

Govind Ballabh Pant



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An Illustrious Life

The Backdrop

All of you know that the Himalayan mountains extend from Jammu and Kashmir in the northwest to Arunachal Pradesh in the northeast of India. From time immemorial these majestic mountains have stood in silent grandeur guarding the northern frontiers of India. If you look at the map of India you will notice that these mountains stretch from northwest to northeast forming a semicircle. That is why an imaginative poet has described the Himalayas as a beautiful crown worn by Mother India.

'Himalaya' literally means the abode of snow; but many legends are current in Indian mythology about the sacredness and greatness of these mountains.

The sacred Ganga originates in this abode of snow and a number of holy shrines and temples have sprung up on its route since remote antiquity. Surely you have heard of Gangotri and Badrinath temples situated in the mid-Himalayan ranges in Uttar Pradesh.

People from distant corners of India from Kanyakumari to Gujarat, from Orissa to Maharashtra and from Bengal to Jammu and Kashmir, visit these temples and places of pilgrimage.

The Home State

The State which is now called Uttar Pradesh is geographically the heart of India. It is one of the ingredient states of the Indian Republic and has always occupied an important place in the history of the country. It has been the cradle of religious, cultural, historical and political movements and represents the best synthesis of Hindu and Muslim cultures. Its language today is the language of the Republic. The two provinces of Agra and Oudh were combined in 1877 and twenty-five years later the combined area became known as the United Provinces.

To the north are lofty Himalayas covered with eternal snow. Their loftiest peaks can be seen from a great distance; Mt. Everest 29,002 ft, Nanga Parvat 26,000 ft, Nanda Devi 25,000 and Dhaulagiri 26,000 ft. They abound in magnificent sceneries and one is simply charmed by the picturesque beauty. One great English civilian who was employed in Kumaon for ten years in earlier part of his life and spent many summers in the higher regions of the Himalays wrote:

“I have seen much of European mountains, but in stupendous sublimity, combined with magnificent and luxuriant beauty, I have seen nothing that can be compared with the Himalays.”

The Kumaon Division which is situated in the north in the Himalayan tract included three districts of Almora, Nainital and Garhwal with an area of more than 12,000 square miles. Its whole surface is covered by mountains, which rise with strange suddenness. In one of its valleys lies the most beautiful lake of India around which the Queen of hill stations, the city of Nainital, is situated.

In the opening years of the 19th century the British Government gained the most valuable portion comprising the present Kumaon Division under its control by the treaty of Sigauli which closed the Nepal War in 1815.

In early times Kumaon was divided into small principalities. The first dynasty to achieve consolidated dominion over Kumaon was the Chand dynasty. The traditional founder of this dominion

was Som Chand of Jhunsi, on the Ganges near Allahabad, who in about the 7th century married the daughter of Katyuri Raja, then holding sway in the interior of Kumaon. Champawat in Almora district and the land in the Tarai and Bhabar in Nairn Tal district were given as the lady's dowry. Champawat was thus the nucleus from which the Chand Dominion expanded over the whole of Kumaon.

Pants originally belong to Maharashtra and they were Brahmins of high class. The ancestors of Pandit Pant— Jai Dev Pant of Bhardwaj Gitra, during the reign of Chand Kings in the 10th century, came to north for a pilgrimage to Badrinath. He was accompanied by his sister's husband, Dinker Rao Pant and one Surya Dixit. They visited the holy places, and were so much attracted by the beautiful sights, bracing climate and the pretty panorama of the snow clad mountains that they abandoned the idea of returning.

They visited the court of the then ruler of Gangoli, who honoured them and asked them to stay in his court. They thus settled there, and since then twenty five generations have passed. Pants are now classed in four sects after the names of four brothers who received recognition in the courts of Kumaon rulers. The descendants of the just three Pant families are strictly vegetarians. Pants though do not eat meat, but intermarry with Tiwaris, Joshis, Pandeys and Bhattas. Their women irrespective of their gotra do not eat meat. Their daughters may, if they like, eat meat after their marriages in the families of their husbands. Pants produced many notable scholars, poets and physicians.

In the year 1887 in the wings of the snow covered mountains of the Himalays in the Almora district on September 10, Anant Chaudas, in a small village in a far remote northern corner— called by the name Khoot in the valley of Shayahidevi Hill in humble surroundings saw the birth of this dynamic personality who was to rule the hearts of millions and was to play such a great part in the history of his country.

The year 1887 marked the beginning of an epoch in the history of modern India. The whole world stood at the verge of a new era. It was the year of the first Jubilee of Queen Victoria's rule.

It saw the rise of new nationalism in India and new Trade Unionism in England. The Indian National Congress was only a baby of two years. Gandhiji had passed his Matriculation Examination. Gladstone, Cobden and Bright were breathing a new spirit of liberalism in British politics. The thinkers like Mill, Spencer and Carlyle were revolutionising society with new theories of social reconstruction. In this year two great institutions were established which had profound association with the future life of Pandit Pant; first the foundation of the Allahabad University from which he graduated and other the establishment of the U.P. Legislative Council. The latter was the scene of his laurels, of which he was the leader for more than 35 years, first in opposition and afterwards on the Treasury benches. It was the arena of his joys, of his triumphs, of his great speeches in memorable debates.

Conditions around Birth

At the dawn of the 20th century, India was struggling with new ideas, new hopes, new aspirations and new ambitions. This was the period of national Renaissance. Lord Curzon was then the Governor-General. He was a great reformer. He was also a great imperialist. In his time he had launched the biggest reforms of the century. He laid the foundation of the nation building departments for improving the lot of the toiling masses and increasing the material prosperity of the country. He arrived in India with a programme of twelve reforms.

In his first budget speech in 1899 he made a mention of twelve subjects of his original programme which he doubled afterwards. All our reforms originated in his days and they are imperishable monument of his genius, ability and imagination. For generations land revenue policy was the subject of bitter controversy. The Government was charged with taking an undue share of the produce of the soil. R. C. Putt, whose works: "The Economic History of India" under early British rule and Victorian age- had stirred the young minds, wrote a series of open letters. Lord Curzon enunciated the Government's policy in his famous resolution of 1902. He appointed various committees and commissions for improvement in agriculture, cooperation, irrigation and university education. He realised the extent of the

evil of the agriculturists indebtedness, which he had characterised as "a canker eating into the vitals of the national life." To give them relief he enacted legislation and started cooperative credit societies and also created agricultural banks. He established an Imperial Agriculture Department. He founded the Agriculture Institute at Pusa for agricultural education and research. He secured a donation of £40,000 from a generous American friend.

