

rs of Liberty" Series No. 4

# ATIN DAS

(The Martyr)



BY  
C. S. VENU

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(The Martyr)

BY

C. S. VENU

AUTHOR OF

"SIRDAR BHAGAT SINGH" (PROSCRIBED)

"GANESH SHANKER VIDYARTHI"

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# JATIN DAS—THE MARTYR



## CHAPTER I

### COLLEGES OF CRIME

*Liberty sits mountain high and slavery has birth  
In the hovels, in the marshes, in the lowest dens of  
Earth  
The tyrants of the world pilt-fall dig their path  
between  
And overshadow it with scaffolds, prison-blocks and  
guillotine.*

—EDWARD DUFFY.

THE threads of comradeship have slowly been woven by common misery. The touch of sympathy, has discovered the man beneath the criminal; the crust of sullen suspicion has melted at the breath of kindness, warming into view, the palpitating human heart. Old Evans and Sammy and Bob, what suffering and pain must have chilled their fiery souls with the winter of savage bitterness! And the resurrection trembles within. How terrible man's ignorance, that, for ever, condemns itself to be scourged by its own blind fury! And these my friends, Davies and Russel, these innocently guilty, what worse punishment could Society inflict upon itself than the loss of their latent nobility, which it had killed? Not entirely in vain are the years of suffering that have weakened my kinship with the humanity of *les miserables*, whom social stupidity has cast into the valley of Death.—“*Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist.*”

How men their brothers maim ! How they torture !! How they humiliate !! Oh, God ! It is idle perhaps to speculate, for one moment, on the stupendous cost of crime. With the severe intellectuality of a decaying tradition, that has drifted itself to brutality and selfishness, a society, that is to say, the civilised upper Ten has divided the known world under its care into Judges and criminals, and has regarded its prisoner and his kind as inevitable mushroom fungus growths, unfortunate derelicts, indeed, yet parasites, almost devoid of humanity. Would the cast of characters in this appalling melo-drama change ? Will it at all change for the better ? What might have been, if we would but look into the face of things from a different perspective, through less-soiled and more visible lens ? Would it be a grosser denial of justice, if more than 90 per cent of those in charge of Jails should be living in those dark, dingy, pestilential cells, and the cast-aways and stow-aways of society, these put into straight jackets, chained to the ring, fettered by the legs, were set at liberty and required to ward over their erstwhile masters ? Why is political murder by an individual in a fit of passion—a crime, and murder, premeditated murder on a vast scale, by all the fiendish devices of science, invention and human ingenuity ; murder by bombs and deadly poison gas, rained down from the sky—regarded as a necessity in the interest of civilisation and creeds and cultures ? Society has branded man as a criminal, who has worked for the emancipation of his country and has lionised the oil-kings, and steel barons, who batter on the pride of big bank balances, who thrive on sweated labour, on misery, ignorance, squalor and the ruin of millions. Society has set up a standard and throws into the dung-hill anyone whom an overworked Magistrate, in the din and hurry of his office hours, with all the limitations of intellect and understanding, with the knowledge of “ conviction being

a good price for preferment and promotion" may adjudge as having transgressed the letter of the law as he has understood it.

With the more speculative aspects of these discussions, we need not concern ourselves. They involve incursions into the domain of psychology and sociology. A thorough overhauling, not alone of the prison system, but of the foundations of the society that has raised this monstrous structure is the Revolutionist's task. The penologist, the humanitarian, or the reformist has accepted, as the basis of his recommendations, the society as it has existed for some time now and is making frantic efforts to continue to be. In India, the Government itself is the humanitarian agency; private enterprise, private initiative, individual impulse of nobility and charity, and an organised institutional desire to reform has more often than not been discouraged, discounted and has been looked upon with suspicion. It is not difficult for the watch-dogs of the police to detect in private enterprise the germs of sedition and the first beginnings of a well-planned, would-be criminal conspiracy. The Government of India itself, however, has, from time to time, instituted prison investigation committees to draw the Indian prison system into line with advanced western ideas of penology. The earliest attempt in that behalf dates as far back as the year 1836. The Prison Committee of that date, with Lord Macaulay as a member, severely criticised the corruption of the subordinate establishment and the system of employing the prisoners in extra-manual labour on the public roads "without exception, the worst method of treatment that had ever been provided under the British Government for this class of persons." There has been very little to encourage the belief, that things have improved considerably; the employ-

ment of Burma prisoners on a ticket of leave system on the Sino-Burmese frontier for road-making and jungle-clearing is perhaps one of the many known instances of "the worst method of treatment" yet continuing.

A second, a third and a fourth Committee of Enquiry came into being, investigated and reported, the latest and perhaps the most thorough being the one instituted in 1919-20. We may dismiss the Pearson Committee (1927) of Bengal, as the scope of its enquiry was extremely limited. It was appointed "in view of the murder of Rai Bhupendra Nath Chatterjee Bahadur in the Alipore Central Jail on 28th May, 1926 ..... to enquire into the present state of discipline among the staff and inmates in the Jails of Bengal and the efficiency and trustworthiness of the subordinate staff and the adequacy of supervision." It came in the wake of anger and panic; it investigated in a huff and it reported almost in a spirit of retaliation and revenge. Most of its recommendations are marred by prejudice; at least, it has added nothing to our ideas of prison reform.

The Indian Jails Committee (1919-20) began its report with a historical resume of Jail conditions and ended with a formidable-looking list of recommendations, 584 in number. Most of the witnesses examined by the Committee agreed in the view that the Indian prison administration has failed so far to regard the prisoner as an individual and has conceived of him rather as a *unit* in the Jail administrative machinery. It had a little lost sight of the effect which humanising and civilising influences might have on the mind of the individual prisoner. Little attention has been paid to the possibility of moral or intellectual improvement. "It must be frankly stated," said one "that the present Jail conditions are not such, as, either to reform or reclaim a prisoner in the slightest degree." "In the



majority of cases," said a Judge of the Bombay High court "a first offender leaves a Jail a worse man than he entered it." "Imprisonment," wrote the Inspector-General of prisons, Burma, "is a deteriorating influence; our Jails may well be called the *Matriculation Colleges of Crime*. This is perhaps the severest condemnation that can be pronounced, and should make the Jail administration judiciary that sends grist to the prison mill, liable for corrupting and dehumanising the prison population. The fact is that the idea of administration itself in India is the grand *idea of terror*; the judicious and the executive, the constable and the warder—each helping in his way to wield the lash and to maintain the terror. At the back of our system of criminal procedure, lurks the special figure of a magnificent and pompous authority, that rules by rod and frown. Common sense is banished: the essential human outlook is shaken off; humour is discountenanced; discipline is raised to the eminence of a cult: the personal equation is ignored; the individual is pilloried and hammered and the system made too much of and idolised. It may well be asked: Why persist in a system which deprives the criminal and then proceed to torture him further, for this system imposes additional criminality? Why do we allow them to go on in the same weary circular bullock-track year in and year out? Why should the innocent and the good be tortured? Why should the gentle and the loving be crucified? Why should God permit the triumph of tyranny and injustice? Are not political prisoners entitled to some kind of mercy? And this is exactly what the fetish of a system of law forbids in India.

To a detenu, the prison gong regulates his existence with depressing monotony. Cut off from the living world, banished from the healthy influences of affections, the days

dawn and drown with the clatter of levers, the slamming of iron doors and the dull thuds of majestic foot-falls. The nights overwhelm him with the sense of solitude. Life is so remote, appallingly far away, that it abandons him in a desert of silence. He has no place in the great Book of Life. He is amidst a Death watch. Hundred eyes pry into his secrets. Hundred tongues slander him. He is lost, lost—lost in the prison. He is being hammered into a machine, to obey orders and respect nods. When the Superintendent passes in majesty, in a daily royal procession, at the head of a long row of frowning, formidable-looking retinue of liveried disciplinarians, with majestic-looking umbrellas to hide him and his administration of justice and his numerous acts of kindness from the sun, the drooping prisoner is made to sit in a crouching position and shout *Sarkar ek Hai*, or *Sarkar ki Salam*.

As Mr. Gandhi has said: "Jail discipline must not take the form of humiliation. Discomfort must not take the form of torture; and respect must not take the form of crawling on one's belly." When he bends down his knees on Mother Earth, lest his eyes should transgress and accost the brother man, now in authority over him, he is made to feel that he is no more than a criminal, though his only crime was patriotism. Woe be unto him, if he fails or refuses to *salam* fifty-times a day his keepers, the gang of warders, the Constables, the Jailor, and the Superintendent. The transgressor is singled out and made to repeat the self-respecting program of sitting and bending and rising and *salaming*, till his tired limbs, his exhausted nerves, his drooping eyes, and his creeping flesh, all teach him, that to *salam* is the privilege and duty of a political prisoner. The British warrior Queen, bleeding from the Roman rods, has been immortalised in song, and the haughty authority was abhorred "deep in

ruin as in guilt." But the authority that dehumanises man, that degrades man's sense of honour, that insults and outrages the divinity in man, that disowns the "fellow-feeling, that makes us wondrous kind," is respected as Authority, worshipped as Justice and exalted as Discipline!

We have, therefore, no use for the humanity of Reform Committees. We have no use for the mercy of the wilderness of beneficent recommendations. A political prisoner's needs are not too many. His grievances are not irredressible. So long as a political prisoner is disgraced, so long as the man beneath him is not discovered and owned, so long as he is exploited and maimed by a brother man, so long as he is not regarded as an individual, but is conceived of as a unit in the Jail administrative machinery, the talk of reformation has no meaning. Mercy will show itself as a mockery. Improved dietary, Borstal institutions, classification and segregation of prisoners and a thousand kind treatment are desirable improvements, but they do not and can never bring the vital spark of life to the political cast-away prisoner, nor the rays of the blazing sun to the calmy prison-cells.

