

# WHY INDIA IS HEART AND SOUL WITH GREAT BRITAIN

Ex-member of the Imperial Legislative Council in India, and President,  
Indian National Congress, 1914, Madras.

By BHUPENDRANATH BASU

**W**HY is India heart and soul with Great Britain in the present crisis? The answer is quite plain to the Indian, but probably it will not be so plain to the Englishman who has never been in India, or having been has not come in touch with the heart and soul of India. Alas! all Englishmen, even in India, do not try to do so.

If India was conquered territory in the sense that is usually understood, or if the Indians held the position of a subject nation, the response given by India in the hour of the Empire's need would have been a matter for wonder indeed; but India is not a conquered country, nor are her people a subject population.

## British Rule in India.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the central Moghul authority at Delhi had fallen into complete and irretrievable decay. The Mahratta power which had arisen on its ruins received a stunning blow in the third battle of Panipat. India was divided into a number of small States, held apart by mutual suspicion and jealousy, and not seldom warring against each other. The country had become a prey to anarchy and confusion.

In this state of things, the help of the French or the English trading companies was sought by rival States or harrassed populations. The battle of Plassey, which laid the foundations of British rule in India and gave to the East India Company the revenue administration of Bengal, was undertaken as much on the invitation of the Indian people as of the threatened English settlement at Murshidabad, and fought practically with Indian soldiers.

In the wars that followed, the Government of Great Britain did not sup-

ply a single soldier or spend a single rupee. It was solely with India's money, and mostly with Indian blood, that the British Empire in India was built up and consolidated, and when the Mutiny came in 1857, and British rule in India was nearly shattered, it was again with the help of the Indian princes and people that it was re-established.

Professor Seeley has justly observed that "the expression 'conquest' as applied to the acquisition of sovereignty by the East India Company in India is not merely loose but thoroughly misleading." India has never felt that she was a conquered country, and the Indians do not feel that they are a conquered people.

## India's Magna Charta.

But it is not a question of historical deduction or personal feeling. The Charter Act of 1833, one of the early parliamentary statutes dealing with the government of India, "definitely and finally recognized the equality of status, of rights, and of duties of the Indian subjects of his Majesty with the British subjects." But this is not all.

The people of India justly attach very great importance to the Proclamation issued in 1858 by Queen Victoria to the princes, chiefs, and people of India on the occasion of the transfer of the government of India from the East India Company to the British Crown. India was just then emerging from a bloody and terrible struggle. Great as was the occasion, marking a new and important epoch in the history of India, it was rendered doubly memorable by the great Proclamation of Queen Victoria, which has been truly called the Magna Charta of the Indian people.