Legislation was enacted to facilitate the reconstruction of the universities. Police was overhauled. Commerce and Industry Departments were created. India was flooded by bounty fed beet sugar from the continent while its great sugar cane languished.

Much was done in his time. "No Viceroy has ever played a part larger than the part played by Lord Curzon" wrote Lovett in his *History of Indian Nationalist Movement*. It was an irony of history that a man of such tremendous intellect, great energy and profound vision should be a tragic figure in history. The partition of Bengal so much agitated the minds of the people and gave a great flip to Indian Nationalism. He did not follow the advice which he gave. "The first temptation that you should avoid," he told the graduates of the University of Calcutta in February, 1902, "is that of letting words be your masters instead of being masters of your words." But the knowledge of the existence of a particular pitfall is not always sufficient to prevent a man from stumbling into it. He himself fell down when he attacked the ethics of the East and wounded the feelings of the people by his uncalled for sweeping indictment.

The chief danger of which Curzon warned his young audience was a temptation to minimise the importance of adhering rigidly, in all the varied circumstances of life, to truth. There were many guises in which this particular temptation presented itself. Flattery was one, vituperation was another. Flattery was only too often a deliberate attempt to deceive—to get something out of some one else by playing upon the commonest foible of human nature. But it seemed to him that in India the danger of the opposite extreme was greater still. He exhorted. "Let those who were now going further from the portals of the university be on their guard against these dangers. Do not exaggerate; do not flatter; do not slander; do not impute; but turn naturally to truth as the magnets to the pole."

Curzon was enunciating a great truth which he wanted to advise his young friends. All would have been well if he would have stopped there. He continued and laid considerable emphasis on the fact that the highest ideal of truth was to a large extent a western conception. He said: "But undoubtedly truth took a high place in the moral codes of the west before it had been similarly honoured in the East."

This gave rise to a storm of denunciation. In the next day's edition an enterprising subeditor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* turned the tables by publishing the following extract from Lord Curzon's book 'Problems of the Far East':

"Before proceeding the royal audience I enjoyed an interview with the President of the Korean Foreign office

"I remember some of his questions and answers.

"Having been particularly warned not to admit to him that I was only thirty-three years old, an age to which no respect attaches in Korea, when he put to me the straight question, 'How old are you?' I unhesitatingly replied, 'Forty'.

"Dear me,' he said 'you look very young for that. How do you account for it.?'

"By the fact,' I replied, 'that I have been travelling for a month in the superb climate of His Majesty's Dominions.'

"Finally he said to me, 'I presume you are a near relative of Her Majesty the Queen of England.'

"No", I replied 'I am not.'

"But observing the look of disgust that passed over his countenance, I was fain to add, 'I am, however, as yet an unmarried man with which unscrupulous suggestion I completely regained the old gentleman's favour."

This caused great sensation, and this self-admission condemned Lord Curzon.

This passage was omitted from the later editions of the book. Lord Curzon had not the slightest intention to insult the Indian people. The whole incident was most unfortunate. He said it at a time, and his indiscretion condemned him when the atmosphere of hostility was fostered against him in India and England.

Four months later with echoes of the clamour still ringing in his ears he gave vent to his feelings of astonishment in a letter to the Secretary of State for India:

“My convocation address to Bengali students was travestied as an attack upon the character and scriptures of the entire nation, A more unscrupulous and mendacious agitation it is impossible to conceive.”

Such were the times and such were the feelings which agitated the minds of students. Henry George's 'Progress and Poverty' made a tremendous impression in USA and Britain. No book ever written on the social problems made so many converts. Economic facts and theories have never been presented in such an attractive way. The author was not a socialist but his book led many to socialism. Student Pant quoted from this book while speaking in debates. He felt that so long as the social system was based upon exploitation, the mass of the people remained poor. Poverty according to him was the greatest social evil. To eradicate was the greatest problem.

Family Background

The ancestors of Govind Ballabh Pant came from Maharashtra nearly a thousand years ago on pilgrimage to these holy places, and enchanted by their beauty decided to settle down on the Himalayan foothills, in the Kumaon hills in Uttar Pradesh.

When the British ruled over these hilly regions in the nineteenth century, a number of hill-stations, as they were called, were developed. That is how the townships of Shimla in Himachal Pradesh, Nainital in Uttar Pradesh, Darjeeling in West Bengal,

Ootacamund in the South, Mahabaleshwar in Maharashtra, Panchmarhi in Madhya Pradesh, to mention a few of them, were established by the British. As you know, the British came from a very cold climate and could not bear the summer heat of India and hence they spent nearly five to six months in a year in these towns, which served as summer capitals of respective provinces.

In Uttar Pradesh, in the Kumaon hills, are situated Nainital, Almora and Kashipur, which are well-known hill-stations. The beautiful landscape of the Kumaon hills enchanted every visitor. It is sheer joy to breathe the cool, fresh air and listen to the rustling sound of the wind blowing across the deep valleys and lush green forests of the mountains. Equally captivating is the music of gurgling spring waters flowing down from the mountain ranges towards the plains. The people of the hills therefore love nature. They love music and dance too, which are essential parts of their social life. Govind Ballabh Pant was also very fond of music.

The joy of living in the land of beauty, however, was marred by the harshness of the realities of life. To eke out a living in these regions was not easy. Unlike in the plains, only the hill slopes near the rivers and springs are fit for cultivation and crops are produced after a good deal of labour. You know, in the Gangetic basin of Uttar Pradesh crops are produced in plenty and with much less labour. People in the hills were not very rich. Agriculture, rearing of cattle like sheep, goats and milch cows were their principal occupations. Rice, jawar, bajra, vegetables and occasionally, some wheat were grown. Coarse woollen clothes were manufactured along with some handicrafts. The economy of the towns was mostly dependent on the population which came on pilgrimage or visits to these hill-stations and the goods of everyday needs were transported to the hills from the plains.

In the nineteenth century, as the British rule penetrated into these areas, roads were constructed, linking up several towns. Bungalows for the British were built. Schools run by Christian missions were started and courts and police establishments were set up for administration, and the economy began to flourish. But the people of the hills, by and large, remained poor, their demands were few and they led a simple rural life. Only the landed gentry and the merchant class thrived along with the administrators.

As for the ancestors of Govind Ballabh Pant, the story was different. Most of them were able and well-educated according to the standards of those days and enjoyed the patronage of the rulers of the land. In the nineteenth century, when the British ruled over the Kumaon hills, Govind Ballabh Pant's father, Manorath Pant and maternal grandfather, Badri Dutt Joshi, were men of means and held positions of importance in the British administration of Kumaon.

