

# **LANGUAGE IN INDIA**

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## **An Eyewitness Account of the Third Indian National Congress in 1887 at Madras**

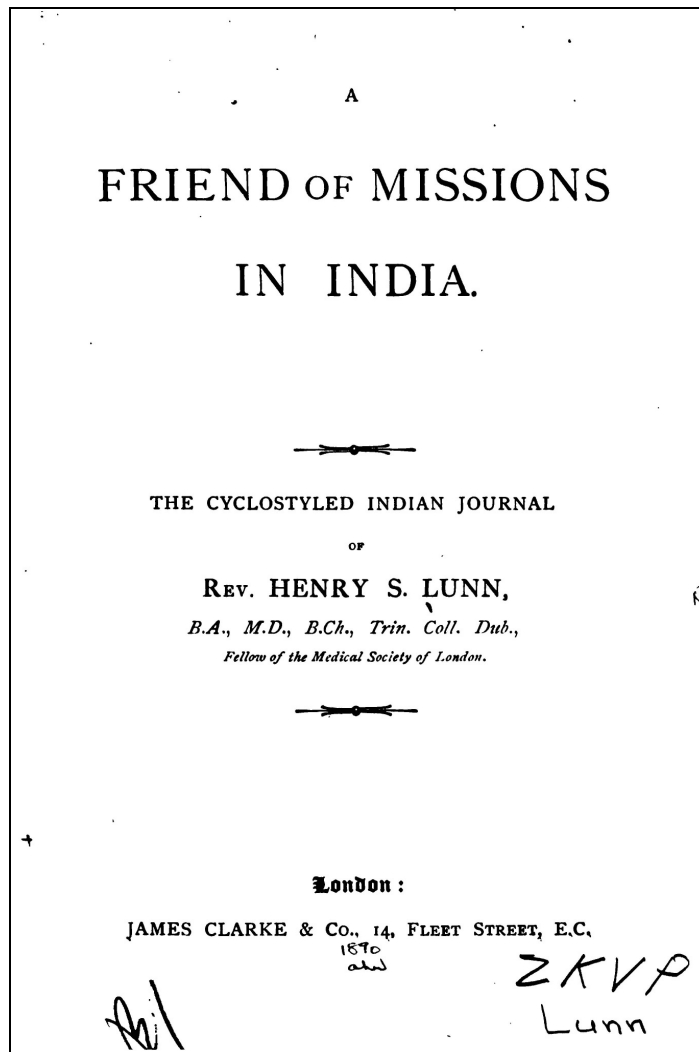
**Excerpts from Dr. Henry Lunn's Book  
*A Friend of Missions in India 1890***

**Presented with a Brief Introduction by  
M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.**

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Excerpts from *A Friend of Missions in India* by Henry S. Lunn, B.A., M.D., 1890. James Clark & Co. London. Taken from [www.books.google.com](http://www.books.google.com)



Henry Lunn's View of India and Its People and Freedom

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An Eyewitness Account of the Third Indian National Congress in 1887 at Madras by Dr. Henry Lunn, with a Brief Introduction by M. S. Thirumalai

Henry Lunn was a medical missionary to India. He was an Irish missionary from the United Kingdom, who served in several Christian hospitals in Tamilnadu, particularly in the Thanjavur district. He arrived in India with his wife Ethel only about six weeks before the Third National Indian Congress which was held in Madras from December 28, 1887. The First Indian National Congress was held in Bombay in 1885, and the Second Congress was held in Calcutta in 1886 and the Third Congress was held in Madras in 1887. Some detailed descriptions of these Congresses are presented in my earlier articles in Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com). A list of these articles is given at the end of this paper.

### **In Favor of Educating the Lower and Poorer Classes**

Dr. Lunn had a strong sense of support for the Indian people even as he felt that India was still in the making as a single, united, distinct nation. He started writing his journal as soon as he arrived in India. His first letter (journal) is dated November 15, 1887. He had some strong views against the current missionary focus of the missionaries in India; in particular, he was not very enthusiastic about imparting secular education through missionary effort. Not that he was against secular education but he felt that the secular education imparted by the Christian schools and colleges benefited mostly the people in the upper strata of the social ladder.

