

Free India; The Dream of a Missionary: Political ideas of C.F. Andrews

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Abstract:

Before he landed in India, C.F. Andrews believed that colonial rule is meant for benevolent activities and to reform India from within. But after he witnessed the real picture, his ideas changed completely regarding the British generosity. He started developing the feelings to contribute in modifying the Indian political conditions so that it can stand by its own right. The research paper "Free India; The Dream of a Missionary: Political Ideas of C.F. Andrews" is an attempt to chart out and critically reflect on the political ideas of CF Andrews and to understand the ramifications of his presence in India and shaping up the political consciousness of the country.

Keywords:

British, C.F. Andrews, Gandhi Ji, Colonial Mission, Free India, Missionary, Political ideas, Indian leaders, India, Indians

Generally speaking, the role of the British in resolving the problems of Indian people and their contribution towards Indian freedom has been imperialistic and one-sided. There are a few examples where some British tried to understand various movements and conditions deeply and with microscopic vision. The Christian missionaries started coming to India in the mid-18th century. Initially, the number was low, but it increased gradually. C.F. Andrews was one among such missionaries. He attempted to understand Indian conditions from a humane perspective and contributed towards their betterment. This paper attempts to have a glimpse of his vision concerning Indian political freedom.

C.F. Andrews' father belonged to an old conservative school of politics. He regarded the British rule in India as a sacred trust given to England by God Himself. Thus, when C.F. Andrews arrived in India in March 1904, he had complete faith in the benevolence of British rule. He thought that the British rule has helped in bringing stability and good governance to India. But his faith in the tangible British rule got shaken quite soon, and he became the staunchest advocate of India's demand for freedom. This change of perspective was the result of his close association with Indian political leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, G.K. Gokhale, R.N. Tagore and others.

Through the majority of Indian leaders co-operated in the war effort (World War I) of the British government and in return, they had high expectations from the colonial rulers. However, at the end of the war, they got almost nothing worthwhile. The British rather introduced repressive policies instead of applying balm on Indian sentiments.

Andrews felt that The British rule had seized Indian public life so that the danger of its moral degradation was looming large. He started analysing various socio-political movements launched by the Indians and started contributing to fulfilling his dreams of a free India.

He believed that establishing the colonial rule by the East India Company was nothing but a conspiracy to loot India. He saw the effort of the British "to create at all costs, a 'whitedominion from which coloured races, as far as possible excluded'" (C.F. Andrews, *The claim for independence, within or without the British Empire*, p.3). At the same time, he was also of the opinion that the idea of complete independence was still seen with suspicion by many Indian leaders themselves. He felt that there was despair in India, and they were in chains. He questioned, "how they took pride in the fact that they were British subjects and British citizens" (*The claim for independence*, p.11).

C.F. Andrews considered independence as the only goal for the comprehensiveness of Indian personality. For him to remain tied to England was against the real nature of Indian culture. He was convinced that "It is the true goal, the only satisfying goal." (*The Claim for Independence*, p. 14) He considered racial supremacy as the greatest menace on earth.

He observed, "It appears to me it may have been necessary for Indians to receive to surgery of a foreign conquest and the shock of foreign cultures before she could hope to be cured of her disease as infirmity" (*The Claim for Independence*, p. 16). He longed to see the dead hand of British imperialism removed from India altogether. He wrote, "But to prolong the shock by endeavouring to keep India permanently with the British Empire or to hypnotise the Indian people... may be altogether harmful" (*The Claim for Independence*, p.17). He was sure that the British rule had performed the surgical operations by the rough instruments, which were not required anymore. He advocated that India needed absolute freedom and complete independence.

C.F. Andrews knew that India was a country with a vast area and large population. It had a long history and tradition. He found the thought of India becoming an integral part of the English empire is inconceivable.