Badri Dutt Joshi, maternal grandfather of Govind Ballabh Pant, was a Sadr Amin and a great confidant of Sir Henry Ramsay, Commissioner of Kumaon. Joshi was a wealthy man and lived in style and enjoyed considerable power in the area. Pant's father was also appointed to a fairly good position in the Almora court, who later rose to be a Revenue Collector, in Kumaon. When he was transferred to Kashipur from Almora, he left behind his wife and the child (Govind) to be looked after by the joint household of Joshi.

Birth and Early Life

Govind Ballabh Pant was born at Almora, on Sep. 10, 1887. Govind Ballabh was a bright child and learnt his alphabet at home. Till the age of ten, he received education from private tutors, under the care of his maternal grandfather. He was deeply interested in his studies, and through his intelligence, he acquired sufficient mastery in mathematics. In 1897, he joined the Primary School of Ramsay College, Almora. In all his class examinations he did very well, and passed with credits. It is said that the mathematics teacher of his school was greatly impressed by him and whenever the teacher was unable to solve a problem, Govind was called upon to solve it, and however difficult the sum might have been, he always succeeded in his effort.

Govind Ballabh did not play many games himself, but was fond of sports. He would watch others play, and at times, he was asked to act as a referee by his schoolmates. It shows that his friends had faith in his judgement, sense of fairplay and impartiality. Govind loved walking and took to horse riding. In addition, he had a passion for music, which he retained even when he was grown up and studied in the college. He records

in his diary, which he maintained while he was a student at Allahabad University, that every morning he used to practise music at least for half an hour.

He took part in debates in the school and formed a debating society at Ramsay College. Govind, along with a few friends, founded a secret society called Happy Club, where the members discussed politics of the day. The Happy Club was not a revolutionary society, but during those days political discussions were not encouraged by schools and colleges run by the British. Later, when he grew older, he participated in debates held at Almora Akhbar Building. He was a good debater. In the college, he excelled in this skill and was known for his eloquence and oratory full of persuasive arguments.

In 1899, Badri Dutt Joshi died, which was a great shock to the family and specially to Govind Ballabh Pant, who was deeply attached to him, and who had been his mentor and a source of inspiration. With the death of Joshi, the family fortunes also dwindled to an extent.

Occasionally, during these quiet days, some distinguished persons visited Almora and addressed public meetings. Among them were Swami Vivekananda, Motilal Nehru, Dr. Bhagwan Das and Annie Besant.

You have, no doubt, heard the names of these great leaders. Swami Vivekananda was a great religious preacher who attended the Conference of World Religions in America in 1893. There he delivered speeches on the philosophical basis of Hinduism and greatness of Indian culture. The people of the West, who listened to him with great interest, were thrilled and began appreciating Indian culture. Swami Vivekananda was considered as the greatest exponent of Indian religious and philosophical texts. He instilled in Indians a sense of pride in the greatness of India and its culture.

Annie Besant was an Irish woman who joined the Theosophical Society in India and was deeply interested in Indian philosophy, religion and culture. She rose to become an important leader of the Indian National Congress, which demanded freedom for India. She started the Home Rule League, demanding self-government for the Indian people. Motilal Nehru was an eminent leader of the

Indian National Congress, a friend of Annie Besant, Mahatma Gandhi and other great men of his times, and a renowned lawyer. He was father of Jawaharlal Nehru. Dr. Bhagwan Das was a learned man and a philosopher. He lived in Benaras.

These great leaders inspired the young by their learning, wisdom, idealism, sincerity of purpose and patriotism. Govind was deeply moved by listening to them. He read on a wide range of subjects as a student in Almora. He also read through newspapers with care and discussed topics of interest with his friends. In 1905, he passed the Intermediate examination from Ramsay College, standing 20th in Kumaon, earning a scholarship of Rs. 20 per month. He would have done better in the examination had he not suffered from a heart attack in 1904, at the young age of seventeen.

Childhood

Since, the father of the child, Pandit Manorath Pant, was in government service in Garhwal district and therefore, was away from his home village. Shortly after the mother moved with the little child and her elder daughter to her maternal village Chakata, near Bhimtal, nine miles from Nainital. His four years were spent in this village, noted for its beauty and sceneries, surrounded by lakes like Naukachiyatal—"the lake of nine corners".

At the age of four he came to Almora to live with his maternal grandfather, Rai Bahadur Badri Dutt Joshi who was Judicial Officer of Kumaon. His father was still in Garhwal, and it was not possible for him to take the family there. He came to Almora often. His maternal grandfather looked after his elementary education.

Schooling

Young Govind showed considerable aptitude for studies at school. He passed his Middle examination in the first division. He also secured a first division in the Matriculation Examination. In his English paper there was a question — "What is a maiden speech?". The boy then little knew that he would often make and hear the maiden speeches. He remembered the some ingenious answers given by the students who answered a maiden speech

as "a female speech," "a speech made by a maid," "a well made speech," "a speech in chaste language," and "a speech as one requiring a great deal of consider.

Secondary Education

He passed his Intermediate examination in 1905 from the Ramsay College, Almora. This college which has done immense service for the cause of education in the far off hill districts of U.P. was commenced in 1850 by the Rev. J. H. Budden on behalf of the London Missionary Society. In 1871, the handsome building in which it is housed was opened. Rev. E. S. Oakley was its principal and professor of English and many of us read his English text books in our school days. Rathee was the teacher in Mathematics. Pant secured a scholarship in the Intermediate examination and his people decided to send him to Allahabad. In the Intermediate class he was known as Govind Ballabh Maharashtra.

Higher Education

After passing the Intermediate examination, he went to Allahabad and joined Muir College. In the B.A. course he took mathematics, politics and English literature. Professor Cox, who taught mathematics, was attracted by him for his gifts in mathematics.

Allahabad University was one of the finest universities in India. There were only five universities in India then. They were: Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Punjab and Allahabad. Besides, Allahabad was the capital of Uttar Pradesh. It had a High Court and the legal profession was greatly valued. Eminent lawyers were members of the Allahabad Bar; among whom were Madan Mohan Malaviya, Motilal Nehru, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sunderlal and a large number of public figures. All of them took part in the Indian struggle for freedom. Govind Ballabh Pant took full advantage of this great opportunity of being a student in Allahabad. He studied hard, but also took part in all kinds of university campus activities.

