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THE WORLD TO-DAY

INDIA



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# INDIA

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By  
T. A. RAMAN



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## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCING INDIA

INDIA's size and position on the map are obvious and familiar enough. The country covers 1,575,000 square miles marked off very tellingly from the rest of Asia by the Himalayas in the north, by a chain of hills and dense forests to the north-east, and by a broken mountain range to the north-west. Her peninsula juts out massively into the Indian Ocean. Nature has fashioned no large slice of the world more definitely as a distinct geographical unit.

The size and the population, now nearly 400,000,000, are facts often ignored, alike by those who would oversimplify the country's problems and by those who marshal her diversities to argue her entity away. India's physical and populational immensity should constantly be borne in mind. Diversity should be expected in a territory equal in size to all Europe excluding Russia, and a people constituting fully a fifth of the human race. A country fifteen times the size of Great Britain naturally belongs to a class or order of states very different from that of compact and, relatively, homogeneous units. But, in that class, India is not too large for integration. The United States, China, Australia, and Canada are all about twice as extensive, while Russia, sprawling across eight million square miles in two continents, is, of course, the colossus among countries.

Taking population as well as size into account, the natural comparisons (or contrasts) of all India's circumstances are with the United States, Russia, and China, especially China, because India is as densely peopled, as rural, as dependent on agriculture, as poor and as old.

Civilization in India, according to our present knowledge, dates back to about 3500 B.C., and this antiquity of over five millenia is another important and much





overlooked feature. Human institutions which have survived to such age penetrate profoundly into the structure of society and the outlook of individuals. Almost everything in Indian customs or habits has roots in the five thousand years of the country's history. They are often fantastic and un-understandable without reference to the development—or decay—of the ages.

Further, the country, so well screened off to north and east and bounded by wide seas in her peninsular half, was never invader-proof in the north-west. There are chinks in India's armour here, the Khyber, the Kurram, the Bolan and the Gomal passes, and the openings through Baluchistan, through which, in the course of centuries, "Aryans", Persians, Scythians, Greeks, Huns, Mongols, and Tartars have poured into the country. And each influx added new ethnic and cultural strains. To-day most of these influences have been absorbed and blended, but racially and culturally everything Indian is a composite of many types.

On this pattern of life Great Britain has for the last century and a half superimposed inflexible political unity—which fact in itself constitutes perhaps her most enduring contribution to India. But the impression abroad that all India is British is correct only in a brutally final analysis. About 712,000 square miles of the country is the territory of the Indian Princes, who come under the "suzerainty" or "paramountcy" of the British Crown, but generally have more or less complete internal sovereignty. These princes—"Rajahs", "Maharajahs", "Nawabs", "Khans", and one "Nizam"—are the scions of historic Hindu and Mohammedan families who fended off direct annexation by the British. The rest of the country is "British India"—i.e. territory directly administered by the Government of India at the head of which is the British Viceroy, answerable only to a British Cabinet Minister, the Secretary of State for India.





