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ANTI-INDIAN MOVES IN CEYLON (*)

BY ST. NIHAL SINGH

Our people need to follow very closely the anti-Indian moves that are at present being made in Ceylon. They are engineered—openly or otherwise—by some of the most prominent politicians in the Island. Included among them are some of the leaders of the Ceylon National Congress and other associations of a political or quasi-political character and Members of the Ceylon Legislative Council. In view of the powerful backing that the anti-Indian agitation is receiving from these influential persons, it would be the height of folly for stay-at-home Indians to ignore this hostile movement.

The object behind the agitation is quite obvious. It aims not so much to secure the restriction of immigration from India into Ceylon as to keep the bulk of Indians in the Island in a condition of political helplessness.

The cry “keep out the Indians” has, of course, been raised. A motion designed to secure that object is, indeed, shortly to be debated in the Ceylon Legislative Council.

Moves directed toward the exclusion of Indians, or even the restriction of Indian immigration, are fictitious, because Ceylon is woefully underpopulated and without importation of labour from India she could not carry on her economic activities even for a single day. In a country comprising 25,000 square miles there is a permanent population of only some 4,000,000 persons. Many of them are lackadaisical in disposition, and some of them actually semi-drones or drones. Indians build the roads and keep them in repair. Indians work the tea and, to a large extent, the rubber estates. Indians play an important part in loading and unloading goods and in the workshops. There are, to-day, some 900,000 of them in Ceylon. So invaluable are they that most of them have been fetched from India, as I shall relate in a subsequent portion of this article. The talk of shutting Indians out of Ceylon is, therefore, mere bunkum.

The Ceylonese who are crying themselves hoarse, shouting “keep out the Indians”, are not, as a rule, regarded as responsible persons. Some of them are, on the contrary, the laughing-stock of their own people. They can do harm, therefore, only if they are permitted to inflame the passions of the mob, which is highly excitable by nature. Racial animosities—the legacy of conflicts in ancient and mediaeval times—

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