

H.F.M.

92

H.F.M

SELECTIONS FROM BOOKS AND
PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE
INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT
IN THAILAND.

(PAGES 1-17)

92

Section 6

Selections from books and parliamentary papers (No. 18)

"A short history of the independence movement in Thailand by Ragnath Sharma".

SECTION 6.

SELECTIONS FROM BOOKS AND PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS. (No. 18.)

"A short History of the Independence movement in Thailand by Ragnath Sharma.

1617

SVI
TII
4

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE INDIAN

INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

IN THAILAND.

BY

Raghunath Sharma.

The Japanese forces attacked Thailand early in the morning of December 8, 1941, and the war lasted about five hours. After setting up the military headquarters here, the Japanese army authorities proposed that the Indians in Thailand select one prominent Indian as their spokesman and representative, with whom they could consult any matter regarding Indians, and communicate their suggestions.

To discuss this proposal, a meeting of Indians was immediately held under the auspices of the Indian Association at its premises in Anuwongse Road, Bangkok. At the time, the President of the said Association was the late Mr. A.E. Nana, the well-known Indian merchant and landlord.

It was unanimously resolved by the said meeting that Swami Satyananda Puri, a man of outstanding academic and cultural talents, be selected as representative of the Indian community in Thailand. The Swami was present at that meeting. He was much pressed by all Indians to take up this responsibility and he was promised all help, financial and otherwise, which might be required to enable him to discharge his work to the fullest benefit of the Indians in Thailand. The writer himself was present at the meeting.

In this connection it will not be out of place to give a brief outline of Swami Satyananda Puri's mission and activities in Thailand. He came to this country in 1931 at the suggestion of the Late Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore with a purely cultural aim and worked his way toward this end with the fullest co-operation of the local Indians. He set up at the outset an organization called "DHARMASHRAMA" and started his cultural work under this organization. He popularised the Sanskrit language in this country and introduced that language in the Chulalongkorn State University. He was offered the chair of Sanskrit by the

University

University authorities which he accepted as a service to both Thailand and India. Gradually he became closely associated with all the religious and academic Institutions of Bangkok. When his work became more wide-spread, he converted DHARMASHRAMA into Thai-Bharat Cultural Lodge in 1940.

The opening of the Thai-Bharat Cultural Lodge is a landmark in the history of overseas Indians' battle for their Motherland's freedom, as on that day Swami Satyananda Puri hoisted the Indian National Flag, alongside the Thai National Flag, at the premises of the Thai-Bharat Cultural Lodge. It was on that occasion that the Thai people first saw the Indian National Flag, which had inspired so many known and unknown Indian heroes to lay down their lives at the alter of freedom. And this flag was regularly hoisted at the premises of the Lodge upto the time the Lodge was seized by the Field Security Service at the end of the South-East Asian war on August 15, 1945.

The lodge was reopened by Pandit Raghunath Sharma in July 1946 after he was released from Singapore jail by the British authorities. In the task of opening the Lodge, he was untiringly assisted by Sri Debnath Das, an old associate of Swami Satyananda Puri and a high official of the Indian Independence League. The Indian National Flag was again hoisted at the mast of the Lodge.

In the midst of all these cultural activities, Swamiji was persuaded by the Indian community in Thailand to take up the responsibility of looking after their interest in the uneasy war-time. For the greater benefit his compatriots, he postponed his cultural activities for the time-being and took up a work which was rather political in nature.

Immediately following this, Swamiji called a meeting of Indians in Thailand at the local Silpakorn Theatre, where he announced the formation of the INDIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL with the fullest co-operation of the Thai Government and people. This meeting was in itself an important event in the Overseas Indians' history in Thailand, as on that occasion thousands of Indians

from

from all parts of Thailand assembled in Bangkok under the Indian National Flag and co-ordinated their activities with a view to gaining the motherland's freedom. It was unanimously decided at that meeting that Swami Satyananda Puri should be President of the National Council.