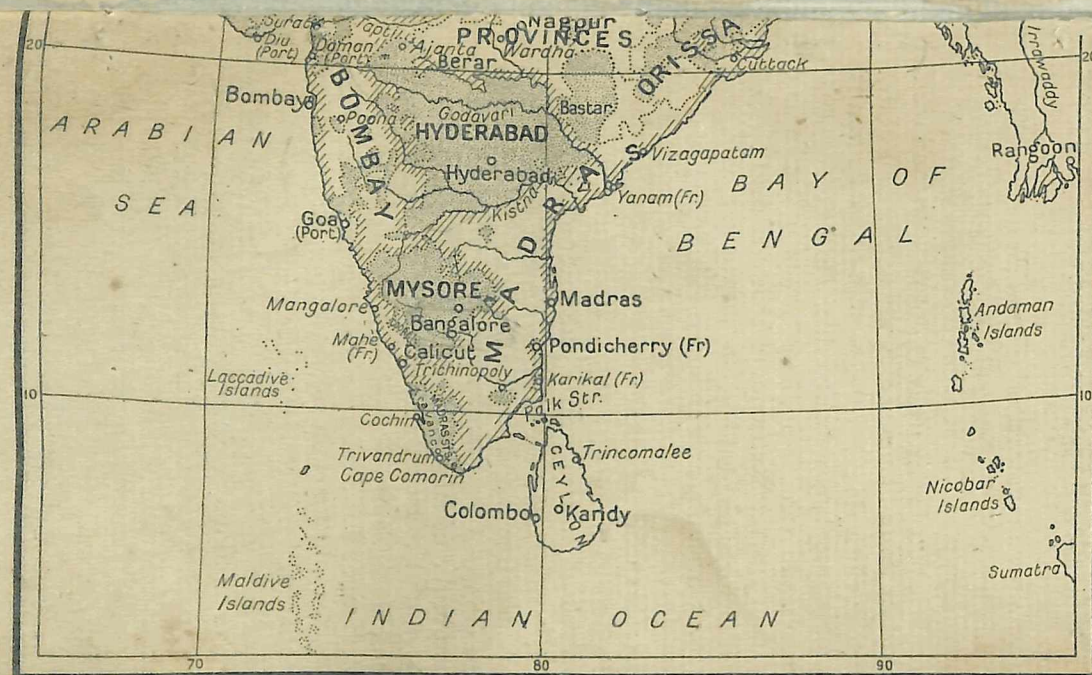
British India is divided into eleven "Provinces", the governments of which collect important taxes, control law and order, agriculture, health, and education, and so on. Over the whole range of these activities self-government by elected legislatures of the people was accorded by the Government of India Act of 1935. Accordingly, in 1937, cabinets of Indian ministers responsible to elected parliaments assumed charge of all the eleven provincial governments. The central government of the country under the Viceroy controls defence, external relations, national finance, commerce, etc.

## II

Thrusting into Iran, like the pennant of the Indian Empire, are the hills, the sun-scorched plains, and the few fruitful valleys and uplands of Baluchistan. Less than a million Moslem people, largely Turkish in racial stock, live in the inhospitable 134,000 square miles of this area, some fishing along the coast, some tending pastures or growing fruit and maize—and all sharing a taste for violence. From Quetta, the only important town hereabouts, now recovered from the disastrous earthquake of 1935 and built up into a formidable military bastion, the Government of India directly administers a portion of the area. But the bulk of the territory is a principedom or "Indian State" under the Khans of Kalat and Las Belas, both, of course, under the "suzerainty" of the Viceroy of India.

Higher north, separating the rest of India from Afghanistan, lie the North-Western Frontier Province and a tribal area. In this region lie the unquiet territories of Waziristan, Malakand, Khyber, and Kurram, round the famous passes which connect India and Afghanistan. And here is India's chronic frontier problem; for the tribesmen, largely of Afghan blood, acknowledge allegiance to none, have slender means of





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living, are fanatic, illiterate, and gifted with a genius for sniping.

The Frontier Province itself (N.W.F.P. for short) is a stable unit, peopled 95 per cent by Moslems of Afghan stock, mainly the tall, light-skinned Pathans who slouch about in peculiar baggy trousers, speak little (and read less) in their Pushtu language. Only 25 per cent of the Province is cultivable and the picture of no Pathan is really quite complete without a rifle. He makes a splendid soldier, and some of the finest troops of the Indian Army are Pathans. Extremes of heat and cold do not worry him, for in his own home he is used to 112 degrees in the shade in summer and below zero in winter, and on mountain territory he is hardly less agile than the ibex and the markhoor, the nimble wild goat of his province. The Pathan has another title to fame. In civil life he sets up too often as a moneylender, especially to the poorest, terrorizing peasant and labourer into paying astronomical interest. It would be quite wrong to confuse the citizen of the Frontier Province with his lawless kinsmen in the tribal area, and the N.W.F.P. governed itself well under elected ministries. A dominant figure in the politics of this martial mountain people is Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known all over India as "The Frontier Gandhi" and an ardent friend and disciple of the Mahatma.