Allahabad was also a centre of political activity. In 1905, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, partitioned Bengal in two parts on

communal lines. East Bengal had a Muslim majority, whereas in West Bengal, Hindus were in majority. The partition of Bengal was considered by Indian people as a deliberate attempt on the part of the British government to destroy the unity of Indian people. Partition of Bengal was opposed by the entire nation. Numerous protest meetings, processions and demonstrations, were held in Calcutta and different towns of Bengal. Rakhi was exchanged between Hindus and Muslims as a bond of brotherhood and as a symbol of national unity. The song, *Bande Mataram*, which was prohibited by the government, was sung in every part of the country defying the government orders. People greeted each other with *Bande Mataram*. A beginning in Swadeshi movement was made in Bengal, when British goods were boycotted for the first time.

There was a lot of excitement in Allahabad and Govind Ballabh as a boy of eighteen was deeply influenced by these events. The annual session of the Indian National Congress was held at Benaras in December 1905. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a member of the Central Legislative Council, was one of the most eminent leaders of the time, who presided over the Congress. Govind Ballabh attended the Congress session and served as a volunteer, in spite of his weak Constitution. In 1907, Gokhale visited Allahabad again. A public meeting was held with Motilal Nehru in the chair. The entire community of students of Allahabad University attended the meeting. Govind Ballabh was one of them.

The same year, when the Kumbha Mela was held at Allahabad, he again volunteered for social service. The Congress used to organise such service to help millions of pilgrims who gathered for bathing in the *sangam* of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers. In the evenings, taking advantage of such large gathering of people, the Congress held meetings, and speeches were delivered, exhorting the people to unite against the British rule and fight for freedom. Govind Ballabh made a fiery speech at one of these gatherings and as a result, Principal Jennings of Muir College, issued orders debarring him from taking the examination. Principal Jennings was an Englishman who did not sympathise with Indian aspirations. This upset Govind Ballabh's preparation for his B.A. examination. His mathematics teacher, Prof. Cox, who

was fond of him, intervened and appealed to the Principal to show leniency towards Govind Ballabh and he was finally allowed to appear in the examination. He passed his B.A. examination in the second division.

Soon after, he joined the Law College, which was a part of Muir College itself. Eminent lawyers like Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mohan Lal Nehru were professors of law. Govind Ballabh was a brilliant student of law and stood first in the law examination in 1909, winning the Lumsden Gold Medal of Allahabad University.

During these formative years, he emerged as an all-rounder. He listened to the great leaders of Indian National Congress. He wrote in his diary about their visits to Allahabad University, and noted the names of Lala Lajpat Rai, Surendranath Banerji, Rash Bihari Ghosh, and that he saw Gokhale from close quarters. Madan Mohan Malaviya was another great leader. He founded Banaras Hindu University and started journals and newspapers for political awakening. Thus, Govind Ballabh's training in politics began, while he was still in the college.

He also read widely. In addition to his subject of study, which was Law, he was attracted by the writings of great authors like Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, Bacon, Emerson, James Mill and John Stuart Mill and other men of literature and science. At the same time, he did not forget reading through the *Rig Veda*, *Quran* and *Bible*, specially the Sermon on the Mount. He took pride in being an Indian and believed in the composite culture of India.

As has been said, Govind Ballabh maintained a diary, in which he recorded his thoughts and feelings everyday. Only a few diaries of his student days are available. It is interesting to read a page from his diary of February 1908, in which he made the following resolutions: I shall learn at least 15 new notes of music. I shall practise truth and gentlemanliness. I shall write loving letters—to dear ones. I shall not smoke from today.

He wrote about the books which he read, the lessons which he must complete, and many more matters of personal nature, including that he must take more care of his health.

It is obvious from the above story that Govind Ballabh had grown as a young man full of idealism and patriotism. His love for the motherland and the society which he decided to serve became deeper and deeper as he grew older. He was a handsome youth, six feet tall, with large eyes and a serene face. With his pleasing manners, he won everybody's friendship. He seldom offended any of his friends in the school or college. He was a young man of great courage.

His life as a young man was rather sad. Yet, he faced life with great courage and strength of will. In spite of socioreligious reform movements and impact of Western ideas, Indian society in the nineteenth century continued to be orthodox in its attitude to social problems. Practices like child marriage were prevalent and children often at the age of ten or twelve were married. Govind Ballabh was married in 1899 at the age of twelve. In 1908, when he was about 21 years old and still studying at the college, Govind Ballabh became the father of a son. Within a few months, however, the child died and soon after his wife also expired.

These happenings were normal in those days. There were not many hospitals or qualified doctors. In small towns and hilly areas, the condition was even worse. The British government in India, being a foreign government, was interested in the collection of revenue and maintenance of law and order. It was not a welfare-oriented state. Disease, epidemic and famines ravaged many parts of India from time to time and millions of people died of cholera, smallpox, plague, malaria and influenza. Floods and droughts also took their heavy tolls. It is, therefore, no wonder that mortality among children and women was very high. In India today, the conditions are different. We are a modern nation. Application of science in agriculture and industry has brought prosperity to people. Medical facilities have reached literally every home. Education has transformed the people's attitudes to life. But the story of the Indian society of the last century was depressing.

Govind Ballabh was persuaded to marry again in 1912. In 1914, his wife gave birth to a son, but both of them died within a few months. You will notice, that there was so much unhappiness in the life of young Govind Ballabh Pant. His father died of cholera in 1913 at the age of 46. His sister became a widow at a

young age. In a few years he lost his mother also. Before her death, she persuaded Govind Ballabh to marry again. He remarried in 1916. Fortunately, from this marriage, three children were born; one of them Krishna Chandra Pant, was a Cabinet Minister at the Centre. Govind Ballabh had suffered from a heart attack in 1904 when he was just a boy of 17. Although he recovered from the attack, he continued to complain of chest pain. In 1909, he fell from a horse. This caused him a serious injury, and the pain in the back never left him. In 1928, during the Simon Commission demonstration at Lucknow, he received lathi blows on the nape of his neck, and the back and shoulders. As a result, he suffered from pain in the neck and the back throughout his life. He narrowly escaped direct lathi blows on his head. If he had received one, he might have met with the same fate which awaited Lala Lajpat Rai. Lala Lajpat Rai died in 1928 as a result of lathi blows received during the Simon Commission agitation at Lahore. In spite of these mishaps, personal bereavements and sufferings, Govind Ballabh remained a cheerful man, maintaining a robust sense of humour and continued to perform his duties as a student with a sense of dedication. Indeed, these adversities made him a braver man and he pledged himself to serve his motherland with greater determination and devotion.

India is one country. The apparent variety in its culture, and diversity in its customs have always been beautifully and organically linked together. This bond of oneness has to be strengthened and developed.