The dungeons against whose dripping walls the brave and generous have sighed their souls away, the scaffolds stained and glorified with noble blood, the helpless detainees with scarred and bleeding backs, the writhing martyrs clothed in flame, the virtuous stretched on racks, their joints and muscles torn apart, the flayed and bleeding bodies of the just, the extinguished eyes of those who sought within the prison-cells for truth, the countless patriots who perished in the cells, the numerous voices crying still from the depths, the burdened, beaten and weeping politicals, the victims of repression and tyranny, of imprisoned forces on Earth, these souvenirs of the dreadful past—these

horrors that still exist in Indian Jails,—these are the samples of British justice: these are the benefits of British rule in India; these, then, are the blessings that benevolent Britain has conferred on us, Indians!

## CHAPTER II

### CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE

*Oh, how I faint when I of you do write  
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name  
But since your worth (wide as the ocean is)  
I shall live your epitaph to make  
Although in me each part will be forgotten.  
Your name from hence immortal life shall live,  
And when all the breathers of this world are dead.  
You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen)*

—SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN the history of the Indian National Congress comes to be written by future Historians, the part played by Bengal in the struggle for India's freedom will perhaps be written in letters of gold; its story told in art and song by millions of men and women, now unborn, and its heroism cited up in rhymes and sung by children in succeeding times. Bengal is the most sturdy province in India: we can break it, but we *cannot* bend it. Only those, who have had a brilliant military career are sent as Governors of Bengal. For, as Lord Curzon once admitted in the House of Lords: "Every *Bengali* youth carries a double-barrelled or a six-chambered revolver in his pocket, and every young Indian is a dangerous Revolutionary."

Taking all in all, the largest number of political murders were committed in Bengal only. Bengal—famous Bengal—has produced all sorts of men. Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, who has startled the world by his inventions in science, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, the greatest living poet and Nobel prize-winner, who has shown the west the richness of Indian culture, Dr. Sudhindra Bhose, the greatest political philosopher, who is holding a prominent position in America, Dr. P. C. Ray, another great scientist, Prof. Radhakrishnan, the King George V professor of Philosophy, who is also a recipient of a Nobel prize, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the very incarnate of Lord Vishnu, who captured the imagination of the west, Swami Vivekananda, the Patriot-saint of India, C. R. Das, the celebrated Lawyer and Orator who sacrificed his all for the sake of Mother India, S. R. Das, who was the Law Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and Lord Sinha, the first Indian peer who showed to the outside world what stuff Indians possess are all *Bengalis*. It was Bengal that produced a Rash Behari Ghose, a Justice Ranade, a Surendranath Banerjee, an Aurovindo Ghose, a Bepin Chandra Pal, a Raja Rammohan Roy, an Iswar Chunder Vidya Sagar, and a Toru Dutt. Babu Subash Chandra Bose is a *Bengali*. J. M. Sen Gupta is a *Bengali*. Upendranath Banerjee, Anil Barn Ray, Santosh Kumar Dutt, Panchanon Chakravarthi, Surendra Mohan Ghose, Purna Chandra Das, Jyotish Chandra Chatterjee, Ananda Chandra Muzumdar, Jibanlal Chaterjee, Bepin Behazi Ganguli, Mon Mohan Bhattacharya, Romesh Chandra Chatterjee, Lal Mohan Ghose, Kaliprasad Banerjee, Dinesh Gupta,—these Martyrs of Liberty (only to mention a few) are all *Bengalis*. It is indeed a sad irony of fate, that it should have fallen to the lot of Bengal to produce such tall giants and to contribute to the lion's share of the soldiers, who constituted the vanguard in the

fight for freedom. Poor Bengal had to lose some of her noblest sons in making a *sankalp* to the cause of the country. All provinces—Madras, Bombay, Punjab, U. P.—have made *kurbans*; but that of Bengal is unparalleled in History and commands universal admiration.

Among the many inestimable gems, Bengal has given to this world, *Jatin Das* was one of them, and it may be as well to mention here, that there is no one in modern History, or perhaps it may be said more broadly, none in all History, from its earliest records, who has made such a tremendous sacrifice as JATIN DAS.

Jatin Das was born of a respectable, but poor Kayastha family of Sham Bazaar, Praunath Pundit Lane, Bhawanipur, Calcutta, on 27th October, 1904 (corresponding to the Bengali year 1311, B. S. 11th Karthick). He was the grandson of the late Mahendranath Das, who was a village Munsiff. This Mahendranath Das was the son of Bankim Behari Das and Jatin Das' great grand-father. Bankim Babu had seven children, out of whom he lost three sons and one daughter, all of them dying in their very infancy. One of the sisters of Jatin Das was attacked by consumption and she died in her fifteenth year.

In 1912, Mahendranath Das, Jatin's grand-father died, and Jatin Das was only a boy of eight years at his death. After two years, Mahendranath's daughter-in-law (Jatin Das' mother) followed suit and found an early grave, leaving poor Jatin Das, who was then completing his tenth year, to the tender mercy of Fate. There was none to take care of Jatin Das except his brother, Kiran Chandra, who brought up his young brother with the most loving kindness.

The ancestral residence of Jatin Das was at Ichhapur, a small village on the banks of the River Ganges in the Dis-

trict of the twenty-four parghanas. When the Government purchased that village to establish the Gun and Shell and Ichhapur Rifle Factories, his fore-fathers, who were served with an eviction order by the Government, had to leave their ancestral adode and come to Bhawanipur, Calcutta, where they had a fine and palatial mansion built for them at 16, Prannath Pandit lane and began to live there ever since. Bankim Babu, fed up with city-life and unable to check his sorrow and emotion at the untimely and premature death of several of his sons and daughters, removed to a small house in Townshend Road.

Jatin Das was popularly and familiarly known as *Khendu*—a nickname given to him by his loving parents. Jatin Das, ever since his childhood, was given out to lofty aspirations and was marked out by all those, who came into close contact with him, as an exceptionally gifted and intelligent child; and he showed unmistakable proofs of what he was actually going to do in his later life. In almost all his activities in his boyhood, he showed those rare and noble qualities of which he had become the master later on. He imbibed, to a considerable degree, the qualities of his grand-father. While yet in his very boyhood, Jatin was very resolute, strong-minded, diligent, industrious, pains-taking, simple and what is more, kind to all. And it was only for reasons best known to himself, that he was particularly attached to his little friends, relatives and neighbours.

Deprived of a loving mother at too tender an age—an age when it required the kind, the solacing, the maternal and the loving care and solicitude of a mother, his brother Kiran Chandra decided on giving Jatin Das the best education. It was also his intention to bring up Jatin as a graduate and, later, put on him a lawyer's robe and gown.

In 1912, at the age of eight, Jatin Das was sent to the Bhawanipur branch of the Mitra Institution of Calcutta. He applied himself carefully to his studies, and passed the Matriculation Examination from this school in 1920 and was placed in the First Division of the Pass List. What more convincing proof is wanting to mark out the genius in him? It was because of this that his teachers used to love and admire him and, it is said, he was one of the best and bright students in the school in his time.

He seemed to have, ever since his infancy, been imbued with one laudable desire, with one definite aim in life and that was, to alleviate the sufferings of others, to remove their distress and to minister to their wants. *That* was his one desire. Every young man in life has one definite aim or idea to which end he works and sets his energies to its fulfilment. It was, for instance, the one desire of Abraham Lincoln to abolish slavery and slave-trade. To this end he laboured hard and when he found himself comfortable in the White House, he did translate his wish into action, and finally caused the abolition of the wretched slavery and slave-trade. So, everybody begins and enters life with one definite aim. Thus, it is the one desire and aim of the present writer to eat dinners with as many raw cabbages as could be found in the world. Jatin Das never wanted raw cabbages; no—not even beans or onions. His aim was to lessen the miseries of others, to save and lift them up from the depths of degradation, if possible. Restraint of passions, and rectitude of conduct had made his moral and personal character quite unimpeachable. He was never known to disown, what he could once accept as truth. He never strayed away from the right. His character, while yet young, was among the noblest and purest in all history. He was truth-telling, temperate,



virtuous, obliging and god-fearing. It was this particular trait of his character, which has made him immortal.

He was also a restless youth, quite unbending and never played the part of a blue-stocking or a black-leg. "Wet-cat" was the term Jatin Das used to apply to his friends, when their cowardice or nervousness was discovered. Once, the Headmaster of his school had found some cause to expel him from school and suspend him for an indefinite period on the score of disobedience and hurling defiance at the school authorities. But his father, who was a very strict guardian, had compelled Jatin Das to apologise to the Head-master and the matter was thus amicably settled.

After passing the Matriculation Examination in 1920, he joined the South Suburban College, at Bhawanipur, which is now more familiarly known as Aushtosh College. In 1921, when the non-co-operation movement was in its full swing, and when Mr. Gandhi issued his call to the Nation, not one student in Bengal remained in the schools or colleges. Every young man left his studies and joined the non-co-operation movement in Bengal, then under the leadership of Chittaranjan Das. Jatin Das also felt it highly obligatory on his part to give up his studies in the College and take to political activities and do what he could to make the freedom movement in Bengal a complete success. Those who had at least a bit of love for their mother country and had a little patriotic zeal in them—even they could not resist the temptation and confine themselves to the comfortable environments of the home and the hearth, and came out in battalions in the wide-field to fight bravely for the freedom of their motherland. Could Jatin Das remain quiet at the clarion call of his country? Could he turn a deaf ear to the appeals of the leaders and

spend his time basking in the sunshine of sunny and be-witching smiles? What was his one object in life—his one aim? Liberty—the attainment of liberty was then the sole mission of his life.

