

Inspiring Speeches

During the early years (1886-1905), when the Congress mainly pleaded for better representation, Malaviyaji spoke in the Congress sessions on a number of issues. These speeches became eye openers with startling facts and new lines of thinking, both to the Congressmen and the government. The hard-hitting speeches on government policies, beautifully couched with substantiating statements and logic, could neither easily be attacked, discarded nor digested by the rulers. This was the main reason why many British officials, including the viceroys, treated Malaviyaji with great respect. As Arnold Ward, a former British

MP said, "He speaks strongly against the government and lashes the English statesmen".

While innumerable passages from his brilliant speeches can be quoted, some selected excerpts suffice to give an idea of his approach on a wide variety of subjects:

Taxes (Congress Session, Allahabad, 1888): A grain parcher earns his daily bread by exposing himself to a blazing fire even throughout the hottest months of summer... in some cases the tax has been imposed on even such miserable men as grain parchers; and what is more painful to have to record is... the revising officer ordered the grain parcher to produce his books, and so prove his income... Fancy a grain parcher keeping books; you might as well expect a beggar selling lucifers in the streets of London to keep books!

Drain of Our Money (Congress Session, Allahabad, 1892): If our country were not being drained of its money year after year by the inordinate employment of persons whose home it is not, and who would never make it their home, we would never have given such painfully earnest attention to the matter as we are now giving... (In 1889-90) about 16500 Europeans and Eurasians drew 9.5 crore nearly as against 2.5 crore drawn by about 11500 Natives.

Starvation, Ruining our Industry and Trade (Congress Session, Lahore, 1893): 20 million people had died of starvation in the previous few years and 40 million lived on one meal a day. Where are the weavers, where are those men who lived by different industries and manufactures, and where are the manufactures which were sent to England and other European countries in very large quantities year after year?... In the matter of the services, in the matter of trade, our people are not enjoying one-hundredth part of the profit and gain which they used to enjoy fifty years ago.

Killing Indigenous Industry (Congress Session, Calcutta, 1896): England pours in the product of her industries into India. Indian industries have been destroyed by the competition of England and other countries.

Presidential Address, United Provinces Conference, Lucknow, 1908): Now in India we are surrounded on all sides with products of English mills and manufacturers. Even the little pins we use, we have to get from England. This influx of foreign manufactures has killed our indigenous

arts and industries, and has taken the bread away from millions of our people. What they used to earn in the form of wages goes now to enrich the foreigner, and leaves India the poorer for its loss.

Swadeshi Movement (Congress Sessions, Calcutta, 1906 and Surat, 1907): I look upon it as a part of a religious duty which we owe to our fellowmen. I consider it the Religion of Humanity... the Religion of Humanity demands that you should promote the Swadeshi movement... When you find such terrible suffering around you, their resources so poor, it is a religious duty cast upon every man of healthy feelings to promote, by giving preference over foreign commodities, even at some sacrifice...

The Germans have partially destroyed the indigo manufacture. The Germans are flooding the markets with foreign sugar; 7.5 crore worth of sugar was imported last year. There is enough sugar cane growing in this country. Do you imagine for a minute, what the importation of sugar means to your people? It means that thousands of people have been thrown out of employment and have added to the number of those who are living on insufficient food.

The time has come when capitalists must be induced to come forward to invest money in introducing machinery, in trying to produce manufactures just as they are produced in foreign countries. The educated men and men of capital must combine to bring about the growth of Indian industries... Patriotism needs it, humanity dictates it, and every possible consideration you can have will enforce the carrying out of the Swadeshi movement in the most earnest spirit...

Scathing Attack (Congress Session, Poona, 1895): We have impeached the administration on almost every conceivable ground. We charge the Government of England with having saddled us with an unnecessarily costly expenditure on the Civil Service of India, we charge them with having forced upon us a crushingly heavy military expenditure. We charge them with indulging in a great waste of India's money beyond the borders of India; we charge them with want of fairness in their dealings with India... we charge them – the Government of India, the Government of England, and the people of England with them – with being responsible for the loss of millions of lives which are lost in every decade from starvation, largely the result of over-taxation and inefficient administration.

Demand for Enquiry (Congress Session, Poona, 1895): Why make us suffer by reason of your inability to attend to our concerns and by preventing us from attending them... Educated

Indians... have been praying for an enquiry, a full and fair enquiry, into the administration of this country during the past forty years...

Famine and Poverty (United Provinces Conference, Lucknow, 1908): Since 1860 we have had twenty-two famines, and it has been estimated that nearly twenty nine million lives have been lost... But the enormous mortality of more than eighty-two lakh caused during the great famine of 1876-78 opened the eyes of our administrators... Notwithstanding this recommendation (of the Famine Commission to give first place to irrigation), the Government favoured Railways even times more than irrigation... Every famine enquiry has left an imperishable record of the extreme poverty of the people...

There is no country on earth which is poorer than India, and none where official salaries range higher than they do in India... the causes of the present discontent lie in the... deep and widespread poverty of the people; in the cost of administration, and therefore taxation, being heavier than the people can bear; disregard of the just claims of Indians to appointments... and higher share in administration; disregard of Indian public opinion in administering the affairs of India... Several of these poor people go undefended and consequently gross injustice is done to them. Cases of police oppression occur in almost every district...

Administration and Expenditure (Congress Presidential Speech, Lahore, 1909): The reforms which had been effected under the Act of 1892 still left us without any real voice in administration of the country... administration was not being conducted in the best interests of the people; it continued to be conducted on extravagantly costly lines; level of taxation was maintained much higher than was necessary; military expenditure was far beyond capacity of the country to bear; excessively large portion of the revenues was being spent on Imperial purposes and a very inadequate portion on purposes which would directly benefit the people, such as promotion of general, scientific, agricultural, industrial and technical education and the provision of medical relief and sanitation...

Education (Presidential Address, United Provinces Conference, Lucknow, 1908): One of the important causes for the widespread poverty in this country is the decline of indigenous arts and industries, and Congress has urged the establishment of technical schools and colleges at important centres throughout the country and the encouragement of indigenous arts and industries.

Poor Progress in Education (Special Provincial Congress, Lucknow, 1917): In India, after nearly sixty years of the great education despatch of 1854... the percentage of the school going is still below twenty... Mr Gokhale introduced the Elementary Education Bill which would have permitted elementary education being made compulsory in certain areas and certain conditions, and... the Bill was defeated by the opposition of the bureaucracy that govern us...

Indian Soldiers had done a commendable job (in World War I) and their bravery and sacrifice were praised by the British ministers and politicians. When Malaviyaji was giving some suggestions in the Imperial Council in 1917, the president often interfered with obtrusive comments and once asked him to sit down. Malaviyaji, known for his silver tongue and cool persuasiveness, gave a threat before leaving the Council in protest: I will now present my case in front of my countrymen. And in less than a week every Indian soldier, whether serving in Mid East or elsewhere, or stationed to maintain the security of the borders of India, will leave the weapons and return back! Let alone the British officers, even the British government may try and stop them, if they can!

Reference: Visionary Of Modern India : Madan Mohan Malaviya