Allahabad University Days

“Allahabad has always held a position of unsurpassed eminence in the annals of our country. Several of our foremost leaders were born here. Jawaharlal Nehru, the idol of the people, who is steering the ship of State with consummate skill against many opposing forces also has his home in Allahabad. Allahabad has seen the synthesis of the culture of India from the days the Aryans settled here. Prayag, ‘the place of sacrifice,’ has fully maintained its traditions by its varied and great sacrifices on the altar of freedom. Here we have

a number of great relics, full of archaeological interest and importance. Just close to us is the Bharadwaj Ashram, the hermitage where thousands of years ago Rishi Bharadwaj entertained Ram and Lakshman. There within the fort founded by Akbar on the banks of the Ganges and the Jamuna stands the pillar of Ashoka. And not far from it one sees what is known as the Proclamation Pillar. These monuments remind us of the various epochs of India's history and embrace within their compass the myriad events and happenings of several centuries."

In the year 1905 when Pt. Pant was nearly eighteen years of age, he went to join Muir Central College of Allahabad for further studies. The College was one of the premier constituent colleges of the Allahabad University. It was founded in 1870-71 by Sir William Muir, built in a modified saracenic style. Jennings was the Principal of the College who continued upto 1913. Pant had Mathematics and Politics with English as his subjects. Randle and A.C. Mukerji were his teachers in English and Homersham Cox and Umesh Chand Ghosh in Mathematics. Cox who died in 1918 was not only a mathematician of very exceptional capacity but also brought an incisive mind to bear on all questions affecting the University. The teachers were of high character and influenced students greatly.

Student Pant got a room in the Macdonell Hindu Boarding House. It was then built by the efforts of Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya. He took great interest in the welfare of the inmates of the hostel. Now this Hostel is named after Malaviyaji and has been converted into a Tutorial University College, the opening ceremony of which was performed by Pt. Pant in 1949. The students had the opportunity to meet Malaviyaji at his house. He used to come to the Hostel very frequently. Thus the students were influenced and inspired by his lofty idealism, his highly critical and cultivated mind, by his noble example and precept.

Forty years later at the death of Malaviyaji, speaking in U. P. Assembly Pt. Pant with tears in his eyes in a reminiscent mood paid the following respectful tribute:

“It is difficult for me to pay my humble tribute to the memory of the late Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, one of the greatest of men ever born and one at whose feet I received my first lesson in public life. He was one about whom one could say that the elements combined to invest him with a perfect personality. In him were combined all those virtues which go to make a man a gentleman and a great man. He devoted more than sixty years of his active life to the service of the people of this country. Every minute of his existence was dedicated to the betterment of the lot of the people of India as a whole. He combined in himself gentleness with firmness. He was pure in thought, pure in mind, pure in character, pure in action and pure in behaviour. If there was anyone about whom one could say that he never consciously did anything wrong, it was, I believe, revered Pandit Malaviya. He represented and embodied in himself the ancient culture of this land in all its richness and all its varieties. Though orthodox in his views, he was never sectarian nor narrow minded. He possessed the most liberal outlook and overflowed with that milk of human kindness and sympathy which one rarely finds in human nature. He was a doughty fighter in the cause of *Swaraj* and independence. There was no good cause which did not receive his loving assistance and sympathy. Where he did not work himself actively he placed those who wanted to work in a good cause. Neither the young nor the old had ever any dread of that great man and they all approached him. Even the students of schools and colleges approached him as one would have approached one’s own father and they never met at his hands anything except affection and kindness. He was a great orator and his silver tongue oratory was the byword not only in our land but also in countries outside. He was of the sweetest of men endowed with that reasonableness and regard for other men’s point of view which marked a cultured

man from a fanatic. He had that profound faith in the destinies of our country which ever made him a robust optimist even in the midst of dense gloom. He devoted his talents exclusively to the service of others; his activities were not confined to the political field alone. His name will ever be enshrined in the history of this country as one of the most distinguished architects of modern India. He built up many institutions but one which claimed most of his attention in the latter part of his life is the Banaras Hindu University which will be a monument of his energy, his zeal, his patriotism, his constructive genius and the influence which he commanded over all sections of the people in this country. I find it difficult to say more about him. In fact I had to exercise a great degree of restraint on myself in order to be able even to utter these few words. His soul will ever be there to inspire us and with his blessings we will soon achieve the goal for which he worked, for which he lived and for which he died."

The minds of the people were agitated on the Bengal partition issue. Seventh August 1905 was observed for boycott of foreign goods and the students at Allahabad had taken enthusiastic interest in it. The 21st session of the Indian National Congress was held at Banaras in December 1905 under the presidentship of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Student Pant went to Banaras to attend the Congress session as a volunteer. This was the first occasion of his life to witness such a political gathering, and it influenced his young mind. The feelings of that time were aptly mirrored in the introduction to the proceedings of the Banaras Congress Session published then. It said "India was declared to be distracted, discontented, despondent, the victim of many misfortunes, political and others."

Gokhale came to Allahabad in February 1907 when Pant was in the B. A. final class. He addressed a public meeting which was presided by Pt. Motilal Nehru. Gokhale spoke for more than an hour on the work that lay before them. The speech had a profound effect on Pant. He mentioned it twenty years after in his address

at the U.P. Political Conference in 1927. In his speech Gokhale had advised that the service of the motherland should become a great and overmastering a passion and that young men should give up all thought of personal advancement and devote themselves in the spirit of sacrifice to the service of the motherland. Pant decided to carve out an independent profession for himself. The wish of his elders was that he should become a deputy collector but he pressed to be a lawyer. He began public speaking outside the precincts of the University. He made speeches at the Kumbh Mela. The university authorities took a serious view and disallowed him to take the examination. He thought that a year was lost but due to the intervention of prominent persons he was permitted at the last moment.

He joined the LL.B. class in 1907. The Law Department of the Muir Central College was converted into the School of Law of the Allahabad University, and his was the first batch. Prof. R. K. Sorabji was its principal. Dr. M. L. Agrawal, afterwards an authority on U.P. Tenancy Law, Mohanlal Nehru were the teachers. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was also on the teaching staff for some time. He stood first in Law final examination and was awarded Lumsden Gold Medal.

He took a leading part in the debates. He spoke without a trace of nervousness and in a convincing manner with apt quotations. He quoted from memory.