It was then announced by Swami Satyananda Puri that Sri Debnath Das would act as the General Secretary of the Council and Pandit Raghunath Sharma would act as Treasurer, which was approved by the gathering. After Swami Satyananda Puri became president of the National Council, he got in touch with Sri Subhas Chandra Bose in Germany through the German legation in Bangkok and through the good offices of this legation the two were in constant touch with each other. From the very outset, it was the principle of Swamiji to conduct every work for the Indians and for India entirely through the effort and financial aid of the Indian community in Thailand. With this principle in the forefront, he started to conduct the affairs of the India Council independently of Japanese aid. He systematically refused to take any suggestion from the Japanese army authorities which could be interpreted as a propaganda for them. This independent attitude of Swami Satyananda Puri was not liked by the Japanese; but he staunchly carried out his work without taking any notice of Japanese displeasure. He considered only such suggestions from the Japanese army authorities which he thought to be genuinely good for Indians.

This basic difference of principle and policy between Swami Satyananda Puri and the Japanese army authorities grew wider with time, which led the Japanese to take resort to another method. They persuaded Gyani Pritam Singh and some other young Indians, who were, nevertheless, genuine patriots, to form an organization with Japanese financial aid to carry on propaganda work. Gyani Pritam Singh, in absolute good faith, took up the suggestion and formed a band of sincere young workers. They were sent to various war fronts with loudspeakers and other field equipments to persuade the British Indian Army to give up fighting against the Japanese forces.

Gyani

Gyani Pritam Singh's activities were not liked by Swamiji as the latter always insisted on the fact that whatever work was to be done by Indians in Thailand must be aimed at the greater good of India and must be conducted through the guidance and knowledge of the Indian National Council. However, Gyani Pritam Singh continued to work in his own way and he himself went to war-frow, from where he could not come back to Bangkok.

The work done by Swami Satyananda Puri won the full support and sympathy of the Thai authorities. When in the course of the war, the movement of the people became very very restricted and they were to move from one place to another with Government permit, the Thai Government authorized Swami Satyananda Puri to issue permits, which enabled the Indians to go to any place in the country and come back to Bangkok. Owing to the urgency of the wartime, the Thai Government had to impose several restrictions on aliens in some provinces, in which Indians were naturally included. As a result, Indians' business concerns in those places were sealed by the authorities and they had to report to the police everyday. When this news reached Swami Satyananda Puri in Bangkok, he got in touch with the Siamese Government and within a week all restrictions were lifted from the Indians in those places. Since then the Indians in Thailand were left completely free to move to and from any place and to conduct their business without any restrictions, whatsoever. As the Siamese Government was impressed with the patriotic work of Swamiji, they gave him all the facilities to use the radio station of the Government Publicity Department. Swamiji arranged daily broadcast to India and it was done through the Publicity Department of the Indian National Council.

As due to war-urgency, hospitals were urgently required the Indian National Council opened a hospital in Syphya Road, Bangkok, called the Indian National Council Hospital. It was housed at a spacious building generously given by the Late Mr. A.R. Salebbhai, Two ambulance cars were purchased by the Indian National Council. One of the cars was given to the Thai Government Health Department while the other was used by the hospital.

Dr. N.T. Joseph, (later a Colonel of the Indian National Army) was placed in charge of the hospital.

While work was thus going on in Thailand under the direction of the Indian National Council the Japanese army authorities requested Swami Satyananda Puri to go to Singapore to attend a conference of the Indians in Malaya and later to go to Tokyo to attend another conference. Swamiji, though indisposed at that time, decided to go to Singapore with a view to studying the Indian Independence movement there. When he reached Singapore, all the Indian leaders there urged Swamiji to go to Tokyo and also agreed to follow his instructions. Accordingly, after the preliminary conference in Singapore, was over, he left for Tokyo. Then the plane reportedly crashed while nearing Japan, and Swamiji, along with three other Indians, Captain Akramkhan of the embryo Indian National Army, Nilkhanta Ayer and Gyani Pritam Singh, who joined Swamiji in Singapore, perished. The tragedy occurred on March 24, 1942.