"The House of Many Storeys", as Kashmir, northernmost area of India is called, rises in layers from the plains to the heights of the Himalayas and Kharkhorum mountains. At the very tip lies Gilgit, beyond which outpost the Chinese, Soviet, and Afghan territories meet. But there is little doing in the "roof of the world", and the political agent of the Government of India stationed there can spend a tranquil time shooting the mountain goat and playing a local variety of polo. Kashmir proper is also a playground, one of the most beautiful in the world. Likened often to Switzerland,





Kashmir is perhaps more varied, less tourisized, and over five times Switzerland's area. Snow-topped mountains smile on pleasant valleys and lotus-covered lakes. Nearly four million people, most of them Moslem, are ruled by a Hindu Maharajah who, in recent times, has set up the rudiments of popular government. The great majority live by tending their orchards, growing maize and wheat and rice, making magnificently embroidered shawls of the lightest and finest wool in the world, and, though poor, contrive to look beautiful. The finances of Kashmir are good, but the state still awaits development of the great mineral wealth which lies untapped in hill and valley.

The great river Indus marks off the rich alluvial plains of Punjab (the "land of the five rivers") where twenty-eight million sturdy people live largely as peasant proprietors. It is a dry bright land, witheringly hot in summer but bracingly cold in winter. Dryness, a climatic advantage, is an agricultural handicap; the Punjab could do with more rain, but makes up with constantly developing irrigational facilities. She leavens dependence on agriculture with a considerable wool trade and an export of hides and skins. But the main occupation of the Punjab is soldiering, and a spell of army service is a family tradition with most Punjabi peasants. Out of the Punjab came no less than 400,000 of the million and a half Indian troops which served in the first Great War, and to-day hundreds of Punjabi villagers crowd round the postman for letters from the Middle East.

The Punjab introduces us with a vengeance to the minority problems which beset Indian politics, because half her population is Moslem, three-eighths Hindu, and one-eighth Sikh—the long-haired martial community professing a reformist creed of Hinduism. An elected coalition ministry responsible to the Legislature rules the province under the Premiership of a notable

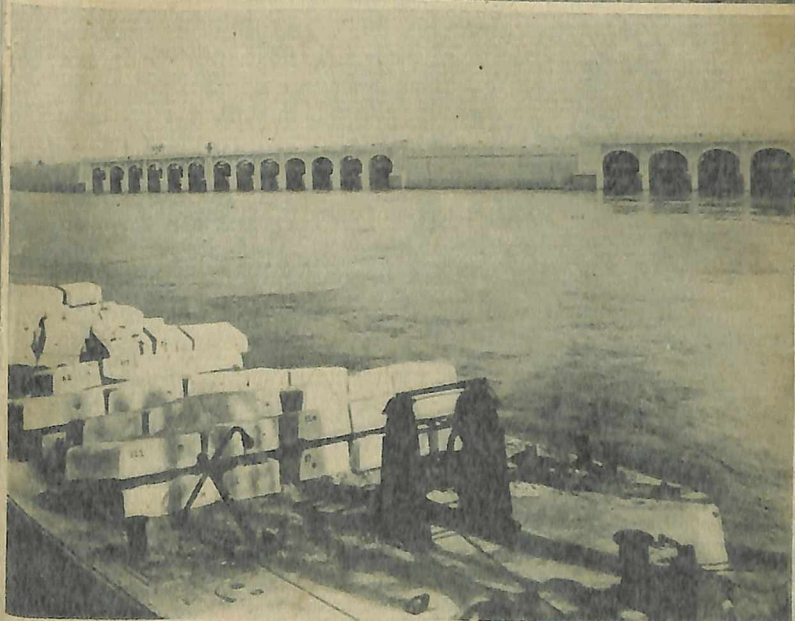
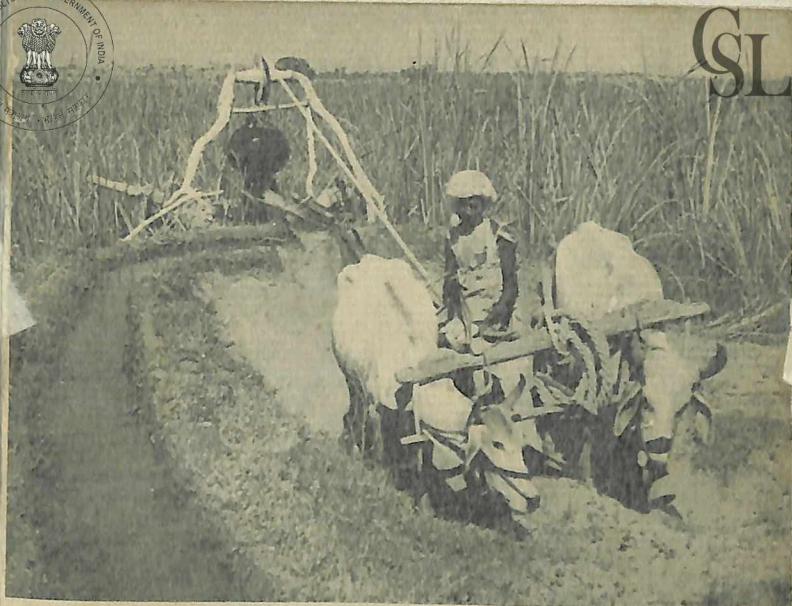




