every Sinhalese Province as Commissioner "to promote the proper administration of the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance."

Concluding his speech, he reiterated his appeal, "I now make a personal appeal to Your Excellency and Your Excellency's Government to do something to mitigate the most scandalous state of things which has arisen at the present day, and which has continued for some years, in the past; and if Your Excellency does not deal with this serious problem speedily, I think, things will go from bad to worse and some day somebody will have to grapple with it in all its complications."

His Excellency, however much he was in sympathy with Ramanathan's appeal, was utterly powerless to do anything in the matter of appointing Commissioners in view of the fact that "in Ceylon, there is no State Church, that the Government made it a point of honour as well as a point of expediency not to interfere in the internal affairs of any church whatever. I am, therefore, exceedingly sorry I am unable to accede to the Hon. Member's request."

However, Ramanathan's contention that it was in the highest degree unlawful and unjust for the legislature to interfere with pending legislation was accepted and the plaintiffs were empowered to pursue their lawsuits unhampered by legislative action.

The Bill was amended thus: "Where any pending action is an action instituted by a trustee with respect to his dismissal or suspension or proposed dismissal, it shall be competent to the

court, notwithstanding anything contained in the principal Ordinance, to inquire into the justice, equity, and reasonableness of the said dismissal or suspension or proposed dismissal; and in any such case it shall be lawful for the court:—

(a) To direct any amendment of the pleadings or to frame any issue that may be necessary to enable it to do substantial justice between the parties;

(b) On such terms and conditions as to the court may seem just, to direct or confirm the dismissal of any trustee, to restrain any such dismissal or to direct the re-instatement of any trustee already suspended or dismissed;

(c) To make any other order that the justice of the case may require.

Ramanathan succeeded in bringing home to the Government that the independence of the judiciary is sacrosanct and inviolable, that it is the ultimate safeguard of man's freedom against arbitrary power, that no person who seeks legal redress for wrongs suffered by him should be restrained by the high-hand of the legislature.

CHAPTER VII

EXCISE QUESTION REOPENED

I say that in view of the absolutely clear understanding arrived at between the Unofficial Members and the Government, it was not right on the part of the Government to increase the taverns relating to toddy by 300. The only excuse of the Colonial Secretary is this, that he had the right to increase the toddy taverns as much as he likes, whether the Excise Reform was on the table or not. I deny that *in toto* and say that it has been the policy of the Government from the time of Sir William Gregory downwards not to increase the taverns as each Government likes. Their bounden duty is not to force this foul poison into every nook and corner of Ceylon.

—*Ramanathan*

There is now no work more loudly calling the intervention of the patriot and the reformer than the work of rescuing our country from the moral and physical degradation into which it is being hurled headlong by the spread of the drink evil. A strong agitation should be started to convert our Government to a policy of total prohibition.

—*The Hindu Organ*

I have never been defeated by ridicule and sarcasm.

—*Ramanathan*

All would be simplified, if only mankind would stop eating meat and abstain from strong liquor.

—*Percy Bysshe Shelley*

It is not meet that the welfare of the Exchequer should be dependent on the ruin of the spiritual and productive energies of numbers of my loyal subjects.

—*The Czar of Russia*

ON August 26, 1912, Ramanathan returned to the Excise Question. He was more than ordinarily puzzled and embittered to discover that the Government, having given him a clear and unequivocal assurance that it would reduce the existing number of taverns and that, if any new tavern was found to be absolutely necessary, it would be set up only after the exercise of local option, was now acting behind his back and unconscionably increasing the existing number by 300. Solemn promises and pledges and even pacts do not weigh with a foreign ruler. One has only to take a peep into the history of subject peoples to find its pages cluttered with the wreckage of broken promises and pledges. He adroitly fills their belly with the West Wind of promise and assurance, while covertly he carries through his own insidious plan of action.

This was how the Government acted. On the eve of the introduction of the new Excise Bill, it increased the existing number of taverns from 800 to 1441, while keeping the Unofficials in the dark about this increase. On Ramanathan's pressure, it reduced not the existing number but rather the increased number from 1441 to 1141. Ramanathan was acting in the belief that the Government, true to its promise, was reducing the existing number by 300, whereas the Government had increased it by 341. Alas, what vile and vicious stratagems, what sharp and shady practices a foreign ruler employs to achieve his ignoble purposes! It is with such deceptive and tantalizing promises and pledges that he lulls a disaffected and defiant subject people into a mood of complacency, while he subtly and furtively weaves his coils round them. Ramanathan felt it was a stab in his back. It became obvious that the Government was obdurate, that it had set its heart on making excise a source of revenue to the State and exploiting that source to its

fullest advantage, unmindful of the harm that might befall the nation and in defiance of its leaders.

Ramanathan would not take things lying down but would stand up and fight a straight battle. He reopened the whole question and asked in Council: (1) Why the Government had increased the number of taverns from 800 to 1141. (2) Whether the Government was not bound in honour to the Unofficial Members of the Council to consult the opinion of the adult population of the Island in regard to all the newly established taverns in excess of the number existing in 1910–1911.

Among other things, he said, "Your Excellency will remember that this was one of the crucial questions which agitated the minds of the Unofficial Members and of the public too, and that almost everyone of the Unofficial Members rose from his chair and said that the only justification for increasing the number of taverns in Ceylon should be a petition from the public, or an expression of opinion on their part that such taverns were wanted by them."

He went on to say that the subject had been discussed threadbare on numerous sittings of the legislature and certain precise and clear-cut decisions, reached, of which the principal ones were that there should be no increase in the existing number of taverns, and if any was found to be absolutely necessary, it was to be set up only after local option had been ascertained. This increase of the number of taverns at the Government's pleasure and in such overwhelming numbers was a brazen and unabashed violation of a solemn agreement reached in Council between the Government and the Unofficial Members. He said, "Now, when we went into Committee after the second reading of the Bill, we gave our utmost consideration to this part of the subject from all points of view, and we unanimously resolved that, when it was proposed to establish a tavern,

Government should give to the public an opportunity of expressing their opinion locally in regard to such tavern and that such opinion should be considered by the Government Agent of the Province. It will be for him to exercise his discretion and establish it or not, and it was further also adopted unanimously in Committee that the opinion of the Government Agent was not to be final, but that those of the public who had a right to express their opinions would be given the privilege of approaching Your Excellency in Executive Council and expressing their opinion to you, in order that Your Excellency may judge for yourself whether the decision of the Government Agent should stand or not. Nothing can be more clear than the wishes of the Unofficial Members, accepted by the Government, namely, that no tavern would be established in the Island except after the Government has given an opportunity to local residents to express their opinion. Such being the clear understanding arrived at between the Government and the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council, we did not think that there would be any violation of that understanding."

He reminded His Excellency the Governor of his promise to the Unofficial Members that his guiding principle in the Excise Reform would be not the increase of revenue but rather the progressive reduction of the drink-traffic and through it, the liberation of the country from its bondage to liquor. He continued, "Now, we were glad to hear from your Excellency last week an assurance that the increase of revenue was not at all desired on the part of the Government out of this Excise Reform, but that Your Excellency and your colleagues in the Executive Council were most anxious to restrict the sale of arrack as much as possible, and to free the population of the country from the disadvantages of illicit sale. We were pleased to have that assurance, and similar assurances given

on previous occasions by Your Excellency and the Hon. the Colonial Secretary. I do not think there is any disagreement between the Unofficials and Your Excellency's Government as regards the duty of restricting as much as possible, consistently with the revenue, the sale of these deleterious liquors. And, therefore, I am all the more anxious that the Government will go a step further and see whether, in giving their sanction to the increase of toddy taverns, they are doing what is advantageous to the people or not. Sir, this Island is full of Buddhists, Hindus, and Mohammadans, who from a religious point of view abhor the use of liquor in any shape, whether it be ale, wine, or spirit. It is forbidden in their religions to use intoxicating liquor of any kind for the simple reason that the man who wants to enter into communion with God cannot possibly do so unless he eschews this most injurious poison. The effect of imbibing it even in moderate quantities has been clearly explained in our books as leading to the promotion of worldly desires and the spirit of worldliness, and so choking all love for the things of the Spirit. Those of us who live in this world, and perform our duties in order to make ourselves less and less worldly and more and more spiritual, see clearly the effects of even small quantities of alcohol on the mind and the body. According to sages, who are our guides both in worldly life, and in spiritual life, it is our paramount duty not to touch intoxicating liquor of any kind, and that if we do, we shall certainly estrange ourselves from the Lord of all Mercies. That is one argument which appeals to every man who is in the habit of invoking God in distress and praying to God everyday. I need not labour the point. There cannot be the love of God or peace to the man who takes intoxicating liquor."

He proceeded to dwell at some length on the horrifying effects of alcohol on the human

system, quoting the pronouncements of eminent experts on the subject and added, "I appeal to Your Excellency as a power and the greatest power in Ceylon into whose hands the fate of so many millions of people has been entrusted. I appeal to your Excellency and your Excellency's Government not to expose the people of this country to the temptation which is laid before their doors to take to drinking. Christianity is one of the greatest religions on the face of the earth, and it teaches every good Christian to pray everyday in his life, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' But what does our Christian Government do, I must say, in ignorance of what is good and what is useful to the public? *It raises a world of temptation at the very door of the villager and the townsman and lures the good people of Ceylon into a trap that is most injurious to the mind and body.* When we Hindus, Buddhists, and Muhammadans, and I am perfectly sure Christians of culture also, who understand the dangers of alcohol, see that our people are being given an opportunity of falling into ruin, our hearts bleed for them. And we cannot help raising our voice against the policy that is being inaugurated now. Arrack was brought to us by the Dutch. They made a monopoly of it, and when the British Government entered the country, it took it up as a source of revenue. That was at a time when English gentlemen used to get drunk on bottles of port wine and get under the table. These times of drunkenness have passed. We are now under the reign of wise principles, and it is a great shame that while we are living in the light of such principles, we should still continue to be what we were not ashamed to be in the times of the Dutch and the earlier decades of the last century. When Sir William Gregory came to this Colony in 1872, he saw that the effects of drunkenness were spreading in Ceylon. He addressed the Legislative Council on this subject,

and said that it ought to be the policy of the Government to restrict the sale of arrack in Ceylon, and from that day forward it has been the policy of every Government that I know of, to exercise a watchful care in the diminution of the sale of toddy and arrack. But unfortunately I find at the present day an order has gone forth, not only that arrack should be sold in the usual places, but also that toddy should be sold separately in 1141 places. We all know that respectable men, in view of the forcible public opinion that prevails, dare not enter a public arrack tavern. Now the arrack taverns being separated from toddy, it is easy for these shamefaced gentlemen to get into a toddy-shop and drink as much as they like. And not only for them. But it will be easy also for women and children to be there without shame. I say it is a temptation which the people of this country ought to have been spared."

He traces the slow and imperceptible stages by which alcohol establishes its dominion over men's minds and in due course encompasses their ruin. He concluded with saying, "If we do not nip this vice in the beginning, there will be no hope for us as a nation hereafter. It appears to me that the position of affairs is like this. Little children, not knowing the dangers of their situation, love to play on the brink of a precipice, and the fathers and mothers of the country allow them to play there. What would you say of the folly of such parents who allow their children to go into such an extreme point of danger? Would you not characterise them as perfect fools, who do not know the duties of life? *How, then will the position of any Government be, when it deliberately proposes to sell alcohol for purposes of revenue and carry alcohol to the very homes of the people with a fiat that it is God-given food?* I say that, instead of being a God-given food, it is a devil-given poison. Impressed with these

views, no man can help exclaiming that we are on the right road to ruin, and that, therefore, it is our duty to raise our voice as much as possible, and impress upon the Government the doctrine that we have learnt from our sages from the earliest generations, that it does no good to take alcohol even in small quantities and that every Government which loves the good of the country must recognise the fact, that it is dangerous in the highest degree to offer facilities to the people of the country to indulge in drink, even in small quantities. I hope the Government will soon give facilities to the people of Ceylon to express themselves on the question, whether they want toddy or arrack in the localities they live in. If the Government confers these facilities at the earliest possible opportunity, we shall be very thankful. We do not want to think of the mistakes committed in the past. We do not want to blame anybody or sit hard upon anybody, because we clearly understand that mistakes must be committed, and we are ready to forget and forgive the mistakes of the past, if the Government give the facilities even now to the people to express their opinion upon the question, whether taverns are needed by them in the localities they live in."

The Colonial Secretary, Sir Hugh Clifford, as was his wont, would not face the issue and in his endeavour to side-track and cloud it, indulged in frivolous chatter and flippant raillery little befitting the occasion or his position as the chief spokesman of the Government. Ramanathan had asked him a categorical question. It was up to him to have given a categorical answer. Instead, he shilly-shallied saying that the speech that Ramanathan had delivered was one which he (Ramanathan) should have delivered at the second reading of the Excise Bill, but that "by some unfortunate lapse, it had been mislaid, and he has produced it today for our entertainment." That was language

that ill-became a Colonial Secretary, to tell the Educated Ceylonese Member, that he had at great pains prepared a great speech and, having apparently mislaid it, *was now producing it for their entertainment.* But what has all this to do with a simple, plain, straight-forward question that Ramanathan had asked him? In his perversity and lack of refinement, he presumed he could with one thrust of that ugly weapon, ridicule and sarcasm, tear and hack his adversary to pieces and by so doing settle all issues with him. But he had reckoned without the host.

His words were, "I have listened, Sir, to the speech of the mover of the motion with absolute astonishment. I can only suggest that the speech is one that he ought to have delivered at the second reading of the Excise Bill, which by some unfortunate lapse, has been mislaid and that he has produced it today for our entertainment."

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: No accident, no mislaying.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: "I would also suggest that it is very difficult to understand how he reconciles his conscience in voting for the Excise Bill, if he honestly believed that its provisions would have the effect of stimulating instead of checking the consumption of alcohol. He could not have learned what he has learned from Western physicians and Eastern sages since the passing of the Bill. He must have been familiar with everything he has told us as to the physiological effects of alcohol on the human system, but I must own that none of these opinions surely could justify the member to support the Bill after listening with most commendable patience to what I fear was an uncommonly long exposition of its principles, and having at that moment apparently grasped the real meaning and its real provisions and voted for it, and, a few weeks later, speaking as the Honourable Member has just spoken, vote against it.

I say, I am bewildered. I have no explanation for this most extraordinary action."

He added, "At the time we were considering the Ordinance in Select Committee, the arrack rents for the coming year had more than a month before already been sold, an express condition of their sale being that purchasers should have no stake whatsover in toddy rents. Many toddy rents had already been sold, before the Bill came before this Council at all, and still more, before the Bill came into the Select Committee."

Granted all that, the Colonial Secretary failed to answer the one question Ramanathan had repeatedly asked, the question that was the crux of the whole matter, the pivot on which the whole issue moved, the sole bone of contention, the question why there should be an increase of taverns, and worse still, in such overwhelming numbers and in such unseemly haste, while yet the Excise Bill was on the anvil and despite the many assurances given by the Government to the contrary. Obviously, the Government was out to steal a march on Ramanathan, forestall him and those of his persuasion by increasing the number of taverns phenomenally and surreptitiously before the Excise Bill became law. It was all in the imperial game. While the nation and many of its leaders cried for abolition of drunkenness, for a drastic reduction in the number of taverns, and for the purpose, had caused a Bill to be introduced into the legislature, the Government was acting behind their backs and insidiously and clandestinely sowing broadcast taverns and liquor booths in every nook and corner of the country, flooding it with all manner of pernicious brews, achieving thereby a dual but unholy purpose, that of bloating the exchequer with funds to pamper an alien bureaucracy and at the same time, vulgarising, brutalising an already decadent and debased subject people.

Ramanathan's reply to the Colonial Secretary

was withering, most devastating. In all his long and stormy career never did any man, however highly-placed, prince or potentate, get away with cheap sneers or unseemly sarcasms.

He said, "My Hon. friend says he does not understand my attitude, Sir, in regard to this motion today. He knows very well that, if the Government determines upon a policy and insists upon the help of the Official Members, we Unofficial Members would be utterly powerless to resist that policy, because we are in a minority. He knows also perfectly well that the Unofficial Members on this side of the house did not want the Excise System to be introduced into the Island without further inquiry and further consideration as to its necessity in Ceylon. But more than all, we were most anxious that there should be no expansion of traffic in arrack and toddy, and that was the one point that exercised us most. We had been told before coming into full Council, and, indeed, at the first reading of the Bill itself, we were told that there would be a full explanation of the merits of the question and of the principles intended to be followed by the Government. In view of these assurances, we did not think it necessary to propound our views at the time. But many of us on this side of the house emphasized our fear that the sale of toddy and arrack would be greatly increased under the Excise Reform; and in view of the official majority that exists, we did not think it would conduce to much purpose to raise a discussion on the merits of the drink question, if we spoke at the second reading, especially as we had been promised that the Government would do its very best to explain the situation more fully, and to consider carefully all our suggestions."

He continued, "Well, we entered into the Committee stage, and then we were satisfied with the assurance given as to local option, and we

came back to the Council and expected that the resolution arrived at unanimously by the Committee would be given effect to by the Government. We had not the least idea that as many as 300 toddy taverns had been added to the existing number of toddy taverns. This information we got only last week, and I have taken the earliest opportunity to come into Council and ask why so many toddy taverns were added before the sanction of the Secretary of State was obtained to the Excise Ordinance."

He further proceeded to answer the Colonial Secretary's jibe that he had prepared that speech of his for the second reading of the Excise Bill "but could not deliver owing to some mischance and was now producing it for the entertainment of the House."

He said, "The Colonial Secretary says that I have let off a speech now which I had, he seems to think, carefully prepared and intended to deliver at the second reading. I can give him this assurance that I do not prepare my speeches. I do get ready the facts needed for the speeches. I came here to-day not knowing what or how much I have to say—

The Hon. Colonial Secretary: "Hear, hear."

The Hon. Ceylonese Member: "Except what was necessary to be said in reference to the subject, and now I am replying quite without preparation in reference to things that have turned up for the moment. I did not prepare any speech, and I did not let off a speech that I had prepared; and I believe Sir, that he considers his remark to be a happy hit which disposed of my question. He is clever at ridicule and sarcasm, but those shafts have no effect whatever upon an intelligent public. They know perfectly that, notwithstanding the specious words with which he has enveloped the subject, he has not answered my question today. Ridicule raises a laugh; sarcasm embitters

the feelings. He is clever at that. Embittering the feelings and raising a laugh against his opponents seem to be germane to him. But I do not adopt those weapons. I stand upon the true merits of a question, and it will be well if going away from Ceylon he does not carry this habit with him, which the public of Ceylon do not at all admire. Sir, I say that my question has not been answered. I say that, in view of the absolutely clear understanding arrived at between the Unofficial Members and the Government, it was not right on the part of the Government to increase the taverns relating to toddy by 300. His only excuse is this, that he had the right to increase the toddy taverns as much as he likes, whether the Excise Reform was on the table or not. I deny that *in toto*, and say that it has been the policy of the Government of Ceylon, from the time of Sir William Gregory downwards, not to increase taverns as each Government likes. Their bounden duty to the King, whose glory is to safeguard the well-being of the people; and their bounden duty to the people, whose destinies have been entrusted to their hands, is not to force on them this foul poison in every nook and corner in Ceylon. There have been promises of various kinds given from time to time in this very hall, and in papers published officially, that it would be impolitic in the highest degree to add to the number of taverns in the manner that has been done by my honourable friend on this occasion. It is owing to this understanding, and the well-defined policy of the British Government, which is well understood in England, and which every rational Englishman thinks ought to be maintained in England and in the Colonies, that my honourable friend cannot say that he has a right under the existing law to multiply taverns as much as he likes. At the outset my honourable friend said: 'We will not multiply taverns.' But when it comes to the fulfilment of that promise, we find that

he has multiplied it by 300. (Laughter) Yes, multiplied in the sense of increased."

His indignation yet unquenched, he went on: "The Colonial Secretary is in the habit of getting astonishingly bewildered; in his bewilderment he has lost the principal point of my question. I excuse his bewilderment but I must say I am perfectly right in coming to this Council today and challenging in the first place his right to multiply taverns, and trying in the second place to convert him and other members of the Government who think that toddy is a good thing for the people of Ceylon. When I heard Your Excellency express yourself with emotion last week that it is your genuine wish that intoxicating drink should be put down, I said to myself that there was no issue between us regarding arrack. None whatever. Your Excellency and we Unofficial Members are perfectly agreed that arrack is a danger to the country. Then, what is the issue between us? The issue between us is whether toddy is a bane or not to the country. I said to myself, 'I will try and make converts of the Government of Ceylon, even as I have made converts of my bitterest opponents, by persistent talking and by persistent argument.' I have put forth my views with the best of intentions, and I have tried to impress the Government of Ceylon at the eleventh hour to hold its hands and not to spread broadcast 300 toddy taverns in excess of those that already exist; and all the reward I got from the Colonial Secretary of the Island is laughter and sarcastic remarks. Sir, I am not pained by them. I have never been defeated by ridicule and sarcasm; but I shall be glad to know from him, why, before the sanction of the Secretary of State was obtained in this matter, the Government of Ceylon were in such a hurry to plant 300 toddy taverns in different parts of the Island. My honourable friend speaks of a right to do it. I say, 'No. You have no right to do it. You are bound

by Imperial policy; you are bound by the public opinion of good Englishmen; you are bound by the opinions which prevail in Ceylon, and which my honourable friend says he respects.' After that, will anyone say my honourable friend has answered my question? No, Sir, he has not answered my question. I will not trouble the Council any more. The Government persists in a wrong course of action. I say this is deplorable in the highest degree."

It was on a note of extreme bitterness that he ended. He knew he had established his case beyond all reasonable doubt. The House knew that. But it was the Official majority that, in this as in all cases, decided the issue. What was worse, his colleagues, the Unofficial Members, who were the accredited guardians of the people's rights and interests would, in the event of a vote being taken, vote rather with the rulers than with him, when he had taken a stand which, however salutary to the nation, was yet unpopular with the rulers. Nevertheless, it was through his pertinacity, one might add, his militancy, his persistent and passionate outbursts of moral fury that the Government was constrained to reduce the number of taverns it had decided upon from 1600 to 1141. He had, moreover, forced the Government to concede the principle of local option and a progressive reduction of the traffic in liquor.

It was a victory for the great leader, in view of the fact that, if the Government had had its own way, it would have flooded the country with toddy and arrack to the ruin of the nation. Moreover, by the exercise of local option the nation could vote out of existence all or any of the taverns the Government would choose to set up. He had fought single-handed and so long and so tenaciously against the serried ranks of Officials who saw in the drink traffic a very rich source of revenue for the Government, and against many of his

colleagues, the Unofficials, who saw virtue in certain kinds of liquor and supported the expansionist policy of the Government. The excise debate was one of the stormiest and most protracted in Ramanathan's parliamentary career. His speeches were in every way admirable, most trenchant, penetrating, dignified and unanswerable. He did not scruple to tread heavily on the corns of Officials, inasmuch as they were implacably obdurate, while his desire to rid the country of the liquor menace amounted to nothing short of an obsession. He made excise the burning question of the day and hardened public opposition to the Government's excise policy. Temperance societies sprang into existence in every nook and corner of the Island; a vigorous and nation-wide campaign for the closure of taverns and liquor bars was launched; and from day to day and from hour to hour, temperance lecturers taught the evils of drink and the national duty of defeating the Government's excise policy, to vast audiences comprising all classes of the population. All those who trafficked in liquor were subjected to a social boycott. Owners of palm trees refused to give them for tapping toddy and tappers refused to tap. Local option was exercised all over the country and tumultuous crowds of temperance workers and supporters laboured all day and night for months and years and succeeded in securing the closure of large numbers of taverns on the strength of the popular vote. The excise policy of the Government gave rise to so much public resentment and discontent that the Riots of 1915 were regarded as an attempt to overthrow the Government. Such was the impact of Ramanathan's leadership that the whole nation rallied round him and demonstrated to the rulers in no uncertain terms that he was in the right, while they and their henchmen were utterly and hopelessly in the wrong.

In retrospect, we see that in the early part of the century, while he was yet Solicitor-General,

finding that drink was fast becoming a great national evil and taking a heavy toll of men and money, he organised a vigorous public agitation against it. Presiding over a mammoth Temperance Meeting held at the Colombo Raquet Court on 12th September, 1904 and attended by 20,000 people, wherein Col. Olcott and other celebrities spoke, he said, "We are assembled here to stem the tide of drink which has been gradually ruining the best energies of a vast number of our people for the last forty years..... The abandonment of alcoholic poison restores peace and light to the soul and the influential committee who have in hand the management of today's festival have resolved that, after the speakers have spoken, the people assembled in thousands should move in orderly procession from here with lights in hand and with music to Galle Face and disperse there."

Were the great leader to rise up from his *Samadhi* and re-visit the scenes of his former labours, how aggrieved, nay appalled he would be to find the high-ways and by-ways of every town and city, every hamlet and village strewn with taverns and liquor-bars dispensing all manner of brews "as if they are a god-given drink" and young and old, reeling and brawling under their impact!

CHAPTER VIII

OUR FIRST GREAT SOCIALIST

He, O Arjuna, who sees with equality everything in the image of his own self, whether in pleasure or in pain, he is considered a perfect yogi.

—*Bhagavadgita*

We see everywhere in the history of man that the spirit of renunciation is the deepest reality of the human soul.

—*Rabindranath Tagore*

We who are feeding fat on our wealth, who roll along in motor cars and fine carriages can have no conception of the grinding nature of the life which the people whom we have to deal with are labouring under.

—*Ramanathan*

Thou shalt gain by giving away. Thou shalt not covet.

—*Upanishad*

To place the depressed classes any longer in their present condition is surely nothing less than a blot on our civilisation, nay, on our humanity.

—*Ramanathan*

This is a lesson that we ought to bear in mind. We must not harass the people. They are the tax-payers, and it is by means of them that the government of the country is being carried on. Every month's pay that an official draws comes out of the tax-payer's pockets. He is really the pay-master of the country.

—*Ramanathan*

Not by wealth, not by progeny, but by renunciation alone is immortality achieved.

—*Swami Vivekananda*

> The spirits and minds and bodies of the people ought to be the chief concern of any government.
>
> —*Ramanathan*

> The first object of government, after the preservation of law and order, should be to ensure for every man the opportunity not merely to earn a livelihood, but to do so by work which he can conscientiously believe is of benefit to his country and the world.
>
> —*Sir Arthur Bryant*

IT is not to be guilty of a misnomer or an overstatement to call Ramanathan our first great socialist. He was the first among us to proclaim the gospel of social responsibility, of service and self-sacrifice in behalf of our less fortunate brethren, the poor and the destitute, the weak and the infirm, the under-privileged and the down-trodden—all in a supreme effort to cleanse society of its manifold ills, social, economic, political; to bring within the reach of all classes of people, a better and a fuller life than they had found. He aimed at the creation of a society of the free and the equal, in which poverty and all its attendant horrors would be but things of the past, a society free from political or social oppression or injustice, a society in which every citizen would enjoy absolute equality of opportunity and a just and equitable share of the wealth of the land he calls his own.

But how is such a society to be brought into being? Not by revolution, by a violent overthrow of a legally constituted government, nor by the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange nor by the abolition of private property but rather by the conjoint action of both the rulers and the ruled; the former, by progressively removing the multitudinous burdens and disabilities which feudal governments and feudal societies had over the centuries heaped upon the community and by appropriating a great part of the surplus wealth lying in the hands of private individuals

by taxation and, if need be, by compulsory acquisition and using that wealth for the benefit of the less fortunate sections of the community; the latter, by voluntarily and large-heartedly placing their surplus wealth at the disposal of those who need them. He would fight exploitation by appealing not to the collective selfishness of the poor—as most modern governments do—but to the sentiment of social justice and solidarity among both the rich and the poor. It is an appeal not so much t the reason as to the heart in man. He would plead and argue with the wealthy to submit themselves voluntarily to the discipline and restraints of trusteeship. He would show them the right way, impress upon them the justice of the cause. He would have no truck with violence or with anything that smacked of violence or coercion. He believed in the efficacy of a persistent and moving appeal to man's moral and spiritual instincts, in waking up the slumbering social conscience of humanity. His method was akin to Vinoba's. He sought to achieve this both by precept and example. He not merely dinned into the ears of a heartless and unthinking generation that the poor and the destitute are a social responsibility, which none can shirk without detriment to their souls, but backed his precepts by example, by the tangible and demonstrable evidence of placing both himself and his all at the service of his people. He proclaimed that all wealth is God's wealth, that man holds that wealth on trust to be used for public good and not for private advantage, not for personal glory nor for sense-gratification but for the greater glory of God and the service of his fellow-men.

Ramanathan was born to wealth and affluence. Moreover, with a long life dedicated to strenuous and ceaseless toil at all hours of the day and night, to abstemious and frugal living, to rigid economy and careful husbandry, he built up a princely fortune and could have lived his days in regal splendour,

if he had chosen to do so. But he lived and died a poor man, deep in debt. His house in Colombo 'Sukhastan' which formed part of his inheritance, was heavily mortgaged to the bank and could not be redeemed. It came under the auctioneer's hammer, as soon as he departed from the visible scene.

It was an enigma and a source of poignant regret to many that the great leader should have fallen into debt and felt the pinch of want in the evening of his life. But the explanation is simple. What he earned with one hand, he gave away with the other. All that immense reservoir of wealth, both inherited and acquired and amounting to several millions, was emptied in public benefactions and individual charity, with no forethought for his own future or for the future of his children. Such was the bounty, the largesse of this prince of benefactors. It used to be said that no worthy suppliant for his munificence—and there were myriads of them—went away unheard or unrelieved; no honest cause that did not benefit by his lavish generosity. He dedicated his wealth to the service of his fellow-men and his God. Our sages and seers of old have said that true greatness resides in this, that a man freely and readily spends himself without measure for something intuitively apprehended as great and noble. Greater life hath no man than that he should lay down his life for his fellow-men. To have founded and built two magnificent seats of learning, one of which has since been transformed into the Northern Campus of the Ceylon University; to have built them unaided, single-handed each on twenty five acres of land, in an age which housed many of its schools and colleges on twentyfive perches; to have equipped them so generously as to render them models for others of their kind and to have endowed them with a superfluous abundance of wealth would have taxed the resources of a prince

or plutocrat. Not content with these, to have established a Training School for girls, and a network of other schools, big and small; to have aided the Government with twenty acres of land to found a Training College for boys; to have built in Colombo a temple, all of solid granite, a monument of Hindu art and architecture, and four others dedicated to the Lord Almighty; and to have richly endowed them; over and above all these, to have aided numerous other institutions and causes with liberal benefactions would make one gasp in wonder that one man could accomplish all that. Moreover, he it was who founded and built the first Hindu Orphanage in the country and made provision for its maintenance. He did more; he founded a Trust for the advancement of Tamil learning and Hindu culture, much of which has during the four and a half decades that have glided by since the great leader returned to his Maker, been despoiled by the cruel cupidity of modern man. But what remains has been valued at fifteen millions.

Why did he do that? It was a custom common among our forefathers—a custom which, alas, has long since fallen into disuse in our more enlightened and more affluent age—for persons of wealth and standing to dedicate a portion of that wealth to great and noble causes. But to give away all one had with a contemptuous disregard for one's future, and to the extent of impoverishing oneself and one's family was a phenomenon rare in the annals of philanthropy. It is extraordinary that Ramanathan gave away all he had. He did so in the simple faith that all wealth is God's wealth given to man on trust to be used in the service of his fellow-men; that man has no reason to misappropriate or misuse any portion of that wealth which He, in the abundance of His mercy bequeathed to him. If he does, he throws himself open to God's wrath. A generation, in mammon's hideous grip, may

deride him, may even scoff at him with the words, "A fool and his money are soon parted", but it is nevertheless true that he clung to his faith through life and acted in conformity with it. He was in every way the modern counterpart of King Janaka of Mithila, who, though the ruler of a mighty and prosperous kingdom was at heart a liberated soul, who disclaimed all title to his worldly wealth. Janaka once said, "Endless is my wealth; yet nothing is mine. Even if the whole of Mithila city were on fire, nothing of mine would burn."

This faith which Ramanathan partly inherited from his noble ancestry and from a father who gave away all he had to the poor and died deep in debt, and partly imbibed from his lifelong devotion to religion and Tamil learning, endured in him through life. That was the code of ethics that Tamil poets and philosophers of old had formulated for the guidance of man. If Tamil poetry in its grandest accents extols anything, it is a life of virtue, of sublime self-denial, of living not for the life here but for the life hereafter. It depicts a model citizen as a man of unblemished virtue and unceasing industry, who lives not for his own sake but owes his all to his fellowmen. It enforces the truth that life in this world and all things appertaining to it are transitory and ephemeral, and the one thing a wise man would do while alive is to perform acts of charity and munificence undeterred by a feeble and effeminate concern for the self. The first letter of the Tamil alphabet, in fact, the first lesson a Tamil child learns from his preceptor, enjoins on the child to love charity above all things else. The *Kural*, stressing the short and uncertain lease on which man holds life, counsels him, "Postpone not acts of charity; do it while yet you have the means, for life is uncertain, life is short." These maxims are but a few taken at random out of the rich store of

antique wisdom which our poets and philosophers of old bequeathed to us as a precious legacy and which Ramanathan imbibed from day to day under his parental roof in his formative years and continued to do so for the rest of his life. The sons of Ponnambala Mudaliyar were nothing if not Tamil scholars of the first order who from their tenderest years and under the loving care of a great father and a solicitous uncle allowed themselves to be soaked and saturated in all that was accounted best and noblest in the domain of Tamil learning. The sublime ideals of life propounded by the great sages and seers of old in Tamil poetry of haunting beauty and grandeur ran in their veins, enriched their minds and dictated every detail of their life and conduct. It was upon this rich and vivifying nutriment of Tamil culture that not merely the Ponnambalam brothers but from very early times, their whole family too on both the father's side and the mother's were fed and nurtured. It would be tedious to elaborate at any length on what Tamil culture did for them and what they in turn did for Tamil culture. Suffice it to say that they strove all their lives to live the life that Tamil culture had prescribed for the salvation of man and propagated that culture as best they could for the benefit of humanity.

It was on these firm and stable foundations that the Ponnambalam family reared the stately edifice of its leadership and renown. The present writer was privileged to see a manuscript copy of the *Thirukural* used in the later decades of the 18th century by Coomaraswamy Mudaliyar, Ramanathan's grandfather and first occupant of the Tamil Seat in the country's supreme legislature. The copious notes and commentaries inscribed in his own hand-writing show with what critical insight and avidity he had learnt it and with what assiduity he had lived up to it. It has been transmitted from one generation to another

as a precious heirloom. His son Sir Muthucoomaraswamy and his grand-children Dr. Anandacoomaraswamy, Ramanathan, Arunachalam and their elder brother Coomaraswamy, though each was a master of at least half-a-dozen languages, both ancient and modern, reserved their first love for Tamil poetry and ethics. One has merely to glance over their speeches or writings to discover how their passion for Tamil learning and the Tamil way of life breathes through every page and dictated every detail of their thought and action. They were, as has been pointed out, the epitome of the finest characteristics of the race, the fine flower of its noblest instincts.

It was on these self-same foundations that the Tamils, through the long centuries of their chequered history, built up a strong, healthy and vigorous national life. Whatever their shortcomings, they loved and cherished their language, their ancient culture and tradition and drew spiritual and moral sustenance from them. Their lives were governed by certain clear-cut values and ideals. They were patriots of high calibre who treasured all things theirs with courage and tenacity; they were industrious and enterprising, simple and frugal in their habits, wise, sagacious, self-reliant, with a wealth of wisdom they had inherited from their forbears, wedded to their soil and drawing much of their sustenance from it; happy and contented, peace-loving and law-abiding, as became a great and ancient people. They were Tamils *de facto et de nomine.*

But with the march of time and the changing fortunes of peoples and nations, the national life of the Tamils suffered a severe set-back. They lost sight of their great language and their ancient culture and tradition. The modern representative, at any rate of the intelligent and vocal section, is a Tamil *de nomine* only. He is neither fish, flesh, nor good redherring, but all things rolled into one; at best a spurious product, a synthetic commodity; no

natural growth, no spontaneous off-shoot of the native soil, but an artificial creation like one of the glittering and multi-faced dolls and puppets with which a scientific and technological age has littered the world. He calls himself a Tamil but cannot for the life of him speak or write that language, with the proficiency of a third-standard school-boy; all the exquisite beauty and charm of its literature, all its wealth of spiritual and philosophic thought, adored by scholars and savants the world over are a closed book to him; day in day out, he mouths with gleeful pride and a sense of achievement a language not his own but an imposition from outside. His dress and deportment, his manner of living, the values that inform his life and conduct—one and all proclaim his servitude to things alien and exotic. And none saw the peril more clearly or combated it more heroically, after the great Navalar, than Ramanathan. Denationalisation was the canker he dreaded most.

On his first entry upon the field of responsible life, Ramanathan had formulated for his guidance a pattern of life whereby he would devote a good portion of his wealth to religious and philanthropic work. In these efforts, he persevered through life, undeterred by discouragements, misrepresentations and even the taunts of unregenerate humanity.

Plain living and high thinking was his creed, and he lived up to it all through life. He never built for himself a stately mansion nor revelled in sumptuous eating and drinking after the fashion of his contemporaries. He denied himself the rudimentary comforts of life, was content to live to the end of his days at 'Sukhastan', an old and unpretentious building that bore the scars of age, moved about in a rickety old car that invited the ridicule of many, ate little and that of the simplest and plainest, slept little, never spent any part of his time in idle chatter or frivolous

amusement and ordered his life in strict conformity with an austere pattern. All this he did for the mere love of his people, for his simple and childlike faith that whoso aspires to serve man or God should first deny himself. That was the cardinal, the central creed of his life and it remained a lasting possession of his.

He was essentially and fundamentally a Hindu sage in the best tradition of that ancient and exalted fraternity, a religious and philosophic thinker who stumbled into politics by a curious destiny, who, if the choice lay with him, would have spent all his days and nights in holy communion with his Maker, in lonely contemplation of the True, the Good and the Beautiful. But his people drew him into politics. It is worth recalling that it was the extremity of the pressure that the leaders of all communites brought to bear on him and the pathetic plight to which his country's politics had been reduced since his sensational removal from the legislature in 1893 to fill the office of Solicitor-General that made him contest the Educated Ceylonese Seat. "I retired from the office of Solicitor-General in 1905," said he, "bent upon educational work, but the people of Ceylon would not let me carry out my wishes, and I came back here as an Elected Member to represent all Ceylon. I came here and I thought it was my duty to resuscitate the vitality and usefulness of the Unofficial Members of the Council. The state of the Unofficial Members was such that they would not speak." He was never known to refuse a popular request, however much it conflicted with his personal likes and dislikes. He felt he was the servant of the people and found his supreme solace and life's fulfilment in their unremitting service. With him *vox populi* was *vox dei*.

He worked indefatigably, worked as none else, before or since, exposing himself to privations and hardships, with no thought of personal gain but

solely and simply to serve his people with all his heart and with all his soul. If there was one thing more than any other that he taught us through life, taught a distraught and disdainful generation lost in sloth, in the heady pursuit of material and phantasmal pleasures, and adrift upon the high seas without chart or compass, it was the gospel of work, work as man's sole resource, as the sole solvent of life's problems and perplexities; work, hard, strenuous and engrossing, work disinterested, detached, dedicated, free of the taint of selfish ambition, work as the grand cure for the multitudinous ills that afflict frail humanity, work as man's highest offering to his Creator. He not merely taught it; he lived it as few men, before or after.

To many of his friends who complained bitterly that he was giving away all his wealth so profusely and with little forethought either for his own future or for that of his children, he replied, "What you refer to as my wealth is, in reality, not mine but God's. I am only a trustee enjoined to administer that wealth with extreme probity and vigilance and in a manner most acceptable to Him that gave it—that is in the service of His creation. I have educated my children and have provided them a modest competence. To do more than that would be but to play false to the trust."

This prodigal giver was by no means a receiver. Had he not in his study of the Tamil alphabet learned from Auvai, the Tamil prophetess and lawgiver, the lesson of his life that all receiving (gifts) degrades the receiver? At the conclusion of his extensive lecture tour of America, a grateful people offered to reward him for his great service to them. He refused the offer on the plea that all work, religious or humanitarian, should not be tainted by the cash nexus. They then offered him gifts to be used for educational work among his people.

That offer too he turned down, for he believed, if the gifts were accepted, he would be morally bound to plan out his educational work in a manner acceptable more to the American benefactors than to himself. In all his work, public or private, he valued freedom more than anything else, the freedom to order things according to his own inner lights. It has been said that if you know how a man deals with money, how he gets it, spends it, keeps it, shares it, you know some of the most important things about him.

Though he lived all his working life on terms of close friendship and intimacy with the highest in the land, who would go to any lengths to oblige him, he never sought any favour either for himself or for any of his children. Even the worst of enemies, though enemies in the strict sense of the term he had none, would not prefer a charge against him that he ever even attempted to influence in the smallest measure the course of justice and fair-play. How else could he have come by that superhuman courage that was the marvel of those who saw or heard him? In his withering indictment of the ruling hierarchy, whenever its actions ran counter to national interests, he spared neither friend nor foe. He often declared, "Private friendship has nothing to do with public duty. That is my creed." To a world which makes a ready and willing sacrifice of national interests to the demands of private friendship, he proclaimed the contrary gospel of the paramountcy of interests public over interests personal and private, of the primacy of reason, justice, fair-play and kindly-dealing in the government of human society. In fact the one piece of advice he gave the members of his family and those around him was that they should not solicit favours from anyone, particularly from those in high places. None did more than he to raise the standard of purity and efficiency in the government of the State or cleanse the

administration of the many abuses and injustices that had grown around it during the centuries of foreign rule and undermined its strength and efficiency. Rightly was it said that his entry into public life in 1879 heralded the dawn of a new era in politics and public administration.

There was one question that was uppermost in his mind all through his long and eventful career and that was the unhappy condition of the poor. The misery and squalor, the destitution and despair that he saw around him distressed him profoundly. His one dominant thought, his one over-riding purpose was how best he could redeem society from its subjection to that giant evil, from the Slough of Despond into which it had fallen through man's inhumanity to man, through State neglect and through its own ignorance and sloth, its own moral and spiritual laxity. Did he not cry out on many an occasion to the British rulers, "We who are feeding fat on our wealth, who roll along in motor cars and fine carriages, can have no conception of the grinding nature of the life which the people whom we have to deal with are labouring under. Europeans do not go to these places, except a few planters. I have spoken to a number of planters and they all agree that the poverty of the country is our worst phenomenon," or "To place the depressed classes any longer in their present condition is surely nothing less than a blot on our civilisation, nay on our humanity?"

He did more than any other man of his generation to wake up the sleeping social conscience of his time, to inculate in them by precept and by example a sense of their duty and responsibility to their less favoured brethren, to tell them that they could not shirk that duty and responsibility without detriment to their souls. In an age which enthroned the self and made it the focal point of man's loves and affections, an age which spurned

the higher values of the spirit and made "Each man unto himself and the Devil take the hindmost" its most fashionable social creed, he proclaimed the contrary and what to many appeared a heretical doctrine that the self, the lower self in man, is man's foremost foe, that whoso panders to it misses the very meaning and purpose of human existence, that mutual help rather than mutual injury is the foundation of public and private good.

We called Ramanathan the first of our socialists. If service and self-denial, with no other end in view than the improvement of the living conditions of the poor, drawing out their lives' full potential, holding out to them opportunities of self-fulfilment, enabling them to live a richer and fuller life are the central concepts, the main hall-marks of socialism, as they truly are, then Ramanathan was among us the greatest socialist we know. He preached and practised the socialist creed in an age in which its voice was only faintly and feebly heard, an age in which it was out of favour with the rulers of men, with bureaucrats and plutocrats, when poverty and all its attendant ills were treated as matters of course, viewed with complacency and unconcern by the idle rich as preordained and therefore to be endured meekly and uncomplainingly.

There was yet another difference fundamental and far-reaching in socialism as understood by Ramanathan and socialism as we see preached and practised in our day. While he was a socialist by conviction and by free choice, many of us who call ourselves socialists are so by necessity. Ramanathan made a willing sacrifice of his enormous wealth for the relief of the poor, for the alleviation of human suffering, for the remedy of social distress, while we of the present day do so because, willy-nilly, we must. Not that we love the poor but that we fear the State. Ramanathan believed that society could be redeemed and regenerated, that social misery and suffering could be alleviated

over a wide area only on a law of love and understanding, of mutual charity and compassion, by the exercise of the humane virtues, by voluntary self-sacrifice in behalf of our less fortunate brethren. A great student of the Bible, he remembered Christ's admonition to the rich young man who sought to know from Him how he could gain Life Eternal. "Go and sell all you have and give it to the poor." His body and soul throbbed to the call of the Hindu Scriptures exhorting man to place society before self, to perform acts of charity even under the most distressing circumstances of life, for therein lies man's only hope of survival, his sole means of salvation. A student of religion, he saw the unity and the universality of all life, the spiritual oneness of all existence. He saw himself in his own fellow-men only in a different garb, and his heart went out in love and compassion to the victims of distress and suffering.

Ramanathan was a good economist and social thinker. The progressive impoverishment and degradation of the rural population, intensified by the apathy and the indifference of a foreign ruler and by the lack of social awareness on the part of the people, engrossed his attention through life. He knew that society could be redeemed and regenerated only by the conjoint action of the State and the individual, by the provision of a sound system of education founded on the basic principles of morality and religion, by the inculcation of a love of hard work and purposeful living in the young, by the practice of the homely virtues of simplicity and frugality in daily life and above all by a return to the land and the traditional occupation of its forbears.

Foreign rulers, in their enthusiasm for the cultivation of cash crops for export and revenue, neglected the cultivation of food crops, which from time immemorial, had been the backbone of rural economy, the mainstay of the rural population

In their endeavour to procure cheap labour for the planter, they imported cheap food from foreign lands, with the result that the indigenous farmer, powerless to hold his own against the foreign competitor and bound down by fiscal burdens like the paddy-land tax and by the exactions of the landlord, abandoned agriculture, his main prop and support. Consequently rural unemployment was rife and social distress, acute. It was the peculiar glory of Ramanathan as it was one of his foremost claims to our gratitude that he re-oriented our traditional agriculture, rehabilitated the farming interest. From his first entry into public life down to his last days, the one question which occupied the foremost place in his national programme, the one to which he gave his best energies, was how best he could restore agriculture to its pristine place in national life. Few saw the truth more clearly than he that, agriculture being the principal occupation of the rural population, by reclaiming vast tracts of land—once the scene of fruitful and bustling activity, but through centuries of foreign rule, fallen into neglect and decay—much of the rural poverty and distress could be remedied. By exerting persistent and interminable pressure, he prevailed on the Government to accord agriculture and its concomitants, irrigation, State-sponsored colonization, etc., a dominant place in its programme of national development. With the impetus thus given, agriculture came back into its own, became a vital element in the nation's economy. It was freed from the reproach that had grown round it, and gained a new potency and a new place of honour in national life.

To a generation which spurned the plough and fought shy of the traditional occupations of its forbears, he preached the gospel of 'back to the land' and 'the dignity of manual labour.' He impressed upon youth his belief that no work is beneath one's dignity so long as it is honest and

beneficent. He said, "When the Ceylonese youth comes to know a little English, his mind becomes unsettled. He discards the plough, the honourable and useful calling of his ancestors, idles away his time or becomes a petition-drawer or clerk on a miserable pittance. This is not as it should be." He foresaw that our neglecct of the land would be our undoing and he was right.

There were three subjects which claimed a good deal of his attention, viz. the development of irrigation by the restoration of numerous ancient tanks and water-ways which were then in a state of utter disrepair and the construction of new ones where necessary; secondly, the reclamation of many millions of acres of fertile and productive land which through centuries of neglect under foreign rule lay entombed in jungle; and thirdly, the settlement of the large masses of landless peasantry upon the land thus reclaimed. He decried the prevalent craze for the white-collar job, and attributed to it many of the political, economic and social ills that held the nation in bondage. He impressed upon the people the view that the white-collar job was deceptive and illusory; that it would be suicidal for a people to base their economy on such infirm and unstable foundations; that it could at best absorb only a small fraction of the country's youth; that it robbed its votaries of their manhood, their self-esteem and their spirit of sturdy independence and in their stead bred craven fear, servility and docile acquiescence in the dictates of an alien ruler; that the ruler employed it as a convenient bait to attract and keep in continued servitude and subjection the intelligent and vocal section of the population. While the plums of the public service were reserved for the ruling caste, the ruled would have to content themselves with the crumbs that fall from the master's table. He exhorted the generality of the youth to look for their chief

source of wealth in the land; and told them that untold wealth lay locked up in the soil; that whoso dug for it would find it; that it is primordial wealth, wealth untainted, untarnished, coming as it does from the womb of Mother Earth; and therefore more enduring and elevating; that it fosters independence, invigorates manhood and brings into being a race of hardy and self-reliant men and women capable of withstanding the stress and strains of life, and the inroads of a foreign aggressor.

Knowing that example is better than precept, and assailed though he was by age and paucity of funds, he built up a mammoth farm of several hundred acres at Kilinochchi, not through any pride of possession nor through any love of material gain, but simply and solely to blaze the trail and lead his people, like Moses of old, to the Promised Land. This farm which forms a part of his legacy to his people provides daily sustenance for several hundreds of homes. The opening up of the Wanni and the prosperity and well-being that followed, the rise to wealth and importance of once obscure towns and villages like Paranthan, Kilinochchi, Mankulam, Puliyankulam, Vavuniya and a host of other centres of agricultural activity in other parts of the country, we owe to his sagacity and vision, to his pioneering zeal and his capacity for prompt and effective action. The myriads of families, once poor, landless, homeless and unspeakably wretched but now living in comparative ease and affluence and enjoying the comforts and amenities of life, have reason to remember him with gratitude and affection. H. A. P. Sandrasegara, K. C. said of him, "During his lifetime, Ramanathan said that the salvation of this country depended on its agricultural development. That was a thing he firmly believed in. He was a great legislator, councillor and educationist, but nobody would have thought that he would come forward to launch the Kilinochchi Scheme. He himself launched the scheme and got five-hundred acres under the Iranamadu Scheme and cultivated it. That was a great and noble example Sir Ponnambalam left behind and he hoped that it would be followed by others."

He was ever the friend and champion of the under-dog, the inarticulate masses, and they in turn loved and reverenced him to a degree seldom seen in the annals of leadership. This may at this distance of time seem a little exaggerated, but it is nevertheless true. This man, an aristocrat and an autocrat rolled in one, who would not bow down his head to any man, be he prince or potentate, in whose presence even the highest in the land would shudder made himself readily accessible to the lowliest and the lost, to the victims of social and State oppression, greeted them with a benign and beaming smile, listened in patience to their numerous complaints and would not rest content until he had found them redress.

Often he would go to them of his own accord, to know them at close range, to study their problems and afflictions at first hand and then, armed with the knowledge thus gained, he would belabour the individual oppressor, or the foreign ruler more keen to swell the exchequer and pamper a foreign bureacracy than improve the living conditions of the ruled. Few leaders that we know of ever put themselves to such strenuous, such limitless pains to study national problems, particularly problems affecting the poor and voiceless millions, and discover effective remedies for them. Man seeks power to exercise dominion over his fellowmen, but Ramanathan sought power only to serve them.

I have it on the authority of many who lived with him for long years and had exceptional opportunities of knowing his mind and character that he viewed everybody alike, that he treated even the humblest peasant as he would treat his own

child. He who was one with the Divine, was one with the whole stream of life. He kept an open house which was supplied with a rich store of grain, vegetables, fruit and milk from his extensive farms and estates. Everyone who called on him—the highest and the lowest, prince of royal blood down to the humblest peasant—was invited to partake of the varied but strictly vegetarian repast provided there. It is said that he would dine only when he had personally satisfied himself that all around him had dined. A visitor, more particularly the peasant or villager, with a grievance to be redressed or a favour to be sought, was first fed before he was given a hearing. This love of feeding the many was pre-eminently a long-standing family tradition stretching back many generations.

Whenever common folk saw him on the high-way or at some public place, they would at once flock to his presence in large numbers or line up on either side of the high-way and with folded palms and hands outstretched, greet him with joyous acclaim. All these manifestations of affectionate esteem and reverence came to him unasked. It was the spontaneous expression of a simple, unlettered, unsophisticated people conscious of his greatness and goodness, conscious of their indebtedness to a leader who placed their happiness and well-being above all things else, who was their chief prop and support against the excesses of foreign masters. It was the singular distinction of Ramanathan that he inspired such universal love and reverence not so much among his people, the Tamils, as among every other people, in the Island. The Sinhalese, the Muslims, the Burghers, the Christians, one and all, owned him their man and looked up to him for succour, whenever the occasion demanded. Such universal confidence and esteem has seldom been vouchsafed to any leader before or since. At a century's remove it may seem too tall a claim to make, when few of his contemporaries who knew

him and could testify to it, are yet alive. But records there are that vouch for it.

He kept not merely an open house; he kept his schools and colleges open to all youth who could benefit by them. Every boy or girl, who could give him proof of intelligence and aptitude, was welcomed within their portals regardless of his or her ability to pay. Many who had made good in life confessed to me that they owed all their success and well-being to the free education and loving care and guidance that he so readily and so willingly bestowed on them in their early and formative period of life.

When the communal riots broke out in 1915, Ramanathan was away at Kodaikkanal, South India. On learning of it, he hurried back to Colombo and found the city desolate, with little or no sign of life about and all activity at a standstill. The reports of the privations and hardships suffered by the peace-loving and law-abiding citizens through their dread of the army and the police and their inability to procure the necessary provisions distressed him profoundly. The city was in the grip of a Reign of Terror. Believing that the situation called for prompt action, he assured the people on his own responsibility that no harm would befall them, exhorted them to shed their fears and resume normal activity. The people readily responded. At his trumpet call, all shops and business houses flung open their doors and did business as usual and people went about their normal avocations. Such was the confidence and sense of security he could inspire in the minds of all classes of the people.

Much of the legislation that had for its aim the alleviation of the lot of the poor and voiceless millions during the half-century of his leadership was fathered by him. The abolition of compulsory labour on roads and highways which inflicted untold hardships on the many who complied, and led up

to the incarceration in insanitary and unwholesome prison cells, of large numbers who did not comply, the repeal of the Paddy-Tax which deprived a very large section of the farming population of the fruits of their labour and in many cases, of their lands too, the abolition of the Poll Tax, the introduction of the Market Ordinance which ended the tyranny of the tax-gatherer, the revival of agriculture, the development of irrigation, the opening up of extensive tracts of jungle-land, the foundation of peasant proprietory colonies throughout the Island and the prosperity and well-being that ensued—these and a host of other services were the fruits of his labours in behalf of the poor.

He was of the conviction that all governments exist by divine sanction for the service of the people and to shirk it is but to commit an offence against God. He once told the British ruler who was a little lukewarm and half-hearted in the discharge of his duties and responsibilities by the people, "The Government, as an organised body, exists by the sanction of God to see that effective measures are carried out for the comfort and safety of the people." On another occasion, he cautioned the British rulers, "The rulers of whatever nationality or status or education must bear in mind that they have come into power only for the sake of the people and that the government of the people must be carried on according to the best needs or wishes of the peoples themselves." What an eye-opener it was to a ruler who regarded the people as mere foot-stools of power and were prone to treat them as such.

To cite just one example out of many hundreds, of how readily he would respond to the call of a suffering people, how speedily he would take measures to bring them early relief, and how severely he would castigate the rulers for their failure to take swift action. The inhabitants of the island of Delft had for long years been virtually cut off from

all intercourse with the mainland for want of a satisfactory means of travel and transport. The Member for Kayts within whose purview the subject lay did not worry overmuch about it. When matters were finally brought to the notice of Ramanathan, he took speedy measures to study the question and ascertain the facts. This done, he took the Director of Public Works and the Colonial Secretary to task for being so blind to the needs and sufferings of the people, so utterly indifferent to their own duties and responsibilities.

He said, "When I went to the Northern Province I was asked to visit the islands, and the people there told me that to do a journey of about ten miles of land and twenty miles of sea one had to set apart three or four days. That is impossible in the twentieth century, because all our time is valuable. I thought of a remedy—that a steam-boat or a motor-boat would solve the problem. There are so many teeming thousands in those islands, and the people there cannot go to the mainland or return except in a boat which plies occasionally. They cried to me for some relief. I wanted to go and see for myself, but I could not. I therefore asked the Honourable Member for the Northern Province (Western Division) to do the trip, and he very kindly undertook it. On the way, either his boat got stuck in the mud or would not move because there was no breeze, and the trip eventually took him a great deal of time. He now says he will never venture on that trip again. *Is it right, to allow His Majesty's subjects in this exquisite Island to be so isolated as they are?* I went to the Director of Public Works and asked him for an estimate for this venture. He is very alert, he does not go to sleep. He took down my instructions, and the next day came the estimate. I have not brought it with me, but I believe it was something like Rs. 12,000 or Rs. 15,000. This is all that is necessary to

help the people of those islands who are dying of inanition. My honourable friend the Acting Colonial Secretary, with his usual frankness, stated that he had studied all the requirements which we had mentioned in connection with last year's Budget."

The HON. THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY: We cannot get a contractor.

The HON. SIR PONNAMBALAM RAMANATHAN, KT., K. C., C. M. G. (Northern Province, Northern Division): Walkers would have taken it immediately, or Brown & Co., and the thing would have been an accomplished fact by now. *If this is the way in which public work is going to be carried on on behalf of the very poor people of the country or the peasantry—a very fine peasantry—I say 'Woe to Ceylon'.*

Such, indeed, is the life-story of this man, truly a man of God, but more truly a man of the people, the trusted friend of the under-dog, who made it the mission of his life to do battle against wrong and oppression wheresoever he found them, and make reason, justice and humanity prevail in the government of human society.

A word in conclusion. Ramanathan's socialism was not the centralised, bureaucratic despotism of the Marxian brand which sets up the monolithic and omnipotent State with the Big Brother in supreme command and wielding the Big-Stick, which nationalises the land and confiscates the instruments of production, controls the banks and transport, controls education and imposes compulsory labour on all and sundry. Marxian socialism is based on compulsion and violence, while Ramanathan's socialism, like the Gandhian or the Vinobayan, rests on an appeal to the spirit in man, an appeal for love and fellow-feeling, is founded on voluntary effort and willing consent. Marxian socialism is a denial of human freedom, while with Ramanathan, freedom is the breath

of life. His creed was that he governs best who governs least or that resistance to tyrants is obedience to God, or that government even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one. Marxian socialism repudiates the religious principle, jettisons all spiritual values and fastens itself upon values material and mundane, while Ramanathan's socialism takes its source and derives its inspiration from that inexhaustible and eternal source—religion—and accords a secondary and subordinate place to values material and mundane.

CHAPTER IX

REOPENING OF THE NORTHERN PORTS TO PASSENGER AND GOODS TRAFFIC

> I say that the time has come now for throwing open the ports of the Jaffna District without further delay.....
>
> ..... I cannot understand why the necessary arrangements to facilitate passenger traffic between Ceylon and India have not been more thoughtfully carried out.
>
> —*Ramanathan*

> In the struggle between nationalities, one nation is the hammer and the other is the anvil.
>
> —*Prince Von Bulow*

THE reopening of the Northern ports—Kayts, Kankesanthurai and Point Pedro—to passenger and goods traffic was for long years an obsession with Ramanathan. It was incomprehensible why these ports, which had from remote ages been busy and flourishing centres of human activity, of travel and transport, of much import and export trade, and had continued uninterrupted during the period of both Portuguese and Dutch rule and for a whole century of British rule both for passenger and goods traffic should be closed by the British during the early part of the present century. The reason adduced by the British rulers was that the incidence of plague, small-pox and cholera was frequent in India and that free communication between India and these ports would expose the Island to the risk of infection. Ramanathan contended that the risk of infection was no justification for this peremptory closure of a service of great utility which the people

had enjoyed over the centuries and which had contributed in no small measure to their economic and social well-being and that it could be met by the simple expedient of providing a quarantine service.

The distance between the Northern ports and the nearest Indian ports being about thirty miles, a passenger bound for one of these Indian ports could reach it within an hour or two and at very little cost. Ramanathan enforced the view that it is the prime duty and responsibility of any ruler to expand rather than contract, to increase rather than diminish the existing facilities for foreign travel and transport and moved for the reopening of the Northern ports without further delay.

After the closure of these ports, a passenger bound for India was subjected to unspeakable hardship and the unnecessary expenditure of enormous time and money. From the Northern Peninsula, he was required to travel a whole night by train to Talai Mannar Pier via Madawachchi, take boat to Dhanushkodi and from there make a journey of many hours' duration to get to his destination in South India, which by the use of these Northern ports could be reached in an hour or two and with a tenth of the expenditure. It was sheer perversity and callousness to human suffering characteristic of a foreign ruler to impose such gratuitous and inhuman burdens upon a people who had for centuries untold used these ports without let or hindrance for travel and transport to and from India and the outside world.

It was as one should expect it to be. For foreign rule exists not to serve but to be served; not to help but to hinder; not to promote but to retard; not to lighten existing burdens but to impose fresh ones. No other explanation would seem plausible in the face of such brazen and benighted disregard for the needs of the ruled. But Ramanathan was helpless against a ruler who presented to the world a facade of majority rule,

while ensuring that a majority vote was always provided by members of his own race and persuasion to defeat the most cherished objectives of the ruled.

While with the advance of civilisation and the progress of science and technology, the frontiers that divide man from his fellow-men in other lands are being pulled down one after another and man sees his sole hope of survival in the creation of one world and one people, it is not to be wondered at that a foreign ruler erects new barriers to thwart the free intercourse of peoples, lest they take counsel together to cut asunder the bonds of subjection.

There was another reason why the White ruler was so inflexibly and perversely obdurate in his refusal to listen to the just and reasonable demands of the people. India was during this period of her history, in the throes of a gigantic struggle for national freedom. He had a lively fear that free and unfettered communication with India would infect the Island community not so much with the cholera virus or the small-pox virus as with the political virus.

On July 20, 1914, Ramanathan asked the Legislative Council whether, as provided in the substituted regulation 20, Part I, published in the Government Gazette dated February 21, 1914, the landing of passengers and goods from India, subject to medical examination and disinfection, was still allowed to go on at Kayts; and if not, why not?
The Hon. Mr. F. Bowes (Principal Collector of Customs) read the following reply:—

"As regards Passengers: The practice is that permits are issued to passengers, provided they obtain a health pass issued by the Medical Officer of the Quarantine Camp at Mandapam to embark by Lady boat at Paamban and to land at Jaffna, Kayts, or Kankesanthurai." In other words, a passenger from one of the South Indian ports, bound for one of the Northern ports of the Island,

had to go all the way to Mandapam for a Health Pass and then retrace practically the whole of his journey to reach his destination in one of the Northern ports, or take train at Talai Mannar and get home, satisfied that he had travelled ten times the distance and spent as many times the money and time that a direct journey by sea would involve.

"With regard to Goods: The present practice is that vessels from South India are allowed to work in strict quarantine at the ports mentioned, provided they are ten days out of port. Those vessels which have been less time away from port are required to go to Kayts and there remain until the ten days have elapsed. This custom has been in existence for years and has I believe given rise to no complaint."

Ramanathan proceeded to move the motion standing in his name: "That in view of the hardships suffered by passengers travelling between India and the Peninsula of Jaffna, and by the importers and consumers of food supplies in the Northern Province of the Island, the ports of Point Pedro, Kankesanthurai and Kayts be thrown open to passenger as well as goods traffic, subject to quarantine regulations."

The Government took shelter under the plea it deemed plausible that the opening of the port of Kayts would be of little use, inasmuch as it would serve only the people of Karaitivu numbering some ten thousand. Ramanathan was at great pains to dispel that notion and pressed his point that the port of Kayts served not merely Karaitivu but the whole of the Jaffna Peninsula. He said, "It must not be supposed that this motion is of interest only to those people who are living in Karaitivu, that is, an island next to the Peninsula of Jaffna, because the port called Kayts, which, I believe, is the Portuguese name for harbour or wharf, is really the port serving the whole of the

District of Jaffna. Your Excellency knows that the Northern Province consists of three districts, the Jaffna District, the Mullaitivu District, and the Mannar District.

"The Mannar District is served by the ports of Mannar and Talai Mannar; the Mullaitivu District is served by the port of Mullaitivu; and the Jaffna District is served by Point Pedro, Kankesanthurai, Kayts, and Jaffna. There are four natural ports belonging to this district, and the motion now refers to three of them, because I have had no information as yet that I could lay before my honourable friends as regards the port of Jaffna.

"Now, the population of Karaitivu is under 10,000, but the whole of the Jaffna District has a population of about 300,000. It might be said that the ships that come into the port of Kayts are small and serve a population of only about ten or fifteen thousand people, but that would be a great mistake. It really serves the needs of 300,000 people at least."

He then proceeded to drive home to the rulers the incredible cheapness of the journey and the shortness of the time taken for it. "The distance between any of the Northern ports that I have mentioned and India is not more than about 30 miles. The passengers pay from about 75 cents to Re. 1–50 for their journey up or down, whereas the steamships that ply between some of these ports and India charge about Rs. 2–50. What more easy for a person from India, whether he is a Ceylonese or Indian, than to get into one of these craft and cross the sea between these two places in the course of about from three to five or six hours, and pay no more than 75 cents or Re. 1–50?

"Speaking about passenger traffic only, passengers are obliged to avoid this route owing to quarantine regulations, and they have to work their way from many towns and ports of India,

from Nagapatnam downwards to Madura, and from there they come to Mannar, and thence proceed to Madawachchi, and from Madawachchi they go to Jaffna, paying a lot of money and undergoing unnecessary delays to boot. Or they have to go to Colombo, paying a higher fee for their fare, and from Colombo a much higher fare by the railway to come to Jaffna. Now, Sir, you will see that the hardship suffered by these people, who are entitled to use the native craft plying between the ports that I have mentioned, are very great indeed in point of time, discomfort, and money."

Similar restrictions were placed on vessels bringing goods from India. Every vessel coming from India was required on reaching the port, to stay outside the harbour for eleven days and then only could it enter the harbour and discharge the goods. This was a grave disability on shippers and merchants who imported goods from India and other lands. Asked why all that unnecessary and wanton imposition, the Principal Collector of Customs justified it on the ground that the people had by long usage become accustomed to these impositions and could well continue to put up with them. How lame and impotent the conclusion! How harsh and inhuman this attitude of the foreign ruler! A subject people long accustomed to suffer hardships through inhuman laws and oppressive restrictions might well continue to endure them indefinitely, though the means of ending them were well within easy reach of the ruler! It was not their acceptance of the disability but rather their courtesy to the British officials that made the people endure these hardships and losses. Ramanathan said, "As regards the goods traffic, my honourable friend quite innocently assures the Council that the people of the country are used to the restrictions imposed by the quarantine regulations, and that he has not heard any complaints about this state of things in the past. Sir, I am very sorry for

him. If he has not heard, I should like to know why not, because a little courtesy and kindly investigation on his part would have brought to his side many a man willing to describe the unfortunate state of things prevailing in that part of the country. Of course, if one goes there with a face that threatens, with words that cause the hearer to flee away, if one goes there with the intention of getting only such information as one cares to hear, and with an impression depicted in one's face that anybody who cares to give information from another point of view is not acceptable, then, Sir, the courtesy of my countrymen is so great in this Island and in India that they would never dare to offend the feelings of such a gentleman, especially an official in this country. They say to themselves: 'Why should we, in the name of goodness, come into collision with this official, who does not care to know the truth?'

"The courtesy of the country is at fault, as much as his own frame of mind, if my honourable friend has not got the information that we all know positively as a matter of fact. I appeal to Your Excellency. Nobody fears Your Excellency; everyone loves you and my honourable friend the Colonial Secretary. It is a tiger that ought to be feared. *A man should not be feared, much less a person who has been invested with high authority in this country to work for the public, to rule this country with mercy and with justice.* If Your Excellency will go to Karaitivu and call up the people in a fatherly way and lend your ear to the statements they have to make, you will find that what I have stated, and what I have still to state, is perfectly true. Then Your Excellency would grant them the relief they pray for, the relief which they are entitled to. The hardships they suffer are very great indeed.

"I had the happiness of going to Karaitivu one fine evening quite unexpectedly, without telling

a second soul that I was going there. A crowd of people soon surrounded my motor car. They did not know who I was. I asked them questions about the state of things in the Northern Province, and they told me little by little. I had only a small bit of paper, and all the notes I gathered are written down on it, but that contains enough to show that those who have had the working of the quarantine administration of the country have not realized the correct situation at all. They are so one-sided in their views; they see things as through a chink. They cannot see what other people with an all-round view can see very clearly, people who have not merely a desire to see things as they really are, but who would lovingly do everything in their power in the name of justice and common fairness to those whose sufferings and hardship they see."

He fulminated against an administration that made it compulsory for a cargo boat that took only four to five hours for its entire journey to wait eleven to fifteen days to discharge its cargo, that viewed with complacency and unconcern the damage caused to goods thus transported, the unconscionable waste of time, money and man-power involved, and the consequent increase of the cost of such goods to the consumer. "I was told that when a *tindal*, that is to say, the captain of a small ship, comes to the port of Kayts, he would be stopped at once if he comes from India, and he has to remain on board the ship for eleven days, and he will not be allowed to land. If he carries goods, the goods must also remain there. And who pays for the detention of eleven days? As I told you, the journey between Kayts and the nearest Indian ports is only from three to five hours. Every day a journey could be made, and eleven days' profit has been missed by the *tindal*. And from eleven to fifteen days have been lost in the case of the owners of the goods who have the right

to turn over their profits ten or fifteen times over during these fifteen days. Who has to pay for these losses and for this detention? It is not the *tindal* surely. The *tindal* calculates his freight so as to save himself from all the consequences of this delay. The owner does the same thing. He clears the goods after so many days and takes them to his store-room, and then adds to the cost of the article the demurrage that he has been subjected to. It is the consumer who pays. It is not only the 10,000 people who live in Karaitivu but it is the 300,000 people who live in the Peninsula of Jaffna. People who see things through a chink may say to themselves: 'What is it? Karaitivu is a pretty place. There are only a few vessels coming there. To whom does it matter? It is only five to six thousand people. Why should they not suffer for the sake of the country?' Theoretically, all this is very nice, but the truth is that the people who suffer from this state of things are not the people of Karaitivu only, but the people who are settled in the Peninsula of Jaffna, which has more than 300,000 inhabitants. If the goods came directly from the Indian port to one of these Northern ports, they would have their rice and other grain supplies and their cattle quickly and cheaply. Lots of cattle are imported from South India. Their farms will be attended to. Traffic will be carried on from one town to another, and the profits from these transactions would be in the pockets of the people expeditiously and often, and they would be all the better for it. But the stringency of these regulations denies to them the small profits that they might turn over fifty times in their pocket; it denies to them many another comfort, and persons who are entitled to take two or three meals a day, I assure you, Sir, are obliged under these stringent regulations to take no more than one full meal a day, and that may be in the night."

He proceeded to inveigh against the officials who were responsible for so frightful a state of affiairs. He said, "My honourable friend does not know these things. Your Excellency is new to the country, and it is easy, Sir, for an official of some standing, who is bound to have your confidence, to put some papers before you, take from Your Excellency your authority and place the people under the operation of the rules that we complain of. Your Excellency will see that in consequence of these grinding rules, the consumers have their goods brought up from Colombo to Jaffna by train. Many a profit has to be taken in the course of this transaction by several hands which deal with the goods, and all these intermediate profits are added on, and the consumers in the Jaffna District have to pay for them."

In seething indignation he asked why such dreadful disabilities should be permitted to prevail, when it was the oft-expressed policy of the British raj, as it should also be the honest endeavour of any civilised government, to do everything in its power to lighten the people's burdens and render life more endurable than it was. He arraigned the whole host of errant officials who fed themselves fat on the earnings of a toil-worn populace but were utterly oblivious of their own duties and responsibilities. He said, "Now why should this be so? Should not we follow the glorious examples set by His Majesty King George himself, who during his visit to India has made known to us that it is his wish that the Government of his country should be carried on with love and sympathy? Ought not we to follow his example and make it easy for the people of the country to barely live? They have no luxuries worth speaking of. It is all a dire, necessitous life. Amidst this necessitous living comes, one on top of the other, a series of unnecessary and unjust burdens which they cannot bear.

"I had a book sent to me by one of my booksellers in England only two or three days ago. I opened the book quite accidentally— I have no time to read these books. It is by Mr. Rees, a Member of Parliament, who has been in India for a long time. He says, 'The stringency of the plague regulations and the quarantine regulations are part of the cause of the unrest that prevails in India.' Sir, that is a lesson we ought to bear in mind. *We must not harass the people. They are the tax-payers, and it is by means of them that the Government of the country is being carried on. Every month's pay that an official draws comes out of the tax-payer's pockets. He really is the paying master of the country, and over him stands the great and glorious master, the King of England. Yet some officials forget these obvious truths, and the fact that the people are poor and unable to help themselves. Even if they want to help themselves, they cannot voice their sentiments. These officials think, 'We are the lords of creation; we can do whatever we like. We can put the screw on and take the screw off just as we like'.*"

He proceeded to trace the chequered history of these ports since the dawn of the present century, how they were opened at one time on the orders of one Governor and then closed on the orders of another, how bureaucratic indifference and irresponsibility contributed to the changing fortunes of these ports, how easy it was to reopen them and by so doing, restore to the people a service they had enjoyed from time immemorial and which had done them immeasurable good. It had promoted the prosperity and well-being of the North, stimulated trade and the ship-building industry in which the Northerners were reputedly proficient. He could not comprehend why the Government should be so purblind to the people's interest; when no such restrictions were imposed upon the Southern ports like Galle where passengers were allowed to be landed, why such burdensome and oppressive

restrictions should be imposed upon the Northern ports.

He went on to add with all the emphasis he could command, "*I say that the time has come now for throwing open the ports of the Jaffna District without further delay.* My attention has been called to a regulation published in the Government Gazette of February 21, 1914, that goods from India are allowed to be landed at Kankesanturai; goods and passengers from India are allowed to be landed at Kayts; and passengers from India to be landed at Talai Mannar only by mail steamers. This was published on February 21, and the regulation came into force, but the very next month, though the regulation has not been cancelled by Your Excellency, the original state of things has continued. *Did Your Excellency authorize it? Did Your Excellency publish a Proclamation to the effect that this regulation No. 20, Part I, has been revoked? Who is the man that has played fast and loose with the regulation? My honourable friend has not ventured to explain how this regulation came to be withdrawn from the public without a further regulation.*

"Now, I went to the place and made inquiries there, and I find that in Kayts people from India could not be landed there, but they must come down all the way to Talai Mannar or to Colombo, and at Talai Mannar only goods from India are allowed to be landed there. *Considering that such regulations do not exist in Galle, for instance, and that passengers are allowed to be landed there, why should the people of the Northern Province, who are much poorer than the people of the Southern Province, be made to undergo these hardships?* I hope Your Excellency will now be in a better position to understand the state of things in that part of the country.

"I am told that when His Excellency Governor Blake was at the head of the administration, he allowed that port to be opened, and there

was a disinfecting machine costing about Rs. 8,000 brought to Kayts. But he turned his back and His Excellency Governor McCallum came in. Being new to the country, and there being another Collector of Customs, the order of His Excellency Governor Blake was rescinded, and the port was put under an embargo again. My honourable friend says that this state of things has remained for several years—I think for fourteen years. It was closed I think in 1900, opened in 1906 by Governor Blake, and then closed in 1907, I think, by Governor McCallum, under the advice of the then Collector of Customs. It was then opened by Your Excellency in February, 1914, and shut up again in March, 1914, without Your Excellency's sanction. Now, Sir, this is an unfortunate state of things. It remains for Your Excellency to inquire more fully into this matter and grant the relief which the people of the country most earnestly pray for at your hands."

Concluding his speech he moved "that in view of the hardships suffered by passengers travelling between India and the Peninsula of Jaffna, and by the importers and consumers of food supplies in the Northern Province of the Island, the Ports of Point Pedro, Kankesanturai, and Jaffna be thrown open to passenger as well as goods traffic, subject to quarantine regulations."

Speaking on the claims of Point Pedro, he said, "As regards Point Pedro, I understand that this is a port which is workable at all seasons of the year. Your Excellency may know it was a famous port at one time dealing with cotton. The native name of the port is *Parithithurai*, that is to say, the port for cotton goods brought from India. That is a port which is usable at all seasons of the year, and one other circumstance is this, that the ships used in that part of the country are all built by the people of the country. They are very clever ship-builders, and great numbers of them are ship-owners. It is at their request and at the request of a vast number

of consumers of grain in the Peninsula that I have ventured to trouble Your Excellency and my honourable friends on this occasion."

The Principal Collector of Customs, the Hon. Mr. F. Bowes who listened to these strictures, was eager to exonerate himself from the charge of bureaucratic ineptitude and evasion preferred by Ramanathan. He said that the Plague Committee was mainly responsible for those oppressive restrictions, that the Committee in Ceylon was in correspondence with the Government of India and that everything possible would be done before long to remove those restrictions and free the people from the many disabilities and losses to which they were being subjected. He further pleaded for the deferment of the consideration of this question until they had heard from the Government of India. He said, "I desire first to assure Your Excellency and the Members of this Council that the official whom the Honourable Member describes as a tiger looking through a chink is not myself, but my genial predecessor, the Hon. Mr. Jackson, whose rules are being followed to this day. I would wish to assure Honourable Members that the Plague Committee has in no way failed to take cognizance of the difficulties to which the inhabitants of the Jaffna Peninsula and India wishing to cross over to that Peninsula are exposed owing to quarantine regulations. The question is, however, not entirely a simple one. Jaffna is a teeming city, which has been exposed to grave epidemics of cholera, and, though healthy, cannot be said to be perfectly sanitary. It is for that reason that the Plague Committee are loath to act in a hurry in this matter. With regard to cattle traffic which the Honourable Member mentioned, there is, similarly, the danger of rinderpest. With regard to the regulation which has puzzled the Honourable Member, I may state that it was passed early this year, and was framed with the view of recognizing the

practice which has been in vogue of allowing a certain number of passengers to land at Kayts. Previous to that regulation, the landing at Kayts was absolutely prohibited, but had been allowed nevertheless. In order to regularize the procedure, by which occasionally passengers are allowed to land, the regulation was altered. On the main question, Sir, I would ask the Council to defer consideration. The matter, as I have said, is under the careful consideration of the Plague Committee at the present moment. It is the subject of discussion with the Indian Government, and I think, as I said in reply to the question, it would be premature at present to make any definite statement as to what the policy of Government is likely to be."

On 18th December, 1914, Ramanathan again returned to the question and moved for all papers connected with the opening of the Northern ports to be tabled. The Principal Collector of Customs had assured him on the last occasion on which the subject was considered in the Legislative Council that the Government was in correspondence with the Government of Madras. Perturbed to learn from the proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council that it was not so, he moved for an explanation from the Principal Collector of Customs for making a statement the accuracy of which was challenged by the Government of India.

He said, "About six months ago, Sir, on July 20 last, I called the attention of the Council to the serious hardships caused by the manner in which the quarantine regulations were being enforced in the Island, and to the necessity of throwing open the ports of the Northern Province to passenger and goods traffic subject to medical examination and disinfection. The Principal Collector of Customs then begged the Council to defer consideration of the subject because the matter, he said, was then being carefully considered by the Plague Committee and formed the subject of discussion

with the Indian Government. He said that in the circumstances it was premature to make any pronouncement as to future arrangements, and thereupon, Sir, I thought it proper to withdraw my motion.

"Last month I found that a series of questions were asked in the Legislative Council of Madras regarding the hardships caused to the Indian people going to Ceylon and trading with it, by the enforcement of our quarantine regulations, and the Honourable Member who mooted the subject asked the Indian Government whether the Ceylon Government had had any correspondence with the Madras Government on the subject, as stated by the Hon. Mr. Bowes on July 20 last. The Madras Government denied that any correspondence had passed as alleged by Mr. Bowes, and added that it had called for reports from the District Magistrates of Ramnad and Tinnelvelly as to the grievances of the Indian people going to Ceylon or trading with it.

"*This Council, Sir, is entitled to have an explanation from the Principal Collector of Customs as regards his statement in this Council, the accuracy of which has been denied by the Madras Government.* I move that the papers connected with the subject of quarantine regulations enforced at Mandapam and the Northern ports of Ceylon, about which the Principal Collector of Customs, as the Chairman of the Plague Committee, said in Council on July 20 last, discussion was going on between himslf and the Indian Government, be laid on the table."

The Principal Collector of Customs said in reply that it was possible under the new arrangements for goods to be shipped direct to the Northern ports, while passenger traffic would have to pass through the quarantine at Paampan. It was a partial victory for Ramanathan, inasmuch as he had secured the shipment of goods from India direct to the Northern ports. But he was far from satisfied, for what he sought to achieve was the

reopening of all the Northern ports to both goods and passenger traffic.

Pursuing the matter further, he said, "Well then, it works out in this way; in the case of a man who comes, say, from one of the Indian ports in a ship. Instead of going direct to Jaffna, Kayts, Kankesanturai, or Point Pedro, a distance of from 30 to 50 miles, he is obliged to go in the ship a much longer distance to Paamban, and then travel by the Indian Railway to Mandapam, and stay there for examination and enforcement of the other requisitions of the quarantine regulations. He has then to find his way back to Paamban by train, and either catch the fortnightly steamer there for Jaffna, if there is one available, or embark the steam launch that leaves Paamban for Talai Mannar and travel all the way from Talai Mannar to Madawachchi and from Madawachchi to Jaffna.

"Now, Sir, that is a hardship which I think can be obviated, and I have not heard any reason stated for not obviating it. What is the difficulty? Why do not the authorities feel for those who suffer these hardships? I cannot understand why the necessary arrangements to facilitate passenger traffic between Ceylon and India have not been more thoughtfully carried out."

It was a moment of extreme bitterness for Ramanathan. He had made a bid for both passenger traffic and goods traffic. He gained the one while he lost the other, which, with him, was fundamental. He yet expressed the hope that before long even that disability would be removed. He concluded with, "Now, it is clear that on both sides of the Straits, there is a great deal of heart-burning about the operation of these rules. Just as my honourable friend has been able to put through goods traffic from India to the Northern ports of Ceylon, I hoped that there would soon be a large measure of relief in regard to the passenger traffic. I am sorry that at least some relief has not been granted, especially

to the people of Ceylon seeking to return to their own country, but I trust that, after this discussion and after the way in which the Madras Government have taken the matter up, my honourable friend will give us the unbounded happiness of seeing the rigours of the quarantine regulations mitigated as regards passenger traffic between India and Ceylon. I once more thank you, Sir, for giving relief in respect of the goods traffic between India and Ceylon."

He had won half the battle. Goods traffic was permitted to be landed without restriction. With regard to passenger traffic, a proposal was made by the Plague Committee to set up a quarantine station in the North, but the War intervened and the question was shelved, never to be resumed. The Report of the Plague Committee for 1914 is explicit: "Proposals for the establishment of a quarantine station for the use of the inhabitants of the Jaffna Peninsula returning from visits to India were considered during the year, but the outbreak of the War caused the consideration of the matter to be postponed."

It is sad to reflect how hard and bitter was the struggle the great leader had to wage at every turn of his life against a foreign despot who was wilfully blind to the needs and wants of the people over whom he held sway, who habitually turned a deaf ear to the passionate protests and entreaties of their accredited leaders, and who, moreover, was armed with a 'brute majority-vote' of his own creation to have his own way with the government of subject peoples.

These ports had been in much use from remote ages and served a distinct and crying national need. The Northerners in general and the people living in and around these ports owed much of their prosperity and well-being to them. Through them a brisk and flourishing trade was carried on with foreign lands. Why did he close them down? Did he

pause to reflect for a moment on the serious impact their closure would have on the lives and fortunes of a whole people who had used them freely over the centuries, earned their living by them and prospered for generations untold? It need cause no surprise or alarm in any, for such, alas, is the way with a foreign ruler. He builds his citadels on the ruins of the ruled. A weak and defenceless people is the seed-bed of the foreign despot. He cramps their economy, cramps their freedom, cramps everything with no qualms of conscience.

All that was done in the name of infection! As if infection was new to the world and was non-existent during the long ages during which these ports served a great national purpose; as if the risk of infection was beyond the ingenuity of medical science to avert. "The care of human life and happiness and not their destruction is the first and only legitimate object of government," declared Thomas Jefferson, the American President. If our great patriot and statesman were to rise up from his *Samadhi* and re-visit the land he loved and served so well, how grieved he would be to find the problem remain as fresh as ever in Free Lanka too!

We append below a letter which appeared in the contemporary press, wherein a Northerner laments the closure of the port of Point Pedro: "Before the introduction and enforcement of the quarantine regulations for plague and closing of the route to Point Pedro from Indian ports, the entire monopoly of the trade of the place was in the hands of the sons of the soil, and they consisted of wealthy merchants, traders, ship-owners, ship-builders, masters and crews of sailing vessels, boatmen, coolies and other workmen as were required for the trade of the place. They occupied the town proper, and had been the sole proprietory owners of all the go-downs, shops, lands and houses, for generations. Besides, records would prove that

they were the owners of many big sailing barques, brigs and schooners and carried on extensive trade with India, Burma and other countries in the East, and their vessels had been engaged in bringing to our country paddy, rice and other grains, timber, clothes, earthenware and other produce of these places and sailing back with Ceylon produce to these shores. There was a time when these merchants of Point Pedro had been sending their sailing vessels to the coasts of Achai, Straits Settlements, Malacca and the Malay States in the East, besides their regular sailings to Akyab, Moulmin, Nicobar and other places carrying salt, coconut and other produce from Ceylon and exchanging them for the produce of these places; and it is said that the first batch of Jaffna Tamils who found their way to the Straits and the Malay States were conveyed by those sailing vessels of the place.

"Before the introduction of the quarantine regulations, many of their small schooners had been daily engaged in going to and returning from all the ports of South India with passengers, traders and goods. The facility for going and returning from India was then such that a trader of Point Pedro with a capital of ten rupees could earn a livelihood, while men with big capitals could earn big fortunes. Each man in the place was then doing amply well in his occupation. India was then nearer to them than even Jaffna Town. Their food, clothing and all requisites of life such as even flowers and the like for their daily temple worship were within easier, earlier and cheaper reach to them from India than from Jaffna Town..... The majority of the merchants with their sailing vessels, who depended entirely on their trade, have sold their ships and schooners to Indian merchants. The majority of them have turned homeless and poor, and many have emigrated to other lands, leaving their motherland, leaving their homes—once places of happiness and luxury,

but now desolate—and their elders, their many places of worship and other charitable institutions unprotected, with hardly any to represent and relate the sad story of the fall and dispersion of this once very strong section of the Tamil trading community of Point Pedro."

All this havoc a foreign ruler would do almost over-night, and with one stroke of the pen, undo the whole life and happiness of a great and flourishing community.

CHAPTER X

RIOTS—1915

The day that you are taken away from Ceylon, from that day there will be none to defend the poor, neglected Sinhalese. They are a doomed people, with none to guide and protect them. Unhappy Singhalese!

—Anagarika Dharmapala

Later on he took up politics again as a means of rendering greater service to his country. The greatest of those great services was that which he rendered to the Sinhalese during the time of their tribulation in 1915.

—Dr. C. W. W. Kannangara

In the dire hour of need, the valiant son of the North came readily and generously to help them (Sinhalese). They claimed him as their saviour. Jaffna and Ceylon should be proud of her greatest son.

—Batuwantudawe

We have no reason whatever for believing that the Sinhalese people have been tainted with disaffection against their Government or their King or are really bent upon encompassing evil for the country.

—Ramanathan

I say most unhesitatingly that a great and grievous injustice has been done to the Sinhalese ..... I assure Your Excellency with all the emphasis that I am capable of, that you can rely upon the Sinhalese people. Whatever other people may say, you can rely upon their loyalty and be certain that there will be no disturbance of the peace hereafter. I, who feel all this, am bound in duty to you and in justice to the Sinhalese to say that no special measures are necessary in future, that the time is now come for the withdrawal of Martial Law and for the cessation of the operation of military courts in the Island, and for entrusting offenders or

alleged offenders to the ordinary courts of justice, to be dealt with by the normal law of the country.

—*Ramanathan*

Private friendship, Sir, has nothing to do with public duty. That is my creed, and this is a most uncomfortable day for me. I have been called upon to do a duty that is most unpleasant, but which I must do at any cost, because the just cries of the people are dear unto God and to the British throne and to you, Sir.

—*Ramanathan*

When I saw error on the rampant and defamation on the lips of men who, I thought, had better sense than that, it became my duty to go about here, there and everywhere and remove the false impression. It has taken me a good many days to bring about a change of opinion and make the Officials and the Unofficials think kindly of the loyal Sinhalese, our brethren and fellow subjects in the British Empire.

—*Ramanathan*

THE riots of 1915, and the atrocious crimes committed by the British rulers in the name of law and order and Ramanathan's heroic defence of the unhappy victims constitute some of the blackest pages in the annals of British Colonial rule, as they do some of the brightest and most luminous in the records of Ramanathan's life. Crises prove the man; the riots gave him one of the grandest opportunities of serving our Sinhalese brethren in their hour of travail and revealing his true stature as statesman and leader. All the patriotism, all that passionate hatred of cruelty or oppression, all that love of liberty and light that ever glowed in him with an intense fire now burst forth into flame and blaze at the high-handed tyranny, the naked brutality that he saw stalking the land. In relentlessly and resolutely espousing the cause of a defenceless and forlorn subject people in the hideous grip of an alien despot, he had to wage a long and bitter conflict against the whole host of British imperialists, armed to

the teeth, impervious to truth, reason and justice and determined to work their wanton will on their helpless victims. Any leader of inferior mettle, of less heroic mould would have recoiled from a contest so formidable and so hazardous. The Sinhalese found in Ramanathan a champion at once intrepid, indomitable, incredibly resourceful, and his ultimate triumph ranks among the glorious achievements of gallant and daring leadership.

The British rulers believed in their heart of hearts that the Riots, far from being stray acts of racial or religious intolerance, were an organised attempt on the part of the Sinhalese to subvert British institutions and overthrow British rule at a time when Britain was locked in mortal combat with the greatest military power in Europe and making a desperate bid for survival in the greatest war in human annals. The rumour had gained currency that Sinhalese leaders had entered into an unholy alliance with German saboteurs and secret agents to strike at the fetters of British rule and regain their national sovereignty; that the *nouveau riche* among the Sinhalese, who had risen to wealth and influence in the wake of higher prices for rubber, plumbago and copra had disguised themselves as temperance workers and social reformers and were actively causing discontent and disaffection among the people and aiming at armed rebellion. The Britisher swallowed the bait readily, as do all who hold unlawful possession of what is another's. His animosity and rancour were directed against this class. His main endeavour was either to exterminate this class or level it down. No wonder, he instituted a reign of terror and unleashed the forces of violence and naked despotism, when no man knew when it would be his last. Unspeakable were the savageries, the hideous brutalities perpetrated by the misguided and power-drunk imperialists and indescribable

were the sufferings of a people reduced to the extremity of helplessness and despair.

To digress a little, I have heard it said in certain quarters that Ramanathan took sides on this ugly issue, that he was partial to the Sinhalese as against the Muslims. Nothing is farther from the truth and no greater wrong can be done to his memory. He was above all things a man of God, who viewed all humanity alike, who saw life's fulfilment in the unstinted service of His creation and held himself answerable to no man but his Maker. Such men are never known to take sides. In all his long and illustrious career ranging over half-a-century and more, it is impossible to discover one instance in which he sinned against the light, said or did anything contrary to the dictates of his conscience or in defiance of the laws of truth, reason and justice. His loyalty to them transcended all other loyalties and he followed them whithersoever they led him, regardless of consequence to himself or his children; regardless of the fears and apprehensions of his friends and the obloquy and ridicule of his opponents

In the whole controversy, he had absolutely nothing against our Muslim brethren. It is on record that he condemned in no uncertain terms the losses inflicted on the Muslims by Sinhalese looters and racialist rabble-rousers. What he denounced, what he waged relentless war against, was the inhuman crimes practised indiscriminately on all classes of the Sinhalese, on the guilty and the innocent alike, the arbitrary and outrageous measures enacted to punish the alleged offenders, the illegal and tyrannous exactions made on the poor Sinhalese peasantry who had little or no share in the Riots, by a foreign ruler who let loose the wildest passions and all the might of an armed soldiery on a helpless and defenceless subject people. In an age riven with racial, religious and class animosities and hatreds, when no man

knows if his neighbour be friend or foe, it was the peculiar glory of Ramanathan's leadership that it never succumbed to such base impulses but rose superior to them all and viewed all races of mankind alike, viewed all questions from the larger standpoint of national interest and the laws of reason, justice humanity and kindly-dealing in the government of the State.

To resume, the Government proclaimed Martial Law, handed over the maintenance of law and order and the defence of life and property to the Officer-Commanding the Troops, Brigadier-General H. H. L. Malcolm, G. B., D. S. O. and authorised him to adopt whatever measures he deemed necessary to suppress the riots. Sinhalese leaders were arrested *en masse* and kept in custody for long periods awaiting sentence by Court Martial for sedition. Innocent men and women, young and old were shot at sight on the flimsiest complaints or on mere suspicion. A Punjabi regiment predominantly Muslim, was brought down from India ostensibly for the purpose of quelling the riots but in reality to terrorise the whole people into abject and servile submission. It became a law unto itself and let loose upon all classes of the Sinhalese, their wildest passions and the worst forms of terrorism and oppression. Despair and trepidation were universal. All freedom of speech was suppressed; not even the accredited leaders could raise their voice in protest against this high-handed tyranny. The country was in the grip of a reign of terror. The bureaucracy would not give heed to the cries and lamentations of the people. The ordinary processes of law and justice were brushed aside. Naked, high-handed tyranny became the order of the day. The properties of the Sinhalese leaders and of the poor villagers too were either confiscated or subjected to heavy exactions on the pretext of compensating the Muslims. Commissioners appointed to levy these

exactions went from village to village, followed by armed soldiery and forced the villagers to produce their title deeds and sign mortgage bonds for heavy sums of money in favour of His Majesty the King, securing the payment in four quarterly instalments of the fine imposed on them.

Conditions were so appalling that a London newspaper was constrained to report: "In these days, when our own lives and liberties are daily in danger from the Prussians, it is perhaps natural we do not take interest in the lives and liberties of our people whom we govern. The recent Blue Book records that under Martial Law in Ceylon, 9000 people were tried, 5000 convicted to penal servitude etc. and 83 sentenced to death. Several hundreds have been shot dead by the Police and the Military without any semblance of a trial."

Sir John Anderson who succeeded Sir Robert Chalmers, in his report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies stated, "The measures taken during Martial Law reminds me of the Lynch-Law. It is almost incredible that anyone, unless one who had been schooled by the Germans in Belgium, could have honestly acted like this." In another place, he declared "There was not the slightest stain on the loyalty of the people and some of the repressive acts were Hunnish in their violence and injustice and deserve the loathing and disgust of every decent Englishman."

The Riots sprang from the religious fanaticism of a small section of the Muslims known as the Hambayas, who insisted that all non-Muslim religious processions should proceed in silence when they passed their mosques. The Hambayas were Mohammedan immigrants from the East Coast of South India and then numbered nearly thirty three thousand. They formed an exclusive community and did not at that time intermarry with other Mohammedans in the Island.

The time for the celebration of the great Buddhist festival—the anniversary of the birthday of Buddha—fell on the 28th of May, 1915. With much trepidation of heart, those who had hitherto conducted the carol procession in Kandy applied to the Government Agent, Central Province, for the usual licence, but the Hambayas of Kandy, who owned the mosque at Castle Hill Street, objected to its issue. The elected members of the Municipal Council unanimously recommended the issue of the licence. The Government Agent, having ascertained from the trustees of the Castle Hill Street mosque that the hour for closing it on Friday, the 28th May, was twelve midnight, issued the licence subject to the condition that the procession should not enter Castle Hill Street before midnight.

He, however, neglected to take the precaution, suggested by the District Judge of Kandy in the Walahagoda Devale case, of having the aggressive Hambayas bound over to keep the peace. He also failed, as the head of the police in the Central Province, to have a sufficient number of properly armed police officers and constables in the streets of Kandy, so as to prevent any sudden outbreak of riot.

It was about 1 a. m., when the first carol procession with a band of musicians in a decorated cart turned from King Street into Castle Hill Street. The Sinhalese crowd were amazed to see the Hambayas' mosque open and lit up, and a crowd of Mohammedans, including Afghans, standing on either side of the street. Inspector Coorav, observing from the junction of King Street the defiant attitude of the Mohammedans, desired the carol party not to go forward, but to pass into a cross street so as to avoid the mosque altogether. The conductors of the procession obediently turned the carol cart into the street indicated. Just then the Hambayas and the Afghans clapped hands,

jeered and boohed, which was more than the Sinhalese could bear. They halted indecisively, looking towards the mosque, when a still larger crowd, headed by another party of carol-singers in a second cart, came and entered Castle Hill Street. The first party then followed the second party.

As they advanced, a number of stones and empty bottles fell on the people, hurled from the upper storeys of two boutiques near the mosque and from the platform of the mosque. The Sinhalese crowd were infuriated. They rushed forward, picked up the stones lying on the street, pelted them at the boutiques and the mosque, chased the Mohammedans, who fled into the mosque, pulled down its iron bars and smashed its glass panes, broke into the adjoining boutiques and flung into the streets the boxes of grain and groceries.

During all this disturbance, there were no more than one Inspector and six constables, who, of course, could not control the crowd. Mr. Cooray sent for help from the Police Station, and a squad of police who arrived seized about twenty-five men on charges of riot and house-breaking.

The surging crowd passed into other streets about 2 p. m. and dissappeared with their battered cars. Thus ended the national Wesak festival of the Buddhists in 1915, undertaken in all piety and reverence to celebrate the birthday of the great peace-maker, named Goutama Buddha.

On Saturday morning (29th May), Kandyan villagers streamed into the town of Kandy from the neighbouring hamlets for worship at Dalada Maligawa, and hung about the streets, having heard from the Hambayas themselves that they were expecting a band of fighters from Colombo to attack and wreck their holy temple. On being asked by some of the leading men of the town, they said, "We hear the Maligawa is in danger. What is the good of our living, if it is going to be wrecked?"

But though the streets were thronged with a mixed population of Kandyans and Low-country people, no disturbance of any kind occurred during the day on Saturday, 29th May.

At nightfall the people collected opposite the shop of one of the principal Hambaya traders of Kandy, and seemed interested in what was going on within. One of the inmates, intending perhaps to disperse the crowd, fired a revolver at about 8 p. m. from the upper storey and killed a Sinhalese youth of about eighteen years, who was only a sight-seer, being a servant at the Hillwood College, Kandy, for girls. The few constables who were standing about did not arrest the murderer.

The crowd cried out, "There is the man upstairs who killed the boy. Why don't the police seize him?" The gross indifference of the police astonished the Sinhalese. The police seemed to connive with the Mohammedans. Some of the more indignant Sinhalese entered the shop and threw out the goods into the street, which the people set fire to and burnt in the middle of the street. The inmates fled and the police made themselves scarce.

On Sunday morning (30th May) the Sinhalese grew more alarmed about the safety of the holy Dalada Maligawa, and gathered again in the streets in larger numbers. The leading men of the town, Sinhalese (Buddhists and Christians), Burghers, and Tamils, and even Mohammedans, who did not know of the arrival of the Punjabis at 3 a. m., began to get anxious about the safety of the city, owing to the helplessness of the police, and the ignorance of the exact situation and the palpable indecision of the local authorities.

Certain of the leading inhabitants of the town called on the Government Agent (Mr. Vaughan) at 8 a. m., but were told he was in bed. They went about the town collecting as much information

as possible, so as to devise some measures for the abatement of the ferment that prevailed throughout the town. They found there was a universal desire on the part of the people to meet the Government Agent, and to place before him their fears and grievances, and obtain from him an assurance that they would be inquired into. A deputation was formed to interview the Government Agent. It met him at the Residency at noon. In the course of the conference it was submitted to the Government Agent that the indifference and inefficiency of the police left the city in a most unprotected state; that the murderer of the Sinhalese was still at large, though he could have been arrested then and there; that the looters were gaining a preponderance in the town; that the good people of all classes, including Mohammedans, were anxious that the trouble between the Buddhists and the Mohammedans should be amicably settled; and that no settlement of any kind could be brought about except in the presence of the Government Agent as the accredited authority of the Government of Ceylon. They told him that the principal Mohammedans would not attend any meeting in which the Government Agent was not present. They therefore begged him to meet the crowd near the Town Hall, or the principal men to be selected by the crowd, in the Town Hall itself, and they said that, if at this conference he promised to inquire into the case of the people and find a remedy in due course, the whole crowd would quietly disperse. They invited him to address the crowd and give an assurance of inquiry and redress.

The Government Agent, however, declined to meet the crowd in the streets, or the men whom they named, in the Town Hall. He proposed to give the deputation a letter to his Mudaliyar, Mr. H. P. Jayawardene, to go and speak to the people. On the deputation pointing out the utter

uselessness of anybody but the Government Agent himself addressing the people, he directed the gentlemen present to see the Inspector-General of Police at the Police Station, and said he would himself be there. He did not inform them that that Officer had arrived in Kandy before dawn with Punjabi soldiers, and the people need not fear for the safety of the city. He was evidently afraid of meeting the crowd, or hesitating to assume any responsibility.

The deputation then went to the Inspector-General of Police and waited long for the Government Agent to arrive, feeling that most valuable time was being lost at the Police Station, when everybody ought to have gone among the crowd and to be doing their best to disperse it.

The crowd grew more and more impatient at the indifference and inefficiency of the police and the neglect of the Government Agent to respond to their call for a conference with them or with their nominated leaders, and presently someone kicked at the door of a Mohammedan tailor, when the door opened, and out came an elderly Mohammedan with a club in his hand. He got into the street and whirled the club fiercely among the crowd, when he was struck down. His two nephews rushed in defence of their uncle and stabbed three Sinhalese men, one of them being an innocent passer-by viz., Mr. Dissanayake, a clerk at the Government Kachcheri. One of the Sinhalese men who was stabbed expired while being conveyed to the hospital. It may be mentioned here that the two Mohammedans who wounded the three Sinhalese were afterwards tried by Court Martial and sentenced to penal servitude.

At the time this collision took place, the Cadet Corps of Trinity College, who were part of the Cadet Battalion of the Ceylon Light Infantry, were returning from the Police Station together with their Principal (the Rev. Mr. Fraser) and other

teachers, after being sworn in as special constables. While at the station, they saw some of the members of the deputation speaking to the Inspector-General of Police. Though the Cadet Corps wore civil suits and were unarmed, they went into the crowd and helped in the arrest of the Mohammedans who had stabbed the three Sinhalese men and run back into their house. At the sight of the Cadet Corps, which numbered about sixty, the crowd fell back and retired towards the Town Hall.