He, therefore, left the college—Jatin Das left the college in 1921—much against the will of his parents. He was quite inexorable and did not give heed to his father's counsels, who was dead against the N. C. O. movement at that time. Disappointed and disgusted at this, his father severely took him to task and taxed him in the most roundest manner possible. He was subsequently turned out from his home. But nothing could daunt his courage; no privation or separation could dishearten him. He smilingly quit his home and took shelter, thenceforth, in the Congress Office at Bhawanipur.

Jatin Das was not, however, happy after his dramatic walk-out from his home. He had to put up a stern fight against poverty and starvation. He was so hard-up for money—utterly penniless, so to say, that he could scarcely get a meal a day. At times, he would swallow a tumbler-full of water, and return to his bed, quite fatigued and tired. But nothing could depress his indomitable spirit. His father's stern attitude, and the pinch of poverty and hunger could not deviate him from the path which he had chalked out for himself. If he could at any time get some fried rice and a pice worth of molasses, he would congratulate himself and consider that day the happiest in his life. He had at times even to fast for days together, but the smile on his lips, which even played on his fair countenance in his last moments, never forsook him for one day. Though oppressed by poverty and privation on all sides (and that for a youth to live in stately Calcutta without a pie, it can best be imagined!) he was cheerful, undaunted

and vigorous. One of the leaders in Bengal remarked that Jatin Das would one day shine out as a beacon light and do some good to the country. How proverbially did that prediction turn true, and that to the very letter!

His winning manners, his good qualities and kind nature soon won for him many friends, one of whom, taking pity upon the miserable plight of Jatin Das, recommended him to a certain gentleman as a tutor to his son on Rupees 10 per mensem. It was on this amount—on this slender amount, that he was maintaining himself, and that in Calcutta—the first and the largest and the costliest city in British India, where Rs. 10 is quite insufficient and inadequate for boarding and lodging expenses for *one* day! He never accepted a pie for Congress work, as he considered it a sin to accept any remuneration for National work. What a noble soul!

Taking stock for a while, how many sons and daughters of India are there in this country who, in the name of the Congress, are swallowing, like sugar-pills, Congress money. How many erstwhile khaddar-clad tribunes are there in our midst, who, hurling defiance at the Government, and preaching sermons from platforms, are misappropriating money collected for Congress work. How many political dandies are now exploiting the Congress for their unworthy ends. How many are now living actually on the Congress. There are many, reader—there are many. Gentle reader, think not that the money you put in the Congress *Hundi* goes straight to Heaven. Imagine not for a moment, that by attending a crowded mass meeting you are laying foundations for *Swaraj*. Dream not that the Congress is a divine body, a celestial institution descended from Heaven. Look to the thousands of youths who, driven to despair, have resorted to political

violence and to the scores of thousands who are now standing their trial. Pity them. Would to God there were no other arbiter on Earth to decide on the fate of these noble youths, who cannot even afford to defend themselves in Court. If you, at any time, come across with any appeal for funds, reader, spurn it not away ; but contribute your mite ; try to save them, though the Congress had deserted their cause and disowned them ; throw your coins at them. and then, you shall have made some real contribution, worth the name, to the cause of your country.

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### CHAPTER III

#### ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT

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*Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen  
And waste its sweetness in the desert air.*

—THOMAS GREY.

IN 1921, Bengal was attended by heavy floods causing great distress to the people and depriving them of their food and shelter. Cattle, houses, crops and villages were washed away in the deluge and the floods played such havoc, that Bengal which had been filling the beggar's bowl was obliged to take the bowl herself. Jatin Das, who was at the time taking shelter under the roof of the Calcutta Congress Committee, organised relief measures in centres worst affected by the floods and did all he could to mitigate the miseries of the famine-stricken people of Bengal. This act of generosity, on the part of Jatin Das and his real energy for philanthropic work, amazed the leaders of Bengal. The affected people, whom

Jatin Das helped by clothing their naked bodies with his own torn shirt and *lungi*, expressed their admiration and appreciation for the courage shown by our hero in gallantly rescuing them from the affected areas. "Such a one—such a young man, with such a youthful spirit," said the people when thanking him for his humble services, "would take us back to Nazareth itself."

A few days after his return from the relief centres, he disobeyed a Government Order, while addressing a meeting, and was arrested and sentenced to four days' imprisonment. He received the sentence smilingly and went to jail. After his release, he worked for the Congress for sometime, and in October, 1921 he was again arrested and sentenced to undergo one month's rigorous imprisonment for disobeying a Government's Order.

In 1922 came the picketing season and picketing was going on very vigorously in the markets of south Calcutta to boycott foreign cloth. The picketers, in their good old fashion, used to request and implore prospective purchasers and enterprising merchants to entirely boycott foreign cloth. Jatin Das was then leading the band of volunteers. He had, by postponing several of his engagements, devoted his whole energy to this work. One day, it so happened that, while he was picketing at Burra Bazaar, he had, quite accidentally or otherwise, a clash with the police and he was consequently arrested. His guilt having been established, he was sentenced to three months' rigorous imprisonment. Oh God, that it should have been possible for a youth, not even seventeen years old, to go to prison thrice and that in a comparatively short period of six months, is unparalleled in History!

He was detained at the Hooghly Jail, and after three months, he was released. Overwork, worries and three

months in prison told very heavily on his delicate health and when he returned from prison, he was weak, emaciated and was almost like a skeleton unable even to move. His father had now returned to his filial affection at the miserable plight of his long-lost and once dear son, and immediately took him home to properly look after him. But Jatin had a serious break-down and was confined to bed for about two months after his release. After completely recouping his health and recovering his lost energy, he got himself re-admitted in the College and began prosecuting his studies. It is really astonishing to note that even after undergoing such hardships in prison and in life, this noble youth should so easily collect himself and get back his spirit of peace, calmness and resignation. It was at this time that he joined the University Corps. In 1924, Jatin Das passed his Intermediate Examination of the University of Calcutta and was again placed in the first division and joined the Bangabasi College to study for the B. A.

In 1924, he was elected Assistant Secretary to the South Calcutta Congress Committee. The same year, the devastating floods played another havoc, this time on the people of North Bengal. Jatin Das felt the call of the suffering and the needy and at once joined the Relief activities and went to Santahar. He rendered remarkable and meritorious service to the people of Santahar. He knew where the shoe pinches and he set his energies in that direction and he achieved astounding results. He also knew how and when to shoulder responsibilities and discharged his duties to the best of his ability. It is because of this that his friends and co-workers began to love him all the more. The people of Bengal, therefore, deemed it a privilege to seek his co-operation in whatever task they undertook.

The same year, through his persistent and indefatigable labours, the South Calcutta Youth Association was started. The object of this Association was to help the poor and the needy. Provision was also made for physical culture among the members of this Association. In 1925, Jatin Das was re-elected Asst. Secretary to the South Calcutta Congress Committee and the South Calcutta Youth Association and began to work with re-doubled vigour. But darker days and greater misfortunes were in store for him.

The Bengal Ordinance and Regulation III of 1818 were playing havoc on *Bengali* youths. They were passed into law in spite of vigorous popular opposition. They were condemned both in the Legislature and in the Congress. Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta brought a resolution in the open Congress and moved :

This Congress strongly condemns the abuse of Regulation III of 1818 and the autocratic enactment of the Bengal Ordinance Act and the arrest and detention without definite charge and open trial of a large number of patriotic young men of Bengal under the said Regulation and the Act, and further condemns their continued incarceration, maltreatment and deportation outside Bengal notwithstanding the clearly and repeatedly expressed opinion of the people, both inside and outside the Legislature.

The Ghauti Congress also passed a similar resolution in a chorus of condemnation. A vindictive bureaucracy could have certainly respected the wishes of the elected members of the Legislatures and the Congress. A B. A., student of the Calcutta University was arrested and sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment in a political case. Immediately after his release, he was again arrested under

the Bengal Ordinance and detained in prison. The province of Bengal went mad with rage at this unlawful arrest and detention. Had he promoted crimes or conspiracies in the jail, the people began to ask. Or, was he punished for an offence for which the law had already demanded from him the utmost satisfaction ?

Jatin Das also fell a victim to the Bengal Ordinance on the 5th November, 1925. Jatin, the Assistant Secretary of the South Calcutta Congress Committee, organiser and the man behind the Youth Association and a member of the B. P. C. C. was arrested by the police and detained. He was not tried by any court; absolutely there was nothing of that sort, not even a mock-trial, so to say. This tragedy of the Ordinance misrule in Bengal embittered political relations throughout India. An oppressive suspicion pervaded the whole atmosphere. Surely repression could never be the last world in statesmanship. As Lord Morely wrote in 1908: "Excessive severity followed by repression is not the path to order. On the contrary, it is the path to the Bomb." That warning went unheeded. Indian officials were revelling in repression, and the arguments of batons, bullets and bayonets, seemed to have found favour with them.

Any law which is not based upon justice, equity and good-will of which the object is not to serve and secure that justice upon which the stability of society depends, must necessarily be a lawless law. It is something which is forwarded under cover of law, but which is *not* law, which offends against the very principle of justice, which is negation of law. Further, to be taken and kept in custody for an indefinite period of time, without being told what evidence there is and without being brought forward to justice according to the law of the land, is a denial of



the primary rights of humanity. All these found no place in the counsels of the Government. Jatin Das was detained in the Presidency Jail. Subsequently, he was transferred to the Midnapore Central Jail. Here, one day, on account of excessive heat, he had an attack of sun-stroke and fainted. The timely help rendered by his fellow-prisoners saved him from an untimely death.

