

FOUNDERS' DAY

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Sometime last year a request came from the Alumni Association to write something for the Magazine of the Association. This request was renewed this year to write about the Founders' Day. The subject was chosen by the Association.

The Founders' Day is for ever a day of remembrance with gratitude and reverence because it has been the cradle and nursery of all round education for many.

At the centenary celebrations of the Founders' Day (Hindu College 1817 1917) Poet Professor Man Mohan Ghose wrote :

"Our native Founders who both bore
The name, and the large heart of Kings
To them, while all the patriot springs
To our lips, let the heart's thanks peal"

Again at the Centenary celebrations of the foundation of Presidency College (Hindu College became Presidency College in 1855) (1855—1955), there was at the back of the Platform (where sat many distinguished alumni) a huge painting of a banyan tree symbolising the College. The Founders of Hindu College expressed the hope "the School which yet was but a seedling would many years hence resemble the banyan tree which when fully grown was the largest of trees in India cooling and refreshing all those who came under its shade". This is our eternal hope.

The analogy of a tree as a symbol of the College is significant. Our scriptures say that one who attains knowledge of the Supreme becomes a silent spectator like a tree. In short it is the humility of learning. The learned man does not proclaim his erudition. Again, a tree is compared with the World because whatever is involved in a seed becomes evolved as a tree. It is in effect a manifestation of the prime cause. It is not an exaggeration to say that our College is one of the ancient trees and the roots are deep and the branches are laden with some of the best flowers. This institution like the seed has always tried to expand the intellect of the individual to fullness as much as possible.

At the Founders' Day one has personal recollections of the past, one has also general reflections on the past and the present, and finally one tries to reach the collective mind to bridge the past and the present. It is wisdom not to have an infatuation for the past and impatience with the present. Let the past be not totally rejected nor the present entirely shut out. Tradition is a continuing process. It is not static. It is a never ceasing movement which is the essence of being alive. Our College has moulded the changing lineaments and the tradition of the college is enduring as bronze. So much for the form of the Founders' Day.

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Now let us have a look at the matter. In the past one noticed Founders' Day to be a great gathering of elders and stalwarts of all walks of life. The present got opportunities of meeting and to a large extent of mixing with the past. Elegant arrangements were made at the lawns for tea. The past as well as the present sometimes sat together. This assembly of past and present students followed a pattern of discipline and dignity. It is intended to stress here that the College administration bestowed care on the past who were guests and the past in their turn tried to give much to the present in the shape of experiences, impressions and loyalty to the college.

Our College has had difficult days and perilous times at different periods. There has been challenge to authority and administration of foreign rule and the college had to face the situation. There has been also challenge to discipline and the ruling regime of the college after independence. Sometimes the balance of advantage has been on the side of the teachers and some times on the students. It is noteworthy that no one could shake the foundation of the college though for a while the equilibrium between the teachers and the students was disturbed. The teachers always tried to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. It can be said of the college that "hers is the head upon which all the ends of the world are come", and therefore, we should give the college such thanks as fits a "King's remembrance".

Without the personal life of the teacher shining as an example of morality, austerity

and affection learning becomes hard as wood. It is only when the teacher blends his learning with love towards his students that the relationship is cherished and enriched. Our Country's ideal is that teaching is not for money or fame but for love so that the teacher and the taught may both share the fruits of learning without any envy. This is at the root of greatness of this college. Our college has given to the country some of the greatest intellects in humanities and science and different professions in life. Our college has also given to the nation some of the greatest freedom fighters. This has been possible because our college gave students character and righteousness and made students better men and citizens who in the words of Aristotle "can rule and be ruled in turn".

Presidency college is an aristocracy of talents based on education equipping students for the struggle for life with the strength of character and spirit of philanthropy and courage. Swami Vivekananda has said that survival of the fittest does no longer mean Darwin's physical fitness but fitness of intellect. Teachers have inspired and illumined students to intellectual heights and lofty thoughts by pain living and high thinking. If ever we desecrate the tradition and discipline of this college we shall have to atone for our sin.

In conclusion, it may be said that remembrance of the past is always a reminder to the present for reconstruction of the future—Founders' Day celebration with ancient lamps and modern lights.