

## ACHARYA PRAFULLA CHANDRA RAY — V

(Continued from the issue of March 2014)

### P. C. Ray, The Patriot and Nationalist

IN his Farewell Address to the students of the Bengal National College on 23 August 1907, Sri Aurobindo says:

If you will study, study for her [*the Mother's — India's*] sake; train yourselves body and mind and soul for her service. You will earn your living that you may live for her sake. You will go abroad to foreign lands that you may bring back knowledge with which you may do service to her. Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. All is contained in that one single advice.<sup>1</sup>

As one revisits the life of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray, one is reminded of the above message of Sri Aurobindo. An intense love for the country and her people was the fountain spring from which flowed the various streams of the Acharya's activity. Indeed, patriotism vibrated through every fibre of his being. This patriotism was "not loud but deep".

#### *As a teenager*

An early indication of Prafulla Chandra's nationalist spirit can be seen from his decision, as a teenager in 1879, to join the institution founded by the great Vidyasagar (in spite of it being a new College with inadequate facilities), because it was a *national* institution and because a great Nationalist leader (S. N. Banerjee) was a teacher in that College. When literature and philosophy monopolised the attention of his contemporaries, Prafulla Chandra decided to go abroad to study science, in spite of his deep fascination for literature and history, as he believed that the key to the country's progress was in the field of modern science and technology.

#### *As a student at Edinburgh*

While a B.Sc. student at Edinburgh University, Prafulla Chandra demonstrated his intellectual courage and patriotic vigour when he took part in an essay competition on the topic 'India before and after the Mutiny' and wrote an essay that was highly

1. *Bande Mataram: Early Political Writings*, SABCL, Vol. 1, pp. 516-17.

critical of the British rule in India. Prafulla Chandra got his article printed and published as a book in 1886; the printed version was prefaced by an appeal addressed to the students of the university. The appendix of the book contains a short article on Scientific and Technical Education in India.

Three sentences from Prafulla Chandra's book will give an idea of the daringly outspoken factual analysis by a young man studying in Britain for a degree course of a British University:

The lamentable condition of India at present is due to England's culpable neglect of, and gross apathy to, the affairs of that Empire. ([5], p. 11)

A government which can squander 10,000,000 pounds on "palatial" barracks, but which cannot spare a farthing for laboratories, should forfeit the title of a civilised government. ([5], p. 132)

The Indian Government is essentially a tax squeezing machinery and not a government for the people. ([5], p. 134)

He sent a copy to John Bright (1811-89), the great British parliamentarian. In the covering letter, Prafulla Chandra drew Bright's attention to the annexation of Burma by the British and the additional burden imposed upon the Indian taxpayer in the form of an increased duty on salt. In his reply, Bright endorsed the article of the young student and expressed this hope ([8], p. 554):

You write what is true on the Indian question and I trust your effort will yield some fruit.

Bright authorised Prafulla Chandra to use his letter in any way he liked and Prafulla Chandra took the opportunity to spread some awareness — he sent Bright's letter to the press. The papers published an item with the headline "John Bright's letter to an Indian student". Reuter flashed the following passage from Bright's letter ([6], p. 64):

I regret with you and condemn the course of Lord Dufferin in Burma. It is a renewal of the old system of crime and guilt, which, we had hoped, had been for ever abandoned. There is an ignorance on the part of the public in this country and great selfishness here and in India as to our true interests in India. The departure from morality and true statesmanship will bring about calamity and perhaps ruin, which our children may witness and deplore.

#### *Nation-building through Science and Education*

After his return to the country, his Government service as a professor at Presidency College prevented P. C. Ray from taking a direct part in active politics. In any case,

his temperament and fragile health were perhaps not suited for a turbulent political life. But a nation-builder in the truest sense, he integrated his dedication to science with his love for the country. As he expressed in a letter (1921) to Smt. Basanti Devi, wife of Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das ([6], p. 233):

. . . in serving my favourite science I have only one idea in my mind, namely, that through her I should serve my country.

While a student at Edinburgh, Ray used to feel sad that while “every civilised country including Japan was adding to the world’s stock of knowledge”, “unhappy India was lagging behind”. He dreamt of a time when India would also be able to make significant contributions. Fifty years later, Ray would have the satisfaction of seeing the dawning of a new era when the people of India “have taken kindly to the zealous pursuit of different branches of Science” ([6], p. v). As expressed in ([3], p. 144), P. C. Ray “was very much at the centre of this immense transformation as an architect, model, witness and spokesperson”.