The Inspector-General of Police (Mr. Dowbiggin) and the Government Agent (Mr. Vaughan) came on the scene in their motor-car, and alighted on the pavement of Trincomalee Street. The Inspector-General and the Government Agent seemed disconcerted at the crowd not dispersing on their arrival. The crowd, on the other hand, expected to hear them speak and allay their fears and grievances. When they saw the Government Agent get amongst the Cadet Corps and enter into conversation with Mr. Fraser, and the Inspector-General jump into the car and drive away, they thought the latter was beating a hasty retreat, and the Government Agent had not the courage to address them. But Mr. Dowbiggin returned on foot with about fifty Punjabi soldiers and some constables, and asked them to disperse the crowd. The Punjabis went up to the crowd and pushed them back with the butt end of their rifles, without firing a single shot, and they all went away in different directions. Thus ended the much-talked-of-riot in Kandy Town. The Government Agent and the Inspector-General of Police set the Cadet Corps on patrol duty from 6 p. m. to 2 a. m. from that night for several nights, and the Punjabis were picketed at different centres.

To pause here for a moment to outline the true dimensions of the disturbances in Kandy Town, the first riot occurred between 1 and 2 on the morning of the 29th May, 1915, in consequence

of the intolerance and aggression of the Hambayas and Afghan Mohammedans assembled in and about the mosque in Castle Hill Street. No lives were lost, nor any serious bodily injury inflicted. Some boutiques were damaged and their contents turned out, which were mostly made a bonfire of in the streets, and the glass shutters of the mosque and and some iron bars were also damaged.

The second riot took place between 8 and 10 p. m. on the same day (29th May) provoked directly by the failure of the police to arrest the murderer of an innocent Sinhalese youth, whom a Hambaya brought down with a bullet from a revolver fired from the upper storey of his master's shop. No other persons were killed. Some shops and boutiques were damaged, and their contents thrown into the streets to be burnt.

The third disturbance occurred between 3 and 4 p. m. on the following day (30th May). It was not a riot, but a street fight between three Mohammedans and a few Sinhalese.

These events, standing out linked together in the minds of the Buddhists, have operated as causes for the attack on the Mohammedans in various parts of the Island during the one week that began on the 29th May and ended on the 5th June, 1915.

Comparatively speaking, the riots in the town of Kandy were not very serious. But the example set there proved most infectious elsewhere, especially as the Police, the preservers of the public peace, were generally believed to be conniving at the disturbances. In this state of passion and panic on the part of the Sinhalese and the irresolution and inactivity on the part of the local authority, the sordid elements in every village spread false reports of the destruction of the Dalada Maligawa, of the rape and mutilation of Sinhalese women and of the desire of the British Government not to arrest or punish the opponents of the Muslims,

as it was at war with Turkey. These rumours spread through all the villages with lightning rapidity.

All that happened in Kandy was known in Colombo and the outlying villages. On the morning of 30th May, the rowdies gave full scope to their spirit of mischief and their desire for loot. The looters had seen enough of the indecision and impotence of the police to embolden them in their work of plunder, especially in places where constables were not to be seen. Their example proved infectious and the looting spread out rapidly to five provinces. Its worst manifestations were in Colombo where gangs of thugs and hooligans gave free rein to their propensity to lawlessness and love of loot. The looting spread to different parts of Colombo. Shops and stores were closed, trams ceased to run, the streets were considerably thinned of traffic. Provisions were difficult to buy. The people stood looking at each other in dismay.

The idea entertained by the Government that the riots were a revolt against British rule was absolutely baseless. The real cause was the intolerant and aggressive conduct of the Hambaya Mohammedans towards the Buddhists, which enabled the criminal classes to creep in for purposes of loot and intensify the seriousness of the situation. The passivity and supineness of the police and the neglect of Magistrates and other public officers to disperse the crowd in proper time operated as two additional and powerful causes for the spread of the riots.

The Government proclaimed Martial Law, handed over the maintenance of law and order and the defence of life and property to the Officer-Commanding the troops, and authorised him to issue orders to make a house-to-house search for the seizure of dangerous weapons, to shoot down dead any persons reported as instigators of riot or as assaulting each other, or any persons found in

the streets between 6 p. m. and 6 a. m., to compel the closing of the shops and places of business at 4 p. m., to prevent the use of musical instruments in places of worship and on festive occasions and to flog way-farers if they did not walk on the pavement. Large numbers of law-abiding citizens, many of whom were public officers and clerks in mercantile offices, were seized and flogged mercilessly first by the station officer, then by a constable as each passed out of the station in dread of being taken before the Court Martial. The Punjabi soldiers and Volunteers flitted about the country in every direction day and night in private cars which they had commandeered on pain of imprisoning the owners in case they refused to let them take away their cars in pursuance of the General's order to scour the whole locality thoroughly. Each military unit, sent out, could exercise its discretion as to the place that required to be scoured. He was free to enter any house or hut and remain for any length of time, ordering the men and women in it to stay in or stand out, or provide him with food or bed or to seize an inmate and carry him off to Colombo on a charge trumped up by a Mohammedan. It was death to the person who ran at the sight of the motor-car, for many were the cases of men, women and girls shot down for this offence and others of like nature. The people had no sleep, night after night, through fear of the motor-patrols coming into the village. Several persons who had weapons purely for defensive purposes were also shot and their guns, on being collected, were broken to pieces and thrown into the deep sea far from the harbour of Colombo. It would be too long and too tedious to enumerate the large numbers of innocent, law-abiding persons who lost their lives in this manner.

Sinhalese chiefs were deprived of their titles; higher native officials were removed from office on mere suspicion, and a rigorous censorship o

the press was instituted. Freedom of speech was suppressed. Schools whose managers or teachers were even remotely suspected of complicity were struck off the roll of Grant-in-Aid schools.

The General also appointed a Select Committee to assess the damages caused to the Moors and to demand immediate payment of compensation on pain of being shot. The Commissioners went from village to village in several cars full of armed soldiers, estimated the damages in their own superficial and exorbitant manner and intimidated the people into paying them. Those who were really unable to pay were compelled to sign debt bonds in favour of His Majesty the King. The total amount secured was five and a half million rupees.

An order was issued by the General to arrest "the ring-leaders who directed the mob" and the order ended in the arrest and punishment of several innocent and loyal Sinhalese gentlemen who were possessed of money and property.

The following were well-known persons of the time whose houses were searched by the military, the Punjabis and the Police and were detained in jail. F. R. Dias Bandaranayake, E. T. de Silva, D. C. Senanayake, Dr. Cassius Fereira, D. P. Wijewardene, D. S. Senanayake, D. R. Wijewardene, John de Silva, W. H. W. Perera, Martinus Perera, John M. Seneviratne, H. Amarasuriya, D. E. Weerasuriya, Rev. G. D. Lanerolle, Harry Mel, A. H. E. Molamure.

The sworn affidavits of all the above were available. The following is a paragraph from the affidavit of D. S. Senanayake, Ceylon's first Prime Minister. "I am a proprietory planter and plumbago mine owner. On 8th of June, at about 12 o'clock, I was in my bungalow, in Cinnamon Gardens, when a Town Guardsman and Inspector of Police and two Punjabis came in a motor-car. They searched the house and left..... A fortnight later on June 21, a Town Guard woke me up and said

I was under arrest and would not allow me to answer a call of nature and took me guarded by two armed soldiers to the Welikade Convict Establishment where I noticed quite a number of prominent gentlemen. After searching me, I was locked in a bare cell..... After 46 days of incarceration, I was let out on a bail bond of Rs. 10,000 in cash and a personal bail bond of Rs. 50,000." Among other affidavits, one relates to "a big brother being forcibly taken by a few Punjabis under an European Sergeant, placed against a wall and shot dead."

The Government Agents of the Provinces affected by the Riots issued the following order:

"Whereas I..... have been appointed under the hand of the Officer Commanding the Troops a Special Commissioner for the..... Province for the purpose of inquiring into the recent riots, assessing damage and levying compensation for such damage.

"I do hereby give notice, in the name of military authorities to all persons whomsoever in the said Province, that they are required to give every assistance, information etc. to the military and civil authorities and that persons not obeying orders will be shot at sight.

"All Moormen who have suffered damage should be ready with detailed claims for compensation. All Moormen are placed under the special protection of the Headmen who will be regarded as personal hostages for their maintenance and security."

The following order was issued to the Police Headmen:

"The amount of indemnity specified by the Commissioners is Rs. 7900. You are therefore oddered to appear on..... at .. ..with title deeds in value to twice the amount in question as security. You are not required to bring the men on..... but you should be ready with a list of the valuation of the lands on that day.

"You are further ordered by the Commissioner to bring a male-goat for the use of Punjabis, and if you do not bring the male-goat as required, your amount of indemnity will be increased by another Rs. 2000."

It happened that the unpaid Headmen of a certain group of villages were ordered to provide, each in his turn, free of cost, goats, fowls, eggs, grain, milk and other provisions to the soldiers quartered there. The Headman of Gangodawilla duly executed his part, and went the following day to see how things were getting on, when it was the turn of another Headman to offer the supplies. The Punjabis, being annoyed with the delay of this Headman in sending provisions, seized the Headman of Gangodawilla, in the presence of thousands of people who had assembled at the Village Court (Gansabawa), manacled him and severely lashed him, though he protested that he was not the man that was responsible for the delay. The General, much chagrined at this narrative, said, "What could the poor fellows do, if no food was brought to them in time?"

At the time of the outbreak of the riots, Ramanathan was recouping his health at *Sivan Adi*, his holiday-home at Kodaikanal, South India. He was completely in the dark about happenings in the Island until his Sinhalese friends wrote to him apprising him of the situation and requesting him to hurry back to Colombo. On arriving he found conditions utterly appalling. The city was desolate and lifeless. Gruesome tales of ghastly violence and terrorism wrenched his heart, and produced a complete revulsion of feeling, an utter loathing in one of the most sensitive and compassionate of men, who, moreover, was by temperament and tradition a humanist and confirmed pacifist, who abhorred force or violence in any shape or form. It was part and parcel of his social and political creed that force should be banished from the domain

of men. But he had learnt history in vain, if he had not known that force, brute force, the prison-cell and the torture-chamber are the daily food, the sole equipage and warrant of an alien ruler, his sole answer to protests against the hideous wrongs and injustices that he heaps on the ruled. By force he built his edifice of power, by force he sustains it. Morality and all else akin to it have no place in his armoury. However, Ramanathan could not bring himself to believe that a civilised power like Britain, with all her long and proud traditions of imperial rule and judicial practice could lend countenance to such a tyrannical exercise of her authority. Police brutality, coupled with military atrocity, shooting alleged offenders at sight, arresting persons on sheer suspicion and keeping them locked up in pestilential prison-cells for long and indefinite periods of time without giving them the rudimentary human right of defending themselves before a lawfully constituted tribunal were practices wholly alien to British genius and tradition. He knew it was the local agents and representatives of that great power who were at fault. It was in that conviction that, when all his impassioned plea for reason, justice, humanity and kindly-dealing would not avail with the local sahibs, he ventured on a hazardous journey across the submarine-infested seas in one of the most perilous periods of human history, to seek redress for a long-suffering people from imperial statesmen at Whitehall.

Our leaders of an earlier generation enjoyed one tremendous boon seldom vouchsafed to subject peoples. They always had ready to hand a Court of Appeal, to which, when justice was denied them in the Island, they could carry their grievances with reasonable certainty of redress. At Whitehall there sat and held sway over a vast and far-flung empire imperial statesmen and jurists, blue-blooded Englishmen of broad culture and liberal sympathies, long

nourished in the great traditions of humane government and the reign of law and justice, who watched lynx-eyed the actions of their minions overseas and brought to book whomsoever had sinned against the fundamental freedoms of subject humanity. The historic impeachment of Warren Hastings, a great empire-builder, for seven long years, the fulminations of Edmund Burke against George III and his functionaries in America could not have happened under any other imperial power than Britain.

To resume the narrative, on landing in the Island, Ramanathan addressed an appeal to the Governor to grant him an interview and was astonished to receive the reply pleading inability owing to pressure of engagements and requesting a written statement.

The subject on which the Governor desired Ramanathan to write being most complicated, the elucidation of it could not be done within the compass of a few pages of written communication. The difficulty was all the greater, because the preconception already entertained by the authorities had to be removed before the exposition of the situation could be done. However, he persevered and at long last got the interview he desired, wherein the Governor told him that the revolt had been put down with *rose water*. It cost him no small effort to convince the Governor that it was no revolt at all but an affair between the Buddhists and the Mohammedans, arising out of the intolerance and aggression of the latter and that this feud was taken advantage of by the criminal classes in towns and villages to spread the riots for their profit. His Excellency was greatly impressed by what he said and granted him and other Sinhalese leaders further interviews which enabled them to clear his mind of the many misconceptions that had clouded it. All these efforts produced a real change of heart and the situation eased rapidly.

He interviewed the Colonial Secretary Mr. Stubbs and apprised him of the true causes of the riots. From Mr. Byrde, Mayor of Colombo, he obtained a Pass to move about the city at all hours and an order to all Military Officers to render him all possible assistance in "quieting and assuring the people". He met Brigadier-General Malcolm who was pleased to receive him and request him to be a Special Constable "following the good example of Chief Justice Wood Renton". Having heard that the city was threatened with famine owing to the closure of all rice and provision stores in the city, he sought and was readily given sufficient armed military personnel to guard the streets where these stores were situated and enable the dealers to open their stores and supply the people the provisions they sorely needed. He patrolled the streets with unflagging energy in a supreme effort to end the riots and restore law and order in the country. All this he did round the clock during all these turbulent days. He had frequent conferences with Sinhalese and Muslim leaders, brought them all closer together, dispelled their fears and anxieties, created a healthy and cordial atmosphere amongst them and did all that was humanly possible to end this nightmare. His efforts met with phenomenal success. He restored better understanding and goodwill between the rulers and the ruled and conditions swung back rapidly to normality. He succeeded in securing the release from prison and punishment by Court Martial (which might have been death in the circumstances) of the elite of Sinhalese society against whom the wrath of the Government was brutally directed.

The story of this tragic episode and Ramanathan's heroic labours to quell the riots, to end the horrors of the Martial Law and the hideous brutalities of the Police and the Army, his ceaseless efforts to bring back the rulers to their senses, to allay the fears and anxieties of a panic-stricken

people, to restore harmony and goodwill among the two communities affected by the riots, and peace and security throughout the land—these and many more are told in greater detail in his book entitled "Riots and Martial Law in Ceylon, 1915" which he published in England for the enlightenment of British statesmen at Whitehall and the information of the British public in general.

CHAPTER XI

RIOTS—SPEECHES

I love the man who wants the impossible.

— Goethe

The non-Official Members of Council dare not turn a deaf ear to the lamentations of the people..... I feel very sorry. I feel I must do something for the people who are groaning under the misfortunes which they have suffered for no fault of their own. And I expect you, Sir, who have been so sympathetic and have extended to me your private friendship, to try and do something for the people on this extraordinary occasion. I have gone amongst them and I have seen grown-up men and women weeping bitter tears owing to the untold sufferings that have been heaped on them by the atrocities of the Martial Law and by the illegal and unrighteous acts of the Commissioners appointed by Your Excellency not knowing how inexperienced and how wanting in a sense of justice many of them are.

—Ramanathan

I say that the Government of Ceylon has signally failed in both these respects. It does not know even to this day the real causes of the riots. It has not yet taken any steps to ascertain those causes, and yet it is blindly determined upon a remedy which is crushing the very life of the people and quenching all their regard for British justice.

If the Government had known the causes of the recent riots in Ceylon, they would not have done many of the things they have done to the dismay of every right-minded person in the country, and this Bill, so crude and so unrighteous and so oppressive, would not be attempted to be forced through the Council with the aid of the Official majority.

—Ramanathan

Government officers must guide themselves by the principle that the people, whom the King has appointed

them to govern, must be treated like their own children, with sympathy and yet firmly. If they sit down quietly and think the matter over, they will see the correctness of the conclusion that the power in their hands is given to them for a sacred purpose, and that those who are called upon to govern the people must be very considerate and tactful in the use of their power. If power must be enforced on the people, it must be for their happiness and well-being, and not for the glorification of the officers or to prove the might of the Government.

—Ramanathan

I say the principal cause of the riots of June last and the consequent loss of property and life was the failure of the Constables and the Magistrates and the Government Agents to do their respective duties.

—Ramanathan

I assure you, Sir, with all the emphasis that I am capable of, that you can rely upon the Sinhalese people. Whatever other people may say, you can rely upon their loyalty and be certain that there will be no disturbance of the peace hereafter. I, who feel all this, am bound in duty to you and in justice to the Sinhalese to say that no special measures are necessary in the future; that the time is now come for the withdrawal of Martial Law and for the cessation of the operation of military courts in the Island, and for entrusting offenders or alleged offenders to the ordinary courts of justice, to be dealt with by the normal law of the country.

—Ramanathan

RAMANATHAN delivered in Council a series of six memorable and impassioned speeches—each a classic and reckoned a feat of oratorical endurance—denouncing the ill-considered and high-handed measures taken by the Government to suppress the riots, and the tyrannical and oppressive conduct of its officers. It was then a perilous time. As has already been observed, the world was in the throes of a stupendous war and the Government was rooted in the belief, however ill-founded, that the riots and disturbances, far from being transient outbursts of religious and

communal fury, were rather an act of calculated sedition, an organised attempt to overthrow British rule. It was, therefore, determined to suppress them with an iron hand. Civil administration was replaced by military rule. All freedom of speech and action was ruthlessly suppressed and no man would dare speak against the Government without fear of grave personal danger.

But Ramanathan was not to be overawed by such personal considerations, for never in all his long and illustrious leadership did he think of safety first. He felt that the Government was blindly despotic in its treatment of the people and that it was his duty by the people to resist it with every resource at his command, and, if need be, at the sacrifice of his own life and possessions. The speeches were not speeches as such; they were in reality philippics, charged with fire and fury unparalleled in our political history and rare in that of any other, wherein he lashed the whole host of British officials, shook them into an uneasy realisation of their folly and incompetence, their hideous savagery against an unarmed and utterly defenceless people.

In few other speeches of his do we find passages more magnificent or eloquence more sustained or more fiery, invective more terrific, wisdom more luminous, or expression more felicitous. In them we see the real man, the terror of tyrants, the trusted friend of the oppressed, the intrepid champion of liberty in an age of arbitrary power, the impassioned advocate of reason and justice in the government of the State. The Government was impervious to reason, outrageous in its insensibility to the woes and lamentations of a whole people whose leaders it had locked up in prison cells without a show of reason, denying them even the minimum protection afforded by law, shooting down human beings as so many heads of cattle, confiscating people's property for no valid reason,

gagging the people and laying an embargo on freedom of movement. All this was Bourbon despotism in its darkest days. It was an undisguised and disdainful challenge which the White ruler in the arrogance born of unbounded might flung in the face of a whole people. Someone should be found to take up the challenge, bring succour to a people in the extremity of despair and anguish and bring the ruler back to his senses. But who would dare the wrath of a ruler who had gone bersek? Many of the people's representatives in the legislature were struck dumb and rendered motionless by the tyranny that held carnival, while others, in their hunt for loaves and fishes, swung to the tyrant's side and in flattering terms applauded his prompt and drastic action in curbing the riots and urged him to continue with unabated rigour.

But Ramanathan, with his clear and unbiassed vision—the vision of a man, cleansed and purified by lifelong communion with the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing—saw the truth, the stark and agonising truth that the people were more sinned against than sinning, that the ruler had acted as no humane or civilised ruler would have acted and that nothing should be left undone to cry halt to these inhuman excesses and put the culprits in the dock. He took up the challenge and stood almost alone, stood four-square against the storms of imperialist fury and rancorous hate that beat him with unexampled violence on every side. A contemporary American cartoonist, one Mr. Modder depicted him as St. George of England mounted on a fiery charger, carrying a mighty lance in hand and fighting the deadly and devastating dragon with heroic courage and remorseless vigour.

The whole of the white bureaucracy—no ordinary men but the pick of the British Colonial Service, and each a stalwart in his province—aided by their war-lords were poised in readiness to defend everyone of their barbarous deeds and if need be, to hit

back with all their concerted strength, any assailant who had the hardihood to question their doings. There were the Governor Sir Robert (afterwards Lord) Chalmers, an expert from the British Treasury; Edward Stubbs, an adept from the Colonial Office in London, holding the office of Colonial Secretary in the Island; Sir Alexander Wood Renton, Chief Justice; Sir Anton Bertram, Attorney-General; Brigadier-General Malcolm, the Officer Commanding the Troops; H. L. Dowbiggin, Inspector-General of Police and others, hand-picked for the service of the Premier Colony in the Empire. There were besides, the local Sahibs—their own creations—ready to cheer and exhort them with loud-mouthed approval and applause.

It was against such tremendous odds that Ramanathan in the evening of life and the infirmity of age was called upon to do battle in one of the sorest moments in our Island's history. Napoleon boasted that in the field of battle, his strength was as the strength of a hundred thousand men. His strength lay in his transcendent genius for war. It is no exaggeration to say that Ramanathan's strength was more than the combined strength of the Officials and the Unofficials, for he was nothing if not a born statesman, a fiery patriot and dedicated servant of the nation, a leader possessed of a prodigious intellect and immense and varied learning and above all, a man of God who drew his strength and courage from that inexhaustible and sovereign source. Moreover he was rooted in his conviction that his cause was just. Through six long, over-night sittings, this tried veteran of a thousand battles pounded away unmercifully, while the perpetrators of those dastardly acts quailed before his sledge-hammer strokes and bowed down their heads in shame, powerless to counter them. He showed them up in their true nakedness, the hideous foes of man, the enemies of all civilised human existence, purveyors of force and violence

in a world that had in all its recorded history seen their utter futility and now saw its sole hope of survival in the healing balm of human love and compassion.

Crises, as has been said, prove the leader and Ramanathan proved himself a leader *par excellence*, a master-pilot equal to any emergency. Our ancient scriptures and mankind's greatest teachers all declare that man's supreme virtue lies in love and fellow-feeling and his noblest acts, in bringing succour to the distressed and the suffering. Ramanathan's heart bled at the sight of human misery and suffering and his whole life was dedicated to the work of combating wrong and oppression, misery and want wheresoever he found it.

There was, as has been observed but which needs reiteration if we are to comprehend the man and his work aright, one fundamental quality in Ramanathan's leadership that distinguished it from leadership as understood in our own day. It was universal and all-embracing. It transcended all barriers of race or religion and took all humanity into its broad bosom. He viewed humanity as one vast, indivisible whole, though subject to differences which, in reality, are extraneous, accidental, circumstantial. The varying pigments of the skin, the diversities of language or race or creed or clime did not weigh with him. What really weighed is the underlying one-ness of the human family, the kinship of all created things. Though a Tamil with his roots deep in Tamil soil, saturated with all that was accounted great and good in Tamil culture and tradition, he viewed all races of mankind alike and made it the mission of his life to serve them with a loyalty and dedication rare in the annals of leadership, and unknown in our own. It was this lofty conception of leadership, the conviction that all humanity is one confraternity, that the needs of one segment are as paramount and compelling as those of

another, that reason, justice, fair-play and kindly-dealing are the chart and compass, the landmarks by which those committed with the government of human society should steer their craft, that whoso ignore them head straight for the rocks, that gave his leadership a new dimension, a new elevation and won for him the homage of the nation and the love and esteem of many peoples outside.

Ramanathan laid the whole blame for the outbreak and subsequent spread of the riots fairly and squarely at the door of the Government. The British rulers were really the guilty ones. They were the villains of the piece, not the people. Had the Government Agent of Kandy, having granted the Esala procession licence to pass the Hambaya Mosque after midnight, taken the rudimentary precaution of providing sufficient safeguards against a possible breach of the peace, in view of the bellicose attitude of the Hambayas, the Hambayas would not have acted so lawlessly or so high-handedly as they had done.

When once the riots broke out, had the Government Agent and the Police taken prompt and effective action to nip them in the bud; had the Government Agent granted the Sinhalese and Muslim leaders the audience they so eagerly sought, and taken them into his confidence; had he addressed the panic-stricken crowd words of encouragement and given them an assurance, as was his duty by them, that everything possible would be done to end the riots and bring the offenders to book, the riots would never have spread out to five provinces or wrought so much havoc. In his first speech, Ramanathan emphasised his point that it was the inefficiency and supineness of the police coupled with the lethargy and weak-kneed timidity of the Government Agent that gave free rein to the passions of the rioters. In his preamble to the speech, he repudiated categorically the false

notion entertained and assiduously propagated by the rulers that "the riots, far from being an act of religious fanaticism, were due to a conspiracy between the upper and the lower classes of the Buddhists against the Mohammedans or the Government."

He said, "It is admitted that the police, though drawn from all classes of people, viz. Sinhalese, Tamils, Malays, Mohammedans, Burghers and others, never expected a rising on the part of the Buddhists, and never heard at any time that there was going to be a disturbance either in Colombo or anywhere else and it is equally certain that, when the collision took place between the Sinhalese and the Mohammedans, the police officers in Colombo lost their heads as did the constables on the several beats, and then this failure of the police gave an opportunity to the criminal classes and to the hungry poor to rise in different places and do just what they liked with the city. If the commanding officers of the Police had remained in the city and properly marshalled the Police force against the rioters and looters, the disturbances would have been nipped in the bud, and the after-consequences would not have been serious. There would have been no necessity for compensation and no necessity for the introduction of Martial Law, or the establishment of Courts Martial, or the appointment of Commissioners and so on.

"I wish to know whether the Government have taken this subject into their consideration with a view to placing the protection of the city on a more satisfactory basis. The disturbances which we all deplore are due undoubtedly to the failure of the Police, both in Kandy and Colombo, at the critical moment, and the failure of the Police Magistrates and other authorities to call out the military to disperse the rioters and looters under the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code. I have much more to

say on the subject, but for the present, I shall dwell on the duty of the Government to see that no such failure will occur ever hereafter.".

He further pointed out that the Governor had no reason whatever to call out the army to intervene until the Inspector-General of Police had reported to him his inability to cope with the riots. It was this intervention by the army that worsened the situation and inflicted such untold suffering and loss of life. He said, "The calling out of the military depended upon a demand on the part of the Inspector-General of Police for military assistance. If such assistance was not demanded, it was not his duty as the Governor of the Island to ask the military to go forth and suppress the rioters by gun and bayonet."

The European Urban Member, the Hon. Mr. H. Creasy "endorsed in a very great measure all that has fallen from the Hon. the Ceylonese Member." It is notorious that our own stalwarts, professed champions of the people, maintained a studied silence, for, wise and far-sighted men that they eminently were, they knew too well that to incur the displeasure of the powers-that-be would be but seriously to compromise their own fortunes, political and otherwise. Nor had they, poor souls, either the guts or that wealth of intellectual and moral equipment to stand up to the resourceful foreign autocrat.

Ramanathan's second speech was a passionate plea for ending the horrors of Martial Law and the operation of military courts and for restoring the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts of justice. In support of his plea, he said, "I assure Your Excellency, with all the emphasis I am capable of, that you can rely upon the Sinhalese people. Whatever other people may say, you can rely upon their loyalty and be certain that there will be no disturbance of the peace hereafter. I, who feel all this, am bound in duty to you and in justice to the Sinhalese

to say that no special measures are necessary in future; that the time is now come for the withdrawal of Martial Law and for the cessation of the operation of the military courts in the Island, and for entrusting offenders or alleged offenders to the ordinary courts of justice, to be dealt with by the normal law of the country..... The continuance, Sir, of the terrors of Martial Law was not necessary after June 10, but I believe it was kept up by the Government firstly, for the purpose of arresting alleged offenders more easily on the complaint of the unfortunate Moslems than under the formalities and safeguards of the civil law; secondly, for trying alleged offenders summarily and punishing them heavily, notwithstanding the regular and unimpeded sitting of the ordinary courts of the Island; thirdly, for assessing speedily the damages suffered by the Moslems; and fourthly, for recovering compensation from the Sinhalese by methods which the ordinary law of the Colony would not permit."

He proceeded to repudiate vehemently the charge of sedition preferred against the Sinhalese by the Attorney-General. He said, "The Attorney-General said that one of the causes of the recent disturbances was the outbreak of sedition in this country. He meant, of course, amongst the Sinhalese. I know the Sinhalese intimately; I have known them all my life, and I have no hesitation in saying that they are remarkably free from seditious libels, seditious conspiracies, and seditious meetings."

He went further to say that much was said of sedition in the country and a good deal of unnecessary fuss was made about it. He defined sedition and showed it was not the heinous crime it was made out to be. He said, "By sedition is meant an attempt to disturb the peace of the State by stirring up ill-feeling among the King's subjects, and according to English law, which the Bill seeks to introduce here, the term 'sedition'

includes, not only seditious libels, seditious conspiracies, seditious meetings, but also seditious attempts to urge others to the crime of treason, which is an attack on the sovereign State, or the King, Queen, or their heir, or the levying of war against the King in his realm, or the killing of his Chancellor, Treasurer, or Justices, or the forging of the Great Seal or Privy Seal. Accordingly, great writers on English criminal law have said that sedition is a far-reaching term in England, and includes offences ranging from libel to treason.

"It is noteworthy that in England sedition does not carry rigorous imprisonment. In Ceylon it is punishable with simple imprisonment with or without a fine. Now, why is that? A great deal has been spoken of sedition here as if it was a most dreadful offence, but is it really so? We can determine its real dimension or size by a reference to the punishment which the Legislature not only of this country but also of England, India, and other places imposes for this offence. It is simple imprisonment with or without a fine. Why did they not provide rigorous imprisonment? For this obvious reason that words are really of no consequence until their effect is accepted and espoused by those for whom they were uttered. It is only then that sedition, or that attempt to stir up ill-feeling among the King's subjects, becomes dangerous. A man may urge the people of the country, but if nobody accepts his words, and only laughs at him, where is the sting in sedition? For reasons of public expediency the Government of the country says: 'Sedition may work harm but it will not, if one who has attempted by seditious words or libels, or seditious conspiracies, or seditious meetings, to stir up ill-feeling among the people, be restrained by simple imprisonment for a year or two, according to the circumstances of each case.' Such being the true dimensions of sedition, we must take care not to magnify its importance. We have

no reason whatever for believing that the Sinhalese people have been tainted with disaffection against their Government or their King, or are really bent upon compassing evil for the country..... Why do we proclaim that the Sinhalese people are a nasty, dirty lot, disloyal to the King, scheming against the British Government here, and trying to create dissension there and everywhere, and that they require a special tribunal and Courts Martial to make short work of them? I, who know the Sinhalese people through and through say that this exhibition of feeling in the case of an offence so small as sedition is neither just to the Sinhalese nor creditable to ourselves as members of the Government of Ceylon."

He referred to a view expressed by the Attorney-General that the recent disturbances had revealed the existence of a deadly disease and protested it was a libel on the fair name of the Sinhalese. He said, "Now the Attorney-General said the recent disturbances had revealed the existence of a deadly disease in our midst to an extent to which he or we had not suspected, and which required to be carefully watched. Sir, I cannot support him in that statement. The Sinhalese community as a whole repudiates this defamatory statement; but I feel that the Attorney-General did not mean to be defamatory at all. He has simply taken up the cry which was common some seventy days ago, when British residents here saw most unexpectedly the spread of riots in different places, and yet did not know the reasons which actuated the rioters....."

He challenged the Governor to tell the Members if the house-to-house search carried on by the Military Commissioners had revealed any sign of seditious conspiracies and seditious meetings. He said, "Well, Your Excellency made the rioters feel the terrorism of martial law. The moment the rioters came in contact with bullets and bayonets, everything subsided, and a dead calm reigned. Then

Your Excellency sent your trusty officers throughout the length and breadth of seven of the Provinces of the Island, and they have been practically making a house-to-house search for signs of seditious libels, seditious conspiracies and seditious meetings. Could any of these officers honestly say that they have found any such evidence whatever in Ceylon? I think not, I have good reasons to say so. And to-day, after seventy days of torture, particularly to the Sinhalese and generally to us all, we must concede that the surmises which were created in the minds of both officials and unofficials have all proved to be wrong, and that the Sinhalese nation continues to be as loyal at heart as any other nation in the British realm. *I say, Sir, most unhesitatingly, that a great and grievous injustice has been done to the Sinhalese, who keenly appreciate and are most thankful for all the countless blessings which they have enjoyed under British rule during the last 100 years.* They fully recognize these blessings, and have to our knowledge vied with each other in expressing their thankfulness from time to time, and showing that love and reverence are in their hearts for the great and glorious Throne which stands unmatched in the world. They feel that it is indeed a great privilege to be members of an empire, so vast and powerful as the British Empire, which is undoubtedly the greatest and best in the world. I am perfectly certain, Sir, that these sentiments are the sentiments that prevail in the hearts of the Sinhalese. And when I saw error on the rampant and defamation on the lips of men who I thought had better sense than that, it became my duty to go about here, there, and everywhere and remove the false impression. It has taken me a good many days to bring about a change of opinion and make the officials and unofficials think kindly of the loyal Sinhalese, our brethren and fellow-subjects in the British Empire.

"Sir, such being the case, I want to know why we want a special tribunal now, in the new circumstances in which we find ourselves. We were all trembling with fear at the display which Your Excellency said it was necessary to make, when the police proved themselves to be a failure in regard to the protection of the city. Your Excellency did a wise thing in calling out the military to deal with a situation so fearful in its consequences. The terrible situation lasted only for about one week—from May 28 to perhaps June the 7th. Your Excellency is new to the country; the public feel that you can only do your best, relying upon those who surround you for such information as will guide you aright. Your Excellency determined that the military despotism should continue for some days more. As soon as Your Excellency was convinced that this military display was not necessary in the North-Central Province and the Province of Uva, you at once withdrew the operation of martial law. It came into force on June 2 and was withdrawn on June 29. Why has it not been withdrawn in the case of the remaining five Provinces? Your Excellency is actuated by feelings of something like affection for the people, I know, and Your Excellency is one of the strongest Governors we have had in the Island, both great and wise. If such a Governor does not withdraw the martial law from the remaining five Provinces, it is because there is some remnant of thought in your mind which makes you think that it is necessary to continue it for some time longer. I wish I could get at that remnant of thought, because a little discussion will dissipate it and lead to the withdrawal of the martial law in the Provinces I have mentioned."

He now concluded his speech with a moving appeal to His Excellency to think kindly of the Sinhalese, to rely on their loyalty and not to mar the Statute Book "with a measure so defamatory

of the Sinhalese people as this Bill." He said, "*I assure you, Sir, with all the emphasis that I am capable of, that you can rely upon their loyalty and be certain that there will be no disturbance of the peace hereafter. I, who feel all this, am bound in duty to you and in justice to the Sinhalese to say that no special measures are necessary in future; that the time is now come for the withdrawal of martial law and for the cessation of the operation of military courts in the Island, and for entrusting offenders or alleged offenders to the ordinary courts of justice, to be dealt with by the normal law of the country.*

"Sir, circumstances have greatly changed since the memorialists asked for the special tribunal. I desire to know what is the necessity for the special tribunal now. Who are the persons that are going to be tried? Mainly a few newspaper writers, I understand. Is it really necessary that we should place on our Statute Book a measure so defamatory of the Sinhalese people as this Bill? No, Sir; I do not think so. I hope my honourable friend the Attorney-General and Your Excellency and all your advisers will come to think as I do.

"These are my sentiments. I shall be so pleased to hear that the Government will consider this Bill by the light of what I have stated and make such orders with regard to it as may seem necessary and just in its wisdom."

In his third speech, Ramanathan summarised one hundred and twenty petitions presented in the Legislative Council complaining that diverse acts of injustice and oppression were committed by the Government officers appointed to assess and apportion the damages and that the signatures of the petitioners to the mortgage bonds in favour of His Majesty the King in respect of such damages were obtained by threats held out in the presence of armed soldiers. It is one of his inordinately long speeches impossible to quote even in small patches. In it he pointed out to the House how

in assessing damages the Commissioners had ridden roughshod over all the canons of justice and fair-play, how even whole villages which had nothing to do with the riots were ordered to pay, and signatures obtained at gun-point and by the threat of being hauled before Courts Martial and dire punishments inflicted on them. He explained how pathetically poor and miserable these villagers were, how precariously they subsisted on their scanty earnings, and how large numbers of them had served jail sentences owing to their inability to pay their poll-tax. In conclusion, he moved for the cancellation of these debt-bonds and the liberation of the hapless villagers from this nightmare of tyranny and extortion.

It was indeed a distressing but edifying spectacle, the picture of the great leader long past his sixty—his mind and body shaken by a lifetime of strenuous toil and continued anxiety for the future of the country and the people he loved so well, by long years of persistent struggle with a foreign potentate in a supreme bid to deliver them from the thraldom of alien rule—the leader plodding wearily through the long hours of the night and in the privacy of his study in his endeavour to master the multitudinous details of numberless petitions confidently addressed to him by an aggrieved and acutely distressed people whom he had learnt to love so dearly through many decades of intimate association with them, at whose tales of pain and agony and suffering his compassionate heart bled so profusely and then, with the fire and passion of an inspired and indignant prophet, fulminating through six long overnight sittings against the whole host of a barbarous and benighted alien bureaucracy for the many and gratuitous wrongs and atrocities it had heaped upon a helpless and unarmed people, endeavouring to open its eyes to the enormity of its crime against humanity and calling down upon all wrong-doors the vengeance

of the Gods. The White bureaucracy looked aghast and speechless, but made occasional and frantic efforts to justify itself. With relentless vigour and flaming indignation he uncovered the whole fabric of their barbarities in all their nakedness for all the world to see. They writhed in pain but were powerless to retaliate. The whole House listened spell-bound to the magic of his oratory, the torrential flood of words, fused with faith and fire, that flowed from a rich and well-stocked mind in a raging, bubbling stream; listened to his infinite resourcefulness of argument, to the withering fire of his invective, to his solemn enunciation of the eternal, the inviolable principles of Truth, Reason, Justice, and Humanity that should govern the government of human society.

Man's memories are necessarily short-lived. The good is often forgotten, while the evil lives on. Six decades have rolled by since these memorable scenes were enacted in our country's legislature. It was a period of great travail. The air was thick with uncertainty and doubt; fear and trepidation were universal; the elite of the nation were locked up in prison-cells and the Court Martial took its ruthless toll; a foreign army was in occupation and life was not worth a day's purchase; the British rulers sat smugly in their seats of power, determined to do their worst and carry all things before them; the anointed leaders of the nation (the Unofficial Members) sat mute and motionless; and the fate of a whole people hung on one man and on the sequel of these six harrowing nights during which their destinies were weighed in the balance and the great leader arraigned the whole host of an alien bureaucracy and called them to account for their dastardly deeds.

In his fourth speech, he moved for the appointment of a Select Committee of the Legislative Council to consider and report on the grievances alleged in the aforesaid and other petitions and

to postpone the consideration of the Damages Bill until the consideration of the petitions by the Select Committee was completed. His motion had eight very weighty clauses hard to quote here. This again is an exceptionally long speech and I have taken the liberty of quoting parts of it at some length.

In speaking on his motion, he cited a statement made in the House of Commons by Mr. Bonar Law, then Secretary-of-State for the Colonies, which said that "it was not right that any village which did not take part in the riots should be assessed for compensation," and pointedly asked, "Have the Commissioners done their work of assessment and apportionment in terms of the Secretary-of-State's exposition?" He castigated the White bureaucracy for not making the returns and reports of the Commissioners available to the Unofficial Members of the House and asked how it would be possible for them to perform the duty cast upon them by His Majesty the King of advising the Government. He said, "But we, the non-official Members of the Council, have not seen these returns and reports of the Commissioners, and it is only right that, if you desire our advice and consent to the Ordinance read a second time to-day, you should give us an opportunity to study the returns and reports and judge for ourselves whether the Commissioners' assessments and apportionments and the bonds they have produced are worthy of confirmation. In the absence of such reports and returns, we, non-official Members, will naturally feel that the duty which His Majesty the King has cast upon us of advising you as to the desirabilty of passing the Ordinance cannot be properly fulfilled, much less can we consent to it. According to our conception of our functions, it is our bounden duty to do our best to advise you, and, if possible, to consent to the policy that you may formulate in this Council. Every ordinance that is passed

here states, in explicit terms, that it is enacted by the Governor of Ceylon with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council thereof. If, Sir, we are to advise you, how are we to carry out our duty without the necessary papers being submitted to us? If we are to exercise our discretion and consent to any piece of legislation, how can we honestly consent or honestly not consent without seeing any of the papers which the members of your own Government have been privileged to see? I sincerely hope that Your Excellency will give us the satisfaction of being able to do our duty in the manner that is expected of us by His Majesty's Government. We are not called to do our duty here in a flimsy, superficial way. It is not right to enjoy the honours of the situation and be respected by the people, and be given the highest places in their communities in public or in private, if we do not do our duty to the people. What respect can we have from the people, what from the King himself? You should help us to perform our duty. Some of us at least are willing to fulfil our duty and to undertake the responsibilities of our situation; but if we find that the Government for some purpose or other keeps back papers from us, and does not admit us into its confidence, we feel that we have no right to be in Council. Our people, however, will not allow us to resign our position. What are we to do? Because the moment the elected members resign their position they will be re-elected, and put back again into the seat in no time.

"Thus, we have to go to our beds with a groaning spirit, with a sense of duty undone to the King, undone to the people, and undone to you, Sir, because Your Excellency may often feel unsatisfied with the advice given by the members of your own Government in the Executive Council, and you may often like to have the benefit of our advice.

"Well, if the Government will not take us into its confidence, and make us speak from our hearts with all the experience we have, what are we to do? We feel often that things are miscarrying, and that though we have been summoned by the grace of our King to this important office in the Legislative Council, we have not the chance of doing our duty as it must be done."

His indignation having got the better of him, he broke into a passionate outburst of moral fury: "*We, Sir, dare not turn a deaf ear to the lamentations of the people as expressed in their petitions before us. If we do, we shall lay ourselves open to the charge of betraying the trust reposed upon us by the King and by the people alike.* I believe, the Legislative Council has received about 350 petitions already, and I know not how many more have reached Your Excellency, because I have a heap of them here on this side of the table addressed to you, and which I have not yet presented. When I read these petitions, I feel very sorry. I feel that I must do something for the people who are groaning under misfortunes which they have suffered for no fault of their own. And I expect you, Sir, who have been so sympathetic and have extended to me your private friendship, to try and do something for the people on this extraordinary occasion. I have gone amongst them and I have seen grown-up men, women, and children weeping bitter tears owing to the untold sufferings that have been heaped on them by the atrocities of the martial law and by the illegal and unrighteous acts of the Commissioners on whom Your Excellency cast this sacred duty, not knowing how inexperienced and how wanting in the sense of justice.....

His Excellency the Governor: Mr. Ramanathan, there are three of them here, and I am sure your words do not apply to them.

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan: I wish them to stand up and answer.

His Excellency the Governor: I am sure you do not mean to make any imputations against any member.

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan: I have seen the work of the Special Commissioners, I have heard of their doings.....

His Excellency the Governor: I take it that your remarks do not apply to any members of this Council.

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan: *Private friendship, Sir, has nothing to do with public duty. That is my creed, and this is a most uncomfortable day for me. I have been called upon to do a duty that is most unpleasant, but which I must do at any cost, because the just cries of the people are dear unto God, and to the British throne, and to you, Sir. If any Honourable Members who have been charged with the duty of administering the Government have done wrong, it is for them to rise up and say in the presence of this assembly, 'I have done wrong. I desire that my work should be thrown away, and that others better advised than I have been, should do the work in the manner in which it should be done.' I beg Your Excellency's forgiveness and the forgiveness of my honourable friends who are sitting round this table, if in the discharge of my duty I have to say some things painful to them, but far more painful to myself. I will ask them to bear with me, because in the complicated circumstances of the case there should not be pronouncement upon only one side of it, but there should be a careful consideration and a sober pronouncement on the other side of the case, too, which is the case that I am trying to lay before Your Excellency. If all the hundreds of petitions which have been presented are to be thrown into the waste-paper basket, or are to be superficially examined only to create the impression that they are receiving attention, but all the same the original intentions of Government are to be carried through the Legislative Council by means of the offical majority, I say, Sir, that that will be an awful imputation on this Council, and I am sure that you, with your sense of justice*

purified in England, will not allow such a thing to be done here. I do believe that, whatever you may have said to the members of your Government, or to the officers concerned, you will from this very minute re-consider your conclusions and make a pronouncement upon the case which the people of the country have presented to you by their humble petitions in such vast numbers today and in days gone-by.

"I do not think, Sir, that human nature after all is bad. I believe that *those who have been called by the King to do their duty to the people will do it when their eyes are opened and make the contentment of the people their greatest concern. We may reasonably expect them to see that the rights and liberties of the people are conserved, and that nothing will be done to endanger their confidence in the Government.*

Ramanathan now submitted that the assessment of damages was far in excess of the actual damages suffered, that the Commissioners would not have fallen into such depths of error if they had taken the wise step of associating with themselves men of experience in the country. He further impressed on the members the necessity of threshing out the whole question afresh. He said, "In view of these circumstances you will see how important it is to thresh out the question at this table, so that Your Excellency may not lend yourself to the idea that everything has been done properly and righteously because it has been entrusted to able and honourable officers of the Government.

"*I say, do not for Heaven's sake assume any such thing. Look at the matter like a judge sitting in a court of justice, and bring to bear your own independent judgment upon each assessment,* and if necessary send into the villages one or two disinterested officers, officers who have had nothing to do under the Martial Law or under the promptings of officers who do not know their business, and let them



St. George of Sri Lanka, armed and on horseback, encountering the British dragon — 1915

(By an American cartoonist)

arrive at a finding. Then only will the people be satisfied. Contentment will reign in their hearts, and the respect for British Justice will never slacken.

"I say that, now that all the proposals of the Commissioners have come before this Council, it is time that we, ourselves, should take the matter in hand, you being our President, and make inquiries from day to day, and arrive at a finding which will stop the lamentations of the people. It is impossible for anybody to refrain from giving his most earnest consideration to this matter. Supposing, for instance, an unfortunate man went before a court of justice and complained of intimidation, duress, etc., and said to the court that a bond had been taken from him by such and such a person and he wanted that bond to be cancelled. Supposing the Judge said: 'Now, look here, that is all very fine, my good fellow. I know the gentleman against whom you are complaining. He is the soul of honour, and is a most able man. My friendship with him is lifelong, and I know that he is not the man to do what you complain of. Now, you get out of court and I order that bond to stand.'

"Would English law sanction such a decision? Would the Appeal Court allow that decision to stand for a minute? And would you, Sir, as the Governor of Ceylon, allow that judge to continue to sit in the seat of justice and do similar harm to the people and make a travesty of justice, the sacred justice that has prevailed amongst us by the goodwill and strength of the British Government?

"No, Sir, you will not do it. Why, then, should we throw to the winds these 300 petitions and more, and say to the people, 'Now, my good fellows, this will do good to you. You know this is the best thing that can be done for you. Just pay the money demanded. If you do not pay, I shall see it wrung out of your pockets.'

"I say, Sir, that this is due to extreme want of the sense of justice. Give to every man his due. The Rs. 100 which it is attempted to pull

out of the pockets of innocent villagers is to them as large a sum of money as, say, Rs. 100,000 to Your Excellency's Government.

"The amount is no concern of ours, but the principle of justice, the principle of righteousness, the principle of listening to the just complaints of the people and finding a remedy for them and restoring contentment in their hearts and respect for British justice, which has kept them in prosperity for more than a century—that is all-important, and by entertaining this sense of justice and saving the people from oppressions of all kinds, we draw ourselves nearer and nearer to God, and are the recipients of His reward in many a spiritual blessing that makes us happy for all time and under all circumstances.

"Sir, both in regard to personal evolution and in regard to the righteous administration of the affairs of other people, this sense of justice is worth cultivating, and we must therefore do our very best to hearken to the complaints of the people, which I feel are true, and which in the course of my speech to-day I shall prove to you to be true. We should, Sir, do our very best in the unfortunate circumstances in which we find ourselves to restore peace in the hearts of the people, and to make them cease to entertain bitter hatred against the persons who are being favoured, and against those officers who have given cause for all this trouble by improper assessment of the compensation.

"*Your Excellency must now be convinced that a reduction is absolutely necessary, and that we cannot deal with this complicated question in a higgledy-piggledy fashion, in a pell-mell way, but should take every petition into our hands and deal with them as we would our own complaints or the complaints of our particular friends to be dealt with. Mistakes will happen, errors will be committed, but what a good man will do is to jump up from his seat the moment he sees that he has committed an error or a wrong, go to the offended man, seize him by the hand, and say: 'My good fellow, I have unwittingly done you mischief, I will do my best to make reparation to you.' That must be the attitude of the Government and the Government officials towards the people.* I shall say nothing about the past, but I have much to say about the future. Let us desist from wrong-doing any more, let us halt and examine the complaints of the people, and see what we can do to mitigate the horrors of the situation."

His next complaint was that the apportionment and allotment of the damages was made *without regard to any rule or law.* He said, "According to law, which nobody knows more than the Attorney-General, damages are the pecuniary satisfaction due upon a breach of contract or for an injury caused to life, limb, or property by a person or by his agent. That is good, sound law which is not peculiar to Great Britain, but is the common property of all civilized nations. If such damages are not amicably agreed to and voluntarily paid, what is the remedy? For the person to go to a court of law and complain of the injury done, and ask the court to assess damages and pass judgment in favour of the plaintiff. But what is done here? Men who are no doubt good in their own routine work are sent out into the open country, made to meet the people of all kinds and degrees, and asked to sit in judgment over the damages caused by persons, without a word of help or without any opinion expressed by the persons on whom the compensation falls. Is that justice, Sir? That is not justice. It is not even patriarchal Government. No, Sir, I do not think even a despot would do it, because he fears the wrath of the people and imposes on his own greed or passion some limit consistent with the aggregate strength of the people. He would ask himself, 'Why should Peter be robbed to pay Paul? Why, in the assess-

ment of damages, should not Peter have a voice?' No court of law would sanction this principle of making a man responsible for damages which he has not been given the opportunity to check, even though he is present and eager to check it. No court of law would sanction the principle of robbing Peter to pay Paul. We, of course, twenty or twenty-one members, can sit and glibly pass an Ordinance to give effect to it, and no doubt the great force of the King behind us will put it all through. But that, unfortunately, would not be consistent with the eternal principles of justice or with the ordinary law of the country. We may say, 'Oh! it is a complicated question, the matter has arisen and continued for 100 long days, and now we must end it all quickly in this way. Let us bury it and put on the best face possible.' But go into the country and see the people, Sir, sitting with a heavy heart and saying, 'Oh! what is going to happen to us?' See them crying. See them ask, 'What has happened to our King? What has happened to our Governor? What has happened to the Legislative Council? Have we no protectors in this world? Are we to be made a football of by inexperienced and heartless men?' No, Sir, we have power to pass this Ordinance, but the good sense of this Council must assert itself, and with all the criticism that we are capable of we must analyse the whole question and once for all settle whether the complaints of the people are right or not. If they are right, I do not ask you, Sir, to punish your officers. Let them live. The world is broad enough for the good and the bad, but let justice be done to the poor innocent villagers. We need not be vindictive, Sir. But it is most important, for our own sakes, and for the trust that is reposed in us, for the duty that we owe to the King and to the people, that the petitions should not be thrown to the winds, and that there should be a pronouncement upon them in an authoritative way."

He bemoaned the extreme impossibility of the affluent classes imagining the gruesome poverty and the stark misery in which the people on whom these impositions were made, lived. He said, "We, who are feeding fat on our wealth, who roll along in motor cars and fine carriages, can have no conception of the grinding nature of the life which the people whom we have to deal with are labouring under. Europeans do not go to these places, except a few planters. I have spoken to a number of European planters—not to Mr. Huyshe Eliot, but to Mr. Sinclair and others—and they agree with me that the poverty of the country is our worst phenomenon, that the poor are very poor. I say that experienced planters are at one with the experienced Ceylonese as regards the impossibility of a poor villager paying Rs. 100 as compensation to the Mohammedans. Once you realize that fact, Sir, you will not be a party to this kind of legislation. You will say, 'Hurry up, children, revise, revise, and remedy quickly.'"

His next complaint was that the Commissioners had shown utter contempt of law and procedure and much recklessness of mind in the work of assessment and apportionment. He said, "The petitioners bitterly complain that Commissioners, attended each by a number of armed soldiers, forced them to produce their title deeds and to sign mortgages in favour of His Majesty securing the payment in four quarterly instalments of the fine imposed on them. They deny *in toto* that the bonds they were made to sign were voluntary. Before considering the terms of the mortgage bonds, let me call attention to some official documents which the petitioners have produced, and which throw a lurid light on the complaints made by them. Here is a printed notice, Sir, bearing date June 10, 1915, purporting to be signed by a gentleman whose name I do not want to disclose, but

I may say that he is a Government Agent and a Special Commissioner. That document runs as follows:—

'Whereas I, ..., have been appointed under the hand of the Officer Commanding the Troops, a Special Commissioner for the purpose of inquiring into the recent riots, assessing damage, and levying compensation for such damage:

'I do hereby give notice, in the name of the military authorities, to all persons whomsoever in the said Province, that they are required to give every assistance, information, etc., to the military and civil authorities, and that *persons not obeying orders will be shot at sight*

'All Moormen who have suffered damage should be ready with detailed claims for compensation. All Moormen are placed under the special protection of the headmen, who will be regarded as personal hostages for their maintenance and security.'

"I always understood, Sir, that the word 'hostage' meant a person delivered to an enemy or hostile power as a pledge to secure the performance of conditions, and that the term 'Government Agent' meant a superior officer appointed by the King to supervise headmen and other classes of Government servants in the work of administering a particular Province. I, therefore, fail to see how the Government Agent—the ruler and patron of his subordinates—converted himself into an enemy, and delivered the headmen into his hands as hostages for the safety of the Moors. But let that pass, Sir."

The Hon. the Attorney General: Will the Honourable Member give us the name of the official who he says issued that notice?

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan: Do you really want it? I will give you the printed document itself. It is Mr. Fraser. The notice is in black and white, Sir. Here is the document (hands document). Similar

notifications have been issued by other Commissioners also. No doubt, Sir, the Attorney-General is astonished, but I thought he knew all about it.

"But let us consider the earlier part of this formidable notice. It enjoins upon all persons the necessity of giving assistance and information to the Commissioner in his work of assessing damages and levying compensation, on pain of being shot if the orders given were not instantly carried out. Therefore, it cannot be denied that such notices, flung broadcast in the villages and towns of the Western Province, must have had a most enslaving effect on the minds of the villagers. Following this notice, Sir, came an announcement in the *Government Gazette* of June 25 last, intimating that the Officer Commanding the Troops in Ceylon had appointed as Special Commissioners twenty-seven gentlemen, all fully named, for five Provinces in the Island, and the functions entrusted to them were notified to be—

(1) To inquire into all crimes and offences connected with the recent riots and disturbances in the towns and villages of the district for which they were appointed;

(2) To inquire into and assess all damage to property caused by rioters and others in the towns and villages in the district;

(3) To arrange for the payment of compensation of such damages and for that purpose to secure contributions from the inhabitants of the said towns and villages.

"All the twenty-seven Commissioners thus appointed were also declared by the Officer Commanding the Troops to be Additional District Judges and Police Magistrates for their Provinces and districts. Surely, Sir, the General has assumed too much power in creating District Judges and Police Magistrates."

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: I may perhaps correct a misapprehension in the honourable

gentleman's mind if I observed that the circular merely stated that these gentlemen had been appointed District Judges and Police Magistrates. The appointments were made by the Governor. It was merely announced by the Brigadier-General as a matter of convenience.

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan: My honourable friend has missed the point. I will explain.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary: The honourable gentleman distinctly said that the Brigadier-General has exceeded his powers by creating District Judges and Police Magistrates.

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan: *I shall not withdraw a single word of that. I have not erred in fact.* I was saying that soon after this notification by Mr. Fraser, came a notification in the *Government Gazette* of June 25 last, which declares that the Officer Commanding the Troops had appointed these twenty-seven Special Commissioners to be Additional District Judges and Police Magistrates for their Provinces or districts. This notice, Sir, is signed by L. A. Northcote, Captain, D. A. A. G. Now, Sir, if the General Commanding the Forces had power to appoint District Judges and Police Magistrates, he may assume power to appoint the Supreme Court Judges and ourselves, Sir. A document of that kind going before the world carries some weight. A District Judge, Sir, has the right to send a man to jail for not answering questions, or for being contumacious in regard to his orders. So also a Police Magistrate. He might commit a man to jail on the spot. Well, when a *Gazette* notice like this goes from the General Officer Commanding the Troops, what are the people to do, but to feel themselves as slaves in the hands of the military authorities, just as they felt themselves enslaved by the Government Agent's notice to the people of his Province that they would be shot if they did not obey his orders.

"After these terrifying notices and *Gazette* notifications, came the Special Commissioners in motor cars bristling with the guns and bayonets of the Punjabis. The petitioners complain, and complain with good reason, that the Commissioners ordered the villagers to produce their title deeds and to sign the mortgage bonds. There is, Sir, a *prima facie* case made out by these villagers in regard to the statements contained in the petition. We know that certain things, such as notices, notifications, and armed police, etc., had preceded the arrival of the Commissioners, and the petitioners say that, when the Commissioners went to the village, they ordered the villagers, sometimes directly by the use of the Sinhalese language, or sometimes indirectly with the aid of the Mudaliyars of the district, to produce their title deeds within so many days, and that if they did not do so, they would be dealt with under the martial law. The villagers say they were terrified, as they had practical examples of the operation of martial law. When I come to the question of the operation of martial law some other time—not today—you will hear the doings of the officers concerned in the enforcement of martial law. The petitioners have seen with their own eyes men hauled up and shot without charge or without trial. They remember, they say, the treatment that such and such a man received at the hands of the Punjabis, who shot him dead. Such instances were quoted by some of the Special Commissioners at one or more of their sittings.

"In great terror the petitioners humbly produced their title deeds, because the idea was thrown out that the Punjabis would come and ransack their houses. It was no good concealing their title deeds anywhere; so they said: 'Here, master, are our title deeds; what more do you want us to do? Sign documents? There is a halter round our necks. There is penury and beggary staring us in the face, and the desecration and destruction of our

homes. If they will let us off with our lives, it will suffice.' And they signed the bonds.

"Sir, if this Honourable Council has heard of such things directly from the people for whose benefit we have been appointed, can any member rise from his seat and say, 'We shall not allow that complaint to be heard. We shall not allow ourselves to give a pronouncement upon the charges made against the Commissioners'? That kind of nature is not in the heart of any member of this Council. I believe that they are all gentlemen. If they have erred, they will be the first to stand up and say, 'I have erred. I have exposed myself to criticism, and even the condemnation of Your Excellency, but let me do justice now and remedy the wrongs that have been done to the people.'

"The Police Headmen appear to have been commanded by the Korale or District Mudaliyars, who in turn have been commanded by the Commissioners to force the people to surrender their title deeds, like the guns with which they protected their fields and plantations, to the Commissioners. Here is a typical order, Sir, by a Korale Mudaliyar to a Police Headman:—

'The amount of indemnity specified by the Commissioners is Rs. 7,900. You are therefore ordered to appear on....., at....., with title deeds in value to twice the amount in question as security. You are not required to bring the men on....., but you should be ready with a list of the valuation of the lands on that day.

'You are further ordered by the Commissioner to bring a male goat for the use of the Punjabis, and if you do not bring the male goat as required, your amount of indemnity will be increased by another Rs. 2,000.

'(Signed)..... ,
'Mudaliyar, ...Korale.'

"A goat for Rs. 2000! These and other atrocious proceedings, Sir, require to be sifted carefully. If true, they would vitiate everyone of the bonds taken.

"So far, as to what happened in the villages. As regards towns, here is a summons bearing the British coat of arms professing to be signed by a Government Agent and Special Commissioner, and bearing date of delivery July 17, 1915. It was served on a Sinhalese gentleman, and runs as follows:—

'1. You are hereby ordered to appear at ..... Kachcheri on July 21, 1915, at 1 p. m. with the sum of Rs. 540, being damages due by you for losses caused to the Mohammedans of ..... palata by the rioters.

'2. In the event of your not being able to pay the said sum on the said date, you are requested to appear with a deed in your favour, or in favour of the Government as security for the payment of the said sum.

'3. If you do not obey these summons, you will be taken into custody.'

"This document, if true—I believe it is true, Sir, because I have got the original of it—shows that the method of levying compensation in towns was the same as that adopted in villages, viz., by intimidation and force.

"Let us now proceed to consider the wording of the mortgage bonds, which reveals the situation of affairs fairly well. I do not know if my honourable friend the Attorney-General had anything to do with the drawing up of the mortgage bond, but I have got copies of it in my hand. These are the bonds that we are asked to confirm by the Bill before us. They run as follows:

'Know all men by these presents that *we, the undersigned persons of the village of* ..... , are hereby jointly and severally held and firmly bound unto our Sovereign Lord King George the Fifth, his heirs and successors, in the sum of rupees....., for which payment well and

truly to be made we do hereby bind ourselves, our heirs, successors, and administrators firmly by these presents.

'And by way of further security for the due fulfilment of the said bond, we do hereby specially mortgage the immovable properties set out in the schedule to this bond.'

"Before I proceed further let me say that the foregoing words acknowledge a debt to the King and create a special mortgage. Then the bond seeks to justify itself by these words, which are very significant:

'Whereas in or about the beginning of the month of June, 1915, armed Sinhalese Buddhist mobs systematically attacked and destroyed sundry Moorish Mohammedan villages, houses, and boutiques and looted the property of Moorish Mohammedans *and were guilty of other acts of lawlessness amounting to the offence of high treason against our Sovereign Lord the King:*

'And whereas martial law was proclaimed in the Province of..... on ....of June, 1915:

'And whereas the General Officer Commanding the Troops, acting in pursuance of the powers vested in him, appointed..... Special Commissioner, hereinafter referred to as the Special Commissioner, to make inquiry in each village and district, and assess the said damage caused to the said Moorish Mohammedans:

'And whereas the said Commissioner *has inquired into the damage caused in the said village,* and has assessed the said damage at rupees.....

'And whereas *we, the principal inhabitants of the said village,* with a view to the settlement of all losses sustained *by the Moorish Mohammedans of the said village,* and in consideration of an undertaking by the said Special Commissioner made on behalf of the Government of Ceylon, that, subject to the faithful performance of these presents, *the said village shall be* exempted from such punitive burdens

as shall in such cases be hereafter imposed by Ordinance or otherwise, have agreed with the said Special Commissioner to pay him, or according to his order, the said sum of rupees..... in four quarterly instalments, payable on....., and to enter into this bond.

'Now, the condition of the above-written bond is such that if the said sum of rupees..... is duly paid in four quarterly instalments, together with the said interest, on the dates aforesaid, then this bond shall be null and void, but otherwise shall be in force and virtue.'

"Now, Sir, the points to be noted in this document are as follows:— First, the signatories to the bond are described as persons residing in a certain village named. Second, the Special Commissioner is said to have inquired into the damage caused in the said village and to have assessed the said damage at rupees..... Third, the signatories are described as the principal residents of the said village in which the damage was caused. Fourth, the losses are said to have been sustained by the Moors of the said village in which the signatories reside. Fifth, the Special Commissioner is said to have entered into an agreement with the signatories to exempt the said village from certain punitive burdens not yet sanctioned by the Legislative Council. Sixth, the signatories are said to have signed the bond in consideration of the Special Commissioner's promise to exempt them from impending punitive burdens.

"The principal feature, Sir, that emerges out of the bond is that damages were caused by the rioters in the very village in which the signatories reside, and that the signatories voluntarily signed the bond in order to avoid the punitive burdens which the Special Commissioner said were impending. The punitive burdens, Sir, were non-existent. This Council alone can impose punitive burdens, and so long as a law to that effect is

not passed by this Council, no man can hold in his hand a bond and say to the people that unless it is signed, the punitive burdens will come, and that if they sign the bond, he will see that they do not come.

"*Sir, what demoralizing state of affairs does this disclose! Decency, the exigencies of public life, honour, and morality alike are against any such proposal being made by any officer of Government to the people who are entrusted to his care and protection. To misuse all the great power of his situation, to intimidate them by threats of impending burdens into signing a bond of the most oppressive character—why, Sir, if the matter went into a court of law, that august tribunal, which my honourable friend the Attorney-General has so feelingly spoken of as the soul of honour and as the one body that was fearless of the Executive Government, would condemn the action of the officer and cast that bond to the winds as utterly vain and ineffectual. And why should you, Sir, a greater person than the Supreme Court, sanction this proceeding when the facts are brought before you. From my experience of you, I say that you would be the last person to tarnish and desecrate the principles of justice, so carefully fostered by the British Government for a century or more, by allowing these proceedings to be confirmed by the authority of this Council.*

"Most of the petitions say that the damages caused by the rioters were far away from the limits of the petitioners' villages, and that they are utterly innocent, and that it would be unjust to impose punitive burdens on them. It is not difficult to see, Sir, that the draftsman of the bond is a lawyer, that his opinion is that those who did not cause any injury to the Moors should not be liable in damages; that if the principal residents of the disturbed villages are to be asked to sign the bond for the payment of the damage caused by others, it should be for a consideration; and that the consideration of avoiding punitive burdens

may be a good consideration for the agreement to pay compensation. Neither is it difficult to see that the Special Commissioners, whose knowledge of legal procedure and legal documents could not but be scanty owing to their want of study and training, though the title of District Judge and Police Magistrate is given to them, completely missed the point of view of the lawyer-draftsman and made the inhabitants of undisturbed villages also to sign the bond that was not intended for them. If upon inquiry it be found that, as a matter of fact, the residents of undisturbed villages were made to sign the bonds made only for the residents of disturbed villages, the obligation in the bond would count for nothing, because both the parties to the bond were in error, even if no fraud was intended."

He further complained that while the Government had taken steps both legal and illegal to compensate the Muslims, *nothing was done to compensate the Sinhalese, many of whom had suffered considerable damage.* He said, "There is no doubt Sir, that, in the early stages of the riots, the Sinhalese Buddhist was grinding his axe against the Coast Moorman, called Hambaya, who had obstructed his procession in Gampola and Kandy. But within two days of the outbreak, during which the criminal classes had the time to observe the passivity and the paralysis of the police force and their opportunity for loot, thousands of Christian Sinhalese belonging to the criminal and unemployed population found it a paying business to join their Buddhist brethren in the general fray, and plunder the stores of not only the Coast Moors or *Hambayas*, but also of the resident Moors, called by the Sinhalese *Marakkalayas*. Why, they even occasionally looted the stores of the Sinhalese and the Tamils too. Rioting and looting thus became general for four or five days. In these circumstances, the damage done to the Sinhalese and the Tamils was as worthy of consideration as the damage done

to the Mohammedans. I have read to you petitions showing that many a Sinhalese man has had his property damaged, and that he has been refused compensation, and the Tamils have also come forward with petitions saying that their claims have not been admitted by the Special Commissioners. On what principle can we deny compensation arising out of the same set of circumstances to one class of people, while we are giving compensation freely to another class of people? That will not be justice; that will not be fair."

He concluded with the submission, "Now, Sir, we who have heard these complaints directly made to us must not be callous or deaf. We owe it to them and to the King, who has called us in fair Ceylon to do our respective duties, to go into these matters in detail and once for all pronounce upon the situation that has been created by the unfortunate circumstances which were ushered in on May 29 last. Howsoever hard or unpleasant the work may be, we must take the petitions severally into our hands and go into them, even as a Judge would take into his hands a complaint from the meanest villager and make him call evidence, examine the other side of the case, and give a judgment that would satisfy the conscience of the country.

"I beg, Sir, that you will not hesitate to appoint a Select Committee to inquire into all these complaints, and only after their report is tabled should you be prepared to take up the second reading of the Bill and make it live or die as the circumstances will admit of. My own feelings, Sir, are that you will do justice, and that even the officers about whom I have spoken will be prepared to do justice, by the appointment of a Select Committee. I move, Sir, for the appointment of a Select Committee."

The Hon. the Second Low-country Sinhalese Member seconded.

The fifth speech was a reply to the Attorney-General who opposed Ramanathan's motion for the appointment of a Select Committee to consider and report on the grievances alleged in the petitions and charged Ramanathan with living in an unreal world and having no sympathy for the Mohammedans who had sustained heavy losses. He, moreover, dismissed the petitions as specious and artificial, having no basis in truth and drawn by professional petition-drawers.

It was a long speech and will not bear quoting. In it Ramanathan demolished everyone of the objections raised by the Attorney-General. He said, "I am not conscious of living in an unreal world. I believe the Attorney-General, in the intensity of his wrong convictions, has persuaded himself that he is living in a world of realities.

"*The greater part of his speech was merely declamation. He did not meet squarely and fairly any of the specific points that I raised..... This is clap-trap eloquence. There is neither truth nor justice in it. Nor does it hold up to our consideration the importance of the issues involved, or the proper way in which we should deal with them.*

"I am sure that, howsoever cleverly a petition-drawer may have stated the case, *there is only one question before the Legislative Council, and that is whether that petition, notwithstanding its artificial magnificence, contains an element of truth in it.* Let not the Attorney-General fix his mind upon the poor professional petition-drawer, or upon the language which is quite suitable to the lips of an M. A. of a University, but rather let him gather the grains of fact involved in the words. I ask him whether he can charge his conscience with the falsehood of those statements. Without investigation, can he say for certain that the statements contained in the petitions are untrue? *Have I not shown that official notifications and other documents actually signed and issued by responsible officers of Government reveal*

a series of most illegal and high-handed proceedings? If they are true, what must he do? Must not he be the first person to advise the Government to make an inquiry into the case? But what does he say? 'Some of the officers *complained of are Honourable Members of this Council, great and glorious men. They and others who have assessed damages are perfect Trojans in work and examples of honour. What? Hear complaints against them by the people of the country, expose them to ridicule and imperil the work of the Government of Ceylon in regard to the attainment of order, peace and authority?' He virtually says, 'No; my affection for them is greater than that. I love them, I believe them, they are immaculate, they are incorrupt. They are quite unable to do any wrong, and, therefore, you brutes, get out of this. I will not have anything to do with you.'*"

The Hon. the Attorney-General:— That is quite foreign to anything I have said.

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan:— I beg his pardon, Sir, I believe that is the effect of his words, the extent to which his statements go. But I hear he disowns it. I am glad of that. I will accept his assurance. But I regret that without fixing his attention upon the statements of fact which are contained in the petitions, he has allowed his predilections for the officers at this table to be in the way of an inquiry upon the points urged in the petitions. He says, 'We repudiate *in toto* the statements made by the petitioners against honourable officers.' Supposing he was a Judge on the bench, could he say that? Could he say to the plaintiff, 'I repudiate your statements, as an inquiry into your allegations would affect the dignity of the defendant. Therefore, I will not hear the case.' I do not think he would say so. I need not labour that point.

"Then he says that the work of inquiry suggested by me is impracticable. He says the Special Committee of this Council cannot do it. Why,

Sir, Special Committees have before now done this kind of work in this very Council—not under your regime."

His Excellency the Governor:— Not about riots.

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan:— Not about riots, but about even more complicated things than riots. About riots too, Sir; now I come to think of it. There was a riot between the Roman Catholics and the Buddhists in Colombo. You will find that a Committee was appointed to inquire into the causes and consequences of the riots. They called evidence, and came to a verdict on many matters of fact and law. You will find their report in the Sessional Papers of 1883, I think. It is an important State document. Then, Sir, many Special Committees have sat in this very hall during the last forty years and dealt with questions similar to this. I do not see any practical difficulty about a Special Committee inquiring into the assessment. I recognize this fact, that when a person does not want to do a thing, it is easy for him to say, 'Oh! it is impracticable, and therefore you cannot expect one to do it.' I am not in the least impressed by the plea of the Attorney-General, by the justice of it, or by the correctness of the position he has taken up.

"If the reports of the Commissioners are placed before the Select Committee, what more easy for the Committee than to read them and the papers on which the reports are founded, and settle in their mind how the course of things lies? What more easy than to summon a few witnesses in typical cases, and if it is found, by studying the map and topography of the place, that the assessments as to disturbed and undisturbed villages and imposition of compensation on innocent persons as stated in the petitions are true, then it would be needless to go into detail in every case. We can say that a sufficient number of cases has been examined by us in reference to the proceedings

of every one of the Commissioners, and we find such and such errors in them, and we make such and such recommendations. There is no impracticability about it, and we need not want thirty long months to prove the work which thirty able Commissioners have done in sixty days.

"Well, Sir, my honourable friend has not dealt with the mortgage bond itself that I quoted from first to last. He has left that severely alone. I read to Honourable Members from first to last a typical mortgage bond, and I said, 'Now, what is the standpoint of view of this mortgage bond?' It is that the damages took place in the place of residence of the signatory himself, and that the damages in that village were, as a matter of fact, assessed by the Commissioners. I pointed out that the petitioners complained that, though in very many cases no damages were done in villages, and though the signatories to the bonds did not participate in the riots at all, yet they were forced to sign the bond. I also showed that the allotment proceeding upon a promiscuous basis could not be just, and that in very many cases the amount of the assessment had to be reduced by fifty percent or more. My honourable friend the Attorney-General quibbled a little with the word 'reduction', but at last he was forced to admit that he was obliged to alter the figures in the bond in terms of a revised assessment.

"Sir, this is an astounding statement. A bond given by one person to another is usually in the possession of the latter, and does the Hon. the Attorney-General say to me as a lawyer that any alteration of the bond by the grantee, without the consent of the grantor, is legal or justifiable? If I granted a promissory note to my honourable friend with the amount inserted in it, he has no right to alter the figures in it in the secrecy of his own chamber. So also I say he has no right to alter a mortgage bond in favour of the Crown

without reference to the person who signed it, *and the admission he has made today at the Council table is a disgrace to the Government that cannot be easily forgotten.*

"Sir, there has been much backsliding in principle and much disrespect for law and legal procedure during the past few months."

His Excellency the Governor:— I do not quite follow the Honourable and learned Member. I understand the point to be that a man entered into a bond for Rs. 100, and his creditor let him off with Rs. 30.

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan:— No, Sir. He altered the bond. The Hon. the Attorney General said that. I have got his words. But let that pass. It is going on to 9 o'clock. *I say the laxity in procedure and contempt for the principles of justice which I have observed during the last few months is amazing, and does not do credit to the officers who are entrusted with the duty of governing the country.*

"Sir, I think I have said enough to show that the points referred to by the people in the numerous petitions are worthy of consideration, and that we are asking nothing impracticable or unfair in begging the Council to halt a little before they obtain our consent to the retention of Clause 41 of the Bill which is before us.....

He concluded, "I say that in justice and honour, we are bound in duty to the people on one side, and the King on the other, to examine the complaints of the people and see whether the bonds sought to be confirmed by Section 41 of the Bill were obtained by intimidation and duress, and whether the signatories to the bond were participators or non participators in the riots."

Ramanathan's motion was put to the vote and was lost. He had made out an unanswerable case for the appointment of a Select Committee to examine the multitudinous petitions addressed to the legislature by the aggrieved Sinhalese,

complaining of diverse grievances. But here again the tyranny of the brute majority-vote intervened to give iniquity a semblance of legality.

In his last speech, the sixth, he opposed the Second Reading of the Bill to make provision for the Levy of Compensation on all the Sinhalese irrespective of whether they participated in the riots or not.

We have quoted the speech at some length, for here we see the great statesman in militant mood, his war-paint on, seething with indignation against the arbitrary and atrocious doings of the British bureaucrats who had now rallied together, against the high-handedness of their actions, their imperviousness to reason, their total mockery of all the restraints of law and justice, their utter contempt for the feelings and susceptibilities of a whole people in travail. He felt it was his duty to cry halt to these tyrannous proceedings, and tell them what he really felt about them and the government they administered, however unpalatable the truth might be.

Having commended the Attorney-General for the sincerity of his convictions with which he had acted, he submitted, "*The Government has erred gravely in the analysis of the complicated facts before it, and in the reasoning adopted to solve the problems which it desired to settle. We, Unofficial Members, do not know exactly the methods by which the Commissioners have come to their conclusions, because we have not seen their reports and the papers on which their reports depend.*"

The Attorney-General had said that all debt-bonds amounted to four million rupees and that all those who had signed the bonds were willing to pay the amounts allotted to each of them but that Ramanathan was unnecessarily making an issue of it.

Ramanathan said that if the assessed damages amounted to four millions and if three millions of that money was being vehemently objected to

by the petitioners, the Attorney-General had little reason to say that the bulk of the villagers who had been taxed acquiesced in the tax.

There was another ground more important, more fundamental, on which Ramanathan objected to these debt-bonds as being illegal, viz. that they were signed under duress and intimidation by armed soldiery.

He said, "I think the statement of the Attorney-General as regards Colombo and the Western Province was drawn in a roseate hue, whereas the truth, *as I understand the sentiments of the people, is that they are weeping and gnashing their teeth over this estimate or assessment. And what they are concerned most about is this, that without any opportunity given them to examine the assessment as made by the Government Agent, they are called upon to pay the sums assessed as if they were not subjects entitled to the protection of His Majesty the King, but were the slaves of the Government of Ceylon.*

"If I am called upon to pay moneys, I certainly will ask—I think Your Excellency would ask if the same demand was made upon you—'*Please explain why you call upon me to pay this amount, and how you have made up your bill against me.*' Is that wrong or impertinent? And if the man who makes the demand be a gentleman who loves his own honour and has a sense of justice, isn't it his duty to say, 'Here is my bill, look at it. I shall be very glad to show you how it is arrived at.' *But the Government of Ceylon is determined to have its own way of 'No explanation; stand and deliver.' The people think that it is utterly wrong, and that it is unrighteous to rob Peter to pay Paul. The villagers are Peter, the Mohammedans are Paul, and somebody is robbing Peter to pay Paul.*

"Neither do I understand the Attorney-General's statement that after all, the damages claimed from the villagers is very little, because if the amount of the damage is worked on the basis per head

of the population liable to the road tax, the damage per head in the Colombo District would be Rs. 15-16; in the Eastern Province Rs. 3-56; in the Province of Sabaragamuwa Rs. 1-35; in the Central Province 80 cents; in the Southern Province 55 cents; and in the North-Western Province 36 cents. *I feel sure, Sir, that this is a very misleading statement, which my honourable friend has taken as gospel truth from a wily official who is trying to screen a brood of wrong-doers and throw dust in the eyes of the public.* If the Council will study the petitions presented to the Governor and the Council, it will be seen how enormous and crushing is the allotment to each villager. I read to you about four hours ago two petitions from two different villages showing what the actual amount is that falls on each villager even on the basis of the reduced amounts. It is several times beyond the amounts mentioned by the Attorney-General.

The Hon. the Attorney-General:— Does the Honourable Member realize that Rs. 3-56 is per head of the population? The figure I gave, Rs. 15, is per road tax-payer for the Colombo District.

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan:— What is the value of this explanation? My contention remains true that the incidence of the allotment is unbearable. It is very different from the figures quoted by the Attorney-General.

"And may I ask, Sir, whether you have personally considered the grievances of the people in regard to the mortgage bonds which were taken by the Commissioners and which we are asked to confirm to-day? You assured us that you would give your most careful consideration to every petition presented, and if that be so, I thought the people would be safe. But up to this day, neither I nor any of my honourable colleagues on this side of the House have received any intimation from you, Sir, or the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, that the complaints of the people have been examined, and

what the results of such examination are. In the meanwhile, the feeling has grown far and wide that the Government may grant a reduction in the amount of compensation, but will certainly not wipe it out altogether even in the case of those villages which have not been disturbed by riots and in which the inhabitants have not done wrong to anybody. It has been represented to me, Sir, by a recent letter, that in one of the petitions presented to you, it was stated that though not a single person had done any wrong to any Mohammedan or taken part in the riot anywhere, my informant's village being situated three or four miles away from any of the disturbed villages, the Commissioner ordered the male adults to pay no less a sum than Rs. 6,000. I understand that this petition was referred by Your Excellency to a deeply interested Commissioner, who is himself charged with oppression and intimidation, to consider and dispose of the petition against the Commissioner who assessed the village in a similar way, and that the former Commissioner informed the petitioner that he saw no reason to re-consider the decision arrived at by the other Commissioner. There is no doubt about the truth of this representation, for I hold in my hands the reply of the Commissioner to the petitioners, which runs as follows. It is dated August 9, 1915:

'With reference to the petition of the villagers of Tammitta, addressed to His Excellency the Governor, and sent to me for disposal, not for report, I have to say that Mr. Moore, Special Commissioner, has fixed a very reasonable amount to be paid by the village. If it is found possible, the amount will be ultimately reduced, but no promise to this effect can be given at present.

'(Signed) J. G. Fraser,
Special Commissioner.'

"Sir, I ask, how can this inquiry and decision be considered just and proper? How can it produce

satisfaction in the hearts of the complainants and respect for British justice which our people have loved so long? . ....."

Ramanathan then pointed out another capital error the Government had committed, viz. that it had not consulted the rightful leaders of the people. Not that venal crew of fawning, adulating careerists and self-seekers, fishers in troubled waters who turn their country's hour of travail to their own inglorious gain, men of whom any age and clime has a goodly number, more so the present, with its desperate clinging to things material and mundane. Had it done that, the riots would not have assumed such alarming proportions. He cited several examples from India of how by taking the leaders of the contending parties into their confidence and conferring with them, the authorities were able to learn the underlying causes of the riots, quell them without much ado and restore peaceful and harmonious relations among the contending parties.

He said, "Riots are novel to us in Ceylon, and our knowledge of remedies for them is very meagre. You must have observed, Sir, that while the present riot was in progress, and even for many weeks afterwards, everyone was in a maze about it. Nobody understood the situation, and therefore could not assign the proper remedy for it. How is the appropriate remedy to be found? The Indian Government says it is discoverable only after conference with those persons who are in every-day touch with the thoughts and feelings of rioters. We are not to run here or there, nor sit in our chamber and spin out a fancy remedy, but quickly confer with the most experienced natives and unofficial Europeans in the country, who are in constant touch with all classes of people, and they will tell you where the sore is, how the riot happened, and what the remedy is.....

"Need there be any doubt now, that the ascertainment of the real causes of riots by conference

with the mob leaders and the rightful leaders of the people, and a determination to be just and sympathetic are essential principles for the restoration of order and peace?"

He then went on to say that the Government of Ceylon had failed signally in not ascertaining the true causes of the riots by conference with the rightful leaders of the people and in not trying to be just and reasonable to the rioters. He was vehement in his denunciation of the Government for trying to force this Bill "so crude and so unrighteous and oppressive through the Council with the aid of the official majority," and for failing in its primary duty of upholding the constitutional rights of the people and for employing its vast amount or physical force against an unarmed people, in the manner of a hardened criminal.

He proceeded, *"I say that the Government of Ceylon has signally failed in both these respects. It does not know even to this day the real causes of the riots. It has not yet taken any steps to ascertain those causes, and yet it is blindly determined upon a remedy which is crushing the very life of the people and quenching all their regard for British justice.*

"If the Government knew the causes of the recent riots in Ceylon, they would not have done many of the things they have done to the dismay of every right-minded person in the country, and this bill, so crude and so unrighteous and oppressive, would not be attempted to be forced through the Council with the aid of the official majority.

"From inquiries I have made from all classes of men, I gather that Government officers have not borne in mind the duty of upholding the constitutional rights of the people, but have gone about thinking that, because they had a vast amount of power in their hands, they should exercise it in full force, even as an angry person is wont to use a knife which he has in his hands. That is not good government. A good father remembers that one of the objects of his existence in the world is the

improvement and reformation of his children (laughter). My honourable friend the Colonial Secretary laughs."

The Honourable the Colonial Secretary:— Only at the idea of your reformation.

The Honourable Mr. Ramanathan:— Well, Sir, what am I to do? Things that are apparent to one class of thinkers are not apparent to another class of thinkers, owing to their density. *But what I mean is that any one who has lived long enough to be a father or grandfather and thought seriously of life could easily understand the principle of living for the people and treating them as his own children. I know that with the years of experience on me I must live for the happiness of my descendants and my countrymen, and that I must control myself and use the power which Providence has put into my hands with the least possible friction in order to improve and reclaim those who are under my control and set them on a principled footing. Government officers must guide themselves by the principle that the people, whom the King has appointed them to govern, must be treated like their own children, with sympathy and yet firmly. If they sit down and think the matter over, they will see the correctness of the conclusion that the power in their hands is given to them for a sacred purpose, and that those who are called upon to govern the people must be very considerate and tactful in the use of their power. If power is to be enforced on the people, it must be for their happiness and well-being, and not for the glorification of the officers or to prove the might of the Government.*

"Well, I cannot help thinking, Sir, that our officers have not gone about with that spirit. The doctrine is new to them, but not new to the Sovereigns of England or their wise ministers, and other high officers of State in India. We may well learn at their feet and have them as our models." What noble sentiments, what sublime precepts for the rulers of men! What sovereign remedies for the ills of the State! The Government should be to the people as a father to his children; sympathy, goodwill and understanding are a better solvent of the problems that divide the rulers from the ruled than blind force.

He said that in the circumstances, it was imperative that they got at the culprit responsible for causing the riots before meting out the punishment and added that they had no need to go far to get at him. He was no other than the Government Agent of the Central Province who had denied the Kandyans their immemorial right to celebrate their religious festivals, unhampered by anybody. It was the Government that was really at fault and not the people. If that be so, why saddle the people with the responsibility of paying the damages and let the Government go scot-free.

The Government Agent had failed not only in this but in many other duties appertaining to his office—his failure to take sufficient precaution against a possible breach of the peace and his stubborn refusal to meet the leaders of the two communities, despite their persistent appeal to him to do so. Then came the "passivity and paralysis of the Police" resulting in their failure to take prompt and effective action to arrest the course of the riots after they had broken out.

Ramanathan said, "Let us consider the causes of the riots in Ceylon and see whether the measures proposed in the Bill are appropriate or just in the circumstances of the case.

"It must be admitted that the riots of June last are rooted in things that happened in Gampola in August, 1912. The first cause is the ill-advised action of the Government Agent in refusing to the Buddhists the celebration of their great national festival in the usual way in Gampola. The Basnayake Nilame of the Kataragama dewale at Wahahagoda in Gampola wanted to take his procession, as of old, through a certain street in Gampola along .....

His Excellency the Governor:— I must not be led away by the fascination of listening to your silvery tones, Mr. Ramanathan, but shall you approach the second reading of this precise Bill?

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan:— Oh, yes, Sir. What I am saying has a distinct bearing on the Bill. I am right in it. The first cause of the rioting of June last is the denial of the Government Agent of the Central Province to the Buddhists of Gampola to have their procession conducted, as of old, from their temple with music right through Ambagamuva street to a particular part of the Mahaweli-ganga. An application was made to the Government Agent by the trustee or Nilame of the dewale, but he refused to grant his permission on August 27, 1912, on the ground that the *Hambaya* Mohammedans, who had built a mosque in Ambagamuva street, objected to the Buddhist procession passing their mosque with music. The trustee of the dewale let the preparation for the procession slide, and went into the District Court of Kandy in September, 1913, and complained that the Government Agent had wrongfully and in breach of the Convention signed in Kandy in 1815 by the British Government and the Kandyan Chiefs refused plaintiff permission to conduct the procession through that portion of the Ambagamuva street within one hundred yards of the *Hambaya* Mohammedans' mosque to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The judgement of the District Judge, Mr. Paul Pieris, was delivered in June, 1914. He found that, instead of binding the Hambaya Mohammedans of the mosque to keep the peace, the Government Agent directed the police to plant pipes fifty yards away from each side of the mosque, and to inform the Buddhists that they should not sound their music while going over these one hundred yards.

"The facts of the case are undisputed. The procession was the Esala Perahera, celebrated throughout the dominion of the King of Kandy as the greatest of the national festivals of the Sinhalese. It related to the worship of the generalissimo of the celestial forces named Kattragama Deva by the Sinhalese, and Karthikeya by the Hindus. The procession, so far as the Walahagoda dewale was concerned, went for centuries from that dewale to the Mahaweli-ganga at Parutota for the cutting of the waters in great pomp and ceremony, and returned by the same road, during all which time the people have been in the highest state of enthusiasm and devotion to that powerful Deva. There are four mosques on the route of the perahera. Three of these mosques belonging to the permanent Mohammedans of the town do not object to the perahera, but the trustees of the fourth mosque, built a few years ago by some immigrant Mohammedans from South India, objected to the procession. The Government Agent did not see the political danger of forcing the Basnayake Nilame into court to discuss the constitutional question about the interpretation to be given to the Kandyan Convention. It was sure to irritate hundreds of thousands of Buddhists, and bring them into conflict with the *Hambaya* Mohammedans all over the Island. The District Judge points out that if the trustees of that one mosque belonging to the immigrant Mohammedans from South India had been bound over to keep the peace, nothing would have happened. But the Buddhists, being forced into Court, obtained judgement from the District Judge. The Supreme Court upset the District Judge's judgement on February 2, 1915. The plaintiff went to the District Court in Kandy almost a year after the refusal of the license.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary:— The license was refused in 1912.

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan:— That is so. The Basnayake Nilame's complaint was that on August 27, 1912.....

His Excellency the Governor:— This happens to interest me very much, but I must protest in the interests of order. We must not go too deeply into this. It happens to interest me, but I must go counter to my inclinations. We will come on to the second reading of the Ordinance to provide compensation for losses by riots.

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan:— Well, Sir, *I have repeatedly asked, on whom are you going to saddle the compensation—upon the causers of the riots or upon someone else?*

His Excellency the Governor:— Who did cause the Riots?

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan:— *I say the wrong move of the Government Agent in regard to the Gampola Basnayake Nilame was the earliest of the causes of the recent riots. The fault is on the part of a Government servant. Then comes another fault of a Government servant on May 27, 1915, in connection with the carol procession in Kandy on the Wesak Day.* The Government Agent granted a license to those who wanted to have the procession, but said, 'Don't go to Castle Hill street, where these immigrant Mohammedans have a mosque, till after 12 o'clock midnight, when their mosque must be closed.' The Government Agent did not bind the trustees of this mosque to keep the peace. The Buddhist procession did not go there till about 1 o'clock. But the Hambaya Mohammedans were ready for them then and there, hooting and jeering at the Sinhalese, whose patience was exhausted. They chased the Mohammedans, damaged a part of their mosque and some of their boutiques also, and brought their procession abruptly to an end. Nothing further happened in the night in Kandy, but on the following day people from the villages came into Kandy and were hanging about the streets, wishing to protect their Dalada Maligawa or Great Temple of the Tooth Relic from the attack which was expected to be made by the Mohammedans coming by train

from Colombo and from South India. They stood opposite the house of the principal *Hambaya* in Trincomalee Street at about 7 o'clock in the evening, together with some policemen who did nothing, because they were in fear of the people. While they were so standing, a *Hambaya* from the upper storey fired a shot on the crowd of people standing opposite the house, and a Sinhalese youth was wounded. Then the people cried, 'There is the murderer; why don't you constables go and seize him?' The constables did not seize him. What they did was to carry the corpse of the youth to the mortuary. The crowd waited and called upon the constables to seize the Hambaya who was still in the boutique. Nothing being done, they vented their anger by raiding that and some other boutiques, and gradually the crowd melted away. The next morning ushered a momentous day. The crowd came back again in greater numbers, seeing the inactivity of the police and hearing that the Maligawa was in extreme danger. The leading people of Kandy—Burghers, Christians, Buddhists, and even Mohammedans—went to the Government Agent and told him that he could easily send away the mob if he only came near the Town Hall and said to the mob that he would inquire into the grievances of the people. The Government Agent refused to go, Sir, unlike the procedure followed in India. The first thing done there was for the chief official to go amongst the mob undefended, unprotected but with the leaders of the people. The Government Agent of Kandy would not go and meet the mob, and the consequence was that within a little time there was a collision between the Sinhalese and the Hambaya Mohammedans, and there were two murders in the street. The crowd who witnessed this street fight were controlled by the unarmed cadets of Trinity College. Then came the Inspector-General with a few Punjabi soldiers. A few stragglers,

who seemed to resent the bigotry of the Hambayas more than the rest, ran in different directions, some towards Katugastota, some towards Gampola, some towards Matale, and some towards Kadugannawa, and raised false cries that the Mohammedans had destroyed the Maligawa, had cut and mutilated Sinhalese women, and that the Hambaya boutique-keepers must be sent out of the villages before the Indian and the Colombo Mohammedans could join hands with them. So the feeling of self-defence and necessity for immediate action being roused in the hearts of the Sinhalese villagers, riots did take place, which soon extended to Colombo.

"In Colombo, again, one of the principal causes of the riots was the passivity and even paralysis of the police. The people by themselves are not so foolish as to defy the great force that lies in the hands of Government and behind it. They are not so stupid as that, nor do they care to be caught red-handed and sent to jail. There are people in every nation who wait for opportunities to do wrong deeds, and if the police is found to be ineffectual, what more natural than for the criminal classes and the villains of the country to come out of their dens and prey upon the country? It is not disloyalty; it is not treason; it is not contempt for Government; but it is a rush upwards of evil desires consequent upon the inactivity of the police.

"The rise of dissension and animosity in the hearts of men can never be stopped. Timely discussion and persuasion may often allay them. But the power that keeps them down is the power of arrest vested in the hands of the police, and the power of imprisonment vested in the hands of Magistrates. If these powers are in abeyance, dissensions, animosities, and evil desires of all kinds will break out and throw social order into wild confusion. Theft, grievous hurt, gang robbery, riot, and murder will be the result of the police

and the magistracy not doing their respective duties. I say the principal cause of the riots of June last and the consequent loss of property and life was the failure of the constables and the Magistrates and Government Agents to do their respective duties. What was once a religious riot soon converted itself into a general loot on the part of the criminal classes and the hungry poor, who saw their opportunity, and it went on extending up to Matara. *The question now is, now that we know the causes of the riots, and now that Government have conceded that they have not found any evidence of conspiracy between the upper classes and the lower classes of the Sinhalese—who is to be saddled with responsibility for these deeds? Are you going to punish the criminal classes and the villains of the country? Are you going to saddle the responsibility upon the police and the Magistrates and Government Agents who neglected to perform their duties, which were the arrest of offenders flagrante delicto, the dispersion of the crowd by the methods prescribed by law, and the prompt punishment of the guilty? If the custodians of the public peace failed to conserve it, if they neglected ordinary prudence and the prompt exercise of the power vested in their hands, why should we go and saddle the responsibility of the riots on the shoulders of what my honourable friend the Attorney-General has called the 'innocent and irreproachable Sinhalese'?*

"To quote from a great authority on this subject: 'It is the duty of a Magistrate at the time of a riot to arm the subjects of the realm—either civil or military—for the purpose of quelling it. It is his duty to keep the peace. If the peace be broken, honesty of intention will not avail him if he has been guilty of neglect of duty. The question is whether he did all that he knew was in his power and which could be expected from a man of ordinary prudence, firmness, and activity.' The law thus stated is gathered from the opinion of the Judges who tried the Lord Mayor of London and the Mayor

of Bristol on indictment for neglect of duty during the Gordon riots of 1780 and the Bristol riot of 1831. In addition to his liability to an indictment at common law, a defaulting Magistrate is subject, under the provisions of the Acts of 1411 (Henry IV.) and 1414 (Henry V.) to a penalty of £100 for every default, the default to be inquired into by a Commission under the Great Seal.

"*Such is the responsibility which fall upon the shoulders of Government officers entrusted with the keeping of the peace. I now ask, why should innocent citizens be charged with the burdens which the actual rioters themselves and the defaulting Police Magistrates and Government Agents of the country must bear?* I repeat that dissensions, animosities, and evil desires will arise in the hearts of the people from time to time, but they must not be allowed by the guardians of the peace to break out and destroy the life, limb, and property of others. Those who illegally take away life, limb and property must certainly be punished, *as also those officers of Government through whose neglect of duty the riots broke out.*"

Ramanathan next proceeded to examine the legal warrant which the Attorney-General claimed for the recovery of the damages from the entire population of the area wherein the riots occurred, and proved the claim to be utterly hollow and untenable. He said, "Let us now come, Sir, to the idea of compensation recoverable from anybody but the rioters. The Attorney-General says that the idea came into the head of the Government from three channels: firstly, the common law of England; secondly, the Riot Damages Act of 1886; and thirdly, the Repression of Crime Ordinance, No. 3 of 1903, and that the present Bill is an adaptation of those laws to local circumstances. Sir, my study of these laws does not enable me to bear out the opinion of the Attorney-General that they justify the present Bill.

"It is a wrong premise, in the first place, to believe that the common law of England supports the Bill. According to the common law, damages are not payable by anybody but rioters themselves. The idea of collective responsibility for a crime done in a village was a part of the obsolete Anglo-Saxon law. It was done away with. Then came the Acts 7 and 8 of George IV, Chapter 31, which provide that the compensation for damage by rioters should be levied on the hundreds, so that it should fall in the neighbourhood where the riot occured. But this Act, Sir, was found to be wholly unworkable because under its provisions it was necessary to prove that the houses were not only partly or wholly demolished by the rioters, but also that it was their intention to wholly demolish the premises. The Act of 1886, instead of recovering damages from the hundreds, empowered a levy from a wider area only for the purpose of making the taxation less onerous than it would otherwise be. The point I now make is this, that under the English Act of 1886 the damages are leviable on an already existing fund, called the Police Fund, raised to pay the maintenance of the police.

"In England there is a Police Fund for the City of London, for the Metropolitan police, for the Counties, and the Boroughs, and these Police Funds are under the control of the City Council, the County Council, and the Borough (or Municipal) Council. It is a fact, Sir, that these Police Funds consist of not only rates payable by householders, but also of contributions made by the Government from the general revenue of the whole United Kingdom. The public exchequer pays 44 percent, and the remaining 56 percent is subscribed by the rate-payers. Villages which have not been given Municipal organizations have no such Police Fund. Thus, if the analogy of England is to be observed here, the collective

responsibility will fall only on Municipalities and Local Boards. Villages will not be touched at all. But what the Ordinance strives to do here is to cast the compensation upon the villagers mostly, and where it casts the responsibility upon Municipalities and Local Boards, the Government takes care not to contribute a cent towards the damages. It is therefore altogether wrong to believe that the English Riot Damage Act supports the levy of damages from villages.

"Then, Sir, I come to the contention that the Repression of Crime Ordinance, No. 3 of 1903, supports the present policy. I have no hesitation in saying that this idea is also wrong. That Ordinance sanctions the quartering of Police in a village, or the payment of compensation in money or labour by the villagers for the damage done only when murder, grievous hurt, or other offence has been perpetrated by some unknown offender, on the principle that the villagers may know who the offender is, but do not like to divulge his name or bear witness against him. In such a case the Government Agent is empowered to go into the village and assess the damages suffered by the injured parties, and to allot the compensation to the different villagers in the special way indicated by the Ordinance and under the safeguards provided therein. The Ordinance does not apply to any village where murder, grievous hurt, or other offence has been committed by a known person, or where such crimes do not exist. I say, Sir, emphatically, that it is wrong to believe that the Repression of Crime Ordinance, No. 3 of 1903, justifies the application of its principles to cases of sudden riots, such as the one which we have in view, where offenders may be easily seen, identified, and brought to book before a court of justice. Do riots now exist in these villages from which compensation is claimed, or does the Government apprehend any more riots there?

"Having now shown that neither the common law of England, nor the English Riot Damage Act of 1886, nor the Ordinance No. 3 of 1903 for the Repression of Crime in Ceylon justifies the most inequitable principle of robbing Peter to pay Paul insisted upon in the present Bill, I now come to the doctrine of racial responsibility propounded by it."

Ramanathan expressed genuine surprise that the Attorney-General should discover a claim for racial responsibility in the Common Law of England and Ceylon. He now asked the Attorney-General pointedly *"whether he as an Englishman has ever paid one single farthing as compensation for any villainies practised by the villainous classes in England"*, and concluded that *"the doctrine of racial responsibility is utter foolishness."* He asked the Attorney-General if he knew not that the law knows no colour, creed or language, if he had not heard that the law is spiritual and makes no difference between Jew and Gentile, Greek and Roman. He said, "I can only say that I am astonished that my honourable friend the Attorney-General has stood up for racial responsibility and has the boldness to say as a legislator that, if 'the innocent and irreproachable Sinhalese' do not accept responsibility for the acts of the habitual criminals and other ruffians of the country, the good name of the Sinhalese will be eternally tarnished, and that to be national, one must pay, not only for the upkeep of lofty ideals, but also for compensating the damage done by the rascals of the country. I desire to ask the Attorney-General *whether he as an Englishman has ever paid one single farthing as compensation for any villainies practised by the villainous classes in England.*"

The Hon. the Attorney-General:— *No; but I would if my community wrecked any quarter of this city. I will pay my share.*

The Hon. Mr. Ramanathan:— *Your willingness to pay is not the question. The point is, whether you*

have ever paid it in England, when class collisions occurred, and whether you once thought that the fair name of England was sullied by the fact that villains have lived in England and have continued to live and flourish there.

"Sir, the doctrine of racial responsibility, I make bold to say, is utter foolishness, and commends itself only to those whom St. Paul has described as corporeal men. Does not the Attorney-General know that the law knows no colour, creed, or language? Has he not heard that the law is spiritual; that it makes no difference between Jew and Gentile, Greek and Roman; that all nations are made of one blood; that we are all the children of God; that we address ourselves to the one and only God, the maker and protector of all nations, as our Father; and that we should not walk after the flesh but after the spirit? The Attorney-General and the other members of the Government who have sat round the table in the Executive Council Chamber and worked at this wonderfully strange Bill, have, I am sorry to say, labelled themselves as very corporeal men, ignorant of the spiritual truths of the great religion to which they belong, truths which are alike common to all the great religions of the world. They have forgotten all these true sayings, and alas! they have forgotten the express teachings of those great and glorious Sovereigns of England, Sovereigns who have graced the British throne since 1837. They have forgotten the proclamation of Queen Victoria in 1856, which states:—

'We declare it to be our Royal will and pleasure that none be in anywise favoured, none molested, but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law. It is our earnest desire to administer the Government for the benefit of all our subjects resident in it. In the prosperity of our subjects is our strength, in their contentment is our security, and in their gratitude is our reward.'

"They have forgotten, too, Sir, the proclamation of King Edward VII in 1908, which states:—

'We survey our labours of the past century with a clear gaze and a good conscience. Errors have occured. The Agents of my Government have spared no pains or self-sacrifice to correct them. If abuses have been proved, vigorous hands have laboured to apply a remedy.'