The untimely death of Swamiji was deeply mourned by Indians and Thais alike. Following it, Sri Debnath Das, General-Secretary of the Indian National Council, was entrusted with the task of conducting the work of the Council. While Debnath Das and Pandit Raghunath Sharma went to see the then Prime Minister of Thailand, Field Marshall Bipul Songgram, who was one of the staunchest admirers of the late Swamiji, the Prime Minister paid tribute to the late Swamiji in glowing terms saying that the first gift of India to Thailand was the Buddha and her second gift was the late Swamiji. He further added that while it could be possible for India to produce many talented men like Swamiji, it would probably take scores of years for Thailand to repair the great loss suffered by her in the death of Swamiji.

At the Tokyo Conference, it was unanimously decided that the Indian Independence movement in South-east Asia would be under the leadership of Rash Behari Bose, the noted Indian revolutionary. Following this Conference, another conference of Indians in Southeast Asia was held in Bangkok by the middle of 1942 under the presidency of Rash Behari Bose. It was at that time that the Indian Independence

League in South east Asia was formed with its Headquarters in Bangkok. The Indian National Council was automatically dissolved. All the expenses incurred in running the Indian Independence League in Thailand was met by the Indian Community in this country. The IIL headquarters was established in Wireless Road with branches in all parts of South-east Asia, including one in Bangkok.

Apart from political activities, the Indians in Bangkok did magnificent social works, one of which deserves special mention. The city of Bangkok saw one of the most devastating floods in its history in September 1942, when all the localities went under several feet of water. The Indians in Bangkok voluntarily arranged to distribute free rice to the affected Thai nationals, under the sponsorship of the Thai-Bharat Cultural Lodge, the father of which was the late Swami Satyananda Puri. For a period of thirty-two days, about three lac bags of rice were distributed to the affected people. For two days the Indian women of Bangkok managed the distribution of rice, which drew sincere appreciation from the Thai Government and people alike. After the floods had receded and normalcy has once more settled upon the city, the Thai Prime Minister, Field Marshal Bipul Songgram, expressed the country's gratitude in the following terms: "We have taken our religion, culture and language from India. And in time of distress, it no humiliation on our part to accept this help from Indians." That Indian milkmen were hard hit by the floods, and they were also given free fodder for cows and wooden planks to erect high platforms on which they could keep the cows well above the water level. Thus, thousands of cows were saved from being destroyed.

Meanwhile, the headquarters of the Indian Independence League were transferred to Singapore and Sri Debnath Das was elected President of the Bangkok branch of the Indian Independence League, while Pandit Raghunath Sharma was elected President of the Territorial Committee of Thailand under which there were twenty-six branches all over the country.

During all this time, Sri Subhas Chandra Bose was kept in closest touch with the Independence movement in Thailand by Sri Debnath Das,

who was almost in daily telephone and code contact with him through the officer of the German Legation in Bangkok. Thus Sri Subhas Chandra Bose kept himself fully informed of the Independence movement in South-east Asia and he himself came to this part of the world in the early part of 1943. From Germany, he first went to Tokyo from where he broadcast a message to the Indians in South east Asia. When this message was heard by the Indian community in Thailand, it brought in its trail an unprecedented enthusiasm to all Indians and they renewed their zeal to work for the motherland's liberation under the guidance and leadership of one, who was a fighter to the backbone with undiluted patriotism.