We must also remember that it was his patriotic zeal (combined with his passion for history and chemistry) that made P. C. Ray undertake the most painstaking work of collecting materials on the history of ancient Indian chemistry, from sources which were not easily accessible, and documenting them systematically. He writes at the end of the Preface of Vol. II of his *History of Hindu Chemistry* ([6], p. 164):

The Hindu nation with its glorious past and vast latent potentialities may yet look forward to a still more glorious future, and, if the perusal of these pages will have the effect of stimulating my countrymen to strive to regain their old position in the intellectual hierarchy of nations, I shall not have laboured in vain.

Thus, while P. C. Ray might not have been openly involved in the historic freedom movements for the *political* independence of India, all his academic and commercial activities were efforts towards the country’s *intellectual* and *economic* resurgence and independence. Keeping this aim, he chose the path of constructive work rather than an open confrontation with the alien Government. For, at the formative stages of creating strong centres of scientific research and industrial enterprises, P. C. Ray had to take care that political turmoil did not come in the way of realising the scientific and commercial rejuvenation that he was attempting. In fact, Ray even saw the colonial encounter, in spite of its shortcomings, as an opportunity for the resurrection of India’s greatness.<sup>2</sup>

2. To appreciate Ray’s position, one may recall an utterance of Swami Vivekananda (cf. *Prabuddha Bharata* 1930, p. 528): “You have not the capacity to manufacture a needle and you dare to criticise the English, — fools! Sit at their feet and learn from them the arts, industries and the practicality necessary for the struggle of existence.”

An episode at Presidency College illustrates Ray's prudent nationalism of utilising, to the fullest extent, all facilities under the colonial dispensation. Lord Rayleigh, the eminent scientist and the mentor of J. C. Bose, once visited the College and J. C. Bose took him round the College laboratory. The then Principal of the College took exception, asking Bose on what authority he "received outsiders into the Laboratory". Rabindranath Tagore was deeply hurt at the insult to J. C. Bose and urged him to resign and work in a new laboratory; Tagore planned to raise the money for the proposed laboratory from a generous donation promised by the Maharaja of Tripura. But Acharya Ray persuaded his friend and colleague against such a hasty step. Ray doubted whether it would be possible to provide comparable facilities at the new laboratory because of the sheer cost. Further, he pointed out that the Presidency laboratory was a property of the Indians as it had been built and equipped from the money extracted from India, not from England. Ray bluntly told Bose that his resignation would amount to "taking one's meal on the bare floor because of dissatisfaction at the action of the thief" ([9], pp. 175-76).

As a representative of the University of Calcutta at the Congress of the Universities of the Empire (1912), P. C. Ray argued for the proper recognition of the degrees from an Indian University and for an increase in the opportunities of admission of the Indian students to post-graduate courses in British Universities. Again, in his evidence before a Public Service Commission, he effectively highlighted the failure of the Government to recognise merit among the qualified Indian youth.

#### *P. C. Ray and National Education*

P. C. Ray was associated with the National Council of Education, Bengal ([9], pp. 209-10). The National Council was established on 11 March 1906 by Satis Chandra Mukherjee to organise a system of education — literary, scientific and technical — on national lines and under national control. It started the Bengal National College and School on 14 August 1906. This is the College which Sri Aurobindo joined as the first Principal (for a mere Rs 150) resigning from his Baroda College job (of Rs 710). Although, because of his job in a Government College, P. C. Ray could not become a formal member of the National Council during its inception, he influenced it with his ideas and ideals while remaining in the background. He helped in framing the syllabus, the course of studies, the scheme of examination and served as a paper-setter and examiner in Chemistry. After his retirement from Government service, he formally became a member of the National Council of Education in 1919. He served as the President of the Council from 1924 till his death in 1944. The Chemical Engineering building of the Council (now part of Jadavpur University) was named after him in 1952.

### *P. C. Ray and the Nationalist Movements*

While P. C. Ray toiled for the development of the intellectual and industrial resources of his country, he was aware that, without political independence, an economic salvation of the country was not possible, that justice was not to be expected from foreign rulers and that, without favourable economic and administrative conditions, the pursuit of knowledge would only cause frustration of an enormous magnitude.

