

Lord Dalhousie's vision

by Barkat M. Khokhar

Exciting, enchanting and exhilarating is the view of the mighty Himalayas from Dalhousie hill station, named after Lord Dalhousie who founded Dalhousie University in Halifax. Thousands of tourists enjoy the breath-taking beauty of Dalhousie. The Roman Catholic Church runs a fine school for girls belonging to rich families.

Dalhousie, 400 miles from New Delhi, was primarily designed and developed as an exclusive hill cantonment for the British troops in India. During wartime, I attended a course in Air Photography Interpretation there. Four beautiful churches stand like sentinels who saw the passing glory of the British Raj. Indians have not changed the name of Dalhousie but have kept the memory of Lord Dalhousie alive without any resentment.

Far in the distance, fertile valleys twist, and above them tower the highest peaks of the world's highest ranges. Through thick pine forests and along the shoulders of the eternally snow-clad hills, narrow ridges lead to Dharmasala (8000 ft.) where Lord Elgin, a most Christianised administrator in India and a former Governor General of Canada (d.1863), is buried in the compound of St. John, the Wilderness. Exactly opposite this beautiful Anglican Church, lives Dalai Lama, the spiritual ruler of the exiled Tibetans.

At this time of the year Dalhousie (6000 ft.) wears a thick blanket of snow like Canada. Many Nova Scotians may wonder that Dalhousie and the surrounding valleys of Chamba and Pongi, produce more apples, apricots, walnuts and almonds than Annapolis Valley. Lord Dalhousie (1848-56) fell in love with the scenic beauty of Khajjar Lake, near Dalhousie where the maddening glory of the Easter lilies runs rampant amidst the riot of other colorful blossoms.

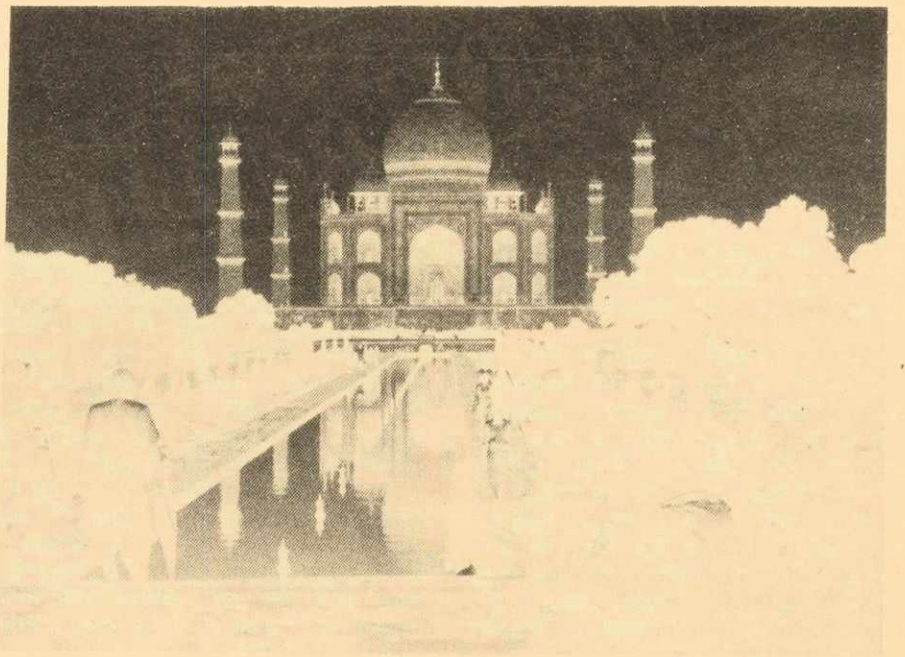
How many women in Canada know what Lord Dalhousie did for the emancipation of Indian women?

Canadians who attended the dance and music concert of the Indo-Canadian Association at Queen Elizabeth High School at Halifax on January 30, would agree with me that it was really the Indian women who made the show. The impact of Lord Dalhousie's social reforms introduced in the middle of the last century, was, clearly visible in the magnificent show put on by Indian women. She was no more an 'unliberated and submissive' female. She manifested her qualities of self-assertion and independence through dance and music.

A recent study carried out in the IWY, reveals that behind that hard and proud head of the great imperial Pro-Consul, there was a compassionate and humble heart that drew its main inspiration and strength from the Gospel. It was supplemented by the study of the Benthamite School of Macaulay and Mill's classic history.

Lord Dalhousie concentrated on a social policy aimed at the amelioration of the conditions of women in India. What we see today blossoming in the person of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu (poetess and governor), Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur (cabinet minister in Nehru's time) and hosts of others, is due to the seed sown by men like Lord Dalhousie and other British administrators and missionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries.

So profound has been the impact of the West and Christianity on Indian civilization that India is the only country in the modern world that can boast of having a woman as a chief executive for the last ten years. We know how far behind are Canadian women from Indian women in this matter. Recently Flora MacDonald, the only women candidate, was rudely rebuked by the



delegates at the Progressive Conservative Convention at Ottawa.