He was soon after this brought to the Alipore Central Jail for medical treatment, but was again transferred to the Dacca Central Jail. It was about this time that Mr. B. M. Chatterjee, Special Superintendent of the C. I. D. was murdered in connection with the Dakshineswar Bomb case. He had to undergo greater hardships in the Dacca Central Jail, whence he was taken to the Mymensingh Jail. While in Mymensingh Jail, Jatin Das showed considerable fearlessness and strength of character. One day, the Inspector-General of Prisons, Lt. Col. O'Brien was inspecting the Prison, where Jatin was confined. Every political prisoner, whatever his station or rank in life, was compelled to stand up and *salam* the Burra Sahibs who passed that way. The indomitable Jatin Das, who had never bent before insolent might, refused to *salam* the Lt. Colonel and remained obdurate. O'Brien, who felt his red-tape of prestige and honour, insulted and outraged, and as if bitten by a serpent, flew into a sudden rage. "My boy, I am thy father and you are required to stand up before me." How nice and how yet insulting are these words. According to our Lt. Colonel, every political worker, who courts imprisonment for his country's cause, is the son of the Inspector-General of Prisons! And, Lt. Col. O'Brien is our *father* and our Mother's husband!! Then how about our *own* father who first gave birth to us: who had the bridal knot tied around our Mother's neck, when she was led to the marriage altar? Father O'Brien, it is a pity, had lost sight of all these

hard facts and unnecessarily allowed his sense of pride which came over his bloated brain, to overcome decency.

How could Jatin Das pocket this insult? How could he tolerate *Father* O'Brien's harsh words? Here is Jatin Das with his retort courteous: "*Be careful, O'Brien how you insult me, or I shall have your skull smashed to dust.*" This said, Jatin Das fell upon him. The result may well be imagined than described. Jatin Das was again put under trial. To protest against, what seemed to him to be, an unlawful procedure, he resorted to hunger-strike, which he, however, continued for twenty days. On the twenty-first day, (Father) O'Brien came and apologised to him saying that it was through a slip of his tongue that he uttered those words and that all that, he wanted: to represent to him was that "he should stand up before him, only because he was of the same age as Jatin's father." Father O'Brien, might well have shone as a brilliant lawyer had he only turned his attention to the Bar. Noble Jatin at once forgave Lt. Colonel O' Brien (we shall henceforth call him *Lt. Colonel* since he apologised) after he himself expressing regret for his attack on the Colonel, and the matter was thus happily settled.

During his hunger-strike in the Mymensingh Jail another co-prisoner named Ramalal Mukherjee had also gone on a sympathetic hunger-strike with him. Subsequently, Jatin Das was transferred to the Meanwali Jail in the Punjab. Cut off from Bengal and Bengalis and all his cordial environments, and deprived of the benefit of society, Jatin's sufferings multiplied three-fold. He had much to complain against his diet and lodging. The scorching sun of the Punjab was unbearable for him. It was just about this time that he received a heart-rending news from his home in Calcutta, that his youngest sister was dangerously

ill and confined to the death-bed. He became anxious and, therefore, petitioned the Government to permit him to go and see his sister. But as the Government's reply was considerably delayed, he became quite restless with deep concern at his sister's illness.

This was not the only case where justice has been denied and *delayed* to the political prisoners. Mr. Hari-kumar Chakravathy, a victim of the Bengal Ordinance and a detenu in the Insein Jail left behind him in the outside world, his wife and his children when the police arrested him. Sometime after his internment, it was reported that his wife was suffering from tuberculosis. She grew from bad to worse and reports of her condition were duly communicated to the Government. In her death-bed, she wanted to see her dear husband once on this side of the grave. She petitioned the Government. Mr. Chakravathi too moved his custodians. When his wife was almost dying, he was duly informed that she was doing well (a most cruel joke) and indeed in a way to recovery. She closed her eyes. The last and the only desire of her flickering life, the only joy she would enjoy in the brief span of life that was still left to her, was denied to her. At Mandalay prison, with the wooden palisades to confide his soul, to be heard—" *your wife is dead*"—who will say, what he felt then? No tongue can tell. Perhaps he remained rigid, immobile, not uttering a sound, nor changing colour. "Your wife is dead". He realised the rending conviction that his wife was dead. "Dead—dead—art thou for ever gone," were the only words that escaped from his lips and he became insane. He is still rotting in the same Jail.

No wonder then if Jatin Das had been allowed the same 'privilege.' The Government's reply was, however, delayed and he became quite impatient. His father, who was too poor even

to engage the services of a Doctor to treat his consumptive daughter, looked to Jatin Das, who alone could have raised the necessary funds for his sister's treatment. At last, Jatin got the permission of the Government and came home under strict police guard. He was allowed only *one day* to remain at home by the side of the sick-bed of his sister, all the while the police closely watching him. Before his sister could fully recover, Jatin Das was snatched away and again interned in a small village in the District of Chittagong. Immediately after his departure, his sister expired. This gave him a very rude shock and shattered his frame. He had, up till now, smilingly endured all troubles and hardships, but this time, it told heavily on his health and was unable to put up with the sad bereavement.

In the beginning of the year 1927, a high Government Official had occasion to visit Jatin Das in the Chittagong Jail and had conversation with him. Naturally the conversation turned on the charges that had been levelled from time to time against the Bengal detenus. The conversation was published in the *Forward* of June 5, 1927. It will give the reader an idea of the nature of the guilt of the Bengal detenus :—

**Jatin Das** :—I can challenge Government Officials to produce an iota of proof against me to connect me with any anarchical crime. Can you produce a single ray of evidence against me ?

**Official** :—I admit, I have no documentary evidence against you personally, but there are such proofs against others.

**Jatin Das** :—I am now dealing with *my own* case and I believe, I can speak with equal authority about some of my friends. Leaving aside the question of documentary

evidence, have you got any evidence to connect me and my friends with any anarchical crimes?

**Official** :—It may be that the group of which you belong have no connection with these crimes, but you all have a revolutionary tendency and in future, if you get proper opportunities, you would repeat the game of 1914-15.

**Jatin Das** :—That means you admit that our detention is due to our political opinions and *not* to our activities. Why then were you so loud in proclaiming that these detenus have nothing to do with the political opinions of the state-prisoners.

The official kept quiet and thereupon Jatin Das resumed his conversation.

**Jatin Das** :—And you, of all persons, gave out a false story in the Council that we were smuggling arms that were captured in Colombo and other parts of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. You know full well that those arms were imported by and were meant for the Chinese Nationalists. But still you told quite a false story in the Council.

There was no reply from the Official.

**Jatin Das** :—Again if you come to the question of political opinions, I can assure you that about 99 per cent of our countrymen hold the same political opinions as we do. But they keep silent, some out of fear and others out of self-interest. If they get proper opportunities, they would all join the Revolution if and when it ever comes.

The Official smiled and said: Every young Indian is a potential Revolutionary.

**Jatin Das** :—Then put the whole lot into Jail. And don't you think it very natural and manly to be so, especially in a subject country? What would you yourself do if during the last war, England was conquered and governed by Germany.

Again the official smiled.

**Jatin Das** :—When would you release us? Does it depend on the political atmosphere of the country, or on the change of our mentality?

**Official** :—On both.

**Jatin Das** :—As regards the change of our political opinions, I can assure you, that there is not the least chance of it, at least not in the near future.

After pausing a while, the Officer said: "I regret to hear this," and went away. So it is plainly clear from what passed on between Jatin Das and the Govt. Official, that the only guilt of the detenus was not their revolutionary activities but of their holding ideas, which, in the opinion of the Govt., was revolutionary. Ideas cannot be killed. Ideas rule the world and its events. No imprisonment can crush an idea. Ideas can be hindered for a moment, but it gets an elasticity even inside the dungeon walls, and it is capable of growing and moving the whole world when it finds an expression.

On 29th September, 1928, Jatin Das was released, and on his return home, he immediately took up his work. Three years' imprisonment and suffering in the Jail had given him a severe break-down in health; but even in spite of all these, he continued his activities with an energy that never flagged, and with an enthusiasm that never flinched. Every one was glad to find that he was quite alright and had not been a bit lacking in his former energy.

During the Congress session at Calcutta, he spent all his efforts to form a strong and well-disciplined Volunteer Corps. When the Congress was over, he took charge, of the South Calcutta Corps and was the Officer-in-Command. The vision of the formation of a National Militia loomed

large before him and, to this end, he concentrated all his energies to the formation of a permanent Volunteer Corps and during the Congress session at Calcutta, he was Major of the Bengal Volunteer Corps. His passion for the Volunteer Corps was so great, that he used to go from door to door in the scorching rays of the tropical sun, to induce the young men of Calcutta, Chetla, Ballygany and Kidderpore to muster strong and swell the Volunteer Corps.

In 1929, he again joined his College and continued prosecuting his studies in the B. A. class of the Bangabasi College of Calcutta. He was one of the Executive members of the "Independence of India League" and Youth organisation. The Volunteer Corps became so great, that it was later on destined to be counted as a national force. As soon as the last General Elections were over, he was arrested on 11th June, 1929 in connection with, what is known as the "Lahore Conspiracy case" and taken to Lahore to stand his trial. Twenty three persons were arrested in connection with the above case of whom seven afterwards turned to be Approvers.

His parting words to his friends and co-workers were:—

**"Perhaps I shall not come back, but keep the Volunteer movement alive and see that it does not collapse."**

Those were his last parting words to his friends and those shall be the last parting words; for nevermore would he come back. And again, how striking were his words when he said—"*perhaps I shall not come back.*" He never went back, as we shall see. He never returned to his friends alive. He perished in the very place, "from where he would never come back." His was not a vain and idle prophecy. It was true to the very letter, to the very syllable.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GREAT HUNGER-STRIKE

*Behold ! we enter the sacrificial fire to-day  
The last debt of our Motherland we gladly pay.*

BARRISTER SAVARKAR.