personage in Indian politics: the dapper, suave, soldier-statesman Sir Sikander Hayat Khan. The territory, battle-ground of India with countless hordes of invaders, is soil whose story was old when Alexander fought on her plains.

Round the lower half of the Indus lies Sind, a midget among provinces with a mere four million population, three-fourths of which is Moslem. Slighted in the past as the "land of the sand-dunes", Sind was till recently an improvident appanage of Bombay. Now, however, it glories in autonomous existence, preens itself on the harbour and airport of Karachi, and anxiously follows month by month the developing irrigation of the Sukkur Barrage. This magnificent engineering achievement, largely the result of the energy and perseverance of the late Lord Lloyd, heads up the river Indus at Sukkur with a mile-long mountain of concrete. Through the sixty-six spans of the dam, water, regulated through 36,000 miles of canals, irrigates thousands of acres which before were scrub and sand. Already in the Barrage zone, a million acres of wheat, a million of cotton, and 600,000 acres of rice flourish in the wastes of yesterday. The Barrage was expected to reclaim five million acres, and as the figure is rapidly approached, Sind feels her financial future assured. Not nearly as easy is the cultural problem—with literacy standing at a record low even for India, a mere 4 per cent. The one-fourth minority of Hindus is much more literate and largely controls trade and industry. Nevertheless Sind seldom develops acute communal tension and ambles along under an adroit Muslim Premier with an eye to the main chance—the spread of irrigation and the growth of Karachi.

Eastwards from Sind spreads 135,000 square miles of desert and scrubby plains ruled mostly by Indian princes. Of these there are no less than twenty-two in this historic area, the home of the Rajputs, Hindu



## I. IRRIGATION

I. OLD STYLE: GUJARAT  
(Paul Popper)

THE FLOOD DAM SUKUR





Soldiers and chieftains who struggled against Moslem invaders in the past and here maintained their integrity and pride. To-day, as through the ages, the Rajputs are great soldiers, and the tradition of their chivalry is one of India's proudest memories. Here is situated Bikaner, whose martial Maharajah gave greatly in men and money in the last war, and himself fought for Britain in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Now again the Maharajah has offered his all and, though he is sixty-eight, protests that "a Rajput is never too old to fight". In between wars, the Maharajah badgered his way to building a canal from the Sutlej river, and turned 620,000 acres of his desert kingdom into dependable cultivation. He is working on another canal scheme now, from which, says his Government, "even more is expected". Hardly less famous are the other Rajput states: Udaipur with its palaces shimmering on the lakes; Jodhpur, celebrated for riding breeches of that name; Jaipur, which develops polo—and, recently, political trouble—and makes those colourful pieces of enamelled gold jewellery so familiar in Fifth Avenue and Bond Street. Poised in the midst of this parched expanse is Mount Abu with a temperature range of 30°–70°, and a hilltop crowned by magnificent marble temples of the twelfth century.