"They have also forgotten the exhortation of our Most Gracious King George V:—

'I cannot help thinking' said His Majesty, 'from all I have seen and heard that the task of governing India will be made the easier if we on our part infuse into it a wider element of sympathy. I venture to predict that to that sympathy there will be an ever-abundant and generous response.'

"I need not say more, Sir, upon the principles of this Bill. I have carefully touched upon all that fell from the Hon. the Attorney-General in his exposition. I do not think that it can be said with any degree of truth that either the common law of England, or the English Riot Damage Act of 1886, or the Repression of Crime Ordinance, No. 3 of 1903, *can be construed as authorities for the new, unrighteous, and inequitable principles which appear in every page of this Bill.* I do not want to go into the smaller principles of the Bill or the details of it, because when it comes into Committee we shall have an opportunity of dealing with them and making the Bill as little objectionable as possible in the event of the Government forcing it through the Council with the aid of the official majority. *I submit that the needs of good government do not require a Bill so drastic as the one before us, and that it is a serious reflection upon the fair name of a people who have always been loyal and grateful to the British throne and to the officers of the British Government in this Island. Such gratitude as theirs, and such loyal feelings as theirs, should not*

be violated by thrusting on them an Ordinance so fearful and unrighteous as this, and I can only hope that wiser counsels will prevail and lead the Government to withdraw this Bill altogether. I oppose the second reading of it in toto, because it is a tangled mass of wrong thought and wrong principle from beginning to end, and is the outcome of gross ignorance of the causes of the riots and the true remedies needed. It discloses the extreme self-sufficiency and precipitate action of the Government."

The Bill was passed by the Official majority. Here, as everywhere, the tyranny of the brute majority-vote prevailed. Of all commodities, by far the cheapest for an alien despot is human life and fortune, said a great historian. Autocracy naked, undisguised, unabashed had done its worst; truth, reason, justice and humanity had been trampled under foot. The forces of evil had triumphed, while the forces of good had suffered a severe repulse. All the wealth of argument Ramanathan poured across the floor of the House in lucid streams of reasoning, in language so trenchant and yet so moving, all his transcendent courage, all his passionate plea for justice, humanity and kindly-dealing left the autocrat unmoved. When the Council went into Committee to examine the details of the Bill, Ramanathan wrangled with the Governor for the appointment of a Select Committee to do that, but the Governor was obdurate, protesting that he had shown him all the latitude he could. Ramanathan said, *"I can't help it. I have a duty to perform."*

These speeches so voluminous in extent and forged in the dead-heat of patriotic passion and blazing indignation against the tyranny of an alien oppressor made a profound and lasting impression on all who heard or read them. Those were anxious days, days of extreme uncertainty and doubt as to what would befall the nation next, when all eyes were cast on the legislature in anxious fear

and expectation of what it had in store for them; if it would alleviate or aggravate their sorrows and sufferings. These speeches of his, so daring, so challenging, and often so appealing, so rich in thought, so deep in learning, so overflowing with human emotion, moved, as few others before or since, the hearts of all lovers of liberty and light, of justice and kindly-dealing in man's commerce with his fellow-men. The Anagharika Dharmapala who followed with bated breath the course of events in his home-country, from his rooms in Calcutta, gave free expression to the emotions that welled up within him on reading these speeches:

Sri Sadsharma Mandir,
44, College Square,
Calcutta, Oct. 21, 1915.

Dear Mr. Ramanathan,

Please accept my sincerest congratulations for the historic speech you made at the Ceylon Legislative Council, which I read in "The Ceylonese".

The day that you are taken away from Ceylon, from that day there will be none to defend the poor, neglected Sinhalese. They are a doomed people, with none to guide and protect them. Unhappy Sinhalese! If only they are under the Government of India, a hundred newspapers would be there to ventilate their grievances. The two religions, Buddhist and Tamil, do trace their origin to India. Their civilisation is Indian, and just as the Colonial Britisher looks to England as his mother-country, so should the Sinhalese look to Northern India as their mother-country. Under the Colonial Office, the Sinhalese and the Tamils will never get equal justice with the British settlers. Not so with the India Office. It is time to commence agitation in Ceylon to have Ceylon brought under the Government of India. Without the protecting shadow of India, Ceylon would decline. It is the view of able Indian politicians, that to get justice,

Ceylon should be brought under the India Office and made part of Madras and Bengal. Burma is under the Government of India and Burma is to India as Ceylon is to South India. May you live long to see Ceylon and India working together under the same government. The cause of the Riots may be traced*.....
.....the Mohammedan mob and to the stupidity of the government. The Indian papers know very little about the Riots, and the best thing that the Ceylon people could do now is to scatter broadcast your speech in pamphlet form.

The British papers should be especially addressed and the agitation kept. The Riot Bill, when passed into law, will be a blot on the British escutcheon. It is a pity when the Germans are being criticised for their brutality, that the British should go down to history with the tarnished name.

The Proclamation of Fraser that the people should be shot at sight is frightful and the demand of Rs. 2000/– for a male goat unsupplied has a terrible frightfulness. When the war is over, a true account of the Riots will be welcome reading. The atrocities committed under the Orders of the Court Martial should go into history.

The Sinhalese alone escaped from the invasion of Mohammedans in the 10th and 12th centuries and all India went down. Even Java was Mohammedanised in the 15th century. When Ceylon goes under Muslim rule with the help of British Officials, then will the end of Buddhism come and the reign of righteousness and mercy culminate.

You will, I hope, do all you can to save the poor Buddhists, for you are trying to save the people from injustice. The Governor is a Pali scholar and yet to the Buddhists he has come not as a guardian-angel. He is able to help the Buddhists more than any other Governor. Will

* Dotted lines indicate places where the words are moth-eaten.

he do it or leave the Island signing the death-warrant of the Buddhists?

Let us hope that his heart will melt with the pleadings and the wailing of the Buddhist mothers in 10,000 Buddhist homes. May you succeed in softening his heart.

Yours sincerely,
The Anagarika Dharmapala

It was one of the sorest moments in Ramanathan's long and illustrious career, the spectacle on one side of indescribable anguish and suffering among a people reduced to the extremity of despair, by arrogant and iron-clad despotism determined to do its worst; on another, the spectacle of large numbers of innocent and law-abiding citizens brutally shot by an irresponsible and blood-thirsty foreign army; on yet another, the spectacle of large numbers facing execution on the slapdash findings of the Courts Martial; of large numbers awaiting trial and sentence by that ghastly tribunal and not knowing when it would be their last; of large numbers of leaders languishing in prison cells not knowing what the despot had in store for them, of multitudes of men and women living in mortal fear of arrest and incarceration at any moment, of whole villages losing their all to compensate the Muslims. To worsen matters, there were his colleagues, the Unofficial Members of the legislature, accredited guardians and watch-dogs of the people's rights and liberties, who through either timidity or self-interest or both ran with the hare and hunted with the hounds—an art they, like true men of the world, had learnt to a finish and practised with consummate ease and skill. With one breath, they pleaded extenuation, with another, they applauded the firm and repressive action of the rulers.

Amid these many discouragements and setbacks, Ramanathan never despaired. He was never known to despair. A man of God that he eminently

was, he knew that tyranny and all things akin to it are but short-lived. He who had weathered many a storm and ridden on the crest of many a turbulent wave in his long and bitter conflict with a bigoted and perverse alien bureaucracy had no need to despair. Such reverses as he faced, if they befell a weak man, a fribble, a coxcomb, would merely have ended him. Rather they steeled him to more heroic efforts.

The sagacious pencil of an American cartoonist, Mr. Modder, has immortalised for us Ramanathan's gallant combat with the formidable host of British imperialists in the Island, by likening him to St. George of England mounted on a fiery steed, carrying a mighty lance in hand, waging bitter war with the deadly and devastating dragon and not resting content until he had ended it and saved his country and his people from utter destruction.

Ramanathan knew he yet had a remedy. He could appeal to the Home Government at Westminister, and if the truth were brought home, he would find redress. He was fortunate in one thing, not often vouchsafed to freedom-fighters. He was fighting a civilised foe, one who would play the game and not hit him below the belt; who would listen to the dictates of reason, bow to the demands of justice; a foe, moreover, who would act with restraint and a sense of honour, who marched with the times and respected world opinion. Any other ruling power would not have brooked his daring challenges, his deadly denunciations of its bureaucracy but would have haled him and locked him behind prison bars in what it regarded as a grave national crisis.

But how was he to make his way to Westminister? The world was then in the throes of the greatest war in human history, every nation fighting desperately for survival. German submarines were ploughing the high seas in a supreme bid to bring England on her knees. No one who cared a rap for life would think of a journey to England

at that perilous time. But Ramanathan was made of sterner stuff. For no man ever wore his heart less on his sleeve than he did. Few things were more impressive about him than his complete fearlessness, his complete disregard of personal danger or suffering. The call of duty was paramount. A whole people in agony and distress looked up to him for succour which he alone could bring. His noble wife exhorted him: "You have done much, but you have more to do." With his soul firmly anchored in God and his heart set solely on his duty by the people, this indomitable man in his declining years and the infirmity of age and against the advice of his trusted friends, took the plunge. To them he said, "My country cries for help in this her hour of dire need and I must respond."

In the meantime, the White Sahibs in the Island, who had been the perpetrators of all these atrocious wrongs were not slow to act. They had clamped down a rigid censorship of the press and prohibited all communications with the outside world, as has been the wont of despots through the ages, lest their iniquity reach the world's ear. All telegrams sent to the Censor to be forwarded to higher authorities in London were returned. Let Ramanathan speak: "Feeling that the time had come for my going to England and personally representing to the Secretary of State the case of my electorate and the people of Ceylon in general, I handed in at the Chief Telegraph Office in Colombo the following telegram on the 27th of October, at one p. m.:

'From P. Ramanathan to Rt. Hon. Bonar Law, London.

'Referring ordinance providing compensation for losses by rioters which validates bonds signed before Military Commissioners, I moved fourteenth instant for appointment of Select Committee to consider complaints contained in three hundred petitions presented to Council, and for postponement

of second-reading until report is tabled. Complaints are Commissioners' assessments and apportionments violate your statements in Parliament, and bonds taken were forced, by threats to shoot and imprison, in presence of armed soldiers. My motion strongly supported was defeated, and ordinance hurriedly passed same night, to dismay of people. Pray defer action, until I personally submit people's awful grievances with documents. I am starting immediately French mail steamer *Paul Lecat*. Arriving London eighteenth.'

"I also paid the cost of this telegram. The Censor seemed to be very much upset by the contents, and would not let me know even at six p. m.—five hours after it was handed in—whether he had despatched it or not. Speaking through the telephone, he said, in reply to my questions, that he was not at liberty to say 'yes' or 'no' to my questions, nor under what law he assumed this attitude of withholding the information which I, as the sender, ought to have; nor, in the absence of any law, whether or not he had any orders from the Governor to delay, or not to despatch the telegram.

"The Governor in Executive Council had power under Ordinance No. 35 of 1908, Section 5, when a public emergency arises, to order telegraphic message to be intercepted, detained, or not be transmitted. I felt that there was nothing but selfish emergency to support the possibility of the Censor not transmitting the telegram and my electorate was put to the trouble and expense of sending a gentleman to Madras (in India) to forward a similar telegram to a friend in London to apprise the Secretary of State that I was coming to see him, and that he should defer action till then."

CHAPTER XII

RAMANATHAN'S MISSION TO ENGLAND—HIS RETURN

> In my opinion, no man has risen to the ideal of what a representative of the people should be as Mr. Ramanathan has done.
>
> —*Sir Frederick Dornhorst*

RAMANATHAN sailed for England by *M. M. Paul Lecat* on 30th October, 1915. Needless to say, the journey was a perilous one. Bubbles were seen rising up to the surface of the sea, and the Captain explained it was due to the breaking up of an iceberg. The ship went in a zig-zag course and the passengers were told that there were rocks underneath. It was only when the steamer reached England that the Captain told the truth. The bubbles were from a German oil tanker which had been sunk and the zig-zagging was due to the ship's being chased by submarines.

Ramanathan reached England after a long and anxious voyage. While at sea he had not idled—Ramanathan was never known to idle—but had put his time to the most profitable use. He had prepared his case for presentation at Westminster. When he landed in England, he had his case ready. He also published a history of the riots under the title "Riots and Martial Law in Ceylon, 1915" for the benefit of the British public and its rulers, had a number of personal interviews with Mr. Bonar Law, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and other Ministers of State, got into close touch with leading Members of Parliament and other prominent personalities, and gave the widest publicity to the foul misdeeds of their agents in the Island.

As a result of his representations, Ceylon hit the headlines in practically all the newspapers in England. Much popular indignation and resentment was aroused at the sensational happenings. Questions were asked in Parliament; the Governor and the Brigadier-General were recalled immediately. Of his work in England, he has given us the following account:

"This is an eventful story which cannot be briefly told. But it may be mentioned that, on arriving in London, I corresponded with the Secretary of State and found him immersed in office, in Parliamentary and War duties, which taxed him to the utmost extent. He deputed the Permanent Under-Secretary of State and the Governor-Elect of Ceylon to meet me. Sir John Anderson gave me a most kindly, patient and long hearing, with assurances of careful consideration and relief after arriving in Ceylon and assuming duties as Governor. Then, on the invitation of a Member of Parliament, who is also a Member of the Privy Council, I met several Members of Parliament in the House of Commons, and addressed them there and answered all the questions put to me. I wrote, printed and published a book of over three hundred pages full of facts, explaining the true state of affairs in Ceylon. I spoke again at another private meeting of Members of Parliament and other influential gentlemen and ladies assembled in the central buildings, Westminster, under the Chairmanship of Sir T. F. Victor Buxton, Bt. I did not leave England until I had the assurance of my friends and supporters that they fully understood the local situation, and would take charge of it and leave nothing undone to get redress.

"My protest in Council and the Colonial Office has borne good fruit. None of the debt-bonds, compulsorily taken by the Military Commissioners, has been enforced; the compensation assessed by the Officers of the Government, which I complained

of as excessive and unjust in its incidence, has been reduced by 70 per cent. And this reduced amount has been distributed amongst a vast number of men, whose burdens have become proportionately less and comparatively small; a large number of persons sentenced by Courts-Martial and the ordinary Courts have been released and long sentences considerably reduced; the very heavy compensation insistently demanded of Moratuva has also been reduced by 33 per cent; and for these and other reliefs, we have to thank Mr. Bonar Law and Sir John Anderson chiefly.

"Great as the calamity was that befell us, we should consider it a blessing in disguise. The ignorant masses know now the consequence of taking the law into their own hands for avenging their wrongs, real or fancied; and the officers of the Government who acted in excess of their powers know now their duties better, as also the relation which they bear to the people as His Majesty the King's servants, charged with the duty of serving the people and guiding them by ways that are not cruel, contemptuous or oppressive."

The Sinhalese people loved and honoured him, for he had served them with selfless gallantry and single-minded devotion in their hour of dire need. Mr. (later Doctor) C. W. W. Kannangara, speaking of this aspect of Ramanathan's service to the people (Sinhalese) said, "When the fair name of the Sinhalese had been traduced, when the whole Sinhalese race was about to be wiped out of existence by a muddle-headed Government, it was Ramanathan the Tamil, who raised his mighty voice and fought on behalf of the Sinhalese. All praise be to him that he discharged his duty by his countrymen manfully. His name will ever be inscribed in the loving hearts of a grateful people."

E. W. Perera said of him: "It was Sir Ramanathan who fought manfully and strenuously for

the Sinhalese, who, though not of his (the speaker's) blood, yet feeling as a child of the country for his mother-land, did all he possibly could as the one Ceylonese member to vindicate the Sinhalese and help them in their great agony and in their great travail."

Ramanathan's return to Ceylon from England on 17th February, 1916, was marked by uproarious acclamation and nation-wide rejoicing. A leading English paper, "The Ceylonese", said in its issue of 21st Feb. 1916:

"The town of Colombo wore a most animated appearance yesterday morning, when a very large section of the permanent population turned out to witness the return of the Hon. Mr. P. Ramanathan from England. The Ceylonese Member had left for England in November last on some important work, the nature of which is well known enough now. And the gratitude of the people of Ceylon showed itself in a very marked manner by the memorable reception he received yesterday. The *'P. & O. Malwa'* by which he was travelling from England was the centre of much interest ever since it became known that he had left England, and there was a large local comment during the few days when that steamer was in the Danger Zone in the Mediterranean. When it became known a very few days ago that Mr. Ramanathan had survived the perils of the sea and was on his way home, it became the general consensus of opinion that he should receive a welcome. A committee of young men met a few days ago and discussed all the arrangements in detail. That they had deliberated well was evidenced yesterday by the grand *Tamasha* which was witnessed by all Colombo yesterday.

"The *'Malwa'* was expected in Colombo at 8 o'clock yesterday morning. But almost as soon as daylight came on, the people started coming into the Fort in the hope of seeing Mr. Ramanathan.

As hour by hour passed and the steamer was not sighted, the crowd increased and the Fort was the centre of much animation. The Committee were all dressed in white and wore rosettes. The carriage which was to bear Mr. Ramanathan to his residence from the jetty was brought to the Fort quite early. It was decorated all over with lovely flowers—eucharis, lilies, roses and other choice flowers being used in the decorative scheme. The carriage was really transformed from an ordinary landau into a type of what was so lately seen in miniature in the grounds of Queen's House. When the news got out a little before noon that the vessel was being sighted, the excitement increased. The people commenced flocking towards the jetty to get a sight of the steamer, but here the police interfered; no one was allowed on the jetty without a pass from the Principal Collector of Customs and this is an unobtainable thing as far as the general public are concerned. Therefore the landing jetty was the quietest part of the whole Fort yesterday. We need say little with regard to the pig-headedness on the part of the Police. There could have been no harm whatever in allowing the public on the jetty yesterday. Shortly after the steamer had moved into the harbour and when the doctor had granted the pratique, the following members of the committee went on board:—Messrs. A E. Goonesinghe, A. W. P. Jayetilleke, R. E. W. Perera and P. N. Jayenetti. All this time the crowd was getting larger and larger. Nearly an hour elapsed before the people were enabled to have a look at their idol. When the Ceylonese Member made his appearance from the landing jetty, there was an uproarious outburst of cheering that could have been heard many hundreds of yards away and it must have been gratifying to Mr. Ramanathan that his appearance was the cause of such an outburst of applause. It ought to have been mentioned that a large number of placards

bearing such slogans as 'Long Live the Ceylonese Member,' 'Honour to whom honour is due,' 'Young Lanka welcomes the Grand Old Man of Ceylon', etc., were very prominent throughout the Fort—some on rickshaws, some on carriages and some were even carried by some young men. Mr. Ramanathan was then conducted to *Sukhastan*, his residence, and the procession was formed up. First came the long line of school boys bearing flags. They were followed by native musicians and native dancers. Behind the native dancers, came Mr. Ramanathan's carriage, in which the Ceylonse Member rode in stately solitude. Before the procession started, the horse was taken out from between the shafts and the carriage was drawn all the way by thirty members of the Committee. The task was performed with great pride and willingness. The procession was nearly a quarter of a mile long and excited great attention on the road along which it followed. The whole Fort turned round to see the procession, and traffic was completely disorganised for over twenty minutes. Needless to say, the Police were very much in evidence. It seemed as if the whole Police force had turned out to take care of those who were forming the procession. There was certainly an abnormal number of Police Officers and men in the procession. Admirable order was kept. The route taken was along Norris Road past the Technical College and Railway Stores, along the Tram road to the Maradana Junction and then through Symond's Road, Dean's Road and Ward Place to *Sukhastan*.

"It was nearly 4-30 p. m. when the procession arrived at *Sukhastan*. Filled with enthusiasm, the monster crowd too entered the compound, eager to demonstrate their joy at seeing the Ceylonese Member. The whole premises were full and loud cheering was heard all round. At home the usual blessing ceremony according to oriental fashion

was held as soon as Mr. Ramanathan alighted from the landau. The native dancers from Ratnapura, Kandy, etc., who had specially been brought down to Colombo entertained the crowds. Mr. Ramanathan, coming to the compound a little while afterwards, briefly addressed the multitude. The gathering round the Hon. Member was so great that the pressmen present found it almost impossible to approach the speaker or take down a verbatim report of his speech. To put in a nutshell, Mr. Ramanathan said that it was an inspiration to those who tried to do their duty by their country to see themselves honoured in the way he (the speaker) had been honoured. It was not a time for him to speak of the work he had done in England. Their first sentiment should be loyalty to the British Throne (applause) and then they could all do their duty to the best of their powers.

"A member of the Ramanathan reception committee interpreted the speech into Sinhalese and the people demonstrated their appreciation of it by listening in silence. The speech over, those present in the compound enjoyed themselves by listening to the native music and witnessing the oriental dancers from the Up-country. In a few words, the whole scene at *Sukhastan* yesterday afternoon was a scene of great animation. There was a garden party too at which a very large and fashionable gathering was present. Refreshments were served in abundance and a very enjoyable and convivial time was spent by all.

"At 7 p. m. there was a brilliant display of fire-works at the *Sukhastan* premises and this was the last item of yesterday's gay doings to honour the Ceylonese Member on his return to the Island. The scenes yesterday at the jetty, along the streets and at *Sukhastan* from the time the procession started created many impressions which would be long remembered by those who witnessed them."

The following account was given by Mr. A. E. Goonesinghe, many years after:

"Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, who had collected a lot of material on the sordid activities of the Englishmen in the name of Martial Law, repaired to England, braving the seas at the time the first World War was on. We also demanded the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the brutal activities of the English in Ceylon.

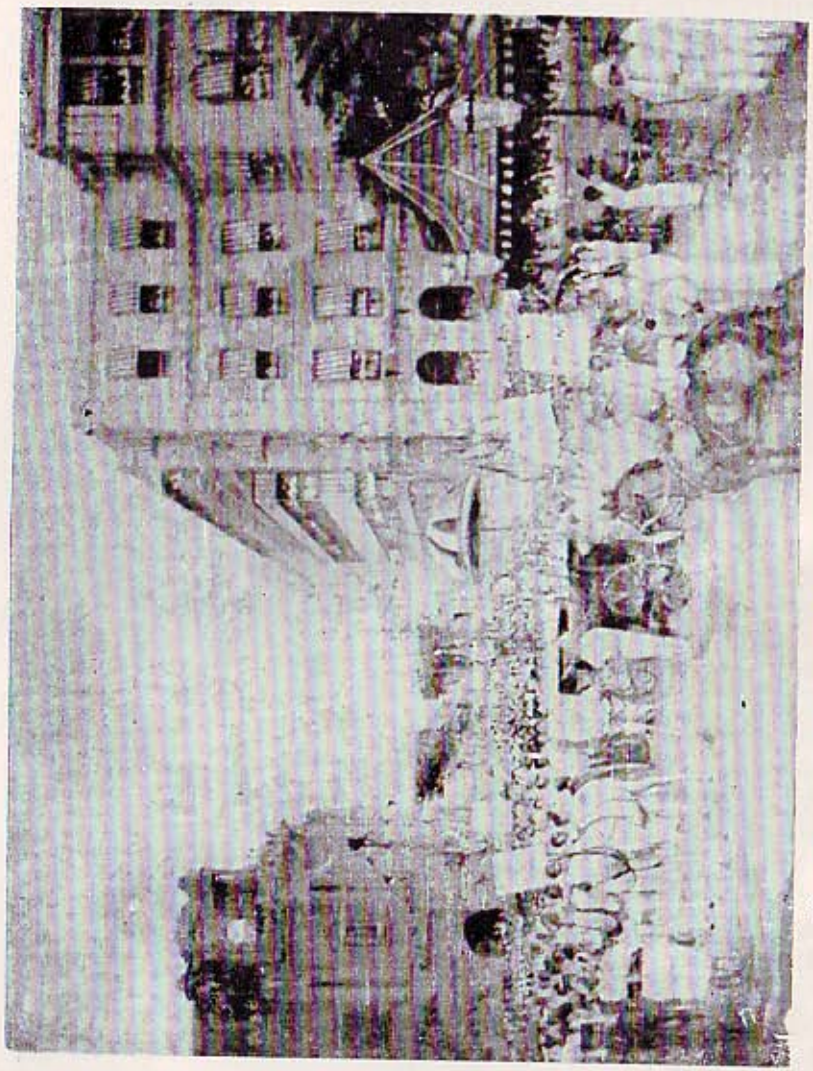
"The Young Lanka League had arranged to give him a reception, when the ship he was travelling in arrived in the harbour. All the leaders were against our according him this reception. I had arranged for Kandyan dancers, bands, etc., to conduct him in procession from the jetty to his residence.

"On the day he arrived, some prominent Ceylonese politicians boarded the ship and I was told that they were going to advise Sir Ponnambalam not to participate in the procession arranged in his honour. Hearing this, I arranged for a number of young men to go on board the ship and speak to him and tell him what they had done.

"Among us was Lionel Kotelawala—now Sir John Kotelawala—quite an insignificant young man at that time. About six of us went on board the ship to meet Sir Ponnambalam. We had printed handbills giving details of the route, etc, but the mischief had already been done, because the leaders were ahead of us.

"When Sir Ponnambalam came out of the cabin, I went to him and presented the hand-bill. He at once said, 'This is impossible; you must understand that the country is under Martial Law, and if anybody should throw a stone at the procession, there is bound to be serious trouble.'

"This is what the leaders had told Sir Ponnambalam and he was adamant. I did not accept his refusal as final. We left the ship before anybody else and going into the jetty where several hundreds



Uproarious reception accorded to Ramanathan on his return from his successful mission in England in 1915

of people had assembled, I made a passage through the crowd from the jetty to the road where a decorated car was ready to be drawn by the members of the Young Lanka League. I ordered that nobody should be allowed to enter this passage other than Sir Ponnambalam.

"No sooner had Sir Ponnambalam arrived at the jetty than I garlanded him and took him through this passage which I had asked the future Minister of Transport, Sir John Kotelawala, to be in charge of.

"I then led Sir Ponnambalam to the landau. He hesitated, but when the music started, the bands began to play and the Kandyan dancers started to perform, Sir Ponnambalam was impressed and he quietly went in and sat down.

"The passage for the leaders was blocked. I had arranged this. It was some time before they emerged from the jetty. The procession started.

"Thousands of people followed it. I sat on the dicky, and twenty-four young men drew the carriage to *Sukhastan*, Ward Place, the residence of Sir Ponnambalam.

"A beautiful painting of this procession was later presented to Sir Ponnambalam by a lady, who had travelled on the ship.

"The history of Martial Law in Ceylon cannot be concluded without mentioning the part played by that great man Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, who stood like a colossus alone in the Legislative Council and vindicated the honour and dignity of the Sinhalese nation. I was present in the gallery on that day in September 1915, when Sir Ponnambalam spoke for several hours. With tears in his eyes, he described the brutalities committed by Englishmen with impunity under the name of British justice. He said it was not justice but downright murder by the ruling race and it was an act of misgovernment for the ruling race to ignore all these atrocities.

"Up jumped Sir Reginald Stubbs, the then Colonial Secretary, and said that Sir Ponnambalam was accusing the government of misgovernment and wanted the word withdrawn. Sir Ponnambalam refused and enumerated one by one the acts of misgovernment.

"No Sinhalese who had heard Sir Ponnambalam in defence of the Sinhalese people in the Legislative Council that day will ever raise his hand, or say anything against the Tamil race. The actions of the Sinhalese in 1958 against the Tamils make me ashamed as a Sinhalese, and I decried them then and ever after. This hatred and contempt engendered by designing politicians against our own brothers the Tamils must cease."

CHAPTER XIII

PRESIDENT—THIRUVALLUVAR MAHA SABAI, MADRAS

Ramanathan takes his place in the great galaxy of heroes whom Carlyle has immortalised in his pages.

—Srinivasa Aiyangar

RAMANATHAN'S fame and name travelled far beyond the confines of this little island. England placed him in the front rank of Imperial statesmen; Europe and America hailed him "a great teacher, one of those enlightened ones who see and feel God"; and India acclaimed him the most authoritative exponent of the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy, and one of the foremost Tamil and Sanskrit scholars of his time.

Tamil scholars in many parts of the Tamil-speaking world were greatly perturbed to find that their greatest sage and law-giver, Thiruvalluvar, was fast passing out of vogue and that the sublime ideals of life he propounded and the precious heritage of culture he bequeathed to the world were being engulfed by the raging flood of Western learning and modes of thought. They resolved that no pains should be spared to arrest this unhappy trend and restore this great teacher of humanity to his pristine place in the national consciousness of the Tamils.

Accordingly, they founded an organisation and gave it the name Thiruvalluvar Maha Sabai, with its headquarters at Mylapur which was reputedly Valluvar's birth-place and where he was laid in *Samadhi*. It was to be a powerful and all-embracing body comprising the choicest spirits from among the Tamil-speaking people. Its aims

were four-fold; to propagate and promote by every means in its power the study and enjoyment of Valluvar's monumental work, the *Thirukural;* to sow broadcast over as wide an expanse of the earth's territory as may be, the noble ideals of life, which formed his chief bequest to posterity, by organising classes for the instruction of the young, instituting weekly courses of lectures on his life and work, re-editing and publishing cheap editions of the great classic to make it accessible to a wider reading-public; to hold annual conferences of Valluvar scholars; and lastly, to build a memorial worthy of his great name.

Before all things, the question of finding a President worthy of the institution, worthy of the great objectives it sought to achieve engaged their serious attention, one who bore an honoured name, one who would shed lustre on the great assembly not merely by his wealth of learning nor by practical achievement in many fields of human activity, but more by the fact of being a living exemplar of the lofty ideals of life the great sage and law-giver propounded for the salvation of man. They looked far and near and finally alighted on the name of Ramanathan.

They had seen glittering reports of his success in America, and heard of the ecstatic praises a grateful people had showered on him for his services in making religion a living and vitalising influence in their lives. They had heard their own countryman V. V. Ramana Sastri commend his services to *Saiva Siddhanta* in language that could hardly be bettered: "On the purely expositional side, the doctrines of *Agamas* have found a reverent and apt interpreter in the scholar-sage, Mr. P. Ramanathan, whose writings it is not possible to surpass either in this (Indian) Peninsula or abroad for either clarity of thought or directness of appeal." Marai Malai Adigal, Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Aiyar, V. V. Srinivasa Aiyangar, High Court Judge of

Madras, and many others were eloquent in their praise of Ramanathan, and counted themselves fortunate if amidst the heavy press of his many-sided activity in his home-country, he could be prevailed on to accept the office.

Accordingly, a deputation came to Colombo and apprised him of the purport of its visit. In any estimate of Ramanathan's life and work, it should be borne in mind that he was never known to refuse a popular appeal, however much it conflicted with the many and diverse interests he already had in hand. Unflinching service of humanity, with complete disregard of the cost, the peril, the sacrifice involved, was the master-trait in the character of this remarkable man; and so the invitation had his ready acceptance.

On the day of the ceremonial opening of the Maha Sabai and the Conference that followed, Ramanathan was taken in procession to the venue amidst much pomp and pageantry, amidst the beating of drums and the blaring of trumpets, customary on such occasions. The audience comprised the fine flower of South Indian society, Dewans of the Native States, Judges of the High Court and scholars and writers of acknowledged eminence. Poets such as Maha Vidwan Arasan Shanmugam-pillai, Namasivaya Mudaliyar, Pandit Bala Saraswathy, P. R. Krishnama Chariar and many others, sang the glory of the honoured guest from the neighbouring Island.

Srinivasa Aiyangar, introducing the President, said, "It is our signal good fortune to have a scholar-statesman of uncommon distinction from Ceylon, the Hon. Mr. P. Ramanathan, as President of this unique institution, the Thiruvalluvar Maha Sabai. His acceptance of this high office and his presence here this morning to advise us and guide us are a crowning glory to this august assembly and a happy augury of the success of the noble work to which we have committed ourselves.

"This is our first national effort to enshrine for all time the memory of our greatest poet and law-giver, Thiruvalluva Nayanar, to whom I may with propriety pay the tribute that Dr. Johnson paid to that celebrated English poet, John Milton: 'He was a poet whose name we boast, from our alliance to whose genius we claim some kind of superiority to every nation of the earth, that poet whose works may possibly be read when every other monument of our greatness shall be obliterated.'

"When at the request of the organisers of the Maha Sabai, I cast far and near for a President who will truly be a source of strength and inspiration to this great institution and shed lustre on this distinguished assembly, my mind went beyond the shores of this great and ancient country to neighbouring Ceylon wherein lay the home of the man whom I regard as the highest triumph of Tamil and Hindu culture.

"It is my conviction that this man is alone among men worthy of this high honour, worthy of the great trust that we have reposed in him. When I met him at his home in Colombo and intimated to him the purport of my visit, his passion for Tamil learning and the preservation of all things great and good among us is so strong and so overpowering that he could not bring himself to say 'No', despite the many-sided labours that claimed all his time and energy in his home-country.

"We in this land have learnt to love and revere him for the distinction his talents and achievements have earned for him and for us in lands far away, and for the magnificent services he has rendered to his people in many fields. The startling impression he made in America by his long course of lectures on religion and philosophy and the fame of his great writings are yet fresh in our memory. Any visitor to Sri Lanka cannot fail to be struck by the immense power and prestige

of his great name, by the affectionate reverence in which people of all classes and conditions, of all races and religions hold him. Some years ago, when, in an important electoral battle which involved the whole country, a Sinhalese leader of great ability and influence was pitted against him, the Sinhalese people threw the weight of their support on his side and secured his election to the national legislature. The temple he built and dedicated to Lord *Parameshwaran* is an imperishable monument of Hindu architecture. The temples of learning he built and endowed for the youth of his land are the pride of his people. His valiant leadership of the nation is among its greatest glories .....

"He takes his place in the great galaxy of heroes whom Carlyle has immortalised in his pages, men of light and leading who have illumined humanity's path through life, and have lightened humanity's burdens; men, but for whose labours, this world would be a poorer habitation or a prison-house for us mortals. In this age of democracy, this era of the Common Man, when kings and potentates have been thrown off the seats of power and the common man has been enthroned, he has shown us that it is yet by clinging to the great ones of the earth, to heroes and men of action that we humble mortals can survive in this sublunary sphere."

In his presidential address, Ramanathan spoke of the *Thirukural* as among the most catholic, the most authentic and the most seminal creations of man, spoke of it as the property not of one people or nation but of all mankind. He added that it holds within its pages the panacea for the multitude of ills that have afflicted humanity over the ages, that it is man's best recipe for the making of a new world and a new race of men.

He took to the subject as a fish takes to water. He was in his best form. It is worth

recalling that the works of Valluvar and Auvai were a common family possession from the days of Mudaliyar Coomaraswamy, Ramanathan's maternal grandfather and first occupant of the Tamil Seat, and were handed down from one generation to another as a precious heirloom. They formed an important subject of study for the members of the family, many of whom have written extensive commentaries on them. It is truer to say that the sublime ideals enshrined in these great Tamil classics ran in their veins and enriched and ennobled their thought and action. It was upon their foundations that the family built up its greatness and renown.

Ramanathan told his audience that he had from his tenderest years loved and cherished the *Kural* for the ineffable beauty of its diction and the inestimable worth of its content; that in the study and contemplation of its great truths, he found his chief solace, his chief spiritual comfort; it was his *Thamil Marai*, his Tamil Scripture; that he had striven all his life to walk in the path that the great sage and law-giver had marked out for man's salvation.

He went on to say that by the willing suffrage of scholars and savants the world over, the *Kural* is acclaimed the highest expression of human genius, that a literature and a language are blessed indeed and inexpressibily promoted among languages and literatures, if they possess but one work of such spiritual, moral and artistic excellence; that as a beacon light to illumine humanity's path through life, as a discipline of the heart and intellect of man, it stands unsurpassed among the productions of the human mind. By soaking oneself in it, by incorporating all its beauties in oneself, by living the life it enjoins, one achieves the perfection that it is the prime purpose of life to achieve.

Other scholars of repute spoke on different aspects of the *Kural*. The Maha Sabai published

Ramanathan's profoundly learned and penetrating introduction to the *Kural* and his extensive commentaries on the first four chapters of it called *Payiram*, under the title *Ramanatheeyam*, as its maiden attempt in the direction of achieving one of the great objectives to which it had pledged itself.

The stimulus thus given to the study and exposition of the *Kural* by these scholars and patriots has gone on through the years. Valluvar shares with Shakespeare alone the love and adoration of a grateful posterity, shares the great legions of translators and commentators who have ministered to him with a loyalty and dedication rare in the annals of scholarship, shares the vast mass of expository and eulogistic literature that has grown round him through the years. The Valluvar *Kottam*, a massive monument to Thiruvalluvar, wrought in polished granite, undertaken and accomplished in recent years by the government of Tamil Nadu was a continuation of the noble work inaugurated by these Tamil scholars and patriots in 1917.

The ancient shrine at Chidhambaram, South India, dedicated to Lord Siva, was at this period faced with a serious threat to its independence and its finances. The government of India, casting covetous glances on its revenue, sought to step in and bring it under State control. It appointed a Commission of three Judges of the High Court of whom one was an Englishman and another, Sathasiva Aiyer, to inquire into and report on the administration of the temple and its finances and suggest measures for its take-over. It was obviously an unwarranted intrusion into the affairs of a people's religion and a severe limitation of their freedom of worship by an alien ruler whose interest in it did not extend beyond cash returns. The priesthood numbering about three thousand who had from remote ages owned and administered the temple and had subsisted on the earnings, saw

their livings threatened and the administration of the temple wrested from them. It was undoubtedly an alarming situation. They took counsel together; they looked around for some one who could save them from the impending danger.

It was suggested to them that the only man who could measure up to the situation, by reason of his mastery of the Hindu Shastras, his legal learning and acumen, his devotion to the religion and culture of his forefathers and, above all, his eager championship of the victims of tyranny and oppression, was Ramanathan of Ceylon. But how were they to get at him? A Brahmin priest's crossing the seas was then taboo. Fortunately for them, Ramanathan happened to be at this time in Madras on other business. They hurried to him in numbers and complained bitterly of the fate that awaited them. Ramanathan knew it was tough business but consoled them with the words, "If the Lord wills it, it shall be done."

None gloried more than Ramanathan in fighting the battle of the under-dog, fighting the oppressors of mankind. Moreover, the intrusion of anything temporal into the sphere of things spiritual was among his pet aversions. For five long days he wrangled and parleyed with the Commissioners, cited the Hindu Shastras, cited Hindu tradition, cited obscure points of law, and at long last succeeded in convincing the Commissioners that the take-over of the Temple against the wishes of the priests who had administered it from hoary antiquity was a violation of the law both ancient and modern, secular and divine.

It was a great victory for the priesthood, a victory for the laity, a victory for religious freedom, a victory for Ramanathan. There was jubilation everywhere. The priesthood and the laity joined in celebrating the victory. The rulers were repulsed in their first attempts to seize control of Hindu temples, many of which were richly endowed. These

attempts were the thin end of the wedge. Had they succeeded, the same fate would have overtaken all other temples in the land.

At a meeting called to celebrate this great victory, Ramanathan's praises were sung by a grateful people, the priesthood and the laity, who felt that State interference in matters spiritual would merely have the effect of desecrating and defiling them. Ramanathan would not arrogate any of these praises to himself but meekly accepted them in the name of Lord Natarajan who, he said, is the Eternal Dancer in the Heart of the World, which is Chidhambaram, and whose humble and lowly servant he said he always was.

Like all truly great men, Ramanathan presents a paradox, a curious admixture, a blend of ardent and uncompromising nationalism and an equally ardent but all-comprehending universalism, that baffled many who knew him. He had his feet planted firmly in his native soil, was wedded to all things distinctively and inalienably his, his ancestral language, his ancestral culture, his ancestral religion, his ancestral mode of life, while at the same time, he was perfectly at home in other religions, other languages and cultures and drew sustenance from them all. Though a Hindu even to the point of orthodoxy, his Hinduism was non-sectarian. He saw truth in every religion. His belief was that, though religions are many, Religion is one. He interpreted the Bible in the light of Hindu thought and vice versa. But what he discountenanced most, nay stoutly opposed, was that the votaries of one faith should claim superiority over other faiths and seek to discredit them and set up a sort of overlordship in matters religious. In America, he exhorted the American people to love their great language, and love their great religion before all things else. When many told him that they had lost faith in Christianity and begged of him to teach them something new,

he told them emphatically that he had no higher religion to offer them than the religion of Christ. He went further; he expounded to them the Bible, in language more intelligible to them, expounded the deeper and sublimer truths that had eluded them. After hearing him, many declared with one voice that they had not known that the Bible is such a rich storehouse of divine truth; and thenceforth, they became true and convinced Christians.

He was fastidious in many things, but in none more than in the use of the mother-tongue. Few men of his time spoke or wrote the Tamil language to better effect or with a more scrupulous sense of its niceties and felicities than he. The language he used whether in addressing assemblies of learned men or in daily converse with his fellow-men in the humbler walks of life was classically perfect.

He was more than ordinarily distressed to find a wanton and widespread disregard of the rules of grammar and a tendency to sloppy, slipshod use of the language among the Tamils of his time. Endeavouring to curb this deplorable trend, he set to work simplifying and modernising as best he could the classical grammar of the ancients, which was proving a veritable nightmare to the moderns. The result was the publication of his handbook of grammar entitled *Senthamil Ilakkanam*. His passion for Tamil learning and culture found expression in the famous Trust which he founded for the twin purposes of instructing Saiva children in the principles and practices of the Saiva religion and promoting Tamil learning.

Not content with what he had done for the Tamils, he exhorted his Sinhalese brethren too to do likewise, to give their language and literature, their religion and culture the foremost place in their affections and in national life. In his memorable speech at Ananda College in 1905, part of

which was quoted in Volume I of the Biography, he woke them up from their centuries-old slumber to a consciousness of their great and ancient heritage of language, religion and culture, provoked them into thinking about things their own. He pointedly asked them, "If Sinhalese lips will not speak the Sinhalese language, who else is there to speak it?" He went further to add, "The man who speaks Sinhalese without any admixture of foreign language, who can roll out sentence after sentence in pure Sinhalese, charged with sober sense, inspiring and grand to hear, is a Sinhalese man indeed..... It is your duty to cultivate the study of the Sinhalese language to the best of your power, and to speak it, ignoring the English language on all occasions and at all places where English has no business. If you do so, then I say you will be doing your duty to your nation; your example will be productive of untold good in the field of nationalisation. But if you do not do so and delight in donning the external and ephemeral phases of Western civilization and cannot or will not speak your native language on public platforms, in railway carriages and in drawing-rooms, and will not stand up for your national institutions, then I say, none of you deserve to be called Sinhalese. The 1,800,000 Sinhalese will soon dwindle to nothing." He administered this warning in days when the English language was the acknowledged medium of higher learning and human intercourse among peoples and nations, when every mother in the land believed in her heart of hearts that she had no better legacy to offer her new born infant than a sound English education, when those licensed tyrants, the schoolmasters, made the use of the vernaculars for class-room converse among pupils a penal offence and cruelly flogged their charges, when Prize-Day oracles exhorted the innocents always to think in English, speak in English and write in English, when the

social snob and adventurer used his proficiency in English speech and accent as his passport to the most fashionable circles in the metropolis. Ramanathan did so in the simple faith that in gaining the language of the master, you might gain the world but in losing the mother-tongue, you lose your soul.

In his audiences with the royalty and the aristocracy, with statesmen and leaders of thought in the hectic days of Victorian England, he made it a point of honour to appear in the traditional attire of the Tamil aristocracy, his resplendent turban and his magenta shawl always on. He clung tenaciously to his belief that a people's language and literature, their culture and tradition are the people's birthright, their sole claim to survival, and that whoso ignore them head straight for the rocks and face final extinction. What wonder then that he was in his time acclaimed the Father of Ceylonese Nationalism!

CHAPTER XIV

ABOLITION OF THE POLL TAX

In this world nothing is certain but death and taxes.
—*Benjamin Franklin*

AMONG the many taxes levied by our British rulers, three taxes in particular weighed heavily on the poor, viz. the Grain Tax, the Road Tax and the Poll Tax. The Grain Tax was an impost of ten percent on the assessed average yield of every farm and was levied irrespective of whether the land was cultivated or not or whether the actual yield measured up to the assessed yield. Every farmer, be he tenant, small-holder or big landlord, was subjected to this levy. It inflicted untold hardship on the farming population, particularly on the peasantry, who amidst the vagaries and uncertainties of the seasonal rainfall, eked out a precarious livelihood. The plight of the tenantry was indescribable, inasmuch as they, after paying the ten percent levy to the State and rent to the landlord, had only the husks of grain to subsist on. Large numbers of the peasantry became dispossessed and landless, when their holdings were knocked down for paltry sums of money at public auctions for non-payment of the impost. Poverty and destitution were rife, but neither the Government nor the leaders of the people took any notice of this inhuman and iniquitous levy.

Ramanathan who had his hand always on the nation's pulse, more so on that of the poor and had made it the mission of his life to liberate them from the manifold burdens and disabilities that held them in bondage, promptly seized upon this

problem, resolved to find a speedy remedy. Accordingly, he introduced a motion into the legislature for the removal of this levy which had proved so oppressive to the poor.

The hard battle that he fought against an alien ruler who did not worry overmuch about the privations and sufferings of the poor, so long as the national coffers were replenished, the large mass of evidence he laboriously collected and poured across the floor of the House, the grim tenacity with which he fought for what he conceived to be the best interests of the people and his ultimate victory are told in Volume I.

Reference has already been made to the Road Ordinance which imposed compulsory free labour on adults often in places far removed from their homes and the consequent incarceration in insanitary and unwholesome prisons, of large numbers who could not comply with its exacting provisions, and its repeal after a strenuous and bitter struggle he waged with the rulers.

During the thirteen years during which Ramanathan was shut out of the legislature by the wiles of an intolerant ruler and made to languish in the humdrum and prosaic business of the Solicitor's desk at Hulftsdorp, public life too languished. It became utterly decrepit and soulless. All that exuberant enthusiasm in the service of the nation, all that spirit of sturdy independence, all that heroic manhood in challenging an alien ruler had vanished giving place to fear and trepidation, to lethargy and indifference. The watch-dogs of the nation, the Unofficials, were no longer the selfless and dedicated patriots of an earlier generation quick to spot out national ills and discover effectual remedies for them. True and loyal nominees of the Crown and solicitous of gubernatorial smiles and Imperial honours, they were content to be underlings, to take the line of least resistance and tread the path that His Excellency chalked out for them,

the path of cheerful acquiescence in his policies and programmes, unmindful of the sacred duty that was cast upon them of sheltering a subject people against the harsh excesses of an alien ruler whose principal concern lay in pampering an alien bureaucracy and promoting Imperial interests.

It was the calm that preceded the storm. The twenty years that followed Ramanathan's return to political life in 1911 as Educated Ceylonese Member until his death in 1930 were among the stormiest as they were among the most fruitful and beneficent in our political history. Questions of supreme national importance crowd its pages—the excise question, the riots of 1915, the establishment of new local government institutions and the reform of the existing ones, land reform, education, the control of national finance, universal franchise, an elected president for the legislature, the foundation of the university, the series of constitutional reforms culminating in the Donoughmore Constitution which virtually transferred power to the people. Ramanathan's brilliant and statesmanlike handling of these questions rank among the greatest achievements of gallant and enlightened leadership.

The impact of Ramanathan's leadership on the public mind was so profound and so telling that a leading newspaper was constrained to comment editorially on the radical change of attitude that had come upon two important dailies, the *Morning Leader* and the *Ceylon Observer* which, for personal reasons, had earlier condemned him and traduced him and had sought to thwart his election to the Educated Ceylonese Seat by every means in their power. It said, "Those of our daily contemporaries who opposed Mr. Ramanathan's election so maliciously, rancorously and strenuously cannot be expected all at once to express unqualified approval of his proceedings in Council. But what they have already said of him in connection with

the first meeting of the Reformed Council is sufficient to show that even his bitterest enemies cannot deny the fact that, owing to Mr. Ramanathan's vast experience of Council procedure, his great abilities and public-spirited independence, not only the proceedings of our Council will be of a really interesting and enlivening character but also the interests of the permanent population of this Island will be most effectually furthered and safeguarded.

"The *Morning Leader* which affects to condemn Mr. Ramanathan's 'manner' of his remarks, was constrained to say in its issue of the 17th instant:—

'Nothing is more salutary and essential for the good of this much-misrepresented land than that the finances of the administration should be rigorously scrutinised. That is a duty which has been neglected scandalously in the past; and the discharge of it eminently desirable. It has to be admitted that the Ceylonese Member rose effectively to the right conception of his obligation. If, incidentally, he found an opportunity to give the Government a taste of his combative quality, that is a circumstance which, far from meriting censure, will delight those of his critics who feared that the powerful leader who, in the old days, made some of the finest speeches on the annual budgets—criticism both statesmanlike and constructive—was no more. It is a pleasant surprise to note that he is with us still, as capable and resolute as of old to exercise due vigilance and to disconcert the Officials who are accustomed to hurry large items of expenditure through the Council with a perfunctory remark that they are "all right and have been passed by the Finance Committee." The people wish to know how their money is spent, and why it is spent in the way it is. It is distinctly refreshing to find that the Ceylonese Member proposes to maintain a watchful eye over the expenditure.'

"The *Ceylon Observer* says in its leader of the 17th instant:—

'There is a change, undeniable, unmistakable. The voice of the "free and independent" is making itself heard in a way never known before. For this, Mr. Ramanathan is responsible. With a smile childlike and bland, an effectual mask to the keen wit of the lawyer, and a voice soft, suave, and almost submissive, he asked yesterday for information on votes usually passed in soporific, eminently respectful silence, and when given a strong hint by the Governor that his tedious wordiness was undesirable, *stuck to his guns, contradicted the Governor, and what is more, carried his point. The very walls nearly fell. One honourable member woke up, (a most unusual occurrence), others were petrified with astonishment at this unwonted daring, even the pressmen lost their bored look, and the large gathering present would certainly have applauded had it dared.*'"

On his return to political life in 1911, he set about the truly a statesman's task of spotting out national ills and discovering remedies for them, like unto a dedicated physician who at great pains diagnoses the many ailments that afflict his patients and discovers speedy and effectual remedies for them. One of such ills was the Poll Tax, an antique survival that hit the poor more than the rich, inasmuch as both were required to pay the same amount as tax. All able-bodied persons between the ages of 18 and 55 were required to labour for six days of the year on roads often in places far removed from their homes, or commute the labour for a money payment. Those who failed to pay the commutation were either caned or fined Rs. 50/= or sent to gaol. In 1880, as many as 10,000 persons were imprisoned.

The harsh and oppressive measures taken by the authorities to enforce the Ordinance gave rise to riots in many parts of the country, which the authorities were often powerless to quell. It was Ramanathan's timely intervention and reassurance that restored law and order. The

Sarasavi Sandaresa, a Sinhala journal, refers to one of these riots in its issue of May 28, 1889: "The regard and esteem which the natives of Ceylon have towards the Hon. gentleman (Ramanathan) is daily increasing. They have steadfast faith in him as the defender of their rights. As an instance of the regard the Sinhalese hold him in, it may be mentioned that during the recent trouble that arose out of the Mutwal fishermen owing to their default in the payment of the poll tax, and the consequent warlike attitude they displayed towards the authorities, and the utter failure of the latter to restore peace, a few words from the Hon. gentleman to the surging crowd that came to resist the Police and the Municipality sent them away like lambs to the fold."

On July 27, 1914, soon after his return to the legislature as Educated Ceylonese Member, Ramanathan gave notice of the following Motion: "That, as the surplus balances of the Colony now stand at about 29 million rupees, and as His Excellency Sir Henry McCallum promised that in the event of the nett revenue under the new Excise System showing any considerable advance over the revenue under the old system, he would recommend to the Secretary of State the remission of such taxes as affect the poorer classes, and as the arrack rents for the twelve months ending September 30, 1915, have realized a nett increase of Rs. 1,771,090 over the rents collected for the current year, the time has come for the Government to take speedy action for the remission of the antiquated and unequal tax known as the Poll Tax."

On August 3, 1914, when he began to speak on the motion, the Governor Sir Robert Chalmers, intervening, cited Standing Order No. 15 which said, "No Bill, Motion, Vote, or Resolution, the object or effect of which may be to dispose of or charge any part of the public revenue of the Colony, or to alter or vary any existing disposition or

charge, shall be proposed except by the Governor, or with his allowance or by his direction."

Ramanathan's motion for the abolition of the Poll Tax was *ultra vires*. His Excellency could have turned it down. But being a liberal-minded ruler, swayed by the gravity of the evil and the earnestness and enthusiasm shown by the mover of the resolution, he allowed it. He said "The question for me to decide is whether, having regard to that very comprehensive Standing Order No. 15, I should allow that motion to be proposed. In ordinary circumstances I should have no hesitation in negativing such motion affecting a very big constitutional question dealing with public finances. Into that I do not enter except to say that such would be my general feeling. But speaking on the precise motion which is on the paper, and without prejudice to any future action on any similar motion which may hereafter be made, I have come to the conclusion that I will allow this motion to be made (the Hon. the Ceylonese Member: Hear, hear), and I allow it for the following reasons, which I think it may be useful to the Honourable Member and other Members of the Council to know. The proposal is that Government should take speedy action for the remission of this particular impost. It so happens that some weeks ago the Government did take action (the Hon. the Ceylonese Member: Hear, hear), and the Government approached the Secretary of State with regard to this and other matters which form a composite whole. The reply of the Secretary of State has not yet reached us: but in due course, and taking our proposals as a whole, it is the intention of Government to proceed with measures dealing with the poll tax. I have therefore felt that it would be proper for me to allow the Honourable Member to proceed with his motion." Ramanathan thanked His Excellency profusely for this generous gesture and proceeded to prove with

an imposing array of facts and figures, how unremunerative this tax was from the point of view of the revenue, and how burdensome and oppressive, from the point of view of the people. Some are prone to suppose that Ramanathan drew prizes in what is called the lottery of life. What is true was his conviction that life is no lottery at all but a serious business demanding infinite pains. Others say that his laurels were won by the magic of his eloquence, by the spell of his silver-tongued oratory and the lure of his winsome personality. True, Nature had endowed him with all these advantages, but they could in themselves have availed him little, had they not been chastened and perfected by that transcendent capacity for taking pains, which was his master-trait, and which he habitually brought to bear on every act of his life.

He said, "Permit me to say, Sir, that after studying most carefully the Sessional Papers, Administration Reports, and Blue Books, I find that all able-bodied males in Ceylon between the ages of 18 and 55 who are liable under the Ordinance to go and work on the roads or commute their labour by a money payment number as many as 912,500 persons. We find that in the Municipalities of Colombo, Kandy and Galle, there are a very large number of them located: for in the Municipality of Colombo there are 77,000 of such resident males, in Kandy 10,000, in Galle 9,500, and in all the towns with Local Boards there are as many as 58,000. In other towns and villages throughout the Island there are 758 000 making a total of 912 500 persons liable to labour. I further find that the total sum collected from these persons by the different authorities who have to do with this tax amounts to Rs. 1,221,500, and that if the expense of collection, including the cost of establishment and the commission due to those who are in the habit of collecting the tax, be

deducted, amounting in all to about one-tenth of the whole, the nett loss to the general revenue, in case the tax were abolished, would amount to a million rupees. Of this amount, we find the Colombo Municipal Council gathers Rs. 154,000, the Municipal Council of Kandy Rs. 13,600, the Municipality of Galle Rs. 13,000, the different Local Boards altogether Rs. 105,900, and the Government Agents gather from all other towns and villages in the Island Rs. 1,035,000, making a total of Rs. 1,220,000. Working out in detail how much the general revenue would lose, and how much the Municipalities and Local Boards, I find that out of a nett sum of one million rupees, the general revenue would lose about Rs. 750,000, and all the other authorities, viz., the Municipalities and Local Boards, would suffer a loss of Rs. 250,000. Of course, in the event of this tax being wholly abolished, it will become necessary on the part of the Government to make good all the losses which the Municipalities and Local Boards would incur. Therefore, it may be stated that the loss to the general revenue as a whole would be about a million rupees."

With a wealth of statistical detail, he proved to the Governor that the great part of the million rupees was wrung from the misery and destitution of a toil-worn populace. He proceeded to add that the soundness of national finance and a surplus budget warranted the total withdrawal of this tyrannous tax.

"It is not to be expected, Sir, that my motion would find acceptance with the Government, if our income from other sources were not equal to the expenses that we have in hand, or in the event of there being a deficit, if we cannot substitute for this tax another tax of a more suitable character, less unjust, and one more easy to collect. But our revenue is happily overflowing, and it was stated by our last Governor, Sir Henry McCallum,

that in the event of the revenue from one source only, viz., the arrack rents, increasing to such an extent that it would be possible to make a remission of taxes, he would recommend to the Secretary of State the remission of such taxes as now burden the poor people. That is an important promise, Sir, which brought some satisfaction to the hearts of the poor people, when the Excise Question was being discussed, and that was one of the proofs which the people found as regards the asseveration of the Government that its intention in dealing with the Excise system was not to make money, but really and truly to check the unwise consumption of arrack and to do all the good that it was necessary to do for the poor people of the country. That promise had cheered the hearts of not merely the poor, but also the rich, because the interests of the rich, in regard to the question, are undoubtedly the same as the interests of the Government of the country, viz., that an unequal and unjust and uneven tax ought to be removed from the shoulders of the poor. It is singular, Sir, that a tax of this description has been allowed to continue for so long a time under the British Government, which is about the freest in the world, always supporting the general principles of free trade, and always against protection of all kinds and uneven taxation in regard to the people of the country."

He then proceeded to trace the history of this iniquitous tax. "The history of this tax, Sir, stands associated with what is called the 'Rajakariya' system which was prevalent in days of old, especially during the time occupied by the Kandyan kings in the hill country. 'Rajakariya' means service to the king, and it was supposed by the kings of those days and by his ministers that the *Dharmashastras* or ethical treatises written by our sages did permit a thing of this kind, and under that illusion forced labour for several

purposes in regard to public works and in regard to the gathering of revenue for the king, was established by a sort of unwritten decree. It then became the duty of every able-bodied person to answer the summons of the headmen of the country and assemble at particular spots, and learn from the lips of those headmen the places at which they should report themselves on a certain day and at a certain hour for the performance of the compulsory labour. If they did not respond to the injunctions of the headmen, the headmen were given the right to punish them then and there on the spot, even with *rattans*. Now when the British Government assumed the Government of the country, it found forced labour fully established. In those days when labour was scanty and members of the Government were most eager to open up the country and do all they could to extend the means of communication, and also to erect public buildings in various parts of the country, they thought that a custom which had been in existence for a century or two perhaps might be utilized by them for the good of the general public. The Government of the day—I am speaking of the year 1802, for instance—issued regulations almost on the same lines as those which existed in an unwritten way in the hill-country, and authorised Heads of Departments and their officers to cane persons who did not respond to the invitation for forced labour. We find that the British Government had at that time instituted courts of justice, too, and the people of the country thought they might appeal to the courts of justice and see what the Judges would say. In a case instituted by the injured party, the decision was that the gentleman who caned the negligent labourer ought to be fined 100 rix-dollars, that is to say, Sir, about Rs. 75/=, though that officer pleaded the very rule made by the Government. The Government of the day asked

him to pay the fine, and at the same time issued a direction that vouchers should be made to recover that fine from the Treasury of the country.

"In 1833 the Secretary of State sent out Lieut.-Colonel Colebrook, and Mr. Cameron to report upon the state of the country, both financial and judicial. They stayed here for some time, went about the country and gathered evidence, and they have left two most comprehensive reports: one written by Lieut.-Colonel Colebrook, and the other written by Mr. Cameron. From these we learn that both the Commissioners of Inquiry condemned this tax as utterly unjustifiable, and one that ought not to be tolerated any longer. That was in 1833. The Legislative Council was established in 1835, and we hear no more of the poll tax till a great crisis came over the country in 1848. Trade declined, revenue fell, public works could not be carried out, and I think it was Lord Torrington who, in 1848, if my memory serves me right, thought it necessary to introduce an Ordinance on the subject and revive the forced labour system, in a somewhat mitigated form. The Ordinance provided that every able-bodied person was bound to labour for six days or so on the roads for the general improvement of the country, and that if a person did not want to do so, he could find a substitute or he could commute the labour by a money payment. One who failed to pay commutation or to work for the time specified was liable to pay a fine of Rs. 50/=. Instead of leaving the punishment of the defaulter in the hands of the headmen, the Ordinance No. 8 of 1848 empowered the Police Courts to recover the fine, and in failure thereof to commit the man to prison. Very serious were the troubles that arose after the passing of this Ordinance. It was amended the same year, without benefit to either the labourer or the Road Committee. In 1880, a year after I entered the Legislative Council, Sir, about 35 years ago, I brought

to the notice of the Government the desirability of looking into the way in which the labour was enforced and the commuted money was recovered. In 1880, 456,000 persons elected to commute; out of the 517,000 persons who became liable under the Ordinance, 284,000 paid their commutation at the single rate, 56,300 paid the single rate with 25 cents added, and 8,400 paid it at the double rate, leaving 81,700 persons to be dealt with by the Police Courts as defaulters. Over 10,000 persons were sent to prison. I was successful, Sir, in my endeavour, because His Excellency the Governor, who I believe was Sir James Longden, appointed a Commission of four officers, three officials and myself only, and we sat down and took evidence and submitted a report on the question, which will be found in the Sessional Papers of 1882. Our recommendations were all adopted by the new Ordinance of 1884."

He proceeded to add that, while this tax was so very necessary in earlier days in view of the comparative poverty of the exchequer and the heavy demands made on it for the development of the country, it was not so very necessary when the revenue from numerous other sources had swelled it. He said, "In those days, as in earlier days, it was impossible, Sir, to touch the moneys collected under this Ordinance, owing to the poverty of the revenue of the country. But now better times have dawned upon us, and a vast number of thoughtful men in the country think that the time has come, in view of our general prosperity, and in view of the promise made by His Excellency Sir Henry McCallum, to abolish this tax as speedily as possible. I have paid in Colombo Rs. 2/= to the Municipal Council as my commutation money for the labour I have to perform, but my garden cooly who draws no more than Rs. 15/= or 20/= a month is also obliged to pay that, and the taxes throughout the Island vary from Rs. 1-25 to

about Rs. 2/=. The inequality of this taxation *per capita*, is extremely obvious. A tax *per capita* must of necessity be unequal and unjust. One and the same charge is paid by everybody throughout the Island, and that is certainly altogether unfair.

"But, Sir, I will be the last person to come to the Council and ask for the part remission or complete abolition of the tax if I felt assured that another tax would be necessary to be substituted for this. Now, Sir, I do not think that in the circumstances in which we are now, we need another tax at all in substitution.

"I am glad that Your Excellency, not knowing what the thoughts of the members of the Legislative Council were on the subject, has of your own accord submitted the matter to the Secretary of State for his consideration. I do hope that the answer which Your Excellency expects will be a favourable one to the country. This action affords another illustration of Your Excellency's hearty sympathy with the people of the country, and your desire to do what is just and proper in their interests."

He concluded with a moving appeal to His Excellency, to end once for all this tax which had proved so oppressive to the poor, basing his appeal on the surplus balances of the Colony. "I move that as the surplus balances of the Colony now stand at about Rs. 29,000,000, and as His Excellency Sir Henry McCallum promised that in the event of the nett revenue under the new Excise system showing any considerable advance over the revenue under the old system, he would recommend to the Secretary of State the remission of such taxes as affect the poorer classes, and as the arrack rents for the twelve months ending September 30, 1915, have realized a nett increase of Rs. 1,771,090, over the rents collected for the current year, the time has come

for the Government to take speedy action for the remission of the antiquated and unequal tax known as the poll tax."

Ramanathan had made out an unanswerable case for the repeal of the levy. He was ably supported by the First Low-Country Sinhalese Member, Sir Solomon Christoffel Obeyesekere, the First Tamil Member, Mr. (later Sir) Ambalavanar Kanagasabai and by the Burgher Member, Sir Hector van Cuylenburg, who concluded with the telling peroration, "When the paddy-tax was abolished in the nineties, we felt that the next tax that should go was the poll tax, *but somehow or other no steps were taken in this Council, at least during the ten years that Mr. Ramanathan was absent from it.* Now he has brought it forward, and all I can say, as a member of this Council and as a citizen of Colombo, is that I give my hearty support to the motion that the poll tax be abolished."

Ramanathan won the day. He brought relief to the adult male population, large numbers of whom were either heavily fined or imprisoned for long terms for non-payment of this iniquitous and antiquated tax.

CHAPTER XV

EDUCATED CEYLONESE MEMBER —SECOND TERM

The vast majority of the electorate have decided that Mr. Ramanathan, the doughty champion of their rights, should be returned to Council.

—*The Ceylonese*

1916 saw the close of Ramanathan's first tenure of the Educated Ceylonese Seat. These five years were among the most strenuous and stormy as they were among the most memorable and beneficent in his long legislative career. The contest for the Seat in 1911 was one of the toughest electoral battles in the Island's political history. "Despite the fierce malice of waspish foes and wily detractors, the victory was a magnificent triumph for Ramanathan," said the contemporary press. But his achievements during the five years of his tenure of the Seat far transcended the most sanguine expectations of the people.

He was now in his sixty-sixth year and longed for peace, for spiritual repose and the leisure necessary for the fulfilment of his long-cherished dreams in the field of religious, educational and literary activity. But in 1916 too, eminent leaders of the country were persistent in their appeal to him to continue to hold the Seat for another term of five years. He gave his consent, however much it conflicted with his personal inclinations, for he felt certain his services would be of benefit to the people. "I don't mind a contest at all, I am ready for it," said he to the representative of the *Times of Ceylon*. "I have been invited by a large number of influential and representative

gentlemen of every community comprised in the Educated Electorate to safeguard the constituency for another term of five years, and although, personally, I should have been glad to have been relieved of the responsibility, so as to be able to devote my time to literary, educational and other work nearer my heart, I found it impossible to decline so general and spontaneous a request. Having now given them my assurance that I would serve them for another period, I think it is foolish for any one to suppose I would fail to face the poll, in the event of a contest."

When he was asked whether any of his constituents disagreed with him on any of his policies pursued during the five years he held the Seat, Ramanathan replied, "None whatever; on the contrary even those who strenuously opposed me in the last campaign five years ago, have most generously become my supporters. When public spirit and interest in good government are fast growing, I must take care not to damp the ardour of the people. Being satisfied that it is their earnest desire that I should continue to represent them, I feel that I should sacrifice my personal convenience for the good of others and help them to broader views of life and higher and higher achievements."

Nevertheless the seat had to be contested, for J. S. Jayawardene, an advocate from Galle, made his appearance as Ramanathan's rival candidate. "One cannot but marvel at the hardihood and optimism of Mr. Jayawardene who believed that he could succeed against one who was the idol of the nation and whom all regarded as the paragon of a people's representative," said *The Ceylonese*. Presumably, he was influenced by a desire that his name should go down to history as the one man next to Dr. H. M. Fernando, who competed with Ramanathan for the Educated Ceylonese Seat. He might also have been heartened by the

thought that he could play the communal harp, but then he should have known the time was not quite ripe for it. However, there was another reason more potent and more plausible; the Age of the Aristocracy was now being rung out and the Age of the Middle-Class Mediocrity was being rung in by the middle-class vote.

There was nothing like the vigorous and prolonged electoral battle that was waged in 1911. There was hardly anything in the nature of a contest, for the contestants were singularly ill-matched, and the whole country was behind Ramanathan.

Several nomination papers were handed in on behalf of Ramanathan. Messrs. A. De. A. Senevaratna, Francis De Soysa, D. G. Obeyesekara, W. A. De Soysa, C. Gnanasekaram, B. F. De Silva, James Peiris, E. J. Samarawickrame, C. Batuwantudawe, R. S. Peris, C. Dias, D. C. Senanayake, N. Ratnasabapathy, T. Sockanathan, R. L Pereiera, D. C. Pedris, A. L. R. Asserappah and R. Dharmalingam were among those who proposed and seconded. Mr. Jayawardene was proposed by Mr. A. V. De Silva and seconded by Mr. A. C. Mohammadu. Three distinguished brothers of Mr. Hector Jayawardene, namely Mr. E. W. Jayawardene, Mr. A. St. V. Jayawardene, the well-known Advocate, and Lieutenant-Colonel T. G. Jayawardene were among the principal supporters of Ramanathan in Colombo.

The supporters of Ramanathan did not by any means put into their work a fraction of the energy and enterprise they displayed during the previous election; for when Mr. Jayawardene announced his candidature, no one took him seriously Ramanathan himself took the matter lightly. Mr. Jayawardene had cars running about the town with his portraits in front, and the streets were covered with copies of it. He carried on a vigorous campaign but the hopelessness of his position was apparent to him on the polling day which was Sunday, the

20th January, 1917. A band of energetic youths who had volunteered to work for Ramanathan were busy from the very early hours of the morning taking voters to the polling booths in motor cars that were lent to them by the wealthy supporters of Ramanathan. At the end of the day when the votes were counted, there were 1704 for Ramanathan and 48 for Mr. Jayawardene, of which 2 were from Jaffna. The result of this contest had been a forgone conclusion. Congratulatory telegrams and letters poured in from every part of the Island, for it was a matter of extreme gratification to all the people that this veteran legislator and redoubtable champion of the people had been re-elected by so overwhelming a majority. The press, commenting on the victory said, "This result was a forgone conclusion. While congratulating the Ceylonese Member on his success, we also congratulate the Ceylonese community on securing the services of the veteran legislator to champion and safeguard their interests in Council."

It was the singular distinction of Ramanathan to have held the Seat for its whole duration of ten years and be the only Ceylonese ever to represent the whole Island and all the communities therein in the Island's supreme legislature.

CHAPTER XVI

PILGRIMAGE TO THE KATARAGAMA TEMPLE

It is undoubtedly the duty of the ruler of a country to call upon their officers to do their level best to gratify the need and the wishes of the people in regard to the worship of God and the maintenance of their religious principles and to see everything is done to secure order, comfort and sanitation during the progress of their procession.

—Ramanathan

I'll fear not what men say,
I'll labour night and day
To be a pilgrim.

—John Bunyan

Pilgrimages are made by very sensible people from the southernmost part of Ceylon to the northernmost part of India. Up to the present day, they make long journeys on foot in order to express their devotion to God.

—Ramanathan

It gives me positive pain to read the rule about making a man who is given to prayer and worship a criminal, and exposing him to the punishment of one year's rigorous imprisonment or a fine of Rs 1000/=. *Where are we living? Are we living in mid-Africa? But the people of mid-Africa are more religious than many another man here in beautiful Ceylon. Where are we living? In Germany? No, we are living in beautiful Ceylon full of philosophy and religion, full of contentment, because we have been allowed to practise our religion and to go on with our worship of God. I never saw anything so supremely barbarous as that rule, and the person who is responsible for it is one whom I cannot support in any way in this Council or outside it.*

—Ramanathan

ON 25th October, 1918, the following regulations were published in the Gazette: "In terms of rule No. II of regulations framed under Ordinance No. 13 of 1896 for the conduct of the Kataragama pilgrimage, it is hereby notified for general information that any person proceeding to Ruhunu Maha Kataragama Dewale at Kataragama during Ehela and Ilmaha Kachchi festival without first obtaining a permit from the Government Agents or Assistant Government Agents of the respective districts will be liable, under Section 2 of the aforesaid Ordinance, to a fine not exceeding Rs. 1000/=, or to rigorous or simple imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year."

The Government based its restriction on pilgrimage on grounds of hygiene and sanitation. But it was obviously a harsh and oppressive one, apart from being a violation of one of the people's fundamental freedoms, the freedom of worship. It was, moreover, discriminative, inasmuch as this disability was imposed upon Hindus only, while members of other faiths were completely free from such impositions. The number of pilgrims was severely limited and every pilgrim, man or woman, was required *to obtain a permit in person from the Government Agents or Assistant Government Agents.* It fell heavily on all, particularly on women, who in an unsophisticated age fought shy of presenting themselves before the White ruler.

To Ramanathan all this seemed utterly outrageous, for it was arbitrary and unwarranted interference on the part of the Government with the free and untrammelled practice of a people's religion and culture. According to him, it is among the primary functions of the Government not merely to refrain from hindering or thwarting a people's form of worship but more, to do everything in its power to foster and promote it. For him life in God is man's highest activity and the only goal worth attaining by mortal man. Any human

institution, be it society or the State, that helps to promote man's movement towards God is doing a service of the greatest importance to the individual and to society. This progress towards God, was, in his view, the sole panacea for the multitude of ills that have afflicted and continue to afflict frail humanity through the ages.

All this attempt to subvert or supplant a subject people's traditional way of life and force its own on them, he knew, is characteristic of foreign rule. It promotes practices injurious to social health and happiness, while it obstructs practices which are healthy and wholesome. It was in conformity with imperial tradition that the British Government persisted in promoting the drink traffic and increasing the centres of production and distribution of liquor, despite the vigorous and sustained opposition of the people and their leaders, while it sought to hinder man's march towards God.

The raison de'etre of all organised Government, its sole warrant, is the happiness and well-being of the ruled. If by the conflux of vast numbers of pilgrims, there is the potentiality of danger to the people's health, it is up to the government to apprehend the danger and take precautionary measures to avert it. But to obstruct a people in the pursuit of a rite enjoined by religion and hallowed by time and tradition is cloaked tyranny.

Ramanathan was appalled at the thought that a civilised power like Britain could descend so low as to punish a *bona fide* pilgrim with a fine of a thousand rupees or rigorous imprisonment of one year for no known crime but that he or she went on pilgrimage to a hoary shrine, the Mecca of the Hindus, in fulfilment of a solemn vow. He knew untrammelled power corrupts the best of men and nations. In blazing indignation, he said, "It gave me great pain to read the rule about making a man who is given to prayer and worship a criminal, and exposing him to the punishment

of one year's rigorous imprisonment or a fine of Rs. 1000/=. Where are we living, Sir? Are we living in mid-Africa? But the people of mid-Africa are more religious than many another man here in beautiful Ceylon. Where are we living? In Germany? No, Sir. We are living in beautiful Ceylon, full of philosophy and religion, full of contentment, because we have been allowed to practise our religion and to go on with our worship of God. I never saw anything so supremely barbarous as that rule, and the person who is responsible for it is one whom I cannot support in any way in this Council or outside it."

His severest censure was reserved for Public Officers whose interests were centered more on salary and emolument than on the efficient and devoted service of the people who paid them. Were they wide awake to their duty and responsibility, these disabilities and impediments need not hamper the people. The flimsiest of reasons would suffice them to shirk work and deny the public a great good. No man understood more than he or acted more upon the axiom that a country's greatness and pre-eminence, and the happiness and well-being of its people are commensurate with the strength and efficiency, the purity and incorruptibility of its administration. Administrative laxity and incompetence inevitably lead to the decline and fall of great peoples and empires. During the thirteen years that Ramanathan filled the office of Solicitor-General and then of Acting Attorney-General, he proved himself the beau ideal of a public servant, superbly honest and efficient, indefatigably hard-working and indissolubly wedded to the nation's good. Meedeniya Adigar described him, "the greatest public servant the country ever produced."

Consequently, the members of the public service, from the highest to the lowest, from the Governor down to the humblest peon, one and all took particular pains to do their duty as best

they could by the people and avoid giving him cause for complaint. I heard a man say that when once he went up to the Jaffna Railway Station, he saw the Station staff in a flutter, flurriedly dusting and cleaning the furniture and setting all things in proper order. On enquiry, he learnt that information had been received that Ramanathan was arriving there by the next train. He aimed at perfection in all he said or did and expected every member of the Public Service to do likewise. He shunned all things sloppy or half-hearted. He said, "I think that the origin of this rule is due to the unwillingness of certain Government Officers who are concerned with the duty of looking after the health of the people not being disposed to do their duty, not being willing to make the best effort to fulfil it. A licence for a procession in the street is applied for. A police officer or sanitary officer urges: 'This is a fearful thing. It must be put a stop to, because disease and death will follow in its wake. What is the good of this procession to anybody?' If it is a religious procession, it is not for a police or sanitary officer to entertain ideas of all kinds, and say that it would lead to the spread of plague, small-pox, and cholera."

He proceeded to enunciate a great and enduring principle that all governments exist by divine sanction, by the ordinance of a Higher Principle, only to take effective measures for the promotion of the common good and that whoso violates that timeless, sempiternal Principle suffers eternal damnation: "Nobody who has any sense of public duty would give utterance to the doctrine that it is not possible to arrange for order and sanitation in regard to a procession. I say what I have said before, that efficient Governors have called up the head of the police, and said: 'You and your officers and men have been maintained only to see to such things as disorder, breaches of the peace,

and riots quelled. Now I will charge you with the duty of seeing this done. You have no right to object to the procession itself.' So in the management of religious processions. It is undoubtedly the duty of the Governor of the land and the Government Agent of the country to call upon their officers to do their level best to gratify the needs and the wishes of the people in regard to the worship of God and the maintenance of their religious principles, and to see that everything is done to secure order, comfort, and sanitation during the progress of the procession. If they say that religious processions should be prohibited, or that pilgrims who have made vows and whose intense feeling is to serve God should be punished by a fine of Rs. 1000/=, and by one year's rigorous imprisonment for persisting in their vows, well, I say Sir, we have seen the best days of Ceylon, and are lapsing into barbarism."

In burning indignation, he belaboured a self-righteous Unofficial Member, who gave solemn utterance to his lack of faith in the efficacy of pilgrimages and added that he never went on any. This was too much for Ramanathan's stomach. To one born and bred in a family the central fact of whose history was religion, a family which found its chief solace and life's fulfilment in the worship of God, in pilgrimages to hoary shrines, to one who regarded man's life as but one long pilgrimage, one unending trek through this dark and dusky world to the Blessed Feet of the Eternal, this view seemed heretical and outrageous. He said, "I am very surprised to hear my honourable friend on my left express his disbelief in pilgrimages, and say that he thought that with the progress of education such superstitions would be things of the past. I can only say that, if he had a wider experience of the world and a great knowledge of history in general and of the attributes of human nature, he would not have given utterance to these

remarks, because, Sir, the religious sentiment is a sentiment that is not known to worldly-minded people. To the worldly-minded people the only thing that is real is that which is certified by the five senses and the inductions and deductions of the mind; but the religious sentiment is purely spiritual, transcending the senses and the deductions and inductions of the mind. It is altogether a thing that is associated with the spirit or soul of man. It is well-known from the earliest times to the present day that every one who believes in God, and believes that He is the great rewarder and punisher of our acts, will continue to be devoted to him, notwithstanding all the pains and penalties that may be imposed upon them for practising their beliefs. Who has not read in ancient and modern history of martyrs tied to the stake and burnt alive, because they would not surrender their God and their notions of duty towards Him? I was pleased, Sir, to see the letter written by Father Le Goc, if my recollection serves me right, in which he deprecates matters of this kind being ventilated in the press and says that it is within his own personal experience that religious processions have had an immediate effect on what seemed to be incurable diseases. He states that those who have faith in the interposition of God will be cured in the way in which they have sought to express their devotion to God. That is a mysterious principle of human nature, which my honourable friend on my left has not known, and which he has yet to learn. Well, Sir, I am afraid that the present Government, barring certain noble exceptions, seem to be of the same opinion as my honourable friend on my left. They seem to think that this is all child's play. 'Why should we,' they say, 'expose the public of Ceylon to infectious diseases? It is far better for them, from a worldly point of view, to take care of their bodies and let the souls, about which most

people know nothing, shift for themselves.' I have already answered this view of the question, and I would add, for the benefit of those officers who have been instrumental in getting these regulations passed, that it is not merely illiterate or foolish people who are in the habit of making pilgrimages. *Pilgrimages are made by very sensible people from the southernmost part of Ceylon to the northernmost part of India.* Up to the present day they make long journeys on foot in order to express their devotion to God. It is like a man, Sir, from another point of view, going to war prepared to lose his life in the attempt to defend his country. A selfish man may say, 'What is this idiot doing? Why does he not stay at home and make himself and his kith and kin comfortable by preserving his life and earning money?' The public-spirited military man would laugh at this mean-souled fellow for saying that it is nobody's concern to go and lose his life for the sake of his country or his king. Step a little higher. The religious man says: 'I long to serve my God. He scintillates in my heart much more than the king or the ruler of the Island scintillates in my heart. I believe in the old legend that God manifested Himself in the place where the temple is built, and I will proceed upon this pilgrimage and undergo all the hardships of the journey for the sake of God.'"

He illustrates his case with a touching reference to his beloved grandmother, a lady full of that old-world piety, with whom making pilgrimages to Kataragama often on foot was a religious duty, a lifelong passion. He says, "I said that it is not merely the illiterate and the foolish who go on pilgrimages. When I was a little boy, my mother's mother told me what she once did. She was then about twentyfive years of age, tenderly nurtured, and well tutored in many respects. She told me that she walked all the way from Colombo

to Kataragama on foot. She would not go in a palanquin or carriage but did the journey on foot, with a party of about forty or fifty relations, some of whom, owing to their tender age, were allowed to go in palanquins and carriages. That austere feeling is in the hearts of men and women at the present day, and it is a good thing, Sir, that such a feeling does exist in their hearts. It makes them more loyal to their king, because they believe that the king is the appointed authority in the realm to keep order. He represents God. He has been appointed by God to rule the country, and we must be devoted to God, loyal to His servant, the king. Do away, with God, and what would happen? What would happen is what has happened in Germany."

The Colonial Secretary who now woke up to the gravity of the situation, expressed regret for what had already been done and gave the assurance that all restrictions to the Kataragama pilgrimage would before long be removed. He said, "I shall be extremely glad to get over them, and I can assure the Honourable Member who brought forward the motion that we will give this matter our most sympathetic consideration before this time next year, and if we can see our way to doing it, I am sure, Sir, you will have no objection, although we may have misled you in the present instance, to a revision of the rules to such an extent as to make it possible for those who share the views of Mr. Ramanathan to perform their religious duties. I would again observe, in case I have left any doubt in the minds of the honourable gentleman, that the rules were not invented by me or by any of the present members of the Executive Council; in fact, I think that they were in existence in a slightly more drastic form, which was amended this year on account of the fact that they were *ultra vires*, many years before I was born, I should think about the time that the honourable gentleman's

grandmother was performing the pilgrimage which he mentioned."

The removal of all obstructions to the Kataragama pilgrimage and the provision of adequate sanitary arrangements was a tremendous boon to the multitudes of men and women with whom pilgrimage to that ancient shrine was a religious duty and a lifelong solace.

CHAPTER XVII

IMPEACHMENT OF H. L. DOWBIGGIN

Are our lives so cheap that we may be treated like insects, or are we human beings? What is the meaning of the Inspector-General of Police delivering these death-dealing orders in a promiscuous fashion? Are any of my friends here going to defend him, because he is an Englishman holding the office of Inspector-General of Police? *Fiat justitia, ruat coelum* ought to be the maxim of every right-thinking Member of Council in a case where grievous wrongs are narrated in Council for obtaining redress. They should not stand aloof, because they are Englishmen and the wrong-doer is of their own race, and the people wronged are of a different colour.

—*Ramanathan*

My duty in this critical situation has been of a threefold character. Firstly, to interpret to the Imperial Government and to the Government here the true causes of the disturbances that had arisen. Secondly, to win back for my Sinhalese brethren the fair name which superficial observers and irresponsible chatterers in both civil and military circles had combined unwittingly to traduce. Thirdly, to urge the Governor and the Imperial Government to remedy the wrongs done to the vast body of the Sinhalese who are innocent and irreproachable.

—*Ramanathan*

I have good reasons for concluding that the arrest and incarceration of some fifty eminent Sinhalese gentlemen, who were as innocent as they have been and are held in the highest esteem by their countrymen, was due to the perversity of Mr. Dowbiggin. They were kept in the cells of common criminals in the central jail of Colombo for six long weeks, and then released after every endeavour to procure evidence against them had been exhausted.

—*Ramanathan*

How can we live in Ceylon with a man so heartless and so narrow-minded as Mr. Dowbiggin, who is given, as Inspector-General of Police, an army of policemen here, there and everywhere, to carry out his cruel, tyrannical orders, and expose every man here to the direst troubles—a man who sees no shame in making false statements in regard to vital questions, and misleading the Government which is obliged to confide in him, and furthermore is obliged to put through public business on the strength of his statements?

—*Ramanathan*

ON October 3, 1917, at a meeting of the Legislative Council, Ramanathan gave notice of the following motion: that in view of the disclosures made (1) at the inquiries held by the Government Commissioners in respect of the conduct of the Police and the re-organization of the Police Force, and in respect of the circumstances connected with the shooting of certain men in the Kegalle District, and (2) at the trial of the Walgampaha case in the District Court of Kandy, and in view of other facts that have come to light in connection with the recent riots, it is the opinion of this Council that it is dangerous, in the interests of good government and the safety of His Majesty's subjects in Ceylon, to allow Mr. H. L. Dowbiggin to continue to hold office as the head and Inspector-General of the Police.

Although the government at Whitehall had done much to repair the wrong done to all classes of the Sinhalese during the Riots of 1915, Ramanathan was of the opinion that more remained to be done. The monstrous brutalities perpetrated by the power-drunk imperialists continued to rankle within him. Everyone of them should be tracked down to his lair and such punishment meted out as would drive home to them the truth that the lives and fortunes of subject peoples were not so cheap as they had imagined.

He based his motion on the results of his long and strenuous study of every phase of the

Riots and on his complete mastery of the 2000 printed pages and more of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the conduct of the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Dowbiggin. Without this pains-taking, fact-finding study and mastery of this great question, he could not have carried conviction to the authorities at Whitehall nor, when his motion was debated in the legislature, could he have met the storm of protest raised by the British bureaucrats, who had rallied round the Inspector-General of Police and were doing their utmost to whitewash his conduct and save him the ignominy and the punishment that would otherwise befall him. The occasion generated unprecedented heat and passion among all classes of the Whites, who felt their prestige imperilled, for never before had subject peoples displayed such temerity, such brazen insolence as to indict the rulers. To us of the present-day when Western Imperialism is dead and buried, when the equality of all races and peoples has been proclaimed and acted upon in every quarter of the globe, this may not appear as anything extraordinary or out of the way. But more than half a century ago, when British sovereignty or suzerainty over a great part of the globe was an accepted fact, when it was acknowledged by subject peoples that the Englishman could do no wrong, this public indictment of a highly-placed servant of his Imperial Majesty by one of the ruled was regarded as an act of the highest impudence. If he succeeded, no British bureaucrat, whatever his pretensions, was safe against the onslaughts of the ruled.

If there is one quality *inter alia* that forces itself on the attention of any reader of Ramanathan's speeches and writings, it is his perfect mastery of his subject. No student of research put himself to such interminable pains in the study and mastery of his subject as did this veteran leader and legislater. It is impossible for us at this distance of time to realise

how heavy was the sacrifice of time and energy, of thought and reflection this entailed on a man long past his prime, who was, moreover, a mystic at heart pitchforked into active political life by the earnest solicitations of his people, one who could not be expected to relish the rough-and-tumble, the thrust and parry of politics, whose heart was already set on a life of lonely retirement dedicated to religious and philosophic thought. But he did not grudge it so long as it meant the service of Man and the vindication of Truth, Reason and Justice in the Government of the State, which he knew were at this juncture gravely imperilled by the cruel hand of unregenerate man.

Ramanathan demanded the highest standards of efficiency and competence in public officers, particularly among the higher echelons of the service. He expected everyone of them to act with a high sense of duty and responsibility, to practise justice and moderation in all things, big and small, lest one false step, one little lapse on their part should betray the nation into irretrievable harm.

Ramanathan's representations to the Imperial Government in England of bureaucratic excesses and bestialities during the Riots of 1915 had resulted in the immediate recall of the Governor Sir Robert Chalmers and the Officer Commanding the Troops, General Malcolm, in the cancellation of debt-bonds, in quashing the sentences of the Courts Martial and the release of all who were kept in custody awaiting trial. He further pressed on Mr. Bonar Law, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the absolute necessity for appointing a Commission of Inquiry into the conduct of Mr. Dowbiggin, the Inspector-General of Police, who too was among the prime authors of those diabolical deeds, but had escaped punishment. Mr. Bonar Law told him that it was impossible for him to make inquiries from England, but advised him (Ramanathan) to make his representations to

the Governor Sir John Anderson and move for a Commission. Accordingly, Ramanathan pressed on the Governor the need for a Commission, and a high-powered Commission comprising the Chief Justice, the Attorney-General and three others was appointed.

A thoroughgoing inquiry spread over many months, the findings of which were embodied in a Report extending over 2000 pages and more of printed matter, brought to the surface disquieting evidence of Dowbiggin's hideous brutality, his savagery and beastly inhumanity. Ramanathan had a compassionate and loving heart that loathed violence of any sort. He would vehemently censure a man's misconduct or his misdeeds only to correct and reform him. He would forgive wrongs darker than death, if the wrong-doer proved himself truly penitent. Having grown up in the best traditions of a humane culture, saturated with the best and the noblest thoughts of the ages, he could not contemplate violence of any sort against any living thing, be it man or beast. He could not imagine that a human being could descend to such depths of savagery, and that against a subject and unarmed people. He wanted Mr. Dowbiggin to be removed forthwith from office, for such a man should have nothing to do with the government of human society.

Ramanathan's impeachment of H. L. Dowbiggin is one of the most memorable events in our political history as it is in the history of subject peoples. For the first time in the annals of British rule in the Island, a British official of high rank, the head of the Police Force, was formally arraigned as a criminal at the bar of the highest tribunal in the land, the supreme legislature, by the nation's greatest leader and most consummate advocate of his time. Happy that we had at this hour a leader of such mettle as would make the bravest of the brave among the alien rulers of the country quail before him.

Ramanathan taught these foreign bureaucrats lessons that they would not forget for the rest of their lives. He taught them that they could no longer trample subject peoples underfoot but that they were answerable for everyone of their actions, that all life is sacred, that in the arrogance born of uncurbed might, they should not forget the ordinary demands of civilised and humane conduct, that they should not make wanton play with the lives and fortunes of subject peoples, that men in authority should not abuse their power but use it with the utmost caution, moderation and fore-thought, that whoso fails to conform to the highest standards of administrative conduct, should be brought to condign punishment and held up to the execrations of the civilized world. It was a victory not merely for the Sinhalese who were at this time the direct victims of the arrogant fury of a foreign despot but to all races of the country. It was more a victory for subject peoples the world over, a clear indication that the days of foreign absolutism were at an end, that the ruler, however mighty or powerful, should come to terms with the ruled.

In his impeachment of Dowbiggin, Ramanathan had to encounter very heavy opposition, fight against very heavy odds. The whole British bureaucracy which felt its *amour propre* severely hurt, had rallied round Dowbiggin, and put up a stout defence. Their hearts were already sore with Ramanathan's ruthless exposures of their own misdeeds and their wholesale condemnation by the British Parliament, the British public and by world opinion. They stood condemned as the enemies of man and of all civilised human existence. The Governor and the Officer Commanding the Troops were already recalled home under a cloud of censure, the convictions of Courts Martial were set aside and debt-bonds, forcibly taken from the people, were cancelled. Not content with all that, here

was a man who continued to rub a healing sore. He had fought for the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry, and got it; he saw to it that the findings of the Commission established the charges framed against the offender, and now thirty months after the ugly event, he proceeded to rake up all the frightful atrocities, all the dirt and filth that time was fast covering up. The reputation of the White bureaucracy stood at the lowest ebb, for never before was any of the British brass-hats indicted in the manner it was being done now. Ramanathan contended that a drastic disease afflicted the body politic and called for a drastic remedy. The wound was deep. Palliatives would not avail. A surgeon's knife should be called to its aid. It was a prestige battle between the White rulers and the coloured ruled. The question was whether Dowbiggin was to succumb to Ramanathan's onslaughts or be saved, whether the Englishman's traditional prestige and authority were to continue unbated or go under. The story of the impeachment would ring through many lands where the British flag flew at high most. A member of a subject people was pounding away breathlessly and remorselessly at one of the annointed dignitaries of British Colonial rule, for Ramanathan was the prince of prosecutors. It would leave a stigma that could hardly be effaced; a dangerous precedent was taking shape. Every other member of a subject race would do likewise and the halo that invested the White bureaucracy would before long dissipate. It was a situation that called for the stoutest resistance.

The Attorney-General, Sir Anton Bertram, appealed to Ramanathan to desist from the impeachment, but Ramanathan was firm and unyielding, for his chief purpose was not so much to punish the wrong-doers as to prevent the recurrence of such high-handed and dastardly actions on the part of foreign despots. Moreover, it pained

him more and more to think of the extent to which a foreign ruler would go in his acts of savagery, if uncurbed by the strong hand of selfless and dedicated leadership. It was in reference to a foreign potentate that Acton pronounced his weighty dictum that 'All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' There is no beast of the jungle more ferocious or more blood-thirsty than a foreign ruler in his treatment of an unarmed and defenceless subject people.

On the occasion of the impeachment, the Council was presided over not by the Governor Sir John Anderson, a genial and gentle-hearted ruler, but rather by the Officer Commanding the Troops, Brigadier-General Hacket-Thompson. Like the fighting fraternity, he was unaccustomed to the soft tones and gentle dealings of a civic assembly. In the imperious accents of Sandhurst, he made attempts to obstruct and overawe Ramanathan at every turn, but the veteran of many a verbal battle stood his ground manfully.

In opening his speech, Ramanathan said, "I have a most unpleasant duty, Sir, to perform today, but I cannot avoid it, owing to the responsibilities of my position as a Member of this Council, and also to the immense interest which the people of this country have unceasingly taken in the events that have followed the unfortunate outbreak of the riots some thirty months ago. It is not in ordinary human nature to lose sight of a matter which has touched the very core of its being, for life and limb, honour and property, have been ruthlessly pulled to pieces during the terrible period when martial law reigned, with its patrol and picket systems, courts martial and commissioners of assessments, cash recoveries and bonds signed at the point of the bayonet. The issue now before the Council is one between the Sinhalese as a body and the local government of Ceylon, and the question we have to answer is whether the Imperial

Government, including the great and good Governor, Sir John Anderson, who has been sent to Ceylon to consider this very subject, and to allay the great discontentment that prevails in the hearts of the people of this country, will do justice and reparation for all the grievous wrongs they have suffered at the hands of those few misguided officers of the Government who had been entrusted with the duty of quelling the riots which had broken out, and who themselves had run riot in the execution of their duty.

"My duty in this critical situation has been of a threefold character. Firstly, to interpret to the Imperial Government and to the Government here the true causes of the disturbances that had arisen. *Secondly, to win back for my Sinhalese brethren the fair name which superficial observers and irresponsible chatterers in both civil and military circles had combined unwittingly to traduce.* Thirdly, to urge the Governor and the Imperial Government to remedy the wrongs done to the vast body of the Sinhalese who are innocent and irreproachable.

"I cannot help quoting on this occasion the encouraging words of King Edward VII, proclaimed in 1908. They keep ringing in my ears still. The words are:

'We survey our labours of the past century with a clear gaze and good conscience. Errors have occurred. The agents of my government have spared no pains or self-sacrifice to correct them. If abuses have been proved, vigorous hands have laboured to apply a remedy.'"

The Officer Commanding the Troops with intent to unnerve and disconcert the speaker broke in: "I am sorry to interrupt you, but the motion before the House is in regard to the conduct of an individual. I must ask you to adhere a little more closely to the subject of your motion."

Ramanathan returned to the charge with: "You have not heard what I am leading up to."

A verbal exchange followed in which the White bureaucrats closed their ranks and presented a united front to their assailant, while Ramanathan's colleagues and compatriots, the Unofficials, kept mum.

"The Officer Commanding the Troops:— I have heard you very carefully.

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member:— I am showing.....

The Hon. the Officer Commanding the Troops:— I must ask you to confine yourself to the subject of this motion, which is the conduct of Mr. Dowbiggin.

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: But, Sir, there are some words of introduction necessary to a case, and it would be inconvenient, if I am called upon to plunge *in media res* and so run the risk of not making an impression on the House, because I consider we are doing a judicial duty now, and I want my colleagues in Council on both sides of the House to listen to me fully, in order that they may make up their minds clearly as to what they have to do.

The Hon. the Officer Commanding the Troops:— The answer to that is that the circumstances connected with the riots are very well known to everybody who is present, and it is unnecessary to refer to them more than to prove your point about the conduct of Mr. Dowbiggin.

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member:— That is, if we view the question as applicable only to those assembled round this table, but I have to speak through this Council to a vast body of persons outside, who are interested in our affairs.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary:— The Honourable Member will perhaps excuse my interrupting him. What the motion says is, "It is the opinion of this Council." It is therefore the opinion of this Council that is wanted, and the opinion of people outside is immaterial.

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member:— That is an observation which I appreciate. I am not

inviting the opinion of the general public, *but in the event of my motion not finding acceptance here, Members of Parliament in England who are watching our welfare may do justice upon the footing of the statement that was presented here to the Legislative Council.*

The Officer Commanding the Troops was obviously not willing to see reason but was rather out to use the big stick. Reason fails before a foreign despot. He told Ramanathan categorically, "I think I have clearly pointed out to you what I consider to be your duty, and I hope you will observe the ruling from the chair."

It was never with Ramanathan to disobey the chair. Moreover, he had set out to do a great national duty which needed to be done. He therefore accepted the ruling and went on, "I must accept your ruling, Sir. It is not much more that I wanted to say by way of introduction, but as you say I ought to speak to the motion directly, I will begin by saying that my charges against Mr. Dowbiggin are (1) that he neglected to do his duty in Colombo; (2) that he neglected his duty in Kandy; (3) that he gave false testimony before the Commissioners appointed to investigate the conduct of the Police and the circumstances connected with the killing of the ten men in the Kegalle District; (4) that by temperament he is too impulsive and credulous, and too easily led, to be the head of the Police, and has consequently misinformed and misled the Government with disastrous results; and (5) that he was guilty of gross misconduct in the military duties assigned to him as the Director of Bases.

"As regards the first charge against the Inspector-General, which is, that he neglected to do his duty in Colombo, he knew very well the state of affairs which led to the outbreak of the disturbances. He knew of the opposition of the *Hambaya* Mohammedans to the Basnayaka Nilame

of the Gampola dewale conducting a procession in August, 1912, on the day of their greatest annual festival, called the Esala Perahera. He knew also the extreme irritation caused by the reversal of the decision in the Gampola dewale case by the Supreme Court making light of the Convention of March 3, 1815, between the Buddhist Chiefs and the British Government. He knew further of the opposition that was offered by the *Hambaya* Mohammedans."

At this point the Mohammedan member stepped in, objected to the term *Hambaya* and started calling him names. It was part and parcel of a concerted move on the part of the Whites and the Mohammedan Member to embarrass the speaker and throw him off his balance. But with characteristic calmness and composure, Ramanathan met the situation and explained himself by saying that he meant no insult by the term *Hambaya* but that it was in current usage to distinguish the Coast Moors from the Moors of Ceylon. He now took his plunge into the subject, having foiled the plans of his British adversaries and the Mohammedan Member. I have quoted the speech at some length for more reasons than one. It was the first occasion in the history of this Island on which a British bureaucrat of great authority and standing was impeached before its supreme legislature. Secondly, it deals with a great episode which convulsed the whole country; thirdly because it is a model of parliamentary eloquence and provides edifying reading, and fourthly because a few disjointed quotations taken haphazard will vitiate the unity of the speech.

Ramanathan said, "Well, Sir, the Inspector-General of Police knew of the opposition that was offered by the Coast Moors, to whom the mosque at Castle Street in Kandy belonged, in connection with the licence to conduct a Wesak procession in Kandy on May 28, the anniversary of the

birthday of the Buddha. Then, Sir, he knew that Governor Chalmers' intention to open his fountain in Kandy personally on March 2, 1915, had to be abandoned, because he had heard that the celebration of the centenary of the annexation of the Kandyan Kingdom was spoken of as adding insult to injury after the Supreme Court's treatment of the British Convention as little better than a scrap of paper. Mr. Dowbiggin knew also that the tension had burst into an actual riot in Kandy on May 28, 1915; and then what did he do? He had no eyes to see in these the signs of an impending storm. Like a dullard, he left Colombo without making any preparations for the coming storm. What shall we say of the captain of a ship who, being engaged to navigate his ship, did nothing to provide for an impending storm, but left it and went elsewhere? If the ship was wrecked, would it not be neglect of duty? In the present case we find that while there was every sign of a coming storm, and while the storm had actually broken 72 miles from Colombo owing to causes which lacerated the hearts of the Sinhalese, the Inspector-General of Police left Colombo altogether unprepared, without giving any instructions whatever in the event of the storm bursting over Colombo. He did not even see if everything was in order in Colombo, for, as a matter of fact, the Police in Colombo, which was under his particular care, were wholly unfit and unprepared for action.

"Having had to go up to Kandy at the call of His Excellency Sir Robert Chalmers, he had ample opportunity to see the magnitude of the storm that was blowing in Kandy; indeed, he was so impressed with the state of things there, and lower down at Katugastota and Rambukkana, and higher up at Teldeniya, Matale, etc., that he informed the Governor, who was then at Nuwara Eliya, on May 31, at 11 p. m., that the riots had got beyond the Kandy District, and that all the

other districts needed protection. He ought to have returned to Colombo post-haste. But he did not. On the night of May 31 he received a wire that there had been a disturbance at Maradana in Colombo. The storm had broken here. Nevertheless, he did not come down to Colombo to assume charge of his own sphere of action. Was not this a grave neglect of duty?

"He attempted to excuse himself by saying to the Commissioners that he thought that Colombo could count upon the troops that were here and that such troops were amply sufficient to cope with any situation; and he further explained to the Police Commission that he desired to look after the districts round Polgahawela and Ambepussa, which had no troops or Police to protect them. This is no excuse. He had no reasons to think as he did. There was no justification for deserting his own post of duty, and assuming the duty of the Government Agent of the Western Province.

"It was lucky for Colombo that we had a man of the calibre and energy of Mr. Fraser to fill the gap so thoughtlessly caused by Mr. Dowbiggin. As the Government Agent of the Western Province, Mr. Fraser had nothing to do with the city of Colombo, with its 250,000 people. His duty was to protect the rest of the Western Province, and yet, in the absence of Mr. Dowbiggin, he was appealed to by Mr. Superintendent Daniel of the Maradana Police for help. Mr. Daniel was so persuaded of the impossibility of the Police, as it then was in Colombo, to face the situation, that his first proposal to Mr. Fraser was that the Troops should be called out. That was an extraordinary proposal. We are paying several hundreds of thousands of rupees for the efficient maintenance of the rank and file of the Police Department, and having it officered by superior men so as to afford protection and safety to the people. But the moment some common labourers

in the railway yard began to pelt stones at some boutiques opposite the railway premises, Mr. Daniel, instead of putting his own house in order and pulling together the different Police forces stationed in different parts of Colombo, goes to Mr. Fraser with this curious proposal that he should take upon himself the responsibility of calling out the military.