### **Saddened by Indian "Servitude"**

Dr. Lunn was clearly against what he considered to be the "servitude" of Indians in general toward their English masters. He was in support of the missionaries learning Indian languages and thus mix with the people more freely eliminating the "social gulf" that existed between them and Indians. While he was not dismissing English as an appropriate means for education, he seemed to be in support of Indian language education.

### **Indian National Congress Attracted Delegates from All Regions and Social Groups**

The following excerpts are taken from his book *A Friend of Missions in India* available through the digitized books in Google [www.books.google.com](http://www.books.google.com). These excerpts give an eyewitness account of the Third Indian National Congress in Madras in 1887.

That the Indian National Congress actually received delegates from a variety of social and religious groups in this Madras Session and in every session is very clear from this account. It is also clear that Indian participants never thought of total independence from the British Empire. The eloquence of early Indian leadership and their ability to work together also come out well in this eyewitness account.

**Excerpts from *A Friend of Missions in India* by Henry S. Lunn, B.A., M.D., 1890. James Clark & Co. London. The headings are inserted by M. S. Thirumalai.**

### **Worshipping English Masters**

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Everything here conduces to a national pride of the worst type. The evidences of the power and greatness of England meet one on every side. Mr. Patterson tells me that a statue of the Queen in Madras, which was erected to celebrate the Jubilee, is worshipped by many Hindus; and the reverence for the Queen-Empress by the women of India is very great. They tell their husbands: "Ah, you have a woman over you all!" and they pray that she may be long spared, as they firmly believe that her death would mean a great increase in the tyranny which is now exerted over them by their husbands. I mention this to show how large a place the Queen-Empress fills in the popular imagination. And this exaggerated respect and reverence applies to everything English, missionaries included.

### **What Should an English Person Do?**

The consequence is that nothing but an incessant watchfulness, and a constant conscious reverting to the great Christian principles of equality, justice, and humility, can enable any Englishman to preserve a right demeanour towards the natives. (page 5)

### **Learn Indian Languages to Develop Love for Indians!**

Goudie is the best Tamil scholar in the district at present. He is also a man thoroughly in sympathy with the natives. This may seem a strange comment on any missionary, but it isn't. These two things — a thorough knowledge of the language, and a true understanding of the native mind — appear inseparable; and it seems to me, as a mere onlooker, a very grave question whether the effectiveness of many of our men is not seriously crippled by the present policy of keeping them in the large towns to teach English speaking native children. In this way men live for years in India without knowing the language and without ever getting into touch with the natives. (Page 7)

### **Sectarian Rivalry Among the Hindus**

**Tuesday, Nov. 29.** — Simpson, Ethel and I went this evening to an adjoining parish to see a Sivite festival (festival of Siva). Siva or Shiva with Vishnu and Brahma constitute the Hindu triad of supreme deities, which sprang from Brahma, the all-pervading mind. Amongst the philosophic Brahmans, Siva stands for the conception of destruction as the necessary precedent of consequent reproduction in that eternal metamorphosis which is ever going on in nature. More popularly Siva is worshipped merely as the destroyer, and in this character is worshipped by three-fourths of the Tamil-speaking people of Southern India. The Sivites are distinguished from the Vishnavites in appearance by three horizontal marks across the forehead, whilst the Vishnavites are vertical. Between these two sects there is the bitterest animosity, and discussions as to which is the greater god frequently end in the disputants " Proving their doctrine orthodox, By apostolic blows and knocks." (Page 10)

### **Meeting a National Indian Christian, a Leader of the Indian National Congress - Invitation to Attend the Third Congress**

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**An Eyewitness Account of the Third Indian National Congress in 1887 at Madras by Dr. Henry Lunn, with a Brief Introduction by M. S. Thirumalai**

**Thursday, Dec. 1, 1887.** — At dinner to-day we had a visit from Mr. Subramanyam, a Christian native barrister, one of Mr. W. O. Simpson's earliest converts. He belongs to the Brahman caste, and is therefore much fairer in complexion than the low caste native. He is a graduate of Madras University, and a most cultured and gentlemanly man.

