

NEW YORK CELEBRATES INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY

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CELEBRATIONS of India's Independence day took place in various places of New York. Besides creating unprecedented enthusiasm among the Indian residents of New York, it brought around a number of greetings to Indians from hundreds of Americans, in a formal or an informal manner. As I passed through the various avenues of the city, through sub-ways, buses, taxi cabs and suburban railways, with the ribbon flag of India on the collar of my coat, faces beaming with smiles greeted me from different quarters. Unknown persons of various nationalities went out of their way to come near me, to say a word of halo, a shake of hand, and then "it indeed is a great day for you." The same expressions I heard from men who run the elevators, drivers of taxi cabs and fellow passengers in a bus or sub-way. Even the British Assistant Secretary General of the Economic Affairs Department, David Owen of the United Nations, could find out time from his flying in Shanghai and Geneva to attend the function celebrating India's Independence. Among many hands that joined my palm in greeting, at one moment I found the little hand of David Owen, this most informal and popular top-ranking U. N. official, uttering the very same phrase with which a while ago I was greeted by the cab driver. On the 34th Street and Fifth Avenue, in front of the Empire State Building, I met a man who was following me from a long distance with an anxious face. I stopped awhile to meet him. Coming very near me and summoning a little courage, in broken English he asked if I was from India. I noticed, he had no tie, his shirt was almost tearing apart, the object which he was wearing on his feet was only an apology for a shoe but yet he was an Indian, my compatriot, a sea-man who like many others had either escaped the immigration laws or arrived in this country at a time when such laws were not very strong. Abdul Hakim, the sea-man who knew very little about Pakistan, was happy, he told me, to learn that "our country is free." Before he left me to return back to his modest hotel in some slums of lower New York, he only smiled, a quiet and pathetic smile, and said, "I have been in this country for more than 15 years now, but now that India is free, I think I should return back." In each of the celebrations that I have had the chance to attend, beautiful displays of colours were seen by the series which Indian women wore on this occasion. American, British, Chinese and European wives of Indians also mingled themselves up in this collection of colours. Besides, Indian women and foreign wives of Indians, one could see many women friends of India belonging to other nationalities joining the celebration in series. A shop in further down town set up a special arrangement to prepare small Indian flags and sell them, 25 cents each. Indian students who had with them their national costumes appeared proudly in these functions. A number of Gandhi caps and scores of sikars presented an unusual variety of spectacle to foreigners who scarcely find a chance to see an Indian in his native dress. Hindus and Mohammedans for the time being the political degradation

that had come in the wake of India's freedom. Occasionally, one could hear in some hotel lobbies or college dormitory, whispers and criticisms of our leaders in accepting a divided India but they faded soon in the enthusiasm of the celebration. There was no doubt a large section of the Indian population here who were not satisfied with all that had happened in Indian politics in recent time but it appeared for the time being that they wanted to forget the past.

I had also occasion to meet many of India's hitherto expatriated revolutionaries, Indian revolutionaries who fought for India's freedom from abroad. There was scarcely any sign of jubilation in their face. These matured faces which for years provided inspiration to young bloods in different parts of India and abroad, in military prisons in Singapore, in far-off Geneva, during the first world war in Japan and China and in the islands of the Far East, not to speak of the different parts of the American continent looked grave and sad on the 15th of August, 1947. One of these persons, the story of whose life filled my youthful days with romance of adventure, and in later years at whose feet I had the honour to sit down like a humble child, to listen to those gallant chapters of the history of my motherland which were never written, appeared particularly morose on this occasion. Indian businessmen and organizers of the India League of America accepted a time-honoured attitude and joined in jubilation. In spite of youthful fanfares everywhere, the grim and suffering faces of these ex-Indian revolutionaries created a shadow throughout, which was ominous and set young minds thinking.

INDIA TRADE COMMISSIONER CELEBRATES INDEPENDENCE DAY

M. R. Ahuja, India's Trade Commissioner in New York, hoisted the flag amidst shouts of "Jai Hind" and "Bande Mataram". Speeches sent by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for this special occasion was read out. Ambassador Asaf Ali's written speech was also read out on this occasion, besides the speech of Mr. Ahuja. Mrs. Kamala Mukherjee accompanied by other ladies led the singing of 'Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka'. Miss Maya Mukherjee, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Mukherjee, greeted the guests by fixing India's national flag on their dress. After the flag hoisting, refreshments were served to the guests.

INDIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA

In an open invitation to all Indians and their friends, the India Society of America, an organization initiated by Hari G. Govil celebrated India's Independence day in the Wing's Club of the Hotel Biltmore. The India Society of America is an organization for the reciprocal study, appreciation, and enjoyment of the arts, culture and commerce of India, as they relate to the allied progress and aspiration in the United States of America.