"Neither Superintendent Daniel nor the Inspector-General, Mr. Dowbiggin, knew in what circumstances and at what critical times military force should be requisitioned. They had no confidence in themselves, or their officers, or the constables. Mr. Dowbiggin liked to think of the military as an adjunct of the Police, and took no trouble to make it efficient for the end for which it was created and maintained.

"A riot, Sir, broke out here some thirty years ago, when Sir Arthur Gordon, a strong and constitutional Governor, was at the helm of affairs, and things looked so dark and fearful in Colombo that many of my European friends thought that I should go to Sir Arthur Gordon and urge on him the advisability of calling out the military. Sir Arthur Gordon received me very kindly, and said: 'Mr. Ramanathan, this is not a question of my likes and dislikes, or of pleasing the people. It is a question of principle, and if that principle, well established throughout the Empire, is to be followed, I have no alternative but to refuse my permission to call out the military for the suppression of riots in a city which is under the protection of the Police. The Inspector-General of Police has never reported to me that the Police Force under his command was unequal to the performance of the duty of protecting the city. Had he done so in time, I would have given him all the supplies necessary. So long as the Inspector-General of Police did not tell me in time that the rank and file of the Force was not

sufficient or inefficient, and that the supervising officers were not sufficient, I cannot move my hands. I expect the Inspector-General of Police to deal with the situation that has arisen, and if he does not deal with it, I know what to say to him." I had to go, and the Inspector-General of Police tried to do his duty.

"The Commissioners who were appointed to report on the causes which led to the Kotahena riots between the Buddhists and the Roman Catholics condemned the Police arrangements generally, and said that the military had at last to be called, and that that 'step was not taken until the Police had been defeated by the mob, and all confidence in them completely lost.' This was in 1883.

"Now, Sir, Mr. Dowbiggin has been in the Police since 1901. He began as an Inspector of Police, then he rose to be Assistant Superintendent, then Superintendent, and then acted as the Senior Superintendent, and became the Inspector-General of Police in November, 1913, after Mr. Longden, who had been lent to us from India, went back to resume duties, and after his successor Mr. David died suddenly. The Government of Ceylon perhaps found themselves unable to select a proper man, and they appointed Mr. Dowbiggin as Inspector-General of Police at the end of 1913.

"From 1901 to 1915 the Government of Ceylon had been doing its duty for very many years as regards the ascertainment of the condition of the Police and the strengthening of it. Major Knollys, in the time of Sir Arthur Gordon, and Governor Blake himself, who had personal experience of the Irish Constabulary, did a good deal to improve it. Sir Henry Blake, after inspecting all the Police quarters, made certain recommendations to the Secretary of State, most of which were sanctioned. The Government Agent of each Province was put in charge of his own Province, and the Inspector-General of Police was to be

in charge of Colombo, and he was to inspect the Police departments in the different Provinces and report upon their efficiency to the Governor after conference with each of the Government Agents. Superintendents of Police were also established in each Province, and they were to act in consultation with the Government Agents and so safeguard the peace of the country. Since the days of Governor Blake and Governor McCallum, the Police has been greatly improved, and we have always felt that during the last fifteen years the Government has stinted nothing to the Police in regard to its numerical strength, and the sanctioning of such measures as were necessary for its efficiency.

"When Mr. Dowbiggin assumed office as Inspector-General of Police, he must have known the exact requirements of the city and the condition of the police. He was apparently satisfied with it all. When the riots broke out in Kandy on May 28, 1915, he goes away to Kandy, and Mr. Fraser, who is approached by Mr. Superintendent Daniel with the absurd proposal of calling out the military, studies the instructions that had been issued to Police Officers on February 23, 1915, for the suppression of riots, and finds them both inadequate and ineffective, and he further discovers, when he had to assume command of the situation in Colombo, that the rank and file of the Police were without sufficient supervising officers, and even insufficient, because the flower of the Police—some 200 of the most reliable constables—had been taken away to Kandy by Mr. Dowbiggin himself. Colombo, for the purpose of Police duties, had been divided of old into three divisions, viz., north, central, and south, and each of these divisions was under an Assistant Superintendent of Police, with an Inspector and a large number of constables. Mr. Fraser found that there was not a single Assistant Superintendent in his place in the whole of Colombo. He found further that there was

in Colombo that day only Mr. Daniel, a very able and trusted Superintendent of Police, who could not cope with the situation at all—who could not correlate and guide the Inspectors in Colombo of the several Police Stations. He found that there was a 'want of cohesion'—those are his words—in the Police Force, and that the Police, as it stood on that occasion, were altogether useless for the purpose of suppressing the riots. These also are Mr. Fraser's words.

"It was well, Sir, that Mr. Fraser was called on to do duty on that occasion, because we now know, when too late, where the trouble was. It is no good crying over the lawless deeds of the vagabonds and criminals of the country; it is absurd to expect them to abide in the law, for they are habitually lawless and are always waiting for an opportunity to indulge in wickedness. *Rioters will riot if the Police will not do their duty quickly, efficiently, and in time. The riots broke out because the Police were unprepared for their duty, because they had no superior officers to lead them and give the word of command, and because they for want of orders and through fear remained passive and supine.*

"*The Inspector-General of Police is responsible for the continuance of the riots in Colombo, and all the damages and injuries done by the rioters.* Had he kept his Force well organized, prepared, and on the alert at the outset, the rioters would have dispersed. Mr. Fraser candidly says that in those circumstances he could not help going up to the military headquarters and applying for the Troops. His words are: 'It was about this time that I realized the want of cohesion in the Police, and the impossibility of my remedying this condition in the absence of several superior officers. I then determined to rely on the military.' And again he says: 'From the moment Mr. Daniel called on me, at 4 p. m., on May 31, I did everything I could to co-operate with him, and on June 1, realizing

that the Police were, in the absence of superior officers and the most reliable constables, useless for the purpose of suppressing the riots, I set myself the task of organising a scheme for picketing the town and securing its safety.'

"I was not in Ceylon in April, and returned to Colombo from India only on June 2, and saw the calamity that had befallen the city. I went about in several directions, and at last to the Police headquarters in Maradana at about 6 p. m. When I went in there I found only one Sub-Inspector of Police, to answer all kinds of calls for directions and for help in regard to the looting that was going on in the immediate neighbourhood and in the adjoining streets. The poor man seemed to be too confused and frightened to do anything. He told me, as I have recorded in my book called 'The Riots and Martial Law in Ceylon, 1915', which I published in England and submitted to the Secretary of State for his consideration: 'There is no one here, Sir, to guide us.'

"I found disorganization reigning complete in the police head-quarters in Colombo at the time I visted the place. I met there a large number of Volunteers, together with Major Cockerill and Captain E. W. Jayawardene, who informed me that they did not understand the situation at all, and that they could not act on their responsibility, but were simply carrying out such orders of General Malcolm as came to them from time to time.

"Now, Sir, have I not made good the charge of gross neglect of duty against Mr. Dowbiggin in respect of his administration of Colombo? Is it not abundantly clear that, before the riots began, Colombo was without its proper quota of superior officers; that the rank and file of the Police were not sufficiently organized to be cohesive and effective; that its numerical strength had been needlessly reduced by 200 of the flower of the Police being sent away to Kandy; that the latest instructions

issued to the Police regarding riots and disturbances on February 23, 1915, were ineffective and confusing; and that for this reason and for want of superior officers, and for want of arms, the Police had become powerless in its work of resisting and overcoming the rioters? Furthermore, was it not neglect of duty on the part of the Inspector-General of Police to have gone away from his post of duty at Colombo and to have left the life and property of all its inhabitants at the mercy of the vagabonds and criminals, and further to compel Mr. Fraser to desert his own duty in regard to the Provinces and thrust upon him the responsibility, all of a sudden and quite unpreparedly, to undertake the protection of Colombo?

"Let me pass from the charge of neglect of duty in Colombo to the charge of neglect of duty in Kandy and examine what Mr. Dowbiggin did there. He says that he was asked by Governor Chalmers to send Troops to Kandy, and to come up to Kandy. If he had to send Troops to Kandy, who asked him to deplete Colombo of 200 of its best constables for the benefit of Kandy?

"He arrived in Kandy at 4 A. M. on May 30, by motor car, having sent the Punjabi soldiers to Kandy by special train. On arrival he took charge of all the Police in Kandy, including the constables who had arrived from Colombo, notwithstanding the fact that there were two Superintendents of Police on the spot—Messrs. Thornhill and Tranchell—and the Government Agent, Mr. Vaughan, who were ready to attend to the needs of the situation. Why brush aside three doughty men in the service? Why should he go and intrude upon the work assignd by rule and authority to these three officers, and let them stand by, and impose on himself the awful responsibility of defending that part of the country which he could not possibly have known so fully and in detail as Mr. Vaughan himself and Messrs. Tranchell and

Thornhill? But that is what he did, fussily and officiously.

"He learnt from them the extensiveness of the mischief that had been done in Kandy, and also the fierceness of the crowd, whose soul had been cut to the quick by the idea that a number of Coast Moormen were coming to Kandy to demolish the Maligawa. He had conferences with all those officers and with the Police Magistrate, Mr. Stace, and he found that in the two riots that had taken place between 1 and 3 P. M. on the 29th, Mr. Tranchell had to recede from the position that he had assumed and run for the safety of his life. The position was so bad, Mr. Tranchell said, that when he and his orderly had arrested a Sinhalese man who was breaking open the planks of a Moorman's boutique, about 200 men armed with sticks and stones came up and demanded the release of the offender. 'I stood up and faced them' he said to the Commissioners, 'and told them I was not going to let him go. They began to throw stones. I got one large stone on my left breast, and sticks and stones were flung at me and my orderly. I got several bruises on my legs—one that made me limp for a week afterwards. I had forgotten to bring my Police whistle. I called for help, but no help came. Neither I nor my orderly was armed, so I said to my orderly that we would have to let the man go. We ran down Colombo Street. The crowd chased me, throwing stones and sticks at me. I ran to the Club.'

"The Inspector-General of Police, Sir, knew this spirit of defiance and fierceness which had been manifested in Kandy. He admits that, when he went to Kandy and beheld the streets between 9 A. M. and 3 P. M., there were large crowds of men going about the city in a way that did not recommend itself to him, and yet when the Punjabi soldiers arrived from Colombo by train at 11-30 a. m.

what did he do? He marched them straight to the barracks and kept them there idle. Why did he keep them in the barracks? Had he forgotten the doings of the crowd on the preceding day? Had he no eyes to see the most unusual crowds expectantly moving along the streets? Had he no sense to conclude that the sight of the Punjabi soldiers in the streets of Kandy as soon as they arrived by train would have kept the crowds in good behaviour?

"Why did he allow the crowd to grow larger and larger, until they demanded a conference with the Government Agent, Mr. Vaughan, for the determination of their grievances? They said: 'Many grievous things have been done against us, and we want to meet the first gentleman in the country—the Government Agent—and tell him what our grievances are, and ask him to inquire into them.' Mr. Dowbiggin's eyes were not open even then. What he did was, he went to the place where the crowd had congregated, near about the Town Hall, in Trincomalee Street, and found suddenly a cry raised in the furthest outskirts of the crowd and a banging of doors in the neighbourhood. He invited Mr. Dunuwille, who had occupied the position of Police Magistrate, and had been honoured by the Government with the rank and title of Dissawa, to try and interfere and allay the feelings of the rioters. Mr. Dunuwille rushed into the scene, and asked the men who were banging at the door of a Moorman's house what they were doing. They said: 'Oh! Dissawa, look what has been done to this Sinhalese man on the ground. He has been stabbed to death. His assailant has gone into this house, with another who participated in the row. We want to seize that man and hand him over to the Police.' There was, of course, a commotion in the minds of all those who were in the vicinity, and Mr. Dunuwille says in his evidence before the Commission: 'The Inspector-

General of Police suddenly disappeared from the scene.'

"What did he do? It was only then that he went to fetch the Punjabis from the barracks. Now, had he, upon seeing such a large crowd congregated in Kandy from 8 a. m., marched the Punjabis on their arrival at 11 a. m. along the streets of Kandy and picketed a few of them at certain junctions, do you think, Sir, that a row of any kind would have occurred? He kept the Punjabis under lock and key. He sees a murder committed in the streets, he sees the murderer locking himself up in a house, and he sees no Police to take charge of the man. He hears the cry for justice, and sees the mob preparing to advance and defend those of their countrymen who were being assailed by the Moors, and then only he rushes back to the barracks to bring the Police. Before the police arrived, Mr. Dunuwille, one man as he was, had allayed the coming storm. He said to the people: 'Now, you keep quiet. I shall bring the Mohammedan out, and I shall see him removed from this place.' The crowd made way, the Mohammedan was brought out and put in charge of some persons, who were asked to take him to a safe place. Mr. Dowbiggin then arrived with an array of Punjabi soldiers, and they had very little to do except to tell the crowd to go away. Holding a gun in the horizontal position with both hands, they pressed back the crowd and said: 'Go away', and they all went. The streets of Kandy were pretty clear after that.

"Except for Mr. Dunuville Dissawa's presence and ready intervention, there would have been a most serious riot on that occasion, and the bringing up of armed soldiers at that stage would have ended in much bloodshed.

"What had the Inspector-General of Police gained by assuming command of the situation? He perpetrated one bungle after another. Had he

the sense to stay and find out what was happening after the crowd had cleared out of Trincomalee Street and the neighbouring streets? Apparently not. Instead of returning to Colombo, and letting the Government Agent and the two Superintendents of Police do their duty in the Central Province, he runs after the crowd to Peradeniya, and even to Kadugannawa. Well, I do not want to dwell upon the bungle that happened in these places. But the Inspector-General of Police returns to Kandy and takes charge of all the Police again and puts them in different junctions. Having divided the whole Police into five parties, he puts one party in Kandy, and asks one party to go north and one south and one east and one west—this is what he said in his evidence. What were the Superintendents of Police and the Government Agent of the Central Province doing? They had to be dancing attendance upon this bungling, fussy, meddlesome Inspector-General of Police. Had he taken time by the forelook, and marched the Punjabi soldiers up and down the streets of Kandy, and picketed them here and there, the riots of the 30th would not have occurred, nor extended far and wide throughout the five different Provinces, where martial law had to be proclaimed on June 2.

"I say, Sir, the Inspector-General of Police was guilty of neglect of duty in not making the crowd see the military march through the streets of Kandy, and in not picketing them at different junctions. Furthermore, I say that he had no business to brush aside the two Superintendents of Police and the Government Agent, and not allow them to have a chance of entering upon the responsibilities of their situation. He further neglected his duty in needlessly tarrying at Kandy, when he should have been in Colombo.

"Now it is my duty to pass from these defections and the bungling administration of affairs in Colombo and Kandy to another part of

my subject. I have to state some circumstances which, it pains me much to say, showed an utter disregard for truth on the part of Mr. Dowbiggin. A harmless Sinhalese boy had been fired at by a Mohammedan and killed about 8 p. m. on May 30. The boy was standing on the edge of a road in Kandy, and the man who shot him was in an upstair room. The murderer was not arrested by the Police, and the crowd who witnessed the act was indignant at the supineness of the Police. On the following day the Sinhalese clamoured for justice, and, in order to allay the crowd's indignation and thirst for vengeance, certain leading men among Christians, Buddhists, and Mohammedans considered it advisable to honour the boy with a funeral in which all the communities should join. These leading men desired to interview the Government Agent of the Central Province and the Inspector-General of Police. I invite attention to the evidence that was recorded before the Commission in reference to the personnel of this deputation, to show how misleading Mr. Dowbiggin can be. The Chief Justice, Sir Alexander Wood Renton, asked Mr. Dowbiggin this question:—

Can you give us the names of any members of the deputation—either Sinhalese or Moors?

Mr. Dowbiggin: Yes, Mr. Dunuwille Dissawa; Mr. Proctor Wijegoonewardene, Member of the Municipal Council; Mr. Weerasuriya, Member of the Municipal Council; and some others whose names I do not know, including one or two very frightened Moormen.

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: The Inspector-General of Police speaks of "one or two very frightened Moormen," as if they were forced to join the deputation, whereas the truth as stated by Mr. Casie Lebbe, on pages 96 and 97, and other members of the deputation, was that besides Mr. Casie Lebbe, there were some other leading Mohammedans on the deputation who freely and willingly went with

Mr. Dunuwille, Mr. Weerasuriya, Mr. Arthur Perera, Mr. Ratwatte, and others. Then higher up, in the first column of page 63, the Inspector-General of Police said:

'At about 2 p. m. this deputation wanted to bury the dead body of a Sinhalese boy who had been shot. They wanted, I understood, to give him a big funeral and pass the mosque in Kandy.'

"This statement was also untrue, for Mr. Casie Lebbe Marikar says on page 96, first column:—

'Mr. Dunuwille proposed that we should go and see the Government Agent, and ask him to keep the crowd away from the town owing to the ill-feeling between the Coast Moors and the Sinhalese. He said he would ask the Government Agent for permission to take the funeral procession along streets where there was no mosque. We said that we had no objection to that.'

The Chairman: Then you went to the Government Agent?

Wittness (Mr. Casie Lebbe): Yes, Mr. Dunuwille made his proposal, and we said that we had no objection.

Hon. Mr. Pagden: You said that so far as you were concerned it did not matter as long as the procession did not go past the mosque?

Witness: Yes.

"As Mr. Dowbiggin knew that his refusal to grant permission to those who wanted to give the boy a funeral, in which Buddhists, Christians, and Mohammedans alike were united, was one of the causes of the crowd collecting together and demanding an interview with the Government Agent to have their grievances redressed, he was now trying to show that he refused permission only because the procession was to go past the mosque. This statement is not true. It is denied by every member of the deputation.

"He bore false testimony before the Commissioners when he told them that 'this boy had

apparently been rioting at the time he was killed.' He had no ground whatever for saying so.

"Neither had he any reason for saying: 'I think two or three Moormen had been killed just outside the Town Hall in Trincomalee Street.' This is absolutely untrue, as shown by the evidence of other witnesses examined by the Commissioners.

"I call the attention of Honourable Members to these three statements: that the boy had apparently been rioting, that the application in respect of this boy was that the funeral should be taken in a big procession past the mosque with music, and that in Tricomalee Street outside the Town Hall two or three Moormen had been killed. I say that all these three statements were false. Two or three Moormen were not killed in Trincomalee Street on that day. The truth is that no Moorman was killed at all, and it was a Sinhalese man that was killed. This Sinhalese man must not be confounded with the Sinhalese boy, who was a passive spectator, and who was shot the preceding night. He had come from one of the schools to see the fun and.....

"Well, I am charging the Inspector-General of Police with stating things to the Commission which were not consistent with facts. I think, Sir, I have said enough on that point.

"Then, as regards the incident which took place in Kadugannawa, in connection with the killing of the Basnayake Nilame of Gadaladeniya, that matter also involves an utter disregard for truth on the part of the Inspector-General of Police. I leave some of my colleagues on this side to call attention to the findings of the learned District Judge as to the false statements made by Mr. Dowbiggin in regard to it.

"Let me now pass on to his statement that after June 6 in Tihariya there was a continuance of trouble, and necessarily a justification for the use of forceful measures because, forsooth, two

elephants with Dissawa Meedeniya's elephant keeper were concealed in the forest of that village in order to pull down a mosque. I quote as follows from the proceedings of the Shooting Inquiry Commission:—

The Hon. the Attorney-General: Apart from this particular belt of country, there was no continuance of rioting?—On June 14 there was still trouble in the Tihariya district.

The Hon. the Attorney-General: What do you mean by trouble?—Stones being thrown on the mosques. Elephants were being tied up in the jungle for the purpose of pulling down the mosques.

"There is a footnote to the evidence (Vide Appendix C), and there we learn that the Superintendent of Police of the Western Province made notes in his diary regarding the disturbances, and on June 14 he says: 'Went up to Veyangoda. Saw Base Officer about threatened attack on Tihariya mosque with elephants. Inquired as regards search for the two elephants, and was informed that they belonged to A. P. Goonetilleke; the driver was one given by Meediniya Ratemahatmaya, and that the elephants had been taken through the jungle towards Three Korales, Kegalla District.'

"I leave, Sir, my honourable friend Mr. Meediniya to explain the part that he is alleged to have taken in this matter. He denies it *in toto*. I do not want to say anything now in regard to it except only this, that the Superintendent of Police had no right to give this information to the Inspector-General of Police, and the Inspector-General of Police had no right to jump at the conclusion that there was trouble continuing in Tihariya, and that therefore all the horrors of the patrol system should be kept up there.

"I may also call your attention, Sir, to the statement of the Inspector-General of Police in his Administration Report for 1915 regarding the proceed-

ings of a meeting of the Attanagala Samagama. He writes as if he knew all about it, in order to influence the Government to keep up the rigour of martial law. His statement was that this temperance society held meetings, and that speakers rose and addressed the meeting, inciting the villagers to attack the Moors and burn their mosques, and do all that was necessary to drive them out of the country. I may say, Sir, that soon after this appeared in his Administration Report, efforts were made to ascertain the source from which the Inspector-General of Police and the Government Agent of the Western Province had derived the information. No materials were forthcoming in support of this declaration about a temperance society, which, to our knowledge, had been and is still doing immense good to the country. The Government Agent of the Western Province is here, and I should like him very much to disclose to this Council whether he received such information about this temperance *samagama*, in the honour and good work of which all right-thinking people are so deeply interested. It is enough to say that when the statement was challenged and proof was asked for, it was not given at all.

"The Inspector-General of Police is either too credulous or too suspicious, according to his passing moods and likes or dislikes, to sift and weigh idle gossip and scandal before acting on it. I ask whether a person who is by temperament liable to go wrong in this manner, and to act impulsively and recklessly, can with safety be allowed to hold office as Inspector-General of Police, and be in charge of the Criminal Investigation Department, where he has the opportunity to harass persons on the vaguest evidence or the flimsiest chatter. I have good reasons for concluding that the arrest and incarceration of some fifty eminent Sinhalese gentlemen, who were as innocent as they have been and are held in the highest esteem

by their countrymen, was due to the perversity of Mr. Dowbiggin. They were kept in the cells of common criminals in the central jail of Colombo for six long weeks, and then released, after every endeavour to procure evidence against them had been exhausted. His system of executive action is to lend a willing ear to tattlers, believe ill of others, misuse his power, and then try to purge his excesses by false statements.

"I now come to my fifth complaint against Mr. Dowbiggin, and that in his awful misconduct as Director of Bases. The disclosures before the Police Commission and the Shooting Inquiry Commission show *that Mr. Dowbiggin has played a most important part in the history of Ceylon during the three months it was placed under martial law*. Governor Chalmers had placed all the five provinces in which rioting occurred under the command of General Malcolm, and permitted him to take all the steps that he might deem necessary for the maintenance of order and the defence of life and property in those five Provinces. General Malcolm, being new to the Colony, was wholly ignorant of the people of the country. He had to rely mostly on the Inspector-General of Police, who was supposed to know a great deal of the whole Island, and his opinions, crude and unchecked as they were, appeared to be gospel truths to the poor General.

"The Inspector-General of Police says in his evidence before the Shooting Inquiry Commission that he returned from Polgahawela on June 3 and reported himself at once to General Malcolm, and gave him an account of all he had seen in the Kandyan District and at Rambukkana and Polgahawela, and recommended the adoption of the patrol system, which he said he had inaugurated at Polgahawela and kept in working order up to the proclamation of martial law. He further says that the General ordered this patrol system to be

adopted in Colombo on June 4, that riot repression measures were drawn up by himself and issued to every Volunteer squad that went out with the Punjabi soldiers; that the General and he were agreed that the Volunteer Officers and the Officer Commanding the Town Guards should select out of the Volunteers and Town Guards a Base Officer to go out with twenty Punjabi soldiers in four motor cars; that each Base Officer was to select three European gentlemen as Special Constables from the body of planters and merchants, who were to be armed with stout clubs only; that on reaching a base they were to split up and patrol all the roads in that place; and that they were to deal with disorders and restore order in the disturbed areas.

"In the riot repression instructions issued by Mr. Dowbiggin and signed by him as Director of Bases, it was announced that, in order that the Base Officers might work together and keep in touch with each other, he himself had been appointed Director of Bases. Instruction 9 is worth considering. It directed the Base Officer to send out patrol parties at his discretion, without waiting for any information, and that he should order the patrol parties to fire on any crowd which had dangerous weapons, whatever they might be doing.

"An innocent person, when surrounded by rioters, Sir, would like to protect himself, especially as there was no Police to protect him. The people took up rulers, clubs, sticks, etc., in order to protect themselves, and not to take part in the riots, and they stood in a crowd which consisted of both rioters and ordinary sightseers. The ordinary men may have had weapons of defence, not firearms or swords or such dangerous things, but instruction 9 issued by the Inspector-General of Police is to the effect that the patrol parties should fire on any crowd which had dangerous weapons, whatever they may be doing. The term 'dangerous weapons' is specially declared to include clubs. They were told that no warning was necessary before firing, that any person who had a club might be shot, whatever he was doing, whether standing or walking or running. They were further instructed that any person engaged in looting or burning might be shot, and that any person running away with or without loot should also be shot."

The Hon. the Attorney-General:— The order says: "Seen running away with loot."

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member: Oh! yes, with or without loot. I would refer him to instruction 9. "Shoot any person engaged in looting or burning, and any person seen running away with loot or running away from looted premises." The only interpretation, Sir, is that a person running away from looted premises with or without loot may be shot. Even the owner of a shop who runs away to save his life, while his property was being looted, could be shot.

"Well, now, Sir, what is to become of Ceylon and its voiceless millions, to say nothing of those who by constitutional methods can wring justice from unwilling hands, if they are to be treated like game that is hunted? Mere running, shoot! Is this human? Is this just? I say, Sir, that instruction 9 only requires to be read to be condemned, and that Mr. Dowbiggin, who acknowledges to have drawn it, must also be condemned as unfit to be in a position of command.

"Then the tenth instruction is: 'No inquest is necessary, and no steps need be taken to report on casualties, nor to see to the wounded. Such steps waste time. The great point to be aimed at is quick movement.' Sir, when a man is killed, whether by accident or otherwise, there is usually an inquest held, either by a Coroner or a Police magistrate, to find out whether there has been any foul play, or at least to describe what were

the injuries which the deceased bore, and what the opinion of the person holding the inquest is about the cause of death. The Inspector-General of Police—the custodian of the unoffending people of Ceylon, who is paid to protect the people says, in effect: 'Fire, and then efface all trace of evidence showing the cause of death. Hold no inquests, and take no steps to report on casualties, nor see to the wounded. Such steps waste time!' Is this human, Sir? Is it human to allow a wounded person, who may have his last words to say on the point of death, to die like a dog, without ministering to his wants and hearing what he has to say?

"*How can we live in Ceylon with a man so heartless and narrow-minded as Mr. Dowbiggin, who is given, as Inspector-General of Police, an army of policemen here, there, and everywhere, to carry out his cruel, tyrannical orders, and expose every man here to the direst troubles—a man who sees no shame in making false statements in regard to vital questions, and misleading the Government who is obliged to confide in him, and furthermore is obliged to put throuyh public business on the strength of his statements?*

"In instruction 13 he says: 'When taking the party by motor, the officer in charge should go in front, with his party behind him, doors to be kept open and held by the hand; if a crowd advance with arms'—the innocent and the mischievous combined, the former having clubs to protect themselves against marauders, and the latter having arms to help them in looting and doing other acts of injustice—'drive straight into the midst of them as quickly as possible, stop dead, and train your men to jump out at once and to line across the road. You immediately give the order to fire; no warning is necessary.'

"*What is their offence? Are we living under the British Government? Are our lives so cheap that we may be treated like insects, or are we human beings? What is the meaning of the Inspector-General of Police*

delivering these death-dealing orders in a promiscuous fashion? Are any of my honourable friends here going to defend him because he is an Englishman holding the office of Inspector-General of Police? Fiat justitia ruat coelum ought to be the maxim of every right-thinking Member of Council in a case where grievous wrongs are narrated in Council for obtaining redress. They should not stand aloof because they are Englishmen and the wrong-doer is of their own race, and the people wronged are of a different colour. Do we not all know that Englishmen in their own country have obtained the dearest of privileges by shedding blood from generation to generation, and secured them under the greatest difficulties? Knowing misfortune, will they not sympathize with our people in their misfortune, or will they stand up for the wrongdoer only because he is one of their kith and kin? I refuse to believe it, Sir. *I want justice, and I hope justice will be done even now. I appeal to my honourable friends to remember the words of King Edward VII, that his agents are ever ready to discover errors and wrongs and to provide remedies for them.*

"To return to the instructions. Supposing the patrol party was going by special train, instruction 14 says that two soldiers should be posted in each carriage looking out in opposite directions, and the officer in charge of the soldiers must be with the engine driver on the engine. 'If you see a crowd assemble, tell the driver to slow down. If you see they have dangerous weapons, tell the driver to stop in the middle of them. One whistle from you means, *get ready*, the second whistle, *fire*, the third whistle, *cease fire*. Fire out of carriages. Do not waste time in getting down.'

"*To me and others like me, Sir, who think the greatest possessions are love and justice, this is perfectly appalling.* I have heard of such things done in Belgium by brutal Germans. And I have also

heard that in carrying out these inhuman directions many an officer in Ceylon did exclaim: 'What are we to do? Orders must be carried out, and we should not be blamed after such orders have been issued.'

"These orders are dated June 5, 1915, and are signed 'H. L. Dowbiggin, Director of Bases.' But it is not only the written instructions that I complain of. There are the verbal instructions issued to Special Constables and to the European gentlemen who were selected and put in charge of the motor car patrolling parties, and these instructions have been transcendentally brutal.

"Dr. Smith, of the United States of America, Mr. Sly, Mr. Sudlow, and a number of other persons were summoned to the office of Mr. Dowbiggin. These instructions were issued to them, and they honestly told the Commissioners that they were dazed by them, and that some of them had been doing their very best to wipe out of their memory the atrocities that they were called upon to perpetrate. They spent more than an hour in Mr. Dowbiggin's room, and he told them practically—I am simply summing up—'Nothing has been done up to this time to quell the disturbances.' This, I need not say, was an utterly false statement to them. 'I rely upon you to follow these instructions, and to act on your own discretion, and fire when you think it necessary. Go and do something.' They understood him to say that the rioters were having it all their own way, and that it was therefore their duty as men of action to go straight there, spread themselves out in different parties, and do something, do something. My honourable friend the Attorney-General, in his cross-examination of these witnesses, has brought out many a touching point, which showed that he was eminently human and righteous, and made many of these witnesses admit that they should not have done what they did.

"Well, Sir, do something. The verbal order was: 'Now you go and do something, using your own discretion. Nothing has been done that should have been done. You do something.' This is a remarkable phrase. We have got a phrase in our native language which speaks of people 'saying without saying, speaking without speaking,' This is one of those things. What was in Mr. Dowbiggin's heart? He wanted them to kill, to strike terror, to trample upon them, and he meant that he was there to defend them. These poor Volunteer Officers who did what they were told to do have got into trouble. The instructions, written and verbal, were illegal and inhuman, and their acts were illegal and inhuman. They were unmitigated murderers, and the Inspector-General of Police is primarily responsible for them all. At his instigation they committed the murders. So he is the principal offender.

"The Secretary of State, Mr. Long, has made his pronouncement upon these instructions. He said the Inspector-General of Police had given ambiguous instructions—instructions which admitted of a double interpretation. As these unfortunate Volunteers and Town Guards had permission to put their own interpretation on it, the person primarily responsible was the Inspector-General of Police himself, because he urged them to go and fire according to their discretion.

"The Attorney-General asked these witnesses: 'Now, what was the offence for which you shot those men? The riots had subsided on the 6th, but these men were being dealt with on the 10th and 12th and 15th. You were asked to go in your patrol cars and make a house to house search and bring out the ringleaders, and if you did catch the ringleaders, what was there to prevent their being sent to the nearest court and given the benefit of an ordinary trial? Why did you sit and judge them? Who gave you authority to

do that?' They said: 'The Inspector-General of Police gave us both written and verbal authority.'

"'Well, what did you think of it? Did you think it was the proper thing to do, to go and search houses?' Many an innocent Sinhalese man, when they heard that the patrol party was coming into their villages, ran into houses, together with some men who had been with rioters, and locked themselves up. One of the officers went up and wanted the door opened. If they opened the door, it would end in certain death to those inside, because they had heard of cases in which the son was shot in the presence of the father, the husband in the presence of the wife without a trial. They refused to open the door. The officer broke it open, entered the house, brought out the men, and told them that their not opening the door was a disobedience of orders and they were liable to be shot, and some were tied to posts and the Moors were asked: 'What do you know of this man?' One man said: 'He was a ringleader. He took part in such and such a riot'. Another man said he did not know anything. Well, Sir, the sum and substance is that the men who were tied up to posts were blindfolded and shot through the head.

"No man in his senses can dare to support these proceedings started and maintained by the Inspector-General of Police. The Secretary of State says Mr. Dowbiggin is responsible, not only for issuing ambiguously worded orders, but for another fault. He selected ignorant and untried officers, men without local experience and without the necessary qualifications to take charge of these patrolling parties. 'Lynching parties' is the term used by the Governor. The Secretary of State goes further and says that, after these proceedings were finished, the Inspector-General of Police did not get from his officers a record of their proceedings. He was asked if he himself made notes and informed the Governor, and he said,

'No'. He was asked why he did not take measures to ascertain their doings, to which he replied that he thought these officers would tender their explanations to the military authorities. Next to the General, he was the chief military authority as the Director of Bases, and these men had derived their authority from him, and in the natural routine of business they ought to have rendered their reports to him, and he should have transmitted them to the General.

"But the Inspector-General of Police is all in a cloud, not knowing what answer to give. He says: 'Oh! I thought they would go to the military authorities.' He conveniently forgets that he was the proper military authority to receive reports from patrol officers. Indeed it is proved by some of these unfortunate Volunteers that they reported the cases to him and that he approved of them. How shifty, how recklessly untruthful!

"I say that a man like that ought not to be at the head of the Police. Ceylon may well cry; 'Save us from our friends.' It remains for the Government of the present day to do justice as between the Sinhalese people and the executive officers to whom the lives and property of the people in five Provinces had been deliberately surrendered by Governor Chalmers.

"I think, Sir, I have gone through nearly all I wanted to say, and I wish now to add that it is not out of spite, or from a desire to earn a cheap reputation, that I have come for redress to the Legislative Council. I have been obliged to take up the subject because the former Secretary of State, Mr. Bonar Law, said that it was impossible for him to make inquiries in England, that these complaints must be laid before the Government of Ceylon, and that it was for Sir John Anderson to make the necessary inquiries and give a suitable decision. I am sure, Sir, that in these circumstances I had no other alternative but to consent

to present the petitions of the widows of the men who had been murdered and to ask for an inquiry.

"It is in consequence of these petitions that His Excellency the Governor was obliged, on the strength of the public announcement of Mr. Bonar Law, to appoint a Commission, and it was the duty of the Shooting Inquiry Commission, consisting of the Chief Justice and another lawyer of eminence, to go into all the circumstances and arrive at a proper finding. Their finding is that all those acts were illegal; but they went a little further, and said that all those acts were covered by the Order of Indemnity proclaimed by the King, and that as these men had been acting *bona fide* they came within the purview of the Indemnity Order.

"Well, Sir, I have carefully analyzed the opinion of the Governor as contained in his despatches, and also studied the despatch of the Secretary of State repeatedly in order that I may know what their standpoint of view was; and I have also carefully considered what was the standpoint of view of the officers who were under arraignment.

"I must say that Sir John Anderson's view is quite correct. He did no more than what was according to law. I would call attention to only one authority, and that is 'Clode's Administration of Military and Martial Justice,' a work deservedly held in the highest esteem in England and the United States of America. When there was war in the United States of America between the North and the South in 1863, it was necessary to place the land under martial law, and to give instructions to those officers who had been entrusted with the execution of martial law. The Government of the United States said that martial law did not mean the absolute will of a General. It did not enable him to do whatever he might like, because martial law was not absolved from the eternal principles

of justice, humanity, and honour. The actual words of the instructions are, 'Martial Law must be administered strictly according to the principles of justice, honour, and humanity,—virtues adorning a soldier even more than other men, for the very reason that he possesses the power of his arms against the unarmed.' That is quoted by the learned author of the work with approval, and I say fearlessly that that is the law of the Empire, and that martial law cannot release itself from the eternal principles of justice, humanity, and honour. A soldier is after all a human being. He must take care that he does not adopt the ferocity of the tiger, or the irresponsibility of a madman, but should conform himself to humanity, justice, and honour. What then is the meaning of the term *bona fides* in the Indemnity Order? Is it the *bona fides* of a being who knows what justice, honour, and humanity are ....."

Obviously the Officer Commanding the Troops was not prepared to face facts or listen to reason nor could he endure such hard-hitting any longer. Deciding to use the big-stick, he broke in: I do not think we need go on like this. I do not see that it has any bearing on the motion. We do not want a long disquisition on martial law here.

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member:— It is not a question of.....

The Hon. the Officer Commanding the Troops:— You have only to prove your point that Mr. Dowbiggin did things under martial law which were not legal.

The Hon. the Ceylonese Member:— That is precisely what I am trying to do.....

The Hon. the Officer Commanding the Troops:— You are going too far.

This arrogant and unseemly attempt on the part of the Officer Commanding the Troops to interrupt him at every turn, to browbeat and silence him became so utterly repugnant and so nauseous that he

felt it was purposeless and meaningless continuing any further. Moreover, while there were many to support the Officer Commanding the Troops, there was none among the Unofficial fraternity to lift one finger in his behalf. He knew all too well that, whatever he might say, however unanswerable his case, decision lay with the foreign ruler who had always ready to hand a blind and brutal majority vote which he would wield at will with deadly effect and make short work of the mighty edifice of reason and argument that he had built with laborious toil. But he had the spiritual and moral satisfaction that, whatever the outcome, he had done his duty by the people and stated their case as few others could have done. With a foreign despot determined to have his own way with the lives and destinies of subject peoples, reason and argument are of little avail. With a heart full of agony and anguish at the helplessness of man in chains to unregenerate tyrants, with a countenance on which despair was writ large over labour ill-spent, the veteran leader concluded, "I submit to your ruling, because you are the Chairman of the occasion. What I mean to say is this, that the Inspector-General of Police having given his instructions—it may be with the approval of the General—neither the General nor the Inspector-General of Police can claim to be absolved from these principles of justice, humanity, and honour, which ought to govern the actions of every man. Certainly these principles will not govern a demented man. Therefore Sir John Anderson was quite right in saying that it is with loathing and disgust that he saw such acts perpetrated in this part of the British Empire."

With mild irony but with seething indignation, he made his apology to the General for detaining him a little too long and urged on him the need to get back early to his military duties, as if to remind him that an army in good fighting trim

and an arsenal fully replenished are the only things that really matter in the government of a subject people; he made his apology to the Official Members, the British bureaucrats, who had assembled there not with any disposition to do justice but with hearts heavy and minds intent on defeating and nullifying the Motion before the House by a ruthless application of the majority vote they always commanded and saving their colleague and compatriot the injury and odium that would otherwise be his portion. "Sir I am very sorry. I have detained you so long. Your military duties are many, I assume, and you must go home and attend to them. I am sorry I have to detain other Honourable Members who do not care to hear these stories narrated in public, and who therefore are listening to me with a sense of, it may be, irritation. I do not want to hurt their feelings, but I certainly think they, like me, are colleagues in the sound administration of the affairs of this Colony, and would like to hear the truth spoken. Everyone admits that it is the duty of Members of the Council to speak fearlessly. I have spoken, Sir. The issue I leave in their hands, and I hope that justice will be done by removing this man from the office of Inspector-General of Police in Ceylon." He hoped for justice, but justice is the last commodity one would expect of an alien ruler. Justice and alien rule are two incompatible things, a contradiction in terms. Injustice is his sole warrant, his sole raison d'etre.

A division was called. As was expected, all the White Sahibs together with the Mohammedan Member voted as a body against Ramanathan's motion, while all the Unofficials voted for it. The whole issue boiled down to a battle of the Whites versus the Coloureds and the Whites won.

But Ramanthan had exposed to the country, to the Government at Whitehall and to the wide world outside what a monstrosity foreign rule

could be, and what a sham, the majority vote was. He had also brought home to the Britisher that the government of Ceylon, unlike the governments of other Crown Colonies, was no sinecure, but that everyone of his actions would be subjected to the closest and the most ruthless scrutiny at the bar of the highest tribunal, the country's supreme legislature, by leaders at once intrepid and resourceful as they were patriotic and self-sacrificing, that he would be pilloried and held up to world opprobrium if ever he sinned against the light. It was in the wake of such brilliant and heroic leadership as was vouchsafed to us by men like C. A. Lorenz, George Wall, Sir Muthucoomaraswamy, Ramanathan's maternal uncle, Coomaraswamy Mudaliyar, Ramanathan's elder brother, Ramanathan himself and his younger brother Arunachalam that this Island loomed large in the estimation of Imperial statesmen and stepped forth to her rightful place as the Premier Crown Colony.

Ramanathan more than lived up to the expectations of his people, of whom the contemporary press said, "In sending Ramanathan to Council, the Ceylonese had only one end in view, namely that new life and energy should be infused into it and that the Government should be made thereby to pay greater regard to public opinion in the decision of public questions by the fear of their measures being openly criticised in Council. The Ceylonese Member might have been in a minority of one on some occasions. But who can doubt that the purpose for which he has been sent to the Legislature has been accomplished?"

CHAPTER XVIII

RAMANATHAN AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

During the long and active period of over fifty years, there was no occasion on which he did not assist his people in their long struggle towards self-Government, at every stage of which he fought in the van.

— His Excellency Sir Graeme Thompson

We hold it a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule which has impoverished and unmanned the people of India.

— Mahatma Gandhi

Reflect that her (Athens') glory had been built up by men who knew their duty and had the courage to do it. Make them your example and learn from them that the secret of happiness is Freedom and the secret of Freedom, Courage.

— Pericles

We ask to be in our own country what other self-respecting peoples are in theirs—self-governing, strong, respected at home and abroad, and we ask for the grant at once of a definite measure of progressive advance towards that goal. Ceylon is no pauper begging for alms. She is claiming her heritage.

— Sir P. Arunachalam

Self-government is the ordinance of nature, the dispensation of Divine Providence. We aspire to self-government. We may not get it in a day. We may have to wait and work for it. The journey may be long and wearisome. But we have learnt patience in the hard school of constitutional agitation.

— Surendranath Banerjea

The clamour for the very institutions of the United Kingdom ought to be a clamour that should find sympathy

in the heart of every enlightened man, including the men who come here from England to govern the people. They should not condemn the clamour, supported as it is by many a high official in England and in India, and by many a member of Parliament, who have cried shame upon the delay and upon the limited nature of the reforms that have been given to such a great people, whose history extends for thousands of years and who from the very first have been considered to be among the most civilised nations of the world. The reforms have been given by little doles with a gingerly spirit, for no reason that we know of. Their hearts burn and they say to themselves, "It is better to die than to go in the way they have been going on for so many years past."

— *Ramanathan*

What would you say if the Government of England was entrusted not to Englishmen, but to a band of Italians or Russians?

— *Ramanathan*

The people of Ceylon, I declare, have no confidence in the Legislative Council as it is constituted now, and there is serious discontent reigning in the hearts of every community in Ceylon as regards the way in which it is used by the Government to carry out its own faulty views.

— *Ramanathan*

People once awakened and awakened rightly cannot be put down.

— *Lajpat Rai*

I declare that it has not been sufficiently realised in Ceylon that the experiment of entrusting officers coming from abroad with the work of making laws in regard to so complicated a question as reform is attended with grave peril.

— *Ramanathan*

THE Riots of 1915 and the savagery let loose upon a helpless and defenceless subject people by an alien ruler armed to the teeth with the might of modern warfare and the massed resources of a modern State left no room for doubt that

alien rule in any shape or form, whether by a civilised power or a savage tribe, is an unmixed evil and should be broken up at any sacrifice and with every resource at the people's command, if they are to live with ordinary decency, self-respect and security. Ramanathan's ruthless exposures of British excesses, his all-night pounding within the Council Chamber at British bureaucrats and their war-lords, who were the authors of these diabolical atrocities, his subsequent intercession with British statesmen on behalf of the victims, his shocking disclosures through his book "Riots and Martial Law in Ceylon, 1915", his impassioned impeachment of the Inspector-General of Police, created a profound and world-wide resentment and loathing of British imperialism and left a gaping wound in the hearts of the people. In the neighbouring sub-continent of India, Gandhi had branded it a "satanic system" and set on foot an agitation which the Britisher was at his wit's end to resist. The feeling that the foreigner must go, and go bag and baggage, and the country, be made safe for the people was general and widespread.

It is worth recalling that, of the many questions of great national importance with which Ramanathan was intensely and ceaselessly occupied during his half-century of political leadership, the achievement of national freedom and sovereignty was certainly the foremost. From the day when in the eighties of the last century, he founded the Ceylon National Association and set on foot a vigorous and sustained struggle for his country's freedom down to the end of his days, he was the genius behind every move for the furtherance of the people's rights and liberties and the progressive elimination of foreign rule in the country. The many Memoranda he submitted to the Imperial Parliament from time to time, wherein he made out an unanswerable case for constitutional reform and the grant of a larger and more effectual share

in the government of the country, the many interviews he had with Imperial statesmen at Whitehall at various periods of his life, his numberless parleys with Governors in the Island constitute some of the jewelled pages in the history of a lifetime dedicated to the shaping of national institutions.

The Reforms of 1910, although they are a landmark in the history of the Freedom Struggle by reason of their introduction of the elective principle, did not go far enough to meet the people's aspirations, in view of the fact that the Official majority continued to have the whip-hand of power and carry all things before it. Many of Ramanathan's proposed measures for the national good foundered on the adamantine rock of the Official opposition as expressed by an Official majority vote. No good government was possible or achievable nor could any popular participation in the councils of State be productive of any great good, so long as an alien ruler continued to wield that brutal weapon called the majority vote. Thrice accursed was the day when man forged it. History does not record another that has taken a heavier toll of whole peoples and nations than this. Ancient Greece in the plenitude of her power and the amplitude of her genius honed not another more disastrous to human destinies than that.

On 11th December, 1918, Ramanathan moved a resolution that "it is desirable that the Government should report without delay to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies the results of its consideration of the following questions, namely:— (1) The Reform of the Executive and Legislative Councils; (2) the more effective popular control of Municipal Councils and other local councils, with elective Chairmen and majorities of elected members; and (3) the filling of the higher offices in the Ceylon Civil Service and other branches of the Public Service with a larger proportion of competent Ceylonese."

The exclusion of the sons of the soil from the higher seats of administration was one of Ramanathan's greatest grievances. To take one example out of many, of 44 appointments in the Civil Service, of the annual value of £ 900 to £ 2000, three only were held by the Ceylonese (including Burghers), of whom the highest drew £ 1,150. The position was utterly intolerable, for there could be no question of the intellectual capacity of the educated Ceylonese. What was worse, all the appointments in the Revenue Branch, the most lucrative of the Civil Service, were made the special preserve of the Whites. No Ceylonese, however brilliant or meritorious, could hope to enter that charmed circle.

One need hardly shed tears over it, inasmuch as it has been a practice hallowed by imperial tradition over the ages. A foreign ruler, in his efforts to fortify his position and perpetuate his rule, gathers up in his own hands all the reins of power, occupies all the key-positions in the State, and by so doing contrives to lay a stranglehold on every department of national life. If he shares any part of them with the ruled, he seeks out only hirelings and toadies who will go one step farther than the ruler himself in furthering imperial interests. These positions are his chief weapon wherewith to achieve his ignoble purposes—on one hand, the progressive pauperisation and vulgarisation of the ruled by a planned effort to ruin their economy and their intellectual and moral well-being; on another, the ruthless expropriation of the landed gentry and the wholesale spoliation of the land thus appropriated, and on yet another, the establishment of a dead level of uniformity in national life.

There is only one resource whereby this giant evil can be combated and subdued, that is by strong, resolute and far-sighted leadership,—leadership that shrinks from nothing, but views life and death alike,

and regards sacrifice as a prime national duty. It was our great, good fortune that at this critical period of our country's history, we had in Ramanathan a leader par excellence, a leader who possessed everyone of these qualities in superabundant measure, whose arena was not the battle-field, but rather the parliamentary forum and the conference table; whose weapon was not the sword nor the bayonet, but the more humane and civilised instrument, rational argument and a friendly appeal to the mind and heart of the ruler. If local sahibs would not give heed, there was always a court of appeal open to him—that band of liberal statesmen at Whitehall who were always ready and willing to give heed to the grievances of subject peoples in their vast and far-flung Empire and mete out even-handed justice to them all.

Ramanathan addressed himself to the problem of Ceylonising the administration as his first move in his long campaign for the achievement of national freedom and sovereignty and was from his early legislative career in hot pursuit of it. As early as 1882, when British rule was at the height of its power, and few would venture to question its doings, he, as a raw youth of only thirtyone, in the formative period of his legislative career, moved a resolution for the appointment of Ceylonese to the Revenue Branch of the Civil Service.

It was a bold move, when many of his seniors in the legislature took the existing order as a matter of course and ordained by imperial writ, and would not lift one finger to change it. He made out an unanswerable case, by citing numerous examples from the neighbouring sub-continent of India where Indians had distinguished themselves in the revenue services and won universal acclaim. He succeeded in extracting a promise from the rulers that Ceylonese officers would be appointed to the revenue branch without discrimination of any sort, when found qualified and competent. He kept on pegging

away at the question ever since, until the Public Service was progressively Ceylonised.

Again in 1918, when he moved for the reform of the constitution, he combined with it two other motions, one for filling the higher offices in the Civil Service and other branches of the Public Service with a larger proportion of Ceylonese, and another for the more effective control of Municipal Councils and other local councils with elective chairmen and majorities of elected members.

When in the course of the discussion on the Ceylonisation of the Public Service, the Principal Medical Officer persisted in the appointment of a European as his deputy, Ramanathan with flaming indignation, protested, "I am not sure, Sir, whether I have correctly interpreted the meaning of the words which fell from my honourable friend, the Principal Civil Medical Officer, but I understand him to say that for certain posts of trust, none but Europeans would answer the ends of good government. If that were so, Sir, I think great injustice would be done to many a Ceylonese, who do not think anything of being a Ceylonese, but only of being a human being. I do not think that the fact of a man being born in Europe, or having for climatic reasons a fair skin, necessarily makes him the possessor of a mind more worthy or superior. I do think, Sir, that this doctrine of the Principal Civil Medical Officer cannot for a moment be admitted by any right-thinking person. I have known many dishonest men in every race of people that I have come across. I have also the privilege of knowing many men belonging to different races who are extremely kind and honest and quite worthy of being given any work of trust. How can I sit quiet and listen to doctrines so absurd and prejudiced as those which have fallen from the Principal Civil Medical Officer? Personally, Sir, I have nothing but kindly feelings towards my honourable friend, but his

opinions need to be revised. I know of different Colonial Secretaries and different Heads of Departments who do not attach the slightest weight to the fact of the place of birth or colour of a man. I have found them willing to employ any one if he has the necessary qualifications."

It used to be said that Ramanathan was sometimes brutally and disconcertingly frank. Quite true. When confronted by persons who, in the intoxication born of power and authority, made high-handed demands or put forward unacceptable and absurd propositions, he could be as ferocious and overpowering as a lion. No potentate, however high or irresistible his power, ever overawed or subdued him. To the good, the courteous and the honourable, he was the soul of goodness, courtesy and honour. But to those who transgressed the limits of human decency and decorum, he could be incredibly blunt and brutal.

Of set purpose, Ramanathan made his motion comprehensive and all-embracing, designed to make the government of the country truly democratic. He knew it would not suffice to make the legislature alone democratic. All local government institutions too should be democratic. The supreme legislature, as he conceived it, is only the cope and the crown of the edifice of democracy. The foundation for such an edifice is laid in every village, town and city, so that the humblest villager as well as the most sophisticated city-dweller may learn the art and craft of democratic rule. The strength and solidity of the central edifice is commensurate with the strength and solidity of its circumference. Hence his lifelong insistence on making local government institutions wholly and truly democratic.

His speech in support of his motion was a long one, a very long one, as many of his important speeches were. As such, it does not bear quoting even in parts, packed as it is with immense and

varied learning, with deep political and philosophical insight, with the wisdom of a lifetime dedicated to the shaping of national institutions, with parallels drawn from many lands outside and above all a speech that breathed militant fire and burning patriotism.

He expressed his confidence in Governor Manning's honesty of purpose and his desire to do justice, but sounded a note of caution against his being misled and misdirected by his local advisers. By local advisers, he meant the hierarchy of British officials who, in his words, "ruled the country with pens in office rather than with knowledge gained by dealing with the people in person and on the spot." He said, "We believe your mind is quite open and free to consider the question in a broad spirit and to do justice to the people of Ceylon. But however good and free a Governor may be, his great trouble will be to distinguish between the right and wrong convictions of friends who, having been here already, venture to tell him what they think of the country and its people. If the listener be not careful, he will easily absorb the crude generalization of the authors he reads and of the friends who have his ear, and be easily victimized."

He indignantly repudiated the false and malicious notion propagated by the opponents of reform that the Ceylonese were not sufficiently civilised nor able to govern themselves, that the art of good government and the graces of civilised life were yet a closed book to them, and quoted at great length the pronouncements of eminent Westerners on the greatness and antiquity of Indian culture and civilisation, a replica of which is Ceylonese culture and civilisation. He said, "A great argument urged by the opponents of the reforms called for here is that the people of India and Ceylon are not civilised enough to be given greater representation than they have in our Councils of State;

that we are not fit for it, because we do not know the highert ruths of worldly life, or the practical methods of action in the field of administration. This accusation is supremely absurd in our eyes, but the men who make it, believe in it and are convinced it is true, and I have to clear off great obstructions caused by such an assumption. They do not seem to know that thinkers and industrial workers of India have always commanded the admiration of the rest of the world. Foreign nations have eagerly desired to possess it. Its fine arts, sciences, industries, and philosophy have been the marvel of all cultured nations."

He now proceeded to quote from Professor Lowes Dickinson, Sir William Jones, Victor Cousin, Freidrich Schlegel, Schopenhauer, Max Muller, Birdwood, Rev. Dr. Pope to prove to the Western ruler that both India and Ceylon belonged to the hoary past and were heirs to a culture and civilisation unequalled by any in the West. To think that they stood in need of the civilising influences and the guiding hands of the West was sheer delusion.

He cited the special interest that Queen Victoria took in the government of India and her people, and her declaration of her future policy for the government of that sub-continent. "When Queen Victoria withdrew the Charter given to the East India Company of British Merchants and assumed charge of the administration of India, she wrote feelingly and appreciatively of the Indians, and sent her sons and grandsons to India to study on the spot its princes and peoples. It was personal knowledge, corroborated by the best of British administrators, civil and military, that made King Edward and King George to think so much of the people of India, to ascertain their needs and aspirations carefully, and to resolve upon measures of justice and wide reform on their behalf. The present King's Ministers of State and Viceroy

have formulated the new policy of the British Government. It was announced as follows in the House of Commons on August 20, 1917: 'The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India is in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.'"

He now asked, "Need there now be a bitter controversy in regard to Ceylon about its demands? Is the situation too dark for our rulers here to report to the British Government that the modicum of reform granted to Ceylon in 1910 is not sufficient, and that the gift of political suffrage ought to be much larger, if the people are to grow in public spirit and become more efficient for good among themselves and for the Empire?"

He next warned the White rulers against the error of looking at things through a chink. "We should not look at this question through a chink. The panorama is so great that views through a chink will not help us to a right conclusion. We must take in the whole perspective, not of place or direction, but of humanity at large, and of the stages of development appointed by God for its attainment of God, the goal, with whom all men should enter into fellowship. Herein lies the highest argument for self-government, for admitting those of the Ceylonese who possess the confidence of the people of Ceylon to a full and proper share in the actual administration of its affairs.

"Let me state this argument as shortly as possible. It is intelligible to every one who loves the truth and lives for the truth. It is the basis on which the famous declaration of His Majesty's Prime Minister and of the English and American

Statesmen stands. They declared that the struggle between the Allies and the enemy was a struggle between liberty and despotism, a struggle for the right of small nations to rule or regulate their own destinies, a struggle on behalf of every people to determine their own ideals and attain them by their own efforts.

"What is the reason of this most remarkable statement, which has given the death blow to the shameless doctrine, that India was made only to feed and dress, and otherwise serve and slave to the British people? The acknowledgement of the right of every people to determine their own affairs and govern themselves was born of actual experience of the horrors of unjust invasions and the fiendish atrocities practised by the barbaric hordes of Germany. *Non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco.* The sight of terrible suffering inflicted on the weak by the strong and the savage melts our heart and makes for justice, and impels us to give to every one his due without delay. Fellow-feeling for those who have suffered bitterly by the rapacity of the wicked compels us, not only to be just, but also generous.

"And the rapid downfall of Empires before our very eyes shows the utter vanity of the things of the world and the flesh, and the greatness and necessity of being righteous and good unto others as quickly as possible. Now indeed do thoughtful men and women in Europe believe in the pilgrimage of the soul from worldliness by the path of self-sacrifice, genuine sympathy, and works of loving kindness.

"The public-spirited or public-minded men in England know the sacredness of home as a platform of work for the expansion of love in the hearts of those who actively labour in it for each other. So is the school a platform of work and knowledge for those who actually labour in it as students and teachers. So is the playground

a platform of work for the development of physical strength, courage, and fair play in those who actually take part in the games. So are the professions and industrial occupations a platform of work for the creation of wealth and credit and honour in the case of those who actually labour in their respective fields. Similarly, the political platform and administrative work in the offices of the Government develop public spirit and devotion to public usefulness in the case of those who are entrusted with an actual share in the government of their country."

He enforced the view that good government can never be a substitute for self-government, that a foreign power has no reason whatever, human or divine, to hold another people in bondage, however just and noble be its intentions, however progressive or beneficent its institutions or its mode of government; that the people should be given sufficient opportunities for training and equipping themselves in the arts of life; that various institutions of society have been ordained by God for the training of man and the betterment of human society. He said, "Home, school, playground, profession, industrial occupation, public work and government of the affairs of the people are said by our sages to be sacred institutes of civilization, ordained for the betterment of man on moral and intellectual planes. Of all these institutes, that which is most effective for good in ourselves in due time, and to others, is the work of government. This work properly done expands the intellect of the worker, conduces to the purification of his soul, and strengthens it in love and light for the still higher and holier work of attaining God."

Ramanathan was extremely apprehensive of the trading classes and the wire-pullers taking part in politics, inasmuch as the pursuit of wealth and its accumulation and glorying in its immensity,

so eminently characteristic of this class of men, unfits them for the service of the state. No country ever grew great that was governed by merchants and shop-keepers and artisans. "Tilling and trading do not suit those who are intellectually and morally grown, for those occupations necessitate buying and selling, which bind the mind too much to things earthy and fatten selfishness. Barter is ordained for those who crave for a *quid pro quo*, and, in the exchange of goods for money, the ideas of material profit and personal gain make for self-aggrandisement, never for self-sacrifice. Commercialism, therefore, is a heavy drag on those who long to grow in love, light and purity.

"Is it right to deprive one of one's home? Is it right to deprive a nation of its indigenous schools, playgrounds, professions, and industrial occupations? No more is it right to deny to a people the platform of political work, and participation in the work of actual government, in their own country.

"When it is clearly felt that public work and actual government of the public affairs of a people in their country have been ordained by God for the uplift of the spirit, it is easy for a nation which has been ruling a country occupied by another nation to invite its leaders to shape its destinies in the way they think right. The trend of enlightened English thought for some years past has been that good government by foreigners can never be a substitute for self-government."

He pointed out that the much-belauded superiority of Western nations over the Eastern was due not to any inherent superiority of intellect or morals but rather to the extraordinary opportunity afforded them to develop and strengthen their native powers. He pointed out that if similar opportunity were given to the Ceylonese in higher education, in applied science and technology, in developing the latent skills in youth, there was

not the shadow of a doubt that they too would distinguish themselves. He dispelled the notion that the art of government as well as the other arts of civilised life were better known to the British than to the Indians and pointed out that any superiority the British could pride on, was more acquired than inherited, acquired by reason of the exceptional facilities their government provided. He said, "The British Government know that in India there are many model States, like Mysore and Baroda, which are governed entirely by native gentlemen, and that it has been proved that in all fields requiring intellectual power and perseverance, such as law, science, medicine, mathematics, and so on, the people of India and Ceylon are as good as any in Europe.

"The efficiency of the British people is due, not to greater congenital talents than those possessed by the peoples of India and Ceylon, but to the training they have had in their colleges and universities, and to the opportunities of further improvement afforded by public life, by a full share of the administration of the government of countries, and by admission to the higher rungs of military and naval service."

He condemned in forthright terms the tendency of the British to regard all coloured peoples as inferior to them in intellect and understanding and added, "A lack of spiritual discernment and the want of loving kindness to all is the surest indication of what is commonly called foolishness, ignorance or barbarism; and what I desire to emphasise is that the general ignorance or foolishness which is common to all mankind may be gradually removed by sound education regarding the principles of the life, simple and real, by opportunities of doing good work, especially on the public platform and by putting one's hand to the work of governing the people honestly and lovingly in the different departments of State. It is neither true nor just

to believe, as some of my British brethren believe, that they are superior and the Ceylonese are inferior."

His indignation not quenched, he exclaimed, "How few know what real life is! How astounding is the ignorance which prevails in Europe in regard to the colour of the skin, the highness of the cheekbone, the slant of the eyes and eyebrows, and other corporeal differentiations! Western nations, I mean the half-witted among them, verily think, whether they are aristocrats or of the middle class or of the populace, that these peculiarities denote real differences in point of ability, efficiency, and morals, though Jesus, John, and Paul taught 'flesh profiteth nothing', and that all men have the same kind of blood, and that they are divisible either into two classes, as corporeal and spiritual, or into four classes, as the selfish, the neighbourly, the philanthropic, and the spiritual or Christly. Nevertheless, Christian nations have always thought (excepting, of course, the most enlightened set amongst them) that the body and its poses, the food it eats, the dress that it puts on, and the material things produced for sensuous enjoyment are the most important things of life. Some very crass people delight in saying that East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet. Have not men of the West met and worshipped such men of the East as Jesus and Paul?"

He cited the example of Japan and attributed her meteoric rise to world eminence not to any inherent superiority of her people over other peoples but rather to the splendid opportunities for self-development afforded by their government. He said, "Did the corporeal peculiarities of the Japanese operate in any way against their worldly or spiritual successes? By sheer training, in the course of a few years, they were able to beat the Russians, the mention of whose very name in days long

past was enough to send a tremor even among the other nations of Europe. The Japanese were able to defeat them. Why? Because their instruments of knowledge and action were sufficiently trained, and the vision of the soul sufficiently widened to cope with Europeans in the course of thirty years before 1875. In that year a Japanese ship of war entered the harbour of Colombo, fully equipped and manned exclusively by men of Japan. The Commander and all his officers and sailors were Japanese. This Commander visited my uncle, the late Sir Coomara Swamy, at his residence, attended by many naval officers, and told him that he had been ordered by the Emperor to call on a few leading men at every port they touched. In answer to the inquiries of Sir Coomara Swamy, the Commander said: 'Japan awoke to a sense of its real capacities and responsibilities thirty years ago, and sent its best-trained youths to different cities in Europe and America to learn their arts and sciences. The Japanese Government paid all their expenses, and, when they had graduated in their respective fields, they were called back and given places in every department to effect improvements. Workshops of all kinds were established, regardless of expense. Whatever was necessary for the success of agriculture, trade, industry, and the production of wealth on the largest scale, and whatever was necessary otherwise for the safety of the nation, were most successfully taught. Neither shipbuilding nor the making of deadly weapons was neglected. English, American, French, and German masters were employed to supervise them in all the new departments, and when they had nothing more to teach, they were highly rewarded and sent away, and their places filled by the Japanese.'

"The Emperor celebrated the making of the first warship and the manning and navigating of it by the Japanese entirely, by letting it go out

on a cruise round the world, and ordering the Commander to call at the principal ports and visit the leading men and interchange courtesies.

"Now, Sir, Japan in days of yore learnt religion and philosophy at the feet of the Hindus and of Sinhalese Buddhists. They were then not distinguished beyond their own borders. Having added to their knowledge the strength that comes of familiarity with the truths of real life, they obtained from Western nations the methods of improving their system of agriculture, commerce, banking, shipping, and so on, and so in the course of thirty or forty years they shot far ahead of India and Ceylon by the training and toil they had been put to by their Sovereign. What a great help the Ceylonese would have been to the British Government during the present war, had they been given similar instruction in time. Ceylon has a population equal to that of Australia, and the shame of Ceylon not doing as much as Australia cannot surely rest on its shoulders."

He inveighed against the British raj for not affording similar opportunities to the Ceylonese, for "not allowing them to grow in breadth of view and in moral and spiritual power, in scientific and technological knowledge, to cultivate the virtues of self-help and self-dependence" so indispensably necessary to man's progress through life. On the contrary, "Our government knows how to look after roads, bridges, public buildings, and forests. It knows how to punish severely offenders against the law, very severely, even for mistakes committed ignorantly. It hesitates to consider deeply, or lay out even one-half of the money actually required for the sound education of the people, or for the production of the food and dress stuffs necessary for the people. It looks on complacently at the import of the necessary articles of food and clothing from far distant countries, and eyes with satisfaction the moneys gathered from duties of all

kinds, taking the first opportunity to expend the revenue on things of the earth. They do not know that the most valuable asset of a country is its people, and that the highest concern of the Government should be, not only the imparting of education, but also the promotion of all sorts of industries that will free the people from dependence on other lands."

He proceeded to juxtapose the picture of the British government providing their own people exceptional opportunities of growing in intellectual and moral stature and playing their parts worthily and well in life. "How many opportunities have been afforded by the English Government to the English people to develop public spirit, sensitiveness to wrong, and prompt action for the attainment of public good. *The English at one time were not able to help themselves, owing to the obstructions of autocrats, bureaucrats, and the owners of other vested interests. But they began to wake up when the advantages of parliamentary representation were held out to them with a free hand. It has been truly said that civil and political liberty can never flourish in a country which has no veneration for justice, and does not cultivate its sense of justice; in which people do not protest then and there against acts of oppression, and take up the cause of the down-trodden as their own cause, and work constitutionally and perseveringly for redress.* This veneration for justice, this disposition to protest then and there against acts of oppression, to take up the cause of the down-trodden as one's own cause, and to work assiduously and constitutionally for redress, are all products of liberal parliamentary representation, or the system of getting the people's representatives together frequently every year for speaking and discussing with each other their needs and grievances, and devising measures then and there for the betterment of the people."

He showed how the British government had its hand always on the nation's pulse, how keenly

sensitive and responsive to public opinion it always was, how often it had reformed the system of parliamentary representation, how hard it had striven to march with the changing times and how by appropriate and timely legislation it had promoted national happiness, peace and contentment. In contrast, how gloomy, how deadening was the picture presented by Ceylon.

He protested, "*The people of Ceylon, I declare, have no confidence in the Legislative Council, as it is constituted now, and there is serious discontent reigning in the hearts of every community in Ceylon as regards the way in which it is used by the Government to carry out its own faulty views.*"

He adduced a wealth of evidence to show how a succession of Governors had reduced the legislature to a sham by compelling Official Members to speak for and vote with the Government and give effect to the Governor's wishes, despite the off-expressed policy of the Imperial Government. He quoted Mr. H. L. Layard, an influential merchant and planter who, in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, stated, "The Legislative Council is now really useless. In effect it is worse than useless, for it produces the impression upon the public mind that the members are at liberty to vote as they please, when in effect their hands are more tied than ever, and the Ordinances and other Acts sanctioned go forward as if they have received the confirmation of all the members, when those Ordinances and Acts are really opposed to the opinions of the Non-Officials as well as the Official Non-Executive Members."

He cited the pronouncements of Mr. George Wall who said, "Large sums are expended without votes, and the Council is superseded in its principal function." "Annual repetition of indemnifying votes has the effect of making the votes of Council a mere form." "The Council is a mere instrument for giving effect to the Governor's own views."

"Resistance of Unofficial Members in the face of a hopeless and inevitable defeat becomes as spiritless as it is vain."

He was particularly severe in his strictures upon the manner in which Unofficial Members of the legislature were appointed: "I must explain other serious causes of dissatisfaction on the part of the people with the Legislative Council, which have brought it into great disrepute. I would call attention to the manner in which Unofficial Members have been selected. This depends on the nature of each Governor. A Governor who is constitutional in his methods and takes care to understand clearly what is permitted and what is not permitted in the field of action before him, does this work of selection well enough. But some Governors have grand notions of their own ability and superiority. They seem to think that the country they have been appointed to govern is practically their own, because they have been given the power to over-ride the advice of the Members of the Executive Council and also the the opinions of the Unofficial Members. They have also learnt from State documents that they are responsible for their acts to the Secretary of State only, who is in his turn responsible to the Parliament. So they do not mind the people or their representatives. They love power, and they love to be considered great. They desire to get all the money required for their schemes as quickly as possible. Talk in Council is all nonsense if it comes from the Unofficials, but the Officials may and must talk freely, and even overbearingly.

"*Such Governors have been known to appoint dummies as Unofficial Members.* Once a man, who was good and wealthy and yet humble, was invited to Queen's House and told: 'Mr....., I want to offer to you a seat in the Council. Will you accept it?' The man was quite alarmed. He stammered: 'I cannot speak, Sir.' 'Ah!' said

the Governor, 'that is the man I want.' He was appointed. The Governor did not know, or ignored the fact, that parliamentary government means government of the people by the representatives of the people, by speaking and discussing with each other. The man appointed, not being able to speak, and not knowing his rights and obligations, once seconded a motion with three words, and when the time came for a division after a long debate, he deserted the mover and the rest of the Unofficials and voted with the Officials.

"Another found an Unofficial Member a little too outspoken during the term of five years he served in Council; but the people longed to have him back for another term of years, and held a great public meeting at the Town Hall under the presidency of an inoffensive doctor, who, by his amiability and undoubted ability as a surgeon, commanded the esteem of the European residents here. He was a Government official, too. The promoters of the public meeting thought that his presiding would convince the Governor as to the desirability of the re-appointment of their favourite. But the Governor deemed it fair to offer the seat to the peaceful doctor, who, dazzled by the honour, did not consider the morality of his accepting it without reference to the promoters of the meeting. He accepted the offer. Then the Governor wrote a handsome letter to the retiring member, acknowledging his independence and services, but regretting that, as it was not the policy of the Government to re-appoint a retiring member, he was sorry he could not re-appoint him. But, when the doctor's term of five years ended, the same Governor re-appointed him for another term of five years. *Owing to such malpractices, the people do not care to leave in the hands of the Governor the right to nominate the members who should represent them. It is viewed with the greatest alarm. Often men well known to be greedy of honours and other favours at the hands of the Government have been shamelessly appointed as the representatives of the people.*"

He roundly condemned the practice of withholding official papers from the Unofficials, a practice which crept in after Ramanathan had left the legislature in 1892, to take up the appointment of Solicitor-General. "Then I would refer to the withholding of information from Unofficial Members so as to keep them in the dark. I have known personally all the Governors, from Sir William Gregory downwards, and their Colonial Secretaries. Sir James Longden came from the Secretary of State's office in London. From the year of my appointment as an Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council in 1879 to the year in which I was appointed Solicitor-General of Ceylon by the late Marquis of Ripon in 1892, neither I nor my colleagues were ever denied the right to peruse the papers on the subjects which we were called upon to consider in the Legislative Council. If we went to Sir John Douglas, or Sir Clementi Smith, or Sir Noel Walker, we were always welcome. They were glad to have long conversations with us on a variety of subjects, and our views would be ascertained. They would themselves explain their own attitudes, and would gladly ask their head clerks to send to our houses the file of papers that we desired to peruse.

"On coming back to the Council as an elected member in 1912, I found a good many changes had taken place during the preceding ten years. The Colonial Secretary was unwilling to give us the information we needed. The papers, if brought up to the table, would be held in his hands as if they were too sacred to be seen by the vile eyes of the Unofficials. The idea that we were the colleagues of the Officials and their equals was forgotten. We seem to be suspected as men whose intentions are anything but good and honourable. They labelled us 'honourable', but

treated us quite differently. *Hand-shaking and smiles and dinners were all plentiful, but when it came to the question of doing our duty to the King and the people, and of getting some information from the Government upon the matters on which they wished for our advice and consent, they kept us at arm's length.* Our call for papers was met by the question: 'What is the special paper you want?' If we said: 'We want to know the history of the subject, how it began, how it was modified, and what changes and for what reasons the Bills before the House contained peculiar clauses,' there would be nothing but hesitation, and even refusal. Information on public questions is given to us more liberally by the present Colonial Secretary.

"Once a Governor invited me to Queen's House and told me that my opposition to some of his pet measures came too late, because, after the subject had developed sufficiently for action, he explained that the papers were circulated among the Members of the Executive Council, the question decided upon by the Governor, submitted to the Secretary of State, and his sanction obtained for the introduction of the subject in Council. 'Your opposition, Mr. Ramanathan,' he said, 'is one that we cannot accept at this stage, as the subject must be put through. It will be far better if you communicate your views to me across this table (at Queen's House). I will then be very glad to meet you as far as I can.' I replied: 'How do I know, Sir, what subject is being considered by the Government? And even if I had heard that something was brewing, how should I know the proper time at which I should intervene?' 'That is a difficult question to answer,' he said. I replied: 'As the Council is at present constituted, I can only express myself when you choose to ask for my opinion. I think it is radically wrong for the Governor to go to the Secretary of State immediately after the Executive Council has finished

its consideration of a subject. If you care to know what the needs and wishes of the people are, you should consult us, and place our views, together with your own, before the Secretary of State. He would then be able to judge between the local Government and the people, and any suggestion that he makes at this stage would be useful to you and to us in the Legislative Council.' This conversation, Sir, took place thirty-three years ago, when I was the leader of the Unofficials. Much of the trouble between the Government and the people since then, and before, may be attributed to the absence of reform in regard to this precedure.

"Governors value highly the advice they get from the Members of the Executive Council. A Governor who is new to the country will naturally want advice, but often some or many of the Members of the Executive Council may be wanting in local experience themselves. In such cases they could only refer to what has happened in other Colonies. *What would you say if the Government of England was entrusted not to Englishmen, but to a band of Italians or Russians? This would be inconceivable.* I acknowledge fully the integrity and ability of the Members of the Executive Council. Whatever can they do but express their opinions when they are asked to do so? How is one to know that those opinions are sound, except one who is wiser than they in regard at least to what the people of the country exactly need and wish? Safety in legislation and financial administration cannot be assured until the proposals made are submitted to men of sound experience selected by the people themselves."

He condemned the practice of Governors appointing to Committees and Commissions only such members from among the Unofficials as were known to be either favourable to the Government or too weak, for the consideration of very complicated and vitally important subjects: "I would refer

to the mischief done when a subject mooted in Council gets to the committee stage. When a subject is presented to the Legislative Council for discussion and is found to be complicated, a committee of members has to be appointed to report upon it. The Governors who ruled the country before Lord Torrington were perfectly fair. The Right Hon. Mr. James Mackenzie selected the committee members by open ballot in the presence of the Council, and that procedure was acknowledged to be the simplest and fairest mode. What do we find in our own days? Burning questions have often been referred to 'packed' committees. If the subject was mooted by the Government, and opposition was expected from the Unofficial Members, only the weakest and the most unintelligent of the Unofficial Members would be placed on the committee; on the other hand, if the subject was mooted by an Unofficial Member who knew all about the subject, and it was not agreeable to the Government, the mover of the motion would be kept out of the committee, and a few amiable Unofficial Members would be coupled with a few Officials, in whom justice and fair play were not dominant.

"What I have said of some committees of the Council are applicable to some commissions also appointed by the Governor under the Ordinance enacted for the purpose. Governors, who believe that whatever they do must be good government, hate to hear of misgovernment during their period of administration, and pack commissions to dilute the truth or favour their own views. Hence commissions here and elsewhere are spoken of as 'chokers.'"

He now concluded with the telling words, "The ill-considered, unreasonable and unjust things that are done under cover of the name of His Majesty the King have reduced this Council in the estimation of the people to a very low level.

It is as distrusted and disrespected as the House of Commons was in 1820 by the then English. *Just as the House of Commons appeared to be good and fair to some autocrats and bureaucrats and very ignorant Englishmen in those days, our Legislative Council seems to be good and fair to only those Officials who have no eyes to see, no reason to judge fairly, and no heart to feel for others. The people are groaning when they see measures forced through this Council by the sheer weight of the Official majority, which is supposed to be given by the King. The people look upon this institution as one full of pageantry, but in the inner working of it as breeding sores and worms, as indeed, a whited sepulchre, fair outside but very very bad inside.*

"I apologize to you, Sir, for going at some length into the deficiencies of our system, and showing to you historically for what reasons measures of reform have been undertaken and passed in England and India. The one and only cause is the grave dissatisfaction reigning in the hearts of the well-educated and far-seeing people of the country. In Ceylon the dissatisfaction is supreme. I have no doubt you will study the question carefully in all its bearings, and make a report as early as your engagements will permit."

This was hard-hitting of a sort seldom or never seen or heard within the Council Chamber. No Unofficial Member had in the whole history of the legislature used language so bitter, so vitriolic, so damning as did this embittered veteran of a thousand battles. The speech was far too long and too exhaustive to be summarised with any measure of fulness here. Suffice it to say, a more trenchant indictment of British rule can hardly be conceived, a more brilliant and forceful exposition of its misdeeds, of the many ruses and subterfuges a foreign ruler employs to have his own way with the government of subject peoples and perpetuate his strangle-hold on them.

Could any ruler, however callous or despotic, resist the force and strength of these arguments or turn a deaf ear to these passionate outbursts of moral fury? Ramanathan followed this up with his memorable speech proposing the first Resolution on the Agenda of the first session of the Ceylon National Congress demanding radical changes in the existing Constitution and a large measure of self-rule. While Ramanathan was launching these deadly shafts from within the Council Chamber and from without, his brother Arunachalam was discharging his fusillades on the Government at first from the benches of the Ceylon Reform League and later from the open platforms of the Ceylon National Congress in the presence of audiences drawn from all classes of Ceylon society. The impact was so potent and so shattering that the authorities were at their wit's end to answer to these animadversions. Two men of great name and influence had spoken their minds unequivocally and decisively. The rulers felt they could no longer remain inert and yet save their face before a carping world. The outcome was a rapid succession of far-reaching reforms—the Manning Reforms of 1921 and 1923 and the Donoughmore Reforms of 1930.

It is to the credit of the British ruler that within a single decade, he carried through three measures of reform, the last of which—the Donoughmore Reforms—virtually transferred power to the people. Much as the world condemned British imperialism, and tarred it with the same brush, it cannot be gainsaid that it had certain unmistakable virtues not shared by any other. It respected and responded to the will of a subject people when it was general and widespread, and stretched itself as far as it could go to meet their wishes. It conformed to certain high standards of imperial conduct. It was never despotic. The Gestapo, the terrorist police state, the torture-chamber, the prison-cell and all the paraphernalia of despotism which

have sullied and in this age of universal freedom and equality, continue to sully the pages of history with the blood of innocents, were more the exception than the rule. If it exploited, it exploited only a part of the wealth its ingenuity and enterprise had helped to create. It set up a strong and efficient administration in lands where there was none; introduced law and order, peace and security in lands where they were markedly absent. Commingled with these there was an element of self-interest. But where in man's commerce with his fellow-men has that element been absent?

CHAPTER XIX

PARAMESHVARA COLLEGE

Students are the hope of the future. The future leaders of the nation are to rise from the students.

—Mahatma Gandhi

"Sir P. Ramanathan lived a full life. He was a great lawyer, a profound scholar, learned in the law both divine and secular, a remarkable statesman and above all, an educational seer who bestowed on his race gifts in the shape of Temples of Worship and Learning. The two colleges and several literary works in Tamil and English are lasting monuments to his all-round greatness. His work for God, Crown and country is far more enduring than any statue made of bronze or marble."

—Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayer

All educationists have special reason for deploring the absence of his noble and inspiring personality, because of his lifelong and splendid advocacy of the cause of education; and I venture to believe his services to education were among his most enduring gifts to the people of Ceylon.

—Professor E. Marrs

"Parameshvara College was inspired by high ideals. It was dedicated to service and was destined to be a great Temple of Hindu Culture and Learning. The duty now devolved on his spiritual children to carry on and perfect the work Sir P. Ramanathan had begun."

—H. A. P. Sandrasegara K. C.

The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity.

—Lord Beaconsfield

The wealthier classes of Ceylon, absorbed in their own pursuits, do not think of the educational wants of the poor, nor are the labouring classes sensible enough or able to help themselves.

—Ramanathan

It is considered by all right-thinking men to be a most meritorious thing for a man to serve God and to do his best to instruct the children of his community to learn the ways of God.

—Ramanathan

IN 1920, at the Annual Conference of Hindu Youth at Keerimalai, over which Ramanathan presided, a popular appeal was made to him for the establishment of an institution for the higher education of Hindu boys, on much the same lines as his institution for the higher education of Hindu girls. Ramanathan, though alive to the magnitude of the appeal, and its heavy financial implications, readily and graciously assented. No man ever laboured more strenuously through life for the uplift and advance of the country's youth or placed greater or more sanguine trust in them than this hardy veteran of Ceylon politics.

It would not be to make a tall claim for Ramanathan to say that he is in line with the great educational thinkers and benefactors of all time, the Rousseaus and the Wycliffs, the Tagores and the Gandhis, men who devoted their best thoughts and their best energies to the consideration of how best they could reform and regenerate human society and arrived at conclusions that time has not set aside, viz. that human society can best be transformed and revitalised by a sound system of education, that such a system of education is the greatest boon that society can confer on its youth.

Ramanathan's speech in the legislature on the occasion of his moving the Ordinance to declare the Constitution of Parameshvara College represents the essence, the quintessence of his philosophy of education, the aims and ideals that led to the foundation of Parameshvara College. Hence the need to quote it at some length: "The College was founded in 1921, in consequence of the earnest desire of Hindu parents in and out of Ceylon who feel that the kind of education that is being given

to their boys and girls in the English schools established by the Government, or conducted by private associations with the help of Government grants, is not at all satisfactory.

"They want something more than a knowledge of the perishable things of life, too much of which is pressed on the attention of students as if there was nothing else worth considering and attaining. The results of this one-sided system of education are painfully manifest in all parts of the British Empire and elsewhere. The great difficulties experienced by administrators in governing the people in Europe, the United States and other places is due to the fact that the curriculum of studies prescribed in the universities and schools of the West, except in theological circles, are confined to the things that relate to the perishable side of life. Everywhere the complaint is that boys and girls are not as they were some fifty years ago. Formerly there was some peace reigning in their hearts. They respected their elders in their homes and societies and the rulers of the country in Councils of State and on political platforms. They were willing and ready to put in practice the principles they had been taught at their homes and schools. They loved to be self-controlled, obedient, thoughtful, and helpful to others. They spurned selfishness and irreligion. There is now a vehement desire for the gratification of the senses at any cost, an extraordinary regard for pleasure, and a proportionate contempt for duty. The principles which make life a thing of beauty and a joy for ever have all been forgotten.

"During the last five or six decades the old methods of instruction have disappeared, especially as to ethics and religion. Even teachers in great colleges do not know how to teach God and morality, owing to fierce controversies which have been raised round them, and which have discredited them in the eyes of those who have seceded from ancient

traditions. People want to know who God is, where God is, what is the reason of the difference between things which are permitted, and what relation does pleasure bear to duty. Such questions, if not answered intelligibly, produce a doubtful and controversial state of mind, which ultimately leads to materialism and atheism. If one believes that there is nothing beyond what we perceive by the senses, and that there is no life after death, the conclusion is easily reached that one should seize every opportunity to please oneself in every plane of the sense. The meaning of pleasing or enjoying oneself is to gratify every desire or passion that creeps into the mind. The result is a life like that of butterflies, dogs, cattle, and other animals, which have no codes of religion and ethics, and which have no power to hear and understand them.

"Such boys and girls, men and women, are satisfied with the things immediately before them, and care not to aim high or live holily. They do not know the radical difference between virtue and vice, or right and wrong nor the reason of the existence of the grand spiritual forces called Religion and Morality. They think that they may do whatever their likes and dislikes prompt them to do, if only they are not detected, taken up by the police, tried in a court of justice, and shut up in jail. They feel that, provided they avoid detection and punishment, they may easily pass for respectable people. To them I would say that Religion consists of those principles and practices which relate to communion with God and the attainment of actual knowledge of God, and that the chief obstacles to such union and such knowledge are indulgence in selfishness, unrestrained gratification of sensual desires, and the preference of pleasure to duty.

"Now Sir, parents in this country, and indeed in all other civilized countries, greatly regret the

evil days that have fallen upon them, and are earnestly craving that the ancient traditions which have prevailed among us and produced really good men and women, really good citizens, may be taught in our schools, under the protection of the Government.

"Some sixty years ago, Professor Huxley assured his large audience in the United Kingdom that he could not commend the education imparted in its schools and colleges, for the simple reason that it could not convert a bad boy or girl into a good boy or girl. His testimony has been found to be true by succeeding generations. They have watched the course of events which have made for disorder and spiritual ruin, and they are anxious that something must be done at once to enable youngsters to learn and live the right life.

"Right thought, right speech, and right action still exist among a limited number of men and women in Christendom and other fields of religion. They are most anxious that the youth of the country should save themselves from the perils of selfishness and sensuousness combined, called worldliness, and that, while the nature of the perishable things that surround us should be taught to their children, a serious effort should be made to inculcate also some of the principles relating to the imperishable things known as God and Souls, and to teach the part which Evil plays in the destruction of humanity.

"Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and Mohammedan sages have all taught the principles of imperishable or eternal life in order to save human beings from the dangers of worldly life. They emphatically assert that the Life-Eternal is not something high up in the skies, but is attainable in our own hearts, amidst our worldly surroundings, and that a knowledge of the principles and practices of Eternal Life is the only safeguard against the corruptions which beset our path on earth.

Therefore, our duty is clearly to bring afresh within the reach of our children the great traditions which have been crowded out of our schools and colleges by the advent of what is called 'modern civilization.'

"I have thought for many years that it was my duty to help Hindu parents in this country and India to attain their hearts' wish. This is the reason, why Parameshvara (College) Vidyalayam was founded. *Vidyalayam* means a house of learning, and *Parameshvara* means the Most High. Thus Parameshvara College means the house of learning of the Most High. Any student who is admitted there will be given facilities to know something more of life than the perishable side of it. He would know that the Spirit within the mortal body, and God within and beyond us, are the only imperishable things which we should labour hard to attain, at least as hard as we labour for the perishable things of the body. In our endeavour to attain the Imperishable, we have first to discover the individual Spirit which is in the body, and then come to know God who is in the Spirit. The Spirit is therefore called the Temple of God. Unless boys and girls are taught these truths early in life, and helped to prefer the principles and practices which relate to the discovery of the Spirit in the body, and God in the Spirit, they would be engulfed in the vortices of selfishness and sensual desires. They would naturally sink more and more into corruption, and become terrible sufferers here and in the lives to come.

"The chief aim of Parameshvara College is to save our boys in this way and to make good citizens of them. By reminding them of our Spiritual Traditions, we hope to make them real assets to us and to the British Empire. Our late Governor, Sir William Manning, attached the highest importance to Spiritual Traditions. He spoke of them just before departing from the Island. He attended a function at Zahira College, Maradana

in March last, and addressed those who were assembled there as follows:

'Now, one passage in the speech of the Head Master struck me as being one not only of great importance, but one as bearing very largely upon the desirability of education under Muslim precepts, and that is this. There is now in Ceylon the means of educating the Muslim youth without the sacrifice of belief and ideals sacred to Islam. I can only tell you how I agree with that sentiment. You have hitherto not had a secondary school where your children will be educated without the sacrifice of belief and ideals which are sacred to your religion. Now this being the sole Muslim secondary school at present in existence in this Island, I can only hope that it will receive your support. My own opinion is that the Muslim community is worthy of a great school. That feeling should be cherished and encouraged in every way by the Government of this country. I very sincerely hope that the Muslim youth of this country will be trained in the tenets of the Islamic faith, and will obtain in this college that education which will enable him to become prosperous and worthy and that, when in later days they recognize the benefits they have received from this college, they will exercise that great tenet of your religion which is Charity and will come forward in their more prosperous days to help all that appertains to Muslim education.'

"How broad, Sir, are these views! How good of this staunch Christian Governor to speak so sympathetically of the religious ideals of the Muslims, and to lay the foundation-stone for a building to be raised for the glorification of such ideals! How different is the conduct of some other educationists among us, who think that they should support their own religion only, and that every other religion on the face of the earth must be undermined and damned! These narrow-minded

persons believe that God does not exist in the heart of every man, and that, when some non-Christian religionist is addressing himself to God who is within and beyond him, he is worshipping the devil. This hatred of other religions and opposition to the works of other religionists, have had a most degrading effect. There is only one God for all nations. He is the only Lord of all hosts who can be worshipped by human beings. The methods of worship in the case of the great religions of the world may be different, but the object worshipped is identically the same.....

"It is said that the education imparted in schools enables an outgoing student to find a livelihood for himself. Between the ages of six and fourteen, there is time enough only to make him read, write and work simple sums in arithmetic, but the training for a clerkship or other vocation for earning a living wage is possible only in later years, say, between fourteen and nineteen. The education that is required to gain a livelihood, so as to keep body and soul together, requires a knowledge of such things as are taught ordinarily in our schools, but Education in the proper sense of the term, implies something that is systematically neglected by our educationists. I am sure that Honourable Members will agree with me that the most important side of Education is the training of the boys and girls to lofty ideals of character, perfection in work, heartfelt devotion to God, and loyalty to the King. This is expressly declared in the draft ordinance before us to be the policy of Parameshvara College.

"What is meant by lofty character? Man is in bondage to evil, and the most urgent problem in life is to extricate the soul from evil and its subtle corruptions. If the instruments of knowledge and action, given to the soul by God, be not carefully trained and strengthened in early life to prefer always the needs of the soul to the

cravings of the body, they will not be able to resist the promptings of evil to do the very things they should not do in the interests of the soul. If these instruments fail to protect the little leaven of love and light that is in every man, and to develop them successfully, first into neighbourly love, and then into philanthropic love, and then to Godly love, they are said to be possessed of 'bad character'. The marks or features or characteristics of our inner being, having suffered disfigurement by evil, are spoken of as low or wicked. But, if our instruments of knowledge, the chief of which are the five senses, the mind, attention, recollection of sound doctrine, right reason, and determined will, do not deviate from the path of duty laid down for us by sanctified sages, we are said to be possessed of 'high or lofty character.'

"It will thus be seen that the formation of good character requires sense-control, mind-control, abundant study and thoughtful action. In every country we have a small percentage of men who are congenitally gifted with good character, with a strong predisposition to avoid evil and follow the dictates of duty. This congenital gift is the result of past lives lived according to law, but there is a much larger percentage of people who wish to be good, and yet are unable to struggle against the impulses of evil. What is the kind of education to be given to them that will lead them out of the mazes of wickedness? Is the nature of evil and its subtle ways ever explained to them? Is God's design as to the uplifting of fallen people ever unfolded to them, at home or at school, in the early part of their lives, when alone ethical and religious lessons can take root, flourish, and fructify? Has anybody taught them that pain, *poena* or punishment, was ordained by God as a remedial measure against evil? In Western countries, on both sides of the Atlantic ocean, there are famous preachers who confound evil with

pain, who say that evil and pain are identically the same. They teach that passion and animal desires in man are so deeply rooted in human nature that it is impossible to efface them, and that all we can do is to wisely direct the higher desires and endeavour to find peace in the culture of one's own personality. Can this wise direction of the higher desires and this cultivation of character be effected under the present system of education which thrusts aside religion and ethics?

"Until our boys and girls are taught to realize the great truth, that indulgence in any desire, not permitted by law, conduces to debase one's character and brings about spiritual ruin; until they learn that the desire for gratifying each of the five senses should be carefully limited and controlled, lest the mind, running promiscuously with the senses, be spoilt by the mire of sensualism; until it is strongly impressed upon our boys and girls that an impure mind becomes the ally of evil, and the enemy of the soul; until they clearly understand what the principles and practices of Eternal Life are, and how such truths only can free the soul from the beguilements of evil, they would continue to be creatures of sorrow and mischief to themselves and to the society to which they belong. So far as regards the formation of high character.

"What is perfection in work? This is absolutely necessary for self-improvement and social improvement. Every Official Member who has a seat in this Council, by virtue of his being a head of a department, will bear testimony to the fact that he earned his position by labouring hard to excel in the work entrusted to him. Whether it is thinking or speaking or writing, or whether it is supervising, directing or organizing, his one desire was to do his very best. From this point of view of excelling in work, he has known what officers working under him as assistants or clerks are excellent workers, what officers are indifferent

workers, and what officers are bad workers. Perfection in work is not to be obtained except by taking infinite pains, and endeavouring to complete and polish up in every detail the work in hand.

"Excellence in hand work is a prelude to perfection in mind work, and that again leads to intellectual and spiritual perfection. In the great design of God which we see prevailing in the constitution of all bodies—mineral, vegetable, animal, and human—we observe that every cell and every aggregate of cells is beautifully made and correlated. We have to copy the example of God in regard to the works entrusted to us in this life. We should not draw any distinction between what are called little things that come to our hands. In the case of everything, our duty is to turn out excellent work, and we shall have our reward, which is steadfastness of purpose, poise, purity of heart, and prosperity in peace.

"These qualifications lead us nearer and nearer to God. We become devoted to God. The habit of giving our whole attention to perfection of worship begets the feeling, all the while, that God exists, mercifully rewards us for works of loving-kindness, and punishes us for our works of hate. Without a full acknowledgement of God and a constant fear of wrong-doing, there can be no extrication of the Soul from Evil. The more and more the power of evil is resisted by us, declines in us, the more clearly shall we see the reality and greatness of God.

"I need not say much about the ideal of loyalty to the King set forth in the Ordinance, because we still make much of this virtue. If the throne and its surroundings are disturbed, there will be confusion in society, and many great dangers will stare us in the face. I am glad to say that there is not a single school or college in Ceylon which objects to loyalty to the King. In the draft Ordinance relating to Parameshvara College it is laid

down as a stern duty, to be observed by students, teachers, and the Board of Directors.....

"Section 10 of the Ordinance lays down clearly that, in addition to the usual curriculum of studies, the religious traditions of the Hindus should be carefully taught to every Hindu boy there. There are some Christian teachers in the college, and boys belonging to any religion are admissible there. The Hindu religion inculcates that the souls of boys and girls and men and women, of whatever faith or race, are all children of one and the same God; that parents as well as teachers are trustees of God; that God exists in the heart of every human being; and that all the affairs of this world must be interpreted in terms of the prevailing power and grace of God. When our thoughts, divorced from the limitations of the body and its surroundings, are thus established in God, our sages declare that we have passed from the kingdom of earth to the kingdom of God, from the things of perishable life to imperishable life or the Life Eternal.

"I move, Sir, the first reading of the Ordinance to incorporate Parameshvara College."

An idealist who was also a hard-grained realist, he aimed at building an institution which would serve as a synthesis, a meeting-point of two great cultures, the ancient culture of the East, with its emphasis on humanistic learning, on the study of religion, philosophy and ethics, and the present-day culture of the West with its emphasis on the material sciences, an institution which would bring into being a race of enlightened citizens who would at once be a glory unto God and a pride unto the country; moreover, an institution which would serve as a model for the rest of the Island. It was never his intention to build one on popular, stereotyped lines, for he felt that education, as then imparted, had failed to achieve its great purpose. The purposelessness, the idleness, the general sense of drift, the lack of a sense of

spiritual power that he saw in the average youth distressed him profoundly. Irreligion, rampant materialism, sensuality, uprootedness, and all their progeny were sapping the life-blood of the nation. He was anxious that students should be given a national outlook, educated in the national spirit. There is a national heritage, a tradition of values which education should help to conserve and into which the children should be initiated. Under the impact of foreign political domination and of the alien influences it brought to bear on many fields of national activity, all the precious heritage of culture and spirituality to which this ancient land is heir, tended to recede into the background. It was to restore the people to their roots, to wean education from the many accretions that had grown around it, to reorientate it and render it more living, more real, more man-making that Parameshvara College was founded.

In any scheme of education he formulated, he assigned the foremost place to the building of high character, for he felt that in no other period of its history did the world stand in so sore a need of high moral and spiritual standards as in the present. The greatest tragedy of the age as he saw it, as the most virile thinkers of the age saw it, was that man's growth in knowledge of the material sciences far outstripped his growth in spirituality and morals with results that have disfigured and deformed man, inherently divine, potentially angelic, into a beast of prey living on the spoils of another. Education should seek to develop man's higher nature, to release the creative, constructive impulses latent in him, the forces of mutual love and goodwill, of compassion and fellow-feeling, of justice and kindly-dealing and glorify the brief while between him and the grave. Education that fails to foster these virtues, to achieve these great and noble ends defeats itself. He shared Ruskin's view of education,

viz., "Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know; it means teaching them to behave as they do not behave." His views were in accord with those of another idealist and educational reformer, the poet-philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, who bemoaned overfar the educational trends of his time with their over-emphasis on things material and mundane to the detriment of all things moral and spiritual, and sought to recapture at Visvabharathi the ideals and practices of education that made ancient India the home of true spirituality and high culture, and the Mecca of scholars from many lands outside. In defining the aims of his school the poet said, "We must make the purpose of our education nothing short of the highest purpose of man, the fullest growth and freedom of soul. It is pitiful to have to scramble for small pittances of fortune. Only let us have access to the life that goes beyond death and rises above all circumstances; let us find our God, let us live for that ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of the dust and gives us the wealth, not of things but of inner light, not of power but of love. Such emancipation of soul we have witnessed in our country among men devoid of book-learning and living in absolute poverty. In India we have the inheritance of this treasure of spiritual wisdom. Let the object of our education be to open it out before us and to give us the power to make the true use of it in our life, and offer it to the rest of the world when the time comes as our contribution to its eternal welfare."

Ramanathan was a firm believer in the value of residential schools and colleges where the pupils grow up under the fostering care of teachers wedded to high ideals, living the life simple and the life spiritual. One of Ramanathan's main objectives in founding his twin educational institutions was the revival of the *guru-kula-vasa* system of education

so much in vogue in ancient India, which had done much to raise the intellectual, moral and spiritual tone of early Indian society and place India high in the estimation of the ancient world. He said, "It has been universally admitted that the more residential centres are established, the better it will be in regard to the improvement of character and in regard to other accomplishments which such centres must necessarily give. This system prevailed among us in India and Ceylon centuries and centuries ago. It was called the *guru-kula-vasa*, the teachers and the taught residing in the same place. The boys remained until they were passed as fit to enter upon the duties of married life. When the pupillary stage was passed, the boy would go out into the world, settle down as a good citizen. The usefulness of the residential system, was universally acknowledged."

Ramanathan condemned in no uncertain terms a system of education which dispensed with residence, required five hours attendance at school and for the remaining ten hours or more of waking life, let children follow the natural bent of their minds, let them roam at will, haunt cinema halls and consort with disreputable folk, becoming thereby a menace to themselves, their kinsfolk and to society at large. He says, "We have now got used to sending our boys for about five hours a day to a college or school, and letting them do what they like for the remaining eighteen hours, of which eight are devoted to sleep. For ten hours out of school they are under the control of nobody, and they do just as they like. This sort of thing was spoken of by a Hebrew prophet of old, when he said, 'They are all gone like wild asses, alone, to Babylon.' These boys go about without the least knowledge of God, thirsting for sensuous pleasures. The remedy is residential schools. Sir Anton Bertram, our Chief Justice, says that there is no college worthy of being called

a college unless the boys are made to enter into residence at the college. That is what has made England and other European countries the powerful places they are for good, and also for bad. They are the redeeming features in European civilization. The English boy who has resided for a term of years with self-controlled and wise teachers knows that it is his duty to stand up for what is good, for what is honourable, for what is right and straight."

Ramanathan knew full well that the new venture would mean a crippling burden on his material resources already heavily depleted by his numerous earlier benefactions. But it had, nevertheless, to be accomplished. And doing things piecemeal or doing them in a small way, was never his way. It is interesting to note that everything that he undertook and accomplished, bore invariably the stamp of stateliness and magnificence. He never set his hands to anything without counting the cost beforehand, so much so that it is hard to find anything, big or small, which, when once undertaken, remained incomplete or was done perfunctorily. Many knew him as a great statesman and scholar, a renowned philosopher and religious teacher, a great jurist and lawyer, an orator par excellence, but few think of him as a great builder, one of the greatest his age and country produced.

At Thirunelvely, on the outskirts of the city of Jaffna, he acquired an extensive tract of land twentyfive acres in extent, for the purpose. Its proximity to the Northern capital and its lovely rural setting added to its appeal. The crammed, tumultuous and dust-ridden atmosphere characteristic of many modern centres of learning repelled him profoundly. It is in an atmosphere of calm and reposeful quiet, amidst the beauty and excellence of natural scenery that the human intellect and the spirit in man blossom and fructify. This was one of the convictions he passionately held and nobly exemplified in his two colleges.

The project was an extremely ambitious one, as all his projects were. However, building operations commenced and what had but a couple of years before been a stately edifice on paper now became a reality on hard earth. The quality of the material used was of the finest and best, for Ramanathan, be it remembered, built not for a time, but for all time. No detail of the operation escaped the close and vigilant scrutiny of the founder. The result, judged by contemporary standards, was a magnificent structure, grand in conception and sound in execution. As the unaided achievement of a single individual, it evokes the praise and admiration of posterity. The College was named after Parameshvaran, the Almighty Ruler who was all-in-all to the great founder. Of the many priceless gifts which the great statesman and leader bestowed on his people, his twin educational institutions are by no means the least. Though built and equipped soon after World War I, when the cost of building materials and equipments had soared to dizzy heights, the college lacked absolutely nothing, for such was the express wish of the founder. With its stately buildings, its spacious playing-fields, its broad walks and breezy lawns, and above all its temple dedicated to Lord Parameshvaran, the college stands there, an imperishable monument to the love he bore for his people, his prodigious self-sacrifice and his unbounded confidence in youth. The Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, the great Indian scholar and statesman, who visited the college and was amazed to see the lavish use of Burma teak wood on the building exclaimed, "Ramanathan has paved the college with gold."