The study of mathematics made him an exact man. It gave him a good mental training for his later life. He swayed the young audiences—as he has done afterwards—to his point of view. He participated in a debate expressing the view that India's financial condition had deteriorated under the British rule. Prof. Sorabji while addressing the gathering in the course of his concluding observations, complimenting student Pant on his magnificent performance, remarked that one day Pant would be the Premier of India. This was said 45 years ago when no one could visualise that one day India would attain that status. How true proved the prophecy of Prof. Sorabji, made at a time when the horizon of Indian political scene was so hazy.

This was a happy period of his life. The Allahabad years were among the richest. He while inaugurating the Allahabad University

Law Society in November 1949 recalled some events that took place nearly 40 years ago. He pointed out that when he was a student of law, the Law College had no building of its own. Law classes used to meet in one of the quarters of the Muir Central College. They had also no hostel of their own, but used to live in a house on the Katra Road which had been converted into a hostel now. He said that they lived in hard times; but the circumstances in which they worked had at least one merit. They had to be hardy and they had an atmosphere of a public school. He added:

“I wonder if any other institution has ever enjoyed that spirit of comradeship, mutual trust and the *esprit de corps* which was our good luck to enjoy in those days. We realised that man lived not by bread alone. Those were pleasant days and in universities then they enjoyed that vivacity, that vitality, that vigour which perhaps one did not enjoy at least to the same degree today. We worked with labour and with faith and we enjoyed life in a wholesome manner— in a manner which tended to help us and which enabled us to help others then and possibly later. The College in which we had our education does not exist anywhere in brick and mortar today. I am not sure if the environment; the spirit and the atmosphere, which we had then, are now really permeating the precincts of the Law College.”

“If I were asked,” continue Pandit Pant, “which were the best moments of my life, I would say that barring the time I spent in prison, the most useful and constructive part of my life was in the Law College.”

A mention may be made of Pant's contemporaries at the Allahabad University College. Sri Purushottam Das Tandon who had graduated in 1904 was in the College for M.A. Dr. Kailash Nath Katju, who was senior to him by one year, later, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, was the Minister of Justice in his first Cabinet in 1937 and also in the second Cabinet in 1946. Har Govind Pant who afterwards became the Deputy Speaker of U.P.

Assembly and died of food poisoning in 1957 when he was M.P. was all along with him. So was Acharya Narendra Dev and Fazl Ali.

Student Pant was a voracious reader. His speed of reading was high and he thoroughly grasped the subject. Bankim Chandra Chatterji's famous novel 'Ananda Math' (Monastery of *Joy*) created a great impression on him. Though written many years previously then became the most widely read book and several translations of it appeared in English and other Indian languages. The famous song 'Bande Matram' in this book became so popular that it came to occupy the place of a national anthem and many sacrificed their lives for it. In July 1952, Pandit Pant was in Dehradun for a holiday when he saw the film based on the novel 'Ananda Math' and was taken to those old days when it inspired him.

To create a patriotic sentiment among the younger generation Joseph Mazzini was put as the ideal of the Indian patriots. His writings were read with great interest. He was the symbol of the downtrodden races, who exhibited in his own life; and character an example of heroic self-sacrifice, of noble self-endurance, of burning love for mankind and of steadfast hatred for tyranny.

He devoted much of his time in reading outside books. He had read the works of Digby, Dadabhai, Ramesh Chand Dutt, Ranade, Spencer and Mill. He liked the novels of Dickens, Thackeray, Scott and Marie Corelli. Mill's works like 'Liberty' and 'Subjection of Women' had effect on his views. He once quoted Mill in the course of a debate: "The Government of a people by itself has a meaning and a reality; but such a thing as government of one people by another people does not, and cannot, exist. One people may keep another for its own use, a place to make money in a human cattle farm to be worked for the profits of its own inhabitants."

Mill's essay on Liberty was a manifesto against despotism of all kinds and was one of the most eloquent and persuasive arguments ever written for social and political freedom. His whole outlook was guided by this noble essay.

In 1947 the Diamond Jubilee of the Allahabad University was celebrated with great enthusiasm.

The degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa* was conferred on Pandit Pant. The following citation was read by the Dean of the Faculty of Law:

“I present to you the Hon’ble Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, a distinguished graduate of the University. He has been a foremost figure in the country’s public life. He was the first Premier of the United Provinces and successfully demonstrated that skill in debate can be combined with skill in administration. He is firm without obstinacy, and gentle without being weak. He is held in high regard even by those who differ from him for his uprightness, for his unrivalled mastery over the intricacies of Indian finance and for his leadership.”

On January 28, 1949, at the Special Convocation of the Lucknow University Pandit Pant was lustily cheered by the young audience when he was presented to take the degree of Doctor of Laws. The cheers were the loudest; and it was an indication that in how great esteem he was held by the people and the youth of the country. H.E. Shrimati Sarojni Naidu, Chancellor of the University, who presided, and it was her last public appearance, speaking of Pandit Pant said that she was reluctant to pay any compliments “for if I begin praising my Premier, it will be offering bribes.” She described him as the living symbol of vigilance, and added that “he is the jewel among the Premiers.”

Pandit Pant was described in the citation thus:

“His independent spirit could not remain restrained within the narrow confines of success at the bar, and the call of the service and sacrifice for the motherland found him in the forefront of the battle for freedom. The battle is won, but the triumph has brought him no rest. He bears unwearied on his massive shoulders the burden of the biggest province which is grateful to him for his exclusive devotion to it. He is a high-ranking statesman, a great financial expert, and is unrivalled as a parliamentarian. Calm in the midst of

severest trials, he is one of the ablest administrators, the country has produced and is highly recognised as one of the foremost sons of modern India. This province is justly proud of a great man of his stature and in honouring him, the University is honouring one whose personality, life and achievements will inspire generations to come."

On December 2, 1918, only a month before Lucknow University Special Convocation, Banaras Hindu University held a Special Convocation and the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa* was conferred on Pandit Pant. The citation mentioned:

"One who has long compelled the admiration of critical assemblies, he has won the respect even of those who differ from him. He hold the supreme position in this province alike in administration and in the affections of the people. A fine speaker, and a skilled debater, he is also a mister of finance, not disdaining the use of decimals and even vulgar fractions. He is the first servant of the State in action faithful and in honour clear."

On February 27, 1950, Aligarh Muslim University in its convocation conferred the Degree of Doctor of Laws on Pandit Pant and Agra University conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa* on him at its Silver Jubilee Convocation on December 6, 1952.

Pandit Pant did not appreciate when he was addressed as Doctor. When a speaker referred to him as Dr. Pant, he very humorously remarked: "I have been all along a patient. I have no physical strength to bear the burden of a doctor." He never allowed it to be written before his name.

