



1881 — 1958

SHRI B P WADIA

SHRI B. P. WADIA

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

Mr. B. P. Wadia was born on 8 October 1881, the eldest son of Mr. Pestonji Cursetji and Mrs. Mithibai Wadia. He had three sisters and one brother. Mr. Cursetji Wadia was a descendant of the famous Wadia family of shipbuilders. The Wadias came from Sigapore, a small village near Surat. Some of the sailing ships built by the Wadias are referred to even today. The *Trincomalee*, later renamed *Foudroyant*, is still preserved at Portsmouth Harbour as "the only surviving frigate of the old sailing navy."

As a young student Shri Wadia studied at New High School, Bombay, conducted by J. D. Bharda and K. B. Murzban. In 1900 (on 1 January, to be exact) his father had him join his office, when he was working for a well-known British firm doing textile business. Mr. Wadia's uncle, Mr. Khursetji J. B. Wadia, was then a member of the Theosophical Society in Bombay. In 1904, Mr. B. P. Wadia joined the Bombay Branch

2

of the Theosophical Society. He became an active member of the Branch and later in 1907 he left Bombay and went to Adyar, Madras, to stay and work there.

At Adyar Mr. Wadia was involved in a number of activities. He was assistant editor of *New India*. He worked in the Home Rule movement and was interned at Ooty along with Mrs. Annie Besant and Mr. George Arundale. He started the first labour union known in Indian labour history. In 1919 he went abroad to attend a conference on the trade union movement.

He had seen for some time now a difference between his own "back to Blavatsky" thinking and what was in actuality taking place at Adyar and he finally severed his connection through a Statement of Resignation issued in July 1922.

From 1922 to 1928 Mr. Wadia toured the United States, came into contact with the United Lodge of Theosophists, founded by Mr. Robert Crosbie, and worked for it. He was concerned in the starting of U.L.T. centres at New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. In 1925 plans were made

to issue a photographic facsimile of the original edition of *The Secret Doctrine*. In that year plans were also made to start a U. L. T. Centre in London, U.K.

In 1922 he married Smt. Sophia Wadia, our present President, and later in 1929 he visited Europe and together with her started several U.L.T. centres. They returned to India on 31 May 1929 and after staying for a period of time both in Bombay and at Ooty, started the first U.L.T. centre in India at Bombay on the 17th of November, 1929. It was then situated at 51 Esplanade Road, later re-named Mahatma Gandhi Road.

In January 1930 *The Aryan Path* made its appearance. "Shravaka" wrote in the editorial in Vol 1, No 1, p. 20:

So much "original" writing is done today, so much "self-expression" is indulged in that, in the clamour that is raised, the chants of the Gods remain unheard. One of our tasks is to bring home the truth that it is not derogatory to respect the old age facts of the science of soul. The study of the wise ancients

convinces us that our forefathers knew better and more than we do. ...It is one of the tasks of this journal to awaken an intelligent appreciation of the hoary past so that an intelligent adaptation of some of the old truths to modern life and conditions may take place.

Shravaka is an old Theosophist who has learnt the virtue and acquired the power of saying—"Thus Have I Heard."

On 17 November 1930, an year after the formation of the first U.L.T. Centre at Bombay, a four-page Bulletin was issued under the title *The Theosophical Movement*. In it all articles were unsigned to draw attention to the contents rather than to persons. The original articles of H. P. Blavatsky and W. Q. Judge were made available by reprinting.

In 1938 a suburban centre of the U.L.T. was formed at Matunga, Bombay, and in 1942, on 12 August, the Bangalore U.L.T. came into being at Maitri Bhavan.

In 1945 The Indian Institute of Culture in Bangalore was formed with Dr. L. S.

Doraiswamy as its first Secretary. Later the name was altered to make it The Indian Institute of World Culture. The road on which it is situated was originally called North Public Square Road, and some mail still comes to the Institute with that address.

In 1945 the William Quan Judge C^ommopolitan Home was started on a non-communal basis, to provide wholesome food and inculcate discipline directed at encouraging habits of cleanliness, tidiness, punctuality and responsibility; and this practical expression of Universal Brotherhood was the nucleus of the Institute.

The Institute is a non-sectarian, non-governmental, private voluntary body with its chief aim to promote intercultural exchange and universal brotherhood without distinctions of any kind. It began to invite eminent persons from abroad and in India and has had persons of great eminence on its platform. Today it is a prominent landmark in Bangalore and the road on which it is situated has been re-named, after the Founder's demise, Shri B. P. Wa^l Road.

4

In 1954, the foundation stone for the present home of the Bombay U.L.T., Theosophy Hall, was laid and in the same year in November the Silver Jubilee of that centre was celebrated. In 1957 Theosophy Hall was opened for its first inaugural meeting on the 17th of November to an overflowing audience. *The Theosophical Movement* had meanwhile enlarged by stages to a 40-page monthly magazine. It has been devoted to "the Leading of the Higher Life."

On 20 August 1958 Shri B. P. Wadia passed away at Bangalore, a few days after his stirring Address entitled *Our Soul's Need* had been delivered at the Indian Institute of World Culture, which subsequently published it.

Thus closed a life of selfless service. His vast insight, his courage and the breadth of his mind made him a builder of those things in life that are foundational to true living. He was an example to all of what life should be. His compassionate heart, his utter devotion to the work he had under-

taken, his self-sacrifice in time, energy and money, made his life a monument of strength to those who knew him personally, and the work that he did has inspired and will continue to inspire countless human beings all over the world in their struggle through life." (*Theodore Leslie Crombie, Friend of India* by E. Beswick)

Published in 1981 By

**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF
WORLD CULTURE**

**6 Shri B P Wadia Road
Bangalore 560 004**

THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF WORLD CULTURE was founded on 11 August 1945 by Shri B P Wadia and Smt B P Wadia.

The aim and objective of the Institute is to propagate intercultural understanding so as to bring about in the minds and hearts of humanity a sense of universal brotherhood. Hence, the Institute through its several programmes and libraries tries to inculcate such and similar ideas.

Shri B P Wadia was connected with the Theosophical Movement, he was involved in the Home Rule Movement, started the first trade union in Madras and in India, and edited the newspaper, New India along with Annie Besant. He later started Theosophical centres under the United Lodge of Theosophists in Bombay, Bangalore and elsewhere in India and abroad. He was editing The Aryan Path until his demise on 20 August 1958.

Smt Sophia Wadia, his wife, assisted Shri B P Wadia throughout his lifetime, and later carried on the work. She founded the first P E N All India Centre and edited its Bulletin, THE INDIAN P E N. She became president of the Indian Institute of World Culture after Mr Wadia's death, until her demise in April 1986.

Since then Shri M V Venkataramiah who was her nominee has become the Acting Vice President and will be in the Chair for the Founder's Day.

The Indian Institute of World Culture

- has a public library, with about 35,000 volumes
- a magazine section, with about 400 periodicals from all over the world
- a separate childrens library with about 8000 books
- used altogether by over 100,000 persons every year

- has a membership of about 1900 persons from all strata of society
- organises about 12 programmes every months consisting of talks, on various subjects, music and other performing arts
- organises special summer programmes for the young and the old
- runs regular classes in Art, Bhajans (devotional music) and group dancing for children