Ray was fully sympathetic to *all* the three types of political agitations: the constitutional approach of the Moderates (comprising protests, prayers and petitions), the non-violent non-Cooperation movements, and the movements of the revolutionaries. He had a deep affection for both Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose; in fact, he had an admiration for the political stalwarts of *all* generations from *all* the three streams, ranging from the early Moderate leaders like S. N. Banerjee and G. K. Gokhale to the firebrand patriots of later years. As he said ([9], p. 224):

I have a really high opinion of young men like Subhas, Sasmal,<sup>3</sup> Prafulla Ghosh<sup>4</sup> and those who have made sacrifices for their motherland following Tilak, Gandhi, Aurobindo, Deshabandhu and others. Such examples of self-sacrifice are great assets.

Though, being in Government service, Ray could not join the anti-Partition movement, he watched it steadily from his “recess in the laboratory” and “his heart went out to it”. From his days at the Science College, when he was freed from the shackles of Government service and when a young generation of talented scientists had already been formed, P. C. Ray’s involvement with political and nationalist movements increased. He was in regular contact with political leaders like C. R. Das. He was present at the public meeting addressed by C. R. Das at Calcutta’s

3. Birendranath Sasmal (1881-1934), a barrister, was known as ‘Deshapran’ for his sacrifices in political and social work. To give a few examples: in response to Gandhiji’s call, he left his lucrative profession to plunge into the Non-Cooperation Movement; he defended (without fees) the accused in the Chittagong Armoury Raid case; he played a pivotal role as a relief worker during the Midnapore floods of 1913, 1920, 1926 and 1933. He was a close associate of Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das.

4. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh (1891-1983), the first Chief Minister of West Bengal, was a prominent Gandhian freedom fighter and social worker. After an illustrious academic career in which he obtained the Doctorate degree from Calcutta University (1920) for his chemical research on synthetic and natural dyes, Prafulla Ghosh became the first Indian to be appointed Deputy Assay Master of the Calcutta Mint. In 1921, Dr. P. C. Ghosh resigned from this secure Government job to join the Non-Cooperation Movement. During the freedom struggle, he suffered imprisonment several times. While in jail, he wrote his highly acclaimed Bengali book *Prachin Bharatiya Sabhyatar Itihas*, a compact, insightful and informative account of the history of ancient Indian civilisation. During his student days, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh had come in contact with revolutionaries like Pulinbehari Das. He remained a bachelor and an uncompromising idealist throughout his life. In his later years Dr. P. C. Ghosh became involved in the study of Sri Aurobindo.

Town Hall in 1919 to protest the infamous Rowlatt Act. Requested to speak, Ray declared that though a man of the laboratory, there arise occasions which demand that he should leave his test-tube to attend the call of the country. During the height of the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1924, the Acharya declared ([6], p. 228):

Science can afford to wait but Swaraj cannot.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of his severe health problem, P. C. Ray made frequent tours (1921-26) throughout India supporting the cause of the National Schools which had sprung up, of *khaddar*, and campaigning against untouchability. His contact with politics increasingly became so intimate that he was invited to preside over several district and provincial political conferences. However, though an admirer of Mahatma Gandhi, even an advocate of the *charkha*, the Acharya had cautioned against Gandhiji's blunders like involvement with the Khilafat movement ([9], p. 96):

We must not allow our loyalty to the mother country to be swamped by the wave of extra-territorial patriotism. India must not be a spoke in the Khilafat wheel gyrated from Istanbul. The *Swaraj* of India must be our one all-compelling goal . . .

People who were close to P. C. Ray could see how he used to be touched by the bravery, determination and sacrifice of the revolutionaries. Hemendra Prasad Ghosh<sup>6</sup> witnessed Ray's deep sorrow when the police discovered the bomb factory at Muraripukur<sup>7</sup> and arrested its workers. "Have the police been able to arrest all the members of the party?" was the enquiry of a concerned Ray when he learnt of the police search and subsequent arrests ([9], p. 174).

It is now known that P. C. Ray used to provide shelter and other help to revolutionaries, for days. Indeed, in the Government files, his name is recorded as a "revolutionary in the garb of a scientist" ([9], p. 272). It is also said that P. C. Ray assisted revolutionaries with ideas regarding preparation of explosives; this has been

5. It is not that the frail P. C. Ray, then in his sixties, was neglecting his research work in chemistry. His research on sulphur compounds around this period appears in journals like the *Journal of the Chemical Society* (London), *Journal of the Indian Chemical Society* and *Nature* (UK).