It is worth-mentioning here that it was only from Bangkok, of all places in South-east Asia, that Netaji got direct information about the Indian independence movement launched all over the region. From Tokyo, Sri Subhas Bose flew to Singapore. A few representatives of Indians in Thailand went to Singapore on that occasion, the writer of this note being one of them. After a short stay in Singapore, when he took charge of the Indian Independence League as its president from Sri Rash Behari Bose, he came to Bangkok. The day of his arrival here will go down in history as a memorable occasion, because on that day all Indians saw a new guiding light in the struggle for freedom and were moved by unbounded enthusiasm. While a few hundreds of representative Indians of both sexes went to airport to receive him, thousands of their compatriots assembled at the spacious compound of the war-memorial at the outskirts of the city to greet their beloved leader. Sri Subhas Chandra Bose was brought to the city in a huge procession and shouts of patriotic slogans went up from the assembled crowd at the war memorial. Sri Subhas Chandra Bose went round the assembly and everyone had a full view of him. Shortly after his arrival in Bangkok, a meeting of Indians in Thailand was held at the Assembly Hall of the Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. In that meeting, Sri Subhas Chandra Bose outlined the future action and emphasised the broad aspect of the Independence movement, by pointing out that while the first front of the war of liberation was in India itself

under the guidance of the Indian National Congress, its second front was in South-east Asia and that it was for the Indians and Indians alone to fight for national freedom. He urged all to devote their strength and energy to make the movement successful. He addressed the gathering for about two hours and when took his seat the writer of this note, with Sri Subhas Chandra Bose's permission, made an appeal to the assembled Indians to make some monetary contributions to the movement. Following it, within the short period of a few minutes, an amount of fifteen lacs of ticals was donated on the spot by the people to the cause of freedom movement. (The value of one tical at that time was equivalent to one rupee and four annas). This spontaneous action on the part of Indians impressed him much.

When Sri Subhas Chandra Bose formed the Provisional Government of Azad Hind in Singapore, he became Netaji to all his compatriots in S.E. Asia, as he is today to all Indians. The occasion was celebrated by Indians in Thailand with an unprecedented enthusiasm. The procession taken out on that day, according to Thai nationals themselves, was the biggest ever seen in this country. It ended in the local Lumbini Park, where all Indians held a meeting reiterating their determination to fight for freedom under Netaji's leadership. The celebration ended with a community dinner at the park, where the Indian milkmen gave free milk totalling to several thousands of bottles.

Since the foundation of the Indian Independence League volunteers were recruited in Thailand who were given adequate military and physical training. When on the second occasion Netaji visited Bangkok as head of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, President of the IIL and Supreme Commander of INA, he placed the programme of recruiting soldiers from the Thailand Indians for the Indian National Army, recruiting girls from Thailand for the Rani of Jhansi Regiment and raising a children's semi-military organization called "Balak-sena". He further suggested that those essential things which were available in Thailand for the Indian National Army should be ~~not~~ sent to Singapore, Malaya and Burma, as far it was possible. Then he completely reorganized the Indian Independence League in Thailand and the terri-

lacs of ticals. And average of fifteen hundred recruits were trained there for a period of three months after which they were sent in groups to Singapore and Rangoon according to the INA Headquarters order. For a period of nearly one and a half years the camp worked at top speed and it existed right up to the end of the South-east Asia war. The average monthly expense for running the Chulburi military camp was about thirty thousand ticals. All these expenses were met from the monetary contributions made by Indians in Thailand. Many of the recruits from Thailand who satisfied physical and academic qualifications were sent to the INA officers' training centre in Malaya and got the commission of Second Lieutenant in the INA. Some of them commanded INA contingents on the front.

Thailand played a very prominent part in supplying all the necessities to the army and civilian personnel of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and the Indian Independence League in Singapore, Malaya and Rangoon, apart from meeting those needs in Thailand itself. The following things were mainly supplied Army boots; rice; pulse; maize; coconut oil; cloth for military and civilian uniforms, medicine red sugar and army flasks.

To meet the demands for boots and uniforms, two factories were set up in Bangkok to manufacture these two items. The total amount of money spent for the above things was about one crore and twenty lacs of ticals, and it was donated entirely by the Indians in Thailand. It was in accordance with Netaji's call that men and money should be met by the Indians and Indians alone.

Every year Netaji's birthday was celebrated with due grandeur by Indians in Thailand and on one such occasion gold, silver, ornaments and money were donated by Indians totalling Netaji's weight. Indian women present at the celebration gave their ornaments voluntarily and with much enthusiasm.