The area stretches down to the Arabian sea through the Kathiawar peninsula, mostly flat except for the Gir forest, where survive the only Indian lions extant. Kathiawar is cluttered with smaller states, including Bhavnagar which has developed a good harbour handling a large trade in cotton. Nearby is Nawanagar, whose late Maharajah was the celebrated cricketer, Ranjitsinghji, and the tiny state of Gondal, a territory absolutely free from taxation of any sort—its shrewd Maharajah having so wisely invested his funds that all the needs of administration are met from the interest and dividends.



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From an ice cave in the small Himalayan state of Tehri Garhwal, according to geographical fact—from a lock of the God Siva's hair, according to Hindu mythology—flows the majestic Ganges, winding through fifteen hundred miles to the Bay of Bengal, watering and enriching with alluvium the largest continuous piece of cultivated territory on earth. On the banks of the Ganges and in the plains she and her tributaries nourish, arose India's most splendid capitals, her greatest schools of learning and her most sacred temples. Through at least thirty centuries, the Ganges has been the theme of song and lyric and fable. Small wonder it is that the nature-worshipping Aryans apotheosized her as divine; that a pilgrimage to her banks became first a fashion, then a tradition, and finally a pious obligation; that designing priests blurbed to such good effect that a brisk trade in sealed jugs of the "sacred" water flourishes to this day. The Danube, the Rhine, the Volga, Euphrates, and the Tiber of ancient Rome, are young in myth and song compared to the Ganges and have contributed far less to the peoples who dwell on their banks. And not only in the storied past, but to-day, on the plains watered by the Ganges and her tributaries, live a hundred million agriculturalists cultivating in the certainty that even if the rains fail, the Ganges will give them a minimum waterage.

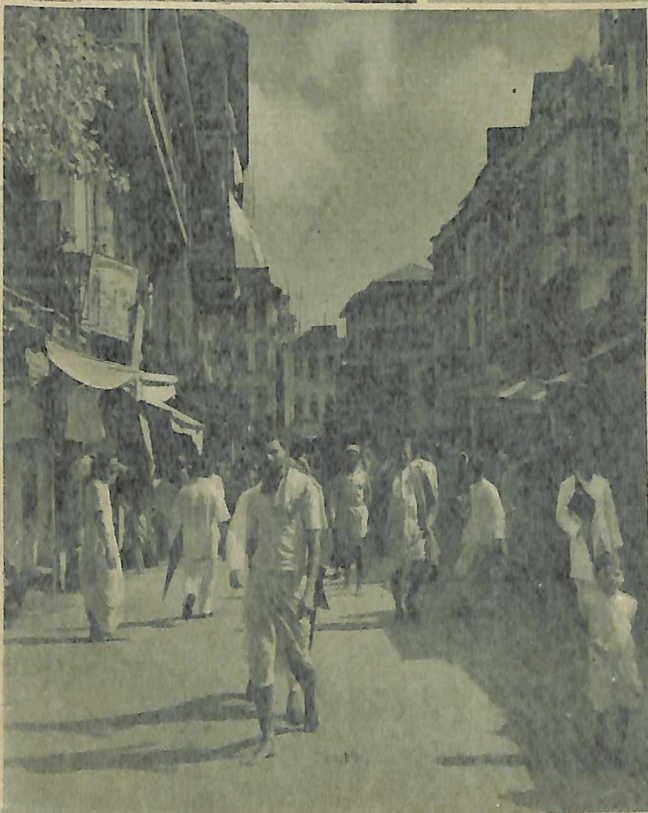
The first of the Gangetic provinces, called the United Provinces, starts from the Himalayan foothills in the north and includes Nanda Devi (25,660 feet), the highest peak on strictly Indian soil. Everest itself (29,141 feet) is on the territory of the independent border kingdom of Nepal whose status is not to be confused with that of the Indian princedoms. Out of its population of hardy mountain people, Nepal contributes the squat, fearless Gurkhas to the Indian Army. Its hereditary kingship has direct treaty relations with H.M. Government, but it is an independent state and generally keeps very much





to itself. But the stretch of Nepal apart, the Himalayan foothills to east and west of it come within the Indian provinces with all their wealth of fauna for the sportsman. Tiger, leopard, bear, and a dozen varieties of deer abound in these jungles. Here also are some of the sacred places of pilgrimage of the Hindus, Badrinath amid the snows, Rishikesh and Hardwar where the Ganges enters the plains.