Career in Law

"Lawyers have occupied a conspicuous place in our public life. In fact with the advent of democracy, lawyers came to dominate over the political life of our country. Even before democracy took birth, lawyers

took a prominent part in the struggle for democracy. Law is after all the foundation of civilized life," said—Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, inaugurating the 2nd U.P. Lawyers Conference in 1946 at Lucknow.

Pandit Pant topped at his law examination at the Allahabad University and decided to adopt law as his profession. He viewed law as a noble profession, and bar offered a career which would enable him to enter public life. He looked upon the bar as a source of leadership where he could maintain his independence. A great attraction was that it was a road to public service. He was full of enthusiasm for public work. He had all the qualities that we associate with youth—ardour, earnestness, capacity for hard work, determination to succeed, and confidence. Law fascinated him. His people at home wanted him to go to the government service. When he was a student of B.A. class he had decided that he would adopt an independent profession and he chose law. He made his choice,— a right choice. He was fully equipped for a Lawyer's profession. He had eloquence. He had knowledge of human nature and of law. He knew that there was no short cut to success at the bar. Law was an exacting profession. A steady practice could only be developed by energy and ability.

"The first years at the bar are of great importance", as he once mentioned to young lawyers. "It is a test to them, to their energy, to their patience, and to their intellect. Then methods are developed, technique acquired and right habits were formed which stood them in life and which were a source of their success in other walks of life."

He had full confidence in himself. In course of time he became the most adroit and successful advocate. He came to the forefront by dint of merit. He was a lawyer of a very high calibre. It can be said of him that he was equalled by few and was surpassed by almost none. He was the greatest lawyer who ever set foot in Kumaon courts. His career at the bar was one of almost unclouded brilliance, who had marvellous industry and matchless knowledge of details, who observed and inculcated higher professional standards. He felt that a man's livelihood should not be the whole

of a man's business. He earned a lot and spent a lot. He never kept any personal account. He had a charitable heart and helped the helpless. He had qualities which pointed to a potential success as a leader at the bar—sound judgement, absolute integrity, dauntless courage and a desire to serve. As a lawyer he soon built a lucrative practice and his success at the bar was very rapid. He possessed the greatest analytical intellect. His learning and forensic skill were proverbial.

Throughout his career it was his practice to put his several hours work on his briefs. He must have complete command of every detail in the most complicated cases. He would study with punctilious care all the case law on every aspect of his brief. He would understand the weakness of his opponent's case, attack it and finish him. He was thorough and always straightforward. He was always scrupulously fair, just and generous to his opponents. Nothing is so ingratiating as good manners to disarm antagonism and enlist sympathy. He never yielded on essentials. He acted in his life on the words of a distinguished British Lord Chancellor Eldon who said to succeed as a lawyer one must work like a horse, and live like a hermit. This was the secret of his phenomenal success.

The qualities which he inculcated as a lawyer were the foundation of his success which he achieved in wider fields and the strength which enabled him to bear the heavier responsibilities with distinction. To be a good statesman and administrator, one must be a good lawyer. Life in the law courts inculcates a deep sense of realism, and a constant witnessing of the intricate working of human mind and emotions. Lawyer's profession makes capable of grasping the real problem. The real foundation of his life was laid in the law courts where he acquired the great virtues of life. It enabled him to acquire the capacity of departmentalising his mind—the ability to turn his attention completely to the matter in hand to the exclusion of other preoccupations, which enabled him to carry the weight of varied interests. That has stood him in his parliamentary career and in administrative field.

Law was a practical business. He had the power to discern—the shape of things to come. He was never taken by surprise or at a loss to counter any move of his opponents. Surely he is the

man who can see the coming events. He had clarity and insight, summed them up and presented to the courts in words which arrested their attention and left a clear impression. He was a powerful and effective cross examiner. He had immense patience. He would never be tired, nor tire the court; but of course tire the witness. Cross examination does not mean examining crossly. He used to arrest the attention of the court in the first sentence. Manner and matter were two things which were important to the advocate. It is the art of persuasion which we call advocacy. His manner was cool and collected. He was meticulously polite. He was courteous without being obsequious. His most deadly cross examination was invariably the most courteous. If he had a number of points in his favour, he would bring out the best one early. If he would have to attack, he would attack the weakest point first. If he had a useful admission, he would keep it in cold storage—and at the right moment he would flung it at the opponent and would finish him.

The surest way to success, according to him, was to act at all times to the highest standards of professional integrity. In law, as in business, 'honesty is the best policy'. Simplicity, sincerity and moderation were the traits which he got by the profession of law. He learnt work was the sum and substance of life. Referring to the task of lawyers, once speaking to the law students, he recalled the advice given by Dr. Johnson which he read as a student in the then popular book—'Boswell's Johnson':

"Sir, a lawyer has no business with the justice or injustice of the cause which he undertakes.

He said that the law was based on reason and reason was law. He referred to a saying by one of the greatest English lawyers—Chief Justice Coke—who wrote at the beginning of the 17th century:

"The reason of the law is the life of law, for tho' a man can tell the law, yet if he knows not the reason thereof, he shall soon forget his superficial knowledge, but when he findeth the right reason of the law and so bring it to his natural reason that he comprehendeth it as his own, this will not only serve him for the understanding of the particular case but of many others."

He gained an immense local reputation. He soon made a great name for himself in the law courts. The first few years he practised in Kashipur where he was also a member of the Municipal Board. He had many interests outside his profession. He was associated with the establishment of a high school which has now become an Intermediate College. He with Badri Dutt Pandey started Kumaon Parishad to study the problems of Kumaon, and also started a weekly paper 'Shakti'. He carried agitation to abolish Kuli Begar. The government officials used to force any villager to work for them as coolie without any payment.

He was so much charmed by Nainital that he established his legal practice at Nainital. Only exigencies of an ever growing public life brought him in contact with plains. He always resisted the temptation of going to the High Court. Then the Allahabad Bar was one of the strangest Bars in India. It commanded the greatest prestige in the public estimation. Sir Sunder Lal, Pt. Motilal, Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Jogendranath Chaudhary held the leadership of the profession.

His outstanding success in legal profession furnished a good criterion of his great merit. A distinguished lawyer who afterwards became the judge of the Allahabad High Court, was with him in some important case in 1916-17 said that every one was impressed by his well marshalled arguments, thoroughness and transparent honesty.