HOW men their brothers maim !—how they torture. It is difficult to imagine, for a single moment, the inhuman torture of the political prisoners in the Lahore Conspiracy case. They were beaten. They were kept fasting with only one pice worth of fried rice a day and sometimes they fainted. They were kept hand-cuffed, hands and arms tied, bound, upstretched, and they were whipped so as to make blood ooze from several parts of the body. Mechanical tortures were used and one prisoner's hand was broken and disabled. Sexual atrocities were perpetrated. They were tortured with battery charges for ten minutes and pins driven into fingers and asked to confess. Slaps, blows and kicks; and made to stand naked in a solitary damp cell for six continuous days. [LIFTED FROM *Forward*.]

No interviews were allowed to them; and if at all there were any, they were accompanied with great restrictions only every four months. Interviews were restricted to a ridiculous and arbitrary number not large enough to include even all very near relatives. Very bad food, ill-cooked in oil or often without even ghee or oil was given. The *chapathi* would contain at least one-eighth of sand and dust and could be hardly eatable, much less could it be digestible. Humiliating searches were made and then for refusal to submit to them, the prisoners were subjected to tortures. They were required and compelled to closely crop their beard, which is quite against Bengali and Punjabi customs. No books or newspapers were allowed to while away their



time. They were not allowed to have their own bedding and clothing. All prisoners used to be locked up soon after 4 P. M. and allowed to remain so locked until 8 A. M. During these intervals, they would have crude dirty improvised arrangements for privy in the cells. "One prisoner was compelled to drink water in the same tumbler used for passing urine." This was the kind of treatment given to the Lahore under-trials among whom Jatin Das was one.

Unable to put up with these, Bhagat Singh and Bhatkeswar Dutt went on hunger-strike. The Magistrate was informed on the 23rd July, 1929 by an accused Jayadev that the above-mentioned two persons had been on hunger-strike for the last 29 days and the remaining under-trials too threatened to follow suit in sympathy with their comrades. The Public Prosecutor, Mr. Noad asked for two days within which, he said, he would get information from the Government. On the 13th July, the rest of the accused went on hunger-strike. The number of the hunger-strikers swelled by the addition of eleven more hunger-strikers of whom Jatin Das was one. Sympathy for the cause of these hunger-strikers was so great, that it brought within its fold, such persons as Sirdar Sohar Sekhar Singh (of the Lahore Conspiracy case of 1914) B. K. Banerjee of Dakshineswar Bomb Case, Sirdar Ujjal Singh, Ratan Singh and several others. "I will fight to the finish," said Jatin Das when first resorting to hunger-strike and he was going to fight it out with his invincible weapon—the "*hunger-strike*."

The incident is not merely one which concerns the hunger-striker alone. One should try to understand the philosophy of hunger-strike, whether it be by a political or a criminal condemned to the gallows. Hunger strike has no tongue : it speaks for itself. Hunger-strike is obviously an extreme step, almost a desperate remedy. No fool will

ever resort to hunger-strike, unless he is driven to despair, unless he is driven to the step. Continued ill-treatment, refined cruelties, petty pin-pricks and tortures of various descriptions on the part of the Jail officials and C. I. D. visitors, and refusal to meet with the legitimate needs and demands of the prisoners drive them to this extreme step.

This is a phenomenon which is closely connected with the advent of the political prisoner. Jatin Das was not the only political who resorted to this extreme step. Irish and French Anarchists have resorted at times to hunger-strikes. Hunger-strike is the political prisoner's companion, friend and adviser. That is his only weapon, if weapon we can call it. When, therefore, Jatin Das failed to get (for himself and his comrades in Jail) his own way and when he thought he had a grievance he, not infrequently went on a hunger-strike.

As soon as an individual prisoner commences a hunger-strike, his demand or grievance should be carefully investigated and a decision come to and communicated to him. If he is dissatisfied with that decision and persists in the hunger-strike, food should be placed within his reach, but otherwise beyond pointing out to him, from time to time, the folly of his conduct, no notice should be taken of him unless and until his condition becomes such, that forcible feeding is necessary to save his life. It would be interesting to note the demands of Jatin Das, the conditions on which he would suspend his hunger-strike. They were:—

- (1) that no political prisoner is tortured and humiliated,
- (2) that they get better food, clothing and the necessaries of life,
- (3) that they should get daily newspapers and books and be provided with writing materials,
- (4) that they would be kept in special ward and all the political prisoners in the Jail should be kept together; and
- (5) that they should be

given medical treatment, toilette, etc. It is worth mentioning here that Jatin Das made these demands *not* on his own behalf, but on behalf of *all* the political prisoners of India. It was the firm conviction of Jatin Das, that the treatment meted out to political prisoners was enough to make a man insane, a treatment, which, he said "outraged one's feelings." He found no other way of bringing pressure to bear on the Government. He decided on self-immolation, with a view to force the Government to consider the case of the politicals all over India with all fairness and justice.

With these in view, Jatin Das began his great hunger-strike on the 13th July, 1929 and within a few days, his delicate health began to decline. When, therefore, the hearing of the case commenced on the 18th July, 1929, Mr. Kiran Das prayed to the Court for permission to remove his brother (Jatin Das) from the solitary cell, as his imprisonment there had brought on boils and insomnia into his brain. The Magistrate refused to interfere in the matter. The result was that Jatin Das, condition gradually became worse. On 20th July, 1929 it appeared in the *Bande Mataram* of Lahore that Jatin Das had become weak and blood was oozing from his nostrils as a result of forcible feeding.

On the 25th July, 1929 Jatin's condition was worse than ever before and on the same day, Jatindranath Sanyal informed the Court that forcible feeding had brought things to such a pass, that Jatin Das was nearing the portals of Death. He further informed that seven or eight persons were employed to force Jatin Das to eat and that some sat on the chest of hunger-strikers, and some kept firm hold on their hands and legs and the rest, it was alleged, pushed pipes containing food through their mouths and nostrils. This process of forcible feeding had made Jatin Das

unconscious leading to the collapse of his pulse, which was revived by injection and the administering of brandy. It was at this time that Major Puri gave evidence before the Court, that Jatin Das had contracted disease in the lungs. The Court thereupon passed orders dispensing with the presence of Jatin Das as his condition was critical and an *ex-parte* trial was held in his absence.

On the 26th July, 1929 news was received that Jatin Das had developed pneumonia and was getting fever and consequently forcible feeding had to be given up. By this time, Jatin Das had completed his 13th day of hunger-strike. The hopeless condition of Jatin lead the Defence Committee for the accused to wire to the District authorities to the effect, that Jatin Das' condition had caused great anxiety, necessitating the aid and consultation of physicians from outside and prayed for permission in that behalf. But the District authorities gade no satisfactory reply; they merely fenced about. His condition became more critical on the 31st July, 1929 and the Physicians certified to the effect, that nurses should be employed to wait on Jatin Das. But Jatin Das sternly refused the offer. His brother Kiran Das, who was by the side of him the whole night keeping a strict vigil, saw the parched lips of his brother and requested him to drink water. Jatin refused to take anything, lest medicine should be mixed with the drink. His weight at this state came down from 132 lbs. to 112 lbs.

At a meeting held at Albert Hall to observe 'Tilak Day' a telegram from Kiran Das stating that Jatin's case was hopeless and pulse-beat was 45 and temperature was below normal, was read and great concern was felt by the audience. Though Dr. Gopichand and Bhargav, Nationalist leaders entreated Jatin to take medicine and water, he refused to touch anything until and unless the grievances

## THE GREAT HUNGER-STRIKE

of the political prisoners were redressed. Pandit Motilal Nehru's condemnation of the indifference of the Government and its stick-up attitude came in time, but the Government remained obdurate and adamant.

On the 5th of August, 1929 Jatin Das became so weak that he was unable to move even in his bed. Finding Jatin Das in such a pitiable plight, Lala Dunichand wired the Government to the effect that the situation, which was going from bad to worse, needed sympathetic handling, but the authorities refused to meet the demands of Jatin Das. Jatin Das passed a restless night with severe pain in his chest and lay unconscious. On 6th August, his condition remained unchanged. On the same day, the Governor of the Punjab went to Lahore in connection with the much-talked-of Hunger-strike and a communique was issued by the Punjab Government, which did not contain anything regarding the meeting of the demands or redressal of the grievances of the hunger-strikers.

It was alleged that a cruel joke had been played on the relatives and friends of Jatin Das on the question of his release. One, Jagadish Chandra, submitted a bail application before the Special Magistrate for the release of Jatin Das. This Jagadish Chandra claimed to be a friend of Jatin Das. As none opposed the bail application, the Magistrate Khan Bahadur Kalandar Ali granted the petition and ordered for Jatin Das' release. In the meanwhile, Kiran Chandra Das, the only relative of Jatin Das was given to understand by some Jail Officials, that his brother was going to be released unconditionally. Accordingly, he informed his friends and sent for a Doctor to advise him whether his brother was in a fit condition to be removed from the Jail. But Jatin refused to come out on bail. "I want an unconditional release," persisted Jatin Das even in his death-bed.

Therefore Kiran Chandra Das, who came at that time to the Jail to take his brother, refused to accept bail and reiterated his demand that he would only agree to an unconditional release.