During this time, Netaji donated a total sum of seven and a half lacs of Ticals to various public and social institutions. Amongst these institutions, the Chulalongkorn University got two and a half lacs of ticals and the Chulalongkorn State Hospital two and a half lacs. From this money the University gives four scholarships annually to the deserving students; and the Chulalongkorn Hospital has set up a women's ward, called Subhas Chandra Bose Memorial Ward containing sixteen indoor beds.

beds, which are open to women of all nationalities. The ward was opened in 1932 and at that time a further sum of one lac of Ticals was donated by the Indians in Thailand to enable the hospital authorities to purchase the necessary equipments.

As the war in S-E Asia continued, an extreme shortage of clothes was felt in Burma and the headquarters of the Burma branch of the Indian Independence League requested the Thailand branch of the IIL to send clothes to Burma, which could be used by Indian civilians there. The women's Department of the Thailand branch of the IIL took up the task and collected old and new clothes, to the value of more than thirty thousand Ticals. The consignments were sent to Rangoon for distribution amongst the needy Indians.

Netaji was very much impressed with the whole-hearted effort of the Indians in Thailand in the freedom battle and on one occasion he told the writer of this note that as the Thailand Indian contingents of the Indian National Army and the Rani of Jhansi Regiment were doing splendid service if it could be possible to get more recruits from here. It is worth noting in this connection that during the time when Choluturi Army camp was operating, not a single complaint of unseemly behaviour by any of the INA soldiers reached the Governor of that province.

The Thai authorities appreciated it very much and the Governor of Choluturi expressed his appreciation of this fact to a group of IIL officials, who went to thank him for all the facilities given. The Thailand Indian recruits in the Indian National Army and the Rani Jhansi Regiment were sent to Burma and Singapore. A large number of those who went to Burma fought valiantly in the battle of Manipur, when the Indian National Army reached Indian soil and planted the Indian National Flag there. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment contingents from Thailand, which were sent to Rangoon, did a magnificent work in INA hospitals there when the city was virtually being bombed every day by Anglo-American war planes; and some of the recruits were sent further up nearer to the battle line to do Red Cross work. During all this time, the Thailand contingents of the Regiment maintained the highest morale.

It was during the first quarter of 1945 that arrangements for shifting the Headquarters of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind were thought necessary and in April of that year the Headquarters were shifted to Bangkok. The members of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment were brought to Bangkok under the personal supervision of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The girls were divided into two groups; while Netaji himself took charge of one group, Shri Debnath Das took charge of another. Nearly 1,800 Rani of Jhansi girls, comprising recruits from Malaya and Thailand, were brought to Bangkok and were stationed here. Apart from the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, thousands of INA officials and soldiers also came to Bangkok. The Indians in Thailand most willingly and enthusiastically took up the task of looking after these tired people, many of whom had walked for over a month all the distance from Rangoon to Bangkok through hills and forests.

Many batches of INA official and civilian personnel of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind thus returned to Bangkok, where the Headquarters of the PGAH was transferred in April of 1945 by order of Netaji. Whenever news of their return reached the Indian Independence League office in Bangkok groups of League workers and INA officers were sent to Thai border to receive the returning personnel, to look after their comfort and diet and all necessities and then to escort them to Bangkok. Such groups were sent to the Northern Thai-Burmese border in Chiangmai, Chiangrai, Maesarieng and to the Southern Thai-Burmese border such as Maesod, Patnam Po etc. The General supervision of this work was admirably done by Shri Harbanslal Sachdev, General-Secretary of the Bangkok branch of the Indian Independence League.

The task of looking after these people from the Burma front naturally meant huge expenditure and anxious care, which were ungrudgingly given by Indians in Thailand. The result was that within a short period the men and women, who retreated from Burma with failing health, owing to the strain of the long journey, regained their former health.