One remarkable characteristic of his was a passion for thoroughness in planning and execution; never was there a more devout adherent of the maxim that whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well, or that other admonition: "If you want a thing

done right, see to it yourself." He never believed in doing things by proxy. This man every bit of whose time and energy was needed for work in higher spheres, in the pursuit of religion and philosophy—his foremost passion through life—in national activity of great constructive and creative value, would not even in the infirmity of age entrust the supervision of important matters to his paid assistants. He would want to see everything for himself. It used to be said that he had eyes as penetrating and far-ranging as a powerful searchlight. At a glance, he could see the rights and the wrongs of things, the flaws and blemishes in any structure or in any of its component parts. Once, when Parameshvara College was building, Ramanathan wanted to go up the building, desiring to see things for himself. Those around him, dissuaded him, as he was then running high temperature. But this indomitable man, brushing aside all their fears and admonitions, climbed up a bamboo ladder, saw all things for himself and then climbed down. Such was his devotion to anything he set out to do and such his passion for excellence in its execution. When the temple in Colombo was building, he subjected every piece of granite in the grand structure to his own microscopic scrutiny. The smallest flaw in any, though chiselled at immense cost, led to its outright rejection.

This passion for excellence, for doing a thing as best one could, for stretching one's resources as far as they could go, permeated every act of his life, big or small. It was all-pervasive. He habitually saw the vision of excellence before his mind's eye and strove all his life to live up to that vision. He once said, "Excellence of work ought to be the day and night dream of men, not for the material rewards it may bring, but because the world is a training ground or gymnasium for the healthy development of our faculties, and

every endeavour should be made to emancipate ourselves from ignorance, especially from two of its deadly forms, passion and prejudice, so as to reach, morally and intellectually, the highest point which an environment will permit us to obtain. Such, I take it, is the true meaning of 'success' in life."

Parameshvara College is a monument to his personality no less than to his philanthropy. It does not sprawl, it does not peter out, it does not war with itself in clashing forms of incompatible, incongruous architecture; it is nowhere half-done. It is a complete entity, solid, square-set and individual.

It was one of his long-standing regrets that the main building at Parameshvara could not be crowned with three magnificent domes, a central dome and one on either end. His architects and engineers had assured him that it could be done; but as the work advanced, they felt diffident about the foundations. In sheer despair, he summoned the best experts and they too shared the same view and the idea had to be dropped.

In a brochure entitled "The Aim of the Students at Parameshvara College" he said, "Parameshvara College was founded to bring inexpensively within the reach of Tamil boys the blessings of a sound education, which combines the best of British learning with the wisdom of the Sages of India and the classics of its literature in Tamil and Sanskrit, in order that every boy, who is bad, may have a chance of becoming good; who is impelled by mischief and passion, may control them and be helpful in good works; who looks on like cattle and will not work, unless prodded, may be alert and take an abiding interest in the welfare of others; who is vulgar and rude, may be refined, who is narrow-minded and prejudiced may be sympathetic and tolerant; who is unable to see a situation or its development, may spot it at once,

trace the causes of its origin and tendencies, and organise measures for remedying the evil, or promoting the good that may be working in it; who is not precise in thought or clear in expression, may think and speak lucidly, *who unthinkingly apes the costumes and manners of foreigners may be made to establish himself and his people on the ideals and practices which have come down to us from ancient times, most suitable to our needs and to the conditions of the land of our birth;* who is running about from pillar to post restlessly, may maintain his ground and work for the uplift of himself and the nation to which he belongs; who is afflicted with promiscuous desires and vain thoughts, may concentrate his attention and effort upon the main business of life, which is heartfelt devotion to God, perfection of whatever work one has undertaken or been given to do, and the realisation of all such aims as may secure for the people both temporal and eternal happiness."

"To bring *inexpensively* within the reach of Tamil boys the blessings of a sound education"—that was the main note in his gamut. In all his national endeavour, educational or otherwise, the claims of the poor were ever uppermost in his thoughts. Education tended to become expensive, aristocratic, exclusive, class-ridden, the preserve of a privileged few, while the poor were complacently allowed to languish in ignorance, squalor and neglect. It should be made inexpensive and brought within reach of the poor, for education is the grand cure for the many ills that afflict human society. Among the primary functions of the College, he laid the greatest emphasis on the teaching of religion and the development of character. The Temple was to facilitate children's worship of God, which was, with him, the first requisite of education and life and formed an integral part of Collegiate activity.

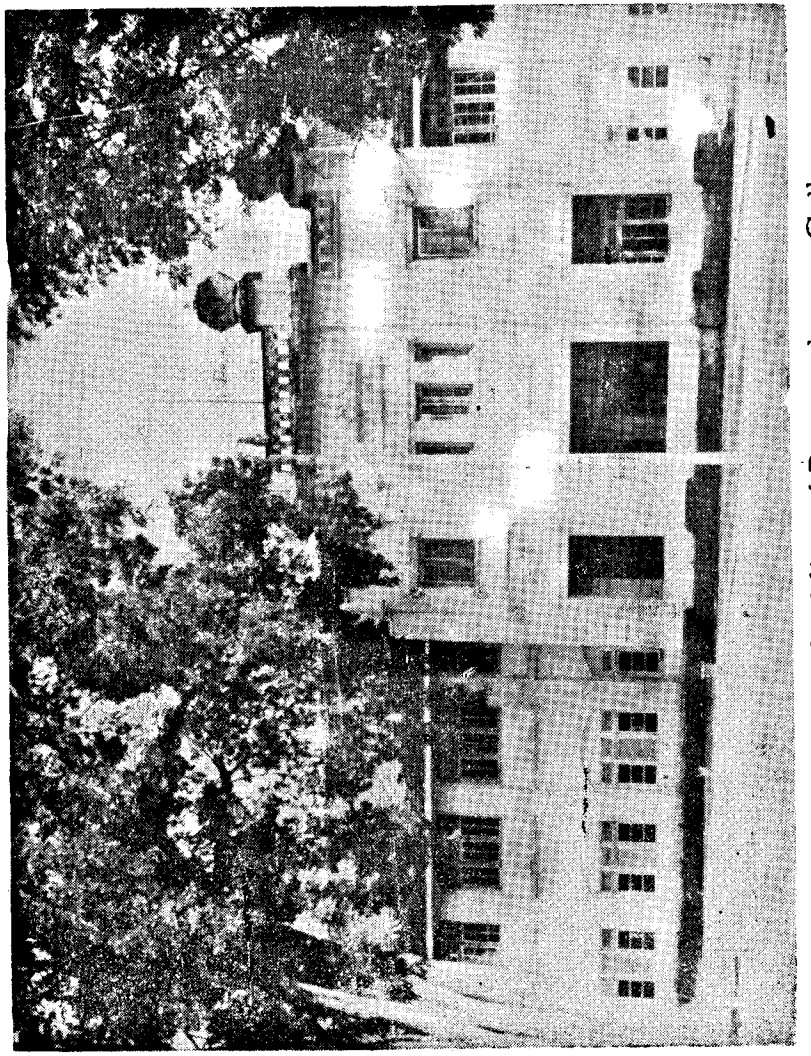
He moreover built a hostel capable of accommodating many hundreds of boarders and provided

that only vegetarian meals should be served in it. To ensure a regular supply of provisions for the hostel, he founded a farm of four hundred acres at Kilinochchi.

On 22nd August, 1921, the opening ceremony of the college was performed by the founder. Mr. S. Sivapathasundaram, the veteran educationist, scholar, philosopher and acknowledged authority on *Saiva Siddhanta* philosophy in his time, was appointed Headmaster of the Lower Department. In the following year, the Higher Department was opened with Mr. (later Sir) A. Mahadeva, M.A.(Cantab.) Bar-at-Law, as Principal. Able lecturers, English, Indian and Ceylonese were appointed to the Staff, and work was carried on under the founder's personal guidance and supervision.

So intense and so profound was his love for the College that he would visit it as often as the pressure of other duties permitted him. It was a delight to him to be in the midst of growing youth, to share their joys and sorrows, to listen to their problems and perplexities, to guide and instruct them in good living and to do all in his power to promote their intellectual, moral and spiritual development. It was his practice over a number of years to give model lessons to various classes and to supervise in person the work of his teachers. He provided a liberal supply of scholarships to ensure that poverty was no barrier to higher learning at Parameshvara.

We can picture to ourselves the Grand Old Man in his declining years attending to every detail of Collegiate activity, plodding through account books, struggling against paucity of funds in a supreme endeavour to ensure Parameshvara's future stability and well-being. No wonder then that during his life-time the College made steady progress and took its place among the foremost institutions in the Island. Parents from far and near sent their children to be educated at Parameshvara.



Portion of the main building of Parameshvara College, now the Northern Campus of the University of Ceylon

Parameshvara College was designed to be a centre of higher learning, a cradle of Tamil culture, a home for the spirit of the Tamil race, distracted and torn by centuries of subjection to alien rulers. In an age which suffered itself to be swept off its feet by the overpowering current of Western thought and learning and spurned all things national and indigenous, it was the special glory of the Ponnambalam family to have held the citadel of Tamil culture and tradition intact, in apostolical succession to the great Navalar. No other family soaked itself so completely in it or drew nutriment from its rich and varied wealth of moral, spiritual and philosophical thought. It was to save this wealth and transmit it to posterity untainted and undiminished by impious hands that Parameshvara College was born.

The founder confidently believed that Parameshvara would before long blossom forth into a Northern University and dispense higher learning for all who would seek it for their sustenance. If his princely endowments to Parameshvara, scattered in many parts of the Island and in diverse forms, had been carefully husbanded and the incomes, scrupulously secured during the half century that has glided by since the great leader returned to his Maker, a full-grown university with liberal provision for all courses of academic study, could with no aid from any other source, have sprung into existence and quenched the nation's thirst for higher learning during a period when myriads of eager and ambitious youth are dying of it. But unregenerate man willed otherwise. Had the great man risen from his *Samadhi* and revisited Parameshvara some years before the University authorities stepped in in time to save it, would not coals of fire have been heaped on his hoary head to behold the ravages that time and man's neglect had wrought on his dearly-cherished offspring?

How high his hopes and expectations! How low, their fulfilment! Surely, we are unworthy of our sires of old, unworthy of the great trust they reposed in us, unworthy of their precious legacies to us, unworthy of the splendid ideals of service and self-sacrifice they set before us, unworthy of their solicitous concern for our future happiness and well-being. Rampant materialism and selfish individualism have been the undoing of our tribe. While it is customary with peoples in other lands to build on the frail foundations laid for them by their forbears, it has become the accepted norm of human conduct among us to despoil and turn to our personal and private advantage the rich endowments of great benefactors of an earlier generation. Ramanathan, an exempler in the administration of public trusts, is a standing reproach to this class of inhuman and unabashed parasites who pillage and plunder public benefactions and defeat the very purpose for which those pious benefactors made them. It is a matter for great gratification that the Ramanathan Trust has in recent years been reconstituted and placed in safe hands.

The Ramanathan Library, a rich store-house of rare books, with a reference section reputed to be the best in the Island—one of his rarest treasures—which formed a part of his bequest to Parameshvara, having been filched by two generations of trusted custodians, is today in shambles. At a remove of well-nigh half-a-century, it is most painful, even heart-rending to reflect upon the immensity of sweat and toil, of sacrifice and self-denial that went into the building and endowing of Parameshvara, to picture to ourselves the physical, mental and moral strain the great leader endured in his declining age and the increasing stress of his dwindling resources, already far exhausted by a long life of prodigal giving, in a supreme effort to give his people a seat of

learning worthy of their great and ancient heritage, at whose life-giving springs their children and their children's children could drink to their hearts' content, and play and frolic at will to their souls' satiety. Faced with the necessity of giving Parameshvara College a modern and well-equipped laboratory to cope with the growing needs of a scientific age, and confronted with the problem of high prices soon after World War I, he mortgaged his home Sukhastan to a bank for Rs. 50,000/=. The mortgage was never redeemed and the considerate creditor brought the property under the auctioneer's hammer, only after the great benefactor had passed out of the visible scene. Such indeed was the love he bore for his people, such his anxious solicitude for their continued greatness and well-being.

When this tragic fate that awaited Sukhastan became widely known, a proposal was put forward that the Tamils should as a people, raise a Fund, discharge the debt and make Sukhastan a national memorial to the great leader. Unhappily, no response was forthcoming and the proposal was dropped.

Some years ago, the Old Girls of Ramanathan College, smitten by a sense of ingratitude to the great benefactor who first opened up for them the gates of higher learning and helped conserve the ancient culture and traditions of Hindu womanhood, resolved to build a monument worthy of his great name and end for all time the reproach that for decades had assailed them. The monument was to take the form of a statue, erected in front of the municipal buildings, Jaffna.

Much noise was made about it and subscription lists moved round. I comforted myself with the thought that Ramanathan was at long last coming into his own, coming to be recognised for what he really was, and continues to be, our greatest leader and benefactor of all time, that the Tamils had after long years of neglect waked up to a sense

of duty and piety to the great ones of the past, that a new and memorable era was opening for them.

Many months later, passing by the municipal buildings, I happened to espy something that resembled a statue. Curiosity awakened, I ventured to draw nearer and nearer to it and read the inscription on the pedestal. To my surprise, I discovered it was the much-talked-of monument to the illustrious leader. It was more than a statue. It was a caricature of that tall, stately and astounding personality. Moreover, there was hardly any trace of bronze or marble one commonly associates with statues. On inquiry, I learnt that as many as half-a-dozen bags of Kankesan cement and as many baskets-ful of river-bed sand had gone into its composition.

I thanked Providence I had lived to see a statue, though in truth a caricature, of the heroic leader, in the Northern metropolis, half-a-century after he had departed from us; thanked the proposers and executors of this pious project, admired the exuberant generosity and munificence of us Tamils, our readiness to do honour to the great dead of all time. Any wonder, then, that there has in the past decades been a total and utter bankruptcy of talent and leadership, a total and utter poverty of men of genius and vision who could see far ahead of their time and lead a people to their rightful destiny. Leadership, alas, thrives in more congenial soil.

It is a matter for satisfaction that the government of Srimavo Bandaranayake has since made Parameshvara the Northern Campus of the University of Ceylon.

CHAPTER XX

G. O. M.

> It is, I think, due to his extraordinary qualities and his marvellous services to his country, which I have just mentioned that Sir Ramanathan will be known to future generations as the "Grand Old Man of Ceylon."
>
> — *Sir Graeme Thompson*

> To the last breath of my life, I shall raise my voice against the exercise of tyranny and for the suppression of falsehood.
>
> — *Ramanathan*

IT is given to few among men to achieve in their lifetime the status of a national institution. It is the peculiar glory of Ramanathan to have earned that exalted distinction. Dr. Johnson was acclaimed as such in the England of George III, Gladstone and Carlyle, in Victorian England, and in our own day, George Bernard Shaw. This honour, one of the rarest of its kind, is often bestowed on persons who by some mystic quality in them, some inexplicable force of character and intellect have won their way to the nation's heart, fired the nation's imagination. Their names are household words; they are the focus of the nation's love and affection, men of sagacity and vision who hitch their wagons to the stars, who see far ahead of their time, see through the world's follies and futilities, its vanities and inanities, give it a new orientation and a new set of values, who influence the thoughts and actions of their contemporaries, whose utterances pass into the current speech of society. They are prophets of a new age, crusaders

in the cause of human happiness and well-being, who labour all their lives to leave behind a better world than they found.

Ramanathan was commonly called the Sage of Lanka, the G. O. M. of Ceylon, the People's Man, the Great Commoner, the Father of the Legislative Council, the Avenger of People's Wrongs, the Leader of the Nation, the National Hero, the Uncrowned King of Ceylon and many such endearing appellations. Valluvar, the divine poet and lawgiver, tells us in one of his pregnant aphorisms that wealth and learning do not share a common habitation. But in Ramanathan we see a strange assemblage not merely of immense wealth and equally immense learning but of many other endowments besides, that give life a special lustre, invest it with a special glory and significance—astounding ability and heroic courage, burning patriotism, boundless self-sacrifice and a total dedication to the common good. In him we behold the rare phenomenon of a man who gave his all that his people might find life and find it in abundance.

He had won international renown not merely as the foremost Ceylonese of his time but as one of the world's leading lights. Britain and her far-flung Empire placed him in the front line of Imperial statesmen and leaders. America hailed him as a religious teacher and philosopher, who weaned her people from the irreligious materialism that sought to engulf them; India acclaimed him not merely a scholar and writer of distinction versed in Vedic lore but a Brahma Gnani, a liberated spirit akin to the sages and seers of old; and Mother Lanka cherished him as her greatest champion and benefactor against the excesses of arrogant imperialism.

He had served under several Governors, crossed swords with several Colonial Secretaries, fought valiantly in many a political battle and emerged

with victory in his hands; formulated and piloted through the legislature numberless measures designed to advance the common weal, had fearlessly and pertinaciously vindicated the cause of social justice and political liberty and played the leading role in the evolution of Ceylon from a Crown Colony to a free democratic state. The splendour of his career at the Bar and in the public service, his immense erudition, his lavish benefactions to the cause of religion and education had won for him the undying gratitude and the adoration of multitudes.

He enjoyed in ample measure the confidence, the love and esteem of all the communities in the Island by reason of his broad humanity, his universal sympathies. Everyone of them acknowledged him as its undisputed leader who would make any sacrifice to right national wrongs, who toiled unweariedly in the cause of national well-being. In every field of activity whether political or social, spiritual or secular, his people looked up to him for guidance and treated his pronouncements with the deepest respect. Few attempted seriously to oppose him in any important matter or to cause him the smallest pain by word or deed. All joined in paying homage to the great sage and veteran statesman, the indomitable foe of all wrong and oppression. The people adored him and the Government feared him. He was the first to be consulted on matters of importance appertaining to the government of the Island. In 1921, when his second term of office as the Educated Ceylonese Member ended, Sir William Manning nominated him to a Seat in the Legislative Council for the period 1921—1924, "in view of the important developments expected in the next reform of the Council."

Although age and the incessant strain of a very arduous and eventful life had begun to tell on his bodily frame, his mental energy and vigour remained unimpaired, his inner fire burned with

a brighter, intenser flame than ever. World-weariness, ennui, *taedium vitae*, the common scourge of uncommon men never tormented him. Success never buoyed him nor failure depressed him. The long succession of events both harsh and soft, painful or pleasant left him unmoved. Nor did he rail at the changing trends and attitudes of the times, though he never failed to sound a note of warning. Even in advanced age, he continued to pursue his normal life of severe toil, political, social, religious, literary and educational, with the same undiminished zest and purpose, the same method, exactness and concentration as he had shown in his vigorous prime. Age which brings in its train physical debility and mental lassitude to statesmen and men of action failed signally in the case of Ramanathan.

Work, incessant, indefatigable all-absorbing, work at all hours of the day and night and at the height of his powers, which was characteristic of his prime and manhood, continued undiminished to the end of life. In the whole history of our race and clime it is hard to find another who worked himself so remorselessly or lived so habitually on a plane of high thought and noble endeavour. As the years rolled by, mysticism found a settled home within him, and he became a virtual *sannyasin*. Though he lived in the world amidst its glamorous and many-sided activities, and played his part in them, his mind dwelt habitually in the region of the spirit, in mystic communion with the Father-of-All-Mercies. He who from youth had a clean-shaven face, now grew a long and flowing beard reminiscent of the sages of old. To see him in later life with his silvery beard, with his features calm and graceful, the reflection of the calm and grace within, was in very truth, an edifying and ennobling experience. Neither did age nor the increasing problems and perplexities of political life weaken

either his personal popularity or his hold upon the confidence of the nation. Both the people and the Government pleaded for his continued service in the legislature so much so that to few other men of his age was it given to die in political harness.

He continued to serve at the Council Board with the zest and enthusiasm that characterised his palmier days. He read the Hansards regularly, studied the Blue Books and mastered the manifold details of legislation and administration with the same gusto and devotion that he displayed in early political life. His attendance at Council meetings was regular. His political life was as vigorous, fruitful and farseeing as it had ever been. Reading his speeches during this period of political life, one cannot help marvelling at his astonishing mental resilience, his memory as fresh and undimmed as ever, his torrent of vigorous and sonorous eloquence charged with faith and fire, the inordinate length of his speeches, his firm, clear and subtle grasp of detail, his superb skill in turning the tables on his opponents, and the amazing powers of endurance he displayed in the mastery and exposition of the multitudinous facets of an intricate and vexatious problem of statecraft. The Hon. Mr. W. W. Woods, the Colonial Treasurer, put it succinctly when he said, "What is also a matter of astonishment to me is the astounding physical endurance which Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan displayed in old age. I have seen him frequently when I myself, a very much younger man, have felt physically tired, sitting straight, upright in his chair hour after hour listening, for instance, in the Select Committee on the Budget or in the long Debate, to every word and showing, when the time came for discussion, he had not missed a single point. That is something I think we can all admire. We would try to follow his example of devotion to duty in our political life."

It was certainly a stimulating experience to behold this sage, this veteran warrior of political action in all the panoply of his past triumphs and his present renown, uttering in measured and silvery tones his words of wisdom and pouring his wealth of experience for the benefit of his younger colleagues. His Excellency Sir Graeme Thompson said of him, "When first I set foot upon the shores of this Island and took my seat in the Legislative Council, the Guest of the evening welcomed me in words that reminded me of Nestor, of whom Homer said, 'There flowed from his lips words sweeter than honey.'" He always held his ground against formidable antagonists and to him none could be formidable. The fire that burned in him, that flaming indignation against injustice, tyranny and oppression and that zealous devotion to the good of the country, glowed as bright as ever. It is also well to remember that there never was a man less a censor or a carping critic or one more ready to make allowance for or be even indulgent to the frailties and shortcomings of other men. Long years of public life had brought him in contact with much that was so sordid, base and ignoble as to breed in him a spirit of indulgence and magnanimity.

On one occasion when he was weighed down by fatigue and the heavy strain of having to make a lengthy speech to convince an assembly, that seemed to have already made up its mind, and when his legs began to ache, he said:— "I think that I have said all that I need to say and considering the exceedingly difficult task that I have had to perform standing on my legs and speaking for such length of time, it would have suited my personal feeling better, if I had said, 'Let things drift wherever they may', but unfortunately I am not bred that way. To the last breath of my life, I shall raise my voice against the exercise of tyranny and for the suppression

of falsehood. That is my reason for speaking at length." This utterance of his brings to mind what another statesman and leader of India, Rajaji said: "Until *dharma* is resuscitated in our land and strengthened with fresh strength and its flame burns like a bright lamp replenished with oil, we cannot rest in peace."

That epitomises the whole man, his concept of life's meaning and purpose, its sole justification, which is to combat wrong and injustice, tyranny and oppression wheresoever one finds them and with whatever resources one can command; to make a life of endless toil and dedication to the cause of human freedom and fellowship, the central creed of life. He knew that much of the unhappiness, misery and suffering that he saw around him was what man in the arrogance born of might and depravity imposed on his fellow-men and that life can find no better fulfilment than in striking down these man-made fetters. In his dealings with his colleagues in Council, he was charmingly courteous and considerate, respected their views and was singularly free from using that tone of authority which lesser men in his position would have been tempted to use. He observed with meticulous care all the decencies and decorum of the House; he was particularly the friend of new-comers into the political scene, to whom he was an inspiring example of self-sacrifice and dedicated service to their country. He felt it was part and parcel of an elder's duty to draw into the legislature more and more of the country's talented youth with a turn for the service of their motherland and train them for the high role. Happy and prosperous is that land, strong and efficient its government, which can boast of an unbroken succession of youth of character and attainment, patriotic and public-spirited, to watch over its destiny. No wonder aspirants to political fame found in him a guide, friend and

philosopher always ready and willing to place himself at their service.

When for the first time in the history of British rule of the Island, the Constitution of 1923 provided for the election of a Vice-President from among the Unofficial Members with powers to preside over the legislature in place of the Governor, all eyes were naturally turned on him as the only obvious choice, most fitted to lend lustre to that august assembly. But he did not share that view. He felt that a younger colleague who could hold the office for a longer period than he should be voted in and trained for the role. He declined the honour and himself recommended James Peiris for the office. Accordingly with E. W. Perera proposing and K. Balasingam seconding, James Peiris was unanimously elected. His goodness and generosity to all and sundry, his unfailing courtesy and charm, his utter selflessness and dedication to his country's service cast a spell on all who came in contact with him. The Hon. A. F. Molamure, speaking at the Jubilee Dinner given in Ramanathan's honour by the Legislative Council said, "What struck me most was the cordial welcome and the championship which the veteran knight extended to us younger men. Sir Ramanathan won our hearts and we are ever grateful and thankful to him for the encouragement he had given us. Those who have been in the Legislative Council will know the amiable and pleasant ways of Sir Ramanathan.

"His Excellency the Governor has never been present at a debate in the Legislative Council and if he has been, he would have been aware of the greatest fascination Sir Ramanathan exercised over the members."

Though grown old, his buoyancy of spirit, his unfailing cheerfulness, his geniality and good cheer, the brilliance and vigour of his intellect never deserted him. Councillors used to say in those days

that the absence of Ramanathan from the Council board robbed the assembly of its brightest luminary. He was their Nestor, to whom they looked up in the hour of need. They exultantly accorded him the privilege of speaking sitting and drank in every word that fell from his lips. Distinguished visitors from far and near deemed it a privilege to be able to gain audience with him and learn of him the secrets of life and religion, of political action and social well-being.

In 1921, when the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII visited Ceylon on his way to Australia to represent his father King George V at the Centenary Celebrations, there was popular and widespread rejoicing all over the Island. People flocked to Colombo from various parts of the Island to catch a glimpse of the beloved Prince. The Legislative Council decided to receive His Highness amidst much pomp and ceremony. To deliver the welcome address, they desired to choose one who was a worthy representative of the nation as a whole. The choice inevitably fell upon the G. O. M. The Prince was due to arrive at the Jetty at 12 noon. The Government had issued an order declaring all roads leading up to the Jetty closed to all traffic from 10 in the morning. To enforce this order, mounted European Superintendents of Police were stationed at important points. The chief officers of State and leading dignitaries from among the people had, in pursuance of the order, assembled at the Jetty before the appointed hour and were waiting in anxious expectation of the Prince. The venerable Knight who could not reconcile himself to the strain and discomfort of having to wait at the Jetty for two long hours was not among them. An eye-witness has left on record that at exactly a quarter to twelve, a car was seen moving towards the Jetty along one of those prohibited roads. One of the Superintendents of Police stopped the moving vehicle and

on seeing the G. O. M. seated within, saluted and withdrew. Another Superintendent of Police did likewise. The I. G. P. who was watching all this from a distance was much put out at seeing the Police countenance such a breach of order. He galloped to the car and stopped it, but when he found the Grand Old Man seated within, he too saluted and withdrew. Ramanathan was at the Jetty in time to receive the Prince. This incident is but one among many which illustrate the high esteem and reverence in which both the people and the rulers held the great leader and the latter's refusal to put up with irksome and meaningless formalities.

Ramanathan travelled widely to many parts of the Island in his endeavour to see things for himself and study national problems on the spot without having to depend on hearsay. As a gesture of sympathy and support, the Government made a standing order that if ever Ramanathan intimated to the station authorities in advance that he would be taking a particular train, the train should, if need be, wait for him half-an-hour longer than the scheduled time. It is not said if the need to delay ever did arise.

On one occasion, on the eve of a sitting of the Legislative Council Ramanathan was travelling from Jaffna to Colombo by the night mail train. Other Northern councillors too were travelling by the same train. On arrival at the Fort Station, the following morning, the train which normally got to Platform No. I, was diverted to Platform No. 4, thereby causing great hardship to the passengers, all of whom, including the councillors, hurriedly moved up the over-head bridge, carrying their bags and baggages to get to the Station Exit. But Ramanathan remained in the train, sent for the Station Master and asked him to move the train to its customary position at Platform No. I. Accordingly, a whole train was seen backing

out of one platform and moving into another with but one passenger within, for whose sole convenience all that was being done. On alighting from the train, Ramanathan reproved the Station Master for failing in his duty by the travelling public whose convenience and comfort he was there to provide for.

On another occasion, the Mail Train which was seen moving out of the Chunnakam Railway Station and passing the adjoining level crossing, suddenly pulled up and moved back to the Station platform. On inquiry, it was found that the engine driver had sighted the leader's car at some distance hurrying towards the Station and guessed that he was seeking to catch the train. And the driver was right.

Whenever he entered a hall, the assembly would stand up all to a man and resume their seats only after he had taken his seat. In his later days when his body had grown weary and infirm, the Legislative Council accorded him the privilege, vouchsafed to none other, of speaking sitting. Many and varied are the stories told of the loving esteem and reverence in which all classes of people, the highest to the lowest, held him.

Knighthood

In 1921, Ramanathan was made the Knight Commander of the most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George by his Majesty King George V. The announcement was made by His Excellency the Governor Sir William Manning on the occasion of the opening of the New Council under the Order in Council of 1921. Ramanathan was an unrelenting critic of Sir William Manning's administration. But that did not prevent Sir William from recognising the merits of Ramanathan and recommending the conferment of the Knighthood on the veteran statesman and leader. It was a belated honour. Many of his juniors. far less meritorious

than he, had already been elevated to that high honour. Moreover thirtyone years had lapsed since he was made a Companion of the Order. During these years his services to the country were no less remarkable than in earlier days. To many, it was passing strange that this honour was being withheld from him for so long a period of time. But the reason is not far to seek. Ramanathan was never *persona grata* with the Government. How could he be? He was the People's Man. The history of imperialism through the ages reinforces the view that, under foreign rule, honours, sinecures, emoluments are for the mediocre many, not for the transcendent few, that an alien ruler frowns upon ability, independence and patriotism in the ruled and reserves all honours and high offices for only those of the ruled who would gleefully toe his line, subserve imperial ends at the expense of those of the ruled. But Ramanathan was not made of common clay. He was made of far sterner stuff. Worldly honours, material affluence and all the pomp and pageantry of life that debauch small minds and hold them in thrall were never a lure for him. None of these could lead him astray from what he conceived to be the path of virtue. He looked up, not to man but to God, looked within and not without for his grand acquittal. As a man of God and a lifelong student of the Vedic scriptures, he knew life's fulfilment lay not in the frantic pursuit of worldly gains, nor in drinking the heady wine of worldly pleasures, nor in flaunting the tinsels and trappings of worldly honours but in doing the will of God, which is living up to the demands of Truth, Reason, Justice and Humanity in man's intercourse with his fellowmen, in pouring oneself forth in self-forgetful service of humankind. It is in brazen defiance of these eternal, unvarying laws that an alien master, with whom might is right, imposes his despotic sway upon weaker peoples.



The Belted Knight

But this stark, honourable and uncompromising man had consistently refused to fawn on them or be subservient to their will and had stubbornly told them what he felt was right. Flattery, adulation or servility to those in authority, the stock-in-trade of the politician and the courtier in the hey-day of Colonial rule, were no part of his political repertoire. Honours, imperial or otherwise, he never sought nor set much store by them. If ever they came to him unasked, he took them. His ideal was the Gita ideal of service as an offering to the Supreme Being, service with no hankering after results. If ever he looked for rewards, it was for the approbation of the One within and not the acclamation of the many without. No wonder the rulers had for decades past by-passed him every time Imperial honours went round.

Nevertheless, it was a consolation to the people that the honour did come after all, though belated. He was the fourth Tamil Knight in Ceylon, the three others being his uncle Muttu Coomaraswamy, his brother Arunachalam and the Hon. Ampalavanar Kanagasabai. Contemporaries were all at one in declaring that the Knighthood had not honoured the recipient so much as it had honoured itself.

On the occasion of the conferment, a leading newspaper of the time epitomised his career in the following lines:—

"There is probably no more interesting personality in Ceylon politics today than the veteran lawyer Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, who enters the reformed Legislative Council as a nominated member. He already had the distinction of having sat in the Council uninterruptedly since 1911, when he was elected as the first Educated Ceylonese Member. In the days when all members were selected by the Governor, Mr. Ramanathan represented the Tamils, but he had to vacate his seat when he became Solicitor-General. He has thus seen the growth of the Council from

its very beginnings as a representative assembly, a fact which was perhaps too often lost sight of during the discussion as to his attitude when Sir William Manning brought in the reform measure.

"Born in 1851, a member of an aristocratic though not very wealthy family, Ramanathan had always been a fighter. He became a lawyer and soon began to make himself felt in the Courts. Politics held an intense interest for him and at a time when some of the new members were yet infants, he was nominated to a seat in the Legislative Council. His retirement from that body to fill the post of Solicitor-General in 1892 marked a new period in his career. As a prosecutor he was a terror to all implicated persons and people who were acquainted with the Courts at that time aver that his aggressive methods did not endear him to the judges before whom he appeared. Many were the wordy warfares he was engaged in and if he did not always come off victorious, his opponents rarely bore his success with happiness. Since his return to the Council, he has exercised to the full his right of criticism of Government policy and if Officials have rarely been able to agree with him, they have at all events respected his point of view. In the Council too, he lost nothing of independence."

The Athenaeum Club in England made him a Life Member. He was the only Ceylonese to enjoy this great distinction at that time until his brother Arunachalam was made a Member later.

CHAPTER XXI

SIR PONNAMBALAM ARUNACHALAM

Arunachalam did more for the political organization of the Island and for the social advancement of the people than almost anyone in the past or recent times.

—Sir James Peiris

A famous historian called Napoleon the most productive man of his age in Europe. I think that quite rightly and fairly we can apply that description to Ponnambalam Arunachalam. He was the most productive man in Ceylon of his time.

—S. W. R. D. Bandaranayake

How often have men stood on the verge of the Promised Land and seen, near and tantalizing, the country of their dreams, only to be driven back again to the thirst and hunger of the wilderness.

—Sir Richard Livingstone

IT will not be out of place in a work which purports to be the life of a great national leader to devote some pages to a brief sketch of the character and career of a man who, in addition to being the leader's younger brother, was among the most seminal figures of his time. Though the glare of publicity and national acclaim that shone on him was only a shade less than that which illumined the elder brother, Arunachalam possessed qualities no less remarkable. As the perfect pattern of public servant, as scholar and writer of uncommon distinction, as philosopher and man of religion, as the pioneer of social reform and champion of the under-dog, as the valiant fighter in the cause of national freedom, he, like his celebrated brother, left an imprint upon his age that time can hardly efface.

Arunachalam, the youngest of the three sons of Gate-Mudaliyar A. Ponnambalam, was born in Colombo on 14th September, 1853. After receiving his early Tamil education at home, he proceeded to the Colombo Academy (the precursor of Royal College) as a lad of seven years and remained there for nine years. His career at the Academy was distinguished by talent, industry and perseverance. In fact, Dr. Barcroft Boake, the Principal, writing of him said, "In my forty years' experience in the instruction of youth, I have never met with any pupil who gave greater evidence of ability and scarcely one who gave so great. Mr. Arunachalam's conduct has always been most satisfactory and I consider him to be in every way a young man of the very highest promise." And Dr. Boake was a prince of educationists and no mean judge of promise in youth. Over four decades later, at a public reception to him, Arunachalam paid his meed of tribute to Dr. Boake: "I cannot but recall how much I owe to my Principal, Dr. Boake, whose name is indissolubly connected with education in Ceylon and among whose pupils were nearly all the greatest men of Ceylon of the 19th century—Charles Lorenz, James Stewart, Sir Richard Morgan, Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy, James Alwis and a host of others."

In 1866 Arunachalam was awarded the Turnour Prize for the most outstanding student of the school. In 1870 he won the English University Scholarship which entitled the holder to a course of studies in a British University at State expense. He entered Christ's College, Cambridge, on the suggestion of Sir Walter Sendall, then Director of Public Instruction, who wrote to the authorities there that he was sending to their care "an Eastern youth of exceptional merit and promise." Within a short time of admission, young Arunachalam made his mark by winning the Foundation Scholarship and distinguishing himself both in Classics

and Mathematics. In the records of Christ's College, he is referred to as a "brilliant mathematician and an able classics scholar."

Arunachalam has placed on record, in a speech at a public reception to him in 1914, the following reminiscence of his Cambridge days: "It was at Cambridge that I spent four of the happiest years of my life with the best of friends and teachers. It was my good fortune to come under the influence of Sir John Seely, Dr. Peile, Dr. Skeat, Dr. Jebb, Dr. Reed, Lord Moulton, my mathematical tutor, and Professors Fawcett and Harcourt. To these and other teachers I owe more than I can tell, and not less to the friendship and inspiration of many able young men who then adorned Cambridge and have risen to distinction in various parts of the Empire—the Balfours, the Lyttletons, the Tennysons, Maitland the great jurist, the Homeric scholars Butcher and Leaf, Bishops Chase and Weldon, Christie the Astronomer Royal, Stanford the Composer, Edward Carpenter the poet, two Chief Justices of Ceylon, Sir Wilfred Bonser and Sir Joseph Hutchinson, and many others."

At Cambridge, he zealously maintained the spirit of sturdy independence and the pride of race and culture that were characteristic of the Ponnambalam brothers. When the Archbishop of York preached to Cambridge undergraduates a sermon showing "scant respect for Indian religions," the young Arunachalam, scarcely past his teens, took exception to the prelate's remarks and lodged a vigorous protest through the pages of the *Spectator* on 26th December, 1874.

During his stay in England, he kept terms at Lincoln's Inn, to which his uncle Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy had belonged, and was called to the English Bar. In 1875, in deference to the wishes of his uncle but much against his own, he also entered for the Civil Service examination, passed high in the list and secured for himself the distinction

of being the first Ceylonese to gain admission to the Civil Service by open competition. On his return to Ceylon in April, 1875, he was attached to the Government Agent's office in Colombo. It seems an irony of fate that he who in later life was destined to be a relentless foe of imperialism in any shape or form and to lead the struggle for his country's freedom should have commenced his career in the service of the government that held his country in subjection. He was later appointed to judicial office in various parts of the Island. In the judiciary his success was so marked that Sir John Budd Phear, the Chief Justice, commended his work to the notice of the Governor and the Secretary of State, saying that he knew of only two men in Ceylon who rose to the standard of what judicial officers ought to be, and they were Justice Berwick and Arunachalam.

In 1887 Sir Arthur Gordon, who recognized Arunachalam's talents and desired to give better scope for their exercise, appointed the young Ceylonese, who was still in the Fourth Class of the Civil Service, over the heads of about thirty seniors, among whom was Mr. (afterwards Sir) Alexander Ashmore, to act in the onerous office of Registrar-General and Fiscal of the Western Province. This appointment caused a commotion in official circles, and a memorial of protest signed by almost half the Civil Service was sent to London, but the Governor and the Secretary of State stood firm.

Arunachalam came to the Registrar-General's office only to find it a veritable Augean stable. He rallied all his powers of mind and body and toiled indefatigably to reorganize the whole Department; and when he left, it had become the pride and envy of the public service. His singular success in the Department will remain a lasting testimony to his great administrative ability. Sir Arthur Gordon thanked him profusely for his services

and expressed "great satisfaction at a success which merited His Excellency's warm acknowledgements." *The Times of Ceylon* paid the following tribute: "In the Registration Department, chaos and corruption held merry sway, when Mr. Arunachalam came to it. The registration of deeds was subject to infinite delay and harassment. There was no index worth speaking of, and references to transactions and encumbrances affecting land were exceedingly difficult to ascertain. Fraud was rife; dishonest transactions often took precedence over genuine dealings and everybody's property and titles were endangered. The records of the Department littered the floor of one particular room and valuable documents, which cannot be replaced, lay where no man but an interested clerk could lay his hands upon them. There was plenty of 'baksheesh' exacted and little honest work done, and yet the record room fees came to something like Rs. 25,000/=. Nobody could tell where the money went to. It was another Augean stable, and no Hercules could hope to cleanse it. It was not lack of will but lack of knowledge. Mr. Arunachalam had a persevering mind. He sat by the side of the various clerks and patiently learned their work. Then he took charge and launched his reforms. He stopped the unconscionable delays and dishonesty in the registration of deeds, secured a fair day's work from each clerk throughout the Island and reduced the lazy, overgrown staff. He would have none of the private practice and fees in connection with official work. He reorganized the record room, appropriated the fees to the legitimate objects of the department, recast the whole system, increased and set apart a special staff to keep the records, inaugurated a real record room, with a system and an index, built fine shelves, and with the surplus money derived from the fees, he founded a Benevolent Fund which has now saved many a clerk from the clutches of the

usurer, from disgrace and penury, relieved many a widow and orphan and conduced more than any grandmotherly scheme of philanthropy to make the clerks of the department a thrifty, contented body of men. The same money has also helped to establish a reading room, a library, and generally to make the lives of the clerks lighter and brighter."

Any account of Arunachalam's official life will not be complete without reference to his masterly compilation of and report on the Census. It was a monumental achievement which was acclaimed in many parts of the world. Suffice it to observe that in the compilation of that Census, he exhibited such extraordinary ingenuity, skill and mastery of facts and figures as to place him among the great statisticians of the world. A distinguished American statistician, Frederick L. Hoffman, writing from Newark, New Jersey, to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Island to acknowledge receipt of the report on the Ceylon Vital Statistics for 1898 said, "I will be permitted to express to you my great surprise at the exceptional care and thoroughness with which the Report on Vital Statistics has been prepared. Certainly in an experience extending over many years and including a knowledge of nearly all the British Colonies, I have never come in receipt of a similar report at once so comprehensive, so scientific and so useful. There is not published in the entire United States a report equally valuable and comprehensive."

A writer in the *The Ceylon Observer* wrote of the Census Report:—"Mr. Lionel Lee was considered to be the ablest Civil Servant of the time. Yet how bald and tame does his Census Report of 1891 read by the side of Mr. Arunachalam's of 1901. Extensive reading, unwearying industry, apt powers of condensation and critical discernment, leave their impress in happy combination upon its pages, forming altogether what is at once a most pleasing work and a singularly valuable contribution."

Arunachalam's Report was described by the *Times* of London as "the most comprehensive authority on the ethnology of Ceylon and of its varied peoples, their history, religions, languages and literatures." S. R. Wijemanne, writing in the *Ceylonese*, said: "The curious reader will find in the report which introduces the Census of 1901, perhaps the most luminous dissertation on the ethnological, social and economic conditions of the Island. A Government official report would be the last document the public would care to read for beauty of diction. But in Mr. P. Arunachalam's account of the history and religions of the Island in his Census Report would be found the language of Addison, the eloquence of Macaulay and the historical insight of Mommsen." The Colonial Government in Whitehall gave Arunachalam a reward of three thousand rupees as a token of their appreciation of this splendid piece of work.

Many of the reforms in the Registrar-General's Department involved extensive administrative changes and legislation. Arunachalam was responsible for the Ordinances Nos. 1 and 2 of 1895 on the Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths, the Notaries Ordinance No. 1 of 1907 and the Land Registration Ordinance No. 3 of 1907. The piloting of the last two Ordinances through the Legislative Council, a work normally assigned to the Attorney-General, was entrusted to Arunachalam by the Government. The question of the registration of titles to land and of the deeds affecting land was considered by a Commission presided over by the Chief Justice. In its report the Commission stated: "We cannot close our Report without acknowledging the valuable service rendered to the public by the Registrar-General, Mr. Arunachalam, in drafting the results of our prolonged labour. We cannot claim for it perfection; but we venture to think that it will conduce to the interest of the public and to the suppression of much litigation and crime."

From the office of Registrar-General, Arunachalam was reverted to the judiciary and made the District Judge of Kurunegala. As a judge, he earned glowing tributes from members of the highest tribunal in the Island. One of Arunachalam's best-known judgements was in the well-known *Adippola Sannas Case*, which dealt with obscure points in Sinhalese social history. It was acknowledged to be a masterly study of the subject. In 1910, having earned encomia as a judge, he won the additional laurel of being hailed as a jurist, when he published his "A Digest of the Civil Law of Ceylon", dedicating it to the Marquis of Crewe, the son of Lord Houghton, his uncle Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy's friend.

This work was an ambitious and pioneer undertaking, inasmuch as it sought to restate the general "common law" of Ceylon, a huge, indeterminate medley of Roman-Dutch and English law based on Latin, Dutch and English texts and statutes and declared in judgements in hundreds of volumes of law reports, in the form of sections of a concise code, justifying each proposition by reference to the relevant authorities. It was his hope that such a Restatement of Ceylon Law could eventually be used by the legislature as the basis for an authoritative Code on the lines of the great German Civil Code of 1900. He was able to complete the first volume only of this gigantic task, but it sufficed to show the great pains he had taken to bring out a work of scholarship, at once systematic, compact and accurate. The book earned the praises of Lord Halsbury, the famous Lord Chancellor, and Sir Winfield Bonser, Chief Justice of Ceylon. Appreciative reviews appeared in the *Law Journal* and other law magazines of the United Kingdom. This "Digest" has been cited on more than one occasion by the Supreme Court and in the standard text books on the Roman-Dutch Law in other countries; and Mr. Justice

C. G. Weeramantry, LL. D., has recently described the work as "among the classics of modern Roman-Dutch jurisprudence."

In 1905 Arunachalam returned to the Registrar-General's Department and in 1906 was nominated to the Legislative Council, where he was responsible for introducing and carrying through the Ordinances relating to the registration of titles to land and to Notaries. He sat on various Commissions in which his wealth of wisdom and learning were acknowledged to be of great value. In 1912, Governor Sir Henry McCallum took the bold step of appointing him to the Executive Council in place of Lord Broadhurst who retired. Sir Richard Morgan and Sir Samuel Grenier were the only Ceylonese before him to occupy permanent seats in the Executive Council, but they did so by virtue of the offices they held. In Arunachalam's case the appointment was a personal one and was ample evidence of the high esteem in which Sir Henry held him.

Though an Official, he showed remarkable courage and independence. As a member of the Railway Commission of 1912, he dissented in its Report on the question of wages, in an effort to obtain an increase of wages for railway workers, although he knew that this would cause annoyance (as in fact it did) in official circles. Again, when at the close of a debate in the Legislative Council on an increased Salaries Scheme in 1913, a division was called, quite a sensation was caused when Arunachalam was seen to rise from his seat and walk up to the Governor who was presiding. After a whispered consultation, he returned to his seat and voted with the Unofficials against the Government. This was an incident unprecedented in the history of Crown Colony government and caused widespread comment in official and unofficial circles and in the public press. His objection was based on his conviction that the finances of the

Colony, as they then stood, would not permit an increase in the salaries of the officials. He completely ignored the fact that, as an official himself, he too would be one of the beneficiaries of an enhanced Salaries Scheme. But with him public good outweighed private advantage. Such was his conception of public duty, his courage and independence in the face of entrenched power and privilege.

With regard to his work in the Executive Council, Sir Anton Bertram, said at a public reception: "I was always struck by the character of his attainments. They always displayed a high feeling of the dignity of Government both in the largest and smallest aspects. Whatever question came before the Council, whether it was some question as to the past history of the country or the religion of the people or some question as to the country's future such as that of the new University College, on all these questions his official minutes were kindled with a kind of unofficial enthusiasm. Not only was he so in large questions, but when he had to deal with the interests of the humblest cultivator in a Gansabhawa appeal, he showed the same earnestness, concentration and conscientiousness as in large questions. No ordinance was too long or too tedious for him to analyse. No question, whether relative, as I have said, to the humble cultivator or the humble employee of the Railway, failed to engage his earnest attention. He seemed to me to bring to his work all the highest qualities that the Executive Councillor should have."

Arunachalam should, in the normal course of things, have scaled the topmost heights of the public service, had not his path been beset with all manner of insurmountable obstacles. First and foremost, he was a "native" and the highest places in the public service were at this time and for some decades to come the exclusive preserve of the White Sahib. Secondly, he showed uncommon

originality and independence, wide learning and an exceptional flair for making speeches, which again were taboo in the higher echelons of the public service where mediocrity and sealed lips were the accepted preconditions to success.

Mr. J. R. Weinman says, "The Official Members of Council further consist of certain Heads of Departments and Government Agents, some of whom are of the Executive Council. They put Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam there as some sort of solatium for not giving him an Agency; and from the Government point of view they were quite right, for Sir Ponnambalam showed some originality and could make good speeches, even when the speeches contained quotations from the Vedas and the Mahabharata. Official Members of the Legislative Council are there to vote solid for Government. They are not there to make speeches.....

"Any Civil Servant may become a Government Agent, a Member of the Legislative Council, and in his retirement be made a C. M. G. provided he lives long enough, never has made a speech unless in reply to the illuminated address presented by the Kachcheri Mudaliyar and staff on his transfer to another district or province. In England the private member who can make a better and more telling speech than a Cabinet Minister is regarded with extreme disfavour, and vain attempts are made to suppress him, as was done in the case of the late Lord Randolph Churchill. In Ceylon it would be considered treason for an Official Member to make a better speech than the Colonial Secretary.....

"Future ages will consider it extraordinary why Heads of Departments should leave their Provinces for Colombo merely to record their votes. Why not they send down their Office Assistants or Chief Clerks? If the Government Agent is summoned to produce a document in Court, he does not carry it himself. He sends it by a clerk.

In the same way, when the Member of the Legislative Council is summoned to the Council, why cannot he send down his vote by a clerk who could be most spared? Or why should not his vote be taken as read or rather recorded in favour of Government?"

In another place Weinman says, "The other Members of the Executive Council are usually put there *honoris causa*. Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam would have acted as Colonial Secretary, if he was not Ponnambalam Arunachalam, and he was told so by Sir Alexander Ashmore. They might have given him a Province, but, instead, they made his appointment a first class one, gave him the highest salary possible for a Civil Servant and put him into the Legislature, and finally into the Executive Council. 'What more can you want?' they asked, but they made his junior act as Colonial Secretary. It is doubtful whether these extra Executive Councillors carry any weight with, or affect the policy of Government in the slightest degree. If they agree with the Colonial Office, so much the better for the Colonial Office. If they disagree, so much the worse for them. Mr. W. H. Jackson, one of the ablest of our Civil Servants, who never did full justice to himself, used to say that he always wrote, 'I quite agree with the opinion of the Colonial Secretary,' not knowing what the opinion was, or whether there was any opinion at all. As a rule, these minor Executive Councillors are quite satisfied with their dignity. and give no trouble either to the Government or to themselves. It would naturally be dangerous for them to do so within a measurable distance of their retirement from the service and the showering of birthday honours. Besides, why should they spoil their record by doing anything original? The remaining official members of the Legislative Council are there mainly as silent voters."

Moreover, another besetting vice with Arunachalam was that he was an incorrigible nationalist in love with all things national. He gloried in his national attire, in his distinctive turban and tunic coat, and prided himself on the greatness and glory of his national language, culture and traditions, matters which were gall and wormwood to the Colonial Englishman. Arunachalam's intellectual and moral superiority, his amazing success in the public service, his sturdy independence and above all, his labours in the cause of national freedom while yet he was in the service of an alien raj were hardly calculated to conciliate the foreign bureaucrat with his airs of presumptuous superiority and his expectation of obsequious acquiescence from the "natives".

Given a wider field and a freer scope, there is not the smallest doubt that Arunachalam's exceptional talents and learning, his sterling character, unflinching industry and dedication to duty would have achieved far greater triumphs; but the foreign autocrat willed otherwise. Arunachalam's well-known reputation for legal scholarship and his long judicial experience naturally suggested his elevation to the Supreme Court Bench. But the simple fact of subjection to alien rule was enough to dash all such hopes and expectations to the ground. Had he been given that honour, he would certainly have ranked among the greatest judges of all time, for he possessed every virtue needed to adorn that high office. He was offered a Puisne Judgeship in Singapore, but he turned it down on the ground that to serve one's own country in a humbler capacity was preferable to serving a foreign land.

He retired from the public service in 1913, with a record of achievement unsurpassed by any other officer of the Crown. His official career will ever be a source of inspiration and pride to the Ceylonese, inasmuch as once and for all he dispelled from the minds of imperialist Englishmen the notion

they had for long cherished that administrative efficiency and acumen were a special gift of the Gods to them, and proved to the statesmen at Westminster that the Ceylonese were more than equal to the task of governing themselves and that Britain's strangle-hold on them was unwarranted and iniquitous in the extreme. The following official appreciation of his distinguished services appeared in the Government Gazette: "His Excellency desires to place on record his high appreciation of the value of the services rendered to the Colony by Mr. P. Arunachalam during an honourable career extending over thirtyeight years." As a reward for his services, he was knighted, receiving the accolade at the hands of King George V at Buckingham Palace. The initiative for the conferment of the honour came from the Colonial Office and not from any "men on the spot" in Ceylon. "No Ceylonese better deserved this honour than this Tamil gentleman whose great abilities, spotless integrity and meritorious services to the Government and the public entitled him to this, if not greater rewards, long ago, and this is only tardy justice done to him," said a leading newspaper.

On his return from England after receiving the Knighthood, all communities joined in honouring him. In 1908, the Royal Asiatic Society made him its Vice-President, the first Ceylonese to hold the office, and in 1916, he became the Society's President, being again the first Ceylonese to achieve this distinction. He had also been elected a Life Member of the Athenaeum Club in London, an honour which he shared with only two compatriots, his brother Ramanathan and his uncle Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy.

Availing himself of his stay in Europe, he made an enthusiastic study of social service settlements, charity organizations, labour unions and municipal institutions. He met Lord Chalmers,

the Governor-elect of Ceylon, and immediately took upon himself the duty of advising him on matters relating to Ceylon. In a letter dated 15th July, 1913, he wrote: "There is now an agitation in Ceylon for the abolition of the poll-tax, a tax payable by every able-bodied man except the Buddhist priest or immigrant cooly. I have always thought it an inequitable tax, for it falls on the rich and the poor, and I have worked several years to abolish it. The rich are fortunate in Ceylon, for they pay nothing else except on luxuries. Some years ago a Commission was appointed to consider the subject of Incidence of Taxation, but it died without making a Report. Your financial knowledge will no doubt reveal to you gross anomalies and inequalities in the Ceylon system of taxation. The most pressing Reform is the abolition or considerable reduction of the duty on salt, which is a Government monopoly. Such a policy will be a great blessing to the poor and an encouragement to agriculture for which salt is needed but not used owing to its cost. The rich, who, as tea and rubber planters and in the professions, make large incomes and the Companies which make and send out of the Colony huge profits remain untouched. There is no income tax or land tax. The richer classes only pay the poll-tax equally with the poorest peasant. I cannot help thinking that the abortive result of the Commission on Taxation was largely due to the influence of the capitalist classes and to the inadequate realisation by the Commissioners of the miserable condition of the poor."

Prolific of great achievement and lasting renown as Arunachalam's official life undoubtedly was, more prolific and of far more enduring value was his life of retirement. The ten years of retired life that the niggardly Fates vouchsafed to him were among the most strenuous, the most crowded and eventful not merely of his long and illustrious

career but of his country's history. For the first time after thirtyeight years of servitude to an alien raj, he felt himself a free man, free as a bird, free to fulfil the secret longings of his heart, free to move in the direction his genius prompted him. And his genius, inherent, inborn, inherited was no less than a passion to recreate in Mother Lanka a free society, free from the many political, social and economic bonds that had for long centuries held her in thrall to alien conquerors. He possessed for a time a more general ascendancy over the minds and imaginations of his contemporaries than any other leader of his time, not excluding his brother Ramanathan. He opened all the ground, touched all the issues, posed all the questions in the spheres which had hitherto remained untouched by man.

The subject that was uppermost in his mind and engrossed his whole attention was social reform. The condition of the working-poor, their appalling poverty and ignorance, their misery and degradation had for long been a sore in the body-politic and a source of profound distress and heart-searching for him. It was, he felt, a serious indictment and a paradox of our twentieth century materialism that in the midst of plenty, poverty should be rife, that large masses of human beings should in any human society wither away in want, in ignorance and squalor through man's inhumanity to his fellow-men. He was the first among us to preach to a callous and unheeding generation the gospel of social justice, to stir up the slumbering social conscience of his people, wake them up to a consciousness of their social responsibility. With a pertinacity, courage and broad humanity that baffled his contemporaries, he grappled with the social consequences of casual, ill-paid labour, of illiteracy, malnutrition, disease and human degradation.

He summoned a few of his friends to 'Ponklar', his home and birth-place of many progressive and

philanthropic movements, and expounded his plans for improving the lot of the poor: "We must study the needs of the masses and bring to their doors knowledge and recreation and brighten and beautify their lives and establish a bond of sweet human relationship between the educated and the wealthy and their less favoured brethren. The work is almost appalling and includes education of the masses, medical relief, economic improvement, and the improvement of their housing and teaching them to lead cleaner and better lives by coming into personal contact with them in their homes and giving medical relief as well as securing the benefits of compulsory insurance and minimum wages." The result was the birth on 29th January, 1915 of the Ceylon Social Service League of which he was the first President. He formulated a Constitution which served as a model for Gokhale, the great Indian patriot and statesman, when he drew up one for the Servants of India Society. It was his aim to make the head-quarters of the League, where he worked unremittingly, a "Social Settlement" like Toynbee Hall in England where men like the British Premier, Asquith worked.

In Ceylon, owing to the novelty of the idea and the want of social awareness, his appeal for spare-time, voluntary service did not meet with encouraging response from a generation permeated by self-interest and blind to all the woes of the poor. But undeterred, undaunted, this indomitable man, in the evening of life and in the infirmity of advancing years toiled at his office for ten hours of the day in a supreme endeavour to bring light and good cheer into the darkened homes of his less favoured brethren. Under his magic touch, the League soon became a hive of vigorous and sustained activity, a centre of light and leading, a dispenser of social benefits to the poor and the needy, the ignorant and the afflicted. He started night schools to impart education to the workers

and personally conducted a Social Study Class for the training of members in social work. The slums in the city were visited by volunteer workers who collected information on the social condition of the poor, instructed them in the principles of health and sanitation, granted medical relief and distributed free milk to expectant mothers and children. First-Aid classes were held and lantern lectures on sanitation, hygiene and civic duties were given. Athletic clubs for slum children were organized and run under proper supervision. Industrial education was imparted to enable children to earn their living and cottage industries such as pottery, basket-weaving, furniture-making, silver and brass work, the cultivation of silk worms and the weaving of silk and cotton cloth, which were fast dying out were revived. For this purpose he moved for the creation of Co-operative Credit Societies to help the people in their industrial and agricultural enterprises by providing them with funds for buying raw materials and improved implements. A Bureau was opened to secure for craftsmen a market for their goods. As a result of his activities, workers in the plumbago industry, domestic servants, artisans, skilled workmen in engineering firms, formed their own co-operative societies. He also pressed on Government, the necessity for the appointment of an Industrial Commission (with Unofficials and experts) to survey the economic resources and the industrial possibilities of the country, to report on the measures that should be adopted to encourage the growth of existing industries and to promote new ones. The Government appointed a Commission with him as one of its members.

During the floods of May, 1916, which rendered many thousands of people homeless and caused widespread distress and suffering, he acted with promptitude and organised several flood-relief-parties which did much to relieve suffering over a wide

area and rehabilitate the victims. Moreover, he inaugurated a Flood Relief Fund and distributed several lakhs of rupees among the flood-stricken villagers. In fortynine villages, over seven thousand people were given monetary aid for rebuilding their houses. In the debates of the Legislative Council, the prompt and energetic action taken by the Ceylon Social Service League in relieving the distress of the victims of the flood was contrasted with the tardy and lukewarm measures taken by Government officers. Arunachalam brought to the notice of the Government the laxity and neglect of its officers in tackling the flood situation and urged on it the necessity for reforming the system of village administration with non-officials to protect the interests of the peasants.

For several years Arunachalam agitated vigorously for the introduction of free elementary education for the children of the poor in the city of Colombo and pressed on Government in memorandum after memorandum the necessity for Government to undertake this urgent duty. With characteristic vision he saw, long before other leaders dreamed of it, that compulsory free education was the most potent remedy for the many ills that afflicted human society. At first, the Government vacillated and even tried to evade its responsibility, but as a result of the increasing pressure he brought to bear on it, free elementary schools were established in Colombo. He it was who first blazed the trail that subsequent generations have followed with lasting success.

While engaged in social service work, he did not overlook the interests of labour. He was the pioneer of the Labour Movement in Ceylon. The first labour union that was established in Ceylon was founded by him on 25th June, 1919; until then the Ceylon Social Service League had looked after the interests of labour under his personal direction. The new organization was called the

Ceylon Workers' Welfare League. Arunachalam was elected its first President and Mr. Peri Sunderam, its first Secretary. The aim of the League, as stated in its constitution, was 'to protect the interests of the working classes in Ceylon and promote their welfare; to improve their social and industrial conditions and help their material and moral development; and to encourage the study of questions bearing on the social and economic conditions of the people." So harsh, so merciless and punitive were the labour laws that his sensitive and compassionate mind revolted against the hideous cruelties and even barbarities practised upon labour. Writing to the Rt. Hon. I. Harcourt, M. P., His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, on July 16th, 1913, he said, "The minimum reform needed, I would submit for your favourable consideration, is to exempt women and minors from imprisonment for breaches of this law [i. e. the penal clauses of the Labour Ordinance] and to secure estate coolies a living wage by the establishment of Wages Boards in the various planting districts."

The League played an active role in the negotiations between employers and labourers during the Railway and the Harbour strikes of 1921. In September, 1920, the Rev. C. F. Andrews visited Ceylon on the invitation of the League in order to examine the conditions of Indian labour in the Ceylon plantations and addressed a large meeting of workers and supporters, presided over by Arunachalam, at the Tower Hall in Colombo. Col. Josiah Wedgewood, another champion of the Labour Movement and a member of the British Parliament, arrived in Ceylon in 1921 and similarly addressed large meetings. In February, 1920, Arunachalam enlarged his labour organizations and established the Ceylon Workers' Federation. In his inaugural address, he said: "This is a great day in the history of Ceylon and I deem it a great privilege to be associated with the inauguration

of this movement. I pray that it may bear lasting and blessed fruit to the people." He never ceased to encourage these organizations to strive for the amelioration of the conditions of the working classes. He was ever one with them, their philosopher, guide and friend. It was largely due to his efforts that the penal clauses in the Labour Ordinance were repealed. His Unions waged relentless war against the *Thundu* system, then operating oppressively against Indian labourers; and indeed these Unions were the only effective organizations then existing in the Island at this time to watch and protect the interests of labour. Colonel Wedgewood paid a glowing tribute to Arunachalam in a speech in the House of Commons on the 14th July, 1921. He said: "I should like in this connection to mention the great work done for these semi-slaves in Ceylon by two men, one in India, Mr. Andrews, and the other an old Government servant, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam. He has gone on year after year, with society after society, pegging away at this question. He is unpopular with Officials because he was an Official. He is educated, he is alive to abolishing this cooly labour, and I congratulate him, as one can, from these Benches, on having achieved the liberation of a large mass of his labouring countrymen." Lord Crewe wrote to him on 27th July, 1922: "You must indeed be gratified at the successful close of your long exertions on behalf of the Indian coolies. It is a real service to the Empire, contentment to these people who deserve well of us all." For these and other services to the poor, the hungry and the down-trodden, many of his contemporaries derided him as a "Bolshevik."

In paying a tribute to his work for the social uplift of the poorer classes, on the occasion of the unveiling of his portrait by the Governor, Sir William Manning, at the headquarters of the Ceylon Social Service League in 1924, Chief Justice, Sir Anton Bertram said: "Sir Ponnambalam was

a man of wide and varied culture. There never had been a man of more distinguished culture in this Colony. He did not live wrapt in his own studies and books. He felt the sorrows of the common people. He did not start the social service movement because it was a fashionable movement. He realised the sorrows of the poor and heard what Wordsworth called 'the still sad voice of humanity'. He felt for the dwellers of the slums and every one of them should cherish as one of their most precious ideals their duty to follow the example of Sir Ponnambalam."

Arunachalam was pre-eminently a scholar and lived the life of disinterested culture. All learning both ancient and modern, all that was best and noblest in the literary, philosophical and religious thought of both the East and the West, he took in his giant-stride. He drank deep and long of these inexhaustible springs and found in them a well of delight and refreshment, an unfailing source of spiritual solace and sustenance, a stimulus to noble thought and action. Justice Moncrieff. Acting Chief Justice of the Island, once said of him that he was "a Classical and Oriental scholar, a master of the English language and literature, who brought to every task he undertook, whether in literature or law or official work, habits of thoroughness and exactitude and a practical mind. *Nihil tetigit quod non ornavit.*" His deep insight into matters philosophical and spiritual is revealed in his writings, notably in the collection of learned essays and articles which were published posthumously under the title "Studies and Translations, Philosophical and Religious"(1937). The distinguished Indian scholar-statesman Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, who contributed a Foreword to this volume, has declared elsewhere, in an article on "Books that have Influenced Me", how an earlier version of Arunachalam's "Studies and Translations" had profoundly influenced his own thought, which until the age

of forty had been almost exclusively formed on Western philosophy and literature, the only mental pabulum afforded in Indian schools and universities in the days of his youth.

In the above mentioned Foreword he wrote: "The world cannot be sufficiently grateful to Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam for having in his 'Studies and Translations' unlocked these treasures of thought and of language to those wholly or partially unacquainted with the wonders of Tamil thought and Tamil poesy... The task of translation from these classics is inexpressibly difficult and no higher praise can be given than to say that Sir P. Arunachalam's translations enable us to comprehend the spirit and some part of the formal beauty of the original... In a carefully arranged series of essays which display a unique acquaintance with European literature, classical and modern, in addition to a mastery over Eastern lore, he has discussed such varied subjects as 'Luminous Sleep', the sleep in which, while there is rest and absence of thought, there is no oblivion but perfect consciousness... He discourses on the symbolism of Siva worship with special reference to the bronzes found at Polonnaruwa... Not the least valuable and stimulating amongst the essays collected in this volume is an address on 'Eastern Ideals of Education and Their Bearing on Modern Problems'..... Although the book is styled 'Studies and Translations' there is embedded in it much original thought evolved by one to whom Greek, Latin, Sanskrit and Tamil literatures were equally open books... I account it a piece of good fortune to have the privilege of introducing this volume to a world which will be all the better for the knowledge and assimilation of that varied culture whereof the author was an exponent as well as an embodiment."

Arunachalam possessed a keen intellect which could take in at a sweep the most recondite and

intractable subjects. Added to this natural endowment was his capacity for patient and strenuous work, a quality which was with him (as with his brother Ramanathan) a life-long possession. Edward Carpenter, in the Introduction to his book "Light from the East" which he designed to commemorate his friend Arunachalam and in which he embodied a selection of Arunachalam's letters, says, "I may dwell for a moment on some characteristics of Arunachalam himself. One of these was (to me at least since my own mind works rather slowly) the surprising rapidity of his thought, and with this rapidity went, as its natural accompaniment, an extreme receptivity. I was often impressed by the ease and celerity with which he drank in and absorbed all sorts of difficult and recondite matters (doubly difficult to foreigners) as a question of procedure in the House of Commons, while at the same time this receptiveness was healthily counterbalanced by a certain almost elfish spirit of chaff and opposition which one might notice at times. This last peculiarity is, I am inclined to think, characteristic of the Tamils who are noted for their originality and their sturdy independence of mind. For the Tamils indeed as a people I have always felt a strange sympathy and admiration."

Arunachalam was first and last a gentleman, one of the finest that ever lived. His mind was free of all things base or ignoble and full of the noblest thoughts of all ages and climes. This is not surprising in one whom contemporary opinion adjudged a fine flower of Cambridge culture, with whom the pursuit of religion, philosophy and the fine arts was a lifelong passion, whose life was dedicated to the cause of human freedom and fellowship and the promotion of social justice and human dignity. No wonder that a personality so noble, so dignified and so wise radiated charm and compelled admiration whithersoever it went. Edward Carpenter wrote: "Whether he was

conversing with the humblest friends at Millthorpe or at Sheffield or with high officials and great ladies in London, his manners had always just the same charming frankness and grace about them, which established at once the *human* relation as the paramount thing". Chief Justice Sir Anton Bertram said of him: "It was a rare privilege to see a man who combined the high and unusual qualities of being a scholar and a gentleman." Decades earlier Colonel Olcott, who met Arunachalam when he was a young Magistrate at Kalutara wrote in his "Old Diary Leaves": "We made a charming acquaintance today, a graduate of Christ's College, Cambridge, one of the most intellectual and polished men we have met in Asia." Sir William Rothenstein, the artist, wrote of him: "He seemed to me to have real interior beauty, which shone through him, steadily and quietly. It was always a delight to be with him. His fine humanity, his scholarship and his gentle courtesy made of his friendship one of the true assets of my life."

Arunachalam has been rightly called the Father of the Ceylon University Movement. A finished product of University culture himself, he realised the immeasurable good that a university confers on youth and saw no reason why such good should be denied to our youth. The absence of a university, he felt, was the gravest impediment to national progress and he addressed himself to the task of discovering a remedy. In one of his public speeches he said, "I have ever since felt that the greatest advantage of a University is not the book-knowledge you acquire there, but the breathing of the atmosphere of high culture and high ideals, the contact of mind with mind, the clash of opinions by association and discussion with teachers and fellow-students and the stimulus thus given to intellectual and spiritual growth. Who can estimate the loss we have suffered here in Ceylon by the lack of such a fountain of life? This feeling was the main

reason why some of us, Dr. H. M. Fernando, Mr. James Peiris and others started some years ago the Ceylon University Association."

This Association was founded in 1906 with Arunachalam as President, and from that time onwards the idea of establishing a University for Ceylon engrossed him. He and his brother Ramanathan carried on a strenuous and sustained agitation, ably supported by their cousin Ananda Coomaraswamy, Marcus Fernando and James Peiris. Governor Sir Henry McCallum, a man of liberal sympathies, gave his benediction to the movement and the outcome was the founding of the Ceylon University College in 1921, designed to be the nucleus of the future University.

Arunachalam, like his brother Ramanathan, had some very original and clear-cut views on the scope and nature of university education. While the generality of the country's intellectuals clamoured for a university founded on strictly Western lines, giving all prominence to Western learning and thought, he and his brother Ramanathan pleaded vehemently for a university with a distinctively national bias, giving special importance to the national languages, cultures, religions and fine arts, while at the same time enriching itself with all that was best and noblest in Western learning and the study of the natural and social sciences.

He was profoundly dissatisfied with the prevailing system of education in so far as it relegated to the background the language and literature, the history and traditions, the arts and the crafts of the country, while enthroning those of the West. Writing about education in Ceylon, he said, "It certainly does not develop the qualities I have just mentioned. How can it, with the mother tongue and the national history neglected in our schools, and our boys and girls growing up ignorant of the ideals, traditions and achievements of their race and by

dwelling exclusively on the achievements of others, hypnotized into self-depreciation and a sense of inferiority? No greater disaster can overtake a people. Mistral and his inspired brother-poets of Provence recognised that the soul and essence of a people lie in their language."

On 8th July, 1900, Arunachalam had submitted his views to the Director of Public Instruction in a memorandum wherein he stated that the fundamental flaw in our system of education was that English was employed as the medium of instruction. In a real sense he was the father of the Swabasha media in education, since in the early years of the century, when our educationists and the people as well, gloried in the use of the English medium and even banned the use of the mother tongue in schools and colleges, he alone of all men at this period sounded a note of warning and pleaded vehemently for their use as the media of instruction at all levels. He pointedly asked the Director, to "think what it would be in England if, say, German was made the medium of instruction in the elementary schools and English was entirely excluded. And German is more akin to English and less difficult to an English child than English is to a Sinhalese or a Tamil." He also urged the introduction in the curriculum of the history and the geography of Ceylon in the place of English history and geography. In January 1906, he delivered a public lecture on Ceylon History under the presidency of Governor Sir Henry Blake, in which he deplored the prevailing "profound ignorance of the history of our motherland", one of "the oldest, most interesting and fascinating histories in the world". An expanded version of this lecture was published under the title "Sketches of Ceylon History", which enjoyed a wide circulation and helped to stimulate much interest in the subject in schools and among the general public.

Arunachalam's view of what the aim of the Ceylon University should be was expressed by him thus: "It will be a chief aim of the Ceylon University, while making efficient provision for the study of English and the assimilation of Western culture, to take care that our youth do not grow up strangers to their mother tongue and to their past history and traditions. Here they will learn to use their mother tongue with accuracy and ease, to appropriate the beauties of their classical languages and literatures, to realise that they are inheritors of a great past stretching back twenty four centuries and to make themselves worthy of their inheritance. The vernacular literature of the day will then be rescued from its pedantry and triviality and be made a worthy vehicle for the dissemination of what is best in Western and Eastern culture and of the thoughts, hopes and aspirations of our best men and women. Then at last the masses of our people will be really influenced for the better by Western civilisation which seems otherwise likely to leave no more enduring mark than the addition of some European customs in our social life." The University, he maintained, should primarily be an instrument of national culture.

The intellectual and moral advantages of a University are inestimable. In this connection he said, "The University will bring together in one place under the personal influence of Professors of high attainments and culture the best youths in the country. Who that has studied at a European University such as Oxford or Cambridge, Berlin or Paris, Bonn or Heidelberg, does not know how the character and example of the Professors,—true high priests at the shrine of learning—and the clash of opinion caused by association and discussion with teachers and fellow students, stimulate intellectual life and create an atmosphere of culture and loyalty to high ideals? This is

the most valuable result of University life, not the learning of books or the passing of Examinations. Who can estimate the loss we have suffered for want of such a fountain of intellectual and moral life?... The University will be a powerful instrument for forming character, for giving us men and women armed with reason and self-control, braced by knowledge, clothed with steadfastness and courage and inspired by public spirit and public virtue. The standard of ability, character and general efficiency will be raised throughout the public service and in every profession, the natural resources of our Island will be developed and its prosperity increased and made secure."

The Obituary Address of Professor R. Marrs, first Principal of the University College to the undergraduates the day after Arunachalam's death throws a flood of light on this facet of Arunachalam's work. He said, "Gentlemen, I have asked you to assemble here at this hour as a mark of respect to the memory of one who was in a real sense the Father of the University Project in Ceylon. Much has been written already of his varied distinction and activities as servant of the Government, Politician, Scholar, Savant, Educationist, and Social Reformer. Little or nothing has been said of that side of his activities which to those who were in close touch with him was the inspiration of his latter days, the side which concerns you and me as members of an institution so dear to his heart, the Ceylon University College. I may remind you that Sir Arunachalam presided over the public meeting which was called to consider the question of the establishment of a University in Ceylon, on the 19th January, 1906, and I should like to quote to you the concluding words of his address at that meeting, a meeting which led to the formation of the Ceylon University Association. 'In seeking, therefore, to form a Ceylon University Association, we are not only following precedent but

doing an indispensable work. We do not commit ourselves to the form the University is to take, to the details of its organization as to teaching, examination, etc. Those are matters that must be developed later, and on which at present there cannot but be differences of opinion. Meanwhile, whatever scheme for higher education may be now before the public, whether in connection with Cambridge, London or Madras, may be pursued without let or restraint. These schemes, it is generally felt, are transitional and require modification to suit our special needs. The aim of our Association will be to make this period of transition not long or fruitless, and to strive for the establishment of a University which will be the Crown of a well-ordered series of elementary and secondary schools and colleges, which will systematize and concentrate the energies now dissipated in various institutions for general and professional education, and which will render it impossible for our schools and colleges to go on in a drowsy and impotent routine, but will raise the culture of our people ever higher and higher by their means.'

'From that day to the day of his decease, Sir Arunachalam has pursued his object, to use his own words, 'without let or restraint', undeterred by the doubts of men without vision or the delay to which an untried project must, I suppose, always be subjected by conservers of tradition. No man in this Island has pressed his advocacy of the University with so clear a conception of its ultimate significance to the political progress of this country or with such single-minded and forceful enthusiasm. The outward evidence of his interest we at the College know. There is first and foremost his great gift of the Padmanabha Library whose value has in my opinion not yet been sufficiently realised. There is his bequest of the Sir Coomaraswamy Science Prize and his generous donations to the Union Hostel. But these are as nothing



Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam

compared with the gift of time, energy and thought to the affairs of the College not only as a member of the College Council and the Academic Committee but as one who was ever ready to extend help and advice to those on whom has fallen the task of guiding the destinies of the College and preparing the foundations of the University of Ceylon.

"Here I speak with fuller knowledge than others. From the time I landed in this country which he loved and for whose good—all must agree, whatever their political opinions—he strove throughout, I have been in the closest contact with him and can assure you that he gave of his best in will and thought and time to the furtherance of our projects. When progress seemed impossible, it was he who confounded the pessimists and inspired us to fresh efforts. It is not easy for me, as Principal of the College, to measure the debt of gratitude which I owe to his courtesy, encouragement and support or to express the deep sorrow and sense of personal loss which I felt when I read of his death.

"Gentlemen, you have in him who has just left us an example and an inspiration. Whatever the difference between him and others in religion or politics, he is an example of certain human qualities which lie at the root of all greatness and which you will do well to emulate in your adult lives. Of these, I would single out moral courage, independent judgement and single-minded pursuit of the ideal. He fought the good fight for his ideal in the spirit of the poet's admonition to his soul:

'Heart, Heart, still vexed with troubles past the curing,
Up and be doing, steel thyself and stay,
Mid thronging foemen to the last enduring,
Steadfast amid the forefront of the fray.'

His proximate ideal was the University. But his ultimate ideal was the ideal of all of us, to raise the natural tone of his countrymen by turning out,

as generation succeeds generation, ever increasing numbers of true men, men of thought and men of action, who think and act according to the highest standards of human civilization."

Great and of enduring value as were Arunachalam's achievements in many fields of national activity, greater far and more enduring were his achievements in the domain of national freedom and self-rule for his motherland. Like all great nationalists and liberators of mankind, he had in early life discerned the truth, the cardinal, the elemental truth that national freedom is a people's prime need, the first of national priorities, its sole basis and warrant of existence. Fortified by that belief, rooted in that conviction, in his retirement he flung himself whole and entire into the freedom struggle and galvanized the nation into vigorous and spirited action, which accelerated, as never before, the pace of constitutional reform and the achievement of democratic freedom and national sovereignty. He was a meteor that set the whole firmament ablaze with an unwonted radiance, a leader who sounded his trumpet-call and rallied the nation round him, drew up a many-sided programme of national regeneration, in the forefront of which he placed national freedom and sovereignty and worked for it with an intrepidity, a tenacity and single-minded dedication that inevitably and irresistibly led up to a rapid succession of constitutional reforms which culminated before long in self-rule. An admirer though he was of Western culture and institutions, and counted many eminent Westerners among his choicest friends, none chafed more than he under the trammels of Western domination, as none others, with the possible exception of his brother Ramanathan, had pondered longer or deeper on the complex problems of politics and statecraft. Few realised more than he the poignant truth, that no greater calamity can over befall a people than subjection to alien

rule or that for a people, political freedom is the parent and precursor of every other freedom known to man or that a people's supreme efforts can be directed to no higher or worthier end than the achievement and enjoyment of that freedom.

Nothing is farther from the truth than the belief commonly held by many that Arunachalam's passion for political freedom was a development of his later life. It was rather an inherited faculty. It asserted itself while yet he was an undergraduate at Cambridge in his late teens, and as the years rolled by, it burned within him like a scorching flame that could not by any means be quenched. Happily for him there was another circumstance that served to intensify that passion; his days at Cambridge were a period of great political and social ferment and upheaval in Europe, where subject peoples were making heroic efforts to shake off foreign yokes and princely despotisms, when the Irishman's bid for national freedom rocked British politics and split the nation into two warring camps. And Cambridge dons were not slow to catch the infection and in turn transmit it to the youth in their charge. Nor was the eager and susceptible undergraduate slow to catch the contagion. Arunachalam returned home with a mind too full of those novel and subversive thoughts to remain content with the humdrum, routine work of a bureaucrat.

It was his good fortune at this early period of his life to attract the notice of William Digby, a great Englishman and friend of subject peoples, then in the service of the *Ceylon Observer*. The two men of like minds, though of various callings, met frequently and held intimate discourse on matters political and libertarian. And there emanated from the pen of the Englishman a historic contribution to the *Calcutta Review* entitled: "An Oriental Colony Ripe for Self-Government," wherein he made a reasoned and forceful plea for the

introduction of self-governing institutions into Ceylon. Finding little response either from the Government or from the people, Digby left the Island in sheer frustration and joined the *Madras Times* where he hoped to find a freer or a more congenial atmosphere. He invited Arunachalam to work with him in India. Writing to him in 1878, he said, "I wish with all my heart you were in India and shall not forget your longing for a larger sphere and a wider field than you occupy now. You will never make full use of your brilliant qualities of head and heart until you brave the obstacles that confound you and cease to lead the exclusive life you do now. We don't find your counterpart here".

For a time Arunachalam interested himself in Indian affairs and did not mince words in his denunciation of British rule. Writing to Carpenter, he said, "It is impossible to see and not to express one's opinion on the horrible injustice perpetrated by the English in and out of India towards the people. We cannot be expected to be always singing Hallelujahs in praise of English rule." He even took up the cudgels in defence of the great Indian patriot and freedom-fighter Gangadhar Tilak, when he was incarcerated for his political activities, and referred to the "priceless services" of the "saintly Gandhi, the noblest personality in the public life of India."

In 1893, he wrote to Digby requesting him to interview the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Ripon, who was known to Digby, and urge on him "the need for an immediate extension of local self-Government in Ceylon." In 1902, Arunachalam had discussions with the editor of the *Ceylon Observer* on the subject of reforms; this resulted in his writing a letter himself for publication in the *Observer* on 7th June, 1902 requesting the editor to use his influence to secure the reform of the Constitution as a Coronation gift to

Ceylon, the occasion being the crowning of King Edward VII. Arunachalam followed this letter with another wherein he elaborated his arguments. It is impossible to do sufficient justice within the compass of a brief sketch to all that Arunachalam did while yet in the Government service and subject to its disciplinary regulations, to advance the cause of national freedom and sovereignty. The Government was not slow to sense what he was about nor was it slow to retaliate. It blocked his path to high preferment in its service, to which his merits entitled him. But Arunachalam was not to be overawed by these set-backs, for he belonged to that select band of men with whom public good outweighed private advantage.

In retirement he launched an Island-wide crusade for national freedom, made freedom the burning question of the day, roped in the best talents of the age, imparted to the movement a new energy and a new dynamism, which led up to a quick succession of constitutional reforms.

His first speech addressed to the Ceylon National Association on 2nd April, 1917, was entitled: "Our Political Needs." Contemporary opinion acclaimed it a classic on the subject and the Bible of the freedom-fighters. It was a bold and forthright statement of the manifold disabilities, that confound a subject people, a catalogue of the multitudinous wrongs and injustices a foreign ruler heaps on the ruled, an impassioned appeal to the ruling power for justice and fair-play and a trumpet-call to the nation for prompt and vigorous action. Inter alia, he said, "The inherent evils of a Crown Colony administration remain. We are deprived of all power and responsibility, our powers and capacities are dwarfed and stunted, we live in an atmosphere of inferiority, and we can never rise to the full height to which our manhood is capable of rising. We have hypnotized ourselves into thinking that we are weak and inferior...

"We are thus practically under a benevolent despotism wielded by a Governor who is responsible only to Downing Street; and he exercises his powers through a bureaucracy predominantly European...

"Colombo, one of the world's greatest ports, is ill-provided with means to help ships in distress and has seen large steamers sink in sight of her harbour. The city is a nest of foul slums and misery, and the abode of plague and tuberculosis. Malaria, which modern science has shown can be mastered, claims its victims throughout the Island by tens of thousands. The conditions of labour are a scandal. While every civilized state is grappling boldly with drink, and putting it down, here its clutch is growing tighter...

"We are exploited by European nations, and now also by Japan and America. We have become their milch-cow. Much of our wealth goes abroad. What is left imparts an air of prosperity to the professional and commercial classes. The real makers of the country's wealth—the peasant and the labourer—are steeped in poverty...

"The Legislative Council, as it is at present constituted, hardly answers a useful purpose. It provides, no doubt, seats of honour to a few Unofficials and an area for their eloquence or for their silence. But they are little more than advisory members, and their presence in the Council serves to conceal the autocracy under which we live...

"The swaddling-clothes of a Crown Colony administration are strangling us. They have begun even to disturb the equanimity of our European fellow subjects. None are safe until all are safe...

"There has been no real attempt to train the people in self-government.....

"We ask to be in our own country what other self-respecting people are in theirs—self-governing, strong, respected at home and abroad; and we ask for the grant at once of a definite measure of progressive advance towards that goal. Ceylon is no pauper begging for alms. She is claiming her heritage."

His words of exhortation were coupled with words of caution and wisdom. To a generation which was repudiating all spiritual and moral values and sinking deeper and deeper in the mire of sensualism and selfish materialism, he proclaimed the contrary gospel that life, whether of individuals or nations, finds fulfilment in service and self-denial, that the governance of human society is essentially and fundamentally a spiritual and moral activity, and that whoever transgress that creed come to grief as surely as the night follows the day. In a famous "Message to the Country" which appeared in the very first issue of the *Ceylon Daily News* published on 3rd January, 1918, he declared: "In our zeal for political reform, we must be on our guard against making it an end. We seek it not to win rights but to fulfil duties—duties to ourselves and our country... People like individuals have each a divinely appointed end, a distinct task to perform... I look to our youth to spiritualise public life and I believe they will do it. They will each seek his own well-being in the well-being of all, will identify his own life with the life of all, and his own interest with the interest of all. They will lay at the feet of our dear Motherland the love-offerings of passionate service. They will work in unity that, in the words of Dante, all the intellectual and spiritual forces diffused among men may obtain the highest possible development in the sphere of thought and action. With our youth inspired by such ideals, I look to see our country rise with renewed splendour paling the glory of Parakramabahu the Great and be a beacon-light to all lands."

Sir James Peiris, referring to Arunachalam's epoch-making Address on "Our Political Needs" said: "Although there were several agitators for

political reform in Ceylon from time to time, the people woke to the necessity of persistent and organized agitation only after Sir P. Arunachalam delivered his address on 'Our Political Needs'..... I would ask especially those young men who are studying politics to read that lecture and cognate publications of Sir P. Arunachalam and treat them as a sort of political Bible."

The words of D. R. Wijewardene on the occasion of Ceylon's attainment of Independence in 1948 are worth recalling: "In those days, the national consciousness was dormant and there was nothing in the spirit of the times to stir it to life and activity. That was to come later, when largely as a result of Sir P. Arunachalam's work, the fire of the national soul was quickened. When he delivered himself of that epoch-making address on 'Our Political Needs' at the Masonic Hall, that leader of imperishable memory set in motion influences that were to change the history of his beloved country. The immediate outcome of that meeting was the formation of the Reform League. The National Association was anterior to the League and they held a joint national conference which gave birth to the Ceylon National Congress. It was then that the national movement which has brought Ceylon to the threshold of Independence received its stimulus; public opinion began to speak for the first time with a firm tone."

In another place Wijewardene called that speech an epoch-making address and added that "it was both a starting-point and a blue-print for the important constitutional changes which followed, and was listened to by a large audience at the Victoria Masonic Hall."

Action followed close on the heels of words and the Ceylon Reform League sprang into existence with Arunachalam at the helm. A loyal and devoted band of forward-looking, freedom-loving youth rallied round him, and the League office

hummed with incessant and vigorous activity, the leader toiling at his desk every day for eight to ten hours. Memorials, one behind the other, drawn by the leader himself with superb skill and mastery of detail, poured into Whitehall; the Secretary of State for the Colonies was interviewed, Members of Parliament, many of whom were his friends from his Cambridge days, were prevailed upon to intercede; and everything humanly possible was done to liberate the country from the thraldom of alien domination. His memorial entitled: "The Case for Constitutional Reform in Ceylon", submitted to the Imperial Parliament was a remarkable document, wherein he made out an unanswerable case for Home Rule. At his request the Marquis of Crewe, his good friend and former Secretary of State for the Colonies, exercised his influence with Lord Milner, who was at the time Secretary of State. Even Arunachalam's son, Padmanabha, then in England, was directed to meet Lord Milner as often as necessary and furnish him with whatever information he might require.

Arunachalam's appeal for action was directed not merely to the educated elite but more to the common man. He it was who first made the freedom movement a truly national one, who first realised and acted upon the truth that any movement, to gain strength and vitality, must be popular and broad-based, must sink deep into the national consciousness. In an age in which political meetings were rare, when questions of government and national freedom were regarded as mysteries appertaining to a few political families and to well-born civil servants, the League lecturers discussed politics, criticised the administration, scrutinized the year's budget, and held up national freedom as the sole solvent of national ills, before vast audiences of merchants and clerks, artisans and farm-labourers. The League invented modern techniques of political education to canvass and

consolidate national support and coerce the alien ruler into submission to the national will. Addressing the Sinhalese Conference convened by him and F. R. Senanayake on September 20th, 1919, he said, "We have met here today to organize a movement in the Sinhalese Districts of the Island (a movement for the Tamil Districts will follow) to form People's Associations throughout the Island for political, social and economic improvement... We wish to reach the great masses of the people. They have shown in the Temperance Campaign of the last few years an amount of enthusiasm, energy and public spirit which has not been equalled by the English-educated classes. We wish to revive in the people the interest they took of old in matters of public concern and to recover for them the power to shape and manage their affairs.

"There is no need for you to be treated as children. It is not as if the Sinhalese and the Tamils were a race of ignorant savages to whom the first glimpses of civilization came with the arrival of the Portuguese, the Dutch or the British. Your civilization goes back at least 2000 years.

"Long before the modern great nations of the West emerged from barbarism or even came into existence, you had a well-organized social and political life. You had a beautiful literature, highly-developed arts, great irrigation works and religious edifices that vie with the greatest in the world, an army and navy, and everything that constitutes a civilisation of a high order."

What pride of race and religion, of culture and antiquity pulsates within him, what passion for freedom vibrates in him, what patriotic fire burns through the marrow of his being!

To render the movement truly national and all-embracing, to bring the diverse and discordant political forces and factions of the country into focus, to rally them round one common banner, and enable them to speak with one voice, he

conceived the idea of merging the principal political organs in the country—the Ceylon Reform League, the Ceylon National Association and the Jaffna Association—into a single national organization and naming it the Ceylon National Congress. But how was this consummation so devoutly to be wished, to be brought about? Sinhalese leaders had made an impossible demand in asking for territorial representation as the grand cure for the country's political and social maladies. The Tamil leaders would have none of it, for they knew they would be completely engulfed by it. Matters had come to a deadlock. A Gordian knot had been tied. Unless a remedy were found and the leaders of the two peoples brought together under a common roof and an agreed programme of Reform wrung from them, the Imperial government at Whitehall would not come to terms. If there was one man who could accomplish that miracle, it was Arunachalam. By reason of his intellectual and moral stature, by his lifelong advocacy of the cause of national freedom and sovereignty, by his untiring labours in behalf of the under-dog, he exercised a peculiar fascination on the minds and imaginations not merely of the elite of the country but of common men. Sinhalese leaders knew that and promptly set to work. To allay the fears of the Tamil leaders, to reassure them, James Peiris and E. J. Samarawickreme addressed the following letter to Arunachalam:

Ceylon Reform League
12, De Soysa Buildings,
Slave Island,
Colombo.
7th December, 1918.

Dear Sir Ponnambalam,

With reference to the suggestion of Mr. Sabapathy that the words "on the basis of a territorial electorate" be omitted from the Resolution No: 4, we shall be obliged if you will point out to him

that their omission will seriously affect our case for reform as a whole. We beg to remind him of all that the promoters of the Reform Movement *have said of the baneful effect of the present system of racial representation.*

We have made the territorial electorate a fundamental part of our demands. The omission of the words especially after the publication of the draft resolutions will be construed as a surrender of an important principle.

It must be borne in mind that the resolutions contain only the essential principles which we desire to assert. They do not constitute a complete scheme, and while we desire to avoid the introduction of details into the resolutions, we are anxious to do all that could be done to secure as large a representation as possible to the Tamils, when exceptional provisions consistent with the principles referred to come to be considered.

As Presidents of the Ceylon National Association and the Ceylon Reform League, we pledge ourselves to accept any scheme, which the Jaffna Association may put forward as long as it is not inconsistent with the various principles contained in the resolutions. We feel sure that nothing obviously unreasonable will be insisted on by the Jaffna Association. *We are prepared to pledge ourselves to actively support a provision for the reservation of a seat to the Tamils in the Western Province so long as the electorate remains territorial.*

We suggest that the resolution should be accepted by the Jaffna Association without any alteration and that they should leave it to us to negotiate with the Indians, Europeans, and Burghers on the subject of special representation for them.

Yours sincerely,
(Sgd) James Peiris,
President, Ceylon National Association.
(Sgd.) E. J. Samarawickreme,
President, Ceylon Reform League.

It was on the strength of this pledge that Arunachalam pressurized the leaders of the Jaffna Association into coming within the Congress fold and making common cause with the Sinhalese leaders. On the same day he wrote to the chief spokesman for the Tamils of Jaffna, the Hon. Mr. A. Sabapathy, as follows:

Ponklar,
Horton Place,
Colombo.
7th December, 1918.

Hon. Mr. A. Sabapathy,
Jaffna.
Dear Sir,

Referring to your conversation with me of Thursday afternoon, I enclose a letter from Messrs. James Peiris and E. J. Samarawickreme, Presidents of the Ceylon National Association and the Ceylon Reform League respectively, giving assurances which should satisfy your Association as to the bona fide desire of the Sinhalese leaders to do all that can be done to secure as large a representation as possible to the Tamils, consistent with the principles of the resolutions adopted by the Committee with the concurrence of delegates from Provincial Associations.

The assurance means that you have three seats for the Northern Province and two for the Eastern Province (or more if you can get it), and that there will be one seat reserved for a Tamil Member in the Western Province on the basis of the Territorial Electorate, in addition to the chances of Tamils in other Provinces and in the Colombo Municipality. No doubt, also, the Government will nominate a Tamil to represent the Indian Tamils. Our Sinhalese friends are also willing to support the claim for a Mohammedan Member in the Western Province on the same footing, should the Mohammedans make such a claim. The Conference is deliberately restricted to essential

principles only, there being a conflict of opinion among the Sinhalese themselves on matters of details. Such details should be hereafter submitted to the Government by the various interested parties.

I trust that nothing will now stand in the way of a large number of delegates from Jaffna (including yourself and Sir A. Kanagasabai) from attending the Conference and making common cause with the rest of the Island. I understand that the Governor is coming to Jaffna on the 15th. You and Sir A. Kanagasabai could return by the evening train on the 14th or perhaps on the 13th by which time we hope to pass at least half the resolutions.

Yours very truly,
(Sgd. P. Arunachalam)

With Arunachalam playing the honest broker, the deal was put through. No man of less intellectual or moral calibre could have accomplished the miracle of bringing the two divergent groups into the Congress fold or prevailing on them to subscribe to a common programme of political action. The upshot of it all was the birth of the Ceylon National Congress on 11th December, 1919. Arunachalam was acclaimed its Father and first President. Professor K. M. de Silva writes: "To Arunachalam, the inauguration of the Ceylon National Congress was 'the fulfilment of dreams cherished from the time he was an undergraduate at Cambridge'. It was also the culmination of a purposeful campaign conducted by him, if not single-handed, at most with very little support from the bulk of the leadership of the constitutionalist elite, Sinhalese and Tamil alike. The task of overcoming the political myopia of his colleagues in the constitutionalist leadership, of reconciling the conflicting claims of advocates of territorial representation and those who stood in defence of sectional interests, would have been beyond the capacity of anyone who did not have Arunachalam's personal prestige and political vision... The *Ceylon Daily*

News claimed in an editorial... that the birth of the Congress marks 'the first great advance in the growth of democratic institutions in Ceylon. The Congress takes up the position of the only accredited mouthpiece of all classes. Those who have worked to bring it into existence have reason to be proud of their achievement. The first President of the Congress has been the great pioneer'."

Mr. C. E. Corea makes the following reference to Arunachalam's part in the founding of the Congress, in his Presidential Address to the Congress in December, 1924: "In later years, in this centre of energy (Colombo) a great man possessed of a keen and observant eye looked and saw in the distance the glow of the scattered sparks of individual enthusiasms, smouldering in isolation towards extinguishment, and the great man arose and made haste, and he went forth and gathered up those farflung embers, energised them with his own burning patriotism and brought them together in one great life-giving furnace of national endeavour, the crucible in which was shaped and formed the Ceylon National Congress. The Congress is the off-spring of the late Sir Ponnambalam's noble enthusiasm. And the Congress had dutifully and in love and affection acknowledged him 'Father'."

Arunachalam was all his life a protagonist of territorial representation as opposed to communal. In his Presidential Address to the All-Ceylon Reform Conference held on 13-12-1918, he said, "I trust special representation for the minorities is only a temporary expedient and that the working of the new system will convince the minorities that it is to the general interest of the whole Island as of themselves that special representation should in the end give way to one common electorate for the whole Island."

Heaven knows by what process of reasoning, by what canons of constitutional law and practice this scion of an ancient house, this fine flower of

Cambridge culture, this bright ornament of the Public Service and, above all, this wise counsellor in the great councils of State arrived at the startling conclusion, that human nature being what it is, unitary mathematical democracy, at best an instrument of government for a homogeneous society, could sustain the destinies of a multi-racial, multi-lingual and in many ways a disparate society thrown together by the historic accident of foreign conquest and subjugation.

Arunachalam was, at this eventful period of his history, a race-horse in blinkers, which sees only the winning-post and naught else. In his obsession for national freedom, his single-minded resolve to end foreign domination for all time, he suffered himself to be blinded to all things else, to truths that could not have escaped the ken of a First Form school-boy. Not that he was so utterly naive, so abjectly obtuse, so completely ignorant of the inner workings of the human mind and heart, so hopelessly out of joint with the changing trends of the times as not to be alive to the perils and pit-falls inherent in a territorially elected unitary democracy, but that his over-sanguine temperament, his unshakable faith in man's good sense, in man's fundamental honesty and reasonableness led him to believe that, once the foreigner had quitted our shores, all domestic differences and squabbles could be settled over a conference table.

Even as the minor luminaries in the firmament pale before the all-pervading splendour of the sun, so do the minor passions in man, his fears and anxieties, his doubts and uncertainties pale before one master-passion, one over-riding purpose. Arunachalam's master-passion was the expulsion of the foreigner from the realm and the resurrection of national sovereignty entombed during four centuries of Western domination. Before it, all his concern for the good governance of the country after the

foreigner had quitted, all his zeal for even-handed justice to all the constituent partners in his commonwealth paled into insignificance. Once strike Cæsar dead, and Rome will be a land fit for angels. The deed was done, but Rome, far from being the abode of angels, became a cockpit of warring peoples. He looked around and to his great horror and anguish, saw before him a yawning gulf ever widening, its headlands ever receding. The two major communities of the Island, the Sinhalese and the Tamils, who had under his leadership worked shoulder to shoulder for the achievement of national freedom, had, when freedom was in sight, come to the parting of the ways. It now dawned on him that he had reckoned without the host, that he had been taken for a cosy ride. He had all his life bargained for a free and united Lanka, but alas saw a free and divided one. He had toiled indefatigably all his life for the creation of a national state in which all the elements of its population would get an even deal, enjoy equal rights and liberties, share equitably the fruits of their common motherland and live in mutual amity, goodwill and fellowship. He had set out to fashion a deity, but alas, there stood before him a hideous monster, a veritable demon. He felt as did Silas Marner, the mammon-worshipping weaver of Raveloe, when one fine morning he woke up to find that all the gold he had hoarded and fondled over a lifetime of endless toil had vanished. Arunachalam's hour of victory was his hour of defeat; his hour of glory was his hour of repulse, his hour of triumph was his hour of humiliation. Such alas are the curious paradoxes of history, such the strange ironies of human destiny.

Arunachalam believed in the unity and brotherhood of man, in the fellowship of peoples and nations, in the integration of all racial, religious and linguistic groups into one organic whole. He believed with a faith that may well be called

apostolic, that the Sinhalese, the Tamils and every other people who have made this Island their common home could co-exist as equal partners in a common polity, unhampered by any trace or taint of racism, that in Ceylon's green and pleasant land, every people would get a square deal, pull its legitimate weight, live a free, full, untrammelled life, believed that the two principal races were but the two eyes of Mother Lanka that together see the same object. He was an incorrigible cosmopolitan, while remaining a hard-grained nationalist. He was at home in any human society and demonstrated to us in his own life and person that loyaly to world-society is not incompatible with loyalty to one's own race and tradition. The ultimate end and aim of all his labours was plain and unmistakable, the unification of the diverse peoples and races of the Island into one compact and coherent whole, binding them all together in one common loyalty, one common patriotism, while each remained true and loyal to its own heritage and tradition. A high and rarefied soul that he eminently was, living habitually in the regions above, the regions of high thought and noble endeavour and looking down on the plains below, he could hardly discern the parochial passions and prejudices, the jealousies and hatreds that have from the beginnings of time, disfigured and deformed God's world, His noble handiwork, into an arena of selfish and warring factions. Therein lay his fatal flaw, the supreme tragedy of his great life. Despite all that was high, noble and unselfish in purpose, endeavour and achievement, he lost his hold on reality and could not escape the chagrin, the disappointment and disillusionment that have through the ages been the portion of men whose idealism has out-run their hold on reality.

The reason is not far to seek. Through all his long and illustrious career, his thoughts and actions ran along national lines, while those of

some majority leaders ran consistently and resolutely along racial and communal lines. Arunachalam was one of the staunchest champions of territorial representation, while Ramanathan who had himself dedicated the best part of his life to the self-same ideology, had perforce to end up as a convinced and uncompromising advocate of communal representation.

With Arunachalam at the helm, the ship of freedom had steered clear of the many shoals and rocks that beset its path and was now in safe waters. The land was already in sight and to reach the port, all that was necessary was a little time and patience. A substantial measure of reform was granted coupled with a promise of more to follow at no distant future. The Official majority in the legislature which from the beginnings of British rule had held oppressive sway for well nigh a century had now been superseded by the Unofficial majority; henceforth, the Unofficials were to preponderate and predominate in the councils of State; the century-old practice of the Governor nominating the members of the legislature was virtually replaced by the principle of popular election; communal representation which, from the inception of British rule, had been the sole safeguard of minority rights but now denounced as the parent and precursor of all national ills, was dethroned and in its place, was enthroned territorial representation, widely canvassed by majority leaders as the sure prelude to the emergence of a united and well-integrated Ceylonese nation free of all taint of racialism or communalism; the Governor who had, hitherto, presided over the deliberations of the legislature had now to give place to an elected member. The Governor's government was virtually ended for all time. The new Constitution had in it the germ, the pith and marrow of responsible government. The people had secured for all time the whip-hand of power; the Congress had become

the chief spokesman of the nation and the most formidable political force in the country. And now the moment was not inopportune for the old pilot to be safely dispensed with; and dispensed with, he was, with little ceremony and less compunction.

The Congress disowned him. It voted him down from the office of President and voted up James Peiris. He took it in good part and on the occasion paid his successor one of the most glittering tributes ever paid by man to man. He said, "There has been no public movement, which has not benefited by his ripe culture, trained and sober judgement, his high character and public spirit. His opinions are formed with deliberation; they are based on reason and principle and guided by zeal for the public welfare and loyal attachment to the Throne. Everybody feels that he has nothing up his sleeve; he is proof against official blandishments and knows not how to trim his sails to every wind. No wonder that he enjoys the unstinted confidence of the people of Ceylon without difference of race or creed and even of the Government. It is however not very creditable to the Government that a man such as he, who would be an honour to any legislative assembly in the world and an acquisition to any Cabinet, has not been utilized all these years in the service of the Crown or even in the Legislative Council."

