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Pratyush Kumar – Madan Mishra (Eds.)

Recollections and Reminiscences of a Long Life by Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha



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Portrait of Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha.
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Preface

Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha was a constitutionalist in the league of Indian public leaders in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. Much against his family's wishes, he became the first "Bihari" Hindu to be called at the Bar in London in 1893; member of the Imperial Legislative Council (1910-1912); played a prominent role in Bihar's separation from Bengal in 1912 and Orissa's (now Odisha) separation from Bihar in 1936; the only Indian anywhere in the British Indian Empire to ever hold the position of Finance Member of the Governor's Executive Council in Bihar (1920-1926); leader of the opposition in Bihar (1930-1936); Vice Chancellor of Patna University (1936-1944); and, a journalist of repute associated with newspapers like *The Indian People* and *The Leader* of Allahabad, *The Behar Times*, *The Beharee*, and *The Searchlight* of Patna; founder-editor of *Kayastha Samachar* since 1900 which became *The Hindustan Review* from 1903 which he continued editing and publishing till his death in 1950.

Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha was an important constitutional leader in India before the entry of Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose who turned India's struggle for independence into a mass movement from the 1920s by bringing the peasantry and working classes who constituted the bulk of Indian population into the mainstream. Despite distancing from the Indian National Congress in 1920, Sachchidanand Sinha remained active in public life in different capacities by being part of the British Indian government and its limited representational bodies for Indians. It is worth noting how as an elderly statesman and the oldest living parliamentarian he became the Interim Chairman of the Constituent Assembly of India for the first two days of its sitting in December, 1946.

Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha had started writing his autobiography titled "Recollections and Reminiscences of a Long Life" serialized in monthly installments of his journal *The Hindustan Review* almost every month from July, 1946 until December 1949. Considering the pioneering and important role Dr. Sinha played in India's public life in the last years of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, locating his unpublished autobiography in the archives and in the collection of the volumes of *The Hindustan Review* at the Sinha Library in Patna came as a surprise to us. But it also offered us the opportunity to publish it as a single volume for the very first time. We collected, compiled and edited it over several years as a single volume with a detailed and contextualized introduction for the first time before readers in 2022 brought out by our friend, Mr. Pankaj Sharma, proprietor of Anamika Publishers located in New Delhi. We are thankful to him for that. We are also extremely grateful for the positive and encouraging foreword by Prof. Dr. Domenico Francavilla,

from the University of Turin, Italy and to Prof. Dr. Mahendra Prasad Singh, former Head of the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi, India, for writing its afterword.

This current edition is being brought out in an open access format by the leading German publisher Nomos in its series *Bibliotheca Academica – Rechtswissenschaft (Historical Law Studies)* for a wider audience across the world who are interested in India's legal, cultural and constitutional history. We have thoroughly revised this volume by revising the introduction, contextualizing and adding references to the text wherever Sinha made references to secondary literature, adding a glossary, preface and a detailed index. In order to emphasize on a subject or a generally exalted view of government and governmental institutions, Sinha often used capital letters and we have let it remain despite differences in style and diction. Few sentences are incomplete or disjointed because the original pages were brittle and broken and could not have been reconstructed.* The editors apologize to their readers for this for no fault of theirs. We are extremely grateful to Dr. Vanessa Schaeffner of Nomos publishers for all her help and assistance in bringing out this work.

Last but not the least, the editor Pratyush Kumar would like to thank his Doktorvater Prof. Dr. Gunther Teubner for his constant support and guidance and the Humboldt Stiftung for its generous support to pursue research without any let or hindrance. Both the editors are thankful to their respective families for their unstinted support.

* The editors have to locate a library or archive other than Sinha Library or Bihar State Archives, both located in Patna, which might have all the issues of *The Hindustan Review* from 1946 till 1949. The Library at the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library (earlier Nehru Memorial Museum and Library) in New Delhi has issues of *The Hindustan Review* to which the editors did not have access in order to cross-check the few passages with brittle pages. Perhaps the "India Office" in London might also have issues of the said journal for the relevant period to which the editors did not have access so far. Maybe, it can be rectified in the future if the editors are able to locate all the original volumes of the said period.

Foreword by Prof. (Dr.) Domenico Francavilla*

It is a great honour and a pleasure for me to write this foreword for the autobiography of Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha, *Recollections and Reminiscences of a Long Life*, which is now published thanks to the work of Pratyush Kumar and Madan Mishra. The reader will be able to observe an extraordinary life through a dense, precise, and insightful description of personal and collective facts, of small and epochal events, which are strictly interlinked and provide a vivid account of the various threads that composed the life of Dr. Sinha.

Dr. Sinha wrote these pages with an admirable style, which is always interesting, sometimes ironical, never complacent. As expected, the first part places his life on the firm roots of his origins, by describing the province, district and place of birth, the ancestral home and family, the influences – and legacy – of his parents and home. His description of the intellectual and moral background and of the education he received at home and school, and then at Patna College, show the formative steps of a personality who was a thoughtful intellectual who never detached knowledge and ethics.

From this grounding an extremely active life emerges in the public sphere, at the political level meant in its broader sense. The many experiences, among which the Congress Deputation of 1914, the Deputy-Presidentship of the Central Assembly, the Presidentship of the Provincial Legislative Council (1921-1922), the career as a Member of Government (1921-1926), as the Leader of the Opposition (1930-1936), and the Vice Chancellorship of Patna University (1936-1944), show a sharp and calm mind dealing with the responsibility of the roles he played and the intricacies of politics.

The book provides a personal perspective on many places, from Patna to Calcutta, from Delhi to London, and on many people of his time, including Lieutenant-Governors and Governors, Viceroy and British Royalty. Dr. Sinha can convey with few words the spirit of an epoch and the personality of the prominent figures he met, and a particularly interesting picture of relationships between communities, for instance the Indians and the British, the Muslims and the Hindus.

Dr. Sinha was the first President of the Constituent Assembly of India. His long life brought him until the dawn of the new India coming out of the colonial period. As a lawyer, journalist, educationalist and statesman he provided a contribution to the spirit of an “India on the move”, an expression by Pandit

* Prof. Dr. Domenico Francavilla is a renowned Professor of Comparative Law, Comparative Private Law and Indian Legal System at the University of Turin, Turin, Italy with authored books like *The Roots of Hindu Jurisprudence* (which is acclaimed all over the world) and *Il Diritto nell'India Contemporanea* to his credit, apart from many other edited and co-edited volumes to his credit.

Nehru he quotes in the inaugural address to the Constituent Assembly, which he ends with the wish that the “proceedings may be marked not only by good sense, public spirit, and genuine patriotism, but also by wisdom, toleration, justice, and fairness to all; and above all with a vision which may restore India to her pristine glory, and give her a place of honour and equality amongst the great nations of the world” (Constituent Assembly of India Debates, 9th December 1946).

As a final word, the Western knowledge of India has often been very abstract and stereotyped. An additional reason to read this book is that, through the story of a prominent Indian as Dr. Sinha was, it shows once again the infinity of facets and nuances in the intellectual and practical life of India.

Torino, December 2021

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