As has been mentioned above, the members of the Rani of

Jhansi Regiment, after returning from Burma, were housed in a spacious camp in Bangkok and well-looked after until all of the members regained their former health and enthusiasm. To bolster their spirit, a route march of the Regiment was arranged from Bangkok to Paknam, a sea resort about sixteen miles from Bangkok. The girls, in full military uniform and army kits, marched to and back from Paknam singing national songs-- a sight which much impressed the Thai nationals.

The writer of this note had the pleasure and pride of hearing more than once from many Thai nationals that when Indian women were so wakeful of their national right and freedom, India's liberation was bound to come in no time.

It was on August 15, 1945, that the war in South-East Asia came to an end. Netaji was in Singapore. He hurried back to Bangkok and inspected all INA camps and the Rani of Jhansi Camp. He stressed the fact that the end of the war in S-E Asia did never mean that our war for the motherland's Liberation also came to an end. He stressed that our freedom fight on the "first front" under the supreme guidance Mahatma Gandhi was to continue until India was free and that until such time none of Indians in South-East Asia would relax his or her patriotic activities. The writer himself was present on some such occasion when Netaji told the above to the INA soldiers and civilians.

At that time it was thought necessary that the girls of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, who were recruited from Thailand and Malaya, should be sent back to their homes. Netaji inspected the Rani of Jhansi Regiment camp several times and had a hard task in making them agree to go home. The girls were all determined to work for their motherland in military capacity and wanted to assure Netaji that nothing unfortunate would befall them in their work for the motherland. They were not ready to return hom by to their mother country and to work there further.

But their persistence was of no avail as Netaji passed the final order that the members of the Regiment would be demobilized

and sent home. Following this, those girls, who were recruited from Malaya were sent back to their respective places, while the Thailand Indian girls were sent back to their respective homes. It will not be out of place to recount the touching scene at the railway station of Bangkok, when the girls, ordered back to Malaya, presented guard of honour to their commanding officer before handing over their arms and ammunition to the Commanding officers. The girls were deeply moved and could hardly suppress their emotions; most of them burst into tears.

The large number of Indians, who were present at the station to send them off, were equally moved. But out of this group seven girls could not go to Burma and Malaya; so some of them were housed at the local convent, the authorities of which most kindly agreed to look after them until such time they could be sent home. The rest were kept in the house of the writer of this note. When the writer was detained in prison by the British Field Security service, six of these girls (two to Burma and four to Malaya) were sent home through the arrangement made by the Security Service. The seventh and last girl was sent home after the writer was released from Singapore jail after six months.

When the Bangkok branch of the Indian Independence League was about to close down, a committee, comprising General J.K. Bhonsle, Shri Paramananda and the local Chairman of the IIL, Sardar Isar Singh, was formed to distribute money to INA officials and other ranks as well as civilian officials and workers. All the INA officers down to the ordinary sepoy were paid handsomely and so also were the members of the Rani of Jhansi regiment. During this time all the INA camps in Bangkok were being maintained and the expenses were being met from the fund which was kept apart for this particular purpose. As restrictions were later imposed on General Bhonsle, Sri Parmananda and Sri Isar Singh and many other officers, the task of managing the camps fell on the writer. When the writer was arrested, he handed over the last remaining sum of about twenty-eight thousand Ticals some other foreign currencies and cash books to Col. Fenny, Chief of the Field Security

Security Service and Colonel Seodutt Singh of the British Indian Army. Alongwith this cash, the entire equipment and furniture of all IIL offices were handed over to them.

Shortly after this, twenty-one Indians, including the writer, were arrested and taken to Santiban (The CID headquarters of the Thai Police." Three were released from Santiban after investigation. After being detained there for two months, the group was taken to Bangkok Central Jail (nearly twenty miles off Bangkok) and detained there for a further period of two months. From here another three were released. The rest including the writer, were transferred to Singapore Jail and detained there for two months. During this period no trial was held, though statements were taken from the arrested persons while they were in Santiban. It is recallable here that on the eve of being transferred to Singapore when the batch, including the writer of this note, was waiting for embarkation in ship in port, Mr. M.S. Anney, who at that time reached Bangkok as the representative of the Government of India at the South-East Asian treaty talks held at Singapore, went to port to see the batch and held a brief talk with it. In the course of his talks, Dr. Anney expressed his sorrow at the arrest of the group but regretted the fact that under the circumstances he could not help the batch in any way.