### **The Objectives of the Indian National Congress - A Comparison of the Irish and Indian Attitudes toward the British Crown**

Saturday, Dec. 3, 1887— This evening we (Ethel, Simpson, and I) went to dine at Subramanyam's, and had a most enjoyable evening. Mrs. Subramanyam is a very superior native Christian, the daughter of one of the earliest native Christian ministers. Excepting for a few shades of colour it was difficult to realize that we were not dining with an English gentleman. I found that Subramanyam was a prominent member of the National Congress which is to hold its third meeting in Madras on the 26<sup>th</sup>. The object of the Congress is to stimulate a national sentiment for the whole of India, which is at present a conglomeration of nations of the most mixed description, only held together by the tie of the English crown, The Congress is as much as possible elective and representative of the whole of India, and its founders hope that by degrees the Government will bestow upon it administrative powers, and elevate it into a statutory Parliament. There is one great contrast between this movement and the Irish National movement. The bitterness and hatred of England which has so much characterized the Irish movement are almost entirely non-existent here. As Subramanyam said "The very last thing we desire is to be rid of English rule. We cannot do without England for at least two hundred years yet. All we ask is that England will carry out her principles now she has herself educated us into accepting them, and will give us the right to govern ourselves as we develop the ability to do so." These are not the exact words but they are the pith of a long conversation.

### **Spacious Grounds and Home of Indian Elites**

To return to the home, the house was a delightful one, truly Indian in character, surrounded by cocoa-nut palms, mango trees, and all that luxuriant undergrowth which only the tropics can produce. In the centre of the lawn in front of the house, five fountains played in a fish-pool, which was illuminated with lime-light for our benefit. The whole scene when thus lit up was about as like fairyland or the Arabian Nights as could possibly be imagined.

After dinner we went to a most remarkable gathering at the house of Doctor Jesudasan, one of the three M.D.'s of Madras University, who, strange to say, are all Christians.

### **A Meeting of Hindus and Christians in a Christian Meeting in Madras**

We formed part of a small party invited to meet the Church missionaries. Besides Subramanyam, his wife and ourselves, there were present about four Europeans and about twenty prominent Hindus or native Christians. Amongst the Hindus were Sir Madava Rao, late premier of Travancore, and Governor of Baroda during the imprisonment of the Gaekwar ; a prominent

Vakil (barrister-solicitor) called Ananda Charlu, who is the secretary and one of the leading spirits in the National Congress; Bashyer Ayengar, a Vakil and Professor of Law in the Presidency College ; and Sashaiyer Shastri Professor of Sanscrit in the Presidency College. These four are all Brahmans. There was also present Dr. Pulney Andy, the founder of the new Christian National Church of India, which is an attempt to found a Christian Society, independent of any European assistance, a praiseworthy attempt, but one which does not seem likely to succeed at present. Mr. F-I — and Mr. H were present, but did not make much use of the splendid opportunity.

### **Extracting Toddy from Coconut Trees!**

[December, 4, 1887] Tuesday. — I went to call this morning on Subramanyam to see the toddy extracted from the cocoa nut trees in his plantation. It was a most interesting proceeding. The servants of the native dealers, who rent the trees, climb the trees night and morning, and fix a chatty or earthenware vessel around the end of the wounded bud of a cocoa nut blossom. During the next twelve hours the juice which would feed the young cocoa nuts, if the bud were unwounded, runs into the vessel, and is removed at the next climbing. When removed it is already slightly fermented, and after being kept twelve hours is decidedly alcoholic. On every tree thus tapped a license is paid to Government, but nothing is paid for trees which are only used for growing nuts.

### **Checking Out the Objectives of Indian National Congress with Indian Leaders**

After seeing this done I had a long talk with Subramanyam on the Indian National Congress. I found him very anxious to introduce me to some of the leaders in the Indian movement. Accordingly I arranged to call for him at the High Court in the afternoon, and go to meet some of his friends, as the opportunity was one not to be lightly missed. In the interim, I read as much of the proceedings of the last two congresses as I possibly could, and had a long conversation with Patterson, who has considerable hopes from the movement, but at the same time is keenly alive to its weaknesses. Thus supplied with a quiver full of criticisms, I went to Subramanyam's, and thence to the office of the "Hindu," the leading National paper in Madras. Here we had a two hours' interview with the Editor, G. Subramania Iyer, a very able Brahman; the Sub-Editor whose name I just forget now; Ananda Charlu, the secretary of the movement, and a leading barrister-solicitor; Pulney Andy, the founder of National Christian Church , and two other prominent Vakils whose names I forget. I found that they expected me to do the talking first, so I hurled Peterson's objections and criticisms at them, with the admirable result of eliciting a most capital conversation, and expression of their views. Having learned all I could, I returned to Royapettah laden with pamphlets, and sat up into the small hours of the morning digesting these, and writing-t an article on them for the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