Being a utilitarian, he implemented reforms with sincere missionary zeal. Some have called him missionary-administrator of par excellence. The most outstanding package of Dalhousie's reforming zeal was the 'emancipation of women'. It was a package of composite measures - abolition of female feticide in Punjab and Kashmir and the sati (the burning of the widow), prohibiting the custom of polygamy particularly among the Kulin Brahmins (Hindu priests), lending support to widow re-marriage, raising the Age of Consent for unmarried girls to 10, and lastly his personal interest in the education of women.

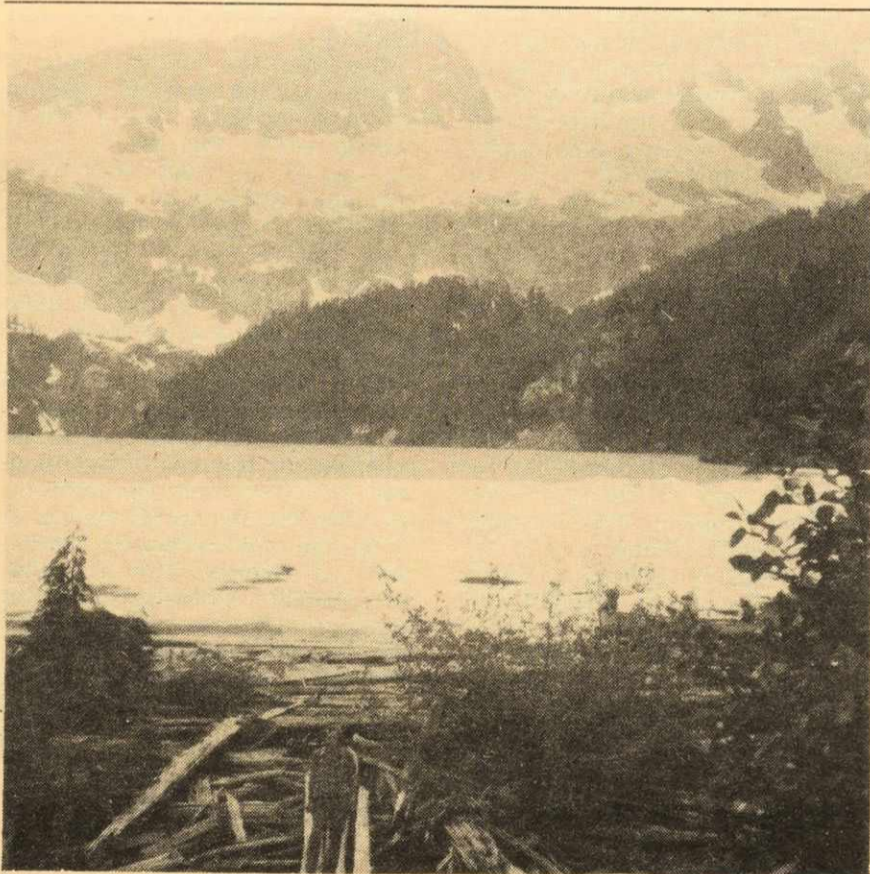
Away back in 1923, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) alone ran twenty-three girl's schools in and around Calcutta. All these schools were due to the enterprise of Mrs. Wilson (Miss Cooke), the wife of an Anglican missionary.

When Drinkwater Bethune's school in Calcutta for the daughters of Indians of wealth and rank was in danger of collapse in 1851 at his death, it was saved by Lord Dalhousie who financed it out of his own pocket till 1856, after which it was taken over by the government. This was the first institution for

higher education of women in India. Thus Lord Dalhousie left a permanent mark in the hearts of Indian women; and one of them today leads India, a nation of 600-millions.

We often hear and laud the missionary work done in India, in the field of education, medicine and social reforms but tend to ignore or play down the part played by many British administrators who were Christian at heart like General Gordon of Khartoum who resigned his lucrative job as secretary to Viceroy of Indian on a Christian principle and went to China. Canada and India has a common heritage. Canada was a training ground for British administrators before they were given higher assignment in India. Lord Dalhousie is one of them who made valuable contribution in Canada and India. Indian women owe a deep debt of gratitude to him who displayed the compassion of the Rabbi of Nazareth in his onerous daily tasks.

One of the chief characteristics of Dalhousie was that he valued time and spent every moment in the service of others. Dalhousie was Indian women's chief spokesman in the last century. Contemporaries noted that he 'wrote 60 minutes of the hour' and that his day was 'worth six of any other man'.



Lake Lovely water in the Tantalus mountain range on the B.C. coast in the summertime. Note the ice still on the water.

The Dalhousie International is produced jointly by the Dalhousie Gazette and the International Students Association. Published monthly during the school year it is designed to be a forum on international issues. Contributions from all sources are welcomed.

This is the final issue of this school year and the third attempt at the International. We feel that the International has become an important part of Dalhousie and fulfills a valuable function in creating a medium where people can discuss issues of a nature which heretofore have been relegated to a peripheral role at this university; we cannot afford to remain isolated from the world around us.

We thank the contributors and hope more will write for the International next year and add their unique perspective to our view of the planet Earth.

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