6. Hemendra Prasad Ghosh (1876-1962) was a renowned journalist and writer. Along with Sri Aurobindo, Bepin Chandra Pal, Shyam Sundar Chakravarti and Bejoy Chatterjee, he was on the editorial staff of the *Bande Mataram*.

7. The secret bomb manufacturing factory of the group of Bengal revolutionaries led by Barindra Kumar Ghosh and Ullaskar Dutta, the discovery of which led to the historic Muraripukur Bomb Case (or Alipore Bomb Case) during 1908-09. The Government tried to implicate Sri Aurobindo and he was arrested from his residence; he was acquitted and released after a trial lasting a year. Recall that Muraripukur was also the site of P. C. Ray's first major experiment in producing a large mass of bone-ash for preparing the super phosphate of lime required for his pharmaceutical venture. (see *MI* April 2014, pp. 235-36)

reported after his death by people who were directly involved ([2], p. 53). But, as Hemendra Prasad Ghosh says ([9], p. 168), the true history of Acharya Prafulla Chandra's contribution to the Independence movement will never be told, for this history is in part the history of underground movements "which must remain necessarily a mystery hidden and lost".

The Acharya's admiration for the great "Bagha Jatin" (Jatindranath Mukherjee) is mentioned by Prithwindranath Mukherjee (grandson of Bagha Jatin) in the book *Sadhak Biplabi Jatindranath* and the article 'Mahapralay'. He writes:<sup>8</sup>

Police records show Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray's eagerness to distribute the *Jugantar*, informing the editor that Jatindra Mukherjee [Bagha Jatin] knew him personally.

At that juncture, the publication of *Jugantar* was managed directly by Jatindranath Mukherjee. A student of the Acharya (Bibhuti Chakrabarti) manufactured bombs under Jatindranath's leadership. In an e-mail to this author, Prithwindranath Mukherjee informs: "Thanks to Acharya's admiration for Jatindranath, several thought-leaders of the future collaborated with him: Meghnad Saha, Sailen Ghosh, Jatin Seth, Jnan Ghosh, Rasiklal Datta, Jnan Mukherjee, Sisir Mitra, Bidhu Ray, Bires Guha, Nilratan and Jibanratan Dhar."<sup>9</sup> In Part II of this article, we had mentioned some of these illustrious students of the Acharya.

#### *A few Anecdotes*

Meghnad Saha, who imbibed his keen interest in ancient history and archaeology from his *guru* Acharya Ray, narrates an anecdote ([9], p. 212) which brings out P. C. Ray's sensitivity regarding the contributions of ancient Indians. Once, in an address at Lahore University, P. C. Ray was describing the chemical processes practised by ancient Indians. A young Englishman, a college teacher who had just arrived in India, was in the audience. P. C. Ray was annoyed by the sneering expression of the Englishman. After describing an ancient apparatus, Ray took in his hand a lump of *makaradhwaja*, resublimed mercury sulphide used as a traditional Indian medicine, and which was sometimes prescribed even by European physicians. And then remarked:

8. [overmanfoundation.wordpress.com/2011/10/](http://overmanfoundation.wordpress.com/2011/10/)

9. Arun Chandra Guha writes in *First Spark of Revolution* (Orient Longman (1971), p. 98): "The first batch of young scientists who gathered around Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray came almost exclusively from the ranks of the revolutionaries. Meghnad Saha, Satyendranath Bose, Jatin Sett, Sailen Ghose, Rasik Lal Dutt, Jnan Ghose, Jnan Mukherji, Sisir Mitra, Bidhu Roy, Bires Guha and others were all directly or indirectly connected with the revolutionary organisation."

Look here, my friends, with such crude apparatus, the Indians, two thousand years ago, used to prepare such a fine chemical and used it to alleviate human sufferings, and this at a time when the ancestors of our friend over there were eating raw berries and wearing raw hides.

The Englishman was to become a great admirer of Sir P. C. Ray and his other Indian friends.