### **The Weaknesses of the Movement of Indian National Congress**

The main weaknesses of the movement are, 1st, the lack of a popular constituency to choose representatives for any National assembly; 2nd, The inability of the movement to grapple with the grave social questions of Indian life, because on all such questions the Congress is deeply and bitterly divided. 3rd, The lack of any common bond of interest beyond that which comes from a general spirit of opposition to centralized government. The value of the movement consists in, 1st, The bond of fellowship, and common nationality, which it is creating between the diverse races, and geographically widely separated peoples, of this great Indian Empire; 2nd, The way in which it is educating the leading men of India to take an interest in public affairs; 3rd, The tendency which all such movements must inevitably have to spread Western ideas, and to shorten the reign of caste. Altogether I was very pleased with my interview with these men; and should like very much to accept their invitation y come up to Madras again for the Congress.

### **On the Cruelty of British India Tax System**

Thursday. — We were to have left Madras this morning at 7 a.m. but a heavy rain prevented us leaving before noon. Our stay in Madras has been a most delightful experience and has given us a very pleasant first-glimpse of missionary life. We have received the greatest possible kindness from Mr. and Mrs. Patterson, and all the Madras friends, and shall have none but pleasant memories of these first weeks in India. Our first resting place after leaving Madras was to be Arcot, a town 65 miles distant, of 60,000 inhabitants. We were seven hours traversing this distance. Our object in calling at Arcot was to see the medical work carried on by the American Presbyterian Mission. We had been invited to stay with Dr. Heckhuis, the medical officer of the mission, and he gave us a very hearty welcome after our long journey.

Friday, —The other story which Heckhuis told us was of a different type altogether. He is of opinion that the salt tax is a very grievous burden to the poor people, and is inflicted with much needless severity. If a poor man is found giving earth taken off his own land to his own cattle, and containing salt, he is at once imprisoned. One day a zealous young salt commissioner, who did not know much Tamil, met an old woman carrying dust in a chatty. He tasted it, and at once declared that it contained salt. The old dame protested something very vigorously in Tamil, which the commissioner failed to comprehend, and, in spite of all she could say, he insisted on her arrest, when he discovered to his dismay that the dust he had tasted and declared to contain salt, was the ashes of the old woman's departed husband. This commissioner is now known everywhere as the man who ordered a widow to be arrested for carrying the ashes of her departed spouse.

### **On the Train from Nagapattinam to Madras to Attend the Third Indian National Congress**

**Tuesday December 26, 1889.** — To-day I am writing in the train on my way to Madras. On Friday last I received an urgent letter from Mr. Subramanyam urging me to accept his invitation

given in Madras to come up for the third annual Congress of the National Indian Union. He said that it would not only be an opportunity of seeing and hearing some of the greatest living Hindus, but would also greatly help on my work by enabling him to introduce me to some of the chief men of my district. As Mr. Little, Findlay and Thompson all heartily concurred in thinking that it was a great opportunity which I ought not to miss and as Mrs. Thompson offered to entertain Ethel during my absence, I decided to go. Yesterday after taking Ethel to Mrs. Thompson's I left Negapatam at 9.30. a.m. and shall reach Madras at 5.50. p.m. tonight a distance of 265 miles, the fare for which second class is only 11s. 6d., or about a half-penny a mile. I reached Tanjore at 2 a.m. and on changing trains I got into the carriage with two native gentlemen, who fortunately proved to be most interesting companions. One of them G. S. Appusawmy was a Christian delegate from Tinnevely to the National Congress, a Vakil (barrister-solicitor) and an Episcopalian. The other was also a Christian, being a Government official of the Revenue department, by name Pinto, a Roman Catholic from the West Coast and a friend of Appusawmy.

### **Arrival in Madras - Meeting Various Delegates**

We reached Madras at 6 p.m. and Will Simpson met us at the station and drove me at once to Royapettah ...