He believed that the British rule had already lasted far too long in India. "How can you, an Englishman, who love your freedom and independence, as an Englishman refuse to allow the very same freedom... to every Indian"(The Claim for Independence, p.35). He was of the firm opinion that foreign rule had been dragging India down to destruction. He wished. "Empires must perish today as they have perished in the past"(The Claim for Independence, p.35).

Very soon, Andrews started opposing British colonial rule. He opposed the Canal Colonization Bill, Punjab, 1907. He requested his civilian friends to contact the public and try to know about their requirements. As a result, the British government deported Lala Lajpat Rai from Punjab in 1907. The discipline of Cambridge brotherhood bound Andrews. That's why he could not express his dismay openly. In a letter to G.K. Gokhale, he wrote that whatever has happened recently and "I am forced to keep my mouth shut, has given me immense pain" (Letter to G.K. Gokhale, 24th June 1907).

After the first world war got over, the British introduced the Rowlatt Bills. These Bills were designed with repressive measures, including the power to arrest anyone and keep them under confinement without trial. In opposition to the Bills, a nationwide strike was called by Gandhi Ji. In Punjab, the passion for freedom struggle went very high, leading to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919. In protest, C.F. Andrews wrote that the opposition to the Rowlatt Bills was widely known. He demanded to the Viceroy to stop this inhuman and cruel behaviour of the military oppressiveness.

To know about the reality, six leading newspapers of the country had requested the chief secretary of Punjab to allow C.F. Andrews to visit Punjab and get acknowledged with the reality. But these requests were outrightly rejected by the British establishment. This refusal was a reaction to the closeness and affectionate relation enjoyed by C.F. Andrews among the Indians. Instead of keeping quiet, C.F. Andrews still tried to visit Punjab. While going to Shimla from Delhi, he changed the train from Ambala to Lahore. When he reached Amritsar, he was stopped and was forcefully directed to return to Delhi by the British (Young India, 21.5.1919).

In opposition to the public whipping at Amritsar, Andrews wrote a letter to the editor of The Leader newspaper and said that military officers and martial law authorities should immediately know that such things can neither be forgiven nor forgotten (Andrews Papers, Oppressions in Punjab).

After the Martial Law was withdrawn, Andrews reached Punjab in September 1919 and described the Jallianwala Bagh massacre as a cold-blooded massacre (The Independent, 8th November 1919). He found that whatever news leaked out of Punjab was not proportionate to the damage done. The actual number of people killed and wounded in

that carnagewas far more than told by the authorities.C.F. Andrews thought that England should repent ofwhat had been committed in Punjab.

On the question of theCaliphate, C.F. Andrews was not agreed with Gandhi Ji. He was unable to understand that when India was fighting for its independence,how she could support Turkey in maintaining its empire. Despite the difference of opinion on this issue, Andrews continued to support Indian National Movement with equal zeal.

On the question of giving dominion status to India, Andrews thought that in that condition, India was forced to accept England as its predecessor;such an idea was ridiculous.

Even though he was an active supporterofthe Indian cause, many Indians suspected him ofa British spy and thought of him as a traitor. But his long and close relationship with Indian leaders could dispel these doubts gradually.On the other hand, the Britishers kept an eye on his activities, and he was subjected to surveillance. Even his pupils were deployed to keep a close watch on his activities. A Tory M.P. Sir Fredrick Hall asked the secretary of State for India to send Andrews back to England in the wake of 'seditious speeches'by him. He further demanded that Andrews be placed on trial on the charges of sedition.

On the issue ofthe non-cooperation campaign, Andrews thought that the call to bring 'Swaraj within one year was a chimaera (Tinker,1979: 186). He also opposed Gandhi Ji on the issue of burning foreign clothes. He warned Gandhi Ji that there was a subtle appeal to racial feeling in that word 'foreign' which "by day seems to me to need checking, not fomenting"(Tinker: 190).