On arrival, Dr. Gopichand was requested by the City Magistrate to take charge of Jatin Das, but he refused on the ground that he was a third person. Thereat, the Magistrate said, if nobody was prepared to take Jatin on bail, he would send away the Ambulance car. After a few minutes, the Ambulance car drove off. In the meanwhile, reports of the release of Jatin Das and the further developments spread like wild wire throughout the city of Lahore. On enquiry, it was afterwards learnt, that while Kiran Das was coming out of the Jail exasperated, he was stopped by the Jail officer and was requested to take his brother on bail, but he again refused. At this the Jail Superintendent was reported to have asked him to give it in writing that he was not going to take back his brother on bail. Kiran Chandra Das retorted saying that as the Jail officials were not showing any written order, he, on his part, was *not* going to give it in writing.

The same evening, the Superintendent of Jail, Major Briggs and the City Magistrate went to Jatin Das who was lying in a semi-conscious state and promised to release him on bail. But Jatin Das persisted in saying:—“*Conditional release is no release*”. Thus, when all attempts of Kiran Chandra Das to get an unconditional release failed, he went away disgusted saying: “If my brother dies, I shall hold the British Government and this Court responsible for it.”

Ajoy Ghosh, Jifen Sanyal and Bejoy Kumar Sinha who were also under-trials were deeply moved to pity and threatened to resume their hunger-strike if Jatin Das was not released unconditionally. It was not definitely known

whether Bhagat Singh and Dutt too had gone on hunger-strike in sympathy with Jatin Das, as they were not found that day in the Central Jail. On the 6th September the Government officially announced that they were *not* willing to release Jatin Das unconditionally.

On the 10th September Jatin Das' condition became so dangerous, that the Jail authorities informed his father of it and his brother was requested to remain all night by the side of Jatin Das. At 10 A. M. on 12th September his heart became weak, his body was paralysed, power of speech and sight had almost gone and his extremities were cold as ice and was hovering between life and death for some time. On 13th September, 1929, Friday, exactly at 1-5 A. M., Jatin passed away after 63 days of hunger-strike and a few minutes before his death, with great difficulty and utmost effort he made his last wish known to the Chief Medical Officer to cremate him in Calcutta by the side of his mother and sister. Those were the *last* words he uttered.

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## CHAPTER V

### FUNERAL PROCESSION

*No longer mourn for me when I am dead  
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell  
Give warning to the world that I am fled  
From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell.*

—SHAKESPEARE.

DEAD!—gone—dead art thou, Jatin, thou Martyr? Art thou, for ever, gone? Did 63 days of fasting, of hunger-strike for a cause, which you believed to be sacred, despatch you to the portals of Death? And you, so young—so good, and, poor too—to immolate yourself for the emanci-

pation of your motherland. Really, it is the poor who sacrifice better than the rich : Ah, it is the youth that sacrifice better than the old.

The news of the sudden passing away of Jatin Das, reached Lahore at 1-30 P. M., and it spread like wild fire throughout the country. Arrangements were at once made to remove the dead body from the Jail premises. The following ladies and gentlemen escorted the body from Lahore:—Mr. A. C. Balley, Mr. Mohan Lal Ghoutam, Pramila Devi, (sister of Batukeswar Dutt) Mrs. Bhagavathi Charan and Kausalya Devi and Sakuntala Devi.

For the first time, perhaps, in the annals of Burdwan, quite unprecedented scenes were witnessed at the Railway Station, when the Express was mournfully steaming in with the mortal remains of the greatest Indian Martyr on its way to Howrah Station for cremation. Perfect solemnity reigned everywhere in and outside the station. The people, young and old, began to gather in large numbers to take a last glimpse of the Martyr, who had laid down his life for the nation's cause. The crowd was increasing even in spite of some light showers, and the crowd was estimated at eighty-thousand. The police were very busy in controlling the crowd and keeping order, and there was no exhibition of police force or *lathi* charge. At last, there came a whispering murmur, which was speedily circulated that the signal was down, and the expected train was coming in. The crowd, for a while, seemed to be restless and much agitated over the gravity of the situation. The words "young hero who preferred death to a life of shame at the hands of an alien Government" were heard distinctly from every mouth.

At last the train arrived. There were voices "hush"—"hush:" and as the train steamed in, the mob shouted at



the top of their voices "Bande Mataram" and "Long Live our Jatindranath." The compartment, which was carrying the dead body of Jatin Das, was easily identified at the sight of a big Black flag which was hoisted at the threshold of the compartment. The crowd was silent for a moment and bent down their heads in dutiful obeisance to the Martyr. The daily routine of work at the station came to a stand-still and the station presented a solemn appearance. The people soon caught sight of the Martyr's brother, Kiran Chandra Das. He looked emaciated, weak and tired due to the journey.

The train then steamed off towards Howrah. On the way-side stations, at Belur, and at Lילוoh, the train received a tremendous ovation on arrival; and the crowd threw flowers and wreaths on the train in motion. When the train was advancing towards Howrah, people were seen in large numbers on the top of trees, bridges and roofs of houses. As the train was passing on, the crowd raised the cry—"Bande Mataram."

Thus being welcomed from the very gates of Bengal, with solemn demonstrations and obedience to the Martyr, the train at last arrived at Howrah Station, where a crowd of two-hundred thousand people was anxiously waiting with flags of honour and with flowers and festoons to pay their last homage to the mortal remains of the "second greatest Martyr of the world." Immediately after the arrival of the dead body, there was a great rush as everybody wanted to catch a glimpse of the body which was covered with flowers.

Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta, the Lord Mayor of Calcutta, Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose and Dr. P. C. Ray and others entered the compartment first and paid their respectful homages to the national hero. As the train steamed in,

there was a shower of flowers, and people from all sides shouted "Bande-Mataram" and "Jatin Das-ki-Jai." With great difficulty, the coffin was brought down to the platform. Mr. Sen Gupta requested the gathering to make a passage for the body and after an hour's hard struggle, the body was then taken out of the compartment.

A procession was then formed and the coffin was brought out of the station, shouldered by the students of Bungabasi College and headed by the Bengal Volunteer Guards playing the Dead March all the time. The following, among others, laid wreaths on the coffin:—The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee; Bangabasi College; Diaua Club; Howrah Sabadaha Samithi, Burra Bazaar Congress Committee; North Calcutta Congress Committee; South Calcutta Congress Committee; All Bengal Students' Association; All-Bengal Youth Association; Independence League of India, and the Yuga Sabha Samithy. After the offering of wreaths and flowers, the procession, with the coffin, proceeded towards the Howrah Town Hall *via* Buckland Bridge.

Exactly at 10 o'clock, the body escorted by the Bengal Volunteers' Guards arrived at the Howrah Town Hall and was received at the gate by Mr. Pyne, Chairman and other Commissioners of the Howrah Municipality with solemn silence. The body was led upstairs to a hall where the coffin was kept on a raised platform covered with flowers. With the shady-coloured blue electric bulbs flashing their sombre light, and dimly lighting the place, the illuminated outside surroundings presented a place of pilgrimage and leaders, including Basanti Devi and others, offered homage in solemn silence. The Bengal Volunteers kept all night vigil watching the body.

As the day dawned, the citizens of Calcutta, young and old, began to assemble in the Howrah Town Hall where

the dead body of the *Bengali* Martyr "lay-in-state." Arrangements for a military funeral procession were quickly made in a manner quite befitting the unequalled sacrifice of the *Bengali* hero, Jatin Das. The students, from all the Calcutta Colleges and Schools were pouring in their thousands with tremendous shouts of "Down with Imperialism," "Long Live Revolution" and "Bande Mataram." Respectable ladies from all parts of Calcutta, on behalf of the women-folk of Bengal, deeply moved at the Nation's bereavement, proceeded to the spot where the bier lay, showered rose water, and laid wreaths and flowers. It was indeed a most touching scene. Some ladies, who had gathered there, burst out weeping and after paying their last respects, left the place with sobbing hearts and gloomy faces.

Exactly at quarter-past seven, the mortal remains of the *Bengali* hero were lifted by a number of Volunteers and students amidst deafening shouts of "Bande Mataram"... "Bir Jatindranath-ki-Jai" and "*Mirtyan Jayee-Bangler Bir Amar Hok*," which means: May the hero of Bengal, who has conquered Death remain in our midst for ever." All the Bengal Nationalist leaders were present there to organise the procession; and Mr. J.M. Sen Gupta, the Lord Mayor of Calcutta was at the helm.

The arrangements and the order of the procession left nothing to be desired. Everything was excellently planned out as befitting the Martyr. At the front of the procession, there was a band of students who carried a number of posters and floral festoons. This was followed by another group of students, who were carrying photos of the Martyr. The next batch was the batch of the uniformed Volunteers and Boys Scouts. Next came the Motor lorries carrying ice-water and *Sherbat* for free distribution amongst the tired and thirsty processionists. This was followed by a party

of Cavalry and a party of Infantry. The Cavalry men were riding on horses and were proceeding with strict discipline followed by a band of Infantry. The next scene was more imposing due to the demonstration by students assembled under the All Bengal Students' Association. They were shouting all the while their slogans and renting the air with cries of "Jatin Das-ki-Jai." Some students were distributing the hero's photographs freely. At a small distance followed a batch of lady Volunteers. Then came the bier containing the mortal remains of Jatin Das carried in a coffin and profusely decorated with flowers and wreaths conveyed by Volunteers and Students. The Martyr's brother, Kiran Chandra Das was closely following the bier. Behind him followed the mourners.

As the procession came near the Howrah bridge, there was great enthusiasm among the dandies and gangs-men assembled there. All the boats stopped and were brought very near the banks of the river. All traffic was suspended in the area for the time being. The police, it must be recorded to their credit, adopted a policy of absolute non-interference and were helping the Volunteers to regulate traffic. The Volunteers too thanked the police for their help and co-operation. Some police Commissioners and Superintendents, who were stationed there on special duty, greatly appreciated the splendid work done by the Volunteers and certified that the crowd was *orderly*!