I found an invitation awaiting me to go with Mrs. Patterson and Simpson to dine at Subramanyam's. On our arrival there we found that the company comprised a Christian delegate to the Congress, a Brahma Somaj delegate from Calcutta Dr. Bose, and his wife; and Manchester Liberal Unionist barrister, named Heywood, whom I discovered to my astonishment have spent an afternoon at Bray with Morgan, M.P. for Battersea, Cr-ok, John O'Leary Oldham, Taylor and myself. He was more surprised than I at such an unexpected meeting.

### **Accreditation as a Journalist to the Third Indian National Congress - A Marvelous Assembly!**

Wednesday, Dec. 28. — I received a telegram from the *Pall Mall Gazette* this morning in reply to a letter of mine, asking me to post an account of the Congress. On the strength of this telegram, I was at once installed in a seat at the Press table, and had a splendid place all through the Congress for hearing the debates. It was indeed a marvellous assembly. There were gathered together representatives of all the many nations that comprise the great Indian Empire, and of all the many classes and castes which compose the different races. In front of the platform sat the Bengalee Babus, the most cultured and Europeanised part of the Congress. They were dressed in black coats, cut in a semi-clerical fashion, and wore orthodox trousers and shoes or boots. In complexion many of them were scarcely darker than an Italian, and the contour of their features was decidedly of the Indo-European type. To the right of the platform sat the men of the Punjab and the North-West provinces. They were dressed in truly oriental style, with many-coloured turbans, and some of them with very richly embroidered dresses cut in native fashion. To the left sat the Bombay representatives also attired in genuine Indian garb. Behind and between their visitors sat the men of this Presidency, dressed generally in native style, but some of the native Christians wore English suits. Amongst these delegates the Tamil type of face with aquiline



noses and the other Dravidian features prevailed. The gathering of delegates numbered 700 and they were surrounded by 2,000 spectators. It was a sight to inspire any Englishman as he realized that this wonderful concourse had been rendered a possibility by the blessings of English rule.

### **Hard Time Keeping Up with the Demands of the Day**

I had a very hard time of it to-day, as I had to write a full account of yesterday's proceeding for this afternoon's English mail, and at the same time to listen to to-day's debate. By a very considerable rush I succeeded in finishing my first article just in time to drive down to the General Post Office before the mail started.

### **Remarkable Eloquence and Passionate Discourses**

To-day's debate produced some remarkable speaking. I never heard a much more eloquent speech than that delivered by Surendra Nath Bannerjee of Calcutta. He was speaking in favour of the extension of representative institutions to India, and roused the Congress to immense enthusiasm as he spoke of the differences of generations being forgotten, the dreams of ages being about to be realized. I have not room here for many extracts, but I am sure that any English audience would have been astonished if they could have heard these Hindus speaking English, and pleading their case with the arguments and teaching of our greatest thinkers and writers, with a force and a fluency which many of our legislators at Westminster would strive in vain to emulate. I left the Congress feeling that the movement cannot fail to have a mighty influence for good or ill upon the future of India.

### **Deliberations on the Sidelines of the Congress**

At twelve o'clock we returned to the National Congress. Today's proceedings were commenced by Mr. Subramanyam, who made a most able speech in support of a resolution of a purely administrative nature.

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We had a very interesting party at Subramanyam's. Amongst the guests was Babu Ram Chandra Bose, a Methodist Episcopal Minister from Lucknow, whom I had heard lecture in Dublin, and with whom I breakfasted at Mr. McMullen's about three years since. It was 9.30 p.m. before dinner was over, and immediately after dinner we went to a most remarkable gathering in the demesne of Mr. Eardly Norton, a prominent barrister, who is a thorough philo-native, and a hearty sympathiser with and a delegate to the Congress. All the members of the Congress were invited by him to a kind of conversazione. It was a wonderful assembly ; the Rajah Rumpal Sing, in his full court dress, mixing freely with the Mohammedan President of this Congress, the English visitors for the evening, and all the other creeds and nationalities represented. Mr. Norton's grounds covered many acres and were all lit up with tiny oil lamps, whilst brilliant lime lights lit up the front of the house.

### **The Last Day of Dr. Henry Lunn's Stay at the Congress**

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**Friday, December 30, 1887**

The debate of the Congress to-day was upon the question of Technical Education, but I was so utterly tired out that I did not stay more than two hours. After making some purchases, I left Madras by the 6 p.m. train, with the prospect of travelling 260 miles in the terribly short time of twenty-six hours.

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