The plains of the United Provinces grow wheat, millet, and rice. Here, as through most of India, the people are 80 per cent agricultural. This is also the largest sugar-producing area in the country. But the seeds of ancient crafts like hand-spinning and weaving still flourish in the Gangetic plain, and magnificent pieces of fine cotton, silk, and brocade are still turned out by the descendants of craftsmen who once made Indian textiles world famous. New industries jostle with traditional craft, manufacture of artificial silk, shoelaces, elastics, furniture, fountain pens and electrical goods. The United Provinces, rich in places sacred to the Hindus, was also the scene of the splendour of the great Mogul Emperors. Agra, with the Taj Mahal and most of the relics of Mogul palaces and mausoleums; and Delhi, the old capital, in well-preserved ruins and crowded bazaars, as well as the new capital, with its imperially planned palaces and council chambers, lie in this area. So also do Aligarh, home of a Moslem University; and Benares, sacred not only as a place of pilgrimage but as an important seat of learning. Here Pandit Malaviya, a great contemporary Hindu, has built a vast university costing three million pounds, which his influence has cajoled out of the rich in India. Yet the United Provinces present an acute agrarian problem. The peasants are landless and much of the area is owned by large "zamindars", or barons, whose methods are likely to be as ancient as their tenure. Strange as it may sound, the language which pre-



## II. PEOPLE

1. A BOMBAY GIRL

(Black Star)

2. AN UP-COUNTRY OPEN-AIR SCHOOL, (E.N.A.)

3. IN A BOMBAY STREET (E.N.A.)



dominates in this Gangetic province is not Hindi, written in the Sanskrit alphabet, but the kindred Urdu, in the alphabet of the Persians. Allahabad, capital of the province, is the home of the nationalist leader Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

Bihar, the next province of the Ganges, is again hilly and densely jungled near the Himalayas, but very fertile plain round the river where people, mostly Hindus, live 900 to the square mile. To the south stretch hills and plateaus rich in iron and coal, a combination which naturally locates here one of the largest steel plants in the British Empire, the Tata Iron and Steel Works at Jamshedpur. Round the works has developed this brand-new city with a population of a hundred thousand. Mica mines, in quantity and quality the richest in the world, add to the mineral wealth of the province.

The last territory of the Ganges is Bengal, for the most part low-lying rice fields marked off from the Bay by the jungle swamps known as the Sundarbans. Most of Bengal's cultivation is devoted to rice, the staple food of the people, but the province is also the greatest jute-growing and manufacturing area in the world. From her plantations and jute mills have come the billion sandbags which protect men and monuments all the way from Scotland to Sydney. Like Punjab at the other end of the country, Bengal holds a nice balance between the communities, 55 per cent Mohammedan and the rest Hindus. The Bengalis, Hindu as well as Moslem, are believed to have a large proportion of Mongolian blood in their veins and have a reputation for being more emotional than the rest of India. They led in the awakening of nationalism and are some of the most fervent patriots in the country. But with national patriotism goes an intense pride in everything Bengali. No Indian literature has developed so exuberantly in recent years as has Bengali, the distinct language of



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92 per cent of Bengal's fifty million people. Rabin-  
dranath Tagore was the leader and the finest product  
of this renaissance. Another Tagore, Abanindranath,  
heads a revival of Indian art, and some of the most  
distinguished modern Indian painters like Nandalal  
Bose, are from Bengal. Their enthusiasm has swept the  
country, creating not only new works but a keener  
appreciation of India's artistic heritage.

Equally great have been Bengal's contributions to  
religion and social reform. The Saint Ramakrishna  
Paramahansa and his famous disciple Swami Vivekan-  
anda set up the Vedanta Societies which flourish all  
over India and in many cities abroad; and the Brahmo  
Samaj, a reformist creed of Hinduism seeking to  
rationalize the faith to its intrinsic purity, originated in  
Bengal. Science is represented by Jagadish Bose, the  
botanist, and P. C. Ray, the chemist.