Soon after obtaining the degree in law from Allahabad University, Govind Ballabh began practising law in Almora. Within a very short time, he was recognised as a most competent lawyer. His earnings increased every month. Within a few years he started earning about Rs. 1000/- per month, which was then considered a big sum. During his student days, he had been an intelligent debater and was gifted with a strong memory. These qualities helped him in his profession. He did his home work thoroughly, mastering every point of law before going to the court. His presentation of the case, marshalling of facts and figures, his logical and persuasive arguments were superb. He won many cases.

Govind Ballabh was also a man of convictions. While practising law, he saw to it that he did not take up false cases. It is said that

once, after winning a case on behalf of his client, he came to know that the whole case was fabricated by the client. He returned the entire amount of fee which he had charged.

While arguing a case at the Almora court, Govind Ballabh came in conflict with the English magistrate. He told the magistrate that he would not enter his court again, and began his practice at Kashipur. Once he went to the court at Kashipur wearing khadi *kurta* and *pyjama* and a khadi cap. The English judge asked Govind Ballabh to change his dress but he told him that he would rather leave the court.

In another incident, an Englishman pushed aside the chair on which Govind Ballabh was sitting, taking tea, because Pant did not get up to greet the Englishman. He asked the Englishman to apologise for his insulting behaviour, otherwise he would have to do so in the court of law. Govind Ballabh Pant told him that the entire crowd will be his witness. The Englishman, when he came to know that he was talking to Govind Ballabh Pant, apologised and left.

These incidents showed the kind of man he was: fearless, upright and principled. He went round from one place to another on horseback and soon became popular with the people because of his honesty, hard work and patriotic fervour.

Zenith, as a Lawyer

As a lawyer he was at the zenith in the Kakori Conspiracy case, which was the first of the biggest political conspiracy cases of Northern India in which the prosecution was represented by the late J.N. Mulla, the leading and distinguished lawyer of Oudh. Pantji led the defence. He was assisted by Mohanlal Saksena, Chandra Bhan Gupta, who became a minister in his second Cabinet in U.P. and who used to wear turban as a lawyer. Out of 28 persons sent for trial 21 were committed to the Court of Sessions in April 1926. They were charged with conspiracy to deprive the King-Emperor of the sovereignty of British India; and conspiracy to commit dacoities in order to collect funds for that end. These 21 persons were tried by Sessions Judge Hamilton, specially appointed. The recording of evidence took more than eight months.

It was on the basis of this evidence that he attacked the flimsiness of the evidence produced by the prosecution. The skill, ability and exemplary patience which he displayed deserved the highest praise.

Ram Prasad Bismil, Rajendranath Laheri and Raushan Singh were sentenced to death, Sachindra Nath Sanyal to transportation for life and only two were acquitted. During the course of the trial two of the absconders Ashfaqullah and Sachindra Nath Bakshi were apprehended. They were tried in a supplementary case and Ashfaqullah was sentenced to death and Bakshi to transportation for life. Of the absconders only Chandra Sheikher Azad alias 'Quicksilver' who was shot dead in Alfred Park, Allahabad after six years remained untraced.

Damoder Swroop Seth was taken seriously ill and could not be tried on account of his illness. He was an old revolutionary and co-accused of Sachindra Nath Sanyal in the Banaras Conspiracy case. In the Rowlett Committee Report he was described as a teacher. His condition in jail became so serious that it was not considered desirable to proceed with the case against him. He was released on bail as there remained no hope of his survival. His friends and relations deserted him. He was brought from jail in a precarious condition by the late Satish Kumar Capoor of Bareilly to the residence of Pt. Dwarka Prasad in Bareilly. Afterwards Sethji became a prominent Congress Leader.

The affairs which gave rise to the case was a dacoity in a running train on the evening of the 9th August, 1925 near Alamnagar Station between Kakori and Lucknow. The train was stopped by pulling the communication cord of the alarm signal in a second class compartment. After the train had stopped a number of persons collected at the brake van overpowered the guard. While some of the men were breaking open the safe, others posted themselves on each side of the train. Cries were raised that their object was not to injure private persons but to take 'Sarkari property'. In about half an hour the safe was opened and the contents were taken away. The train then proceeded on its way to Lucknow.

R.A. Horton, Superintendent of Police of the C.I.D. was deputed to investigate this occurrence. The dacoity seemed to be

of an unusual kind and it was thought that it had been committed by an organised gang of educated men. Several other dacoities took place in U.P. during the previous year. The police could not trace the miscreants for such a long time. Horton suspected that it was the work of the revolutionaries. He turned his attention to the actions of certain suspects.

His attention was attracted to Shahjahanpur as he had heard that some of the notes stolen in the Kakori train dacoity had been traced there. Suspicion fell on Ram Prasad. Indu Bhushan Mitra, a student in the local Government High School was suspected of being his post-office. He was only 14 years of age and his father was the Medical Officer of the Health. Idris Ahmad was the head master of the School. He was afterwards our head master in Bareilly Horton arranged with the Head Master that he should open letters addressed to Indu Bhushan, take copies of the contents, reclose them and deliver to Indu Bhushan and inform the police of what the letters contained.

Through the letters of Ram Prasad, which passed through his postbox, Indu Bhushan, Horton surmised that a meeting of the leaders of the revolutionary party would take place on the premises of the Vaish Orphanage in Meerut on September 13, 1925. Vishnu Saran Dublith, now M. P. from Meerut was the Superintendent of the Orphanage. One of the letters written by Dublith to Ram Prasad which was intercepted was as follows:

Vaish Orphanage, Meerut Dated 9th Sept. 1925. My dear brother,

“Everything is all right. All arrangements about the Executive Committee of the Orphanage are complete. The Updeshak at Lahore had promised to attend the function. You are requested to intimate to your friends to put up in various Dharamshalas. Jain Dharmshala is in the way to the railway Station. Dharam Das Dharamshala is just near the clock tower.

The place of the function has been after due deliberation fixed at my own place”.

Yours Supt. V. O.

Watchers became busy at Meerut. They remained outside the main gate of the Orphanage. Nothing was observed during the day until shortly before sunset when eight men came out of the residential quarters of Dubliss. Among them were Damoder Swroop Seth, Ram Prasad and Rajendra Nath Laheri. There was a piece of paper which was recovered from Jogesh Chatterji at the time of his arrest in Calcutta, which was a record of the proceedings of a meeting held in October 1924 of the provincial Council that disclosed that efficient representatives were acting as district organisers all over U.P.

It was believed by the police that a revolutionary organisation had been created in the U.P. Horton connected this knowledge with the other facts and felt convinced that the dacoity was the act of revolutionaries in which the educated youths were involved. Horton issued warrants of arrests which were executed on 20th September, 1925, against Damoder Swroop Seth and two dozen other young men.