The Constitution of 1921 of which Arunachalam was the principal architect marked, as has been observed, a striking departure from the traditional pattern of Colonial rule and constituted a spectacular advance on the road to Independence. It set up a legislature comprising 37 members, of whom 16 were to be elected on a territorial franchise. One of these electoral seats was allocated to the city of Colombo. The elections were duly announced and all discerning eyes were pitched upon Arunachalam as the candidate most worthy of the

metropolis. Moreover, there was hardly any other Seat where he could have a comparable chance in view of the residential qualification. stipulated by the Constitution. But some influential majority leaders, notably the Senanayake brothers, thought otherwise. F. R. Senanayake branded him "an egoist who had an exaggerated notion of his importance and an extremist in politics." They put forward James Peiris, who readily announced his candidature, despite the fact that he could have passed muster in many other constituencies, especially the Low-Country Products Association of which he was then President. Arunachalam gracefully withdrew. Nor was he in the smallest degree perturbed over it, inasmuch as he had for many long and memorable years sat in both the Legislative and Executive Councils and served his country with uncommon distinction.

But the bee that stung him most was this. In the days of his hectic struggle for reforms, Sinhalese leaders, notably Sir James Peiris, President of the Ceylon National Association and E. J. Samarawickreme, President of the Ceylon Reform League, had given him certain solemn and specific pledges, one of which was that they would support the demand for a Tamil Seat for the city of Colombo; and he had taken it for granted. But in the hour of victory, Sinhalese leaders with the exception of C. E. Corea and his brother Victor S. Corea, repudiated the pledge and would have none of it. James Peiris repudiated the pledge on the good ground that he gave the pledge as President of the Ceylon National Association and now that he was President of the Ceylon National Congress, he was no longer bound by it, while H J. C. Pereira took his stand on the debatable ground that the new leadership was not bound to honour the commitments of aforetime leaders. He protested: "It may be that for political reasons, individual members with perfectly honest intensions, with the idea

of maintaining unity, have entered into certain compromises and bargains with individuals of the North; the Congress knows nothing of all this." Whatever the ground, the pledge was repudiated. Nay, they went further; finding their objections lodged with the Governor unavailing, they went on a crusade to Whitehall to protest against its grant. They went yet further. They directed the Sinhalese electorates to nominate only Sinhalese candidates for election. They would not halt at that; they objected to the provision of any safeguards for the Tamils on the good ground that the Tamils, like the Sinhalese and unlike any other people of the Island, were in themselves a majority community, and as such had reason neither to be classed with the minorities nor to stand in need of any safeguards In saying so, Sinhalese leaders gave utterance to a solemn and stupendous truth, long since forgotten, that the Tamils, far from being a minority, have from remote ages been and continue to be a full-blooded majority in their ancient homelands, where their own kings and potentates had held unquestioned sway. It was when the evil genius of a foreign conqueror subdued the whole Island with its separate and sovereign peoples, pulled down age-old national frontiers and for no other reason than his own "supervisory convenience" made the Island a single political and administrative unit, that the Tamils became a minority in the conglomerate mass of the Island's population.

Nor could the Tamils look for asylum or succour from the ruling power, inasmuch as they had through the decades been the pioneers and forerunners of the freedom struggle, the focus and spearhead of the national resistance, the fire-brands that set the country ablaze with an unwonted passion for national sovereignty. Their foul exposures of the wrongs and injustices, the failures and shortcomings of British rule, their fulminations

against foreign rule in general, had rudely shaken the fabric of British prestige and supremacy. No wonder, the Tamils had at this hour none to befriend them. No wonder, the Brtish could with no compunction whatsoever, see these minority freedom-fighters consigned to the limbo of political extinction.

C. E. Corea in his Presidential Address to the Congress made a mild reference to this breach between the majority and the minority leaders. He said, "It is true that, later, an estrangement occurred over a most trifling cause and a misunderstanding in which, I must say at the risk of your displeasure, we were not wholly without blame. At any rate, I have it on sure information that on one or two occasions, prominent members of Congress slighted him (Arunachalam) and failed to accord to him the respect and deference they owed him. On account of the undutifulness of these few, the Congress as a whole stands under the reproach of base ingratitude." E. T. de Silva ruefully remarked, "I regret the insinuations made against Sir P. Arunachalam. Twelve months ago, when the Mahajana Saba was started, the people acclaimed him their President and set him up on a pedestal. What has he done or how has he deserved the wrath of the people within these twelve months?"

C. E. Corea made a forceful plea on behalf of the Tamils. He said, "The Tamils only asked for equal treatment in that common family of equal brotherhood. They said that, though their territory was small and their numbers few, they should not be rated below their brothers. They were absolutely and indisputably right. They also said that, if there were to be given safeguards to minorities, the Tamil minority in Colombo, which was (in the words of the Despatch) a community considerable in numbers, which played an important part in the political, economic and social life in Colombo, should be safeguarded.

If Europeans in many towns needed to be safeguarded, they said, so did the Tamils in Colombo. Again, they were absolutely and indisputably right. There was a lot of talk about principles. No principle was involved. To give extra members to the North no more violated any principle than did allotting to the Parliament of the United Kingdom more Irish Members than the proportion of their population to the English justified, and the Colombo Tamil Seat was beyond all doubt a minority safeguard."

The cumulative effect of it all on the sensitive mind of a great patriot and humanist may well be imagined. He now emerged from his dreamland wherein he had dwelt for many a year. Disillusionment, despair, embitterment, the sense of labours lost, the purpose of a lifetime defeated, bowed him low. All his dearly cherished hopes of building up a free and united Lanka were dashed to the ground. It now dawned on him that all the fierce protestations of national unity and solidarity, of equality and fraternity and liberty for all were mere claptrap, a ruse to beguile the unwary minorities into accepting a majority dictatorship. He who, as an ardent protagonist of territorial representation, had crossed swords with his brother Ramanathan, he who would not pay heed to the elder's oft-repeated admonitions, realized in horror and anguish the absolute correctness of the latter's position. Had not the brother warned him time and again: "Aruni, Aruni, you are playing with fire. You little know what you are about; you are cutting the earth from underneath your own feet."

In an interview with the *Times of Ceylon* on 14th December, 1921, Arunachalam said, "My feeling is one of profound distress. Not with regard to the Legislative Council's resolutions or the reforms debate, which are of transitory interest, but with regard to the position of the Ceylon National

Congress and Ceylon's goal of responsible government. Everyone must see that this goal cannot be reached unless there is mutual trust, harmony and co-operation between the various sections of our Island population. Only those who have been in the inner councils of the reform movement can know how supremely difficult it was to bring the various communities together on a common political platform aiming at responsible government in the future, what ceaseless toil and tact were needed to educate the people in their rights and duties, to remove ancient prejudices and jealousies, harmonize dissensions and to create the indispensable basis of mutual trust and co-operation.

"This almost impossible task was, however, fulfilled and out of the discipline, intelligence, energy, public spirit and the enthusiasm of a practically united people, there arose the stately structure of the Ceylon National Congress, which achieved a position of power and prestige that could not be ignored by its foes and made its influence felt both by the local government and the Secretary of State. The Government was compelled to negotiate with the Congress and to promise a speedy amendment of the illiberal scheme of the Order-in-Council of last year. Everything was progressing satisfactorily and pointed to a successful issue at an early date. The final attainment of success depended entirely on the continuance of mutual trust and co-operation.

"This was rudely shattered by the conduct of a clique who got hold of the Congress machine... The clique imposed its will on a weak President of the Congress, Mr. James Peiris, and his colleague, Mr. E. J. Samarawickreme, and compelled them to repudiate solemn pledges given by them in writing in regard to a seat in the City of Colombo. A blow was thus dealt to the trust of the Tamils in the Congress and its leaders and spread to every other minority who realised that

they would be dealt with in the same way, if like the Tamils they joined the Congress. ...Mr. Peiris and his friends have by their blunders wrecked the Congress, destroyed its power and prestige, reduced it from a National Congress, to one representing mainly a section of the Sinhalese, destroyed the feelings of mutual confidence and co-operation between the various communities and put back the attainment of the goal of Swaraj indefinitely."

It was the tragedy of Arunachalam's political career that he was caught between two fires; on the one hand was an alien raj which hung like a millstone round the nation's neck and which he abhorred with an abhorrence rare in the annals of leadership; and on the other, were two peoples, speaking two great languages and heirs to two great cultures, who had for long centuries existed as two separate, sovereign entities, each with an ancient history and a clearly defined geography, whom a historic accident, that of foreign conquest and subjugation, had saddled together under a common yoke and who on the eve of the foreigner's departure were desperately endeavouring to evolve a common principle of co-existence.

While he heroically subdued the one (fire), he could not escape being scorched by the other. While he made a successful bid for national freedom, he left the whole question of communal co-existence more complicated, more involved than ever. The day the Ceylon Reform League and then its successor, the Ceylon National Congress, pitched upon unitary mathematical democracy based on the British pattern, on that day were laid the foundations of a divided Sri Lanka. The acceptance of co-existence under an untrammelled unitary mathematical democracy was the first great betrayal of the Tamils by men who posed as their leaders and saviours at this critical period of their history, men who had neither the wisdom nor the statesmanship to understand that unitary mathematical

democracy for a multiple society such as Ceylon is a contradiction in terms, that it runs counter to all the accepted canons of constitutional law and practice, that the majority, if it chooses, would make mince-meat of the minority.

The realisation left a deep scar on one of the most sensitive minds of all time. He now set out to retrace his footsteps, to discover a way out of this impasse, out of the maze into which he had inadvertently led the Tamils. He felt that if the Tamils were to survive as a people with their great and distinctive heritage intact, pull their legitimate weight in national life, their leaders should spare no pains to retrieve lost ground, dam the flood that would otherwise engulf the whole race. Pious resolutions! Grandiose schemes! But who was to implement them? He was already a spent force, an extinct volcano. However, he made a feeble attempt. He founded the Ceylon Tamil League, changed his key and played a new note, the communal note, having all his life played the national anthem with exuberant enthusiasm. No wonder, Tamil audiences heckled him mercilessly at many meetings he addressed them thereafter. But was not all this too late? Was he not locking the stable door after the horse had fled? Was he not becoming wise after the event? What had been done was final and irremediable. Territorial representation had come to stay and was accepted by the ruling power as the main principle of parliamentary representation. Communal representation, which had from the beginnings of foreign rule been the sole safeguard of minority rights, was now given a severe beating. Moreover, will the cry for communal representation as the sole refuge of the minorities ring true, when it emanates from a man who had nearly all his life been a protagonist of territorial representation? Before anything tangible or palpable could be achieved, death claimed him. He died a sadder but wiser man.

But he left us one great legacy; he furnished us with a blue-print for salvaging the Tamils out of the Slough of Despond into which they had fallen. Had succeeding generations of Tamil leaders shed their littlenesses and instead of scrambling for little pittances, for little crumbs that fell from the master's table, looked the question full in the face, as became true leaders, taken a bold and realistic view of it, had they asked themselves the question if the Tamils would, as indeed they must under the existing dispensation, submit themselves as a subservient minority to the dictates of a democratically elected neighbours of another race or religion, submit to the oppression and humiliation that, they knew, would inevitably be their lot for all time, had they trod the path the great leader had chalked out for them, they would have little cause to weep or wail. The speedy creation of a Tamil Eelam was Arunachalam's sole answer.

In his prefatory address to the Tamil League, he said, "The League was brought into existence by a political necessity. But politics is not the *raison d'etre* of its existence. Its aim is much higher. The Committee and those responsible for the League consider that our aims should be to keep alive and propagate the Tamil ideals which have through the ages past made the Tamils what they are. We should keep alive and propagate those ideals throughout Ceylon and promote the union and solidarity of what we have been proud to call Tamil Eelam. We desire to preserve our individuality as a people, to make ourselves worthy of our inheritance. We are not enamoured of the cosmopolitanism which would make of us 'neither fish, flesh, fowl nor red-herring'. That does not mean that we are to be selfiish and work only for the Tamil community. *We have done more for the welfare of all-Ceylon than for the Tamils... We do object, however, strongly to being under-*

dogs. We mean to make ourselves strong to defend ourselves and strong also to work for the common good."

One very vital need for the Tamils which he stressed but did not live to see fulfilled was a free and virile press. It was one of the sorest sorrows of his life. He said, "Various wants we have. A press that may not degenerate into a 'hireling' is a great want for the country. Shall we aim at a press for the Tamils, if only to combat calumny and vile misrepresentation? For days, weeks and months and well-nigh two years we have suffered at the hands of an unscrupulous press. How long are we to submit to this without a word in protest, reply or defence?"

It is the language of an embittered but disillusioned soul which, having groped for many a long year in a dark and unreal world, has suddenly emerged into a region of light and reality; it is the jubilant cry of a puissant spirit, which, having lost its moorings and drifted for long years in the slimy waters of untruth, has at long last found safe harbourage in the haven of truth. But then the occasion gave rise to much obloquy, much gratuitous slander which he was powerless to parry for want of a free press. The many who had once adored him but a little this side of idolatry now turned scoffers and maligners, inasmuch as he who had all his life thought and spoken of all things in terms of Ceylon and the Ceylonese now spoke of Tamil Eelam and the Tamils; he who had in all his long and illustrious career striven incessantly and inexorably to unify and consolidate Ceylon and the Ceylonese, now spoke of unifying. and consolidating Tamil Eelam and the Tamils It now dawned on him that the only road to salvation for the Tamils lay in a return to the pre-Western order of things in which the Tamils had for ages enjoyed separate nationhood and a separate sovereignty.

Ramanathan in his vehement plea against territorial representation as promulgated by the Donoughmore Commissioners, bemoaned the utter failure of his brother Arunachalam in his ardent advocacy of territorial representation. He said: "Then, Sir Arunachalam conceived the idea of forming a National Congress for Ceylon. The work was started in 1917, I believe, but what happened in the end about three years afterwards? Sir Arunachalam was obliged to sever connection with the Ceylon National Congress. He resigned the Presidentship, many other members also seceded, because of a handful of men who had seized the machinery of the Ceylon National Congress, and were working it for racial and personal aggrandizement. Sir Arunachalam publicly avowed that he retired from the Congress because it was not working for the benefit of all the communities of Ceylon and because the leaders of the Ceylon National Congress were fighting for their own ends and were deliberately misleading the public and the Government alike. Had they played fair, had they continued to be just, had they been appreciative of all the interests of the different communities, so that they could live together in amity and flourish in this glorious land, we would have still advocated territorial representation. But no chance was given to us; good English education tested by public examinations and high property qualifications have been abolished, freedom of opinion has been gagged, racial and class distinctions are stalking the land cloaked under the high-sounding names of political freedom and territorial representation."

Ramanathan had the same thing in mind when in welcoming Governor Sir William Manning, he said, "If the government of the people by the chosen representatives of the people for promoting the welfare of the people is to be fully achieved, we are convinced that all the constituent parts of the community should, for this purpose, forget

all consideration of race, rank and sect and willingly work together at all times without fear or favour or ill-will; we are certain that this co-operation will readily secure for us a rich harvest of moral and material blessing."

It was the tragedy as it was also the paradox of Arunachalam's life that with all his immense learning, his wide knowledge of men and matters and his varied experience, there ran in him a vein of idealism, deep, strong and clear, a streak of the visionary. He was at bottom an idealist and dreamer out of touch with reality, unacquainted with the hidden springs of human thought and action. Of man in the mass, a creature of impulse, of likes and dislikes, incorrigibly selfish, insatiably ambitious, with the rough-and-tumble of political life, Arunachalam, unlike his great brother Ramanathan, had little or no knowledge. What strikes one who reads his speeches is the vein of Platonic idealism that runs through them all. In his address to the Ceylon Reform League, he said, "I have an unquenchable faith in the youth of Ceylon. Youth is the time of noble impulses and generous aspirations and our youths have behind them centuries of inherited culture and traditions. I believe they will soon find their souls and leaving mere money-making and wallowing in ease to the baser sort, will revert to the ideals of their forefathers and establish an Aristocracy of Intellect, Character and self-sacrificing Service. Until this is achieved, political reforms and power are of little use. Suppose Ceylon won even such a place in the world as Japan has. What would it profit us with the canker of materialism gnawing at our vitals? I look to our youth to spiritualize our public life, and I believe they will do it. They will each seek his own well-being in the well-being of all, will identify his own life with the life of all and his own interest with the interest of all. They will lay at the feet of our dear

Motherland the love offerings of passionate service. They will work in unity that, in the words of Dante, all the intellectual and spiritual forces diffused among men may obtain the highest possible development in the sphere of thought and action. With our youth inspired by such a spirit and such ideals, I look to see our country rise with renewed splendour, paling the glory of Parakrama Bahu, the Great, and be a beacon light to all lands."

This is idealism in its purest form, undiluted, quintessential, transcending the idealism of its greatest practitioners through the ages, the idealism of one who had lived all his life in that rarefied realm. No wonder in one who passed his boyhood in the sheltered isolation of an upper class household; his youth, in the cultured refinements of an ancient seat of learning and his manhood, in the sanctum of a pampered bureaucracy. This ivory-tower existence, this divorce from reality, unfitted him for the role of carving out a just and equitable way of life for two ancient peoples, with little to bind them together, two peoples speaking two different languages, professing two different religions, heirs to two different cultures, having two different histories and occupying two different and clearly-marked territories, who had lived under two separate governments until the strong hand of a foreign conqueror saddled them together against their will under a unified dispensation for no other reason than that it suited his own administrative convenience. Subject peoples are helpless pawns on a foreigners chessboard. It cannot, however, be gainsaid that posterity will treasure as a jewelled page in the history of our freedom struggle Arunachalam's incomparable service to the cause of emancipating his Motherland from the thraldom of foreign rule.

To proceed, the scope of Arunachalam's activity was not limited to questions political or sociological. The cause of Hinduism claimed a good deal of

his time and energy. Religion was with him, as with his brother Ramanathan, the central fact of his history, the chief motive force of his mind and heart, the true secret of his all-round greatness and achievement. His faith in the governance of the universe and of man's destiny by an Almighty, All-pervading Being was simple, childlike, absolute. Amidst the many vicissitudes of a very crowded and agitated life, he yet found solace and sustenance in secret and loving communion with that Transcendent Reality. Arulparananda Swamigal was his religious "Guru", as of his brother Ramanathan, and his writings abound in rapturous and ecstatic references to the great Master. Arunachalam's mastery of the Hindu 'Shastras', as of the scriptures of other faiths, was profound. His translations and his illuminating commentaries containing a wealth of comparative material have enriched the study and practice of Hinduism. In an age in which the strong influx of Western thought and the materialist way of life had all but engulfed much that was distinctively and traditionally ours, it is surprising that the sons of Ponnambalam not merely resisted them but rose superior to them all. They exemplified in their life and person all the finest characteristics of the race from which they were sprung and demonstrated to the world that Tamil culture and the Tamil way of life at their best surpassed much else known to man before or after. Following worthily the noble example of his father who dedicated a good part of his life and all his worldly wealth to the cause of combating irreligion and saving Hinduism and the Hindu way of life from being trodden under-foot by foreign influences, he reformed the Colombo Saiva Paripalana Sabai, became its President and gave it a new lease of beneficent life.

Shadows, of course, there were in that great picture—errors, miscalculations, disappointments,

disillusionments; such things are unavoidable in a life filled for over half-a-century with great national issues, some among the greatest in the annals of this country and in an age of great political and social unrest and upheaval. The picture, nevertheless, portrays a noble figure full of noble achievement, genius, self-command, an untiring sense of public duty and an ever-deepening love of human freedom.

His end was as glorious as was his beginning. He died of pneumonia on 9th January, 1924, in the ancient temple city of Madura, in South India, where he had gone on his customary pilgrimage. It was in the fitness of things that he who had all his life been a passionate devotee of the One, in Whose light he had toiled all his life to bring succour and solace to stricken humanity, should lay down his life at His feet in that hallowed shrine. His remains were brought to Colombo and cremated according to orthodox Hindu rites in the presence of a vast gathering. Friends and political opponents alike vied with one another in paying tributes to a departed leader, whom the *Ceylon Daily News* described in an editorial the day after his death as "the most powerful personality in Ceylon of the last decade" and *The Times* of London described as "a founder of modern Ceylon."

A short time after Arunachalam's death a grateful people honoured his memory by erecting his statue in the grounds of Parliament House. It was unveiled by the Governor Sir Herbert Stanley on 3rd April, 1930. It was the first statue to adorn these premises and stood in solitary splendour till the statue of his brother Ramanathan was erected in 1953. A postage stamp to commemorate Arunachalam was issued by the Government on 10th March, 1977, eighteen months after the issue of a stamp to commemorate Ramanathan.

The inscription on the statue reads as follows:—

Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam
Scholar, Statesman, Administrator, Patriot
Erected by a Grateful People in
Testimony of a life nobly spent
in the service of his country and in
recognition of his pre-eminent and
signal services as the champion of
a reformed legislature and of
his matchless devotion and
steadfastness in the cause
of the Ceylon University.
1853 — 1924.

But statue or no statue, his memory will live enshrined in the hearts of a people whom he served with a sincere and selfless devotion rare in political or social history.

It is impossible to compress within the compass of half-a-hundred pages, even in bare outline, the life history of a brilliant and versatile personality, the beau ideal of public servant, a freedom-fighter par excellence, a renowned scholar, a jurist and historian, a philosopher and man of religion, an indefatigable social reformer, an indomitable champion of the under-dog in an age in which underdoggery evoked little response from the rich and affluent, and far more than all these, a gentleman of great personal charm and refinement, of integrity and disinterested patriotism.

We may fittingly close the sketch of Arunachalam's life and work with the words of one who was a shrewd judge of men and matters, and knew him at close range. Sir Josiah Wedgwood, M. P., wrote in his Foreword to "Speeches and Writings of Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam" (1936): "Sir Ponnambalam had India in his blood, Ceylon as his field and workshop; but in his mind I like to think that he was the perfect, cultured, liberal-minded English gentleman of the 19th century. There is a good deal to be said for Cambridge which could produce an Arunachalam and a J. C. Smuts. The type is rare enough today, and we may justly

salute it and hope for its resurgence. For them life was a duty, career so little respected that they secured respect, money so unimportant that no one doubted their probity.

"There was some conceit, but it was a good conceit; they were bad 'mixers', but why should they mix? They were linked all over the world by a common love of fair-play and justice, a common hatred of slavery and cruelty, a common contempt for the vulgarity of the demagogue and the 'science' of the planner. A little inhuman, but the salt of the world... He was one of the three who had most to do with making the Ceylon Constitution. I helped too, so I ought to know. But the triumph and the sacrifice were Arunachalam's. He was a Tamil and everyone knows how the Tamils feel... The way is not yet smooth in Ceylon, but that it can be travelled at all is due to Arunachalam... Especially to my colleagues in liberty, the Low-Country Sinhalese, the team with which Arunachalam rode abreast, to them I would say, 'Take care to preserve the liberties you won. For this sacrifice and unselfishness is still needed, and the understanding that liberty and justice are for all.'"

CHAPTER XXII

FATHER OF THE HINDU BOARD OF EDUCATION

> It is, no doubt, a truism to observe that the progress of any nation or race ultimately hinges upon the educational equipment of that nation or race.
>
> —*Ramanathan*

> There is no doubt that the country, in general, is much indebted to the efforts of the Missionaries in regard to imparting education in the remote districts of the Island. I, for one, have been always anxious to acknowledge the services that they have rendered to the country, provided that there was no religious intolerance on their part.
>
> —*Ramanathan*

IT was a cause of profound distress to Ramanathan that Hindu children suffered great disabilities and hardships in matters educational and religious. For, while there was a network of Christian missionary schools in every village and town, there were few schools of their own denomination. While all schools were State-aided, missionary schools placed special emphasis on teaching and propagating their own faith, to the detriment of the child's own. To Ramanathan, religion made up three-fourths of life, as he saw it after his own lights, the central, formative force in a child's life. Any impairment of the child's religious convictions would be but to negative the whole meaning and purpose of education. To achieve its purpose, education should be imparted against a background of religion and that religion should be the child's own.

Moreover, there were many out-of-the way, even remote villages throughout the Island, in which no

provision of any kind was made for the education of the children. It was an evil of the highest magnitude, for, education was, with Ramanathan, the first of national priorities, the panacea for all national ills.

It was in this conviction that he exhorted the Buddhists to found Buddhist schools and colleges throughout the Sinhalese provinces and collaborated enthusiastically with Colonel Olcott in the spread of Buddhist education. To promote Hindu education in the Tamil provinces, he founded the Hindu Board of Education, after he had founded, built and endowed his twin institutions, the Ramanathan College for girls and the Paramesvara College for boys.

It should, in this connection, be borne in mind that Ramanathan, far from having any ill-will towards the missionaries, held them in the highest esteem and reverence and spoke of them in terms of the highest praise for their selfless labours in the cause of education among alien peoples, for their spirit of service and self-sacrifice, for the men and material they expended in uplifting backward peoples. He was inordinately grateful to them and counted many among his choicest friends. The many magnificent institutions they reared and the high standards of education they maintained are a standing testimony to their labours, and a rebuke to their detractors.

Ramanathan was all his life a physician who had his hand always on the nation's pulse, keen to track out national ills and discover quick and effective remedies for them. There was another reason why he urged his people to establish their own schools and colleges. It was neither right nor proper for them to live on the generosity and munificence of foreign peoples nor does it conduce to the self-respect and independence of a people to lean heavily and continually on them for their education and well-being. They should learn to fend for themselves.

These and many other reasons impelled him to summon the Hindu leaders to a conference at Ramanathan College in October, 1923, impressed upon them the need to take upon themselves the responsibility of educating their children in a distinctively Hindu environment and in various parts of the Tamil provinces, and to work together in a spirit of national service to achieve this great end. The result was the birth of the Hindu Board of Education on 9th December, 1923 with Ramanathan as its first President and Manager of Schools. He took upon himself these two weighty offices and held them until the close of 1926 despite advancing years, only to give the infant institution in its formative period the fostering care and the impetus so vitally necessary to ensure its future stability and permanence. Thereafter, until his decease in 1930, he was its patron and guiding-spirit.

The Hindu Board of Education was Ramanathan's brain-child. He was its guardian-angel. How well he nurtured it to strength and maturity may be gauged from the fact that within a few years it grew up to be a magnificent organization and became a formidable force in the educational life of the country. At the time of the take-over of schools by the State, it had founded and built more than two hundred schools, many of them in the remote parts of the Tamil areas, where, until then, no facilities of any sort were available for the education of Tamil children. The Board had, besides, established a Training College and two Orphanages.

The Hindu Board of Education exercised a far-reaching influence on the life of the Tamils, in that it served a great national need, the need to instruct children in their own religion, besides saving them from the proselytizing activities of foreign missionaries. Its ideal was to propagate Hindu religion and culture throughout the Tamil country.

People generally think of Ramanathan as only the founder and builder of two Colleges in the North. But few think of him as the man who brought about a renascence of Hindu culture and learning and translated into practical reality the ideal of Hindu education and life formulated by the great Arumuga Navalar.

In his Presidential Address delivered at a conference of the Head Masters, local Managers and teachers of the Hindu Board Schools, held at Paramesvara College on 1st August, 1926, Ramanathan set out in broad outline the ideals he sought to achieve: "The great ideal which the Hindu Board of Education has set before itself to attain is to fill the whole district of Jaffna in a few years with a network of well-organized and well-equipped schools, Tamil and Anglo-Tamil, to serve in the most effective manner the educational uplift of the Tamil race. I need scarcely go into detail on the aims and objects of the Hindu Board of Education. At this distance of time, I take it you must be aware of them. My purpose at any rate, in meeting you at this conference, is to exhort you one and all, to co-operate enthusiastically and by every means in your power with our Board in the glorious work of spreading education and culture among the Tamils of the Jaffna District. We are proud to belong to a race whose civilization mounts up to a dim antiquity—to a race which has heroically withstood the onslaughts of other races, which has successively and in ever-increasing numbers overrun India and this Island down to very recent times. And it is this pride which tingles in the vein of every true Tamilian that should serve as the fruitful soil from which all our revivalistic activities should sprout up and bear fruit. May I then confidently expect each one of you present here today to readily come forward and strain every nerve to assist the Board in the educational work to which it has set its hands

as the very first step in the renascence of our language, our literature and our religion? No doubt it is a truism to observe that the progress of any nation or race ultimately hinges upon the educational uplift of that nation or race."

He concluded his address with an exhortation to them to bring at least the prominent members of the Tamil community in the district within the fold of this organization. He said, "I have to draw your attention to another important matter. Our list of electors, directors and life-directors is still a lean one. Many prominent members of the Tamil community both within and outside the district have not yet joined our body. This is a very regrettable state of affairs and should be remedied at the earliest moment. Let me, therefore, appeal to you to use all your influence in your neighbourhood and try to bring at least the prominent members of the Tamil community in the district within the fold of this organization."

His appeal did not fall on deaf ears. The elite of the Tamil community enlisted themselves under his banner and the Hon. (later Sir) W. Duraiswamy, S. Sivapathasundaram, the Hindu savant, the Hon. S. Rajaratnam and M. S. Rajaratnam became his lieutenants. Under his vigorous and inspiring lead, the Board grew into a formidable organization, spreading its ramifications to all parts of the Tamil provinces and became a potent instrument in the spread of Hindu education in the country. Ramanathan's successor was the Hon. Mr. S. Rajaratnam, a nationalist leader who sacrificed a great career at the bar and in the judiciary and dedicated himself, whole and entire, to the service of the Board.

The aims and aspirations of the great founder were realised. Hindu children could now be educated in Hindu schools against a Hindu background, without the fear of their religious convictions being

tampered with. This was not the least of the services of the great and veteran leader and patriot.

News was brought to him that on representations made by the Wesleyan missionaries, the Government Agent, Eastern Province, had issued orders to all Government servants prohibiting them from taking part in the promotion of religious education among their respective communities. It was a violation of State policy, viz. the observance of strict neutrality in matters religious.

On March 24, 1915, Ramanathan moved for copies of orders issued by the Government Agent, Eastern Province, and also for information regarding the action taken by the Government, if any, on such orders.

Speaking on the motion, he said, "It was about the tenth of last month, that a representation was made to me by the Hindu inhabitants of the Eastern Province regarding the circular that I refer to, issued by the Government Agent, apparently interfering with the liberty of Government officers in general to promote the cause of education and religion in their respective communities. I cannot understand why the Government Agent issued a circular so abnormal as this, but I am told it was upon the representation of an over-enthusiastic Wesleyan Missionary who could not bear to see religious instruction being given by the Hindus in the Province in Hindu schools, which Hindus in that part of the country were anxious to establish for themselves."

He proceeded to proclaim the country's indebtedness to the missionaries, but deplored only their religious intolerance. "There is no doubt that the country in general is much indebted to the efforts of the Missionaries in regard to imparting education in the remote districts of the Island. I, for one, have been always anxious to acknowledge the services that they have rendered to the country, provided that there was no religious intolerance on their part."

He expressed his conviction that a child should be instructed in the religion in which he was born and brought up, and his gratification at seeing Hindu parents in the various parts of the country wake up to their responsibilities: "For some time past it is well known that the Hindus, who have hitherto had no opportunities of establishing schools for the instruction of their young ones, have become active both in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, and they think it their religious duty to enable their children to know at least something about their religion, and avoid the dangers of being irreligious altogether. It is impossible for any religious sect to be instructed in the schools of any other religious sect without their own religious views being interfered with subtly or openly, with the consequence that, instead of a child having immense respect for his religion, there is substituted in the young mind either a contempt for his religion, or utter neglect in regard to it. That works disaster in the household, and the child, far from being a help to the community in general, becomes really a menace to the State. He does not respect the law, because he does not know the raison d'etre of it or of its connection with God, and therefore thus instructed, becomes a secret law-breaker and dangerous to society. Everybody understands this, including, I believe, the Missionaries; only they think that the particular form of religion which they impart in their own schools is the only right one. They do not know the principles on which toleration in religion is based, nor what is happening in other parts of the world, even in places like Russia, about whose institutions we have come to know somewhat more than we did in the past owing to Russia's entry into the war as an ally of Great Britain."

He spoke of the noble example set by the Emperor of Russia who was assiduous in his efforts

to provide for the religious education of children of differing faiths within his own extensive dominions. "The other day I came across two Russian friends who had been sent out from Petrograd to investigate the condition of Buddhism in Ceylon, because the Emperor of Russia has five million Buddhist subjects in his Empire, and he was anxious to study the needs of the Buddhists in his Empire and to do his very best for them. They assured me that there was no such things as a grant-in-aid school in Russia, and that the Government there felt it to be its duty to establish in every village or group of minor villages a school to answer the requirements of the people, to whatever religion they belong. If, for instance, on the establishment of a school, it is found to be attended by children belonging to different denominations, it becomes the duty of the Government of Russia to find for each denomination a priest belonging to that denomination to instruct the young ones in religion. We all know that in Russia the established church is the Greek Catholic Church, which is quite different from the Roman Catholic Church, or the Church of England, or Buddhism, Brahminism, or Mohammedanism. Nevertheless, the Emperor of Russia, with all the liberality, which the religion of the Greek Church teaches, thinks it necessary that every one of his subjects of whatever creed it may be, ought to have some religious instruction in his own school in the particular religion in which he has been brought up.

"But people here in this outlying part of the British Empire, are so engrossed in their own ideals, and so convinced that their ideals are right, that they do not know that there may possibly be another view in regard to such abstruse questions as this, and necessarily they become over-enthusiastic and self-assertive."

Reverting to the question relating to the Eastern Province, he continued, "I am told that,

in consequence of the Government Agent's espousal of the cause of the Wesleyan Missionaries, all the subordinate chiefs, from the Vanniah downwards, are very anxious to know what their duty is. I learn from the document in my hands that the Vanniah of Karavaku has been sending orders to the minor headmen instructing them to secure the attendance of children to the Wesleyan school. The Moorish headman of one of the divisions in Karavaku, acting on the strength of this order, has stopped twenty-one children from attending the Hindu school, and personally conducted them to the Mission school. When the Head Teacher of the Hindu school questioned his conduct, he showed the Vanniah's order to him, and this is said to have created a great panic in the village. Hindus are now afraid to send their children to Hindu schools. Fancy a social cancer like this, produced without rhyme or reason in the midst of a population which was striving to worship God and serve man in the manner they thought best. I am quite sure that if Your Excellency has heard of these proceedings, you will be the first to interfere and say that it is the duty of Government officers to maintain the strictest neutrality in matters of religion and education—that is the well-known and settled policy in the British Empire—and that there is therefore no reason whatever for disturbing the peace and welfare of the public, and that the circular should be withdrawn." He concluded with the telling words: "I have now come for relief to Your Excellency's Government in the full assurance that something will be done, if it has not already been done to mitigate the horrors of the situation."

The Colonial Secretary gave him the assurance he wanted and accordingly he withdrew his motion. Ramanathan thus succeeded in arresting the religious intolerance and the proselytizing propensities of the missionaries and establishing the right of Hindus

in the Public Service to work for their religion. He was one of those rare souls who believed in the unity of Religion and the One-ness of God, in the freedom of every individual to worship God in the manner he deemed best, unhampered by external pressures.

CHAPTER XXIII

MALAYAN VISIT

> We are sure that this visit of the great Tamil Knight paid at great personal inconvenience and self-sacrifice will be productive of much good to the people of the countries visited, especially to the Ceylonese in those parts, who are labouring under disadvantages of a serious nature, for which the Straits Government is responsible.
>
> —*The Hindu Organ*

IN 1924, came Ramanathan's memorable visit to Malaya in fulfilment of a long-cherished desire on the part of the Malayan Ceylonese to meet their great national leader and do him signal honour. It is well to recall that during this period of Malayan history, the Malayan Ceylonese formed the backbone of the Malayan Public Service, and Malaya had special reason to be particularly grateful to that community for the inestimable service it rendered to her in the early stages of her growth and development under British rule.

When in the latter half of the last century, Britain gained control of Malaya's administration, Malaya was one long stretch of virgin jungle interspersed with little towns and villages. It was, moreover, ridden with malaria and infested with wild animals of every description. The British, who had divined immense natural wealth locked up in the soil, embarked upon a massive programme of development. But the personnel to work the machinery of administration was totally wanting. The Malays were for the most part illiterate and lived in rural haunts, far removed from the reach of civilized humanity. They were, moreover, indolent, unambitious and unenterprising, and

preferred the easy, care-free life of the Kampong (village). As such the Malays were utterly powerless to assist the Britisher in the onerous task of opening up the country, tapping its immense hidden resources and strengthening the administration.

In this predicament, the government of Malaya looked far and near and finally addressed an appeal to the Government of Ceylon to come to its rescue, to send recruits of competent and qualified youth to man the administration. In response to this call, large numbers of Tamil youth, educated, energetic, enterprising and resourceful, went over to this distant land across the high seas and found employment in the Public Sector. The unutterable privations and hardships they suffered in those early pioneering days, the very precarious conditions under which they lived and worked in an alien country far removed from their home-country, the ability and endurance they displayed in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities entitled them to a special claim on the gratitude and goodwill of the Malayan Government. It was in no small measure due to their zealous and sustained efforts that the Malayan Public Service became before long a by-word for efficiency and competence.

But after the passage of some decades, when Malaya had attained to a high standard of material development and administrative strength, when primeval jungles had been transformed into healthy and fashionable towns and cities, when the Peninsula had gained the distinction of being the "Richest Corner in the British Empire", the Tamil community was faced with a new and unforeseen threat to its existence. The Malays, attracted by the abundant facilities and incentives provided for education and the preferential treatment accorded to them in the Public Service, gradually gave up their old modes of life, moved out of the Kampongs into towns and cities, and having acquired a knowledge of English, began to clamour for employment



Sir Pon. Ramanathan, Lady Ramanathan and daughter Sivagamasunthari
(*Picture taken during their Malayan Tour*)

in the Public Service. They held that they alone, and no other, had the right of entry into the Public Service. The cry, "Malaya for the Malays" was vigorously and relentlessly raised in all quarters.

In the early twenties of the century, when economic depression set in after World War I, and when Malaya, like many other countries, was adversely affected by it, retrenchment laid its ruthless axe on the Tamil officials in the Public Service. Their claims were completely brushed aside; they were regarded as aliens and subjected to harsh treatment. It seemed as if their days in the Malayan Service were numbered. Several hundreds of Tamil youths in the prime of life, who had pinned their hopes on the service, were ruthlessly retrenched. The spectacle of these youths thus thrown out of employment and returning to their home-country with their careers prematurely closed in mid-career, rent the hearts of all right-thinking people.

This was indeed a grave situation crying for immediate remedy. At this time, it occurred to the leaders of the Tamil community in Malaya to invite Ramanathan there. The fame of his glorious services to the people of Ceylon had reached them. He was their national idol, one to whom they could look up for succour in this their hour of distress. He was the man who could tackle this difficult and delicate situation. Apart from this, it was their long-cherished desire to see the Grand Old Man, this veteran statesman, patriot, philosopher and man of religion in person and to show him their love and reverence. Actuated by these motives, they sent invitations to him to visit them. A visit to Malaya was not an easy undertaking for one who had already passed the biblical span of life and, moreover, had so much to do in his home-country. But the call was insistent and, as Ramanathan realised, urgent.

He felt that great injustice had been done to his people by the Malayan Government and that it was his primary duty to intercede in their behalf and secure for them a better and a more equitable treatment at its hands.

He accepted the invitation and undertook to visit them in the early part of 1924. The news was received with great acclamation by his compatriots in Malaya. They set about making elaborate plans for the reception of their national leader. Meetings were held in various parts of the Peninsula and resolutions were passed as to the manner of receiving him. In Kuala Lumpur, the Federal Capital, a huge meeting, attended by nearly all the Ceylonese, was held in the Town Hall. They spoke of him in terms of high eulogy and passed the following resolution: "That this meeting of the Ceylonese of Selangor resolves to give a grand reception to the Hon. Sir P. Ramanathan, K. T., K. C., C. M. G. on the occasion of his forthcoming visit to Malaya." Similar meetings were held in other parts of the country and similar resolutions were passed. It is said that a sum of sixty thousand dollars was raised for his reception. The people waited eagerly to receive him.

On the 24th of February, 1924 Ramanathan left the shores of Ceylon for Malaya, accompanied by Lady Ramanathan and Miss Ramanathan. He was received at the Singapore Jetty by high British officers of State and the leaders of all communities and taken in procession to the Victoria Memorial Hall where he was accorded a grand welcome. The editor of a leading journal, commenting on Ramanathan's visit to the Malayan Peninsula, said, "The accounts of the cordial and royal receptions given to the Hon. Sir P. Ramanathan by all communities in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States show in an unmistakable manner how much his visit is appreciated and in what high veneration and esteem the Grand

Old Man of Ceylon is held by the people in the Malayan Peninsula. We are sure that this visit of the great Tamil Knight paid at great personal inconvenience and self-sacrifice will be productive of much good to the peoples of the countries visited, especially to the Ceylonese in those parts, who are labouring under disadvantages of a serious nature, for which the Straits Government is responsible. We think that our readers are aware, that the Government, forgetting the very important part men from Ceylon have played in the successful administration of those countries by the English, has begun to turn its back on the Ceylonese by making it practically impossible for them to enter the Government Service there. We do not know the exact situation of the matter just now, but we feel confident that the distinguished Knight will have availed himself of the opportunity the tour has afforded him to place before the Straits Government the claims of our compatriots in Malaya for just and equitable treatment at its hands. The excellence of the lectures delivered during the tour and the keen appreciation with which they were received by those who had the rare privilege of listening to them show to what admirable use the Grand Old Man is capable of putting the remarkable gifts, wide culture and profound learning he is possessed of. The tour has proved altogether happy and successful and has had the highly desirable effect of uniting the communities in the places visited in bonds of common brotherhood and love. We feel it our duty to give expression to our warm appreciation of the disposition of our brethren in Malaya to honour our great men as they deserve, which we think is a good proof of the noble pride they feel in them and which, we are sure, is highly conducive to our national solidarity."

While in Malaya, he was the honoured guest of the Governor and the Sultans of the various States.

With them he discussed the past, the present and the future of his countrymen there. He dwelt on the great contribution they had made to the prosperity and progress of that great land and exhorted them not to be ungenerous towards a people who had made such signal sacrifice in the early days of their connection with that land. He succeeded in influencing the Governor and the Sultans, and the leading officials to view favourably the claims of his community and to mete out to them a better and a more equitable treatment. Many hundreds of those who had been retrenched in 1922 were reinstated in the service and several thousands thereafter were newly admitted to the service. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the work he did in Malaya in behalf of his countrymen there.

To facilitate his visits to the various places, a special train was placed at his disposal. Ramanathan addressed distinguished gatherings in important towns and cities and his speeches were listened to with profound admiration. He exhorted all the communities to live united as one people and to treat each other as brothers. He paid a high tribute to the Chinese people who, he said, "were all an extremely good people, kind and generous". He said that the Chinese possessed great virtues which we Ceylonese should emulate. He expressed his great admiration for Chinese ladies and spoke of the greatness of the Malays and their religion. Whenever he spoke, he made communal harmony and co-operation his central theme. "The tour proved altogether happy and successful and had the highly desired effect of uniting the various communities in the places visited in bonds of common brotherhood and love," said a leading Malayan journal at that time.

In Kuala Lumpur, the Federal Capital, he was presented with a walking stick wrought in silver, which to the end of his life, he valued as a priceless

possession. In Taiping, he was taken in procession from the 'Astana', the Palace of His Highness the Sultan of Perak, with oriental music to the town. There he delivered an instructive and edifying lecture entitled "True Progress" at a meeting which was presided over by Lieutenant Colonel Hon. C. W. C. Parr, C. M. G., O. B. E. He said that true progress was to be achieved not by material gains but by the cultivation of the soul.

His visit though brief, was immensely fruitful of good results. He secured for his countrymen there, the favour and esteem of the Government and of the various communities who live there. It will be tedious to give a detailed account of the princely receptions accorded to him in the many towns and cities he visited. Suffice it to say that none had ever before received so warm and so enthusiastic a welcome in Malaya. He left Malaya in the last week of March, 1924 carrying with him the gratitude and affection of one and all in that happy and flourishing land. When he left the country, the Tamil community offered him a sum of fifty thousand dollars as an endowment to Ramanathan College. But he declined the offer, saying that the College had enough funds and advised them to utilize that amount for establishing a paper of their own in Malaya. Thus ended a very happy and fruitful tour.

CHAPTER XXIV

RAMANATHAN AND THE CEYLON NATIONAL CONGRESS

Those who are enamoured of their political power and gloat over their extension of dominion over foreign races gradually surrender their own freedom and humanity to the organizations necessary for holding other peoples in slavery ... The narrowness of sympathy which makes it possible for us to impose upon a considerable portion of humanity the galling yoke of inferiority will assert itself in our politics in creating the tyranny of injustice.

—Rabindranath Tagore

Think seriously of the folly of allowing any body of persons within the State to foster resentment against the denial of rights which they feel to be part of their just due.

—Edmund Burke

European history exposes the unwisdom of the view that a state is strengthened by the compulsory assimilation of its various national elements.

—Lipson

If the government of the people by the chosen representatives of the people for promoting the welfare of the people is to be fully achieved, we are convinced that all the constituent parts of the community should, for this purpose, forget all considerations of race, rank and sect and willingly work together at all time without fear or favour or ill-will. We are certain that their co-operation will readily secure for us a rich harvest of moral and material blessings.

—Ramanathan

Where absolutism reigned by irresistible arms, concentrated possessions, auxiliary churches and inhuman laws, it reigns no more.

—Lord Acton

My fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

—President John Kennedy

ON the invitation of the Ceylon National Congress, Ramanathan moved the first resolution on its agenda at its first session held on 12th December, 1919, demanding radical changes in the existing constitution and a large measure of self-rule. The resolution ran as follows:—

This Congress declares that, for the better government of the Island and the happiness and the contentment of the people, and as a step towards the realization of responsible government in Ceylon as an integral part of the British Empire, the Constitution and Administration of Ceylon should be immediately reformed in the following particulars, to wit:—

1. That the Legislative Council should consist of about 50 members, of whom at least four-fifths should be elected according to territorial divisions upon a wide male franchise and a restricted female franchise, and the remaining one-fifth should consist of official members and unofficial members to represent important minorities, and the Council should elect its own speaker as President.

2. That the Legislative Council should continue to have full control over the budget and there should be no division of reserved and transferred subjects.

3. That the Executive Council should consist of the Governor as President assisted by officials and unofficials chosen from the elected members of the Legislative Council, with the view of affording them administrative experience and that such Ceylonese members should be made responsible for the administration of Departments placed in their charge.

4. That the Governor should be one who has had parliamentary experience and training in the public life of England, the better to fit him to discharge the duties of a constitutional ruler and to help in the smooth working of the political machinery under the altered conditions.

5. That there should be complete popular control over the administration of local affairs in the provinces, districts, towns and villages by a wide extension throughout the island of Municipalities, Urban and Rural District Councils and Village Councils, with elected Chairmen and substantial majorities of elected members.

6. That a proportion of not less than 50 percent, rising up to 75 percent, of the higher appointments in the Ceylon Civil Services and the other branches of the public service should be reserved for Ceylonese.

In proposing the Congress resolution, Ramanathan was alive to the perils and pitfalls inherent in a territorially-elected unitary democracy of the British pattern for a multi-racial, multi-lingual society such as Ceylon. He knew that such a system of government to succeed demanded certain indispensable pre-requisities viz. (1) a homogeneous society (2) an educated and enlightened electorate (3) a civilized and cultured outlook on the part of both the rulers and the ruled with their concomitants of self-restraint, toleration, gentle-dealing, good manners, freedom from ignorant prejudice and the readiness to do unto others what they would that others should do unto them. He knew that in the absence of these pre-requisites, mathematical democracy of the British pattern would easily degenerate into either anarchy or brutal tyranny masquerading as democracy.

However, when the majority leaders and his brother Arunachalam, the Founder and first President of the Ceylon National Congress, invited him to propose the resolution, he willingly accepted the

invitation and moved the resolution in one of his inspiring and impassioned speeches, emphasising the immediate grant of Home Rule. He could not have acted otherwise, for he and his brother Arunachalam were the chief protagonists, the twin dynamos that hummed incessantly, though not in unison, in the cause of national freedom. To assert the claims of the minorities at this crucial hour when the country's freedom hung in the balance, would be but to put the clock back, to present a divided house to an alien oppressor. His belief was akin to his brother's, that national freedom is first of a people's priorities and that no obstacle, however formidable, should stand in the way of its achievement. Moreover, he was fortified by the belief that, when national freedom was won, communal claims could be adjusted over a conference table. He reposed absolute confidence in the vociferous protestations of Congress leaders that minority interests would in no way be compromised or endangered by the proposed reforms.

But as time rolled by and territorial representation based on a broad adult franchise had come to be accepted by the ruling power as the main principle of parliamentary representation, Ramanathan discovered in the new leadership of the Congress an unholy propensity to use the dominant position thus gained through superiority of numbers not as a means of building up a free and united Ceylonese nation wherein all its constituent partners would get a square deal, but as a plausible guise in which to set up a majority dictatorship.

The Congress leaders made no secret of it. James Peiris, H. J. C. Pereira and E. W. Perera and a few others who had taken the helm of the Congress and were its chief spokesmen were never weary of singing the refrain, "The majority must rule." But these constitutional pundits and freedom-fighters who parrot-wise kept on repeating the slogan of majority-rule, had not the wisdom

to understand that majority-rule pre-supposes, nay, demands as its first condition of success a homogeneous polity. In the absence of that, majority-rule degenerates into majority despotism and then into anarchy.

As has already been observed in an earlier chapter, the Jaffna Association, the principal political organ of the Tamils, stubbornly refused to come under the Congress banner at the time of its formation, in view of its firm conviction that territorial representation—to which the Congress had hitched its wagon—and its inevitable concomitant, majority rule, would be the ruin of the minorities. It needed neither political wisdom nor mathematical expertise to know that. An elementary school-boy could have pronounced on it. It was the solemn pledges given in writing by two stalwarts, James Peiris, President of the Ceylon National Association and E. J. Samarawickreme, President of the Ceylon Reform League, on the eve of the merger of these two political organs to form the Ceylon National Congress, and guaranteed by the founder of the Congress and principal political mentor Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, that the Congress leadership would leave nothing undone to temper the harsh south-wind of territorial representation to the shorn Tamil lamb of the North, that it would go as far as necessary to secure the rights and liberties of the Tamils, that it would support the demand of the Tamils for more seats than their numbers warranted, and uphold the claim for an additional Tamil Seat for Colombo, that impelled the Tamils to come under the Congress banner and make common cause with the Sinhalese. They were so far enamoured of national freedom, that in its achievement they staked their all on the hazards and uncertainties of the pledged word. But no sooner had the Congress been founded and stabilised and the rulers come to regard it as the chief spokesman of the nation, than its

leadership repudiated every one of its pledges. It would have territorial representation, whole and entire, undiluted, untrammelled, and its corollary, the enthronement of the majority community and the relegation of the minorities to sheer impotence in national life. It would have none of the Colombo Seat. It not merely lodged a vigorous protest against its grant, with the Governor, it went on a crusade to Whitehall to oppose it. This episode is given in greater detail in chapter XXI. Peiris pitched his repudiation of the pledges on the good ground that he gave them as President of the Ceylon National Association, and now that he was President of the Ceylon National Congress, the pledge had no longer any binding on him. The determined opposition they presented to the Tamil Seat and to Tamil demands in general left no room for doubt that the Congress leadership did not mean what it said, that its heart was set on majority rule, whatever might befall the minorities.

Moreover, the elections of 1921 served to intensify these fears and anxieties and confirm what had hitherto remained a mere supposition that the Congress High Command had beyond all doubt chosen to tread the communal path, when it campaigned for the nomination of Sinhalese candidates only for all Sinhalese electorates.

The *Hindu Organ*, in its editorial of 28 September, 1922, commented, "Swaraj or representative Government is, undoubtedly, an excellent thing—an object which all people should strive to attain. Few have more zealously and consistently in these columns, during the last thirty years or so, advocated constitutional reforms leading ultimately to the government of the people by the people in Ceylon than we have done in the belief that the community which forms the majority of the population world respect the feelings and interests of the other communities. But experience of the

last elections (1921) under the new reforms and the proceedings of the Sinhalese leaders of the Congress have shown that Swaraj in Ceylon in the present state of affairs would be the Swaraj of one community with all the other communities subordinate to it."

It was this change of front, this breach of faith, this brazen-faced violation of a solemn pledge, this *volte face* that produced a complete revulsion of feeling, and gave rise to grave fears and misgivings on the part of the Tamils, that the new Sinhalese leaders were not true to their professions, that they did not mean what they said. It was this that led Arunachalam to disown his own pet creation, the Congress, and sever all relations with it. It was this again that confirmed and intensified Ramanathan's fears of territorial representation and hardened him into an ardent and uncompromising advocate of communal politics.

The contemporary press throws light on the situation: "That Mr. James Peiris is the bottom cause of the Sinhalese-Tamil split is a fact which anyone with just a little common sense and knowledge of the political history of the Island for the past few years will have to admit, unless one is deliberately going to be blind to stubborn facts..... He opposed the Colombo Tamil Seat with all the strength and energy he could summon to his aid. Not content with that, he went on a crusade to Downing Street."

If amidst this medley of men and leaders who crowded the political scene with their bags full of nostrums for the political maladies of the time, if there was one who saw things in clearer light, saw the hideous truth, it was Ramanathan. He saw that in the wake of territorial representation, a perilous situation was fast shaping itself, that the minorities would not survive the impact of a territorially-elected unitary democracy, that they would be good grist for the majority mill. Any

wonder that this indomitable and lifelong champion of majority rights and liberties against an oppressor from without was by a curious destiny transmuted in the penultimate period of his enormous career into a stern defender of minority rights and liberties against an oppressor from within? Such alas! is the fickleness of human fortunes, such, the vagaries of politics!

Had he not changed his course with the changing currents of political thought and action, as became a true leader, had he not been true to his inner self, true to the inner light that guided his course through life, had he, ostrich-like, buried his head in the sands of wishful thinking and deceived both himself and the world into believing that all was well; had he patted the protagonists of territorial representation on the back and told them what fine fellows they were, he would have earned their plaudits, won their lusty applause; he would have gained the world, but lost his soul. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

E. W. Perera moved in the legislature a resolution "entering his emphatic protest against the extension of the communal principle, because such a policy is alien to the whole spirit of democracy, is entirely unjustified by existing conditions, and will result in keeping the different communities perpetually apart." In the course of his speech, he said, "I rise to lodge an emphatic protest against the intension of the government to revert to tribalism as the basic principle of Reform in this country..... *Here is a country which is practically homogeneous*, where the people of the different communities mixed freely and where the tradition of a community of interest has prevailed for a long time, both in social intercourse and in political development..... We are only working for a principle that had already been allowed to this country, and which is the corner-stone of

democracy and the foundation of British liberty, namely, that the representation of a country should be on territorial lines."

While denouncing communal representation with the fire and passion of an inspired prophet, branding it tribalism, and extolling the praises of unitary mathematical democracy for a multi-racial, multi-lingual community, Perera had, hidden in the innermost depths of his heart, a secret longing, a morbid craving, to set up under its cloak a tribal, a Sinhala imperialism superseding the British. He clutched at the terms 'territorial representation', 'unitary democracy' and 'adult franchise', knowing full well that such terms had a magic spell on the Englishman, while he studiedly avoided all mention of the one and only one condition precedent to the successful working of democratic institutions, namely a homogeneous and enlightened polity. He withheld the one cardinal, one salient fact that before the advent of Western imperialism and for centuries untold this Island had been the home of two different peoples speaking two different languages, professing two different religions, inhabiting two separate and sovereign states—Sinhala Ceylon and Tamil Ceylon—with clearly-marked national frontiers and ruled over, each by its own monarchs—and that unitary rule for the whole Island was only an importation, nay an imposition of the Britisher, a temporary expedient in the interests of imperial administration, termed 'supervisory convenience' in imperial parlance.

In support of his contention, Perera spoke of "British statesmen *who had honestly sought to evolve a homogeneous political community by proceeding on territorial lines, making communal representation the exception.*" It looks as if these British statesmen had either taken a leaf out of Procrustes' book or mistaken living human beings for logs of dead wood or slabs of hard granite

to be cut and shaped and moulded to order by the carpenter's or the sculptor's chisel.

To all these passionate outbursts, Ramanathan made adequate reply in a speech so trenchant and yet so convincing that it put to rout his assailants. The speech is unhappily too long to bear quoting even in parts. However, small bits of it are given here. He said, "I have listened with great attention to the arguments adduced by my honourable friend who represents the "B" division of the Western Province, and I cannot say that I am convinced by him. He seems to have taken a one-sided view of the whole question, and being firmly convinced that that view is the right view, he has poured forth his wrath upon the Secretary of State, the Governor, and various members of the Council, including the Attorney-General. He is entitled to be self-satisfied in that way; but luckily, in and out of this Council, there are sober-minded men who value arguments on their own merits, and who could judge for themselves whether the statements of my honourable friend are entitled to any weight. *He has shut his eyes to many parts of the question which are of vastly greater importance than the little issues he touched upon.* We have first to bear in mind the precise relation which the proposals of the Secretary of State bear to the constitution. I think, the public who are watching this discussion with keenness and anxiety are entitled to know how the matter really stands."

Ramanathan proceeded to commend the Reform proposals of the Imperial Parliament, embodied in the Despatch of January 11, 1923, which Mr. Perera denounced so violently as not conceding the territorial principle *in toto*, but smacking a little of the communal. He went on to say, "We have under the present constitution no less than thirty-two members, as against the sixteen now in the present Council. This is a hundred percent increase of elected members, and any man who understands

the real state of affairs must be thankful that such an advance has been made upon the present constitution. The Secretary of State declares in his despatch that the present constitution is a distinct advance upon the old constitution. All sane men will admit this to be quite true. The Secretary of State also says that he will not cry halt for ever on this question, but says that he would wait for five years, and that he is prepared to consider any amendment that may be presented to him at the end of this five-year period. This is far beyond what most of the thinking men in the country expected to get from the Secretary of State. But some selfish and speculative persons who have seized the machinery of the Ceylon National Congress have been advising their supporters for some years that they must open wide their mouths and ask for a hundred times more than they should get or would get. 'Ask for more and more,' they have cried, 'and then only would you get a half or a quarter of what you demand.' On this principle they have clamoured for a Constitution upon lines which I am perfectly certain the country is not ripe for as yet. It has now got all it needs for some years. My countrymen ought to be satisfied with what has been given to them in regard to the Legislative Council."

Ramanathan knew for a certainty that the views expressed by Mr. Perera and a few others of his persuasion were not shared by the generality of the Sinhalese leadership—men of integrity and honour too good for such subterfuges—but were part of a claptrap move on the part of a few hot-heads within the Congress fold to loom large on the political horizon, and seize the saddles of power by the simple expedient of raising the communal cry. He said, "My honourable friend is trying to voice in this council the opinion of a small body of speculative and

improvident persons. He should have paused, reflected, long before he gave notice of such a resolution as he has moved in Council. He is quite sure of its soundness. He is equally sure of the correctness of the opinions he has expressed. But neither opinionativeness nor the assurance of being right is always proof that what we say is true. I shall illustrate this by a personal experience. I entered the Legislative Council when I was twenty-eight years of age, and I was very incisive about my views those days. I often thought I had the right end of the stick, especially as I was used to gathering information laboriously from various sources, and to being in constant consultation not only with those who were in agreement with me, but also with those who were likely to differ from me. Slowly I arrived at a conclusion and then came to the Legislative Council and stated my views firmly, but always respectfully. All the country—the newspapers included—would sometimes say I had delivered an unanswerable speech. That was very pleasing, but when the time came for me to retire into my chamber, I used to review the incidents of the day. *My whole life has been subject to severe self-examination. My thoughts, words, and actions were brought under the test of self-criticism.* One day, a voice bubbled up within me and said: 'They say you have made an unanswerable speech. Do you think that is true? Can you honestly say that you feel that you are right, and others are wrong?' And I had to reply: 'I really do not know.' 'Then,' said the same voice, 'why were you so positive, so insistent?' I confessed my fault with a groan. Now, when I see a young man stand forth and use painful adjectives and vehemently assert himself in a way calculated to provoke even a saint, I could only say to myself, 'Here is a double-dyed edition of myself.' 'Double-dyed,'

because I see no signs in him of self-examination or respectfulness to opponents. He seems to be a member of a mutual admiration society, who hold secret counsel amongst themselves saying to one another: 'Am I not right? Am I not right?' And the others saying: 'Yes, you are right.' I would strongly advise my honourable friend, young as he is and capable of reform as he is, to consult men who think differently from him, and carefully consider what they may say. That is the first lesson he has to learn in social and political life. It would not do for a man to come here and spout by the yard about things which he has not considered from all points of view. He may earn the esteem of fools outside this Council, but here he must learn to associate respectfully with those who differ from him, and he must not assign dirty motives or hard names to those who differ from him."

Ramanathan continued, "I do not think that the Honourable Member for the 'B' Division of the Western Province should have exaggerated his case and spoken as if all the Sinhalese were one-minded or were in agreement with him. *I know that this country is full of very good Sinhalese men and women, many of whom I know. There is nothing but sympathy prevailing in their hearts for every other community in the Island, their interests being much the same commercially, agriculturally, and politically. But, Sir, I have something to say against that handful of would-be leaders, who, because they have been gifted with considerable facility of expression and courage of conviction are preaching a kind of democracy which, though suited to the homogeneous conditions of Western countries, is by no means suited to the very different conditions of Ceylon. The democracy proper to Ceylon is the government of Ceylon by officials selected by the King and by representatives elected by six different communities who justly desire to protect efficiently their respective interests. The democracy of Ceylon should not allow one community to enslave the remaining five communities. My honourable friend the member for the 'B' Division of the Western Province keeps harping that as the vast majority of the people of Ceylon are Sinhalese, they must have an overwhelming voice in the government of the country. Is this glorification of the Sinhalese community to the utter detriment and degradation of the other five communities humane or just?*

"Sir, the five other communities have great leaders of their own, and they will not tolerate such a claim, which would destroy the best interests of the whole of Ceylon. What did the leaders of the five different communities do? They sat down and discussed the claim of the would-be leaders of the National Congress. *I acquit three-fourths of the National Congress of any desire to harm the different communities, but I want to show up those few Sinhalese men who, posing as patriots, have schemed to do wrong.*"

At this juncture, it is well to remember that when matters were coming to a head, when the views of the few extremists inside the Congress were beginning to prevail and the minorities were becoming increasingly apprehensive of their future, Ramanathan caused a joint-memorandum to be drawn and signed by the minority-leaders and forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, moving for such modifications in the Congress scheme of representation as would enable the voice of the minorities to be heard in the Councils of State. It was a perfectly harmless document, a self-protective device, a life-belt in the grasp of the minorities, to escape being completely submerged by the tidal wave of arithmetical democracy. The spokesman of the Congress, E. W. Perera, branded it "infamous", while in reality it was the very reverse of "infamous", being an honest and honourable attempt on the part of national minorities to counter an arbitrary,

high-handed, nay, inhuman invasion of their indefeasible, inalienable rights. He called it a 'secret' document, while there was not the smallest trace of secrecy in a document drawn in the open by the accredited leaders of all the five minorities in the land and forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies through His Excellency the Governor. He, moreover, stigmatized it as a "betrayal of the Sinhalese", while, in truth, the boot was on the other foot. It was in reality a cruel betrayal of the minorities in general, in particular the Tamils, who had reposed absolute trust in the honesty of purpose and the sanctity of the pledged word of eminent Sinhalese leaders that nothing would be done to imperil the future of the minorities, that they would have the decisive say in determining their own destinies, but now found themselves completely at sea. It was the minorities who were sinned against rather than sinning—as was made out by majority leaders. Charges such as these, extravagant, most fantastic, even preposterous, are part and parcel of a political jargon, a figure of speech, so common and so fashionable today—whereby the brutal biter cries out to the wide world outside that he is being brutally bitten—as to evoke neither surprise nor resentment.

Ramanathan continued, "The memorandum says, 'When it came to the working out of this principle of territorial representation in detail, the Tamil delegates discovered that their Sinhalese colleagues, with certain exceptions, were striving to create electorates numerous enough in the Sinhalese districts to efface any opposition that may be offered on behalf of other interests. Consequently, the Tamil delegates and all the Tamil Associations which had been affiliated to the Congress, retired from it, and refused their co-operation.

'Thenceforth the Congress ceased to represent the joint views of the Sinhalese and Tamils, and

at its last session represented only the views of the Sinhalese and even of them, the views of those Sinhalese only who had consented to be politically organized. The Kandyan Sinhalese represented by such men as the Hon. Meedeniya and an influential section of the Low-Country Sinhalese at the head of which stand Sir Christoffel Obeyasekera and Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranayake, stood aloof, even as the Tamils, the Mohammedans and the Indians did. In these circumstances, the continued use of the words *Ceylon National Congress* is wholly unjustifiable and misleading.'

"My brother Arunachalam who was the founder and President of the Ceylon National Congress from its inception in 1919 until the latter part of 1920, and was a member of the Executive Committee in 1921, has withdrawn from the Congress. In an interview granted to the *Times of Ceylon* on the 14th of December last (four days after the division in Council), he said: 'The National Congress has now been reduced to one representing merely a section of the Sinhalese and the feeling of mutual confidence and co-operation between the various communities has been destroyed and the power and prestige of the Congress wrecked.' What remains now of the Ceylon National Congress is the Sinhalese section of it, and neither this section, nor the Sinhalese Members of the Legislative Council who voted together on the 10th of December last, have any claim to speak for anybody but themselves.

"There are five other communities standing apart, who have the right to speak respectively for the Europeans, Burghers, Tamils, Mohammedans and Indians, and they all earnestly desire to co-operate with each other."

He quoted further from the memorandum which said: "'We the undersigned Members of the Legislative Council, finding it would be dangerous to the welfare of the Island to accept the demands of

the Sinhalese Members, sought an interview with H. E. the Governor in November last to discuss with him the 'impasse' condition of affairs that had arisen. He explained to us his views and what he proposed to do in the circumstances, as follows:—

"It is proposed that the Council shall consist of 50 members and that the 50 seats shall be divided up amongst the various communities. But that is not the correct principle that should be adopted. *What we should aim at is to see that each community shall be so represented in the Legislative Council that it shall be able to make its voice heard. The various communities must themselves decide what the adequate representation shall be.* What we want is that all the communities shall say: 'We have carefully thought out what would be adequate representation for our community, and we place before Government our views.' I have not got that yet. Each community will naturally look at the demands of the other communities and see that they are not getting more than they should. It is there that the difficulty will come in. and then will be the time for us to see how we stand. Today (Nov. 4th), I do not definitely know what the proposals are as regards each community.

"In talking over this matter with Sir Ramanathan, I told him: 'If you can put up a scheme to which you all without exception agree and you say that the scheme is one which the present members of the Legislative Council have authorised you to put before me as a scheme which has been accepted by all, I must forward it to the Secretary of State and say it is the unanimous opinion of the members of the Legislative Council that the further reforms in regard to the Council should proceed on these lines. I may criticise them, but in these circumstances I must accept them.'

"I have always said that, if you do not agree with the views of the Congress, you must take steps to bring your own views to the Secretary of State."

"'Acting upon this advice of His Excellency the Governor, we have done our best to adjust differences with our Sinhalese colleagues in Council, but they have not recognised the impropriety of allowing any two communities to have a majority in Council by the strength of their own members.'"

Ramanathan continued, "Mr. Perera branded a harmless and essentially defensive document as 'infamous' and 'a betrayal of the Sinhalese', made an issue of it and raised much heat and dust over it. A truly famous and sacred document has been shamelessly characterized by my honourable friend by a word beginning with I and ending with S. I say it is that document which has bowled my friend over with all his coterie of wrong-thinkers and wrong-doers. *It is that document which makes him now like a worm. Let this be a pregnant lesson to him and others, braggart captains, who are now making their first steps on the political platfovm.* That document speaks for itself. It has met with the approval of those in authority and by all men who love truth and justice. and yet my honourable friend is full of impotent condemnation. That is because abundance of I-ness and My-ness, born of selfish desires, has constricted the vision of his soul. Hence his misunderstandings, his contrariness, and want of charity."

Replying to Mr. Perera's contention that the Montague—Chelmsford Reforms favoured territorial representation, Ramanathan said: "He has referred to the Montague—Chelmsford document and other reports. We know perfectly well that territorial representation is the right form of representation in the case of communities who, by oneness of religion, oneness of domestic and social customs, and oneness of sentiment and aspiration are able to understand each other and move well together. But if Montague and Chelmsford knew intimately the numerous differentiations prevailing in Ceylon, they would be the first to admit the soundness of the conclusions of our Secretary of State."

In his plea for territorial representation, Perera held up Ramanathan's election to the Educated Ceylonese Seat as a monumental example of Sinhalese immunity from the contagion of racialism or communalism. He forgot to mention the fact that Ramanathan had all his life been the trusted friend and ally of the Sinhalese more than of any other people, not excluding the Tamils, that it had been their battles that he had principally fought and won, that he was bound to them by the closest ties of mutual love and esteem, that he counted his choicest friends among them, that their relations had never before been strained until the few firebrands within the Congress fold asked for his acceptance of certain political propositions which revolted him, forgot to mention that, above all things he was the genius behind the Reform Movement, that it was his persistent and lifelong advocacy of national freedom that had immeasurably accelerated it, that the electorate then were more enlightened and more responsible than now. Ramanathan countered his assailant: "My honourable friend has drawn a wrong conclusion fron the fact that the English educated Ceylonese joined together to elect me as their representative in 1912 and again in 1917, and to reject the candidature of two well-known Sinhalese gentlemen. That was a very exceptional case, which does not justify the conclusion that Ceylon is ripe for purely territorial electorates. The circumstances which helped towards my election in 1912 and 1917 no longer exist now. The unique electorate called the Educated Ceylonese Electorate sanctioned by the Ordinance of 1910 consisted of Sinhalese Christians, Sinhalese Buddhists, Tamil Hindus and Tamil Christians, Burghers who did not care to be Burghers as defined by that Ordinance, and Moors and Malays. They numbered about three thousand voters who, true to their education, gloried in being non-racial. These English

educated men said: 'Where shall we get a man to represent all of us?' I had then retired from public life. When I was requested to stand for election, I said: 'Elect some one else', but they said: 'You are the man we want. For our sake please come. You need not ask a single man for his vote.' Of their own accord they elected me, because they knew that during the preceding thirty years I had always done my best to promote friendliness between the different races and to work in and out of Council for their common good. My English friends, Burgher friends, Sinhalese friends, and Mohammedan friends were of the best. We merged our differences, and stood together on the political platform. So solidly did we co-operate between 1879 and 1909, that Governors like Sir Arthur Gordon were obliged to confess that our influence with the Secretary of State was out of all proportion to our numerical strength, which was only six as against ten officials. The Ceylonese electorate, created in 1910, was qualified by fair English education and high property qualification. When I was serving as the Ceylonese Member, I observed a wrong conclusion taking root in the minds of certain men here. They fancied that, because I had been twice elected by all classes of people, irrespective of race or creed, the time had come for doing away with the Ceylonese Seat and forming many territorial electorates. They forgot that my election to that seat was due to special personal considerations, and that the electors were men who had a fair English education or were possessed of high property qualification. The National Congress movement in India fired the imagination of the younger generation in Ceylon at this critical period.

"Then, Sir, a man—I may say he is my brother, Sir Arunachalam—conceived the idea of forming a National Congress for Ceylon. The work was started in 1917, I believe, but what happened in

the end about three years afterwards? Sir Arunachalam was obliged to sever connection with the Ceylon National Congress. He resigned the Presidentship; many other members also seceded, because a handful of men had seized the machinery of the Ceylon National Congress and were working it for racial or personal aggrandizement. Sir Arunachalam publicly avowed that he retired from the Congress *because it was not worked for the benefit of all the communities of Ceylon, and because a handful of its members were fighting for their own ends, and were deliberately misleading the public and the Government alike. This amazing discovery came upon us with a shock.* And if my honourable friend asks why it is that we want a communal representation, our answer unhesitatingly is, *'Because of your own conduct.' Had they played fair, had they continued to be just, had they been appreciative of all the interests of the different communities, so that they could live together in amity and flourish in this glorious land, we would have still advocated territorial representation. But no chance was given to us. Good English education tested by public examinations and high property qualification have been abolished. Freedom of opinion has been gagged. Racial and class distinctions are stalking in the land cloaked under the high-sounding names of political freedom and territorial representation.* I hope, Sir, that my honourable friend will now clearly understand why the five communities of Ceylon, and even the Kandyan Sinhalese, condemn the tactics of the would-be leaders of the Ceylon National Congress. *I would ask him to examine himself in the quiet of the night, and he would then see that we have far greater interests to protect than those of the handful of men who are playing for their own aggrandizement.* We shall do our best to put before the Government and the Secretary of State our views of the situation. I would ask him not to call names. He must learn to respect those who entertain other views of public questions and to attribute to them good

motives as well as sincerity of heart. I appeal to my honourable friend in this Council to say now whether the scheme sanctioned by the Right Hon. the Secretary of State is just or not. I say that it is eminently fair."

Ramanathan knew that in a territorially elected unitary democracy the power to rule the roast would reside with the Sinhalese majority not for a time but for all time, that the minorities would be ground to dust by the majority mill; that they—at any rate the Tamils—would not in the age of universal freedom and equality consent to be underlings, political orphans in their own land, in the land that had fed and nourished them from dim antiquity, the land over which their own kings and potentates had held unquestioned sovereignty, until the evil genius of a predatory Westerner stepped in, subdued them along with the other peoples of the Island, pulled down their age-old frontiers, and forced them all into accepting a common yoke, a common rule for no known reason but that it suited his "administrative convenience."

Ramanathan did not mince words. He never did. He told this little coterie, this communal-minded caucus, what he really felt in the depths of his heart, told them that he would not be a party to territorial representation, that it would spell ruin and disaster to the minorities, the Tamils in particular, that they would be completely engulfed by the flood-tides of arithmetical democracy, that reason, justice and fair-play forbade that it should be so, that their whole history and geography, their whole culture and tradition revolted against its being so. But this little coterie had seen beckoning to them glittering prospects of place and power for themselves, and of supremacy for their people over all the other peoples in the land—where at no earlier time had such a dispensation, such a mode of government existed prior to the advent of Western rule—and had

become so far enamoured of them as to be in no mood to relent or heed the wise counsels of their elders.

All his powers of persuasion, all his appeals for reason and justice, for humanity and kindly-dealing left them unmoved. It was perhaps the bitterest moment in his long and illustrious career when the neo-Sinhalese leadership with no knowledge of the past, with little thought for the future, refused to take him at his word or give ear to his admonitions that the new constitution would strike at the foundations of national unity and solidarity and leave a running-sore in the body-politic. When it dawned on him that he could no longer work with them in the spirit of camaraderie, of goodwill and understanding which characterized his relations with earlier generations of Sinhalese leaders during four and a half decades of active partnership, and that he had, perforce, come to the parting of the ways, the disappointment struck him down physically and spiritually. It left a gaping wound in one of the most sensitive minds of all time. He covered his humiliations with silence, bore them with the equanimity and fortitude that became a man of God; but the change wrought in him was profound and decisive. The lifelong prophet of Ceylonese nationalism, of one country and one nation had perforce turned apostle of communalism, of a divided country. The militant champion of majority rights and liberties for four decades had now by a curious destiny hardened into the uncompromising advocate of minority interests. The many who had once acclaimed him, now frowned on him; the many who had all their lives cried him up, now cried him down. Such alas are the vagaries of politics, the play of human destiny, the fickleness of all things human and mundane. But all that made little difference to one who looked up to the Ruler within and not to the rulers without for his

acquittal. Amidst all this praise and blame, all this loud-mouthed laudation and sharp-tongued censure, few ever doubted the sincerity, the immaculate purity of his motives or loved and admired him less.

One of the main reasons adduced by Mr. C. E. Corea, a Congress stalwart and one of the foremost Sinhalese leaders of his time, a parliamentarian besides, of exceptional calibre and brilliance, for his refusal to accept the office of Congress President for the year 1924, was the wrong and injustice done to the Tamils by the Congress leaders. In his letter of refusal, he said, "I have reason to deplore the attitude of the Congress to the minorities. They have wrongly confused their national aspirations with communalism. Self-determination to all, should be the watchword of the Congress policy. What the Kandyans and the Tamils asked for was nothing more than the recognition of these three well-established divisions. They claim equal brotherhood. They want that each Province should be given adequate representation according to the merits and needs of each and not the mere counting of heads. I feel the Congress must accede to this. These are my political views and principles and if they are acceptable to the Congress, I am ready to place myself at its service without counting the cost."

It was the continuing tragedy of Ramanathan's prodigious career as statesman and leader of the nation that in its penultimate period, the period known to history as the Age of the Middle-Class Mediocrity, soon to be succeeded by the Age of the Common Man, he was caught among many fires. There was on the one side a foreign ruler who prized his own sovereignty above all things else; who was therefore self-willed, self-opinionated, unyielding. On another side were the majority leaders, at least a militant and vociferous section thereof, claiming all the loaves and fishes for

themselves, hap what may to the minorities. On yet another side, were his own colleagues and friends, the elected Tamil Members, the accredited champions, the trusted custodians of Tamil rights and liberties in the country's supreme legislature. The majority of these last were great and good men judged by conventional standards, hard-headed, hard-eyed, hard-grained, matter-of-fact men of the world, who were all eyes on self-interest beneath a well-worn veneer of respectability and disinterested patriotism, fishing for gains in every deal, who, afflicted, as a good many of their modern countparts, true to tradition, are, with a devastating passion to serve their people, the Tamils in particular and the nation in general, knowing full well that none else could discharge that sacred duty so well as they, and knowing too that there was no better means of assuaging that holy passion than by plunging into national politics, propelled themselves by all the arts they alone knew, into that haven of human felicity and bliss—the country's supreme legislature—and from their first entry down to their last exit, addressed themselves to the sublime task of interpreting the greatest happiness of the greatest number in terms of the greatest happiness of themselves and their numerous kin. Past masters in the art and craft of navigating the high seas of their country's politics, they would adroitly trim their sails to any passing wind, if only it blew unfalteringly or unerringly in the direction from which the call of Self-Interest came. They would woo any man or woman who gave them clear evidence of his or her capacity to pander to that Deity.

It is not strange that these stalwart champions of human rights and liberties, these toilers in the cause of human happiness and well-being, would never, at any rate not for long, own a leader or mentor, for that would involve the obligation to sail with him in the direction he thought best,

but that alas! would not be the direction in which their Promised Land lay. It is the special distinction, nay, the great glory of the Tamil legislators that few of them have within living memory acknowledged a leader, for another simple and obvious reason, that everyone of them knew the Gods had made him for no humbler role than that of leader, that he was a leader par excellence, whom everyone else should follow. The upshot of it all was that, while there were many to lead, there were few or none to follow. Any wonder that a leader of the majesty and eminence of Ramanathan could not command a following, or that many of them went so far as to deride him and question his right to pronounce on matters that appertained to the Tamils. Amidst the babel of voices raised by too many prophets and too many saviours, the authentic voice of a true son of the people was drowned, and with it, the fortunes of an ancient and flourishing people.

The abysmal depths to which public life had sunk and the dizzy heights to which aggressive individualism and tireless self-seeking had risen among the new generation of Tamil leaders finds poignant expression in the lament of the editor of a Northern journal. In his editorial of 4th October, 1923, he says, "Patriotism can be of only one kind. A man can only be a patriot or not a patriot. But in this world where men openly put on appearances in order to gain some object or objects which they hold dear, there have been found men who, while professing to be patriots, are not only not what they profess to be, but are just the reverse of it. If a man calls himself a patriot and takes part in patriotic movements and expects the co-operation and confidence of the public, while he is always exceedingly careful about advancing his own personal ends, he is called a false patriot and his patriotism false patriotism.

"We are of opinion and it must be clear even to an intellect gifted with the least imagination that the greatest need of this country is true patriotism in those who undertake the very arduous task of bettering the political conditions of the country."

It is most poignant, even heart-rending to reflect that many of Ramanathan's wise, beneficent and far-sighted moves to save the Tamils from what he foresaw, was an impending catastrophe at critical periods of their history, when the unity and solidarity of the Tamil representatives was all that was necessary to avert it, were foiled and set at naught by no other than the very men who posed as their leaders and saviours and whom they voted to the legislature, who in the simple discharge of their trust should have been his staunch allies and supporters, but who in reality proved to be his bitterest opponents. Attempts are being made to pin the blame for the complete collapse of Tamil fortunes on all and sundry, on the Britisher and on our Sinhalese brethren. But when the tragic history of the Tamils comes to be written, as it must one day come, the world will know the truth, the stark and unflattering truth, that the Tamils were foiled not by enemies from without but rather by enemies from within, that they were their own undoing, that they have none else to blame but their own sweet selves. They can endure anybody and anything, but a great national leader or a great national purpose they truly cannot. At no period of Ramanathan's leadership did the Tamil members of the legislature with rare exceptions, lend him their support or at any rate maintain a position of neutrality. On the contrary, they crossed his path at every turn and thwarted his purposes by every means in their power. When he was at war with the British rulers, they were one with the British. When he was at war with the majority leaders, they were one

with the majority leaders. Under a foreign ruler long inured to democratic rule, with whom numbers was all that mattered in issues, big and small, and right and wrong were of little consequence, with whom matters of the highest moment, matters of life and death hung on a majority vote, many of Ramanathan's far-sighted measures to build up a strong, vigorous and well-knit national polity founded upon the basic principles of truth, reason, justice and fair-play for all proved abortive. Human perversity, nay iniquity, could not have gone farther. "Tuppenny saints have been the ruin of the church," was the desperate cry of a Christian Bulgar impatient of grabbing clergy given to collecting pennies professedly for church purposes. "Many an ass hath entered Jerusalem," bemoaned another, expressing his abhorrence of the entry of inept and prating priests into the Holy Church of Christ. Tuppenny politicos and asinine prophets have between themselves bartered and brayed away the fortunes of an ancient and prosperous people. All the terrible reverses, all the tremendous set-backs that have confounded the community since the third decade of the century and thereafter, have been of their making. Had they listened to the great leader, listened to his wise counsel, had they given self-interest a holiday, set aside for a brief while their congenital jealousies and bickerings, rallied round him and told the ruler in so many words that a territorially-elected unitary democracy of the British pattern for a multi-racial, multi-lingual society such as Ceylon, was a flagrant and unabashed violation of all the known principles of constitution-making and that the minorities would not survive its impact, but that they would face ruin and disaster for themselves and for all things they hold dear, the ruler would have had no choice but to listen to them, to come to terms with them, for reason and justice and constitutional law and practice in other lands

were all on their side; had they chosen to tread the path that their leader, the Father of the Reform Movement and acknowledged leader of the nation for well-nigh half-a-century, had chalked out for them, the Tamils would now have little cause to weep or wail.

On the contrary, these corrupt and selfish factions spared no pains to discredit him, even disparage him. They joined with the revilers to revile, with the scoffers to scoff. Flippant detraction of all things great and good, of great names and reputations—infallible symptoms of a society on the highroad to decadence—was their stock-in-trade, the main note in their gamut. The sorry plight to which these adventurous and self-seeking politicians had reduced the legislature during the decade and a half during which Ramanathan held the office of Solicitor-General and went on his extended lecture-tour to America, can be gauged from one of his speeches in the legislature on a point of order. He said, "I readily concede that for eleven or twelve years this Council has upon motions made by some official or other *silently given its adhesion to that procedure in regard to the reading of Bills, but, I think, we should not be governed by the action of our predecessors. We can take an independent view of things.* Standing as we are under the observation of an eager class of critical minds which want to know whether this Legislative Council is going to continue to be an object of pity and ridicule as in days past, let us consider the proper procedure. Rules are made for the consideration of Bills and time must be given to every party concerned to study the the Bill and then to form an opinion thereon, and to place such opinion before Your Excellency and this Council. The supply Bill contains hundreds of points upon which light is needed from a point of view other than that which the official mind has grasped. How are these questions to be properly

considered, and how are we ourselves to do our respective duties in regard to the Government of the country? Our one desire is to help the Government in the administration of this country upon just lines. We are willing to work, but how can we go to sleep with a sense of duty done?"

It will be too long and tedious to enumerate the many efforts that Ramanathan made to ensure a safe and secure future for all communities of the Island and through it, build a happy, contented and well-knit Ceylonese nation. While the reform proposals of 1923 were under consideration, when Congress leaders were intransigent in their attitude towards the minorities and it was feared, these proposals, if implemented, would push the minorities to the wall, and the situation looked desperate, and when in consequence he summoned a conference of all minorities and addressed to the Secretary of State a Joint-Memorandum (already referred to earlier), seeking succour, the elected Tamil representatives of both the North and the East swung to the side of the majority leaders and made common cause with them and opposed him with every weapon at their command, thus giving the British rulers the impression that territorial representation and all it stood for had the wholehearted support of the Tamils as expressed by their elected representatives. The Member for the North said in the course of a press interview: "I cannot understand how age and experience could have been guilty of such egregious blunders..... No sane Tamil unobsessed by personal magnificence could have been guilty of such a woeful exhibition of political absurdity." He went a step further. He invited the Congress leaders to his Northern home, hosted them amid fanfare and trumpets and signed a memorable pact guaranteeing his unqualified and unwavering support for territorial representation. The Britisher, though he knew

the Congress proposals for reforms would be disastrous to the minorities, had no choice but to implement them, when they were acclaimed by the elected representatives of both the major communities, the Sinhalese and the Tamils. When the Tamils of Colombo, in view of their numbers and their growing economic and professional interests, demanded a Tamil Seat for the metropolis, and the rulers, seeing the justice of the demand, agreed to concede it, these self-same Tamil members of the North and the East ranged themselves alongside the Sinhalese leaders and entered upon a vigorous and acrimonious protest against the grant of the Seat.

It was in reference to these reform proposals that the *Hindu Organ* of 21st Sept., 1922, writing editorially said, "It should be borne in mind that every scheme of Legislative Council reforms formulated by the Sinhalese leaders from the day of the Ceylon National Conference in 1917 up to the Congress of 1923 has been so designed as to place a Sinhalese majority in the legislature as against the Representatives of all other communities combined. They have even violated the pledge given in regard to a Reserved Seat to the Tamils in the Western Province, although they were prepared to grant Reserved Seats to all other communities including the Kandyans who are in a majority in five out of the seven Sinhalese Provinces."

The member for the North chose to drive another wedge into the relationship of the Tamils by drawing a very subtle, insidious and far-fetched distinction between the Tamils of the North and the Tamils of Colombo who were none other than the Tamils of the North resident in Colombo for professional and commercial purposes. Instead of drawing them closer together and strengthening their ranks, as became a true leader, this celebrity from the North was scattering them to the winds by drawing such mischievous and uncalled-for distinctions.

If one would trace the causes of such unwonted behaviour to their roots, one would find a desire to swim with the current and be sharers in the spoils which would follow in the wake of the reforms. He said, "We in the Northern Province are governed by the law of *Thesavalamai*. Those members of the Tamil community who migrated from the Northern Province many years ago and abandoned their willingness to be governed by the principles of the *Thesavalamai*, and resided in Colombo, are governed by the law of the Maritime Provinces, and not by the *Thesavalamai*. The identity of interests of the Tamil people who resided in the Northern Province and those who came to the metropolis, is lost as it were, because the latter bettered themselves and advanced themselves in so many ways and looked upon Colombo as their home."

The member representing the Eastern Province was no less hostile and caustic. He said, "It would seem very ungrateful for a Tamil to criticize Your Excellency's recommendation that the Tamils should have a Reserved Seat in Colombo. I may, however, say that it is more than what they deserve. Though it may seem ungrateful, I find, Sir, that I cannot support the reservation of a seat for Colombo." He now proceeded to refer to the great leader in tones of contemptuous and flippant detraction by harping on the words 'Nominated' and 'Knight'. This trumpery, petti-fogging politico from the East had not the wisdom to understand that the institution of Knighthood had gained a new prestige, a new elevation by Ramanathan's admission to that chosen fraternity, while in the estimation of the country and the world, plain Mr. Ramanathan was a far greater man, more honoured, more revered, more cherished than the gilded Knight Sir Ponnambalam. It is true that Ramanathan was nominated to the legislature in 1921 by Governor Manning, not because Rama-

nathan sought nomination—he never did—but because Governor Manning "needed the benefit of his wise counsel, his rich experience in view of important changes contemplated in the Constitution." The good Governor who did much for Reforms was actuated by the fear that Ramanathan might retire from politics on completing the full ten years of the duration of the Educated Ceylonese Seat. His Excellency knew full well that it was with extreme difficulty that the intelligentzia of the country prevailed on him to contest both the elections to the Educated Ceylonese Seat, that he had at that time set his heart on educational and religious work, that Parameshwara College was then building and that the only means of securing his services to the legislature was by nomination. Had Ramanathan, the erstwhile all-Ceylon Member and the cherished idol of the nation, sought election to any constituency, be it Sinhalese or Tamil, he would beyond the shadow of a doubt, have swept the polls. The Member for the East continued, "The Hon. the Nominated Tamil Member—or I would call him the Nominated Knight—for whom I have the greatest respect, stated that the judge has decided the grant of the Tamil Seat for Colombo and that there is no appeal. I challenge that statement, and would ask him whether there is not still room for an appeal to set right what has been done either in ignorance or through device."

He proceeded to question the propriety of Ramanathan's participation in the memorial presented to the Governor by minority leaders, on the ground that Ramanathan was only a nominated member and added that the proper persons to do it were he and his ally the member for the North, by reason of their being elected members. Could temerity have gone any further?

He went on, "I say that the representation contained in that memorandum, which has been called the secret memorandum or memorial, *does nor represent the opinion of the Tamils.* I do not deny for a moment the high position occupied, and rightly occupied by the veteran Knight in our commmunity. But it is one thing not to deny the high position, and another, to state that he represents all the people in the community. *He did not represent the Tamil community, for the reason that he was not elected by them.*" No wonder, when giants are in the ring, the motley fools below too stage a mock-fight as an exercise in contrast and an attempt at providing cheap diversion for the groundlings in the pit below; when hot and fiery steeds neigh, asses too bray.

It was this suicidal and self-destructive enterprise of the Tamils in entrusting their political destinies to venal adventurers and shady self-seekers, men devoid of all the attributes of leadership, coupled with the agility and adroitness with which the majority leaders made capital out of it that led the Tamils up the garden-path into the wilderness below. If the Tamils have any to blame it is their own benighted folly, their crass stupidity in entrusting their political destinies at critical periods of their history to men utterly unworthy of their trust, exploiters enjoying the chance of their lives, hectic fishers in troubled waters, who would barter away a whole people's birthright for a mess of personal pottage. In a world all that rules the roast is numbers, in which true statesmanship, genuine patriotism and love of dedicated serve in the government of human society invite the derision of the multitude, in which the demagogue and the rabble-rouser commanded a following, in which reason, justice, humanity, and kindly-dealing between man and man and between peoples and nations have been banished from the domain of men, no wonder human societies the world over find themselves in the doldrums.

Some ill-informed critics have said that Ramanathan was not wholly immune from blame

for this untoward turn of things, that he fell a victim to the machinations of Governor Manning, who in his endeavour to perpetuate British rule accentuated racial differences and set the two principal peoples of the Island at variance. It was all pure fiction, a malicious concoction of his political opponents, who saw in him the gravest impediment to the achievement of their obnoxious purposes. In truth, none ever subdued him, much less a foreign ruler. If ever any did, it was his own compatriots and colleagues, the Tamil Members, who by sheer weight of numbers and unity of purpose had the ear of the alien ruler. None other saw the problem in clearer, brighter or truer light than he, as none felt its gravity more acutely than he. But what could he or any man do in a land wherein a brutal majority vote carried all things before it, wherein reason, justice, fair-play and kindly-dealing were fast becoming grossly archaic, hopelessly obsolete, and nincompoops stole the whole show and could by the simple expedient of raising their hands bring the greatest of statesmen to his knees.

A great contemporary has, in the course of a brief appreciation of Ramanathan's life and work, has told us that he was not immune from the malicious tongues of men. He says, "In public or in private, there is a remarkable persuasiveness of speech about Ramanathan. At 'Sukhastan' he is a genial host, a pleasant talker. With equal grace he will talk to you and with equal ease on the age, authorship and merits of so dry a thing as *Tholkapiam* as he will discourse on the spiritual sublimities of *Thiruvasagam*. Law, politics, literature or religion, he is quite at home in any, so much and so comfortably that people wonder whether he is a scholar or impostor. He is a great man. His friends say he is a great man maligned. His enemies say he is a great man marred. He is a remarkable man, one who has not blundered

into distinction, but steadily, with a set purpose he has worked his way up to where he is now. He has laboriously made himself. From the beginning, he was meant for great things and it is in his power to fulfil the high purpose to which he is called or to baffle the workings of destiny and sink into the slough of low promptings. *No public man of any note in Ceylon has in so short a time been so confronted with severe opposition, so met with deadly hate, so pointedly abused and so held up to public execration as he—but he has* surprised his enemies, belied the croakings of doom and defied all and everything by the dignified calm of the Stoic. He has outlived much and he would be a false prophet were he not to read in the providences of his past that much is expected of him, that his name may be a power for great good among his people."

It was the tragedy of Ramanathan's enormous career that its latter half coincided with the early decades of the twentieth century, known to history as the Age of the Middle-Class Mediocrity. It was the era of iconoclasts, when great names and reputations were toppled down from their lofty pedestals, when debunking was the fashionable creed of the time, and established dignitaries and secure celebrities were unceremoniously thrown out of their seats of power and prestige and the Middle-Class mediocrity with little culture and less scruple, found himself entrenched therein, when traditional and age-old values and ideals were derided and jettisoned, when the loud-mouthed demagogue and the rabble-rouser in the market-place commanded a following and seized the reins of power. Amidst the mass of mediocrities that constituted and will for ever constitute mankind, Ramanathan moved like a Titan amongst his fellow-men, somewhat aloof and unapproachable, lashing their base ambitions and pretensions. In that condition of public affairs, it need evoke neither surprise nor

resentment that the Tamil twins of Sir William Manning's administration could summon sufficient temerity to challenge Ramanathan's right to speak for the Tamils, the right of a man who had begun the leadership of the Tamils long before these Tamil twins were in their mothers' wombs, who had with supreme distinction represented all-Ceylon for the whole duration of the Educated Ceylonese Seat and was now in Council on the express invitation of Governor Manning to advise him in view of great changes contemplated in the government of the Colony. One is constrained to cry out, *O tempora, O mores.*

It is apposite that at this point we examine some of the causes that led to the rapid decline and fall of Tamil fortunes in their ancient island-home, during the decades of British rule during which the transfer of power to the people was effected. One was the rulers' abysmal ignorance of the early history and geography of the peoples who inhabited it, their distinctive languages and cultures, their manner of life and their modes of government. Nor has anyone reason to blame them, for they came not for intellectual or spiritual enlightenment but purely for material aggrandizement, however it came. They little knew that from pre-historic ages, the Tamils had been occupying the habitable parts of the Island and ruling over a rich and prosperous kingdom with cultural and commercial ties with Mediterranean countries; that long centuries later, the Sinhalese immigrated into the Island and set up a kingdom of their own in the central and south-western regions with the result that at the time the Western powers set foot on the Island there were two separate and sovereign peoples—the Sinhalese and the Tamils—with their clearly-marked national frontiers. The amalgamation of these two separate and sovereign states—Sinhala Ceylon and Tamil Ceylon—to form one political unit was only an imposition of the Britisher in 1833,

to serve what he termed his 'supervisory convenience'. Since the turn of the present century or earlier, the idea was propagated assiduously among British administrators in the Island and the ruling classes in England, that the Island had from early times been the home of only one people, the Sinhalese people, and that the Tamils are only latter-day immigrants from India.

Such false and vicious propaganda had its desired effect and proved to be the parent of immeasurable harm done to the Tamils at the time that British rule ended. Instead of restoring the *status quo ante,* that is, restoring to each of the two peoples its sovereignty and its traditional homelands—that is what any just and responsible imperial power would and should have done—the Britisher saddled the two disparate and discordant peoples together under a unitary democracy of the British pattern, and left them to settle their disputes between themselves. Hence it was that the Island witnessed some of the worst disasters in its history, the triumph of the law of the jungle, the inhuman atrocities, the hideous brutalities, the rape of innocent and helpless women and girls, rapine, arson, and the multitudinuous other barbarities perpetrated during the Communal Riots of 1956 and 1958 and thereafter; hence the vast-scale expropriation of Tamil territory for State-sponsored Sinhala colonization, the Government's notorious neglect of the economic and social development of the Tamil provinces. Whereas during a period of only thirty years after Independence in 1948, well over three hundred and fifty massive schemes of development—industrial, agricultural, social—have been carried through in the Sinhalese provinces, for the most part with Foreign Aid, only three factories were set up in the Tamil homelands soon after Independence and none thereafter; hence, shutting the Public Service and all seats of higher learning, the universities and the polytechnics in

particular, against the Tamils; hence the Torture Chamber and the incarceration of innocents in frightful prison-cells for long years without trial, the tyranny of the police and the armed-forces—these and innumerable such acts of tyranny and barbarism as has never before been known in the history of a people who had from the dawn of history lived and prospered as a free, independent, peace-loving and law-abiding people under their own kings and potentates. All these tyrannical excesses were perpetrated by one people against another people solely in the name of majority rule.

It is the Britisher and no other who is the villain of the piece. The communal problem is his problem, his sole handiwork. He had no reason or justification to have acted in the way he did either at the time of his coming—merging two separate and sovereign peoples into a single polity —or at the time of his departing—leaving things not as he had found them but as he had made them only to serve his imperial ends, viz. "supervisory convenience." The imperialist Englishman who had neither the time nor the patience to study the historical and geographical backgrounds of the two peoples, took all this propagandist material for gospel truth and chose to regard the Ceylon Tamils not as the earliest inhabitants of the Island—which they really are, a well-known fact of history—but as mere intruders and interlopers of a later era come to snatch the fruits of the Island from their legitimate claimants, the Sinhalese.

How profound, how dreadful was the Englishman's ignorance can be gauged from two stray incidents: The Governor Lord Gordon got into serious scrapes with Ramanathan, when His Excellency let fall a remark in the legislature in the early eighties of the last century that his "friends in England took him (Ramanathan)

for a Sinhalese." This episode is told in greater detail in Vol. I of the Biography. It was no fault of the English friends. They, poor fellows, were taught to believe that the Sinhalese constituted the sole national community in the Island.

As late as 1922, in answer to a question asked in the British Parliament by a Member, Mr. Bennet, "whether in any of the British Colonies, an Indian sits in the local legislature by election, as distinguished by nomination," the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lieutenant Colonel L. S. Amery said, "In Ceylon, a person of Indian origin but born in Ceylon, the Hon. P. Ramanathan sits on the local legislature as the Ceylonese Member."

Nor could the Tamil leaders, poor fellows, preoccupied with their own petty feuds and dissensions, their mutual jealousies and hatreds, their selfish greed and ambition spare a few moments to combat this pernicious propaganda that sought to reduce the Tamils to the degrading level of immigrant adventurers. It was given only to a Sinhalese ethnologist and antiquarian of international repute, a gentleman, besides, of the highest integrity and culture, the late Dr. Paul E. Peiris to do that service for the Tamils. He said, "Long before the arrival of Vijaya, there were in Lanka five recognized *Isvarams* of Siva which claimed and received the adoration of all India. These were Thiruketeeswaram near Mahatittha, Munniswaram dominating Salawatta and the Pearl Fishery, Tandeswaram near Mantota, Thirukoneswaram opposite the great Bay of Koddiyar and Nakuleswaram near Kankesanthurai.

"Everyone must concede that the chief influence which has been exercised on the Sinhalese Court throughout its history was the Dravidian interests of South India. I am of opinion that long before the arrival of Vijaya, the country had been fully occupied by Dravidian Races.

"I hope the Tamil people will realise that in truth there is buried in their sands the story of much more fascinating development than they had hitherto dreamt."

But the false and vicious propaganda had already done its worst, taken its hideous toll It resulted in immeasurable harm being done to the Tamils at the time the British transferred power to the people. They regarded the Tamils, just as they regarded Ramanathan, as Indians born in Ceylon and with little or no permanent stake in the country. Otherwise they would not have treated them so cavalierly or so inhumanly as to throw them to the tyrannies and oppressions of a people of another race and persuasion, in imposing on them a unitary mathematical democracy. Instead of restoring the *status quo ante*, that is restoring to each of the two peoples its traditional and age-old dominions and sovereignties thereof—as any responsible, any sensible and fair-minded imperial power would and should have done—the British left the country, knowing full well how the country would fare, when the conqueror's whip had been withdrawn.

Another factor that led to the fall of Tamil fortunes was that, since the commencement of the freedom struggle, the public-spirited among the Sinhalese had at great personal expense a permanent team of able and patriotic leaders resident in England to watch their political interests, watch every move on the political chess-board, brief the Secretary of State for the Colonies and other members of Parliament and press their communal claims with firmness and promptitude. But the Tamils never had any. That is not to say they were idle. The far-famed Scots of the East never were; they never are. Cruel to level so atrocious a charge against one of the most industrious and enterprising peoples the world has seen. They were frightfully busy with their

customary pugilistic exercises, fighting bitterly among themselves over trivialities, each of them fighting desperately to undo the other, completely oblivious of the larger and weightier issues that confronted them and their people; for one dominant characteristic of the Scots of the East—laudable or otherwise, should be left to better judges—has been and, thank God, continues to be that no two leaders will agree on any common policy or programme, for each of them believed the Almighty in the abundance of His Mercy had marked him for His own, chosen him for the role of Messiah, come to deliver his people from bondage to alien masters. Moreover, a proverbially frugal people, these Scots of the East, are paradoxically the most extravagant when it comes to expenditure on all forms of ephemeral display, on self-advertisement, on weddings and temple festivities that proclaim the grand performer, on sumptuous eating, drinking and merry-making on festive occasions, but for expenditure on any kind of constructive, creative activity of enduring value such as providing a safe and secure harbourage for their people, or repelling an enemy from outside and ensuring their future survival as a free and self-respecting people, they have no money to spare. Hence their case went by default. On the Reforms question, Sinhalese leaders invariably closed their ranks, took counsel together, confronted the rulers with an agreed body of proposals and had recourse to every resource in their power to have their case accepted.