India's farthest north-east is Assam, a province of  
hills and dense forests. In the far north where the  
Himalayas end and the river Brahmaputra curves into  
the country from Tibet, are reed forests infested by bison  
and wild buffalo and tiger and the vanishing Indian  
rhinoceros. On the top of the hills live primitive  
aborigines, and on the slopes are the great tea gardens.  
Coal and other minerals are believed to abound, and  
a petroleum belt eight hundred miles long has been  
located, but Assam for the moment works but one small  
oil refinery. She is content to grow her rice and tea,  
fight the floods, float the produce down her numerous  
waterways, and carry on a brisk minor trade with the  
border territories. From Shillong perched on hill slopes  
against a background of mountain ranges, an elected  
Ministry normally governs the province.

Southwards from Bengal, through the small province  
of Orissa, chiefly important for its fisheries, its wealth of  
iron-ore and its distinct language, lies the jumble of  
hills and forests which mark peninsular India from the





North. Great teak and bamboo forests cover the hills, and all the fauna of the Himalayan region, tiger and bison, deer and hog abound here as well. The plains and uplands grow wheat and cotton, and the population of fifteen millions is again largely agricultural, though a great deal of manganese is mined in the area known as the Central Provinces. In all parts of this province and not merely in remote hills and inaccessible jungle, live aborigines called the Gonds, a people who have survived contact with civilization better than any others anywhere in the world. They are not less than 7 per cent of the population and are steadily being absorbed into the Hindu or Christian fold. In a village near a little-known town of the province, Mahatma Gandhi set up residence a few years ago, and Wardha is now the G.H.Q. of the Indian Congress Party.

The South of India is made up of the provinces of Madras and Bombay, and the large Indian princedoms of Hyderabad, Mysore, and Travancore. The Madras Presidency reaches a long arm along the eastern coast to the borders of Orissa, runs all down to the tip of the peninsula and then up again 450 miles to the west. The Madrasis have a reputation for cleverness and scholarship, precisely as the Punjabis are considered "martial", the Bengalis "emotional", the Gujaratis in the Bombay Presidency "commercial", and so on. There is, of course, very little in these generalizations, but Madras strives hard to maintain its reputation for "intellect" and "cleverness". Its University is reckoned one of the best in the world, but so great is its output that most of its scholars force themselves into jobs which require but an elementary education. The result is that the Madrasis have in addition to their reputation for cleverness another one for "underselling" all others. Throughout the country thousands of Madrasis fill clerical and administrative positions. Madras's reputa-



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tion for worthwhile intellect is sustained by men like Sir C. V. Raman, the physicist and Nobel Prize laureate, Sir Radha Krishnan the eminent philosopher, and the late S. Ramanujan the mathematician. The southern reputation for balance and constructive statesmanship was brilliantly vindicated by C. Rajagopalachari who astutely governed the province as its elected Prime Minister. Madras speaks three principal languages of Dravidian origin, Tamil and Telugu by about twenty millions each, and Malayalam by a smaller number along the west coast. Only 9 per cent of the population is Moslem, and these live in greater amity with their fellow Madrasis than anywhere else in the country. Madras is the most Christian of the Indian provinces, her Christian population amounting to as much as 4 per cent. Largely agricultural and mainly rice-growing, Madras is now developing industries. Great hydro-electric and irrigation schemes are now complete and a period of rapid industrialization may follow.

At the south-western corner of the Indian peninsula is the pleasant Hindu state of Travancore, ruled by a Maharajah whose dynasty reaches back unbroken through seventeen centuries. But succession in the Travancore royal house and in many of its families is through women, from a person to his sister's son. Matriarchy has had one good effect on Travancore—its women are the most progressive and the best educated in the country. Travancore and its small neighbour state, Cochin, are the most literate parts of India, and hundreds of journals are published though the total population is only about five millions. Over two millions of these are Christians and the Travancore variation of the communal problem is Hindu-Christian instead of Hindu-Moslem. The present ruler of the state, a young man in his thirties, with the advice of his conspicuously able Prime Minister, Sir C. P.