After being transferred to Singapore jail each man was kept in a separate cell which was barely spacious to move about. No facilities for reading or taking any physical exercise were given. Out of twenty-four hours, only two hours were allowed for taking bath and food, which was the only time when the arrested person could see and talk to one another. The food given was the worst of its kind and it naturally affected the health of all very badly. It is strange that though no formal charge was brought against any of these men and no trial held, the arrested Indians, including the writer, were treated as ordinary convicts. During this time, Mr. S.K. Chettur, the then agent in Singapore of the Government of India, went two or three times to see the arrested persons in Singapore

and Dr. H.M. Kunzru also visited them once. After the lapse of nearly one month, the jail authorities permitted the arrested persons to read the books which they had taken with them at the time of transfer to Singapore.

After two months, a few were sent to India and released there while the rest, including the writer, were sent to Bangkok where they were set free. This turn of affairs came suddenly only two days before the visit of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Singapore. In our opinion, this step was taken by the British authorities in Singapore to prevent the arrested persons from meeting Pandit Nehru.

It goes to the credit of Indians in Thailand, that amongst all the individual donations made by Indians in South-east Asia to the freedom movement under the leadership of Netaji, that of Shri Jagat Ram Pawa, a noted merchant in Bangkok and partner of Messrs. Jagatram Chunilal, was the biggest. The amount was about twenty-four lacs of ticals. When interrogated by the British authorities on this donation, Shri Jagatram Pawa characteristically replied that it was the magnificent personality, leadership and patriotism of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose which inspired every Indian, including him, to make every possible donation to the freedom movement for the motherland. He further added that if his interrogators were in his position they would also act in the manner.

Sd. Raghunath Sharma.
23-4-1954.

Netaji As I Saw Him.

(By Raghunath Sharma)

Since the time I first saw Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Singapore and upto the last moment when I saw him off to Saigon on his last fateful journey, I had always perceived his inherent leadership, magnetic personality, boundless patriotism, untiring zeal for work and greatness of the mind. All these traits in him came to the fullest manifestation during the years when he moulded millions of Indians in South-East Asia into a single and solid bloc to fight for the motherland's freedom.

One of Mahatma Gandhi's foremost desires was Hindu-Moslem unity which could form the very foundation of the Free India we saw its implementation in South-East Asia under Netaji's leadership. It will go to the eternal credit of Netaji that he not only preached religious and communal harmony to the Indians in South-East Asia but also fully implemented it with the result that Indians in this region ceased to think of themselves on any basis other than that of their motherland--India.

After creating new men of the Indians in South-East Asia, Netaji proceeded with the gigantic task of organizing them into a vital force which could join hands with the independence struggle conducted by the Indian National Congress within India. In this task he revealed his deep knowledge of human psychology in a masterly manner. With Himalayan patience he personally attended to the minutest affairs relating to the Indians in S-E Asia, which is almost unparalleled in modern history.

Being a born leader of men, he pursued from the very beginning the most correct method of uniting Indians, scattered over the vast region from Japan to Burma by giving them one national salutation "Jai Hind" and one National Song, the Hindi version of Tagore's "Jana Gana Mana". It is no small glory to the Indians in this part of this world that the Government of Free India has adopted both these things as integral parts of national life.

It was for Netaji to make the Indian womenfolk in South-East Asia fully conscious of their latent power and of the important part

774/2/30

29-4 / RH/RI
2013

~~1043/6~~
638/RH
21/11/2001

~~183A~~
~~RH/OF~~
~~10/12/2006~~
OBR (RI)