We mention another episode ([9], p. 174) which shows how the Acharya protected national interests with nationalist self-respect. P. C. Ray was the patron of a tiny steamer company which owned one passenger steamer that plied on the river Kapatakhsi and served his native village. A rich European company tried various means to crush the tiny company but the Acharya's resourcefulness overcame all difficulties.<sup>10</sup> Unable to throttle the local company, the European concern made a proposal to buy the company. An interview was arranged at the Acharya's room between the Acharya and a representative of the European company. The European representative arrived at the appointed time. The Acharya who was lying in bed, reading Macaulay's *History of England*, asked him to take his seat. When the representative broached the proposal to purchase the Indian company's vessel, the Acharya replied:

I have a counter-proposal to make. You are a big concern with hundreds of steamers serving many lines. Ours is an insignificant concern with only one vessel and serving a short line. Why not let us alone by leaving the line to us? We shall be grateful to you.

Unprepared for such a rebuff, the representative continued to argue and tried to explain that, having fought the Indian company for many years, they could not give up their line as their prestige would be at stake. The Acharya retorted:

You talk of prestige! You have come here only for exploiting the resources of the country. And what of our prestige? We are sons of the soil, the steamer serves my own village and the neighbouring villages. If we sell our concern to you the loss to our prestige will be irreparable. Do you see that?

The European representative returned, crest-fallen.

This fighting spirit can be seen in Acharya Ray even in his old age, when he had retired from public life. In 1941, the British Association for the Advancement of Science adopted a Charter of Scientific Principles in which fascism was con-

10. The reader may also recall the anecdote about the Scindia Steam Navigation Company (and the accompanying footnote) in Part IV of this article in the March issue of *Mother India*, p. 241.



demned, but not imperialism. We quote below excerpts from the letter the 80-year-old ailing Acharya wrote to Sir Richard Gregory, President of the Association ([9], p. 175):

Indian scientists would, however, take this opportunity to point out to the scientists of Britain and of other countries that the object of science for the promotion of human welfare is not only frustrated by Fascism but also by Imperialism as it operates, for instance, in India and other dependencies of Britain.

The Acharya cites instances:

Industrialisation which is essential for the prosperity and strength of a nation in the modern age has been persistently opposed and even recently the Government of India has refused to support the growth of the automobile industry in India and the Secretary of State for India has spoken in Parliament against the manufacture of internal combustion engines in this country.

#### *Relationship with the Government*

P. C. Ray never failed to condemn the glaringly unjust Government policies that were detrimental to the flowering of the efficient and meritorious Indian youth. Raw English graduates of ordinary qualifications would be appointed in the Provincial Educational Services with high salaries while experienced Indian professors of proven merit were made to rot as subordinates with relatively lower salaries. At every possible opportunity, Ray would criticise the policy, accusing the Government of squandering the poor taxpayer's money to provide employment to the undeserving unemployed from Britain. His presidential address at an annual session of the Indian Science Congress, where he made a strong articulation of his protest against the unjust Government policies, had created quite a stir at the time and was effective in advancing the cause of Science in India ([7], p. 43). He made similar tirades, in appropriate forums, against the Government apathy towards the development of Indian industries. As a member of the All-India Chemical Service Commission, he fearlessly recorded his opinions in a note of dissent.

In spite of P. C. Ray's vehement criticisms of its policies and the reports of his involvement with the revolutionaries, the British Government valued P. C. Ray as a chemist. P. C. Ray too would provide constructive suggestions to the Government when approached. In his reminiscences, Satya Sundar Deb (of Bengal Potteries) mentions ([9], p. 157) an incident showing the high esteem in which the Acharya was held by some of the British rulers. One day, while he was with the Acharya at the Science College, a large envelope was brought to the Acharya containing a

the then Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University.<sup>13</sup>

When the colonial Government resorted to an oppressive reign in Bengal, the birthplace of the Swadeshi movement in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, as a member of the Legislative Council, counselled the Government to adopt a conciliatory approach. One can see from his speech how the example of a personality like P. C. Ray helped Gokhale in presenting the case for the state. Emphasising that the Bengalis are “in many respects a most remarkable people in all India” and that “they have great qualities which are sometimes lost sight of”, Gokhale said ([6], p. 124; [9], p. 168):