Long before the arrival of this mammoth procession, another huge procession numbering about a lakh and fifty-thousand, was waiting at the crossing of Harrison Road and Strand Road. When this procession joined with the main procession, it became so big that it extended up to the crossing of Chitpore Road and Harrison Road. The height of enthusiasm was reached at Burra Bazaar, when

the procession passed along Harrison Road. House-tops, balconies, lofty storeys were all filled with eager spectators, while women blew conch-shells and showered rice and flowers on the bier. Several placards bearing the mottoes "You are the modern Dadhichi of Bengal"—"Jatin, the Martyr"—and "Long live Jatin's Sacred Memory," were hung on doors and trees.

Miss Subadhra Devi, along with about 200 up-country ladies, waited at the gate of *Viswamithra* office and laid flowers and fried rice on the bier. The procession halted for sometime and the ladies sang, offering prayers for the departed soul of the Martyr.

Ladies, numbering about a thousand, squatted on the stair-case of the Calcutta University with flowers and garlands. As the bier reached that place, the ladies in several rows came near the bier and offered wreaths and flowers on it, and some of them bowed before the mortal remains of the great Jatin Das for his supreme sacrifice, which he made for the salvation of his country. A very pathetic scene was witnessed near the Medical College, when an old lady who was all the while waiting patiently to have a glimpse at the bier approached the bier and laid the wreaths on it and burst into tears.

The processionists then marched onward towards the Wellington Street with the bier amidst tremendous shouts from all sides and when it reached the house of Mr. Nirmal Chandrachunder, the sight-seers showered flowers on the coffin with great solemnity. The procession reached the Corporation Buildings at 10-30 A. M., where the Corporation officials laid wreaths on the bier. And when the procession was nearing Bhowringhee, many Europeans took off their hats as a mark of respect to the deceased. The procession next entered Bhawanipore, the birth-place:

of Jatin Das. All the shops in Bhawanipore were kept closed as a mark of respect to the memory of the Martyr.

After six hours' march through the principal streets of Calcutta, the procession, with the mortal remains of Jatin, reached the cremation ghat. Every body was trying to rush forward to have a last *darsan* of the remains of the beloved hero. As the entire crowd could not enter the cremation ground, only the mourners and pall-bearers were allowed inside the ghat. The dead body, with due respects, was placed on the ghat marked for the purpose. The members of the Bengal Volunteers, under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose, gave their last salute to the departed patriot. The whole crowd remained silent for a while. All bowed down their heads before the bier. The body was then uncovered and placed on the pyre and after the usual ceremonies, Kiran Das, the only brother of Jatin Das, set fire to the pyre. In a short time, the fire blazed high and the mortal remains of the great Martyr were reduced to ashes in a few seconds. The cremation over, the Bengal Volunteers gave their final salute in memory of the departed hero and withdrew. There was a regular scramble for the ashes that were left after the cremation. According to the last wish of Jatin, his remains were cremated by the side of his mother and sister. Even in spite of bad health, Bepin Chandra Pal attended the funeral and paid his last respects to the Martyr.

Jatin's father, Bankim Behari Das, when interviewed, expressed himself thus:—

“ I am proud of my son and consider myself the most fortunate father to-day. I am hoping that this striking self-sacrifice, on the part of my son, will usher in the millenium that he had been

striving for. It is in that belief and with that consolation, that I am bearing my great loss."

Asked why he refused to perform the funeral rites of his son, Bankim Babu said:—

"I don't want to see Jatindra's face which; I am told, has been somewhat disfigured. I should like to remember, for the few days that is left to me, the smiling face with which he left me at the time of going to Lahore. I have, therefore, decided not to be present at the Kerotala cremation Ghat when the coffin will be opened and Jatin's body will be exposed to public gaze. I shall, however, join the funeral party when his mortal remains are consumed and then perform the necessary rites and rituals."

As soon as Jatin's father and brother left the cremation ground, Prof. Nitendra Chandra Banerjee delivered his funeral oration:— "May I address a few words to you," began Prof. Banerjee, "as a teacher of Jatin Das. The mortal remains of Jatin Das are no more; in a few hours, the procession of millions have culminated in this. Let the memory of this solemn and fatal incident reside in your hearts always. It is no use fighting for his ashes, what is valuable is his soul. His soul has shed lustre to India, nay, the whole world, by this act of unequalled self-immolation of this modern Dadhichi. His has been a death worthy of our land and her cultural distinctiveness. That culture and its background are to-day being disregarded by the foreign bureaucracy; but I say, that I accept defeat, at the hands of my pupil in his heroic challenge to this state of affairs. I request you to think over how far the Govt. is responsible for this death and let this discussion be carried from every citizen's house to the Military barracks."

“He was a Revolutionary and he told me that he was ready to die even four years ago.”

“Friends, and my pupils, who are taking his ashes, I say, take up that *tilak* of his ashes as the symbol of your acceptance of his largeness of heart, his *sadhana*, and Dadhichi-like self-immolation and thousands of Jatins will rise from amongst you. Thus take the vow to prepare yourself for avenging his death. Take that mark of ashes on your forehead; and, boys, put it on mine. Let that usher in a truer patriotism, a newer concept of Swaraj. “Long live the Revolution—Long live Jatin Das.”—“Bande-mataram.”

It is all now over with Jatin Das. His has been the greatest National tragedy. Humanity has a curious way of handling its heroes. When they are alive, they are unknown, unhonoured and when Death lays its icy hands on them, *then* it stoops to wail and mourn over the dead. As Prof. Banerjee has rightly remarked, Jatin Das is the modern Dadhichi, who has preferred death to a life of shame. Youths! Lest we forget!

If there were but a just Government, an honest Legislature and a good social system in this country, what wonders might not be wrought with youths (like Jatin Das) in whose minds were already existing the germs of every generous feeling and every moral excellence and courageous worth! And—Oh! that there shall yet come an HOUR and arise a MAN, to give freedom to these enslaved youths of India and evoke all the grand and noble qualities, which now lie buried beneath the weight of bondage, tyranny and oppression.





## CHAPTER VI

### A NATION IN MOURNING

*I vow to thee my country' all earthly things above  
Entire, whole and perfect, the service of my love  
The love that asks no question, the love that stands  
the test  
That lays upon the altar, the dearest and the best  
The Love that never falters, the love that pays the price  
The Love that makes undaunted, the final sacrifice !*

ANON.

“TO-day unknown Jatin Das has become a great hero for all Bengalees, for all Indians to worship, and the cause for which he gave his young life gallantly in a last full measure of sacrifice is certainly going to triumph, although for the present, the Government think, and think wrongly, that they had won. The same thing happened with regard to Mac Swiney and it will be the same with regard to Jatin Das—the Indian Martyr”.

In these pregnant words, the sentiment was expressed by the Lord Mayor of Calcutta, Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta in the Corporation meeting in expressing the Nation's great sorrow at the untimely and heroic death of Jatin Das, the great. As a mark of respect to his memory, the Corporation meeting of the day was adjourned till next week.

The news of the sudden demise of Jatin Das reached the Councillors before they assembled for the meeting. At the commencement of the proceedings, the Lord Mayor said :—

“Aldermen and Councillors! It is with great sorrow that I have to announce that Mr. Jatin Das, who was until about two months ago an unknown citizen of Calcutta,

has passed away. He was arrested in Calcutta a little over two months ago, and taken away to the Punjab on a charge which was in all consequence, a very serious one.

“ Now that he had gone, it is possible for me and those who had known him well to say, that he was perfectly innocent of the charges that were brought against him by the Government.

“ But whatever opinions the people of India might have formed with regard to the charges brought against him, there cannot be but one opinion amongst all Indians and particularly of the people of Bengal, that Jatin Das, the young and hitherto unknown hero, was fighting for a cause, which had nothing to do with the offences with which he was charged. He fought for a principle. He was fighting for the better treatment of political prisoners—a cause, for which in other parts of the world, the people in the past have fought and given their lives. In all civilized countries, we know the political prisoners, actuated by political motives do take upon themselves the right to vindicate their position even when they are imprisoned by the Government against which they act. This young man had given us cause for anxiety for the last two months. We in Bengal had been waiting with abated breath, for quite a long time as to whether or not Government would give in on this important question, or whether Jatindranath in his great faith in the cause for which he was fighting would pass away to the other world.

“ It may be contended,” proceeded the Lord Mayor, “ that the Government has won, because they have not given, in while Jatin Das has passed away to the other world. He was a young man of Calcutta and his activities were confined to Calcutta alone. He was absolutely unknown to most of us; but to-day, his fame, his great sacrifice

would not only be known all over Bengal and India, but all over the world. And it would be well, if young men of our country would follow in his foot-steps and show to the world, as other great men have shown in the past, that however such Government of the country might imprison our body, our soul is beyond the control of the foreign Government."

This said, the Lord Mayor proposed "that this Corporation does express its great sorrow at the untimely death of the great hero, Jatin Das and further, that they send their sincere condolence, to the members of his family and that the meeting do adjourn till Wednesday."

The condolence motion was adopted, the whole house standing in perfect silence. The European members were conspicuous by their absence. Well, what would have they done, if an English youth had similarly, and under the same circumstances starved himself to death? The inference is obvious.

"A man who resorts to hunger-strike," said Mr. M. A. Jinnah for his part in the Legislative Assembly "is moved by his soul." "Thus moved" by his soul" wrote the *Tribune*, "Jatin Das struggled on and at last laid down his life after he had been on hunger-strike for 63 days."

