



THE TWO GREAT ANGLO-INDIANS

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Sir Henry Gidney and Frank Anthony were the two great Anglo-Indians who spoke for the Anglo-Indian Community and were able to improve their status.

SIR HENRY GIDNEY

Lt. Col. Sir Henry Gidney was the leader of the Anglo-Indian Community for 20 years before his death in May 1942. He was born in 1873 at Igatpuri in the Western Ghats, about 80 miles from Bombay. He was educated at Bangalore, Calcutta, and Allahabad and was a brilliant student. Gidney qualified for the Indian Medical Service and then joined the army. He saw active service in China during the Boxer Rebellion and was recognised for his bravery in 1901.

Three years later Sir Gidney married Grace Wignall from Agra. At the time Agra had a large Anglo-Indian community. Grace was the daughter of a Yorkshireman who had settled down in the city of the Taj. However the marriage of Sir Gidney and Grace Wignall was not successful. Grace went away to England after a few years of marriage and never returned back to India and her husband. But Sir Gidney is supposed to have supported his wife, Grace, right up to the time she died childless in 1937. After his wife walked out on him, he was posted as a civil surgeon in Kohima where he joined an expedition against the headhunters. He later helped his group thwart a Naga raid for which he was not rewarded though other members of his team were honoured by the Government. This made him very sad and he asked to be posted elsewhere.

During World War I, Gidney was posted at Peshwar and saw active service in the North West Frontier Province. Here again he distinguished himself with bravery. He was wounded during the attack on Shabkadar Fort, and had to take retirement from

the IMS. He then set up a private practice in Bombay and also devoted his free time to the welfare of the Anglo-Indian Community. Gidney represented the Anglo-Indian Community at all the three Round Table Conferences in England, testified before the Simon Commission and the Cripps India Mission, met King George V and spoke of the sad lot of the Anglo-Indians. He spoke of the Anglo-Indians as "my people" and then corrected himself addressing them as "Your Majesty's people and my community." This is supposed to have brought a smile to King George V's face. Gidney also met R.A. Butler, the Parliamentary under Secretary of State for India, and Lord Harding. He managed to get support from them both for the Anglo-Indian cause. Eventually with their help he succeeded in persuading Lord Zetland to do something about the plight of the Anglo-Indians at the time. Lord Zetland was then the Under Secretary of State for India. Butler, incidentally, had a soft corner for the Anglo-Indian community because he himself was born in Jabalpur.

Sir Gidney was knighted in 1931, and when the Central Legislative Assembly was formed he was nominated to it by the Viceroy. At the Assembly, he had a dig at Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Both of them wore monocles and were among the best dressed. Just after Jinnah had spoken, Gidney got up to say, "*The Hon'ble Member who has just sat down has not only got the bull by the horns but the cow by the udder end.*" The house burst into laughter.

Sir Henry Gidney headed the All-India Arts and Crafts Society. He was a man of taste, lover of art, wine, dance, and all the good things of life. He had a large number of women friends with whom he enjoyed dancing the tango, and the waltz with grace, at the many parties he attended. His house in Prithviraj Road, New Delhi was famous for art collections, Persian carpets, and chandeliers. Gidney died in 1942 of heat stroke on his return to Delhi from his native Igatpur. He was also a great shikari of great skill, and had hunted big game all over India. The Gidney Club in Connaught Place, New Delhi is named after Sir Henry Gidney and in his memory. He and Frank Anthony are epitomised as the best in the Anglo-Indian community. Frank Anthony succeeded him as the chief of the Anglo-Indian Association after his death, and followed up the good work done by him both in India and England for the community.

FRANK ANTHONY

Frank Anthony was born in Jabalpure, in 1908. As a young scholar he was very bright and intelligent. He excelled at University and won the Viceroy's gold medal for English. Frank Anthony studied law in London and returned home to commence practice in Jabalpure. At the same time he retained his deep interest in the affairs of his Anglo-Indian community. In 1942, Anthony was elected the President-in-chief of the Community of the All India Anglo-Indian Association, and since then, had been the undisputed leader of the Anglo-Indian Community. From the beginning he realised that the future of the community lay in India, and advised them strongly to always remember that they were Indians:-

"Let us cling and cling tenaciously to all that we hold dear, our language, our way of life and our distinctive culture. But let s always remember that we are Indians. The Community is Indian. It has always been Indian. Above all, it has an inalienable Indian birthright. The more we love and are loyal to India, the more will India be loyal to us."

Anthony fought battles in the National Defence Council presided over by the then Viceroy Wavell over the different payment for the Europeans and Indian Commissioned officers, and won it. Not only the Anglo-Indians but also officers of all communities were beneficiaries when the scales were equated. He opposed the partition of India on the grounds that it would be injurious to the minority communities, and argued that, although numerically a very small community, the Anglo-Indians had given their lifeblood to nurture the major Indian services. In the event, Anthony won the right for Anglo-Indian representation in State and Central Assemblies. During those difficult days when the future of India was being decided by the British, Muslim and Indian leaders, he put the Anglo Indians case to Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Valabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru, and they agreed to make special provision for the Anglo-Indians in the Indian Constitution.

In October 1946, Frank Anthony was selected as one of India's principal delegates to represent the country in the first delegation from Independent India to the United Nations. In 1948 and again in 1957, he was one of India's representatives to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. Anthony had given up his practice as a lawyer in 1942, but ten years later when Prime Minister Nehru requested him to proceed to Peshawar and defend Mehr Chand Khanna, the ex-finance minister of

North-West Frontier Province; he had to resume his career as a lawyer in 1952. At the time no Hindu lawyer dared to go to Peshawar and so Anthony was found to be the most appropriate and competent. Following discussions with the chief minister, Khanna was released. Again in 1978, Anthony assisted the Nehru family when Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi was arrested and appeared before the Shah Commission. Because of his continuing public work Anthony declined offers by Mrs. Gandhi, of Governorship of the Punjab and the Vice-Presidency of India.

Frank Anthony's greatest contribution has been in the field of the Anglo-Indian Education. In 1947 he was elected Chairman of the Inter-State Board of Anglo-Indian Education. The Board co-ordinates standards in about 270 and more schools throughout the country. Anthony had also been the Chairman of the Indian School Certificate Examination to which over 250 of the leading English medium schools in India is affiliated. He was also the Founder-Chairman of the All India Anglo-Indian Educational Trust which, today, owns and controls five schools named after him, The Frank Anthony Public Schools in the north and south of India. He also setup a funding scheme whereby scholarships and loans could be given to the Anglo Indian student wishing to take up Teacher's Training.

Throughout his public life Anthony fought for the retention of English as the medium of instruction in Anglo Indian schools and in the universities. He was against the imposition of Hindi language on non Hindi-speaking people of India. He maintained that the instrument of integration in higher education was the English language. One of the most important pillars was an integrated judiciary. He attained his objectives through the process of law and in so doing uplifted his Anglo Indian community. Anthony's legacy will be remembered not only by Anglo Indians, but all Indians who seek a united and prosperous India. Indeed, it is to Frank Anthony that one is indebted for the insight into the life and times of Sir Henry Gidney, so faithfully recorded in his magnum opus, *Britian's Betrayal in India*.

Anthony was also a good and keen *shikari*. He and his wife, Olive was once the guests of Maharaja Karni Singh of Bikaner at the annual grouse shoot. A good shot, Anthony could stand his own against the rajas and maharajas gathered there, for he had taken after his famous big game hunter Uncle William. Anthony died without any

child and heir, but the schools he founded bear his name, like the Gidney Club commemorates his illustrious predecessor, Sir Henry Gidney.

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