EDITOR'S NOTE

A word of explanation is not needed in presenting a history of the Freedom Movement in India. The present work, however, seems to need one. The story of India's Freedom Movement is as old as the advent of British power in India. It dates from almost immediately after the cannonade at Plassey. Within three years the Nawab-makers in Bengal were called upon to contend against one of their erstwhile creatures whom they found to be far from obliging and who turned out to be recalcitrant. Succeeding years provide numerous examples when various elements—Rajahs, chiefs, zamindars, peasants, tribals, religious groups and so on—chose to rise in opposition against the system set up by the Britishers, or rather the lack of it. These were, in a number of cases, of the nature of civil rebellions and were often localised. But in all cases these took on the character of armed conflicts against the alien rulers or their agents. Unlike the Mughals whom the British had supplanted, the new conquerors made no attempt to conceal their alien identity; from their policy and actions it was evident to the governed that their sole object was to enrich themselves at the expense of the country they had conquered and the people living in it. The struggle begun in 1760, continued in one form or another, almost unbroken till the country emerged into independence, 187 years later.

The present work is a treatise on a phase, a distinct one, of the protracted struggle, covering roughly a span of hundred years. The use of the word 'roughly' is deliberate; for the story, as a whole, or even a distinct phase of it, does not commence in 1847. The movement of freedom, like nearly all movements in human history, was a continuous one. It cannot, as such, be studied compartmentally. History, nevertheless, admits of divisions and periodisation. In choosing this title—Hundred Years of Freedom Struggle—we have refrained from arithmetical calculation and have striven to stress on the last hundred years of the movement as we consider it to have been the most crucial period in our liberation struggle. The forces that had so long remained content to fight sectionally or in isolation now tended to coalesce, enabling the outburst
of the first organised armed resistance in which various elements spread over wide areas and representing diverse interests combined in 1857 in a common bid to overthrow the foreign regime. If the Great Revolt marked the culmination of an era of revolts, it was also the beginning of a new era in which the enlightened middle-class and the elites became disillusioned and hence critical of the British rule. The peasants who formed the bulk of the nation also grew restive. The character of the alien rule as an eroding factor, thriving on persistent denial of minimal civil and political rights, as well as on economic exploitation, characteristic of colonial misrule stood glaringly revealed. The Indian National Congress repudiated the vacillating leadership of the Moderates and grew to be increasingly assertive in its demands. It found an inspiring leader of all times in Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who elevated the struggle to a nation-wide mass-movement and created in the minds of his fellow countrymen, irrespective of caste and creed, an undying determination to become free.

The growing discontent against the oppressive alien rule also generated another source of powerful opposition. It came from the militant extremists who like similar elements in other countries smarling under foreign yokes were firm believers in the efficacy of violent methods in the attainment of their objective, namely, complete independence. Their resistance passed through distinct stages—beginning with the experiment of the bomb cult and ending in the open war waged by the liberation army under Netaji Subhaschandra.

These two broad currents, viz., mass movements through non-violent means as propagated by Gandhiji with all the earnestness at his command and the determined armed challenge of the revolutionaries were not, however, isolated movements; they not only supplemented each other but often merged together in a national bid for emancipation.

The learned contributors to this volume, in their respective chapters, have tried to place before the readers an impartial survey and analysis, based on available documentary evidence, of the phases in the evolution of the movement over a spread of a full century. While doing so, they have steadily refrained from edifying one phase at the expense of another.

The Editor takes the opportunity to convey his thanks to
his colleagues on the Editorial Board, the authorities of the National Archives New Delhi, State Archives, West Bengal and the Home Political Department, Government of West Bengal for their permission to consult and use the original material at their respective disposal, the contributors who made their ungrudging expertise and scholarship available to the Editorial Board and Dr. Pranjal Kumar Bhattacharyya, in particular, for the preparation of the Bibliography, an additional labour of love for him, Sri Sobhan Basu, Shri Sailen Niyogi, Shri Satyen Chowdhury, Sri Santimoy Ganguli and Sri Anupam Roy and Sri Brojen Mondal for their constant help and advice which made the task of the Editor a comparatively less arduous one.

