

2011

La Masonería en el mundo - India

Archivo C I E M - Madrid

Documentación - países

Adrian Mac Liman
Centro Ibérico de Estudios Masónicos (CIEM)
03/04/2011



Freemasonry in India

In 1717 A.D. when an era of comparative peace and harmony dawned on the European scene, the Grand Lodge of England took shape at a meeting of the local Lodges of London, to elect a Grand Master. A United constitution was drawn up and recognized by all the Lodges. A democratic tradition in the election of the Worshipful Master of a Lodge was prescribed. The Worshipful Master was authorized to appoint his team of officers.

It is therefore of interest that within 12 years of the constitution of the Grand Lodge of England, constituted for the purpose of exercising supervision over the lodges in London, and its neighboring areas, a petition was sent by a few Brethren in India to constitute a Provincial Grand Lodge in Calcutta. The Petition having been granted, a Provincial Grand Master was appointed to supervise Masonic activity in India and the Far East in 1728 A.D.

Full details regarding how the First Lodge was constituted in India, are preserved in the Minutes of the Grand Lodge in London. First a petition was presented on December 28, 1728 and at the end of the minutes of that meeting, the text of the "Deputation" from the Grand Master: "to Empower and Authorize our well beloved Brother Pomfret....that he do, in our place and stead, constitute a regular Lodge, in due form at Fort William in Bengal in the East Indies...." This was signed and sealed "the 6th day of February 1728/9 and in the year of Masonry 5732 (which shows that Grand Lodge used Usher's Chronology in dating the Masonic era - as the Grand Lodge of Scotland still .

The Lodge at Fort William -- that is, Calcutta -- appears in the Engraved List of 1730, as No. 72. It was to meet at Fort William in Calcutta. The coat of Arms was adopted from the East India Company a golden lion, rampant guardant, supporting between the forepaws a regal crown. In 1729, Captain Ralph Farwinter was appointed "Provisional Grand Master for East India in Bengal" and also James Dawson as "Provincial Grand Master" for East Indies.

The Provincial Grand Lodge of Madras was formed in 1752 and The Provincial Grand Lodge of Bombay was created in 1758. Although it appeared in the Roll of Grand Lodge there is no record of how it came into being.

The first Indian Mason was Omdat-ul-Omrah, Nawab Carnatic initiated in 1775. The doors to Hindu Masonry was flung wide-open might one say, by the unstoppable determination of one Mr. P.C. Dutt of Calcutta to become a member of the craft. After much opposition from the Provincial Grand Master (Hugh Sanderman) and nine years after he was proposed for initiation Mr.Dutt became Bro. Dutt in Anchor and Hope, No. 234, in 1872. Twenty-three years later, he was Deputy District Grand Master.

THE BIRTH OF THE GRAND LODGE OF INDIA

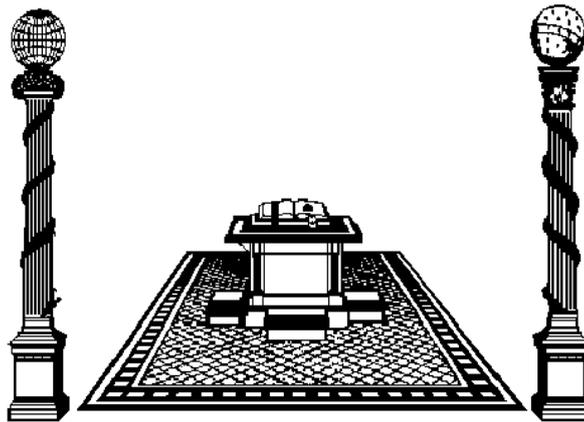
It was towards the end of October 1959 that the Most W. Grand Masters of England, Ireland and the Immediate Past Grand Master Mason of Scotland met in London to discuss the future of Freemasonry in India. The three Grand Masters considered that "an independent Grand Lodge of India is desirable and that its establishment should....be gradually but actively pursued."

A representative Steering Committee was set up consisting exclusively of Indian Brethren in proportion to the number of Lodges under each of the three Constitutions, with R.W.Bro Lt.Gen. Sir Harold Williams, K.B.E., C.B., as Chairman, with the aim of establishing an independent Grand Lodge of India on the best possible foundations. The Steering Committee met at important centers of Masonic activities in the North, East, South and West of India and its report was unanimously signed early October 1960. On December 1, the three Grand Masters issued "Notes on the proposed Grand Lodge of India for the information and guidance of Lodges in India." Therein they reiterated their declared attitude towards an independent Grand Lodge of India, but left it to Lodges in India to decide whether to opt for or against joining such a body, adding that if the Brethren in India decided in favor of an independent Grand Lodge, they would accept the decision and establish with it the closest fraternal relations and that Lodges not wishing to participate would continue to enjoy the existing rights under their respective Grand Lodges.

Out of a total of 277 individual Lodges in India (excluding Pakistan, Ceylon and Aden, which were excluded for the poll) 145 opted for the new Grand Lodge of India. This represented a little over 52 per cent.

INAUGURAL

The Grand Lodge of India was officially constituted at ten minutes to six o'clock on Friday the 24th November 1961 in the Ashoka Hotel, New Delhi. There were three delegations from the Grand Lodge of Scotland, Ireland and England in that order.



MEETING

After the three delegations were received and greeted, the Grand Master Mason of Scotland proceeded with the Consecration. Thereafter, The Deputy Grand Master of Ireland officially constituted the new Grand Lodge saying "in the name of the Grand Lodges of England, Ireland and Scotland and by the command of their Grand Master, I constitute and form you, my good Brethren into the Sovereign Grand Lodge of India, you are empowered henceforth to exercise all the rights and privileges of a

Grand Lodge according to the ancient usage's and landmarks of the Craft. May the Grand Architect of the Universe prosper, direct and counsel you in all your proceedings."

After the Consecration and Constitution, the Deputy Grand Master of England assumed the Throne and installed Major General Dr. Sir Syed Raza Ali Khan, G.C.I.E.,D.Litt., LL.D., His Highness The Nawab of Rampur, as the first Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of India. The Aprons, Collars, Gauntlets etc. for the new Lodge were provided jointly by the three parent Grand Lodges.

In addition to the three parent Grand Lodges, the M.W. Grand Master of the Grand Lodges of the State of Israel, the M.W. Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Alberta (Canada) and about 1,491 Brethren from all over India were present at this historic event.