In almost all the walks of life open to the Indians the Bengalees are among the most distinguished. Some of the greatest social and religious reformers of recent times have come from their ranks. Of orators, journalists and politicians, Bengal possesses some of the most brilliant . . . take science or law or literature. Where will you find another scientist in all India to place by the side of Dr. J. C. Bose or Dr. P. C. Ray or a jurist like Dr. Ghose or a poet like Rabindra Nath Tagore? My Lord, these men are not mere freaks of nature. They are the highest products of

13. Bires Chandra Guha (1904-62), one of the most distinguished alumni of Calcutta University, belonged to a family of freedom fighters of Barisal — the great Aswini Kumar Datta was his maternal uncle. Inducted into the revolutionary Jugantar party at the age of 11, Bires joined the Non-Cooperation Movement of Mahatma Gandhi (1921) for which he was imprisoned for a month and expelled from Presidency College, Calcutta. Completing B.Sc. (Hons.) in Chemistry from St. Xavier’s College (1923) and M.Sc. in Organic Chemistry from Calcutta University (1925), and after a fruitful year of research in Chemistry under the guidance of Acharya Ray, Bires Guha was preparing to go to England with Tata Memorial Scholarship (1926) when his passport was cancelled due to the adverse police report.

Future events will give an idea of the historical importance of the Acharya’s successful intervention in getting Bires his passport for going abroad. After his Ph.D. and D.Sc. from London University under Sir J. C. Drummond, a leading biochemist, Guha moved (1930) to the Cambridge Biochemical Laboratory which was at the peak of its glory under the leadership of Nobel Laureate Sir F. G. Hopkins, the father of British Biochemistry. Apart from Hopkins himself, Guha interacted with a galaxy of brilliant visiting scientists including the Hungarian Nobel Laureate Szent-Györgyi and the American biochemist C. G. King (both were involved in the discovery of Vitamin C).

With such a strong foundation, Guha made life-long prolific and pioneering research on vitamins and nutrition at the Bengal Chemical (1932-35) and Calcutta University (1936-43 and from 1953 till his untimely death), shaped the Food and Nutrition policy of the Govt. of India as the Chief Technical Adviser to the Dept. of Food (from 1944), and contributed immensely to the development of biochemical research and education in India. During the devastating Bengal famine of 1943, when there was a tremendous scarcity of milk and protein, Guha saved the lives of numerous infants by his preparation of artificial vegetable milk with almost the full nutritive value of cow milk; he also prepared protein substitutes by isolating proteins from grass and leaves and demonstrated means of blending such protein with human diet. B. C. Guha was a Founding Member of the Indian Institute for Medical Research (now named Indian Institute of Chemical Biology) at Calcutta and contributed to the Damodar Valley Corporation (from 1948). Dr. Bires Guha was married to Dr. Phulrenu Guha (1911-2006), the illustrious freedom fighter and social worker, whose wise counsel and devoted guidance channelised his creative energies to research and national development. For more details on his life and work, see the article “Bires Chandra Guha — Father of modern biochemistry in India” by I. B. Chatterjee and D. P. Burma, *Current Science* Vol 87(6), 25 Sept 2004, pp. 823-30.

which the race is regularly capable; and a race of such capability cannot, I repeat, be put down by coercion.

In fact, as a veritable embodiment of the high ideals of ancient India, the life and work of P. C. Ray itself served as a reminder of the greatness of his nation. This can be seen in the numerous tributes to P. C. Ray from his international contemporaries, which eventually flow into a salutation of India! For instance, while referring to the spirit of dedication and humility in P. C. Ray, Prof. F. G. Donnan remarked ([8], p. 66):

I found then and afterwards that the words modesty and devotion could best describe the personality of Sir P. C. Ray. From the great Buddha onwards through the stream of time, these qualities of mind and spirit have ever been the characteristic of the great leaders of Indian thought and Indian ideals.

*The agony of the patriot*

P. C. Ray was fond of quoting the following lines of Wordsworth (cf. [6], p.411; [9], p. 82) which possibly may give us a feel for Ray's agony at the misery of the once-glorious India:

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight  
    To me did seem  
Apparell'd in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
It is not now as it hath been of yore; —  
    Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
    By night or day,  
The things which I have seen I now can see no more. . .

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

*(To be continued)*

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*But the oblivion that succeeds the fall,  
Had blotted the crowded tablets of the past,  
And all that was destroyed must be rebuilt  
And old experience laboured out once more.  
All can be done if the god-touch is there.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

(*Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 3)