Jatin Das became the hero of the nation, in whose honour, the leader of the opposition, Pandit Motilal Nehru passed a censure motion against the Government. By 55 votes against 47, the Assembly carried Pandit Motilal Nehru's motion for adjournment of the House to censure the Government's policy regarding the treatment of political prisoners and under-trials in the Lahore Conspiracy case, which resulted in the death of Jatin Das. Only four elected Moslem members opposed the motion. In bringing the motion, Pandit Motilal Nehru accused the Government of inhuman barbarity and said that it reminded them of the case of Nero, who fiddled while Rome was burning. The Government had issued communiques and circulars while high-souled men were lingering between life and death. On the other hand, the Irish Government were prepared

to save the lives of the accused even by letting the convicts go.

“While the Government is thus dilly-dallying and shilly-shallying, one life is already lost and the others are on the verge of death. Is not this a case for severe censure of the Government”. (Applause)

Sir James Crerar, replying, on behalf of the Government, said:—“Whatever might be the circumstances which resulted in his death, the Government sincerely deplore it. I hope, honourable members would accept the assurance from me that, whatever be your criticisms, you would acknowledge my honesty and candour. Whatever the merits of the case, Jatin Das is now removed from an Earthly tribunal.” (Applause).

Proceeding, Sir James Crerar denied that the Government had showed disregard to the human aspect of the case. He knew personally that the Punjab Government and its officers watched the progress of the accused, with the deepest concern. Non-official visitors to the jail, who were allowed free access, paid the highest compliment to the sympathy and consideration with which Medical and other officers of the Jail discharged their duties. He did not know what the specific charge of Pandit Nehru was.

*Pandit Motilal Nehru*:—The Government's plain duty was to meet all the demands.

*Sir James Crerar*:—I have already shown Government's position in the matter. The Government's policy and conduct has been fully explained in a recent communique, a close examination of which would convince the honourable members that there was no supineness or negligence on the part of the Government of India or the Punjab Government to take action. A demand had been made that an under-trial prisoner charged with a grave offence, should be discharged or prosecution against him be withdrawn. The Punjab Government went as far as possible having regard to their responsibility in making it known that they would not oppose any application for bail.

“ The next accusation against the Government, was that under-trial prisoners had been segregated from convict-prisoners. It is a well established principle in jail administration and a salutary principle, that under-trial prisoners should be separated from convict prisoners. If the accused stood on principle, the Government also were standing on principle, namely, that of vindicating the authority of law so that every man should have protection and remedy from law, to which he was entitled and, further, there was no obligation resting upon every one of the accused of infringing the law, that he must answer for it effectively. This was the principle followed in the whole history of the case, and which any Government either this, or a Swarajist Government, must and should be obliged to adopt.

Conscience makes us cowards of us all and Sir James Crerar, this twentieth century Sir Galahad's *own* conscience seemed to have served him ill in this particular instance: in this unchivalrous act of defending an irresponsible Government, which stands convicted and guilty of the high treason of having killed a young man. The Government's apologia has, indeed, something mystical and interminable about it. After listening to these words, who can deny that there is a faith that moves the very mountains.

Then followed a chorus of condemnation and condolence messages from all parts of the world. MARY MAC-SWINEY from Ireland sent the following cable-gram to the Lord Mayor of Calcutta, Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta touching the death of Jatin Das :—

*“ Family Terrance Mac Swiney unites patriotic India in grief and pride on death of Jatin Das. Freedom will come.*

The Lord Mayor of Calcutta replied thus :—

*“ India feels grateful for your message. Terrance Mac Swiney showed the way Ireland Freedom. Jatin Das has followed him! ”*

The Lord Mayor J. M. Sen Gupta received, among others, the following cablegram from O'KELLY, Irish Republic, Dublin.

*"May the Martyrdom of Jatin Das bring India the Liberty he sought."*

Ireland's solidarity with and deep sympathy for India was marked out by messages received by the relatives of Jatin Das from Anti-Imperialist Associations, The Republican Army, the Women Prisoners' Defence League and from the Students' League, Ireland. That was not all.

EAMON DE VALERA, the Champion of Irish freedom had the following cable-gram sent to the Lord Mayor :—

*"Jatin Das has not died in vain. He is the Indian Mac Swiney. Freedom is certain"*.

### Conclusion

Once upon a time a donkey kicked a lion. The lion was dead. That is the only conclusion.

Quite recently, 'a high European Official is reported to have said that the Government could crush a thousand Baghat Singhs, but they did not know what to do with Jatin Das. Howsoever disputable may be the fact, it cannot be denied and there can be no two opinions but that, Jatin Das has earned his well-deserved Martyrdom by laying his life at the altar of Liberty.

LIBERTY: Yes, the Liberty for which Jatin Das, the Martyr has lived and died. It is the fiat of eternal justice that rules the world. It stands forth in every page of History. It is not for an abstraction that men have toiled and died; that in every page the witnesses of Liberty have stood forth and the Martyrs of Liberty have suffered and died bleeding. Some of us speak of Liberty in a manner that staggers humanity: in a manner that makes the dead rise up from their graves and stare into our faces. Liberty is the source, the mother, the necessary condition. She is to virtue what light is to colour; to wealth what sunshine is to grain; to knowledge what eyes are to sight. She is the

genius of invention, the brawn of national strength, the spirit of National Independence! Where Liberty rises, there virtue grows, wealth increases, knowledge expands, invention multiplies and tyranny dies a hard death. Who is Liberty, that we should sacrifice for her such noble youths as Jatin Das and Bhagat Singh? Who is this Liberty? Is she peace? Is she prosperity? Is she bread? No; that is not Liberty—that is not Liberty at all. Saints have seen her only in their visions; seers have witnessed her only in their trances. Even the Mahatma, who shuns youths and their actions, even he has seen only her shadow. But to heroes like Jatin Das, to this gallant young Bengali, she has spoken; for he immolated himself for that very cause—to Martyrs the flames are cool.

It is really astonishing why Mr. Gandhi had not expressed his opinion on the Martyrdom of Jatin Das. Probably, this idle dreamer and visionary, perhaps I might call him the enemy of the youth, does not believe in that type of bringing pressure on the Government. What has this saint of Sabarmathi done to better the lot of the unfortunate political prisoners? What has he done, one is almost tempted to ask, to save the victims of the rack? It matters very little to him so long as such treatment is not meted out to him and so long as he could get a palatial building, with a Secretary, with goats, with ground-nuts and other necessities of life for himself during his internment. It is all O. K. if Mr. Gandhi, who has gone to the extent of condemning Bhagat Singh and his cult and preaching a sermon on the dangers of terrorism, could make himself comfortable in prison and lead a princely life, but he would never raise his finger, nor move his pen to allviate the sufferings of the unfortunate political prisoners. It may be, that he hates the youth of this country to the core; but it will not take long for the militant youth, to get the better of him, throw him overboard, and enunciate the mathematical doctrine, that the Mahatma *minus* his spirituality is ZERO. Surely, it will not take long for the youth to revolt against him, if not the Government, and point out to the world that he is a mere child in politics, that his politics are without principles, that his political doctrines are centuries

old, and that he should clear out of the field of practical politics and leave the path safe for the youths.

Curiously enough, the youth of this country are achieving what the elders, and what Mr. Gandhi himself has failed to accomplish. What man, what politician, what lawyer, what Congressman in India, raised his voice for the rights of the under-trials? What champion took the side of the oppressed? Who refused to come out of the prison bars on a conditional bail? What man fasted for 63 days in prison? What man pitied the victims of the rack? Is there a grave in India, a tomb on this side of the grave, on which a lover of Liberty would now drop a flower or a tear? Is there a tomb holding the ashes of a hero from which emerges one ray of light? None—reader—none—save that of JATIN DAS!

There is this beautiful peculiarity in human Nature. It has been the practice of those who are desirous to believe themselves made venerable by length of time to censure and discourage the youth, when in politics. Mr. Gandhi once gave out that he would starve himself to death, if the youth created factions and opposed his shameless resolution ratifying the Irwin-Gandhi Pact. How ridiculous and ludicrous! While Jatin Das starved himself to death for a cause, for a principle, Mr. Gandhi wanted to starve himself to death to gain his object and to make his voice and reason prevail. Jatin Das, when the Government showed its reluctance to meet with his demands, did *not* hold out a threat that he would starve himself to death. No—he didn't. He quietly submitted to Fate and accomplished his desire in a calm spirit of resignation. With a zeal amounting to enthusiasm, with a courage that was heroic, with an energy that never flagged, a determination that



brooked no opposition, and with a firmness that defied torture and death, he welcomed his end.

JATIN Das!—a name that excites the curiosity and admiration of men, the youth and the old alike and the malignity of the Police. Pronounce that sacred name (pronounce the name “Jatin Das”) in the presence of a Government Official, and you will find that you have made a declaration of war. The reasons are not far to seek. The obvious truth is that Jatin Das was a soldier of Freedom and an apostle of Liberty. Death which had sucked the honey of his breath, hath had no power upon his sacrifice.

Gentle reader, every cradle asks us : whence ? ; and every coffin : “whither ?” The only answer is “to the grave”—“to the grave”. Some may think, that Jatin Das is dead ; that he is dead and gone. No Jatin Das has *not* passed on life’s high-way, the stone that marks the highest point. But being weary for a moment, tired of his activities which were full of suffering and sacrifice, he lay down by the way-side : he lay down within the walls of the Lahors Central Jail, and using his burden for his pillow fell into that dreamless sleep that kisses down his eye-lids still. While yet in love with humanity and raptured with the world, he passed into silence and pathetic dust. Life is a narrow vale, between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain, like Jatin Ds, to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and, the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead, there comes no word, because the dead don’t speak—but in the night of death, hope sees a star, and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing !

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