C.F. Andrews took a keen interest in the affairs of the labours. He attended theAll India Trade Union Congress meeting and got elected as its President in February 1925. He was required to mediate in an industrial dispute at Jamshedpurwhere The Tata's were not interested in recognisingthe leaders of the Steel Union. When Gandhi Ji, Nehru and Andrews intervned, the Worker's Labour Association finally got recognisedby the company(Tinker: 1979).

C.F. Andrews wrote a book titled *India and the Simon Report*. He tried to consider the causes of the resentment in India againstGreat Britain, which had led upto the present landlock (Andrews, *India and the Simon Report*). No Indian was allowed to becomea member of the Simon Commission, which led to the increase in nationalistic activities. Andrews felt that this step of the British was like inviting trouble, leadingto its destruction (*India and the Simon Report*, p. 32).

For Andrews, the report of the Simon Commission was disappointing. He thought that India should be given dominion status in the lines of Egypt. He was of the view that this report could have suited India thirty years back. He opined that as the buildings constructed by the British are not suitable forIndia, the same was the case with their legislative structure introduced in India.

When Gandhiji visited England in 1931, Andrews tried his best to acquaint Gandhi Ji with British public opinion. He requested Gandhi Ji to visit Lancashire to appraise the situation of the workers. He appealed to Gandhi Ji to withdraw the boycott of British cloths because the workers had reached a very horrible situation. Though Gandhi Ji did not withdraw that boycott call, he accepted to visit Lancashire. There was an atmosphere of distrust towards the objectives of Gandhi Ji. Yet Andrews worked hard to pacify the situation even though it was difficult for him to classify issues like the boycott of foreign clothes (Tinker: 248).

Andrews arranged Gandhi Ji's meeting with essential personalities of England. As far as the outcome of the Round Table Conference was concerned, Andrews considered it a big failure. Very soon, the government led by the Labour Party fell. Andrews felt that the constitution, based on fear and mistrust, could not satisfy politically awakened Indians. In such a condition, he thought that the British government should leave India as soon as possible.

C.F. Andrews never favoured the use of violence in the Indian national movement. He found that this drifted many Europeans away because they were never in favour of murders used as political weapons.

On the Government of India Act 1935, Andrews opined that the present provisions would mean a cat-and-dog fight between the Muslims and the Hindus for the coming years without any chance of compromise (R.K. DasGupta, C.F. Andrews and Indian National Movement in the Stepniens, 1971)

Andrews was impatiently watching while witnessing the pre-Second World War political atmosphere. He wished that India was not drawn into the war. Though, he was openly in favour of the elimination of Nazism for the survival of humanity.

C.F. Andrews passed away on 5th April 1940 in Calcutta. Before dying, he started believing firmly that the British would have to leave India soon. He had complete faith in Gandhi Ji's leadership. In his last words to Gandhi Ji, he said that Swaraj was coming and the British and Indians could bring it faster (Harijan, 13th April 1940).

It can be inferred from the above analysis that C.F. Andrews made strenuous efforts in bringing independence to India. He concluded that the British Empire had terrible effects on India. Indians were in such a stage that they felt helpless in opposing the colonial state. Through his writings, ideas and active contribution, Andrews intended to give pace to the Indian National Movement. He demanded absolute and complete freedom for India. He propagated such ideas at times when many Indian nationalists were hesitant of speaking openly in such terms.

C.F. Andrews faced two ways of suspicion. He was under surveillance by the British government. At the same time, many Indians also considered that he was a British spy. In such conditions, the path was difficult. Andrews dissipated all doubts and kept on

acquiring a close association with many Indian political leaders. The Britishers, throughout, considered him as their opponent. This proved that Andrews was honest towards the Indian cause. He dreamed of a free India and worked wholeheartedly for it.

It was his considered opinion that the Britishers failed to understand the sensibilities of India, and it was a blunder on their part. He also felt that if the violence were used in the freedom struggle, then it would become another form of might-seeking at any cost. Though India could not gain independence during his lifetime, he was hopeful that 'Swaraj was coming.'

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