On the contrary the Tamil leaders were sharply divided among themselves, each viewing the question more from the sordid angle of self-interest than from the larger standpoint of national well-being, and confronted the rulers with conflicting counsels often obnoxious to the Tamils but gainful to themselves. No wonder, at every reform of the constitution they were systematically elbowed out of the inner councils of state and made mere

impotent onlookers, rather than rightful actors in the grand drama of governing their country. The fault, Dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings. The Tamils of the present-day have always thought and acted in terms of the individual self, the personal self, never in terms of the corporate community, never thought of the individual as but a part, a mere speck of a great organic whole, the whole being a great and ancient people with a great and ancient heritage of culture and tradition, with a distinctive territory and sovereignty harking back to the remote past; never thought the happiness and well-being of the individual is dependent on and commensurate with the happiness and well-being of the community. Hence, the unholy, unpatriotic scramble on their part to barter away the Tamil destinies for place and power for themselves, utterly unmindful of stupendous harm they were heaping on the community and in good time on themselves and their progeny.

Another important factor was that the Tamils had forfeited the sympathy and the goodwill of the rulers by the fact of their being the pioneers and the most impassioned crusaders in the cause of national freedom and sovereignty. While it was the time-honoured practice among subject peoples for the majority community to fight the battle for freedom, to confront the alien ruler with a stern demand for self-rule, and for the minorities to woo him, in this Island alone we saw the roles reversed, the Tamils being the focus and spear-head of the national resistance to foreign rule, while the Sinhalese were content to be their camp-followers. None other challenged with more unrelenting vigour and pertinacity the foreigner's right to hold sovereignty over another's land, as none did more to impair his prestige by open diatribes against his wrongs and injustices done to subject peoples. No wonder, the iron entered

the foreigner's soul and made him view the Tamils not so much with disfavour as with positive hostility and contempt. The Tamils looked for fairer treatment at the hands of their compatriots, the Sinhalese; had they not defied the Britisher at every turn but treated him more honourably, even tolerably, and told him the truth that the Tamils are not immigrant adventurers begging for little morsels of food from their masters, but masters in their own right claiming their legitimate and age-old inheritance, that the earliest historical records and archaeological finds extant proclaim their earliest occupation of the Island, proclaim the spread of their ancient language, their great culture and religion to every part of the Island, he would not have left them helpless orphans in a free and independent Sri Lanka.

Another important factor was that the Tamils never had a press to call their own, for that demands collective and corporate action. A free and virile press is the bulwark of a people's freedom. The Tamils had none to state the Tamil case, to stand up for Tamil rights and liberties and tell the rulers and the world in so many words and from day to day that the Tamils of Ceylon had as good a claim on the Island as any other people and that they would stand up for their rights and liberties, hap what may. All that the Tamils had were a few shabby, soul-less and religion-oriented weekly or fortnightly sheets, while the majority community had a vigorous and forthright press with three dailies to state its case in all its dimensions and enlist national and imperial sympathy and support. In fulfilment of one of his long-cherished dreams, Ramanathan, as stated earlier, canvassed popular support for a truly national daily and founded *The Ceylonese*. For a time, things went well but soon the communal canker crept in, and before long

Ramanathan was removed from the Directorate. Thereafter *The Ceylonese* lingered on for a brief while and at last petered out. "A Colombo Tamil" writing in the *Hindu Organ* of March 31, 1924 laments the ignoble part some majority leaders played in this tragic episode. He says, "We are also aware who plotted and conspired and were responsible for removing the Hon'ble Sir P. Ramanathan from the Directorate of the Ceylonese Union Company which conducted the now defunct paper, *The Ceylonese* and who subsequently conducted the affairs of the Company. Had it not been for this conspiracy, *The Ceylonese* would not have closed its useful career and would today be fighting for the rights of the Tamils."

What was really at fault with the Tamils was their affliction with a wrong philosophy of life, their addiction to false values, their narrow and selfish individualisms, their feverish craze for material and egotistical ends, their congenital incapacity to work in harmony with their fellowmen, their readiness to sacrifice the larger interests of their country and their people for petty, personal gains, their unseemly scramble for place and power, their incorrigible propensity always to go one better than his neighbour, hap what may to his country or his people. While with peoples the world over, freedom is the first of national priorities, the choicest of God's blessings to man, with the Tamil freedom, national or personal, counts for little, as is evidenced by their leaders' abject readiness to bend their knees before insolent might, be servile supplicants before every alien impostor, and barter away their liberties and their people's for a mess of personal pottage. What is strange is that the people themselves have been condoning it over the years, while in other lands, the people would ere long have taught these mendicants their business. Centuries of servitude to alien invaders have inured them to the belief

that servitude is the law of life, the natural, the inevitable and the pre-ordained lot of Tamil man. Hence their meek acquiescence in, nay their ready and willing acceptance of a servile way of life. Else, why is it that the Tamils who call themselves the oldest people on earth with a language, and literature, a culture and civilization which hark back to the hoary past, which are the envy and despair of the greatest nations the world over, should find themselves in chains wherever they happen to be? It is notorious that, when primitive peoples not far removed from savage societies, with little education or culture or discipline, with comparatively little claim to separate sovereign existence, with no experience of working parliamentary institutions are glorying in their new-won freedom, the Tamils alone are groaning under the fetters of alien masters.

However much his colleagues, the Tamil Members, assailed him at every turn and spared no pains to discredit him and defeat many of his efforts to secure for the Tamils their rightful place in national life, Ramanathan never complained. It was not in his nature to complain. He knew that unregenerate man is at bottom an incorrigibly selfish animal and any attempt to wean him from his selfish purposes would be but to hit one's head against the wall.

Ramanathan's shafts were mainly directed against the Britisher, for he knew the Britisher was the culprit and had much to answer for in his imperial history. It was he who had led subject peoples into a colossal maze, and it was up to him to have led them out of the maze, before he took leave of them. It was he who ruthlessly pulled down age-old national frontiers and created new ones to satisfy his imperial purposes. It was for him on his departure to have restored those old frontiers and the *status quo ante* of the peoples whose territories and sovereignties he had mangled

and mutilated. His pretensions and professions were many, but his performances were few. Discovering a better and a happier destiny for subject peoples was one of his oft-proclaimed policies. He told the world, his mission was to save the world, to recreate it, to usher in a new era of peace, prosperity and progress, of happiness and contentment for all; but in practice on his departure, he paved the way for a period of anarchy, for reversion to barbarism and barbaric tyrannies. The White Man's burden proved to be the Black Man's ruin.

Far be it from me to say that this unhappy state of things existed during his period of rule. Rather it followed the cessation of his rule but owing chiefly to the blunders he wittingly or unwittingly committed in planning the future structure of the governments of peoples he liberated. Had he played fair by all, had he acted with a due sense of his high responsibility, his great mission, as became a great ruler, by the many peoples whose future destinies were in his keeping, such atrocious and inhuman episodes as have soiled the pages of the history of Free-Ceylon would not have been enacted. His pet nostrum, his sole specific for man's multitudinous political ills, however complex or tangled or multi-faced, has been but one, viz. parliamentary democracy and its concomitant, majority rule. And majority rule in a multi-racial polity means that the racial majority sits on the throne, while the racial minorities are made its foot-stool. His belief that the majority is always right, that, however communal or intolerant. it is born to rule, while the minority communities, whatever their political past, are always to be ruled, and if need be, trampled under foot and exterminated, has been a fetish with him. He forgets that man is innately and incorrigibly a selfish and communal animal, more aggressive, more predatory, than the most predatory

beasts of the jungle, that he would without the smallest qualms of conscience fling all scruples to the winds and act diabolically, if that would advance his own selfish purposes. Many of the Britisher's newly-liberated lands are paying dearly for his overweening confidence in the efficacy, the sanctity, the inviolability of majority rule.

Instead of rendering unto Caesar what was Caesar's and unto God what was God's, instead of restoring to each of the two peoples what was lawfully and inalienably its own territory and sovereignty, he planned to go one better, to pose before the world not wholly as an imperialist but more as a reformist also. He set out to fashion new worlds out of old, to carve out new states out of the old ones he had subdued and ruled, and in the act, proved to be the grave-digger of many ancient, prosperous and sovereign peoples. Had the Britisher given a thought to whether arithmetical democracy would pass muster in a land peopled with such disparate and discordant elements, he would not have lapsed into the fatal fallacy of supposing that what was good for an educated, enlightened, homogeneous and above all, long-evolving State like Britain was also good for Ceylon. Had he been true to his own self, true to the trust reposed in him by subject peoples, he would not have acted so cavalierly or so recklessly but would categorically have told those aspirants to a majority dictatorship that unitary mathematical democracy was not the sort of government suited to the needs of a multi-lingual, multi-racial society, that it would spell ruin and disaster to the minorities and render peaceful and progressive government all but impossible. But that was not to be. He merely dilly-dallied shilly-shallied, acting presumably on the principle "after me the deluge". Moreover, there is one congenital disability or debility under which the Britisher suffers. He is obsessed by the belief that numerical democracy as exempli-

fied by him in his own land is the acme of human achievement in the realm of government, that it is his greatest contribution to the sum-total of human happiness, that on its application, all the blues that afflict the government of human societies will ipso facto vanish.

It is remarkable that when the Britisher finds that the time has at long last come for him to take leave of his subject peoples, he adopts a step-motherly attitude towards them, a haphazard and sloppy handling of their problems. He sends them from Home a team of men who at no time had anything to do with them, rank strangers, starkly ignorant of the peoples' past, with but a very cursory and superficial knowledge of their present, with little thought for their future, for their racial and religious, their linguistic and cultural differences, their differences of history and geography, many of them doctrinaire politicians with pre-conceived and often very fallible and deceptive notions of what constitutes good government for the peoples concerned, some of them amenable to influence, to inquire into and report to the authorities at Home on a scheme of government best suited to the peoples concerned. These men, after a brief and perfunctory inquiry, turning a deaf ear to all the pleadings of wise and experienced national leaders and having a purblind faith in the superiority of the British brand of democracy, draw up a constitution that more often than not results in the enslavement and ultimate annihilation of peoples who, before the advent of the Westerner, had lived and moved and had their being in perfect freedom and security within their own ancient and national frontiers and under their own rulers. A foreign ruler's coming is bad enough, but his going is worse.

It is noteworthy that a foreign ruler, at the termination of his rule, leaves behind a trail of sorrow and suffering, a legacy of problems of such complexity and magnitude as often defy the ingenuity

of its victims to discover a remedy, problems often leading to violence and anarchy. "If I cannot reform with equity, I will not reform at all," said Edmund Burke, the great Irishman and prescient political thinker. If the Britisher could not reform with equity, with a lively sense of his high responsibility, of what is becoming, he should not have committed himself to any reformist activity. He had no reason to have toyed with the destinies of great peoples and nations.

But now for the first time after four and a half decades of Ramanathan's dutiful, devoted and dedicated service to the majority community, there occurred a breach which neither time nor circumstance could heal. On the contrary, it has worsened more and more over the years and become a running sore in the body-politic. It was a breach not with the people nor, be it understood, with the old guard who were men of integrity and honour and free from all taint of communalism, but with the new leadership which had risen to power and pre-eminence on the wave of popular democracy and taken control of the Congress. It stubbornly refused to see reason and justice, was averse to all compromise and was determined to work its wanton will on the minorities. British rule had done its worst. It had succeeded in playing off one people against another, driving a wedge into the relationship of the two principal races of the Island, the Sinhalese and the Tamils, setting them at variance—all in the name of unitary mathematical democracy. British rule has gone, never to return, but the legacy it left, the legacy of interminable inter-racial conflict giving rise to anarchical passions remains. The communal virus then injected continues to poison the body-politic and render communal harmony, peace and goodwill all but impossible.

Ramanathan, a pilot true and bold, saw the sky darkening in the distance, saw clear signs of

the oncoming storm and hastened to warn the nation. But few would heed him. The sky darkens more and more and the storm draws nearer and nearer every day. He beheld an avalanche on the move on the Alpine heights and warned the shepherds grazing their flocks below. But they continued to whistle, heedless of the oncoming loom. Time alone holds the sequel.

CHAPTER XXV

RAMANATHAN AND THE UNIVERSITY QUESTION

The idea of having one university with one teaching college for the whole of Ceylon is an impossible idea. It will be most harmful to the youths of the country. We need more than one university in Ceylon, situated in the great centres of population.

—Ramanathan

Our men of light and leading do not believe in either the secularization or the commercialization of Knowledge.

—Ramanathan

University education leaves him (a youth) not merely a generation but often centuries ahead of his surroundings.

—C. F. Andrews

ONE of the many questions of paramount importance to Ceylon with which Ramanathan was intensely and ceaselessly occupied during the last three decades of his long and strenuous leadership was the provision of adequate opportunities for university education throughout the country. The question was first mooted in 1905 by Ramanathan and his brother Arunachalam and was kept alive by them, until in the twenties, it became a burning issue which engaged the attention of the leading intellects of the country, and in its later phases developed into a fierce and acrimonious controversy, when in 1927 the Report of the Akbar Committee was discussed in the legislature. It would be truer to say that it rent the nation in two over what was then known as the "Battle of the Sites." Ramanathan was nearing the eightieth year of his

life. Yet, as we read the pages of the Hansard and other contemporary records, we cannot but marvel at his extraordinary energy and power of endurance, his comprehensive and clear-sighted grasp of a complex and many-sided issue, his superb mastery of detail, the supreme tenacity with which he fought for what he conceived to be the best interests of the country, his passionate concern for the nation's youth, his eager solicitude for the needy but ambitious scholar, the intensity and strength of his convictions, his wisdom and vision seen in retrospect.

Early in his career, conviction had come to him that true university culture is the basis and foundation on which a healthy, vigorous and progressive national polity could be built, that a people's genius flowers and fructifies within its precints, that national life is enriched and vitalized by successive generations of youth shaped and moulded within its walls, that political freedom loses its validity and meaning unless it connotes intellectual and cultural freedom, and that this freedom is possible of attainment only through the instrumentality of a university. He therefore made it one of the supreme objectives of his life to bring the blessings of high university culture to the door of every youth who sought it and could benefit by it.

After the University College had come into existence in 1921, the agitation for a full-fledged, autonomous and degree-granting institution freed from London's apron-strings and laying special emphasis on national culture and tradition was sustained in full vigour by Ramanathan. In an age when subject peoples regarded University education as synonymous with the learning and culture of the alien ruler, when our own national culture and tradition ran the risk of being completely engulfed by the flood-tides of alien cultures and institutions, it was the peculiar glory

of the Ponnambalam brothers to sound a note of warning and tell their people and their rulers in so many words that education will defeat itself unless it has its roots in the native soil, unless the distinctive culture and the traditional learning of the people whom it purports to serve occupy the foremost place in its curriculum. A nationalist far ahead of his time, Ramanathan sought to recapture through the agency of a university all that is great and glorious in the cultural heritage of the Sinhalese and the Tamils who have from time immemorial made this island their common home and have enriched its cultural and national life. Denationalization, deracialization, a morbid craving for things foreign and exotic was a monster he dreaded most. He was profoundly aware of the value of the past, of our inheritance and tradition, of the soil from which we are sprung and in which we are rooted and pleaded for a university founded on distinctively national lines, inasmuch as a university in its true sense, is the repository, the guardian-angel of a people's culture. To make the University of Ceylon a replica of a Western university is but to nullify the whole aim and purpose of university culture. For one thing, a people's native genius cannot blossom or fructify in an alien setting and under alien influences; for another, the undue emphasis of Western university culture on mundane and materialistic ends to the detriment of the spiritual would, he maintained, spell ruin and disaster to the nation. The breakdown of spiritual and moral health is, as he conceived it, the supreme malady of contemporary society. The body-politic was no longer inspired by any soul-politic. Men, individually and in the mass, cared only for material prosperity, sought only outward success, made the pursuit of happiness the end and aim of their being. Education had failed in its major purpose, the building up of high character

in youth, who would in their time be shining examples of how life should be lived, beacon lights to guide floundering humanity in its march through life. He valued university education more as an instrument of moral and spiritual regeneration, than as an equipment for worldly ends. Culture was to him an affair of the spirit and of mind not to be measured by material progress or worldly success. A life of simplicity, piety and moral rectitude dedicated to the service of their fellowmen rather than the life of a plutocrat living in ivory towers, in worldly affluence and splendour was the life he envisaged for the youth of the country.

The purpose of education is spiritual freedom and not utilitarian ambitions. What distressed him deeply was the breakdown of traditional moral and spiritual values in the young. He attributed this break-down to the preponderant influence of Western systems of education which eschewed religion altogether. Education lacked the purpose, the sense of spiritual power, the moral restraint and the lofty idealism which alone can give life and soul to any system of education. The purposelessness, the idleness, the wanton excesses and the general sense of drift that he saw among the average young adult at the University College were to him a serious indictment of a preponderantly Western system of education of which our educators and legislators were inordinately enamoured and which they were endeavouring to import into this country wholesale. If this tendency in our youth is to be arrested, religion and morality should, he pleaded, be restored to their rightful place as the basis of university education. The main cause of our malaise, he felt, is our uprootedness. We are detached from our spiritual foundations which give us poise and balance, refinement and elevation. Many of us, he felt, have lost our historical roots

and become exiles from our past. We have lost confidence in ourselves, in our great heritage of culture and civilization. We need a renewal of our nature, a re-orientation, a creative transformation which will lift us out of our suffering, out of despondency and helplessness which have resulted from servitude to an alien raj, from our desperate clinging to the culture and the way of life of an alien people. We should enter more fully into the experience and ideals of our race, we should be inspired in our minds and hearts by the great ideas enshrined in our culture. To achieve these great ends is the proper function of a university.

In his masterly and authoritative Memorandum on the university question, he says, "Our men of light and leading do not believe in the secularization or the commercialization of knowledge. To keep the minds of our youth soaked for hours together in the contemplation and study of the perishable things of the world for the sake of making money and spending it on the gratification of the senses is the very thing condemned in all holy books by such saving words as 'all learning about things that perish is foolishness with God', by which is meant that such knowledge cannot awaken the spirit to a knowledge of itself and of God who is in it. Through ignorance of the meaning of education, as the principles and practices which relate to the freeing of the soul from worldliness and leading it to godliness, the masses of people living on either side of the Atlantic Ocean delight in unrest, excitement and inordinate indulgence of the senses. The British Government is earnestly endeavouring to give us a university for conferring degrees on all branches of learning. The University College, as officered now, is suitable for students who esteem too highly the vanities of the world, but what about other students who are of a higher order, and, who prefer to develop the 'Fruits of the Spirit',

such as love, joy, peace, patience, contentment, gentleness, goodness, faith in God, respect for elders, clear understanding and temperate speech and action, while desiring to qualify themselves for the ordinary pursuits of life? The literature and educational methods of the Hindus, Buddhists and Mohammedans who together form 85 percent of the population of Ceylon abound in the teaching which promotes the growth of the graces of the spirit and develops thrift which is the parent of industry and wealth."

It is wrong to suppose that Ramanathan was in any manner averse to Western learning with its emphasis on the material sciences. No man had a greater admiration for the talent and enterprise, the energy and resourcefulness, the discipline and dedication, the sense of purpose and responsibility which have for many centuries distinguished the Westerner and made him the master of the world around him. And no mean held in higher esteem the stupendous advance made by the West in science and technology which have led up to the abolition of poverty and want and the raising of the living standards of the common man. What he condemned among Western peoples was their frantic pursuit of things material and mundane to the neglect of things spiritual. What he deprecated most among his own people was their blind and heady imitation of everything Western, while ignoring their own national tradition. What he aimed at in the education of our youth was a synthesis, a blend, a fusion of the best of both, an education in which Western material science and learning will occupy an important place but will always be subordinated to the moral and spiritual values that from time immemorial have informed the thought and learning of the East. A university should not merely be a scientific and technological institute. It should make the students not merely intellectually competent and technically skilled; it should make them civilized in their emotions and refined in their purposes. Only then will they have a liberal outlook, develop compassion and understanding, shake off racial and religious prejudice, banish hate and ill-will and render the world fit for man to live in. To achieve this end, spiritual values should gain precedence over the material.

To commit the higher education of our youth to foreign professors and lecturers to the exclusion of men chosen from among the people is, in his view, an act of folly, for foreigners, however brilliant and erudite, can never enter into the genius of another race and give its youth in their formative period the best and most fruitful direction that it is the function of a university to give. On the contrary, they will fill their impressionable minds with new-fangled ideas and even subversive creeds which have often proved the bane of human society. He says, "The University College is now and will be greatly influenced by a large number of officers recruited from Europe who do not possess an adequate knowledge of local conditions and national needs. It is not right to allow the higher education of the youth of our country to be controlled and guided by this body of educationists, however able and well-intentioned they may be, to the exclusion of equally able educationists, born and bred in the country, who, by reason of their intimate acquaintance with the ways, wants and aspirations of their own countrymen are loved and honoured by these as safer guides in life. Many such men in our midst have founded schools of various grades and are doing all they can to stem the tide of materialism, indifferentism and atheism which have steadily flowed into this country from the West and are ruining our people morally and spiritually."

He vehemently deprecated the practice of sending our youth to Western universities, except

for specialised study and advanced research for which facilities are not available locally. In his view, such an education has a denationalizing, soul-destroying and subversive influence on their impressionable minds. He says indignantly, "I see no reason why many more young men and young women should not come to the University of Ceylon rather than go to institutions established on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and return denationalized and revolutionized and make the government of the country a very arduous task." And no man could speak on the subject with greater authority than he, in view of his extensive and first-hand study of the working of Western universities. University education must be humane; it must include not only the training of the intellect but the refinement of the heart and the discipline of the spirit. No education can be regarded as complete if it neglects the heart and the spirit. It must, moreover, render its beneficiaries true sons of the soil, truly proud of their motherland, proud of their own distinctive culture and institutions and not breed a band of aliens amidst their own kith and kin, cut off from the general stream of national life and glorying in alien cultures, institutions and ways of life.

He was in perfect accord with great Englishmen who served India with uncommon distinction and have left on record views which hold good for all time. Lord Macaulay was of the view that the product of the sort of education imparted to Indians by the British rulers would be the creation of the "coloured Englishman". Mr. Havell, formerly principal of the Calcutta School of Art, too shared the same view when he said, "The fault of the Anglo-Educational system is that, instead of harmonising with and supplementing national culture, it is antagonistic to and destructive of it." Sir George Birdwood too meant the same thing when he said, "This system of education

has destroyed in Indians the love of their own literature, the quickening soul of the people, and their delight in their own arts and worst of all, their repose in their own traditional and national religion, has disgusted them with their own homes, their parents and their sisters, their very wives, brought discontent into the family so far as its baneful influences have reached."

Sir John Woodroffe was of the same mind when he said, "The influence (resulting from a Western system of education) has been deracializing (if I may use the word to denote destruction of racial characteristics), devitalizing, deforming.

"Personally, I should like to see the education of the Indian people in the hands of Indians themselves without any interference from Government as at present constituted... It is sufficient to hold that Indian civilization is the best for the people whose forefathers have evolved it. Let us stop all attempts, direct or indirect, whether political or religious, to impose our beliefs and practices, on a people to whom they are foreign. Let us admit and give effect to the claim of the true Indian patriot that his language, history, literature, art, philosophy, religion, general culture and ideals, should be given the primary place in the prescribed courses of study."

Culture in widest commonalty spread, was the ideal Ramanathan sought to achieve. An aristocrat by birth and breeding, he was first and last a democrat, the chief preoccupation of whose life was a supreme concern for the common man and the under-dog. The streams of university culture should, he pleaded, irrigate, fertilize and vivify as broad an expanse as possible, of the nation's territory and not inundate a narrow, exclusive and affluent circle. Every youth with a love and aptitude for higher learning should, without let or hindrance, be afforded adequate opportunities for its pursuit, for it was one of

his deepest convictions that true university culture alone provides a sound and secure basis for healthy, vigorous and progressive national life.

To achieve this end, the dissemination of university education over the whole country, to enable as many of its youth as possible to be its beneficiaries, a single university with only a single teaching institution, he contended, would be far from adequate. He protested indignantly against the proposal made by the Akbar Committee to found a single unitary and residential university, for that would not go any far towards quenching the nation's thirst for intellectual and spiritual nutriment. "We need more than one university in the great centres of population," he said. When the University College was founded and arrangements were made to affiliate it to the University of Oxford prior to its affiliation to London, his proposal that "other colleges working up to the appointed standard should be allowed an equal opportunity of affiliation to the University of Oxford" was accepted by Governor Chalmers and by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. As late as 1926, at a conference held at Queen's House to discuss the issue, he "combated the idea that there should be only one college in the whole of Ceylon to prepare students for university degrees."

Ramanathan said, "Our experience is that the simple type of unitary university is well and good for important populous cities possessed of special enterprises to be developed but not where there is a craving for knowledge beyond the needs of an industrial city and where communities of different races and creeds seek the nursing care, guidance and control of a university devoted to a wider and more liberal culture. I would ask the Hon. Mr. Akbar to be good enough to enlighten the Council on the following points, namely (1) Why he moves for the establishment in Ceylon of the simplest type of unitary university like

that given to Dacca owing to its local needs and interests, when he knows that we in Ceylon are quite differently situated; (2) Why he moves for a University of Ceylon, when our requirements need more than one university in Ceylon situated in the great centres of population; and (3) Why he moves for the erection of university buildings in a place so forlorn or so scanty in population and unindustrial as Dumbara Valley, when the students hailing from the hills to the University College number only a small fraction out of the 350 now on its roll. What answer can my friend give to his colleagues in this Council when he misuses the term 'Unitary Type' in regard to the whole of Ceylon and vests in a single college the exclusive right to teach, when we all know that there are more communities in Ceylon than in England craving for education, the Buddhist community, the Hindu community the Muslim community and the Burgher community, when we have so many types of people delighting each in its own institutions, its own literature, its own philosophy and its own culture? How can any reasonable man present to us the idea that, notwithstanding these differences which we believe to be important for our own salvation, one college only should have a monopoly of teaching the higher arts and sciences to every class of students, whatever their nationalities, religion and aspirations may be? I cannot understand it. It is an abysmal depth of error into which my Hon. friend wants us to plunge without knowing the consequences of such a proposal."

He clung passionately to the view that a single unitary university in a multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-religious country such as Ceylon is, is a mere chimera, a contradiction in terms and will jeopardize the whole cause of university education in the land. For in endeavouring to serve everyone of these diverse racial, linguistic and

religious groups, it would end in serving none at all. Rather it would create a sort of hybrid and multi-form culture satisfying to none associated with it. A university, in its true sense, is the citadel of a people's distinctive culture and tradition, its main bulwark; its true and proper function is to preserve, strengthen and vivify that culture and tradition and hand them down intact as a precious legacy to generations unborn; for in the life of any people, these are what matter most, its very life and soul. When these are lost, all are lost. Ramanathan pleaded that in the absence of homogeneity of race, religion and culture, every separate group, racial or religious or linguistic, must have a university which it can cherish and foster and endow and to which it can look up for intellectual, spiritual and cultural sustenance. If it is not feasible to found separate universities for the various racial or religious groups, at least a federal type of university should be founded, with university colleges of various denominations and in different centres of population affiliated to it. Such a university will, he maintained, provide opportunities for philanthropic and public-spirited men who will strive to uplift the youth of their respective communities according to their conception of what is best for them. He said, "My Hon. friend has no reason whatever to come into this Council and say, 'Down with all colleges which would prepare students beyond the Matriculation standard, down with your philanthropic men who would strive to uplift the youths of their respective communities according to their conception of what is needed in the best interests of the country; we shall import professors from distant lands and compel students to sit at their feet and learn of them and them only; we shall not permit you to go to any other college for liberal education, for culture of the fruit of the spirit and for knowledge of God.' Every country of Europe is teeming with materialism,

atheism and sensualism of the worst kind. Are we, who have been born and bred in this country and who have carefully studied the glorious literature and the traditions of our ancestors, to allow our boys to drift away from the goal which they have set before us? No, God and learning cannot be monopolized." He deprecated State monopoly of education and was an ardent protagonist of popular participation in all phases of educational activity. Education, he pleaded, should be a free thing and provide scope for the exercise of private philanthropy and a say in determining its character and complexion.

We now see the great statesman in combative mood. He strongly objected to the University being wholly residential on other grounds than those of the poor scholar who cannot pay for residence. He had little faith in modern youths' being allowed to reside in hostels promiscuously and in conglomerate masses. Hostel-life, he felt, had outlived its period of usefulness, when modern scholars, unlike their counterparts of earlier times, are enamoured of the pleasures and frivolities of life more than of the disinterested pursuit of learning and culture and the present-day world is too full of snares for unwary youth to resist. In trenchant language, he denounced the life of youth in modern hostels. "The fact is," he said, "that residence at a hostel is not needed for students who live in well-ordered homes and among friends who are well-bred and devoted to high ideals. If such a home and society are within easy reach of a university, why should students so situated be forced to go into residence in university hostels where boys with all sorts of temper and tone are promiscuously thrown together?

"Mr. Akbar made a point of teachers residing with students and not allowing them to go to theatres and to dancing and dinner parties. But I am afraid that waywardness is very pronounced

now-a-days. It is very pronounced in this august assembly. We ourselves are setting a most discreditable example to young men. It is a stern fact that the boys laugh at their teachers to their very faces. Mr. Akbar takes no account of the times and thinks he is living in a millennium of sobriety of thought, speech and action; whereas it is all the other way. We have passed the period of herding students together promiscuously. There is, for example, the gambling set, the fashionable set, and the drinking set, the racing and betting set, and these young men find out the set to which they should belong; and those who are sober, serious and careful about their conduct and the expansion of sound knowledge are the men who are destined to succeed in life.

"What is the history of the undergraduates who congregate within the walls of those residential colleges? I met a civil servant here who said to me, 'I do not know how I escaped it all and came safe to Ceylon. I was often urged to put away my aspirations and ambitions and to plunge into excitement and sensuous pleasures. Well, I escaped and find myself in peaceful Ceylon.'

"What does Akbar mean by attaching so much importance to the residential qualification? Look at the results of the residential qualification in the Ceylon University College. I went to the college and paid a visit to the hostels. The authorities there have absolutely no control over the boys. I was astonished at the way they treated their Wardens and each other.

"I say I have grave doubts about this promiscuous gathering of students in mismanaged hostels. I would rather that they were allowed to live in homes under the influence of well-natured ladies and gentlemen from whom they can draw inspiration. In a promiscuous hostel, there may be half-a-dozen persons of the right type, but they cannot redeem the whole community of students. I speak of

the danger that exists in exaggerating the value of the residential universities."

Alas! how true, how strangely prophetic these words are in the light of student unrest, indiscipline and even rebellion against authority, which have become so rife and so endemic today and have marred the history of hostel life in the universities. He had with the eye of a born seer divined disturbing tendencies in the character and propensity of modern youth and the disastrous consequences that would befall them and their country when large masses of them are herded up together pell-mell.

Ramanathan maintained that there were colleges in different parts of the country which, if developed with private philanthropy and State aid, could well teach up to the degree standard and that such institutions should be affiliated to the University of Ceylon. University education and culture could thus be brought as near to the door of every youth as may profit by it and at an expense within the reach of the average parent. The nation's thirst for higher learning could thus be assuaged and national life thus enriched and invigorated. The course was obvious and he could not comprehend why persons in authority were so purblind to it. He protested with all the vigour at his command that education should be a free thing and ought not to be interfered with by a system of State monopoly suggested by some of its votaries. He said, "I say there are educationists amongst us who are ready to lead the youth of the country in the direction they should go to the goal which is God. It is not right that one college only should be given the right to teach, which cannot or will not teach about the things of the spirit, while there are other colleges which can teach such things as also the things of the world."

Again how true, how strangely prophetic! Within a quarter century of the birth of the

university, five campuses of the university have sprung into existence. And yet the congestion has been so alarming that the university authorities have been at their wits' ends in improvising accommodation for even a fraction of the youth that knock persistently at its doors for admission. The problem becomes increasingly formidable year after year and cannot find a satisfactory solution until our rulers appreciate the wisdom of that great statesman and seer and build universities "in the great centres of population".

Ramanathan was through life an unflinching advocate of freedom in all fields of human activity whether educational or social, religious or economic or political. His own instinct abhorred compulsion or restraint of any sort, especially compulsion or restraint practised on the human intellect. In no uncertain terms he condemned undue State intervention or regimentation in the sphere of education, for he held the view that the human intellect, like a tender plant, cannot blossom or fructify except in an environment of perfect freedom.

A people's education should be formulated against the background of the people's genius, its culture, religion and historical tradition. And it is the inescapable duty of any government to subsidize and promote by all the means in its power the efforts of every people who can lay claim to a distinctive cultural heritage, in founding educational and cultural institutions for the education of its youth and the preservation of its cultural heritage.

In his Memorandum on the university, he quotes with warm and fervent approval the claims of the Catholics to found a university college of their own and have it affiliated to the University of Ceylon. He was of the opinion that every community, racial or religious, be it Sinhalese or Tamil, Muslim or Buddhist or Hindu, Catholic or Protestant has an indefeasible right to the

preservation and expansion of its own distinctive culture, to impart to its youth the sort of education it deems best suited to it, and that in every effort to achieve that end, the State must always give the lead.

In all his educational endeavour, as in every other act of his life, Ramanathan was dominated by an anxious concern for the poor. A University should not be a Class-Nursery, the preserve of privilege, the paradise of the idle-rich. It should be so constituted as to render it accessible to the young of all classes and conditions of people. That was why he protested vigorously against a single university and pleaded for more, in the populous parts of the country. He pleaded, moreover, for making these universities both residential and non-residential, so that even a poor youth of ambition and aptitude could yet come within its pale, without having to pay for residence. When the question of site for the University was debated, he vehemently advocated the Colombo site because the claims of the poor scholar were uppermost in his mind. Wherein he differed fundamentally from his colleagues in Council was in this, that he wanted high intellectual culture not to be the luxury of the privileged and opulent few but rather the prerogative of every youth in the land; not to create an exclusive intellectual coterie in the traditions of Oxford or Cambridge nor bring into being a class of social snobs or prigs living in ivory-towers, cut off from the general stream of national life and creating class hatreds and strife. He aimed at the diffusion of higher learning and culture over as broad an expanse of the nation's territory as its resources would permit in order that its influence might permeate the masses and invigorate the whole life of society.

Contemporary public opinion viewed University education primarily from a material and mercenary standpoint, that of the volume of employment,

the public and private sector could provide for its beneficiaries. Graduate unemployment, they dreaded as a hideous monster. But Ramanathan viewed university education from a different and higher angle, that of the intellectual discipline, the moral elevation and the spiritual illumination, that it is the true function of university culture to impart to its votaries. In his view, university education should, if rightly imparted, enable its beneficiaries to think and act for themselves, to choose between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, wisdom and folly, beauty and ugliness. It was as an instrument of mental culture and moral refinement that he valued university education, an agent in strengthening and invigorating the mind so as to enable it to enter with ease, skill and aptitude any trade or profession, in cleansing it of much of its natural dross, of emancipating it from the thraldom of base and sordid desires and propensities and raising the moral and spiritual tone of society. Another virile thinker and man of religion, Cardinal Newman propounded the same view of university education in his monumental treatise entitled "The Idea of a University." He said, "The force, the steadiness, the comprehensiveness and versatility of intellect, the command over our own powers, the instinctive just estimate of things as they pass before us, which sometimes indeed is a natural gift, but commonly is not gained without much effort and the exercise of years..... Certainly a liberal education does manifest itself in a courtesy, propriety and polish of word and action, which is beautiful in itself, and acceptable to others; but it does much more. It brings the mind into form. When the intellect has been properly trained and formed to have a connected view or grasp of things, it will display its powers with more or less effect according to its particular quality and measure in the individual. In the case of most men, it makes itself felt in the good

sense, sobriety of thought, reasonableness, candour, self-command and steadiness of view which characterizes it. In some, it will have developed habits of business, power of influencing others, and sagacity. In others, it will elicit the talent of philosophical speculation, and lead the mind forward to eminence in this or that intellectual department. In all it will be a faculty of entering with comparative ease into any subject of thought, and of taking up with aptitude any science or profession." Equipped with these advantages, a youth, he felt, will be able to carve out for himself avenues of employment, and face the problems of life, wherever his lot be cast, with courage, resolution and resource.

As has already been pointed out, Ramanathan longed to see the poor scholar enjoy his full share of university culture and his vehement plea to have the university located in Colombo was mainly inspired by that longing. He says, "Universities founded in metropolitan cities would be helpful to the poor boys who want to have the advantage of entering the university and graduating there by finding a means of livelihood to eke out the income which their parents afford to them for carrying their own studies in the universities. That is an important aspect of the question which is not known to people in general. The cost of living in a university is ascertained by the Warden of the Hostels of the University College to amount to about Rs. 81 a month. From statistics gathered by those who are able to deal with this question, it is found that the average income of the fathers of young men who have gone to hostels is about Rs. 320 a month. Out of the Rs. 320 they have set aside 25 percent for the education of one member of the family; that means, neglecting all the other members of the family in the hope that he may be the bread-winner of the rest of the family. It is not all boys who enter hostels who have parents able to contribute Rs. 81 a month.

There are many more who are not in that favourable position. They come into the city and try to live with the friends and relations of the parents—live in their homes and are supported by such friends and relations. Out of the serious position created by the enforced hospitality, the boys find it possible to earn a living in the city by such occupation as teaching some students somewhere in the city for an hour or two every day. Some boys in the hostels are obliged to enter upon some occupation of this kind. If it is not teaching, it may be helping an employer in clerical work. In this way, residence in a big city is exceedingly helpful to a student who is anxious to gather knowledge and make himself useful to his supporters.

"How can these boys help themselves, if they were transported to a place like the Dumbara Valley? It will be utterly impossible for them to earn any livelihood there, while the cost of living there will be very much the same as in Colombo ..... It is only the person who understands the needs, the wishes and requirements of the students who could give sympathetic consideration to it. These points are missed by those who attempt to solve the problem in a haphazard way, on considerations of climate or beauty of natural scenery etc."

What anxious and persistent and heart-searching concern for the poor and needy scholar! It was in this more than in any other, that he differed from the general run of leaders. His prime concern was the poor, to discover ways and means of rescuing them from the morass of poverty, ignorance and moral squalor into which they had fallen, to hold out to them opportunities of a better and fuller life. He felt that undergraduate life in Colombo would enable rustic youth to slough off rusticity, transform them into practical, matter-of-fact men and women by

endowing them with wide and varied experience of men and matters and a breadth of outlook so vitally necessary for tackling the complex problems of modern life. He says, "Consider the matter in a new light. The subject is one that does not lie on the surface. It lies deep down in the hearts of parents and pupils. Who are the people, I ask, in whose interests the University has been demanded? Unhesitatingly, I say in the interests of those who desire higher education beyond the eighth standard of elementary education, and who live in the metropolis, and in other towns and villages craving for such education. These students are endowed with the memory and intelligence necessary for the task of pursuing their studies in the University, and their parents desire them to enter it. Whether they come from Jaffna or Point Pedro or Kandy or Trincomalee or down below from Matara or Tangalla or further south, it is the same mediocrity of village life and the same village ideals that govern their minds. Most of these boys, I have heard other persons say, are uncouth, unpolished, unsatisfactory. The conditions of life in the village are very different from those of cities. The village boy rushes to school, comes home and has his food and then rushes to the fields to assist his people in agriculture. Where is the opportunity that will give such boys the necessary training to befit themselves for association with men and youths bred in a city? They make a sorry spectacle in the eyes of those whose manners and bearing have been polished by association with exemplary men in cities.

"In the metropolis, activities are of a ramified kind and the students' success in finding employment entirely depends upon a knowledge of the world. This practical acquaintance with the best methods of business can never be obtained except in a city which is inhabited by so many of the British

men, the best Europeans and the best natives. And are we to locate our University in a place like Dumbara which is inhabited by villagers perhaps lower in standard than the average villager we meet? What is there at Dumbara to equip our boys effectively for the best manner of performing the various duties of life in society and in business circles? Can going down upon their knees and contemplating the clouds and the falling streams help them in the competitions of life and the perfection of actions?"

In his defence of the Colombo site, he took his stand on another ground, that every issue connected with the University had been the subject of prolonged study and deliberation by numerous commissions of experts under earlier administrations and elaborate reports had been made by them. It had been discussed threadbare over several years in the country's supreme legislature, certain tangible, clear-cut and conclusive decisions had been reached, the site had been selected with general unanimity, moneys had been voted, specialist architects had been set to work and plans had already been perfected. It would be but to do irreparable injury to the honour of past Councils to repudiate and reverse all their solemn decisions and actions and to begin the question all anew. He was all through life a stern and relentless upholder of the honour of the House and in all his long career of legislative work, it would be impossible to discover a single occasion when he suffered it to be slighted or outraged. He maintained that the matter was *res judicata* and it was for the present Council to begin not at the beginning but rather at where the past Councils had left it. We can do no better than hear him. "That site (the land south of Buller's Road) was inspected by a Sub-Committee of the Council which had been appointed in 1922. Who were the men who served

in that Sub-Committee? Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, Sir James Peiris, Sir Marcus Fernando, Dr. Rutherford and Principal Marrs. I challenge anybody to say that these eminent well-tried men were not fit for the work of declaring their opinion upon this question. The site was inspected by this Sub-Committee and they strongly recommended to the College Council that Government should be asked to assign the land south of Buller's Road. Their recommendation was considered and accepted by the College Council which included, in addition to the five members of the Sub-Committee already named, the following eleven gentlemen: The Hon. the Chief Justice, Sir Anton Bertram; the Hon. Mr. Macrae, Director of Education; the Hon. Mr. Stockdale, Director of Agriculture; the Rev. H. Highfield, Principal of Wesley College; the Rev. A. G. Fraser, the Principal of Trinity College; the Rev. Father Le Gog, Rector of St. :Joseph's College; Dr. C. A. Hewavitarne; Dr. S. C. Paul; the Hon. Mr. Jayatilake and myself (Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan).

"Now the sixteen gentlemen I have named were all unanimous that that site was the best for the university. That site was then inspected by Governor Manning and the Colonial Secretary Sir (then Mr.) Clementi and the Government accepted the recommendation of the College Council, and allotted to the University the collateral area along Buller's Road consisting of 95 acres. There was not a word of suspicion about the correctness of the decision arrived at.....

"After the question of site was unanimously decided upon, the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Cecil Clementi submitted to the Council the following motion: 'That a sum of Rs. 3,000,000 from the surplus balances be set aside and temporarily invested to form a Building and Equipment Fund for the proposed University of Ceylon.' In speaking on the motion, Cecil Clementi referred to the site

already selected in the following terms: 'In the first place, an admirable site of 95 acres South of Buller's Road in Colombo has been found for the proposed University and, owing to action already taken by this Council, it will soon be made available. The motion was accepted unanimously.'

"His Excellency the Governor in his report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies had said, 'It is evident from the unanimity with which all sections of the Council welcomed the resolution that the country is earnestly desirous of seeing the University come into being in the near future and is prepared to meet the heavy charge which such an institution will impose on its resources. The site proposed possesses every advantage of position and amenity, and the erection on it of a carefully planned array of buildings conceived with an eye to beauty will ensure for it the permanent exercise of those aesthetic yet formative influences which are associated with the buildings of the world's greatest universities and have been so marked a factor in their distinction and success.' It will thus be seen that the Buller's Road site was recommended by the College Council for a residential university; that the Governor with the Colonial Secretary inspected it; that he found it most suitable for establishing a University; that he reported to the Secretary of State the desirability of erecting the buildings on that site; that he asked permission to set apart Rs. 3,000,000 out of the surplus balance for the purpose; that his request was sanctioned; that in terms of that sanction, the Colonial Secretary moved the allocation and reservation of that sum, and explained fully that it was to be used on the Buller's Road site selected; and the Legislative Council accepted the proposals unanimously."

Ramanathan now produced before the House the plans of the various buildings drawn by

two eminent architects recruited from England specifically for the purpose and said, "Here is the plan of the 95 acre block. Here is the Buller's Road site, and here are the plans of the buildings put upon that particular land, there is no question about it. There is no escape from the definite truth that this site was before everybody when the buildings were located on this site and when the money, Rs. 3,000,000 was voted to be expended upon the buildings to be put upon this site. The plans are all set forth here. It would be better if they could be put on some boards and pinned on so that Honourable Members might have a clear idea of what the action of the Government and the action of the Legislative Council led to. Is this plan which I hold in my hand indefinite? Here is a further plan. Everything is clear, and I am sure that my Honourable friends who have not studied these things, will come over to my side. Here is another plan showing a building with a tower. That is the kind of university we ought to have. Four and a half millions are required to produce all this. Here is a plan of the Hostels. Here is a plan of the gymnasium for boys. It includes a cricket pavilion. Here is the plan of the Science Block and here is one of the Arts Blocks. We can understand what laceration of hearts there must have been among those people who laboriously constructed these plans according to instructions given by experts when they found that they had been cast away! Then there is the plan of the Convocation Hall and one of the Hostels for women."

To repudiate these actions of past Councils and Governments, to completely annul their weighty decisions and to start the whole question anew, Ramanathan held, was not merely to do dishonour to the Councils and the Government responsible for those decisions and actions but to render all moneys expended on them a meaningless and profitless waste.

A stalwart champion of the honour of the House and vigilant steward of national finance, he protested indignantly against such gratuitous and contemptuous jettisoning of its solemn decisions and involving the country in such wanton and woeful expenditure. He held it was all unnecessary, outrageous and unwarranted in the extreme. He protested, "It will be a bad day for Ceylon, if resolutions solemnly passed in this Council are to be thrown to the winds, just as the Germans treated treaties like scraps of paper. Are we to learn morality from the Germans? Are we to be the football of those wild fads and ambitions, likes and dislikes?"

But how came it that, after so much had been done in the direction of giving the country a university, a new committee under the chairmanship of Justice Akbar was appointed to report on a site and the Dumbara Valley was decided upon by that Committee? Ramanathan says, "I have now to refer to Sir Hugh Clifford's appointment of a committee of gentlemen to report upon a site suitable for the University. Neither a Commission nor a Select Committee was appointed. But what did he do? He appointed for this investigation six gentlemen whose names were presented to him by certain Unofficial Members of Council. I had a conversation with Sir Hugh Clifford on the subject. I asked him, 'How is it, Sir, you came to appoint certain gentlemen to investigate and report upon this question?' He said, 'I do not know anything about this, Sir Ramanathan. A paper containing six names was presented to me, and I was asked to appoint those persons as a Committee to investigate the question of site and to report thereon. I acceded to their wishes and appointed the Committee.' This was not a Select Committee under the rules of Council, nor was it a Commission under the Ordinance.

"I therefore submit that nothing can possibly be made out of the report emanating from a Committee so illegally appointed, though the appointment came from the Governor himself. What the Governor did was *ultra vires*, beyond the strength of the law. A number of propositions are put forward and we, Members of the Legislative Council, who have never had an opportunity of expressing our opinions in Council about the appointment of that Committee are asked now by this illegally constituted body to accept all the recommendations contained within the pages of their report. I have only to state the proposal for Members to say that it is supremely absurd."

The Buller's Road site found very ardent advocates among the foremost educationists and the most distinguished leaders of the nation. But the Council was now dominated by new men with new-fangled ideas who were not prepared to give in to the 'Old Gang'.

All his multitudinous arguments poured across the floor of the House in lucid streams of rhetoric would not prevail. The age of reason, good sense and dispassion in public life when large issues of national import were viewed from national viewpoints and decided solely on the merits of the case was now changing, yielding place to a new age in which parochial passions and prejudices clouded issues of far-reaching national importance.

In sheer despair and anguish of mind, he cried out, "I said to myself that we were really living in an evil generation. That is a good little phrase, instructive and very suggestive. It is because we have evil in our hearts and not love in our hearts, and no spirit of co-operation in our hearts that the moment one opens his lips to speak, there is opposition and diversion. Visualizing these things, I felt that we were going from bad to worse and that things were not as pleasant as they were before in the Legislative Council.

Everything is misunderstood. And we see this perverting spirit in Council..... This is indeed an evil generation. What is the pleasure of being Members of this Council? Why should we undertake these onerous duties only to be misunderstood and abused?"

Ramanathan lost, but time has vindicated him. As has already been remarked, within a decade of the founding of the University of Ceylon, the demand for additional universities was so strong and so insistent that five other campuses have already sprung into existence. University authorities are at their wits' ends in improvising accommodation for the myriads of youth craving for higher university culture. They have had recourse to every expedient they could devise. Yet the problem is nowhere nearer solution. Under-graduates particularly women are compelled to seek shelter in congested homes and in private boarding houses and thus expose themselves to the dangers and discomforts inherent in them. Recent happenings have exploded the myth of residential advantage in hostels. No parent would entrust his son or daughter to any of them if only he could avoid it.

It was a moment of extreme bitterness and searchings of heart for the great leader. Had they listened to him, listened to his sage counsels and founded universities in important centres of population or a federal university with university colleges in different parts of the Island affiliated to it, the problem of university admission would not have become so formidable or so touchy as it has today.

The Hon. M. T. Akbar, who was the Chairman of the Committee that decided on the Dumbara Valley site and against whom Ramanathan fulminated so ruthlessly admitted, "I for one certainly feel that by the participation in this debate of a man of the calibre of my honourable friend,

the Tamil Knight, he has raised this debate to a higher plane." The Hon. E. W. Perera remarked, "I am looking forward to his charming eloquence again. Three score years and ten! and yet the vigour and the charm of his eloquence are still ringing in my ears." The Hon. Mr. A. F. Molamure exclaimed, "I feel I am only a youth before my venerable friend and having listened to the marvellous effort which he made on behalf of the cause he had in hand, I feel that all young men like myself are simply imbued with admiration for him which is his due. We all know that he is well advanced in years—I am told he is seventy seven years of age today. The marvellous effort he made in putting forward this case went to my heart."

CHAPTER XXVI

GOLDEN JUBILEE OF POLITICAL LIFE

> It is indeed a historic occasion on which we are met tonight. It is not often in the history of a Parliament or Legislative Council that its members can meet together to celebrate the Fiftieth Jubilee of one of their colleagues.
>
> —*His Excellency Sir Herbert Stanley*

THE middle of June, 1929, marked the Golden Jubilee of Ramanathan's political life. A whole half-century had glided by since 1879, when as a youth of twenty-eight, he first entered the portals of his country's supreme legislature as Member Representing the Tamil-speaking Population of the Island in succession to his uncle Sir Muthu Coomaraswamy. The youthful undergraduate from Madras had now grown to be the foremost man in Ceylon. The occasion was in many ways a memorable one, for it is seldom that in the history of peoples or nations we find a man devoting a half-century of his prime and manhood to public life, much less in an age in which public life, far from being a career, was only a vocation, when young men of character and calibre, of gentle extraction and independent means devoted a great part of their working lives to the service of the legislature for no remuneration whatsoever but through a sense of patriotic duty. The occasion was unique in our annals for more reasons than one, inasmuch as none other had in the history of our times been in active political life for half-a-century and during the whole of that period been the principal actor on the nation's political stage.

These fifty years spanned a great era in the Island's history, which a grateful people acclaimed the Ramanathan Era. It was an era which witnessed a nation-wide transformation. It was an era of great men and great leaders, of great causes and lasting achievement, on every page of whose history was stamped the personality of the great leader. It was an era of great national awakening when the people who had for centuries languished under the repressive rule of alien despots, now waked up to a consciousness of their rights and liberties, their ancient heritage of culture and tradition and were resolute to come back into their own. These fifty years saw the commencement of the Freedom Struggle when in the early eighties of the last century, the great leader founded the Ceylon National Association and set on foot an agitation for Home Rule, which saw its virtual fulfilment with the grant of the Donoughmore Reforms. The legislature which had for many decades been the scene of servile and compliant courtiers had now been transformed into an arena wherein sturdy, stalwart senators battled with the rulers in defence of the people's rights and liberties. It was a period during which national life gained a new potency and vigour, when purged of the multitudinous ills which had accumulated over the centuries of foreign rule and clogged national life. It was a period when under the strong hand of wise and far-sighted leadership, a bowed and broken people learnt to stiffen their backs, looked the foreigner full in the face and questioned his doings, if ever they conflicted with national interests. Not the least of the great services that Ramanathan rendered his people lay in this that he infused into them a new self-respect and a new self-confidence and dispelled fear from the minds of men. Under his influence, a new wave of patriotism, of self-sacrifice, of living more for the country than for

themselves swept through the land. National economy was greatly strengthened and revitalized by big-scale plantation and planned agriculture. As an indefatigable planter and agriculturist, he demonstrated to the people what immense wealth lay locked up in the soil. Education was given a new stimulus, a new impetus by liberal State-aid, private philanthropy and missionary zeal. A University College, the fore-runner of the future University of Ceylon had come into being and was dispensing higher learning for those who sought it. The administration was strengthened by the increasing absorption of qualified, competent and patriotic Ceylonese youth into the higher ranks of the Public Service. Denationalization, a contempt for all things national and indigenous and a blind acceptance of all things foreign and exotic, which had over the centuries laid a strangle-hold on the elite of the nation and was making them strangers in their own land had now been halted and the people taught to take pride in their ancient culture, tradition and mode of life.

A new manhood had come into being, proud of its past, confident about its future and resolute to live a free and full life, unhampered by alien and exotic influences or oppressions. In this transformation, this nation-wide metamorphosis, this strengthening and enriching of national life, it is not to be guilty of an over-statement to assert that Ramanathan played by far the most dominant role. It would be truer to say that he was the sole genius behind this whole transfiguration. He was the great Reformer, the great Cleanser and Purifier of national society. On his coming, he found a people without a soul, with little knowledge of life's purpose and meaning, with few ideals to live by, tumbling through life as best they could. It was his singular distinction, as it was his supreme service to the nation that he gave it a soul, a new strength and dynamism,

a new philosophy of life, in essence the distilled wisdom of the ages.

It was not merely as a statesman of the highest calibre that Ramanathan's contemporaries loved and honoured him, a statesman who had enriched their Statute Book as none other had done, with a long catalogue of beneficent and far-reaching legislation. He was much more than that; he was a scholar, philosopher and religious teacher, whose reputation had travelled far beyond the confines of this little Island; an eminent lawyer and jurist whom the King and the Inns of Court had delighted to honour in recognition of his signal services to the legal profession; an educational reformer and benefactor whose contribution to educational thought and the expansion of educational activity and whose monumental seats of learning are the pride and glory of their race; and above all, a philanthropist who had left them legacies unparalleled in their history.

Any wonder that the entirety of the nation rejoiced in celebrating an event so unique and so memorable as the Golden Jubilee of "the greatest Ceylonese of all time?" Congratulatory messages and blessings from all parts of the world poured into 'Sukhastan'. Individuals, associations, friends and political opponents—all vied with one another in proclaiming their appreciation of his magnificent and lifelong services to his people and to the world at large. His friends in America, who still cherished and honoured him for his illuminating addresses to them on religion and philosophy joined in paying their tributes of praise. India honoured him for his Tamil and Sanskrit learning and for his profound mastery of Eastern religions and philosophies. Malaya too, where many of his compatriots remembered him with pride and gratitude for his signal services to them in their hour of travail sent congratulatory messages wishing him many more years of health and service to the people.

Ramanathan Jubilee Committees were spontaneously formed in all parts of the Island and were jubilant and untiring in their efforts to commemorate his life and work worthily and well. The chief of these Committees was the one formed in Colombo. It consisted of the Hon. Sir James Peiris, Kt., Chairman, and one hundred and sixty members. The Committee resolved:—

1. That an oil painting of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan be offered to the State Council to be hung up in its Chamber.

2. That a statue of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan be erected in Colombo on a site near the State Council Chamber.

and 3. That, should any surplus funds be available after carrying out the aforesaid objects, it was desirable to utilize such funds for the establishment of scholarships.

The past and present members of the Legislative Council entertained the G. O. M. to dinner at the Grand Oriental Hotel, on June 14th, 1929. His Excellency the Governor Sir Herbert Stanley, who presided, proposed the toast of the Chief Guest. In the course of his speech His Excellency said, "It is indeed a historic occasion on which we are met tonight. It is not often in the history of a Parliament or Legislative Assembly that its members can meet together to celebrate the 50th Jubilee of one of their colleagues.

"I think if I were a Ceylonese," His Excellency continued, "I should feel specially proud of Sir Ramanathan. He has had a most remarkable career. I suppose there are few instances on record in which a man has touched life at so many points and at every point at which he has touched it, he has touched it with distinction. You know him here as a politician or something more than that. I think we might call him a statesman.

"You know him also as a great orator; you know him as a great scholar and a philosopher;

you know him as a distinguished lawyer who has held the high office of Solicitor-General. But the quality by which you would think of him most readily is that of a great patriot—a great Ceylonese patriot. He has rendered services to Ceylon which will outlast his own generation in showing the people of this country, and those who live in this country, though they are not descended from the original population, that true Ceylonese nationalism can be combined with perfect loyalty to the British Crown, and that a man can be all the more a good British subject if he is a good Ceylonese. Now, when we see patriotism such as that, we are glad to feel that we can join together with such patriots in working for the good of the country, knowing that the more this country prospers the more fully and worthily it will play its part as the Premier Colony in the British Empire. I desire in my own name and on your behalf, to offer to Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan our sincere felicitations on his completion of fifty years' service as a member of the Legislature. His presence among us in this Council is to us all a source of pride as well as of pleasure and we trust that he may long continue to delight this and future councils with his eloquence and to enrich their proceedings with the wealth of his sagacity and experience."

Several others joined His Excellency in felicitating the Guest. Their speeches are too long to bear quoting.

Ramanathan, replying in a brilliant and lengthy speech, said that his difficulty was to accept those words of praise as belonging to him or appropriate to him, knowing as he did the design of this great universe and also what share he had been entrusted with in the administration of a country like Ceylon. It was a problem that he seriously put before them. He continued, "The instruments of knowledge and action are not a creation of ours;

they are given to us and nobody knows, not even the man himself even in his old age knows, what the extent of those powers, capacities and talents are.

"Nevertheless, with those instruments of knowledge and action, powers, capacities and talents, some things have been done for the people and for the benefit of the country, and is it reasonable for us to stand up and say to ourselves that we are very clever folk and that we have done this and that we ought to be proud of the things we have done? Or would it be better for us to acknowledge our indebtedness to the Maker of the universe for all the blessings that have been given to us and for the opportunity that has been offered to us for doing some good at the proper time and in the proper way? We know that we do make tremendous mistakes and often ask ourselves why on earth we did such a thing on such an occasion. Knowing this circumstance as prevailing throughout every country in the world, I say that the only course open to us is to acknowledge the beneficence of the supreme deity, and to accept the praises of the people, and lay them before the feet of the Almighty and pray that these who have praised us should receive blessings of a higher order, even more for acknowledging the work that has been done.

"Being of this opinion, I feel honestly that I personally, by my own efforts, have not done anything that was really worth making, what I may say, a fuss about. But a fuss is made by other people and I have learned from all parts of Ceylon that they expect me to say something on this occasion in regard to this difficult question as to what our powers are in this world. They say, 'You have lived in this world doing works of beneficence of all kinds to people, and we love you for it and thank you for it; we think you are a hero.' Well, I do not know what to say to them. I do not feel that I am a hero. I have

been given certain powers and capacities and I have utilized those powers and kept myself straight without straying this way or that way from the 'Dharma' or the Law that has been imposed upon us. The Buddhists, for instance, say 'Damman Saranam Gachchami.' The Christians say the same thing in so many words. St. Paul for instance said: 'Without the Law we shall be lost, the Law is holy, the Law is spiritual.' It is our duty to abide in the Law, to recognize the Law which is our schoolmaster and that, unless we sit at the feet of the Master and perform our duty in deference to the Law, we shall all go astray and become sinners or as it is put in Greek, 'Wander not from the path of righteousness.' I feel that from the first to the last I have recognized the power of God in regard to the universe."

Thanksgiving services were performed and offerings made in temples as an invocation to Providence to grant him long life and good health so as to enable him to continue his service to the people and serve as a beacon-light of noble and selfless service not only to the members of his community but also to the nation as a whole.

An oil painting of Ramanathan done by the celebrated artist Mudaliyar A. G. G. S. Amerasekara was unveiled by His Excellency the Governor Sir Graeme Thompson in the State Council buildings and today it hangs at the entrance to the Chamber of Parliament.

The Hon. Mr. C. W. W. Kannangara, in inviting His Excellency to unveil the portrait said: "And now, Sir, in the fervent hope that the memory of this noble son of Lanka will long remain as a precious possession to inspire and guide her sons and daughters and generations of her children yet unborn, I would invite Your Excellency to be graciously pleased to unveil the portrait of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, the Sage of Sukhastan, the G. O. M. of Lanka and the universally acclaimed

leader of our country during the greater part of half a century of public usefulness."

A grateful people have now erected his statue in the premises of the Parliament House. But the statue and the portrait alone do not perpetuate his memory. He lives enshrined in the hearts of his grateful people, whom he served with a loyalty and dedication unsurpassed, nay, unparalleled in the annals of our history.

CHAPTER XXVII

I BELIEVE

What advantage can there be in possessing everything except what is good, or in understanding everything else, while of the good and desirable we know nothing.

—Plato

Mr. Ramanathan is unquestionably a man of great wisdom concerning the deeper problems of life and man's ultimate purpose under God. He is a great teacher, one of those enlightened ones who see and feel God, one possessed with perfect love, the 'complete fellowship with God' of the Apostle.

—Hon. Charles H. Aldrich,
Ex-Solicitor-General, U. S. A.

Mr. Ramanathan impresses me as a remarkable man... His interpretations of the Scriptures both Western and Eastern are simply wonderful... The spirit of the man is Christly.

—Rev. Walter A. A. Gardner

Worldly duties, if rightly done, will assuredly lead to the perfection of character and the attainment of the life spiritual in which frightfulness and disorder and hate have no place through the world. We must not be of the world and there must not be one set of principles pervading the heart and another set pervading the lips. The lips should only speak what is in the heart, and nothing must be entertained in the heart that cannot be proclaimed by the lips.

—Ramanathan

IN 1930, when Ramanathan was in England for the purpose of protesting against the introduction of the Donoughmore Constitution, the question "What are we here for?" was mooted by the English press. The answer was attempted by many

eminent leaders of religion and philosophic thought, but their replies left the readers in doubt and confusion. Ramanathan made the following answer: "'Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you,' are assurances relating to what are called the mysteries of the Kingdom of God or the Life Eternal amid the fleeting. In them is contained the true answer to 'What are we here for?'

"The English word 'God' comes from the German word 'Gott' which is from the ancient Indian word 'Kutta' and means that which is invoked or called for help by men and women in this world.

"By daily invocation (voicing of God's Name and selfless work) we establish a cordial relation with God.

"God is everywhere, but communication with God takes place in our hearts. For this purpose we should turn our eyes upwards to a point right between the brows and think earnestly of God as All-Merciful and All-Powerful Being and speak to God silently for help and guidance.

"Then will God hear you in the heart and grant you peace and prosperity in good works.

"Pray in this way thrice a day, morning, evening and at bed time. Also make up your mind by the power of your Will to avoid wrong-doing of every kind, to forget and forgive any wrong done to you, and to do always works of loving kindness—not pretending kindness—to every one, whether friend or foe.

"We have been sent into this world to make this pilgrimage to God—not to eat, drink and be merry but to live the Life Simple and to make ourselves acceptable to God.

"If we live the Life Simple and Righteous, our reward will be joy for ever. Any other kind of living will assuredly bring trouble and sorrow."

In it he has epitomized his whole concept of religion. He maintained that "life is a pilgrimage to God. It is for the great purpose of seeking and finding by incessant striving the blessed feet of God that we mortals are sent into the world. The primary aim and endeavour of life should be the advancement of the soul. But how is one to achieve that? It is by absolute surrender to God's Will and walkiug in the path of righteousness and doing one's duty fearlessly, without caring for the result of one's actions. Life in God is the fullness of life."

Ramanathan once said: "Fear of God and the discipline of life are the twin bed-rocks on which I built up my greatness. God is the doer and I, His humble servant resigning myself to His will, keeping myself in tune with the Infinite by plain living and high thinking." He was never weary of reiterating his conviction that he was "but a humble instrument in the hands of a Divine Providence". A great contemporary once said of him: "In Ramanathan are fully exemplified the words, 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you.'"

To Ramanathan, God meant, "'He who is invoked.' He is a personality whom all should hold dear in their hearts, and without whose abounding grace we shall not prosper and who is invoked for help and for relief on earth. The Tamil equivalent is 'Kadavul'. The term means that which transcends and is yet immanent in the universe. One would ask, 'What doth it transcend?' It transcends everything that is called Nature. Nature or Prakriti is that which is born, which changes and which decays and which re-appears. It is never one thing for even a second. God transcends this Nature and yet is in everything. Nature is false and God is real. The whole Nature floats in Akasa. There are three kinds of Akasa. God exists in the perishable nature, without

entangling Himself in Nature. God is infinite, eterna and un-changeable. He is Existence, Intelligenc and Bliss. He is Satchidhanandha, His function are creation, maintenance, ingathering and blessing He is the greatest *Shakthiman.*"

In his lecture entitled "The Spirit of the East and West" delivered before The Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, U. S. A., at its opening meeting of the season of 1905—1906, he said: "Of God, our Father, Eastern nations have no doubt. He is the Boundless Being in whom we all live and move. He is in and out of us. He is the very basis of all things, even of the space in which all orbs float. Space itself floats in a corner of Infinite Being which is quick with knowledge all through Itself. It is also able to do all things, and every form of power, spiritual, mental and physical, proceeds from Him. He is the Father of all nations, who are made of one blood, whatever the colour of the skin or type of the face may be and therefore designated in every country as 'Our Father'.

"Since all power belongs to Him, it is He who has endowed each soul with a mind and body and sphere of action and sense of pain and pleasure so as to enable it to see the real value of life and escape from worldliness to Godliness."

The end and aim of life is to raise oneself above the dominion of worldly desires and establish oneself in unity with the Supreme. How is this to be achieved? Ramanathan provides the answer: "Worldly duties rightly performed and without attachment to results leads to godliness, *Sivadharsanam.* Man is a trustee of God as regards the resourses lent to him for the purpose of liberating himself from worldliness. He must employ these resources not for gaining things that are sensual and worldly but for the achievement of things that are spiritual and eternal. Those who endeavour to make money and reputation by

unrighteous means have missed the true goal of life which is spiritual happiness or peace.

"The Soul or Spirit in man is love and its growth is denoted by the words Self-Love, Neighbourly-Love and Infinite Love. Spirituality or life in God is the Soul's march from Self-Love to Neighbourly-Love and Infinite Love." Ramanathan defined Self-Love as follows: "In the domestic circle, it pays no heed to the voice of its natural guardians, is devoid of affection for those whom it should love, is unthankful, not willing to oblige, nor easily pacified. Abroad, it puts on the appearance of goodness without believing in its virtue, is false in friendship, given to belittling others, boastful of its own deeds; unforgiving, scornful, much inclined to the pleasures of the senses, easily urged by external influences and led away by divers desires, owing to instability of character. Such a spirit *may be ever learning, but will never know the Truth.*

"The Spirit's next stage of growth is Neighbourly-Love. Another name for it is the Merciful Spirit, that is, the Spirit which melts at the distress of others and longs to help them. When Self-Love grows to be Neighbourly-Love there grows also in him a natural liking for things spiritual and a corresponding dislike of things corporeal.

"The third and last stage of spiritual growth is known as Perfect Love, the love that knows no height or depth, makes no difference between friends, neighbours and enemies but loves them all equally, doing good to all even to those who hate it and despitefully use it. This indeed is Fulness of Love called by Indian Sages *Atma-Puvanam*, the love that sees all round everywhere, and takes a most comprehensive, most worrying and most practical view of the appearances or situation of life. It is not misled by situation of life. It is not misled by appearances, having the gift of seeing the core or substance of every question.

"These great facts of the real existence of the Spirit in the body and the practicability of gradually ripening the Soul from the stage of Self-Love to Neighbourly Love, and from Neighbourly Love to Perfect Love, are fully recognized in India all through the different gradations of society. The sages of India and Judea alike have proclaimed the necessity of rearing the Spirit with the utmost care. *It should be the greatest work of life on Earth.* The Spirit is like a flame that should be protected against wind-currents, and fed with oil everyday. Sensualism and emotionalism, irreverence and frivolity, are the breezes that *quench the Spirit* and leave only a smoking flax; and the work of quenching will be all the sooner effected by idleness and too much sleep. The oil that keeps alive the Spirit is sound doctrine and wakefulness against error and sin. 'The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, as also the lusts of other things, *choke* the word,' said Jesus. The cares of the world are the engagements of worldly life which must be attended to, but the West does not know how to fulfil these *without being entangled in them* or drowned in the vortex of sorrow. To one who is devoted to the art of nursing the spirit, by not allowing it to be quenched by the breezes of corruption, non-entanglement is easy. 'No man,' said St. Paul, 'that warreth against corruption, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.' The hearing and understanding of sound doctrine, or the doctrine that heals the soul of its worldliness, enables one to perceive that all flesh is as grass, and all the corporeal glory of man is as the flower of grass. 'The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away.'

"In the performance of the duties of life, whether as husband, father, friend or citizen, it is wise to be *detached* from things that are likely to perish, and to work for the spiritual welfare of oneself and of those around oneself. It is most

necessary to be watchful of the seductions of wealth. Numberless are the men who have been beguiled and ruined through the possession of well-furnished houses, gaudy jewels and carriages, country seats and other facilities for sensuous enjoyment, which are barriers to quiet meditation, and which ere therefore said to 'choke the word of God' relating to the things of the Spirit. To be in the world, one need not be of the world. If the transactions of life are carried on with loving spirit, attentive mind and effective hand, but without entanglement, there will be no fear of the clear flame of the spirit being converted into a smoking flax.

"Space will not allow of enlarging further upon other main currents of thought which work silently in India under all the engagements of worldly life. The spirit of the East is alive unto God, and thinks not too highly of the world that is changing, decaying and perishing, even as we are looking on. It does indeed adorn a home, engage in industrial arts, and produce things beautiful to behold, such as marble palaces and all other luxuries which go to make up great cities, but it never forgets that, like the birth and death of each day, the things made of earth and flesh will also soon pass away. It is therefore a duty it owes to itself, and the living God whom it serves, not to allow the treasures of the world, which moth and rust doth currupt, to multiply themselves beyond a certain limit and deceive man unto perdition. It is deeply religious. It recognizes as a fact clearer than the noonday sun that the Lord reigneth throughout the universe; that he is above all, through all and in all; that he made the world as a training ground for the soul, is Creator, and faints not in His work of mercy; that his work of mercy is teaching the soul how to be free from corruption; that He is the one and only Teacher of all spirits and all

nations, the Teacher of Truth and Illuminer of every understanding; that He is Light and Love; that He teaches man by the great Spiritual power known as Law, which is unto man a real school-master, able to wring obedience to it by its minister known as Government, and to develop in him the love of Justice; that God teaches also by other agencies imbued with love, namely, by parents at home, by teachers at school, by teachers of occupations, by teachers of religion, known as pastors, by evangelists, who are the disciples of the Apostles of God, who quench not the smoking flax, but bring out of it discernment unto truth, a veritable beacon of light and love, a thing of beauty and joy for ever; that God is the chastener of the soul, a dispeller of fears and sorrows, and the strengthener of all who appeal to Him in abiding faith, who ever in mercy says 'Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.' The Spirit of the East also recognizes and feels most assuredly that the Soul is the principal part of man; that the helpmate of the Soul is the mind; that the collectors of worldly information for the Mind are the Senses; that the Mind and the Senses are maintained in strength for their respective work by other subtle helpers, such as the Digester of food, the Distributor of the food-essence to all the members of the body, etc; that the mud-house of the Soul and its subtle helpmates is the body that falls off at death and becomes food for worms; that therefore the affections should not be centred on the body; that the Mind should be withdrawn as much as possible from the things of the Spirit, the Son of God, for whose benefit the body and the world was made; and that it is worse than madness, suicidal, to miss the opportunity of a life-time in gathering and polishing up worldly treasures,

like unto chaff. The Spirit of the East is further fully persuaded that the Soul has a growth in light and love, and that it must be carefully nursed in every possible way from day to day, and with watchfulness all through the day; that it is good for a man that he bears the yoke of Soul-culture in his youth, that this culture of the Soul begins by *first* sharpening and refining the instruments of culture, namely: the Mind and Senses, under the instruction of parents, teachers and pastors, *secondly* by abiding in the law and gathering restful guidance and strength for work, *thirdly* by active work in the world in various ways, such as industrial occupations, charitable work and work in and for the Church, and *lastly* by imbibing sound doctrine from the living lips of evangelists and apostles of God.

"Knowing as the East does these great truths, it is able to say without hesitation that the high ideals and ethical conduct needed for ripening the Spirit from Self-Love to Neighbourly-Love and Neighbourly-Love to Perfect Love constitute Soul-culture or Civilization; and that the Mind (reason and will), if set to work on the things of the world, may produce articles of trade, money, flourishing homes and lofty cities, but can never produce righteousness, Love of God or Peace, unless it be united with the Spirit and made to mind the things of the Spirit. In these circumstances, no Civilization is complete without its material and spiritual planes. It will lack symmetry if one outgrows the other. A constant careering of the Mind in the path of bodily necessities and luxuries renders it unfit for the development of spirituality. The gracious Bhagavan said (in the Bhagavad Gita vi. 5):

'The work of uplifting the Spirit *atma uddharana* from corruption and its entanglements has to be done by the Mind.

'Since the Mind only is the ally of the Spirit, and the Mind only the enemy of the Spirit, the

Mind should not be made impure by letting it run on sensuous planes.'

"A Mind that capers about in the broad ways of the senses and turns needlessly on its own axis becomes quite unfit for the edification of the Spirit. It cannot build it up in love and light. It cannot understand the word of God, called the *Jnana Shastras* in India, much less convey their intended meaning to the Spirit, so that the Spirit is obliged to continue in Darkness, that is, materialism, or worldliness. A Civilization that is without its full complement of spiritual-mindedness may produce clever men and women, willing to do what is proper and right, but they will be unable to resist temptation when it comes associated with the chance of not being found out by others. The materialized mind, known of old as carnal-mindedness, however able to perform the ordinary duties of life before the gaze of the public, will frequently go wrong and even persist in error, if it be sure that its vagaries will remain undetected. In its sight, crime or sin is neither wrong-doing nor estrangement from God, but allowing oneself to be detected in wickedness or impiety. The inner purity of the *Individual* is not so much the concern of the votaries of material civilization as that *Society* should not have to talk about the latest scandal. Exposure is the one great offence known to material civilization. To endeavour to keep up the *appearance* of being good and well off is the end and aim of deadly respectability, of 'whited sepulchres.' Any civilization which does not crave for the spiritual growth of the individual, for the active development in each person of Loving Kindness and Knowledge of God, is on the high road of Sensuousness, doomed to become a 'smoking flax,' a thing of lurid vanity.

"The Civilization of India has endured—has endured so long as to be styled 'stationary'—because of its equipoise between materiality and

spirituality. The authors of that civilization were great *Jnanis*, sanctified spirits, who knew human nature in its entirety and the worldly and spiritual needs of men ushered into life on the soil of India. The industrial arts and popular amusements of the Hindus have not been allowed to run riot, so as to quench the Spirit, but have been developed sufficiently to answer the ends of beauty and comfort, and leave enough time to cultivate the fruits of the Spirit and worship God in peace, *every day* in all earnestness. Owing to this equilibrium between the material and spiritual sides of civilization being carefully maintained up to the present time by generations of Sages, the teeming millions of souls who inhabit the Land of Light *(Jnana bhumi)*, now known as India, has the singular privilege of surviving all other nations of the world and maintaining almost intact the traditionary ideals and practices of their pious ancestors. I say 'almost intact', because the influx of Western modes of thought, which cultured men of the West condemn as Materialism and Agnosticism, has, during the last two or three decades, begun to lead astray the youth of the country who have flocked into English Colleges and trade centres for learning the novel principles of money-making under competition, even at hazard of their souls."

Ramanathan believed fervently in the tremendous efficacy of prayer as a great solvent of human ills. He says, "Who that is given to fervant praying and to silent communion with merciful Providence has not borne testimony to joys which he knew not of before? Is it not within the *experience* of everyone who rises above his cares and worldly surroundings and, with attention fixed inwards, beseeches the Divine Spirit to help him on in faith and charity, in goodness and love to all, that he has quivered in limb and faltered in accent, felt himself moved to tears and calmed

beyond description in the great Presence? Descending from that holy region, has he not felt that consciousness. purified of its worldly attachments, is instinct with Peace? Such glimpses of light and joy are assurances of the reality of God. They who have *experienced* this blissful state require no proof for belief in Him. They want no reasons for such belief, for they are spiritually-minded already."

In the teaching of religion and the instilling of faith in God, the Guru or Spiritual Teacher plays a great part. Ramanathan says, "The rise of faith or love of God usually takes place through the instrumentality of a teacher, for the truths which relate to God and to the soul, till made manifest in actual experience, must of necessity rest solely on the authority of the person who propounds them. His private character, attainments, and bearing are the credentials of his authority. Without them a mind that is not credulous will refuse to incline towards him. Where faith or love of God is not innate, it manifests itself primarily as love of pupil to teacher, founded upon reasons sufficient to the mental calibre of the pupil. The purer the life of the teacher, the greater his insight, the more masterly his exposition, the stronger will be his hold on the pupil. It was by such personal qualities that Jesus created in the minds of the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles faith in himself and, by means of that faith, faith in the God he preached. The grand assurance of his words and the wonderful acts he performed in the name of God, his overflowing love and pure disinterestedness, his unblemished life and utter contempt for things worldly, were the grounds upon which thousands and thousands were led to accept him as a true teacher, and to take on trust what he taught regarding God. He was eminently great at teaching.

"When the disciple fixes his mind on and understands clearly the doctrines preached to him

by the Guru, *Renunciation of the world at heart would necessarily follow and readily lead to Faith or Love of God*, for that which obstructs the rise of faith in or love of God is the faith in or love of the world.

"The waxing of the love of God depends indeed upon the waning of the love of the world. Emphasising this great truth, one of the disciples of Jesus said, 'Know ye not that the love of the world is enmity with God?' If any man loves the world the treasures of the Kingdom of God, known as the graces and the powers of the spirit are not to be had until the so-called treasures of worldly life have been thrown away."

"Oneness with God," Ramanathan says, "is a great spiritual experience realizable in earthly life by due culture of the spirit or soul up to its utmost growth, and is known to the Sages of India as *Atma puranam* (Spiritual Fullness). Such a Perfected Spirit enters into union with the ever-Perfect Spirit and remains in inseparable fellowship with It in love and righteousness unto eternity.

"Of all teachers, the Jnana-Guru is acknowledged to be the greatest. Unlike the Vidya-Guru, who imparts knowledge on any given secular subject; unlike the Samaya-Guru, who imparts knowledge on any given religion, the *Jnana-guru* is concerned with the very foundation of knowledge, with Truth eternal, unchangeable. He is therefore a teacher of teachers, a *guru* in the real sense of the term, and hence called a *Jagat-guru* or *Loka-guru*, a Preceptor or Light of the world.

"He is found mostly in secluded places from Cashmere (Kashmir) to Cape Comorin (Kumari) living in the utmost simplicity. Some are so dead to the world as to go wholly unclad, seeing nothing but the reign of God everywhere. To them and indeed every other *Jnani*, men, women, and children are all alike without any distinction whatever of

sex, age, colour, creed, or race. Some *Jnanis* are often mighty in attainments (Siddhis), but power by itself is not considered their distinguishing characteristic. What are called miracles are often performed by men who are not in fellowship with God, and who therefore misuse the powers entrusted to them. The truth is that God is the author of all forms of power, and He alone is the worker of all miracles, from the making of a mineral cell and the growing of a blade of grass to the suspension of myriads of stellar systems in space. Jesus always declared miracles to be God's works and not his own, and he condemned the display of the gifts of prophecy and miracle on the part of those who did not know God, as works of iniquity. Knowledge of God and the consequent restfulness of spirit, called the Peace that transcends all thought, is indeed the only characteristic of *Jnanis*. Many of them are well known and much resorted to for instruction and advice; others, undiscovered, perform worldly duties in different walks of life, like ordinary folk; but ripe souls are drawn to them and learn of them in secret the way to God. These *Jnanis* in domestic life make the kindliest and best of fathers, husbands, brothers, and citizens, though never so entangled in those relations as to forget for a moment the grace of God, which assigned to them and others their respective spheres in life for freedom.

"It is such masters, who have attained fullness in love and Godly knowledge, that demonstrate to seekers in India that *God can be known by man, while on earth and in the body*. Sound doctrine is necessary to disestablish the mind from sensuous objects and establish it in the spirit, and then many an arduous work, having in view the development of righteousness and perfect love, should be undertaken. For mere study of the principles relating to God, soul, and the world will not and cannot secure for the student actual knowledge

of God. What he reads in books or hears from living lips is, so far as he is concerned, only hearsay knowledge. What is needed is personal Knowledge."

But how is God to be known? He says, "Just as the milk of the cow, which pervades her lymphatic system, is drawable only at the teat, *Jnanis* say that God, who is Spirit, Love, and Light, though existent everywhere, is knowable only in that part of his temple called the Spirit or Soul; that souls in bondage to Folly or Corruption (Avidya) are like pure water mixed with ink, unable to see itself as something different from the corruption it is in; that the Soul is the being which loves and knows; and Folly, the false being, which hates and works lawless deeds through the instruments of the Soul, namely, the mind, the sense, and the faculties of speech and action; and that if measures be taken to separate the Soul from Folly, the Soul will first know itself and then God who is in it. Knowledge of God is impossible till the Soul *renounces* all its impurities and stands in the likeness or 'image' of God fit for fellowship with God. The Doctrine of Renunciation, and the practices necessary for *forsaking* corruption, form the sum and substance of the teaching of the *Jnanis*. This work of renunciation of impurity on the part of the disciple must be carried on from day to day, it may be for years together, before God manifests Himself to the seeking Soul.

"When it awakens to a sense of its bondage to corruption and gradually releases itself from its carnal attachments, it is said to 'ascend' towards God, who is in the soul."

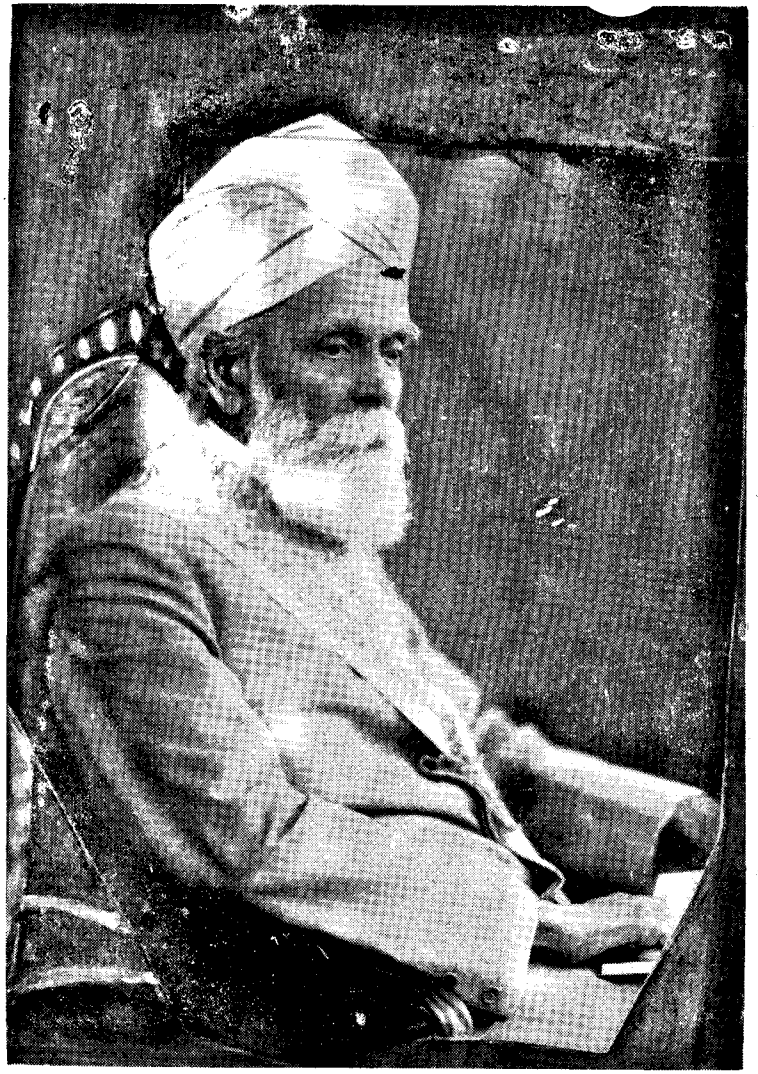
The Vedas and the Agamas treat of the ascent of the soul from corruption to incorruption. He says, "That part of the Vedas which is called Upanishads treats of this 'ascent' or 'rise' from corruption to incorruption. 'He who in perfect

rest rises from worldly attachments and attains the highest light, comes forth *in his own proper form.* This is the immortal soul.' (Maitr. Brah. Up., 11—12). Numberless are the books written by *Jnanis* to expound this doctrine of Godliness *(Brahmi sthiti)* contained in the Vedas and Agamas. The oldest of these books are in Sanskrit and Tamil. Some in Sanskrit are known to 'Western scholars, but not any in Tamil. Their works in Tamil deserve to be studied, especially those in the form of hymns. One of the ancient psalms of Manikka-vasakar, daily chanted by hundreds of thousands of Tamils in South India and Ceylon, is as follows:—

'O Siva, abiding in the limitless region of holiness, who, darkness dispelled, has granted me grace this day;
To abate thoughts, I thought of Thy way of rising from the bosom of the soul in the glory of the sun;
I thought of the non-existence of everything but Thyself;
I thought of Thee and Thee only—having worn off thought, atom by atom, and drawing closer for union with Thee as one;
Nothing art Thou, yet nothing is without Thee.
Who, then, can think of Thee?'

—*Thiruvasakam, Koyit Tiruppadikam, 7.*

"God as Absolute Being, or Being Unconditioned by quality or quantity, is indeed unthinkable, nor is He to be perceived by the senses, as Immaculate, Infinite Spirit, but yet, as such, He is knowable. He is to be known by the soul only when the mind runs down to a calm and lies quite still. When in spiritual communion, thoughts are wholly abated and sleep does not intervene, the soul stands by itself like a steady flame, unobscured by sleep and unagitated by thought. In this state of isolation or aloneness, called *kaivalya,* the soul knows itself and God who is



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in it. The gradual elimination of thought 'atom by atom' as the Master quoted above says, draws the soul out from the dust heap of thought and enables it to see itself more and more, till at length, when the last trace of thought is 'worn off', the soul appears, as declared in the Maitrayana Upanishad, in its 'own proper form' as Unconditioned Being, in unspeakable repose. This is called by the *agamic* Jnanis *atma-dharshana*, or knowledge of the soul, corresponding to the 'manifestation' or 'appearance' of Christ within man (John xiv: 21; Matt. xxiv: 30). Then is realised *Siva-darsana*, or knowledge of God, who manifests himself only within the Spirit, though He pervades all the Universe. This is 'His way', His usual method of manifesting Himself to those men who worship Him spiritually, 'in truth and in spirit' as Jesus said. *Vedanta Jnanis* speak of these two experiences as *Vikalpa Samadhi* and *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*.

"Just as the soul enshrined in the body 'rises' from the body, God enshrined in the Soul 'rises' from the Soul and manifests himself to the Soul. These are the two *fundamental experiences* of human nature, the one leading necessarily to the other; and this is the goal of life—the knowledge of God."

This is man's supreme goal in life. He says, "Attaining it, there is nothing more to attain here or elsewhere. Progress with all its toils ends. The long-sought for Rest has come. No longer do pure and impure thoughts strive against each other for mastery; no longer do kind and unkind words flow alternately from the lips; no longer does the flesh strive against the Spirit, nor the Spirit against the flesh. Differentiation between oneself and others has ceased. Peace reigns. In the consuming fire of Truth (*Jnanagni*), all the beggarly elements of egotism and desire have been burnt, and infinite Bliss (*ananda*) survives, bearing witness

to the Godly nature of man's consciousness (*atma*).

'Thou art the indestructible Bliss, which appears the instant all the world (Jagat) of thought and senses, like nuggets of gold, is dissolved into an ocean without waves or current. To this day I have not thus realised thee: Can I attain this happiness by only singing Thy praises in verse? When, O Lord, wilt thou establish me in the reign of holiness and grant me, a sinner, the bliss of the state resulting from non-differentiation?

—*Tayumanavar, Panmalai, 9.*

"The 'dissolution' of the 'world' (*Jagat*), which occurs to each man as soon as his mind ceases to differentiate—as soon as all thoughts have run down to a perfect calm—is also known as the 'death' of the much mistaken *Jiva-ahankara* (or worldly spirit) which veils the true Ego (*parama-ahankara*), which alone knows itself and is the basis of all knowledge, temporal and spiritual. Another great Sage of South India, who lived about two thousand years ago, and whose psalms are on the lips of every cultured Tamil of the present day, well said:

I became like the dead:
Of all thought was I void:
None but I remained:
I knew no further change.

— *Venkadar, Arut-pulambal, 49.*

"The master means to say that when the *Jiva-ahankara* (or worldly-minded I) dissolved itself by non-differentiation, the *parama-ahankara* (or Divine I) stood forth unchangeable, liberated from nescience or worldliness, and hence known as *Jivanmukta*. Another Sage sang as follows:

My heart has hardly throbbed for thee:
But little have my thoughts dissolved:
Divorced I am not from the body, so hard to separate.

I have not died: I am still in a whirl.

"The 'I' that ought to die is the earth-bound or worldly I, that knows not its true status and is therefore led captive by worldly thoughts. The true Ego (or atma) can never die. It is eternal.

"The death of the worldly or sinning I (*Jiva-ahankara*) is the 'crucifixion' of the sinner—the 'old Adam'. When 'old Adam' is crucified, the heaven-born Adam, the son of God, the true Ego (parama-ahankara) appears.

What do the words 'world' and 'worldly' denote? He says, "The words 'world' (Jagat) and 'worldly I' denote differentiated existence. The sum of human affairs and interests, or, in a restricted sense, that portion of them which is known to any one, is popularly understood to be the 'world', which in truth consists of names and forms only; and the worldly 'I' exists only when one is conscious of differentiated names and forms, that is, of thoughts. The 'end or dissolution of the world' (nama-rupa-nasa) is thus another expression for the 'death' of the 'worldly I'. The 'world' dissolving or ending is the same as the worldly I 'dying'; and the 'death' of the 'worldly I' is the same as the "end" of the "world". These expressions denote cessation from differentiation in spiritual communion. When sitting for worship one is alive to the reports of the senses or is thinking of the things of flesh or worldly life, he is in the state of differentiation, which is the opposite of Unification, or Peace or Rest.

Sanskrit and Tamil, Ramanathan maintained, abound in works which expound these hidden and eternal truths clearly and forcefully. The revival in our land of an intensive study of these languages and the abundant wealth of spiritual and philosophical thought they enshrine was one of his passionate concerns. Of such a study he was admittedly the greatest exemplar of his time. For Manikkavasaga

Swamigal's *Thiruvasagam* he had an ecstatic passion. It represented to him the high water-mark of spiritual culture. It was for him the fountain-head of religious illumination and exaltation. In it he found light and inspiration for his labours in the material world. In moments of weariness and despondency, of defeat and disappointment, he would find spiritual solace and sustenance in chanting the marvellous hymns, many of which he knew by heart. To hear him discourse on them was to experience a new spiritual ecstasy and awakening. It may in parenthesis be interposed that Ramanathan inwardly cherished, though not outwardly expressed, the feeling that his life was in many ways comparable to that of the great saint who, though in active life was the Prime Minister of the Pandyan King, was at heart a great recluse. The hymn which begins with the words, "Muthineri ariyatha" was ever on his lips. He has translated it in his inimitable manner, though the beauty and grandeur of the original are untranslatable:

A miracle indeed; for unto whom has the
Father been so gracious as unto me,
Who loved the company of fools that know
Not the nature of freedom?
He caused me to be taught in the way of
Faith, in order that works of the flesh
May hasten away.
He caused the evil of my soul to be severed,
And made me attain His own glorious form.

The Bhagavad Gita, which embodies the teachings of Lord Krishna to Arjuna on the battle-field of Kurushestra, was to him a treasure-house of spiritual wisdom. He was so far enamoured of it that he mastered it in its Sanskrit original. Moreover, he translated it into immaculate Tamil and added voluminous and illuminating commentaries on the text, in his endeavour to enable his people to partake of its rich spiritual repast.

He was the Superman envisaged in that great religious classic. Action was the very fibre of his being, action desireless, detached, divorced from clinging to results, action as a dedication to, and adoration of the One, action as the fulfilment of God's purposes for Creation, action as man's best prayer to the Eternal. He believed firmly in the tremendous efficacy of prayer as a solvent of human ills. Prayer was with him the effort of man to reach God. That there is in the world an answering presence was the very foundation of his belief. If we ask, it shall be given to us. Through prayer we know the Divine and become more and more like Him. All his life he lived in the Divine. He yielded himself completely to the Divine. His attitude was one of self-oblivious, non-utilitarian worship of God for His own sake.

Rampant materialism as exemplified by Western society and miscalled "Progress" was, in his view, the supreme malady of modern society. Man cannot attain his sovereign purposes and be great, good and beneficent as long as he is in bondage to desire, permits himself to be enslaved by the love of money and the love of sensual pleasures. When, in the course of a Press interview, the reporter asked the question, "Will it pay?" he burst out indignantly, "That is a ridiculous question—a question that estimates life by the money that comes into one's pocket. Religion does not pay, nor patriotism, nor love for your mother who is being annoyed by others with whom it is dangerous to come into collision. Nevertheless, you have to sacrifice yourself for the sake of your good mother, for the maintenance of love and of high ideals. In every land where there is a civilization of any worth, self-sacrifice is considered to be the highest ideal of life. I despise money where character, personal or national, is at stake. The question, 'Will it pay?' is the language of damnable materialism."

Ramanathan exploded the belief common among Western peoples and shared by many among us that civilization is synonymous with frantic, self-centered materialism, with luxurious and ostentatious living and defined civilization as man's rescue from his fearful subjection to sense, as man's self-denial and dedication of himself and his all to the service of God and his fellow-men, as man's expansion in love, humanity and kindly-dealing.

In any estimate of Ramanathan's life and work, it should be borne in mind that he was first and last a man of God and a religious teacher of acknowledged authority and eminence. If we miss this aspect of the man, we miss the real man, the man who lived all his life in constant communion with the Divine, the man whose every act of life was a dedication to the Divine, the man whose voluminous writings have enriched religious and philosophic thought, the man who brought about a religious and cultural renaissance in his country when it was fast degenerating into a religious and cultural desert, the man who made large numbers of distinguished Americans his bondmen by his illuminating addresses on religion and life, the man who among us reared the stateliest temple to the glory of God, the man who has left us legacies unparalleled in our history of philanthropy for the propagation of religion and a religious mode of life. In a world, all that matter are things material and mundane and politicians enjoy a monopoly of power and publicity, and values spiritual are often derided and treated as matters of no moment, Ramanathan's celebrity as statesman and leader tended to eclipse his fame as a man of God and a teacher of religion. But the fact remains that not for a thousand years shall we find another, much less a statesman, in whom the religious motive was so paramount and so compelling.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DONOUGHMORE CONSTITUTION

We maintain that there are three right forms of constitution, and that the best must be that which is administered by the best man.

—Aristotle

Healthy nations, when justly governed, never demand constitutional changes.

—J. A. Froude

In Ireland, the penal laws tended to give the larger nation the vices of the monopolists, and the smaller nation the vices of slaves.

—Lecky

Self-government is the pith and foundation not only of the life temporal but also of the life spiritual. It is the first article of every man and woman who feels within himself or herself the call of the Divine. It is the first article of every Yogi, of every Jnani and of every Bhakta.

—Bepin Chandra Pal

On that particular occasion when he denounced the Donoughmore Constitution, one felt as if a prophet had come from another world opening the eyes, stirring the hearts and shattering the illusions of smug, self-complacent individuals.

—K. P. S. Menon, I. C. S.

Providence has a way of teaching those who persist long and wilfully in ignoring great realities, the dignity of man, the sense of human equality and the right of all people to freedom.

—Sir Arthur Bryant

Life without liberty is not worth living. Let us go forward and win that liberty and establish that liberty for ever on sure foundations.

—Earl Atlee

IN the closing years of a long and arduous life, Ramanathan was called upon to play a conspicuous role in one of Ceylon's most momentous events, the Donoughmore Reforms. The Donoughmore Commissioners formulated a novel constitution which transformed radically the political structure of the country. Though the reforms marked a tremendous advance on the road to national freedom and popular sovereignty, many of its features disappointed and embittered him.

The veteran statesman was now entering upon the penultimate period of his prodigious career. He was at the apex of his power and renown. He stood pre-eminent in the eye of the nation; he enjoyed the applause, the confidence, the adoration even of multitudes. Yet at the height of this power and popularity, he was cruelly denounced and even disparaged by certain scheming and self-seeking politicians who, enamoured of the splendid opportunities for power and self-aggrandizement that the new constitution offered to them, were completely oblivious of the larger and more abiding interests of the country and of the demands of Truth, Justice, Humanity and Fair-play in the government of the State.

Ramanathan sincerely and passionately believed that the Constitution, despite its glossy veneer of democratic self-rule, concealed in its wily bosom the seeds of national discord, disruption and ultimate decadence. It was highly obnoxious to the nation. It would hamper the country's political growth and administrative strength, impede the ultimate attainment of national freedom and sovereignty by an over-hasty and premature enthronement of the uneducated, unenlightened and indisciplined masses in the seats of power, strike at the roots of communal harmony and concord by an overweening faith in the validity and efficacy of arithmetical democracy in a multi-racial and multi-lingual society and by the imposition on the

country of a novel and untried political experiment. He who had during half-a-century of distinguished public and political life, toiled indefatigably for the gradual evolution of a national state governed by enlightened public opinion and had with vision and endless toil advanced immeasurably the cause of national freedom and sovereignty, the diverse elements united in amity and concord, in one patriotism and one common allegiance, regarded the constitution as a tragic political blunder. The Master-Statesman who had with growing satisfaction watched the country's steady advance from the rule of an absolute Governor to one in which the people actively participated was outraged at the temerity and wanton folly, the indignity and shocking absurdity of a band of men living several thousands of miles away, with no knowledge of local conditions, starkly ignorant of the history and the geography, the diversities of race and religion, of language and culture and tradition of this composite land, presuming, after a hasty and superficial inquiry, to hammer out a constitution calculated to sustain the destinies of the heterogeneous elements comprising several millions of the country's population.

No man was more free from Utopian delusions or complacent optimisms or had a shrewder or more practical sense of what was demonstrably possible or achievable or resisted more stubbornly the lure of impracticable, unrealistic, illusory ideological abstractions. Universal suffrage, territorial representation, popular sovereignty and such other forms of high-flown, high-sounding political and patriotic claptrap might stir the souls and fire the imaginations of the people and their leaders but what remained to be settled was the question of their applicability to the needs of a country that had for centuries lain prostrate under the heels of alien conquerors, that could lay no claim to widespread literacy or

political awareness, indispensable to the successful working of democratic institutions, a country, moreover inexperienced in the processes of democratic self-government, a country that from time immemorial has been the home of diverse peoples, diverse religions and cultures. Did the Commissioners address themselves to this all-important question on the answer to which depended the success of political institutions? If they did, they would not have lapsed into the fatal fallacy of supposing that the political processes applicable to the government of an ancient, long-evolving civilised community like Britain could also be applied to the government of a country that had long withered under the paternalistic and repressive rule of foreign powers. The democracy formulated by the Commissioners, he dreaded, would degenerate into either anarchy or brutal tyranny masquerading as parliamentary democracy. It was not a question whether universal suffrage was in itself desirable but whether it was fitted to the needs of the community as it existed in 1928. It exactly indicates Ramanathan's conception of the relation of abstract ideals to the possibility of what can be realised. He had little confidence in the perfectibility either of man or the world. He condemned the unrealism of British radical belief that immediate manhood suffrage should be granted to everyone regardless of existing standards of education and culture. He rejected the barren doctrine of racial nationalism. His ideal was the union of all the races and creeds, be it Sinhalese or Tamil, Muslim or Burgher, Buddhist or Hindu in one patriotism and one citizenship. Such a union would have the power to provide the stability so essential to the orderly development of the country and the happiness and prosperity of its peoples. He envisaged the establishment of a societyfree from racial discrimination, capable of enriching itself from the cultural heritages of all the races which compose it.

He rejected the idea that the vote should be exercised without qualification. Universal suffrage would give rise to the danger of irresponsible politicians being elected to the legislature on grounds irrelevant to the common good. He asserted that there should be a qualified franchise, restricted to those who have attained certain standards of education or responsibility and, as an essential corollary, that there should be the most vigorous enforcement of the State's obligation to afford to the limit of its economic capacity such facilities for education in all its forms as will give every individual the opportunity of attaining higher standards and thereby gaining the vote.

Ramanathan was passionately convinced that the Constitution was fraught with immense possibilities of national danger and disruption and was, therefore, from the outset a relentless opponent of it. He was nearing the eightieth year of his life when even the hardiest and most stalwart of men would have recoiled from so strenuous and hazardous a role. But with a fire which, far from being quenched, burned fiercely with age, with a courage and resolution that baffled friend and foe alike, this indomitable man girded his loins, and stood before his assailants firm and impregnable as a rock, four-square against the storms of criticism and invective that assailed him with a fury and vehemence without parallel in our political history and challenged the propounders and promoters of the new Constitution.