1961

Nisith R Ray.
PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

The independence of India from British subjugation is almost taken for granted by the present generation. There is little awareness of the tear and toil, the enormous loss of precious life and property that preceded the birth of free India. For those who have inherited an independent India, it is difficult to comprehend freedom, for like any inheritance it is easily forgotten what went into making it.

It has been one of the dear objectives of the Biplabi Niketan to induce the people at large to acquire a sense of belonging to the great mass of humanity that is known as the Indian Nation, through the spread of knowledge of our past history which unfolds the process of our integration as such. To us one of the most potent factors that have contributed to the unity in the midst of all our diversities is the common suffering and sacrifice of the people in the common fight for freedom against a common foe, the cementing force of unity in adversity. To know about this extremely significant era of our nation's history is to love the country.

The contemporary disruptive trends in India can no doubt be traced to a lack of knowledge of our heritage, absence of a living faith in the unity of the nation imposed on us by geography, history and tradition. That every one of us, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh, is the son or daughter of the same soil with the same aims and aspirations often slips from consciousness and we begin to consider ourselves as different from one another. A proper understanding and appreciation of our history will go a long way in binding all of us by unbreakable ties of common inheritance. An inheritance that is free India, to this end the Biplabi Niketan would humbly dedicate the volume—Hundred Years of Freedom Struggle 1847-1947.

We are extremely grateful to Professor Nisith Ranjan Ray, Director, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, who acting as the Editor-in-Chief has spared no pains to produce this remarkable compilation with the cooperation of a group of eminent authorities on modern Indian history.

To give it added value we have tried to reproduce in the book some documents, illustrations and even period cartoons
that we were able to collect. It is hoped that the book will satisfy the demand for an authentic picture of our freedom struggle in the midst of a plethora of partisan accounts and incorrect versions which have denigrated our real heroes to serve narrow political interest.

All the sale proceeds of the book after deducting the expenses incurred in its production and distribution will go to the building fund of the Biplabi Niketan for construction of the annexe to the Biplabi Niketan Medical Complex for social welfare service at 12A, Dr. Biresh Guha Street, Calcutta-17, especially for the benefit of the freedom fighters and the weaker section of society.

JAI HIND
BANDE MATARAM

(Translation in Prose)

By : Sri Aurobindo

I bow to thee, Mother,
richly-watered, richly-fruited,
cool with the winds of the South,
dark with the crops of the harvests,
the Mother!

Her nights rejoicing in the glory of the moonlight,
hers lands clothed beautifully with her trees
in flowering bloom,
Sweet of laughter, sweet of speech,
the Mother, giver of boons, giver of bliss.

Terrible with the clamorous shout of
seventy million throats,
and the sharpness of swords raised in twice
seventy million hands,
who sayeth to thee, Mother, thou art weak?

Holder of multitudinous strength,
I bow to her who saves,
to her who drives from her the armies of her foemen
the Mother!

Thou art knowledge, thou art conduct,
thou our heart, thou our soul,
for thou art the life in our body.

In the arm thou art might, O Mother,
In the heart, O Mother, thou art love and faith,
it is thy image we raise in every temple.

For thou art Durga holding her ten weapons of war,
Kamala at play in the lotuses
and Speech, the Goddess, giver of all lore,
to thee I bow
I bow to thee, goddess of Wealth,
pure and peerless,
richly-watered, richly-fruitetd,
    the Mother!

I bow to thee, Mother,
dark-hued, candid,
sweetly smiling, jewelled and adorned,
the holder of wealth, the lady of plenty,
    the Mother! *

*Translator's Note:*

It is difficult to translate the National Anthem of Bengal into verse in another language owing to the unique union of sweetness, simple directness and high poetic force. All attempts in this direction have been failures. In order, therefore, to bring the reader unacquainted with Bengali nearer to the exact force of the original, I give the translation in prose line by line.

Karmayogin, 20 November, 1909.