All his long political life was dominated by one supreme ideal, the ideal of good, just, efficient and progressive government in which every citizen would take his rightful place, every community, play its legitimate role and every interest, find due fulfilment. Such a government alone conduces to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and such a government is achieved only when according to Plato "political power is entrusted

to highly gifted natures who have passed through a long course of intellectual discipline and practical experience and who will despise all existing honours as mean and worthless, caring only for the right and the honours to be gained from that, and above all for justice as the one indispensable thing in whose service and maintenance, they will reorganize their own state." Such philosophic statesmen are brought into the legislature only by educated, enlightened and responsible suffrage. Ramanathan was painfully aware that Ceylon had yet a long course to traverse before it could attain that ideal of educated and enlightened universal franchise. He knew that Western democracy needs many generations of experience, tradition and training to make it succeed. Universal franchise, unless preceded by universal education and a civilized outlook, would let loose dark and tyrannical forces and result in the helm of state being seized by ambitious and adventurous demagogues, power-hungry mob-leaders and rabid racialist party-bosses, men devoid of character or attainment, whose one dominant passion, one over-riding impulse would be not the promotion of the common good but rather the furtherance of sectional interests and the accumulation of personal wealth and power. Government based on a mere arithmetical counting of heads or the one man, one vote principle so sacred to modern exponents of democracy was abhorrent to him. It revealed a surprising ignorance of history and an almost complete absense of a sense of historical proportion. Numbers or rather those who control numbers would dominate the country and they would not be the men under whom a country could grow great. Men of true wisdom and political insight, of genuine patriotism and self-sacrifice would recoil from the din and dust of vulgar political conflict and turmoil, recede into the political background. Reason, Justice, Fair-play, Liberty and Kindly-

dealing would be banished from the domain of men and in their place would be enthroned passion and prejudice, tyranny and oppression. Racial peace and harmony, national security and solidarity would vanish from the visible scene, giving rise to anarchical passions. He arraigned the Commissioners for foisting on the country a scheme of government which would be catastrophic in its consequences.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, he stubbornly and heroically refused to take refuge from what he saw to be a hideous reality in an easy and unthinking acceptance of the spirit and trend of the times. Nothing could induce him to condone blind folly and self-destructive enterprise, to say or think things acceptable to those in authority. His vision was as profound as his knowledge. He saw the truth and regardless of unpopularity, ridicule and even obloquy, announced it with a splendid and heroic eloquence. Happily for him, he did not live to see circumstances make men realise the horrid truth of what he had said. But though the man is dead, the writing on the wall that he saw remains, and, for those with eyes to see, it seems to be growing larger and more clear. When in his evidence, he pleaded with the Commissioners that the constitution they proposed was extremely ill-suited to the needs of the country and when in reply they said that he was out of tune with the times, in sheer exasperation he cried out, "It's meaningless casting pearls before swine."

He asked in effect, "Who are they, the Commissioners, to adjudicate upon what is good and what is bad for the country? What are their credentials for the very weighty and arduous task they had taken on themselves to perform? Were they equipped with a sound knowledge of the peculiar political, social and economic conditions obtaining in the country? Did they apprehend the gravity and sanctity of the task they set out to

perform? Was it their motive to foist on the country a constitution that was beyond human ingenuity to work successfully and then proclaim to the wide world outside the inherent incapacity of subject peoples to rule themselves? It is characteristic of the British, as of every other imperial power, that when they find that they cannot any longer hold oppressive sway over their subject peoples, when the forces of nationalism and self-determination have become far too insistent and irresistible, they so devise a machinery for the transference of power to the people as to render strong, healthy, peaceful and progressive government all but impossible. The seeds of discord are insidiously sown and the subsequent history of the country becomes one long tale of racial hostility, internecine strife and ultimate national decadence. The tragic history of newly-liberated peoples bear ample testimony to it. Ramanathan firmly believed that Ceylon would have to wait for many years before she could attain the ideal of successful universal suffrage. Education, political experience and a sense of moral responsibility should enable the voter to appreciate the worth and significance of the vote and to employ it in the best interests of the country and not to let himself be the dupe of deceitful and self-seeking politicians seeking to climb to power on the backs of the ignorant and illiterate masses. The extension of the franchise should be gradual and progressive and not precipitate and revolutionary, as proposed by the Commissioners. It should keep pace with the spread of education and the deepening of political consciousness among the people. It took England centuries of preparation to introduce universal franchise and it was incomprehensible why the Commissioners should have blinded themselves to the experience of their own country and turned a deaf ear to the deprecations of wise and far-sighted leaders as to think that Ceylon could successfully practise it within a decade or two of

the introduction of the principle of election. "The Donoughmore Commissioners," Ramanathan said, "have recommended the grant of universal suffrage to our adult men and women, though the vast majority of them are illiterate. As I said at the beginning, British boys and girls have had elementary education imparted to them for about seventy years and they have the advantage of hearing the opinion of wiser people in regard to political matters. They are in a much better condition than our own people who have no such advantages. The Commissioners ignore all these drawbacks and with one stroke of the pen recommend universal suffrage and the abolition of communal representation."

It was a deliberate attempt on their part to arrest the gradual and progressive evolution of self-rule, sabotage the smooth and efficient working of the machinery of government on the one hand, by thwarting the entry into the legislature, of men of integrity and political acumen elected by educated, experienced and responsible suffrage, and on the other, by throwing its doors open to political adventurers and communal firebrands thrown up by a blind and venal mob. And the mob, he knew, is the seed-bed of the tyrant, the Big Brother. It was the imperialist's response to the insistent demands of the leaders of the people for a fair share of responsible government. Ramanathan asked in effect, "Is there anything sacrosanct about adult suffrage as a form of parliamentary representation? Did the leaders of the people ask for it? Did the Commissioners feel in their heart of hearts that the country was ripe for it, in the face of the fact that illiteracy was rampant and political consciousness and experience confined to a very meagre section of the adult population? It was, he believed, an act of treachery, a gratuitous and wanton betrayal of the solemn trust the nation reposed in the honesty and good faith of the ruling

power. No other explanation was possible in the context of conditions that obtained in the country when the Donoughmore Commissioners formulated their scheme of government. A great British historian, Professor Northcote Parkinson has condemned in no uncertain terms the application of British parliamentary institutions to the governance of the newly-liberated British Colonies. He says, "The basic fallacy in all our colonial theory has been the assumption that a certain pattern of parliamentary constitution is an ideal to which every land must necessarily aspire..... In this argument, there was from the beginning a fatal flaw..... Our mistake has been to see Anglo-Saxon democracy as the goal to which all mankind is heading. The British politician still thinks of representative democracy as a Promised Land; a state of perfection which can be reached by all.....

"Democracy has always, so far, ended in a chaos from which only dictatorship can rescue it..... There is good reason to doubt whether British parliamentary institutions have even a theoretical chance of success in the unhopeful situation to which they are automatically applied in the Colonies."

The constitution that governed the country at the time of the advent of the Donoughmore Commission, was working smoothly and without a hitch, and there was hardly any manner of dissatisfaction anywhere. But in June 1927, Sir Hugh Clifford resigned the Governorship of the Island on the ground that certain impossible conditions were prevailing in and out of the Legislative Council of Ceylon, after recommending to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Amery, the appointment of a Commission to examine the situation and to report "on the measures that could best be taken to surmount the impasse." The despatch was not laid before the Legislative Council, though an Unofficial Member moved that

it be tabled. Had it been produced, the unofficial members would have considered it carefully and stated their views upon the points raised. But they were not given the opportunity. The reasons given by Sir Hugh Clifford in justification of his desire that a Commission should be appointed were the following:

1. The revival of Buddhism in the last twenty years for political rather than religious purposes.
2. The substitution of vulgar abuse of the tenets of other creeds for the toleration of ancient Buddhism.
3. The acquisition of wealth by the Karawa caste (the tribe living along the sea-shore) and their endeavour to break the monopoly which the highest caste or the Goigama aristocracy had till then enjoyed of representing the Sinhalese interests in the Legislative Council.
4. The ill-feeling based on caste prejudices and upon the angry passions which such prejudices aroused, and the consequent racial animosity which then began for the first time.
5. The first scheme of Reform worked out in 1909 by Colonel Seely, then Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, and accepted by Governor McCallum, in spite of the protests of his Executive Councillors, and the obvious inapplicability of Mr. Seely's scheme to local circumstances.
6. The first election of a representative of the Educated Ceylonese, which was fought purely on caste lines, when a high caste Tamil was chosen, with the aid of the high caste Sinhalese votes, and from which time caste prejudice proved to be a stronger passion than racial bias.
7. The growth of unrest thus created and maintained with vigour during the World War.
8. The outbreak of the riots in all the districts occupied by the Sinhalese in 1915, owing to a religious fracas between the Buddhists and Mohammedans at Gampola.

9. The misapprehension of the situation by Governor Chalmers and the Colonial Secretary who, through want of Colonial experience, failed to deal promptly and firmly with the disturbances by using their trained civilian officers and the police, allowed martial law to be proclaimed, surrendered their responsibility to the General Officer Commanding the Troops, who had been in the island for only one month, and suffered him to adopt measures for the suppression of the riots, which have left behind them a legacy of grievance and hatred.

10. The strengthening of the hands of the local politicians by mismanagement of the riots and by grant of a series of legislative reforms during the Governorship of Sir William Manning, the final instalment of which in 1924 definitely vested all financial control in the hands of thirty six Unofficial Members, and the administrative responsibility in the hands of the Governor only, who could not discharge it save by the goodwill of the unofficial majority in the Legislative Council, or by the exercise of his power of vote, which could be easily countered by a refusal to vote supply, in which case the constitution would be practically suspended.

Ramanathan refuted the Governor's arguments thus: "It was all false history from beginning to end, due to his want of knowledge of Sinhalese and Tamil, which did not permit him to hold intimate intercourse with the natives of the country in their respective homes, his desire to be in constant touch with the British in their exclusive clubs, playgrounds and bungalows, and his fatal habit of romancing for writing novels to amuse people who hate solid literature. A careful study of them will convince any thoughtful reader how difficult it is for the central authorities in England to govern a distant country, situated thousands of miles away, by relying too much on the man at the spot to do his duty discriminately and efficiently, of observing the true condition of affairs and reporting the real causes that created it".

Soon after receiving Sir Hugh Clifford's despatch, Mr. Amery appointed a Special Commission of Inquiry consisting of Lord Donoughmore, Sir Matthew Nathan, Sir Geoffrey Butler and Dr. Drummond Shiels to go to Ceylon and report upon "the working of the existing constitution, and on any difficulties of administration which may have arisen in connection with it, to consider any proposals for the revision of the constitution that may be put forward and to report what, if any, amendments of the Order in Council now in force should be made."

The Commission arrived in Ceylon in November 1927, examined witnesses and returned to England without informing the Unofficial Members what they had heard and read of their conduct towards the Government officials who were obliged to appear before them in its Finance Committee and without asking them whether they would offer any explanation of the grievances of the officials. The Commissioners chose to give judgement against Unofficial Members assuming as correct the statements made by Sir Hugh Clifford in his confidential despatch, and those made by certain officials also in confidence.

The Commissioners came to the conclusion that the Unofficial Members had reduced the existing Constitution to an "unqualified failure". The indictment made by the Commissioners against the Unofficial Members was that:

1. They were making continual attacks on officials of the Government.
2. They became a permanent opposition because they were not given executive responsibility.
3. They made use of every opportunity to embarrass the Government.
4. They failed to appreciate the value of the services rendered to the country by these public

servants because they thought that it would weaken their claim for self-government.

5. The abuse of the Government officials thus became a familiar phenomenon. In the Council, in the sessions of the Finance Committee, on the public platform and in the Press attack followed attack and criticism was heaped on criticism.

6. Policy was too frequently discussed in terms of personalities and the discussion carried at times beyond the bounds of what was courteous or decent.

7. Doubtful motives were imputed to and allegations of all sorts were made against those who had had little opportunity for reply. Though the heads of Departments were naturally the worst sufferers, no class or grade of public officers, was exempt from these painful experiences.

The Commissioners laid all those charges at the door of the Unofficial Members and added that by such an attitude on the part of the Unofficials, public officers had been disheartened and bewildered, and therefore they said, they must contrive a machinery which would safeguard public officers and others concerned against the Unofficials. Such an indictment of the Unofficial Members was altogether undeserved, inasmuch as they were reputedly a band of honourable men whose sole purpose was to do an honest job without in any way hampering the good work of officials.

The Commissioners recommended to the Secretary of State as a remedy for all these ills, the grant among other things, of adult suffrage to the people of Ceylon in order that the uninstructed masses numbering two million men and women of twenty one years of age may compel the 65 Members chosen by them to own their mastery and be answerable to them for their conduct in the State Council.

Ramanathan viewed illiteracy and ignorance and their concomitants, the want of political awareness and experience, the absence of a cultured

and civilized outlook upon life, the jettisoning of the one basic principle of human co-existence, the principle of 'live and let live', as the foremost foe of all democracy. He said, in effect, "Do not put the cart before the horse. Before all things, educate our masters, free them from the dead-weight of ignorance and folly, which oppresses them, lead them from darkness to light, civilize and humanize them, enable them to view themselves and their fellow-citizens as members of one confraternity, though subject to extraneous differences, enable them to see that one community should not seek to build on the ashes of another, that healthy, vigorous and progressive national life is possible of attainment only through social understanding, mutual charity, that hatred and oppression are poisons without effect but to inflame, that education rightly planned and ably imparted would be an effective remedy for our social and political ills. He drew attention to the deficiencies and inadequacies in our educational system and concluded that Ceylon would take another thirty years to befit herself for universal suffrage. This was said in 1928 and we are now in 1977. Are we, after the lapse of a full half-century since the introduction of universal franchise, and three decades since the spread of compulsory free education from the Kindergarten to the University, anywhere nearer successful universal suffrage?

There was another ground on which he opposed the constitution. He was extremely apprehensive of the future of the minorities whom the Commissioners sought to sacrifice at the altar of mathematical democracy. He knew that to ignore the claims of the minorities to absolute equality of opportunity in national life, to the right of self-determination is to be guilty of a disregard of minority pride and put back the clock of progress and outrage the principles of religion and humanity. He believed in man's fundamental freedoms with a faith that

may well be called apostolic, in his freedom to live a free and full life, in his freedom from man-made restraints or disabilities or from mob violence. Ramanathan advocated the retention of communal representation until such time as, with the advance of education and the spread of a civilized national outlook, voters could exorcize the demon of racialism and communalism, which has proved to be the gravest menace to man's peaceful co-existence upon this planet.

He had little faith in the efficacy of nomination as a solvent of the problems of minority representation. His long political experience had taught him that nominated members served more the ruler who made them than the ruled whom they professed to serve. Man being what he is by nature, an incorrigibly selfish animal, a nominated member sees both virtue and self-interest in pandering to his maker who could requite him with bounty of all kinds, rather than in serving the people who have little of worldly goods in them to bestow on him. Nominated members are often known to betray their charges in their hectic pursuit of worldly ends. He said, "Equally illegal and sorrowful is the political extinction, recommended by the Commissioners, of the Burgher, Mohammedan, Indian and the Western Province Thamil constituencies. What offence have they committed to deserve this ignominious treatment, to be deprived of the work of winning the love and esteem of the people by unceasing devotion to their welfare? These communities and their trusty leaders have always been helpful to the Government in its endeavour to administer the country soundly. It is wholly unjust to abolish their constituencies and enable indifferent men versed in the art of currying favour to get themselves foisted into nominated seats." In support of his contention, he quoted the pronouncements of eminent statesmen and political philosophers and made the solemn

submission that "the protection of existing communities and their respective customs is indeed the prime duty of the Government". He fulminated against the Donoughmore Commissioners who had "the hardihood to despise the Orders of the King, the written instructions of his Ministers, the opinions of great practical Governors like Sir William Manning and Sir Cecil Clementi and of imperial statesmen like Cecil Rhodes and General Smuts and to assert in cold blood that communal representation is a 'canker' which must be rooted out."

What he resisted implacably was not national independence but national disintegration, not democracy but mobocracy and its concomitant, political anarchy. He knew that, if in the name of a spurious nationalism, an attempt was made to suppress the minorities, each of whom had a great and distinctive heritage and a very valuable contribution to make to the common good, centrifugal forces and fissiparous tendencies would set to work and ultimately destroy the hard-won unity of the nation. It was, he felt, a curious delusion on the part of British bureaucracy that, in the interests of uniformity and so-called efficiency, the larger should always dominate and, if necessary, extinguish the smaller, and that human well-being and virtue can only be achieved by enforcing such uniformity. He stood by the principle that every people should have the right to make a free choice as to the kind of government they want. With passionate intensity of conviction, he clung to the belief that numerical democracy has no place in a country such as Ceylon, inhabited as it is, by diverse racial, linguistic, religious and cultural groups, for he knew the essence of democracy is that in any given country or State, the minority, however large it may be, and however separate from the majority, must accept without qualification or right of appeal, the rule of the majority. The latter's representatives possess, under this theory

of political society, the legal right to impose on the minority any law, institution or policy it pleases, even if it offends against the most cherished instincts and interests of the minority. If that is what arithmetical democracy does, what would be the plight of the minorities under the new dispensation? He knew that the conferment of untrammelled self-government, that is to say government without adequate and effective safeguards for the minorities, must mean for those minorities total political extinction, a state of permanent national bondage and servitude.

When many of our so-called leaders and saviours fondly hugged the delusion that the party-system of Government would be an antidote, an invaluable corrective to racialism and communalism and a multitude of other ills, which have from the beginnings of time beset every multi-racial society, he alone of all men saw the grim and hideous truth that the party-system, far from smoothing out racial and communal differences, would go far towards accentuating them. He knew that in the race for power, a political party or a power-hungry despot cannot hitch upon a more potent or a more decisive rallying-cry than racialism. With a contemporary British historian, he held the belief that "the principle of conferring unrestricted power on the elected representatives of the party which secures the largest number of votes can only operate justly where those who vote and whose needs are counted, share, by and large, with the minority over which they rule, a common belief as to what constitutes justice. *If, for instance, a majority of those who vote, believe it to be just to violate the lives and persons and seize the property of the minority merely because they are of different origin, race or colour to themselves, justice cannot and will not be done and democracy, as we understand it, no more exists in such a country than it would do, if the minority did not possess the right to vote at all. Where such a divergence in the fundamental ideals of justice exists, the two communities cannot share a common democratic form of Government without outrage being done to everything that we mean by democracy.*"

Ramanathan knew from experience that a majority or those whom a majority elects can be just as oppressive, just as intolerant and just as vindictive as any ancient despot or any modern dictator. Reversion to tribal barbarism and barbaric tyrannies, to the tyrannical law of the jungle, he foresaw, was inevitable. He was far too realistic to face the future with his eyes shut, unlike many of our pretentious political pundits who could not see beyond their nose but posed as the spokesmen of the people at this crucial hour and at many subsequent occasions besides, and bartered away the lives and liberties of a great and ancient people for a mere mess of personal pottage. Ah, these two-penny saints and saviours have been the ruin of the race, men without an iota of patriotism in them, demons of self-interest, fishers in troubled waters, men who turn their country's need to ignoble gain, who strut their brief hour upon the nation's stage and then are heard no more.

Ramanathan made it crystal clear to the Imperial Parliament and the leaders of the nation that there did exist in the country a minority problem both stark and hideous, the solution of which was imperative and inescapable, if the country was to march towards its goals of national freedom, unity and well-being, that any ostrich-like attitude to it in which many of our professed leaders took shelter, would spell ruin and disaster to the nation; that mathematical democrcy would mean purely and simply the total, absolute and permanent subjugation and ultimate extinction of the minorities; that the adoption of such an expedient would run counter to all the canons of truth, reason and justice, and would undo all the constructive and creative work that had been done laboriously over the years,

and, more than all, besmear and besmirch the fair name of their common motherland. He pleaded vehemently for the continuance of communal representation, which he said, was the secret of the national unity and solidarity and progress the country had enjoyed hitherto and the only solution to the constitutional problems confronting a multi-racial state. Every racial and religious group in the body-politic, like every limb in the human organism, should pull its full weight and be a free and equal partner in the Government of the state. No single community however preponderant in numbers should be in a position to dominate or over-ride all the other communities, if they choose to stand together.

He said, "In fact I may say that since my entry into the Legislative Council in 1879, both the Europeans and the native members have cordially worked together. And our influence with the Secretary of State between the years 1879 and 1912 was so great that some of the Governors here and the Secretaries of State in London said that the united power of all the six different communities was out of all proportion to our numerical strength. That was the situation of affairs. We worked together; we did not think of colour, caste or religious differences. We all thought of Ceylon and we were all developing the best interests of Ceylon.

"In 1916 Governor Manning confessed, 'I came into this country as a staunch conservative but now I am surrendering the reins of Government and departing as a liberal.'

"Communal representation was, moreover, the system adopted by great national and international organizations like the American Senate and the League of Nations wherein many peoples and many states were represented. In the American Senate, a State with a population of 75,000 voters should have two delegates in the

Senate and a State like New York with 10,000,000 voters should also have two delegates. In the League of Nations, nations big and small, have equal numbers of representatives.

"Is this a faulty system?" he asked. "I do not think so because the more powerful and the more intelligent nations of the world have agreed to work together upon some righteous principle which admitted the rights of small communities as well as the rights of large communities. I do think that every minor community should be given a representation suitable to them in order that all the representatives may work together in a hearty way and arrive at conclusions that would ensure the safety of the whole community.

"I cannot comprehend the sense of equity that has been inspiring the special commission in reguard to this important question. They say, 'Let us not have communal representation at all; let territorial, reign; let there be universal suffrage; let the suffrage be given to every body, be he fool, mischievous or undetected rogue and it will be all becoming better.' That contradicts all the conclusions of educationists who insist on the masses being educated.

"The people of Arcadia, they say, will never be able to govern themselves unless they develop a common patriotism, a patriotism towards Arcadia which transcends their traditional loyalties to race, religion, caste or tribe .....

"*Our trials and anxieties are very heavy. We do not know to what state the country is going to be reduced owing to this opinionativeness on the part of the people and the trouble caused by persons in authority and the highest authority too.* What is our fate going to be? This is the concern for us, and therefore, whatever the past has manifested to us, we yet feel that we are now in the presence of a state of things which we must resist and quietly make the whole thing go down by constitutional methods

and by sound reasons clearly stated for the benefit of those authorities who are implicating us in trouble without their knowing it. That is the best part of it."

It was for the veteran statesman a moment of great trial, of extreme agony and anguish of mind to behold the stately fabric of a free and firmly integrated Ceylonese nation which he had built brick by brick over a half-century of dedicated leadership and which in his time was the envy and despair of many peoples outside, now threatened with disintegration and dissolution not through any fault of its peoples or its leaders but rather through the evil genius of a perverse and bigoted alien ruler who refused to see reason, justice and equity, spurned the solemn admonitions of its wisest statesman and persisted in foisting on it a system of government which would obviously strike at its very foundations. It seemed as if the great leader had lived and laboured all his life in vain Desperate situations call for desperate remedies. He knew the racial minorities would not survive this savage onslaught. It was obvious that the foreigner was toying with the fortunes of subject peoples, making wanton sport of their dearly cherished rights and liberties. The constitution proposed by the Commissioners reduced the minorities to unending servitude and ultimate extinction. It opened the door to unmitigated majority despotism. A people who before the Westerner set foot upon the shores of this Island, existed as a free, independent and sovereign community ruled over by its own monarchs, in possession of clearly demarcated territory, in free and untrammelled pursuit of its own distinctive culture and way of life now ran the risk of total, complete annihilation through the arbitrary and high-handed absolutism of an arrogant and benighted imperialist. Experience had taught him that subject peoples are, to imperialist bosses, as flies to wanton boys, they kill them for

their sport, are as play-things for the gods of power-monopoly. He felt he would not be true to his innermost self, true to his Maker within him, if he did not resist this monstrous imposition, this tyrannous will of an ignorant and self-opinionated foreigner, and make the will of God and the demands of truth, reason and justice prevail. He had the firm conviction that this edifice of a new Constitution that the alien ruler was seeking to build on the quicksands of false premises, on hear-say, on an overweening confidence in his wisdom and omniscience, would crumble to the dust, leaving behind a trail of anarchy and suffering. These representatives had come from afar; had at no previous time been associated with the country for which they were legislating; knew nothing of local conditions, nothing of the background of the peoples who inhabited it, nothing of their history, geography, their age-old culture and tradition and after a hasty and perfunctory inquiry drew up haphazard a constitution designed to sustain the destinies of a multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-religious community. It was, he believed, an effrontery of the worst description, a challenge flung in the face of a subject people at the point of the bayonet. Where naked tyranny stalks the land, it is the bounden duty of the people to resist and resist with all the might they could summon to their aid. That was Ramanathan's creed; that was and remains to this day the creed of the great benefactors and liberators of mankind. For where there is no liberty, there is no life. That is a truism for all ages.

He knew the strength and validity of a Constitution, its sole raison d'etre resides in this, in whether it safeguards the freedom and self-respect of the ruled, accords them the right to determine their destinies, to reject the evil and accept the good. That is its only test, its sole criterion and justification. If it fails in these

particulars, it forfeits its claim to the loyalty and allegiance of the ruled. Judged by these standards, the Donoughmore Constitution was a monstrous travesty, a total, utter failure, inasmuch as it reduced a once free, independent, sovereign people, sole arbiters of their destinies, to sheer zeros, to unmitigated servitude and impotence in national life.

It was at this dark hour of spiritual and moral travail when all his passionate plea for rudimentary justice and humanity had proved utterly unavailing, that the idea of a return to the pre-British order of things and the resuscitation of a separate Tamil State commended itself to him, as the only means of escape from what appeared to him to be irretrievable disaster for the Tamils. "But I want to present to my honourable colleagues and to those who are watching us from outside the Council another question, 'Why did the Commissioners not study Ireland which is next door to them?' There are the Southern States and the Northern States; they could not agree. They said, 'We are one lot and you are another. We cannot work together. We must have separate Governments.' The British descendants who were in the North said, 'It is no use trying to work with them. There is no safety to us.' And what did the British Ministers do? The British Ministry said, '*We shall give you each a Government which you can work yourselves according to the interests of each of the communities concerned. The Southern State and the Northern State were separated.* The former having clamoured for a Free State, were given a Free State. The latter said, 'No, the King for ever. We want a Government of our own in Ireland, but we will be loyal to you.' Was not that communal Government? Why did the Commissioners not think of that? Why did they not? What is their excuse?

"Then I ask, what happened in the Dominion of Canada, a part of the British Empire? There

were the descendants of the French and the descendants of another set of people there and they could not agree; and what was the conclusion arrived at by the British Government? Luckily the British Government did not invite four Commissioners to decide that important question. But the officials concerned, officials who were experts in the act of Government itself, in the service of the Empire itself, were requisitioned to write reports upon the subjects and they said, 'It is an impossible situation. It is no use keeping the wound in a festering condition for the ruin of all the people concerned. Let us give these French descendants one form of Government and let us give the other people another form of Government—form of Government suitable to the interests of each of these great, big communities.' Why did the Commissioners not thik of that?"

It was the great paradox of Ramanathan's long and illustrious career as it is the irony of all things human and mundane that the most inveterate nationalist turned the most hardened communalist; the most impassioned unionist was metamorphosed into the uncompromising separatist. Such alas, is the caprice of man's destiny, the inexorable impact of changing circumstance on noble minds. What exasperated him most was that the Britisher had one code of imperialist ethics for the Whites and another for the Coloureds. The Britisher knew that the Constitution he had drawn up would mean the total, absolute sacrifice of the Tamils at the altar of arithmetical democracy. Now that he knew his stewardship was coming to an end and the two peoples were once again coming back into their own, was it not his plain duty to leave things exactly where he had found them on his arrival, restore to each its traditional homelands and the sovereignties thereof? Instead, he threw them together hotch-potch and against the passionate protests of veteran statesmen and

leaders and left them to solve as best they could between themselves problems which he alone had created. In doing so he subjected the Tamils to a martyrdom unprecedented in all their recorded history.

But that was not how he acted in the case of British settlers overseas. When he feared the Protestant minority of Northern Ireland, who were British settlers, would be swamped by the Catholic majority in Southern Ireland under a unitary democracy, he divided an undivided Ireland into two separate sovereign states, thus securing the British Protestants of the North against domination by the Irish Catholics of the South. He acted likewise in Canada too. When the British and the French in Canada were at loggerheads with each other, he split Canada in two and created an Upper Canada as distinct from a Lower Canada. If the Britisher could act with such promptitude and decision to save British minorities outside their home country, why should he not do likewise to save the Tamil minority within their ancient homelands, whose territorial integrity and independence he had so cruelly violated in 1833 purely to serve the interests of imperial administration? What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The Britisher forgot the fact that the Tamil problem was solely his own creation, dictated solely by his own self-interest. What right had he to pull down age-old frontiers and merge time-old sovereignties? Did he consult the peoples concerned? In the arrogance born of imperial might he rode roughshod over the cherished rights and liberties of subject peoples. Ramanathan asked if it was not rudimentary justice that the British who had got us into this mess, got us out of it, before he took leave of us.

Territorial representation, Ramanathan contended, may pass muster in the government of a country with a homogeneous population possessed

of a common language and literature, a common racial ancestry, a common heritage and tradition and a common national history and geography, but has no place in a composite land such as Ceylon. He propounded the principle of communal representation and cited the example of the American Senate in which each constituent State, big or small, had a single vote, cited the example of the League of Nations in which each nation big or small, had a single vote; similarly in Ceylon, each community must have an equal vote. Otherwise, majority rule fast degenerates into naked, unabashed, unflinching majority despotism. The truth was so patent and so obvious that it only needed to be said, to be believed. He could not comprehend why the Britisher was so purblind to it, was so obsessed by other vagaries.

Viscount Bryce, in his celebrated treatise *Modern Democracies*, has said aptly, "If the racial group constitute a majority in the Chamber, it is omnipotent. It can count on passing all its measures and not trouble to expound or defend proposals in debate except for the purpose of saving appearances and putting its case before the country. It has only to go on voting steadily what has been previously determined on in secret, uninstructed and unmoved by arguments from any other part of the Chamber, because there is no need for listening to words which cannot affect its pre-determined action. The Chamber, having ceased to deliberate, has become a mere voting machine, the passive organ of an unseen despotism."

Ramanathan knew that the counting of heads in the Government of human society would be the ruin of man and the end of all civilized existence. He asked, "Is the communal system a faulty one? I do not think so because the most powerful and the intelligent nations of the world have agreed to work upon the same righteous principle which admitted the rights of small

communities as well as the rights of larger communities. And if you study the constitution of our homes, of our school, of our societies, our workshops and any institutions that flourish in the country, we shall find that this communal system is the basis of all these institutes of civilization and therefore it may be accepted without any doubt whatever, that the design for the good government of human society is this and nothing else, namely it should be founded on the union of love and righteousness to all." He added, "If the principle of the counting of heads is accepted in the government of the home and if the children choose to stand together, the parents will be in a minority. What will happen to the family if its Government is to be in accordance with the counting of heads? What is the law of life in regard to schools or the workshops or society? If the principle of the counting of heads were accepted, what would be the fate of these institutions? How many pages have been devoted by the Donoughmore Commissioners to explain their principle—their so-called principle which will not bear analysis—in support of the opinion that equality and universal franchise are the birthright of every man? I have stated over and over again and I say it now that the principles of equality and counting of heads do not actuate the home, the school, the workshop, society or the public or private services. The communal system means love and unification and I tell you that from 1833 downwards, the communal system has reigned in the minds of the parties concerned and with the Government. Universal suffrage does not lead to contentment. It makes straight for revolution and the pulling down of existing institutions."

But all the words of wisdom of this veteran statesman and sage, this stark, honourable and uncompromising man who at that dark hour saw the truth and announced it with heroic courage

and blazing patriotism, went unheeded by the leaders whose reason and judgement were so far warped and their vision clouded, by parochial passions and prejudices, by the glittering prospects of place and power the new constitution held out that they lost all hold on reality. It cannot be said of the foreigner that with all his wealth of political learning and practical experience garnered in many lands and over many centuries during which he held imperial sway, he was not alive to the dangers that lurked underneath the veneer of popular sovereignty and mathematical democracy for a multi-racial society. It was as he desired and ordained it. Ramanathan asked him if the voice of the minorities could be heard in the councils of state in which their representatives, territorially elected, would be swamped out of existence by those of the majority. Nay, in these days of centralized despotisms and state invasion of every field of national life, economic, educational, social, would they not have to face total annihilation under the sustained onslaughts of untrammelled, unending majority rule. The provision of a safe and secure future for the minorities in a unitary democracy was with the aged statesman the crux of the whole problem, the raison d'etre of constitution-making. That is true statesmanship; that, the paramount and inescapable duty and responsibility of the sovereign power. Did the Commissioners address themselves to this all-important problem? He asked with indignation searing within him if the minorities could by any conceivable means survive the impact of arithmetical democracy in a land where communalism and racialism and all the varied ills that afflict human society had come to rule the roast. Was that freedom meant for the nation as a whole or for one particular section of it? If it was meant for the whole nation, why this wanton and ruthless jettisoning of the minorities? Were they alien intruders or interlopers trying to

snatch away a morsel of food from native mouths or were they true sons of the soil merely claiming their rightful and age-old inheritance? Did not the Tamils from remote antiquity rule over a prosperous and flourishing kingdom, a sovereign state of their own, until the wily and wicked Westerner subjugated them along with the other races of the country? Did not the British as late as 1833, amalgamate the disparate and separately administered realms into one political unit for their own "supervisory convenience"? Would the Tamils ever have become a minority, if the British had not in their own imperial interest effected this political union, but had let them live and move and have their being in their immemorial realms as a free, independent and sovereign community? Were the sins of an unholy foreigner to be visited on them unto eternity? What had they done to deserve so horrid and atrocious a fate? Should the British, in the guise of liberators and benefactors, be enslavers or malefactors and wrest from them at the hour of their departure what little rights they had until then enjoyed and fling them to the wolves? Under the dispensation propounded by the Commissioners, would the minorities have a decisive say or, for that matter, any say in determining their destinies? Would they not be reduced to the level of a permanently inferior and wholly impotent factor in a territorially-elected parliamentary democracy? Would not their voice be a cry in the wilderness, unheard, unheeded by the powers that be? Would not the minority suffer the extremity of indignity and anguish of mind on seeing issues of life and death appertaining to them decided by representatives of another race and creed without reference to their own wishes? Or did self-rule for a country mean the freedom of one community to subjugate and enslave all other communities? These he contended, were the touchstones of a constitution, the criteria of its validity. Judged by these,

the constitution was a grotesque failure, an unmitigated evil, a monstrosity which had no justification for its existence and which no honourable assembly would for a moment countenance.

This indomitable and lifelong champion of Ceylonese nationalism had in the penultimate period of his prodigious career become by a strange metamorphosis the militant advocate of communalism; the statesman who had all his life thought and acted in terms of a united Lanka had now by the inexorable logic of events and circumstance begun to think in terms of a divided Lanka. And he could not possibly have avoided the transmutation, inasmuch as the new constitution aimed a mortal blow at the minorities who were part and parcel of the Ceylonese nation, to relegate whom to the Shadow of the Valley of Death would be but an iniquitous betrayal of their trust and the end of all civilized existence for them. It was an article of his political faith that national society, being operated by human beings, requires a series of consistently applied checks and balances to prevent any one man or group from being able to ride rough-shod over the interests, beliefs and opinions of others. It corresponded to the great historical principle enunciated by the great historian, Lord Acton, that all power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. The Imperialist had thought and acted as if in the country there did not exist such a thing as a minority problem and that he was legislating for a Utopia, where people were all of one complexion, more angels than men.

Ramanathan was of opinion that this brutal and unconscionable sacrifice of the Tamils was a wilful and premeditated act on the part of British imperialists, inasmuch as the Tamils had been the pioneers and the most vociferous and intractable champions of self-rule. From the days of Sir Muthu Coomaraswamy in the sixties of last centur-

when the country's legislature reverberated with the splendour of his classic eloquence and the then Secretary of State became so far enamoured of it as to lend himself to the comment that if Ceylonese politicians could rise to such heights of political wisdom and oratory, they might as well be permitted to administer their own affairs, down to the days of Ramanathan's elder brother, the Hon. Mr. P. Coomaraswamy, acclaimed the Lion of the Metropolitan Bar, when in the legislature he fulminated against the government of the day in language that wrung the heart of the imperialist Englishman and on one occasion cried out that instead of being the protector of the people, it (government) was playing the part of a high-way robber; and again to the days of Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam who dedicated the whole of his retired life and all the resources of his unrivalled intellect and administrative expertise to an intense and ceaseless struggle for the achievement of the country's freedom; and yet again to the days of Ramanathan whose life was one long and relentless struggle against the trammels of foreign rule, the Tamils were the pioneers and the most impassioned crusaders in the cause of their country's freedom. Every movement for Constitutional Reform and the expulsion of the foreigner was inaugurated and vitalized and piloted by the Tamils; they founded powerful political organizations, rallied the nation round them and carried on a vigorous and sustained agitation for Home-Rule which the rulers found impossible to resist. No wonder then that the whole hierarchy of British officials, the Commissioners and the Imperial Parliament were of one mind in chiselling out a Constitution which would carry self-rule to its bitter end and in so doing, reduce these intrepid and recalcitrant champions of freedom to a subjection unknown and unheard of in all their history. No more charitable explanation is

possible in the face of such brazen abuse of power and responsibility on the part of the ruling power.

Could any ruling power, in the hectic days of its imperial fury, be reasonably expected to condone language so bold, so blatant, so forthright, so vitriolic, so damning, and that from a member of a minority community, as was employed by Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam in the course of his epoch-making speech on "Our Political Needs"? The speech was acclaimed the Bible of the freedom-fighters. It spotlighted the dark and sore spots in British rule as few other speeches had done and served as a rallying-cry to the nation.

The election of Ramanathan to the Educated Ceylonese Seat in 1912 in the face of the determined opposition of the Government and his retention of the Seat for the ten years of its duration, his trenchant denunciation of Government policy and his resolute and stubborn resistance to it, when it ran counter to national interests, his fulminations against the whole host of British officials for aggravating the Riots by their wanton neglect of duty and for their subsequent savageries during the dark days of 1915, his victorious pursuance of the cause of the aggrieved Sinhalese at the Imperial level, his successful bid for the removal from office of many of the brass hats responsible for these brutalities, his memorable impeachment of the Inspector-General of Police and above all, his persistent and lifelong advocacy of the cause of national freedom and sovereignty—these and many others had given the rulers the unmistakable impression that the Sinhalese were their friends and loyal subjects, while the Tamils were their real enemies, the firebrands and the hot-heads who spearheaded the freedom movement and unfurled the banner of revolt. And they were not wrong in their diagnosis. One of the grounds on which Sir Hugh Clifford based his plea for the reform of the Constitution was that caste had come to play the decisive role

at elections and that the people had voted a high caste Hindu—Ramanathan—to the Educated Ceylonese Seat. It may in parenthesis be added that the many speeches on constitutional reform Ramanathan delivered both within and without the legislature, the many memoranda he submitted to the Imperial Parliament on this vexed question will form a handsome volume at once inspiring and edifying to any freedom-fighter.

Herein lay the fundamental blunder the Tamils had committed. If they had not crossed the ruler's path at every turn nor challenged him on every front but had co-operated actively and gracefully with him and by so doing basked in the sunshine of his goodwill and generosity, as was customary with minorities all the world over, if they had at least struck a neutralist attitude, the ruling power would not have shown such a heartless and shocking disregard of Tamil rights. Instead they assailed the White man at every turn, questioned the validity or legality of his position and subjected him to a pressure he had not known in any other British Colony. The iron had naturally and irresistibly gone deep into his soul. And he acted in the only way a foreign ruler would have acted, flung these freedom-fighters to the fury and hazards of arithmetical democracy. The Tamils cried for national freedom, whole and entire, for freedom unadulterated, untrammelled, absolute. And he gave it. He gave the country universal adult franchise and territorial representation, for he knew where these dastard champions of self-rule would find themselves under the impact of numerical democracy. He was obviously out to teach them the lesson of their lives—no other explanation is possible—and he succeeded as few others could. Had the Tamils been a little circumspect, a little lukewarm in their opposition to the Britisher, had they at any rate not been the prophets and precursors of the revolt for national freedom, the Britisher

would not, nay, could not have treated the Tamils so flagrantly or so cavalierly. Had they, Jinnah-wise played the jackal to the British tiger, posed as the friends and allies of the ruling power, as minorities have done through the ages, they would have reaped, in view of their talent for political leadership, a richer harvest of freedom and security than was ever vouchsafed to racial minorities in other lands. To recompense the loyal Jinnah, they divided an undivided India and created two states where there should have been one. To punish the Tamil rebels and fire-eaters, they created one Ceylon where there had from time immemorial been two. They did so, in the face of resolute and impassioned protests from their greatest leader of all time. The Tamils did not count the cost of their actions. They were far too complacent, reposed far-too-excessive trust in the innate goodness of human nature, in man's capacity for fair-play and kindly-dealing, in the sincerity of his professions, and believed naively that national freedom connoted freedom for all.

It is the supreme tragedy of the Tamils as it is a curious paradox of their political history that in the nation's struggle for freedom, they should have been the foremost fighters and that, when at long last the prize was won and they had confidently hoped for a fair share of it, they were not merely repulsed from it, but, what is worse, subjected to a despotism unknown and unheard of in all their recorded history.

Moreover, the Ceylon Tamil was mistakenly identified with the Indian, and the Indian in the days of his hectic struggle for freedom was an object of horror and detestation to the imperialist Englishman who saw in him a rebel and revolutionary seeking to subvert and overthrow British imperialism not merely in India but all over the known world. And there was much in the conduct of the Tamils to lend support to this mistaken identity, inasmuch

as there were many among them for whom Gandhism was a religion more real, more living than the traditional religion of their forbears and who, moreover, preached and practised it with more than apostolic fervour. The intelligentsia at any rate shed their erstwhile European attire in which they had for long gloried, sported about in home-spun *kaddhar*, donned the Gandhian cap, plied the *charka*, the spinning-wheel and Gandhian symbol of national freedom, saturated themselves with Gandhian literature, assiduously disseminated the Gandhian creed, his ideals and way of life, his technique of subversion, invited the Mahatma to their homeland, acclaimed him their friend and saviour and made lavish contributions to his Harijan Fund and did everything in their power to give the local British Sahib the unmistakable impression that the Tamils of Ceylon were at one with Gandhi in his nefarious attempts to completely overthrow British imperialsm.

Ramanathan was not slow to sense the danger, to apprehend the gravity of the situation that was fast developing out of what appeared to the British ruler to be an unholy alliance of the Tamils with a revolutionary anarchist, and their consequent estrangement from the British. He hastened to declare his categorical disapproval of Gandhi, who was not then the saint and martyr that subsequent generations of Westerners idolised, but an uncompromising rebel armed with a novel weapon he himself had forged, Satyagraha, and resolute to expel the Britisher from his Indian Empire. Ramanathan had a profound admiration for the Gandhian way of life with its austerity and simplicity, its complete sublimation of self and its passionate dedication to Truth. But he had little faith in the *charka* or in his gospel of non-co-operation or passive resistance or mass civil disobedience. He was actuated by the fear that a mass movement, however disciplined and dedicated to non-violence, might at any moment get out of

hand in the face of grave provocation and plunge the country into anarchy and bloodshed. Addressing the legislature on the vexed question of constitutional reform, Ramanathan said, "Following the march of events in India, they (the people of Ceyon) say to themselves, 'Why, look what those men are doing there under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. Consider the policy of boycott and non-co-operation launched there. That is our only course of action. The Government has forced us into this state of non-co-operation by never trying to co-operate with us. We cannot do anything less in regard to this measure.'

"Well, Sir, my heart is sore, because I believe Gandhi is *in this instance* an unsafe guide. By his ascetic fervour and by his fearless and resolute conduct, he has won a firm hold upon the imagination of the people of India. But he is not well-versed in our Shastras, and the majority of the English-educated people in India know very little now of what their forefathers knew so well, that worldly duties, if rightly done, will assuredly lead to the perfection of character and the attainment of the life spiritual, in which frightfulness and disorder and hate have no place. Gandhi has misinterpreted the doctrine of Satyagraha. He is wrong in thinking and teaching that it includes passive resistance to the government of the country. I say, Sir, with full knowledge of what I am saying, that there is no such interpretation to be found either in our Shastras or in the lips of our sages. Satyagraha means devotion to Truth. Though in the world, we must not be of the world, and there must not be one set of principles pervading the heart and another pervading the lips. The lips should only speak what is in the heart, and nothing must be entertained in the heart that cannot be proclaimed by the lips. How in the name of goodness could the doctrine of Satyagraha, which has preserved for hundreds of centuries the people of India from

the destruction which overtook other nations like the Assyrians and Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Romans, be supposed to mean the practice of hate and estrangement from our rulers? Neither Gandhi nor his followers know the doctrine of Satyagraha in its proper sense. Satyagraha means devotion to Truth, meaning by Truth the Imperishable Spirit and conformity of thought, word and deed to what is righteous. It has no part with non-co-operation with the Government. It has nothing to do with passive resistance, boycott or disturbance of the peace of the country."

Ramanathan was not alone in his disapproval of Satyagraha as a political weapon. Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian poet and philosopher, was more vehement in his denunciation of it. He said, "I believe in *ahimsa* as the means of overcoming the congregated might of physical force on which the political powers in all countries mainly rest. But like every other moral principle, *ahimsa* has to spring from the depth of the mind, and it must not be forced upon man from some outside appeal of urgent need. The great personalities of the world have preached love, forgiveness and non-violence, primarily for the sake of spiritual perfection and not for the attainment of some immediate success in politics or similar departments of life. They were aware of the difficulty of their teaching being realized within a fixed period of time in a sudden and wholesale manner by men whose previous course of life had chiefly pursued the path of self."

However much Ramanathan might endeavour to dissociate himself and his people from Gandhism and the Gandhian creed of achieving freedom by open and undisguised defiance of the ruling power, the average Englishman could not shake himself free of the belief that the Tamils of Ceylon had made common cause with the Mahatma. To worsen the situation, the Mahatma's memorable visit to

the Tamil Provinces and the uproarious acclamations with which he was received, the rapturous and ecstatic references made to him, the bulging purses presented to him by an adoring people, the sensational publicity given to the visit in the daily press unhappily coincided with the visit of the Donoughmore Commissioners to the Island.

There was yet another circumstance that served to intensify and inflame the Englishman's hostility towards the Tamils. A band of politically-minded Tamil youth, fresh from many seats of academic learning and in the first flush of youthful exuberance and enthusiasm, who had learned much of their politics from their Union tables and from Park oratory and had, moreover, been infected with the Gandhian virus, formed themselves into an organization to which they gave the pretentious and awe-inspiring appellation, "The All-Ceylon Youth Congress". The ideals they set before themselves were what Gandhiji had set before himself, the expulsion of the foreigner, the achievement of complete national independence, "Poorna Swaraj" as they termed it, and the revival of their time-old national culture. The means whereby they sought to achieve these lofty aims and ideals were again a replica of the Gandhian—boycott of the Britisher at every turn and on every occasion, non-co-operation, passive-resistence and *swadeshi*. At their much-vaunted and widely-publicized meetings and conferences, conducted in superb English, they emitted fire and thunder against the Englishman and held him up to public opprobrium as the enemy of human freedom. They invited political firebrands and professional agitators from India to address vast concourses of people drawn from many walks of life, and made it appear to the imperialist Englishman that the new organization of Tamil youth was potentially a more subversive force than any they had hitherto to contend with. All this was bad enough, but what

was worse, these hot-heads sought to corrupt the youth of the South too by making overtures to them and enlisting them under their banner for the crusade of liberating their mother-land from the strangle-hold of the foreigner. Their foremost plank was political and they posed as the spokesmen of the nation. They instituted a wholesale boycott of all things English, except of course the English language and literature of which they took long and passionate draughts and their mastery of which they flaunted at every conceivable opportunity, jettisoned unmercifully all their erstwhile tweed-suits, their neck-ties and collars and all that foppery in which they had for long revelled, and now gloried in draping themselves in coarse, home-spun *kaddhar*. Nit-wits might dismiss it as an act of frantic folly but the discerning would esteem it an act of high wisdom, for the attire alone sufficed to secure for the wearer a place of honour in society and a reputation for high idealism and selfless patriotism. These youthful and irrepressible patriots would not sit at table with an Englishman nor subscribe to the traditional toast of loyalty to the King. It seemed they would out-distance Gandhi himself in their ruthless enforcement of the Gandhian creed.

The boycott of the State Council by the Northern councillors and their refusal to go to the hustings in 1931 on the ground that the Reforms, though they had gone a long way, had not gone the whole way, (the way of Poorna Swaraj) was largely the handiwork of this band of exuberant and errant crusaders. With the total and abject collapse of the boycott, following the acceptance of the Reforms by the Southern politicians despite their repeated assurances to the contrary, with the Tamils languishing for long in the political wilderness and their subsequent and unreserved acceptance of the Reforms and their humiliating return to the councils of state, the All-Ceylon Youth Congress petered

out as speedily and dramatically as it had sprung into existence. But the damage done to the Tamil cause was irreparable.

Unhappily for the Tamils, the fulminations of the Youth Congress too coincided with the visit of the Donoughmore Commissioners to the Island. All this represented the Tamils as the implacable foe of British rule. The cumulative effect of it all was to steel the heart of the Englishman against the rebel Tamil. He knew all too well—for even a nincompoop could have known that—that in a territorially-elected unitary democracy, the Tamils would be good grist for the majority mill, but made the plausible pretence that he was out to exorcize once and for all the demon of communalism and racialism and transform this green and pleasant isle into an Utopian Commonwealth, a living example to the rest of the world of how different peoples speaking different languages, professing different religions, heirs to different cultures could yet co-exist as one confraternity in perfect peace and harmony, in perfect equality and liberty, in perfect freedom from fear of injury to person or property.

It would be but to do scant justice to the wisdom and sagacity of the British rulers to plead in defence that they little knew that communalism is ingrained in the human heart, that it constitutes the innermost core of man's being, the flesh of his flesh, the bone of his bone, that it is Nature's first law, that to attempt to conjure it away by man-made mantrams and tantrams, by political claptrap and human expedients, by man-made legislation, by pious and ponderous platitudes is but to cry for the moon. In 1977, nearly half-a-century after Lord Donoughmore administered his sovereign remedy and three decades after Lord Soulbury repeated it, the demon is nowhere near relaxing its predatory hold. On the contrary it has waxed with the waxing years and now threatens to annihilate a whole people who had for centuries

untold lived and flourished in this Island as a free and independent community until the Westerner set foot on their shores.

It is poignant to reflect that these so-called constitutional pundits from another hemisphere, with no knowledge of the peoples they were legislating for, but with a presumption that surpasses anything known in constitutional history, should have made guinea-pigs of helpless subject peoples to test the soundness and efficacy of their fantastic and far-fetched political nostrums. They ran counter to divine ordinance. Whom God had made many with diversities of race and religion, language and culture and tradition, they sought to make one. They did so to their lasting ignominy and shame. If these Olympian builders of terrestrial Utopias had but a rudimentary knowledge of human nature, a sense of what was possible or achievable, a perfunctory grasp of the springs of human thought and action, of the fundamental principles that should underlie the government of human society, a smattering of the historical, geographical and social backgrounds of the peoples for whom they were legislating, they would not have lapsed into the fatal folly of supposing that two peoples disparate in numbers, each priding on its ancient heritage of language, religion, culture and tradition, each inhabiting a separate territory from remote antiquity and ruled over by its own monarchs, both thrown together in 1833 under a unified rule by the historical accident of foreign conquest and domination, and held together by no common cement but the whip in the hand of their common overlord and master—the British ruler—could yet survive the impact of untrammelled mathematical democracy. To face facts is not to counsel pessimism. Man is no angel, but a rank, circumscribed human being with a conglomeration of frailties both human and inhuman. What is worse, progressive pragmatic materialism tends to destroy civilized values more

and more and make man, potentially a god, a stinking beast. The imperialist had at the cessation of his rule, no reason, human or divine, to subject an alien subject people to a fate so appalling in its immensity, a fate to which he certainly would not subject his own people scattered about his far-flung dominions. What was worse, he did that in the face of resolute opposition from the people's veteran statesman and leader. A great British historian and constitutionalist has said, "He (the maker of constitutions) should have known that every community in the land has as much right in equity to their homes, livelihood and liberty as any other and that, if through a blind and over-impatient pursuit of ideological uniformity and perfection, the whiphand of power is vested in a single community whose sole claim to it is numerical superiority, the inevitable outcome would be anarchy and mass-destruction of the most horrible and brutal form. Preservation of law and order, the primary function of any Government, would become impossible. Altruism is undoubtedly a great virtue when it is practised at one's own expense, but when practised at the expense of another, it becomes a despicable vice, even an atrocious crime." And that was precisely what the British imperialist did in 1928 and thereafter.

To say that Ramanathan's stout opposition to the constitution sprang from the fact of his being a member of the Tamil community, is an utterly false reading of the man. He would have done no less if he had been a Sinhalese or a Mohammedan or a Burgher, for Reason, Justice, Humanity, Fair-play and Kindly-dealing were his guiding principles, the ruling passions of his life, the lode-star by which he steered his stately craft. True statesmanship, he knew, consists in recognizing reality and then seeking to modify and change it for the better. The Hansards of the fifty years and more during which he dominated public life, bear

it out. His supreme endeavours were directed towards enabling every community to play its legitimate role, to live a free, full, unfettered life under a system of government which dispensed absolute freedom and equality of opportunity to everyone of its component parts and not make one the footstool of another. If, in all his long and illustrious career he had been animated by anything base or ignoble, anything sinister or underhand, he and his illustrious brothers and before them, their no less illustrious uncle could have wrung from the Britisher all they could desire for their people, in view of the immense influence they wielded in their palmier days with both the local British Sahibs and the Imperial statesmen at Whitehall. But that was never the way with them. Men of God that they eminently were, patterns of integrity, souls of honour, who would not depart one jot or tittle from what they conceived to be the path of duty, which with them was the path of Truth, Reason, and Justice, who dedicated their lives to the service of their motherland and the cause of humanity, unmindful of what might befall them. In fact Ramanathan's services to the Sinhalese people during the first four decades out of the five of his active political leadership, far surpassed all that he rendered to his people, the Tamils, through life. It was their cause that he championed and fought for with a courage, resolution and dedication that earned for him their undying gratitude. It was the impossible and inhuman stand taken by the neo-Sinhala leadership under the Congress banner in their unholy attempt to set up a Sinhala dictatorship and suppress the minorities for all time that caused a complete revulsion of feeling in one of the most sensitive minds of all time and impelled him in his decrepit old age to take up the cudgels in defence of the aggrieved minorities.

To regard Ramanathan as essentially a politician or at best a statesman seeking to advance the interests of his people, if need be, at the expense of other peoples, is to be guilty of a grievous error. He was before all things a man of God who had strayed into politics because politics today, as Gandhiji has said, "encircle us like the coils of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how one tries." Like all true men of God, he saw himself in his fellowmen. To serve them with all his heart and with all his mind was with him to serve his Creator. Hence, his broad humanity, his unbounded love for all created things, his complete freedom from prejudice, racial or religious, his readiness to sacrifice his all in the service of his fellowmen. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," says the Bible.

Ramanathan believed in the equality of all races, in man's dignity, in man's fundamental freedoms. He abhorred mathematical democracy for Ceylon, for he had not an iota of doubt that under it all equality and freedom would vanish into the thin air. He knew for a certainty that in a territorially-elected parliamentary democracy, the Tamils would be swamped out of existence in political life, and through it, in national life as well, by their fellow-citizens of another race and and persuasion. He was far too realistic to be deluded into thinking that the communal groups would eventually merge into one another. Their co-existence in any plural society had to be accepted and they had their various contributions to make to it. They were, as a great historian remarked, 'the warp and woof of national life', the bright and variegated fabric of which it was made and from which it gained life and colour. The ostrich-like attitude of many leaders, dictated more by self-interest than by national well-being, burying their heads in the sands of wishful thinking and pretending

to believe that such a problem as the minority problem did not exist repelled him profoundly. He knew it did exist in all nakedness and would not run away from it but would take the bull by the horns, as was the way with him in all his long and illustrious career. He sincerely believed that any derogation of the power and influence of the minorities would be prodigious injustice and an offence against man and God. Nay, it would be the gravest obstacle to national unity and solidarity, so indispensably necessary to national progress and well-being. National life would before long be contaminated and would become a fen of stagnant water. In sheer indignation searing into his heart, he asked, "Will it not be a death-blow to the minorities? What have the minorities done to deserve a fate, so dire and so dreadful?" He knew that a disinherited, disgruntled and aggrieved minority would be a festering sore in the body-politic and the gravest menace to national peace, security and survival. With prophetic vision and insight, he foresaw what the Tamils and many of their representatives in the legislature failed to see, that reversion to racial barbarism and barbaric tyrannies would become the order of the day. For despite what woolly-headed idealists and idle-dreamers might say, he knew that man in his natural state, unrestrained by the arm of the law, uncurbed by moral and spiritual bonds, can be as predatory and as blood-thirsty as the hyena or the tiger. Stern duty and the demands of Truth and Justice and Equity forced his hands to take up the cudgels in defence of the minorities.

We have heard it said by many that if Ramanathan had died in 1920, or, though alive, had sat smugly and watched with unruffled complacency and unconcern this brutal sacrifice of the minorities, he would be worshipped today. In other words, if he had been false to himself, and false to his

Maker, if he had swum with the current of majority applause and seen the clear, pellucid stream of national life polluted and muddied, seen the lights go out one by one and darkness envelop the land, he would certainly have been deified. Monuments would have sprung into existence, his effigy would have been diffused in stamps, pictures and medals, and his name and renown, proclaimed from house-tops. But he would not be the Ramanathan that we love and adore so well, the lone and intrepid fighter against all things rank and gross in national life, the indomitable champion of human rights and liberties, the avowed foe of tyranny and oppression. He would have gained the world but lost his soul. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? He stood for all that was true, good and beautiful. Did he not say, "To my last breath, I will raise my voice against tyranny and oppression?" And his last breath was expended on this memorable struggle for human rights, human freedom and human equality.

In the early phase of his determined opposition to the Constitution, Ramanathan was supported by leading Sinhalese politicians who honestly believed it was ill-suited to the needs of the country, inasmuch as the country was not ripe for adult franchise, as it would throw the floodgates open to mob-violence and consign the minorities to a sanguinary end. But when they eventually realized that the new dispensation, however imperfect and prejudicial to the larger interests of the country, vested the government of the country in their own people to the exclusion of every other, and that it held out to them glorious prospects of place and power, they quietly swung to the other extreme. The hydra-headed monster of racialism, communalism and a narrow, bigoted nationalism unknown and unheard of in the halcyon days of his prime and manhood had unmistakably begun to rear its minatory

head. Questions which had hitherto been viewed from the broad standpoint of national Interest had now begun to be viewed from the narrow and sordid angle of race and creed. Ramanathan had with characteristic vision and foresight discerned disturbing signs on the political horizon, clear and palpable indications of the oncoming storm, of an unholy and insidious attempt on the part of certain majority leaders to secure a dominant and over-riding position for people of their own race and creed, and through it, the whip-hand of power for themselves, while reducing all other peoples to sheer impotence and servitude. Public life had now lost its savour, its joie de vivre, the vivacity and exuberance of old and spacious times when under strong and clear-sighted leadership, wholly free from passion and parochial prejudice, the leaders of the various communities stood side by side and fought each other's battles shoulder to shoulder, and gloried in each other's victory, Referring to the sense of solidarity and oneness that characterized the relationship of the members representing the various communities, Ramanathan once said, "Just as the Europeans never differentiated amongst themselves but were content to co-operate together, whether the European was a planter or a commercial or general man, so the three native communities never set up different and divergent views of the situation but all worked together as one community. So, Sir, it must not be surprising if from the year 1833, all these communities were working like brothers. We worked together. We did not think of colour, caste or religious differences. We all thought of Ceylon and we were all developing the best interests of Ceylon. Now, Sir, the first fact that the people who are for territorial representation should remember is this, that from the year of the institution of the Legislative Council, representation has been Communal." Communal representation gave sufficient weightage to every

community and made its voice heard in the councils of state and every issue appertaining to it received the closest scrutiny, and even-handed justice was meted out to all and sundry. There was no question of a single community ruling the roast or riding the high horse. But now a sort of anaemia had afflicted the body-politic. Envy and shrewd suspicion, mutual fear and mistrust, venality and apostasy, an eclipse of patriotism and selfless service and a craving for personal and egotistical ends had vitiated the minds of men who posed as the leaders and saviours of the nation. Such was not the political confraternity in whose company Ramanathan in his early prime and manhood entered the lists against an alien and arbitrary bureaucracy. They were born leaders, men of character and intellect, of independent means and genuine patriotism brought up in the best traditions of public life. Whatever their personal frailties and shortcomings, they rarely swerved from certain clearly-defined standards of justice, integrity and honour, men who approached with open minds questions of national import and strove with all their hearts to discover a solution just and equitable and acceptable to all the peoples. But now, new men had with the aid of the ballot invaded the political scene, bringing with them new-fangled ideas and ideologies and were engaged in a desperate scramble for power and filthy lucre, deaf to the dictates of reason, justice and kindly-dealing, utterly oblivious of the wrongs and humiliations they were heaping on other peoples.

Whatever arguments Ramanathan poured forth across the floor of the House in lucid streams of reasoning, left them unmoved. It was all a case of the bigger ones eating up the smaller ones. The law of the jungle had come to rule human society. Public life had now become the happy hunting-ground of political adventurers, rabble-rousers and power-hungry racial bosses,

who knew not that the basic principle of human existence is 'live and let live', and sought to build their mansions on the ashes of other peoples. If Ramanathan's deeper feelings were consulted, he would have recoiled from a contest so barren and so futile. But that was never his way. "I think," he said, "I have said all that I need to say and considering the exceedingly difficult task that I have had to perform, standing on my legs and speaking for such lengths of time, it would have suited my personal feelings better, if I had said, 'Let things drift wherever they may,' but, Sir, I am not bred that way. To the last breath of my life, I shall raise my voice against the exercise of tyranny and for the suppression of falsehood. That is my reason for speaking at such length."

And he was as good as his word. He fought with all the resources at his command, fought like a shaggy, stalwart old lion which age had robbed of its abundant youthful strength and vigour but not certainly, its dauntless spirit and native fire.

One is tempted to ask, suppose Ramanathan had succeeded? Suppose in 1929, he had been able to persuade his colleagues and the Imperial Parliament that unitary mathematical democracy as envisaged by the Commissioners was absolutely unsuited to the needs of a multi-racial society and had prevailed on them to render the Constitution more just and tolerable, more humane and acceptable to these racial and religious elements, is it not possible that the country would have been saved all the tragic episodes that have marred its recent history and threaten to disrupt and disintegrate its national life? We may not all agree on that. But we shall all agree in treasuring as a jewelled page in the history of our legislature, the picture of that heroic figure at the end of life battling through several exhausting sittings in a supreme bid to make his colleagues see the light,

the tireless work, the wonderful vitality, the infinite resourcefulness of argument, the vulnerable temper exquisitely disciplined, the power of language fused with faith and fire. What wonder then that both friends and foes alike loved him with a devotion rare in national history or that when his voice was at last silenced, they felt as if a glory had departed from their midst.

Ramanathan's speeches were not speeches as such; they were philippics against the reforms. In gravity, dignity and elevation of tone, in clear and comprehensive perception of the multitudinous facets of this great political question, in their power of idealist appeal, in the brilliant force and trenchancy of argument, in bold and energetic rebuttal of his adversaries' arguments they have few parallels in the records of parliamentary eloquence. It was certainly an inspiring and ennobling experience to behold the sage and statesman in the penultimate period of his long and illustrious career, with a body enfeebled by age and continued strain but with a fire that no earthly circumstance could quench, denouncing with impassioned eloquence and prophetic fire what he regarded as the monstrosity of the Donoughmore Constitution.

K. P. S. Menon, veteran diplomat and litterateur, said of the speech, "On that particular occasion, when he denounced the Donoughmore Constitution, one felt as if a prophet had come from another world, opening the eyes, stirring the hearts and shattering the illusions of smug, self-complacent individuals. On that occasion, he was distinctively in combative mood. The mood of 1915 was again upon him. But while in 1915, he trod on the corns of Officials, in 1929. he trod on the no less sensitive corns of Unofficials. But on both occasions, he was distinctively on the side of purity and integrity and justice in political life."

Ramanathan fought as did Gladstone, the great Victorian Premier, during his last spell of office, when,

though shaken with infirmity and age, he crossed swords with his younger colleagues on the question of Home Rule for Ireland and made an eloquent and moving plea for justice, humanity and kindly-dealing towards a bowed and broken subject people. But theirs was a lone cry, theirs, a losing battle, for there were pitted against them the forces of the market-place, the plebian cohorts of the hustings, unregenerate humanity mouthing the platitudes of progress, of peace and plenty for all, while riding rough-shod over the hard-won rights and liberties of other individuals and peoples. And as is often the case in an epoch of rapidly dwindling moral and spiritual standards, an epoch which has idolized brute force and banished tolerance, goodwill and just-dealing from man's commerce with his fellow men, the latter triumphed. The twentieth century known to history as the Age of the Common Man had clearly set in and was now in full career. Accredited dignitaries and established reputations were thrown off their lofty stations to make room for their New Master, and be content to watch with equanimity and meek acquiescence the procession of events as they passed before their eyes, helpless to change them one jot or tittle for better or for worse. Time has vindicated the correctness and nobility of Gladstone's position in the achievement of Irish freedom. It has done no less in the case of Ramanathan, in the ugly turn things have taken in this once happy and pleasant land.

It was a dark hour for the veteran statesman, perhaps the darkest in all his long and illustrious leadership. Many of his older colleagues, who loved and adored him and were content to follow him whithersoever he led them, were either dead or superseded by new men who would not take him at his word; all the immense wealth of reason and argument that he poured on them across the floor of the House, all his impassioned appeals for justice and fair-play, for humanity

and kindly-dealing towards their fellow-men of other races left them unmoved.

Had they listened to him or had the bigoted foreigner paid heed to the wise admonitions of this veteran statesman and seer, that the two major communities cannot co-exist under a territorially-elected unitary democracy, that any constitution worth the name should enable the Tamils to take their rightful place in the Government of the State, that the rule of numbers could pass muster only in a homogeneous polity; but where two distinct and separate peoples were perforce thrown together by the historic accident of foreign oonquest and subjugation, rule of numbers would only mean the permanent enslavement and ultimate extinction of the one by the other which commands a numerical superiority; had they listened, Mother Lanka would have been saved the blood-baths of 1958 and 1977, saved the ghastly spectacle of tens of thousands of helpless, defenceless men, women and children rendered homeless, bereft of bread and raiment trekking to Refugee Homes in a desperate bid for safety, saved the weeping and wailing of widowed men, women and orphaned children, saved thousands of business-houses looted and burnt by the fell hand of racial fanatics.

If anyone is answerable for these holocausts, this big-scale destruction of life and property, occurring within a quarter century of Independence, it is the Englishman and no other. He is guilty of two major blunders. His first blunder was committed at the commencement of his rule when in 1833 he bound together in a common polity two peoples with no common link to bind them together except the whip he wielded with remorseless vigour. His second blunder was committed at the termination of his rule when he forced on them against the passionate protests of their veteran statesman and leader a constitution which placed the one people completely at the tender mercies of the other.

Ramanathan contended that any scheme of Government the foreigner would formulate should guarantee to the Tamils absolute freedom to work out their destiny as much as it did to the Sinhalese to work out theirs. Any departure from this pattern of constitution-making would mean the total, utter extirpation of the Tamils. "Donoughmore means," he said, "Tamils no more." It was this self-same Constitution that impelled one of its early protagonists, a Tamil intellectual of note, later turned politician and now a disillusioned and embittered crier in the wilderness, to indulge in his proud boast, "It was I (with all emphasis on 'I') who evolved that little mathematical formula whereby the Sinhalese were able to capture all the ministerial seats." That dictum gives unmistakable proof of the fundamental flaw in a Constitution, which enabled a single element in a composite polity to capture all the ministerial seats by a simple but ingenious exercise of the vote.

Ramanathan knew for a certainty that the Sinhalese people were no party to this injustice. He had known them all his life, and having known them, had learnt to love them and admire their great qualities of head and heart; he had served them all his life and served them with a willing heart, for he knew how well they deserved of him. It was the new men who posed as their leaders, who were at fault, who were making the country an easy prey to their overweening ambition. The lure of mammon and the thirst for place and power were the motive forces at work. "I know", he said, "that the gentle Sinhalese men and women are very different from the cantankerous people who are members of associations and misuse and mislead them, and I, therefore, say the country is in a bad way. The desire to secure a ministerial post with its salary of Rs. 27,500 a year and the fear of incurring the displeasure of the proletariate who were to have universal suffrage

proved strong for some of our colleagues and made them hesitate to speak in the interests of truth and public welfare." He knew it was in the best traditions of British imperialist policy to set the two major groups at variance with each other and thus perpetuate their own hold upon the country. But in this British application of the principle of division to this country, there was a divergence with a vengeance. For whereas it was customary with them to cry up the minority, and cry down the majority, here they cried up the majority and cried down the minority. And it was as it should be, for ironically enough, it was the minorities who cried the loudest for national sovereignty and self-rule.

He shuddered to think what the future of this great and glorious country in building which he had borne no small share, was going to be under the impact of a Constitution formulated by ignorant and irresponsible foreigners. A born seer and statesman of incomparable foresight and vision that he eminently was, he had seen the Writing on the Wall, had divined the infinite possiblities of internecine conflict and chaos the Constitution had in store for this happy, prosperous and resplendent isle. In sheer agony and anguish of mind, he cried out, "*Our trials and anxieties are vevy heavy. We do not know to what state the country is going to be reduced owing to this opinionativeness on the part of the people and the trouble caused by persons in authority too? What is our fate going to be? That is the concern for us and therefore, whatever the past has manifested to us, yet we feel that we are in the presence of a state of things which we must resist and quietly make the whole thing go down by constitutional methods and by sound reasons clearly stated for the benefit of those authorities who are implicating us in trouble without their knowing it. That is the best part of it.*"

Ramanathan as has already been observed, published a Memorandum on the Constitution,

in which he made out an unanswerable case against it and even ventured on a journey to England in his decrepit old age, in the hope of bringing home to the Imperial Parliament the disastrous possibilities latent in the scheme propounded by the Commissioners; but even they had already sanctioned this iniquitous measure and were in no mood to reconsider it. Herein, he felt, lay the supreme tragedy of subjection to alien rule, to the gods of power-monopoly. The British rulers had made wanton play with the destinies of great lands and subject peoples. Many had been the occasions on which he had taken the grievances of his people to Westminster and on every occasion he was listened to with profound respect and consideration and the remedies he sought were readily given. But now Parliament was in no mood to give him a hearing, and whatever the consequence, was resolved to implement the scheme.

A short time before he took his final leave of us all, he addressed a meeting of Tamil leaders at Ramanathan College. His attire on that occasion was unusually of the simplest; a plain dhoti, a shirt and a shawl were all he wore. His turban was markedly absent, making visible the little tuft of hair he had on his head all through life, as became an orthodox Hindu. He looked the picture of melancholy and spoke in a voice charged with deep emotion. His opening words were, "Gentlemen, dangerous times are ahead of us." He proceeded, "The Donoughmore Commissioners have framed a constitution which will be the ruin of the country..... The uninstructed masses will henceforth choose your rulers..... I see before my eyes a surging mob..... Beware; our future is in peril.....

His was a voice as of a Cassandra prophesying doom, when he warned his countrymen against the wisdom of accepting a Constitution formulated by ignorant and self-opinionated foreigners whose sole motive was to create anarchy and chaos in a land

where they were no longer wanted. Recent British Imperial history reinforces this view. They split India into two mutually hostile and warring states, thus to play off the unsuspecting Muslim against the rebel Hindu and eventually encompass the ruin of both. In Ceylon he carved out one state, though on his advent he found two, and left the two peoples to solve their problems and shape their destinies as best they could between themselves.

To frame measures and propose schemes the nobility and soundness of which posterity was to discover, and to see them ignored or defeated by corrupt and selfish factions and his own venal colleagues; to address to impervious and sceptical ears masterpieces of political wisdom the like of which has not been heard in our parliamentary history; to be the one man who saw the truth, who solved correctly almost every political problem of his time, only to find himself denounced as a visionary and dreamer who had gone astray from his mission—such was Ramanathan's experience of public life during the last decade of his long and illustrious career. Some represented him, if they wished to speak tenderly of him, as a reactionary; if they wished to speak harshly, as a communalist. But he was neither a reactionary nor a communalist. He was a very wise and a very honest man whose vision was never clouded by passion or prejudice or selfish ambition and who could therefore see the truth clearly and who, having seen it, proclaimed it with a courage and a high sense of purpose and duty that startled his colleagues. All wisdom, all logic flounders when it hits against the hard adamantine rock of self-interest. But Time, the great Judge, has adjudged him wiser, more far-seeing, more true, more disinterested, more patriotic than his victors. His last words to the nation, his last will and testament were: "Truth will triumph in the end."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE END

He who does so (meditates) at the time of his departure, with a steady mind, devotion and strength of yoga and setting well his life force in the centre of the eyebrows, he attains to this Supreme Divine Person.

—*Gita*

If the soul takes its departure in a state of purity, not carrying with it any clinging impurities which during life, it never willingly shared in, but always avoided; gathering itself into itself and making this separation from the body its aim and study; well then, so prepared, the soul departs to that invisible region of the Divine, the Immortal and the Wise."

—*Plato*

Sir Ramanathan died, full of years and honour and mourned by all, after a most useful and vigorous public life of over half-a-century and with a reputation that extended far beyond the confines of this Island. Many and varied were his activities and it will hardly be possible to lay to the credit of any Ceylonese, living or dead, a career of greater usefulness to his people."

—*C. W. W. Kannangara*

Home they brought their warrior dead.

—*Ceylon Observer*

ON 10th, November, 1930, Ramanathan contracted his last illness. It began with an attack of influenza. At first he seemed to rally round but later there was a relapse. Gradually he grew worse and the doctors who attended on him pronounced his condition serious. Ramanathan had a presentiment that his end was drawing near. For ten days he remained in a yogic posture, without uttering a word, and with his eyes closed

most of the time. He knew how holy men of his faith lived and died and he prepared himself to meet his end with the Stoic calm of a yogi. But until his very last, he was perfectly conscious. "How do you do Sir?" inquired Dr. S. C. Paul, the eminent surgeon, who had been attending on him, on the morning of his death. No response came. He spoke not a word. "Please let me see your tongue," requested Dr. Paul and the patient complied with the request. Ever since the news of his illness began to spread abroad, a regular throng of people of all classes crowded into Sukhastan, to learn about the state of his health. It was a moment of extreme anxiety to them.

At eight o'clock on the very night of his death, the doctors felt that there was improvement in his condition and the callers at Sukhastan were told so. But, contrary to all expectations, his condition deteriorated and he passed away in the early hours of the following morning, 30th November, 1930. Lady Ramanathan, Ramanathan's children, his grand-children and his nephews were all present at his bed-side during the last moments. At the beginning of his illness, it was suggested to him that other rooms at Sukhastan wouid be more comfortable to him. But he firmly declined and preferred to remain in the modest room which looked into his magnificent library. He passed away in peace full of years and honour.

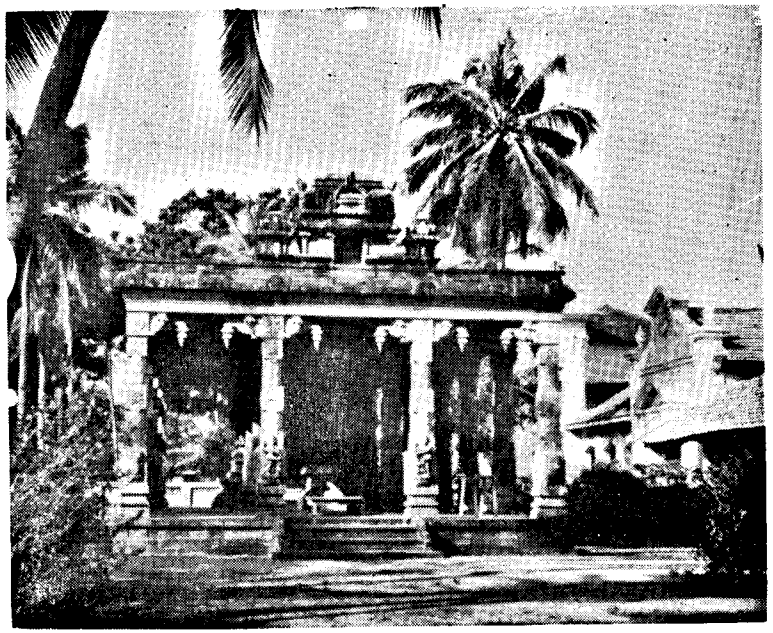
It was as if a glory had vanished from the earth. His death marked the end of a great era—acclaimed by many the greatest in the annals of our history—in much the same manner as his entry into public life in 1879 marked its beginning. There was widespread excitement and a sense of irreplaceable loss, inasmuch as a bright and resplendent luminary which had blazed the national firmament for half-a-century and more had now blazed out. However, it was no occasion for tears, for the great leader had lived his full span and

was now a spent force, spent in fruitful and dedicated service to his country and his fellow-men. The great friend and benefactor of the people, the resolute and intrepid champion of popular rights, the honest and indefatigable public servant, the awowed enemy of wrong and oppression, the strong lion-heart that never quailed before an enemy, the saint who carried the torch of spiritual enlightenment to distant lands, had now found his eternal rest in God.

The 30th of November was a day of intense national mourning, for never before was there one who had so completely won the hearts of the people of this Island. To commemorate the occasion, the Government declared the day a public holiday. All offices of Government, all schools, banks and business firms, the courts and the Council Chamber were closed to mourn the passing away of Ceylon's greatest national figure.

The chamber in which his body lay was thrown open to the public, and a continuous stream of callers reverently paid their last respects to the departed leader. The first Kandyan Adigar Mr. J. H. Meedeniya was among the first callers at Sukhastan. All that was mortal of the great leader now lay on a bed covered with a crimson bed-spread embroidered with gold. His countenance bore the impress of calm resignation in death, and a grace that was indefinable. At each of the four corners of the bed stood large brass oil-lamps. At four in the afternoon a religious ceremony was performed, which consisted of an *abhishekam* (ceremonial bathing of the body). At night began another stage of the solemn obsequies and the lying-in-state. The body was placed cross-legged on a leopard's skin and in a meditative posture.

Messages of sympathy poured in from various parts of the world. The Secretary of State for the Colonies telegraphed the following message:—



Ramanathan Samadhi

"I have learnt with much regret the death of Ramanathan. During his long career he has rendered many valuable services to Ceylon and his loss will be severely felt. I request that my sincere condolences may be conveyed to his relations."

His Excellency the Governor, Sir Herbert Stanley sent the following message to Lady Ramanathan:

"My wife and I are deeply grieved to learn of the death of our dear friend Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan. I held him in the highest esteem as a legislator, orator, lawyer, educationalist and scholar and above all, as a great gentleman. He was one of Ceylon's most distinguished and patriotic sons and his loss will be deeply felt and sincerely mourned."

A vote of condolence was passed in the Legislative Council and a reference was made in the Supreme Court. The Colonial Secretary, speaking in the Council said, "I should like to say that I feel that the venerable Knight was an example to all of us. He allowed no consideration of personal convenience to interfere with the performance of his public duty. Even those who, like myself, were not privileged to know him in the fulness of his activities will always look back to his memory with great affection and respect. We shall never forget the vigour of his mind until the last, the pungency of his humour, the characteristic little chuckles of amusement that used to escape from him when he would score a point against the Government or some other member."

Sir Baron Jayatilaka said among other things, "The death of Ramanathan brings to an end a splendid career unique in every respect and remarkable in the public life of Ceylon. A remarkable personality that occupied a conspicuous place in it for nearly half a century has now passed away."

Mr. E. W. Perera said, "His courage, his leadership, his kindliness we shall never forget. On

many an occasion, when a member of the House was in difficulty, he always stood up to fight for him. His stern sense of duty was an example to them. Despite his age and so many activities, he was in his place regularly in the Finance Committee and in the Legislative Council. In 1915, when the Sinhalese were without a friend, Ramanathan went to their rescue. Then it was Ramanathan who manfully and strenuously did all he possibly could, as the one Ceylonese Member to vindicate the Sinhalese and help them in their great agony and in their great travail. A great parliamentary and national figure has passed away from our midst. One of the things he said in 1915 was, 'Private friendship has nothing to do with public duty.'"

Mr. (later Dr.) C. W. W. Kannangara, in his presidential Address to the Ceylon National Congress, paid a glowing tribute. He said, "There has passed away amid universal lamentation the Sage of Sukhastan, the ablest man of his age. In the death of Sir P. Ramanathan, we mourn the greatest politician and the cleverest debater we have known. He combined with his matchless eloquence and silver-tongue, a wonderful grasp of great political and economic problems which stood in good stead whenever he directed his ruthless invective against the blundering policy of the Government. The official hierarchy stood in constant terror of his masterful personality, and friend and foe alike paid full homage to his unchallenged supremacy. For full half-a-century, he practically dominated the public life of his country. We miss in him the great lawyer, the profound scholar, the keen educationist, the tireless worker and above all, the able champion of the rights and liberties of the people. If to live in the hearts and memories of those we leave behind is not to die, then Ramanathan is not dead but liveth. True, he no longer lives with us in the flesh but he will

live on in those who succeed us, enjoying an immortality which is not given to many a man."

Ever since the news of the serious illness of Ramanathan reached Jaffna, people there spent gloomy and anxious days, hoping against hope that he would recover. When they heard of his passing away, the profoundest gloom was cast over the whole Peninsula, for it had lost its greatest friend and benefactor. The people were anxious to have a *dharsanam* of their revered leader and to pay their homage to him. In their sorrow, they were a little consoled when they learnt that the body would be brought to Jaffna and laid in *samadhi* in the premises of Ramanathan College. The great leader had ordained that his remains should be laid to rest in the land of his forbears, within the precincts of Ramanathan College for Girls, the institution he loved and cherished so dearly through life.

The remains of Ramanathan were taken in procession from Sukhastan to the Fort Railway Station at 4 p. m. The casket was placed in a white car drawn by the Members of the Vivekananda Society and others along Ward Place, Union Place and Shorts Road.

Newspapers devoted several columns to paying glittering tributes to his life and achievements. The *Ceylon Observer* referred to the removal of his remains to Jaffna in the memorable words: "Home they brought their warrior dead."

The Mail Train from Colombo to Jaffna that evening was an unusually long one. Seventeen compartments were specially attached for the funeral party which consisted of many of the most distinguished sons of the land. Eminent legislators, officers of state, professional and business men accompanied Ramanathan's remains to their final resting place in Jaffna. Among them was Maha Mudaliyar J. P. Obeyesekera representing His Excellency the Governor. The carriage in which the remains

were kept was richly decorated with garlands. The casket was profusely covered with wreaths.

The Jaffna Railway Platform was richly and elaborately decorated by the Jaffna Urban District Council. From the early hours of Friday, the day of the expected arrival of Ramanathan's remains in Jaffna, overwhelming crowds poured into the Railway Station. Motor vehicles, carriages, bullock-carts and rickshaws, all hurried to the Station. Ten minutes earlier than the scheduled time of the arrival of the train, the platform was full and the outside was a vast sea of heads. Boy scouts and cadets from the various schools and colleges lined up the Station Road leading to Martins Road. The other students dressed in white and holding white flags were also lined up. A large number of them held aloft torches and urns of burning camphor. The crowd swelled. Leading gentlemen and ladies of all communities were on the platform. As the train steamed in and drew itself alongside the platform, cries of "Arohara" rent the air.

In one of the compartments was the casket in which his body was placed in the posture of a yogi in contemplation. Below his silvery beard and over the crimson silk which covered the breast was a 'rudrasha malai'. The face though shrunken bespoke the unruffled calm and repose of a soul which once illumined it. The forehead was smeared with holy ash and sandal paste. A musical party chanted sacred hymns. The members of the U. D. C. headed by the Chairman entered the compartment and placed a wreath on the casket. The casket was placed in a gilded car and a procession unprecedented in the history of Jaffna and headed by a life-sized portrait of the dead leader accompanied it. Songs specially composed for the occasion were sung along the route recounting the virtues of the departed leader. The procession reached Ramanathan College before noon. Here was witnessed

one of the most touching scenes. The girls came to the gate and wept bitter tears. The procession entered Ramanathan College and wended its way to the "Samadhi Shrine."

Funeral orations were delivered by Sir Baron Jayatilaka, Mr. C. W. W. Kannangara, Mr. E. R. Thambimuttu and many others, in which they extolled his magnificent services to his country. Sir Baron Jayatilaka said, "Sir Ramanathan though typically a son of Jaffna belonged to the whole country more than to the Jaffnese. He lived to a great age and the better part of it was spent in the service of his country. It would take a long time to relate even briefly his services as lawyer, administrator, legislator, educationalist and social reformer. It is difficult to realize that his graceful figure will not be seen again in the hall, and his silvery eloquence will not be heard again in the hall. It is not an exaggeration to say that he was the greatest man Ceylon has produced during the last fifty years. He has lived every minute of the fifty years for the progress of his country. He has built for himself monuments which would last for ever. It is left for you and us to remember the great services Sir Ramanathan rendered and to cherish his memory and perpetuate the great institutions he started and maintained in his life-time."

The *samadhi* ceremonies were performed by his two sons, Mr. Rajendra and Mr. Vamadeva, amidst the chanting of hymns and *manthirams*. The casket containing his remains was lowered into a specially built mausoleum in the *samadhi* shrine, while men, women and children wept inconsolably. Thus ended the life-story of one of the greatest and best of men of all time and clime.

The pilgrim will stand at the *Samadhi* in awe and reverence as the vision of the departed leader passes before his mind's eye, the vision of a mighty soul which, after a lifetime of endless toil in the service of man, has found its final repose in the bosom

of its Creator, the heroic leader who led the nation to victory in the battle for human freedom, the master-statesman who lent his name to a great epoch in national history, the silver-tongued orator whose eloquence was among the finest ever heard in any assembly, a scholar of immense and varied learning, a philosopher in whom spoke the wisdom of the ages, a religious teacher whom many peoples in lands far away venerated, an educational seer and benefactor who gave his country's education a new impetus and a new orientation, besides two great seats of learning, one of which has since blossomed into a university, a prodigious builder who has left us the finest monument of Hindu architecture and sculpture the country has ever had, a patriot and philanthropist incomparably the greatest in our annals, a friend and champion of the under-dog, and above all, a gentleman of impeccable integrity and abounding love and compassion for all created things. Measure the man by any standard we may, measure the permanence of his contribution to human happiness and well-being, he will be commemorated by posterity as the personification of the noblest and the most fruitful qualities within the reach and compass of mankind.

Let a simple admirer, a great and good man of heart from among our Sinhalese brethren — let Mr. A. C. Seneviratne — say the last word on him whom many apparently greater admired:

RAMANATHAN

Let the nation stand with drooping head,
The people whom for fifty years he led,
Their venerated leader now lies dead;
The voice of half a century is fled.

Doughty champion of a people's right,
Unequalled in forensic fight,
Darkened is his rapier bright,
Now ensheathed in endless night.

His work is done —
Our modern Lanka's greatest son.

Over a space of fifteen years there floats
Back to the mind one precious memory.
Thick round him surge the multitude, and notes
Of acclamation rend the air, while he —
Patriot true, whose deep devotion
Led him across a death-concealing ocean
To succour his tormented country when
A lawless "Law" ramped rioting in this land —
Leans back serene,
And with majestic mien
Bestows his eye upon the swelling scene.

Not horses but relays of men
Draw his carriage through the street.
A halt is made: he leaves his seat.
Now see him stand
Above the crowd,
A new-enfranchised country's choice
And now he speaks; be proud
To tell in ages hence you heard that voice.

And now the last, long halt. The surge around has calmed
On a ***Samadhic*** *throne*
The form still leans half prone;
The soaring spirit wends its way through realms unknown
To mortal ken. Hushed is the voice that charmed
The ear of half a century.

Yet still within the memory
Vibrate those siren notes. There still
A nobler monument than human skill
Can e'er devise brings back that tranquil face,
That saintly vision of angelic grace.

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"சேர் பொன்னம்பல இராமநாத துரையவர்கள்". திக்கம், வ. சி. செல்லையாபிள்ளை எழுதியது. (இராம நாதரைச் சமயகுரவரோடு ஒப்பிட்டுள்ளார்.)

6. **இராமநாதன் கல்லூரி வெள்ளிவிழாமலர், 1939.**
ப. 82—83.
"சேர் பொன்னம்பல இராமநாத துரையவர்கள்". பாக்கியம் கந்தசாமி எழுதியது.

7. **இராமநாதன் கல்லூரி வெள்ளிவிழாமலர், 1939.**
ப. 78—79.
"சேர் பொன்னம்பல இராமநாத துரையவர்கள்". விபுலானந்த சுவாமிகள் எழுதியது.

8. இராமநாதன் கல்லூரி வைரவிழா மலர், 1973. ப. 18.
சு. அம்பிகைபாகன் நிகழ்த்திய சொற்பொழிவுகளின் சாரம். சுன்னகம், திருமகள் அழுத்தகம்.

9. இராமநாதன் கல்லூரி வைரவிழா மலர், 1975. ப. 30—39.
பரிசளிப்பு விழா உரை. ப. சந்திரசேகரம் ஆற்றியது. சுன்னகம், திருமகள் அழுத்தகம். (இந்துசாதனம் மறு பிரசுரம், 1973.)

10. இலங்கைத் தமிழ்விழா மலர், 1951. ப. 60—72.
இலங்கை அரசியலும் தமிழரும். சு. அம்பிகைபாகனால் எழுதப்பட்டது. சுன்னகம், திருமகள் அழுத்தகம், 1951. (முதல் இலங்கைப் பிரதிநிதி. ப. 65—67).

11. ஈழகேசரி ஆண்டுமடல், 1935. ப. 92.
வயோதிபனின் ஞாபகக் குறிப்பு, 1833—1935. சுன்னகம், திருமகள் அழுத்தகம்.

12. உதயதாரகை, தொகுதி 90, இல. 48, 1930. ப. 1.
சேர் பொன். இராமநாதன் அவர்களின் தேகவியோகம். மார்கழி 5ஆம் திகதி. தெல்லிப்பழை, அமெரிக்க அச்சகம்.

13. நாவலர் மாநாடு விழா மலர், கொழும்பு.
ஆறுமுகநாவலர் சபை, 1969. ப. 6.
ஆறுமுகநாவலரின் வரலாற்றுடன் தொடர்புடையோர்.

14 நாவலர் மாநாடு விழா மலர், 1969. ப, 34.
நாவலருக்குப்பின் ஈழத்து உரையாசிரியர்கள். கு. பூரணனந்தா எழுதியது. கொழும்பு, ஆறுமுகநாவலர் சபை.

15. ஸ்ரீலங்கா, ஜூன்—மலர் 2, இதழ் 6, 1950. ப. 3ஏ.
ஸ்ரீ ராமநாதன் வாழ்த்து. பண்டிதமணி திரு. க. சு. நவநீதகிருஷ்ண பாரதியார் யாத்தது. கொழும்பு, அரசாங்க சமாச்சாரப் பகுதி.

16. ஸ்ரீலங்கா, ஏப்ரல்—மலர் 3, இதழ் 4. ப. 3.
சேர் பொன்னம்பலம் இராமநாதன் நூற்றாண்டுவிழா. கொழும்பு, அரசாங்க சமாச்சாரப் பகுதி.

17. ஸ்ரீலங்கா, ஏப்ரல்—மலர் 3, இதழ் 4. ப. 7—8.
பெருஞ்சொற்கொண்டல் சேர் பொன் இராமநாதன். சேர் ஜெரட் விஜயகோனால் எழுதப்பட்டது. கொழும்பு, அரசாங்க சமாச்சாரப் பகுதி.

18. ஸ்ரீலங்கா, ஜூலை—மலர் 4, இதழ் 8, 1952. ப. 20—23, 30.
சேர் பொன் இராமநாதன், அம்பலவாணர் எழுதியது. கொழும்பு, சமாச்சாரப் பகுதி. (பிள்ளைகள் பற்றிய குறிப்பு.)

19. ஸ்ரீலங்கா, மார்ச்—மலர் 7, இதழ் 4, 1955. ப. 14.
சேர் பொ. இராமநாத துரையவர்கள், டாக்டர் உ. வே. சாமிநாதையர் எழுதியது. கொழும்பு, அரசாங்க சமாச்சாரப் பகுதி. (இராமநாதன் கல்லூரி வெள்ளி விழா மலர் 1939இல் டாக்டர். உ. வே. சாமிநாதையர் எழுதிய கட்டுரையின் மறுபிரசுரம்.)

20. ஸ்ரீலங்கா, டிசெம்பர்—மலர் 13, இதழ் 1, 1961. ப. 19 — 21.
சேர் பொன் இராமநாதன் அவர்கள் நினைவு தினம் (26-11-61). திருமதி முத்துக்குமாரு தங்கரத்தினத்தால் எழுதப்பட்டது. கொழும்பு, அரசாங்க சமாச்சாரப் பகுதி (வானொலிப் பேச்சு).

21. ஸ்ரீலங்கா, டிசெம்பர்—மலர் 13, இதழ் 1, 1960. ப. 20—21.
வாழ்க்கை வரலாற்றுச் சுருக்கம். திரு. குல. சபாநாதனால் எழுதப்பட்டது. கொழும்பு; அரசாங்க சமாச்சாரப் பகுதி.

பகுதி II

கல்வி

22. சிவபாதசுந்தரம், ச.
சைவபோதம்: முதற் புத்தகம், 4ஆம் பதிப்பு. யாழ்ப்பாணம், நாகலிங்க இயந்திரசாலை, 1922. ப. 1-3, (இந்நூலுக்கு பொ. இராமநாதன் எழுதிய பாயிரம்.)

23. பொன்னம்பலபிள்ளை, ச.
ஸ்ரீ ராமநாத மான்மியம். சுன்னகம், ஸ்ரீ ராமநாத வித்தியாலயம், 1931. ப. 176.

24. இராமநாதன், பொ.
பகவத் கீதா (தமிழ் மொழிபெயர்ப்பும், விருத்தி யுரையும்)
யாழ்ப்பாணம், நாவலர் அச்சுக்கூடம், 1914. [illegible]
(ஆ. முத்துத்தம்பிப்பிள்ளையால் [illegible])

25. இராமநாதன், பொ.
பொன். இராமநாதன் அவர்கள் சமாதிப்பேறு.
(அன்பின் மேலீட்டினால் ஆங்காங்கிருந்த அன்பர்கள் இயற்றி அனுப்பிவைத்த கவி மஞ்சரி.) சுன்னாகம். திருமகள் அழுத்தகம், 1935. ப. 84.

26. இராமநாதன், பொ.
திருக்குறளின் பாயிரமும், அதற்குப் பொன்னம்பலம் இராமநாதன் இயற்றிய விருத்தியுரையாகிய இராமநாதீயமும். யாழ்ப்பாணம், நாவலர் அச்சகம், 1919. ப. 143.

27. இராமநாதன், பொ.
செந்தமிழ் இலக்கணம்: முதற் பாகம்.
சென்னை, அடிஸன் அச்சுக்கூடம், 1927. ப. 545.
(ஸ்ரீ பவணந்தி முனிவரது சூத்திரங்களைத் தழுவி இலகுவான உரைநடையில் விரித்து இயற்றப்பெற்றது.)

28. இராமநாதன், பொ.
ஸ்ரீ ராமநாத தர்மசாஸ்திர பாடம்: க. ஆத்திசூடி மந்திர விளக்கம், 2ஆம் பதிப்பு. சுன்னாகம், திருமகள் அழுத்தகம், 1933. ப. 45.

29. **ஸ்ரீலங்கா, ஏப்ரல்—மலர் 3, இதழ் 4, 1951.** ப. 16—17.
ஈழத்துக் கேசரி சேர் பொன். இராமநாதன் புகழ்ப் பாமாலை. பண்டிதமணி திரு. கா. ச. நவநீதகிருஷ்ண பாரதியார், பண்டிதர் சு. சிதம்பரநாதன், பிரான்ஸிஸ் கிங்ஸ்பெரி, வித்துவான் ச. பொன்னம்பலபிள்ளை, க. வேற்பிள்ளை, வண்ணை நெ. வை. செல்லையா, ஸ்ரீமதி தியாகராஜா சிவநாயகி ஆகியோரால் பாடப்பட்டவை. கொழும்பு, அரசாங்க சமாச்சாரப் பகுதி.

30. **அகில இலங்கை தமிழ்க் காங்கிரஸ் 21ஆம் மகா நாட்டு மலர்.**
யாழ்ப்பாணம், கலைவாணி அச்சகம், 1966. ப. 29—34.
(இராமநாதன் சைவ பல்கலைக்கழகம். நவாலியூர் பண்டிதர் சோ. இளமுருகனார் சைவ பல்கலைக்கழகத்தின் தேவை பற்றிய குறிப்பு.)

31. **உலகேஸ்வரி ஆண்டு மடல்.** சுன்னாகம், திருமகள் அழுத்தகம், 1940. ப. 60—61.
சேர் இராமநாதன் தமிழில் உரையாடியது கேட்டிருக்கிறீர்களா?
ஸ்ரீ பொ. நாகலிங்கம் எழுதியது. (இராமநாதனது செந்தமிழ் அறிவை விளம்பரப்படுத்து முகமாக எழுதப்பட்டது.)

32. ஈழகேசரி ஆண்டுமடல். சுன்னாகம், திருமகள் அழுத்தகம், 1935. ப. 14.
(சிலேடை மு. செல்லையாவால் எழுதப்பட்டது.)

பகுதி III

அரசியல்

33. கணபதிப்பிள்ளை, சி. தொகுப்பாசிரியர்.
நாவலர் விமர்சனக் கட்டுரைத் தொகுதி,
(இந்துசாதனம் மறுபிரசுரம்) யாழ்ப்பாணம் சைவ பரிபாலன சபை. 1966. ப. 35, (சேர் பொன். இராமநாதருக்காக நாவலர் செய்த பிரசாரச் சொற்பொழிவு பற்றிய குறிப்பு.)

34. செல்வநாயகம், அருள்.
ஈழமும் தமிழும். மதராஸ், ஒறியன்ற் லாங்மன்ஸ், 1963. ப. 130—133.

35. சுத்தானந்த பாரதியார், யோகிஸ்ரீ.
நாவலர் பெருமான். புதுச்சேரி, புதுயுக நிலையம், 1948. ப. 153—155. (நாவலர், பொன். இராமநாதனுக்கே சட்டசபை அங்கம் வேண்டுமென கவர்னர் ஜேம்ஸ் லாங்டனுக்கு நேரே மனுச்செய்துகொண்ட செய்தி குறிப்பிடப்பட்டுள்ளது).

36. **உதயதாரகை, தொகுதி 25. ஒக்டோபர் 20ஆம் திகதி, தெல்லிப்பளை ஏ. ஸி. எம். அச்சகம், 1915.** ப. 1.

பகுதி IV

சமயம்

37. நவரத்தினம், க.
இலங்கையிற் கலைவளர்ச்சி. சுன்னாகம், திருமகள் அழுத்தகம், 1954. ப. 22.
(பொன்னம்பலவாணேஸ்வரர் சிவாலயம் பற்றிய குறிப்பு)

38. **திருக்கேதீச்சரம் சைவமகாநாட்டு மலர், 1960.**
சென்னை, சைவசித்தாந்த மகாசமாஜம், 1960. ப. 7—8.
(திருக்கேதீச்சர ஆலயமும் மாந்தைத் துறைமுகமும். சேர் கந்தையா வைத்தியநாதன் எழுதியது).

39. திருக்கேதீஸ்வர வெளியீடுகள்.

சேர் கந்தையா வைத்தியநாதனுல் தொகுத்துத் திருத்திப் பதிப்பிக்கப்பட்டது. கொழும்பு, ஸ்டான்காட் பிரின் டர்ஸ் லிமிடெட், 1957. ப. 26—27.

40. ஸ்ரீலங்கா ஏப்ரல்—மலர் 10, இதழ் 4,

கொழும்பு, அரசாங்க சமாச்சாரப் பகுதி, 1958. ப. 16—19. 24. (கொழும்பு பொன்னம்பலவாணேசர் கோவில் நூற்ருண்டு நிறைவு விழா. குல. சபாநாதனுல் எழுதப்பட்டது.)

41. ஸ்ரீலங்கா, டிசம்பர்—மலர் 13, இதழ் 14.

கொழும்பு, அரசாங்க சமாச்சாரப் பகுதி, 1960. (ஈழ நாடும் சைவசித்தாந்த சமாஜமும். திரு. குல. சபா நாதன் எழுதியது. சைவசித்தாந்த சமாஜத்தின் முதலாம் மகாநாட்டிற்கு சேர் பொன். இராமநாதன் தலைமை தாங்கிய செய்தி குறிப்பிடப்பட்டுள்ளது.)

Some Contemporary Tributes to Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, Kt., K. C., C. M.G.

Statesman and man of action, sage and scholar, legislator and jurist, philosopher and man of religion, patriot and philanthropist, controversialist and orator, author and administrator, educational reformer and benefactor, born leader and idol of the nation.

I think, if I were a Ceylonese, I should feel specially proud of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan. He has had a most remarkable career. I suppose there are few instances on record in which a man has touched life at so many points and at every point at which he has touched it, he has touched it with distinction.

— *His Excellency Sir Herbert Stanley*

The greatest Ceylonese of all time.

— *Rt. Hon. D. S. Senanayake, P. C.*

Sir Ponnambalam was a national figure with an international reputation. His memory is well worth preserving, well worth cherishing, well worth handing down to our children and our children's children as a precious heirloom.

— *K. P. S. Menon*
(Indian Diplomat and Scholar)

At the early age of twentyeight, he was selected by His Excellency Sir James Longden to represent the Tamils in the Legislative Council. Then and from that day to the ripe old age of seventynine years, whether as the masterful lawyer at the Bar, the silver-tongued orator on the platform or the undisputed leader of the Council board, he bestrode the public life of this country like a Colosssus.

— *Dr. C. W. W. Kannangara*

The Solicitor–General of Ceylon is one Ramanathan, a Tamil Hindu and a cultured man of great ability and influence. What struck me most was that he was altogether free from the social trammels which encumber us here.

— *Bal Gangadhar Tilak*

It has not been my lot in any country to be associated with a gentleman of greater natural dignity, courtesy and charm of manner than Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan.

— *Prof. Marrs*

The Buddhists, as a national sect, owe Mr. Ramanathan a deep debt of gratitude. His interest in the question of the Wesak Holiday and the Buddhist Temporalities Bill, his encouraging words to the Buddhist students of the Pali College and the Theosophical Society and a host of other services to Buddhism have endeared him immensely to the Buddhists of Ceylon.

— *'Sarasavi Sandaresa' of May 28, 1889*

The day that you (Ramanathan) are taken away from Ceylon, from that day there will be none to defend the poor, neglected Singhalese. They are a doomed people with none to guide and protect them. Unhappy Singhalese!

— *The Anagarika Dharmapala*

During the long and active period of over fifty years, there was no occasion on which he did not assist his people in their long struggle towards self-government, at every stage of which he fought in the van.

—*His Excllency Sir Graeme Thompson*

Mr. Ramanathan, in the Solicitor-General's chair, you are a race-horse yoked to a bullock-cart

— *His Excellency Sir Henry Blake*

Mr Ramanathan impresses me as a very remarkable man. His interpretations (of the Christian Gospels) are simply wonderful. The spirit of this man is Christly.

— *Rev. Walter A. A. Gardner, New York*