Ramaswami Iyer, startled India in 1936 by throwing open the temples in his state to the "untouchables": a measure of social reform which has had immense exemplary value. :

Mysore, lying in the middle of the peninsula, is generally considered "the model state". The late Maharajah's saintliness and sagacity were honoured all over the country, and Mysore is doing all she can to develop her resources and improve the lot of her seven million people. She mines gold, makes steel and iron, manufactures cement, paper, and soap, develops sericulture, silk-weaving, and so on. Large hydro-electric plants provide motive-power for factories and cottage industries and also illuminate her principal towns. Her capital is the scene of the most splendid pageantry once a year when the Maharajah celebrates the Dassara festival. The natural beauty of the town is lit up with millions of lamps into a fairy-splendour, and the Maharajah holds court in the ceremonial Hindu fashion. Mysore is blessed with a temperate climate—its chief city Bangalore generally registers between 60–70 degrees. Most of the state is plateau, but to the south and west lie the forests where wild elephants are caught in stockades. "Sabu", the boy film-star, was in life, as on the pictures, an elephant boy from these parts.

Even larger than Mysore is Hyderabad, most important of the Indian princedoms, with an area the size of Italy, a population of eighteen millions, mostly Hindu, and a ruler called the Nizam, an orthodox Muslim. The Nizam is reputed the richest man in the world. Hyderabad is mainly agricultural like the rest of India, but new industries are springing up, including a cement factory, and cotton mills. The state also has the largest collieries in India. Hyderabad enjoys an administration the efficiency of which was greatly raised by the late Sir Akbar Hydari, till recently the President of the Executive Council. But Hyderabad is also rather



medieval, three-eighths of the land being owned by feudal barons known as Nawabs; one-tenth is the personal estate of the Nizam. Within the state are the famous Ajanta caves whose walls still glow with the most beautiful murals of ancient India, paintings executed in sections between the third and seventh centuries.

Bombay, according to a recent Hollywood "portrayal", is a place of sinister intrigue and "oriental" mystery, but those who live there know the town as just a busy port and commercial metropolis, with the usual hotels, boulevards, cinemas, railway stations—and the corresponding slums. The hotels, etc., are just as good as in any western city, but the slums are incredibly worse. The people of the province are, first, the wiry Marathas, from the hills and plains of the Deccan. The Marathas make excellent soldiers and once based a great empire on this territory. Next are the Gujaratis, from the great cotton-growing districts, who are shrewd businessmen. Finally there are the Parsis, a people of Persian descent comparatively recently settled in India. Less than 200,000 strong, the Parsis have contributed magnificently to the prosperity and advancement of the country—as well as themselves. Bombay city and the neighbouring Ahmedabad are the centres of the important textile industry which to-day employs probably nearly three million people. Cotton mills and a good deal of brass and silver work lighten dependence on agriculture and only 64 per cent of the province live on the land. In the Gujarat area lies Baroda, long recognized as one of the most progressive Indian princedom. Its late Maharajah did much through fifty-eight years of masterful and devoted rulership to advance education, pioneer social reform, improve the lot of women and the humblest classes of his two and a half million subjects. He developed also an important harbour—a useful addition in a country with thousands of





20 miles of coastline but only a few worthwhile ports. Mohamed Ali Jinnah, stormy leader of the Muslim League, hails from Bombay, and the province has contributed many able statesmen to Indian public life, including members of the Congress Party's Cabinet.

A country of continental proportions peopled by no less than a fifth of the human race; 75 per cent of the population subsisting in the 700,000 villages; a standard of living perhaps the lowest in the world not excluding China: that is *the* basic pattern of India. To these we must add that 88 per cent of its people are illiterate. But we must also notice that the myth of the unchanging East does not survive the most cursory study of the immense political, social, and economic ferments now active in the country. Nor would the contrasts and diversities which abound in India overwhelm those who realize her size and population. They are certainly there—Hindu and Moslem, Brahmin and “untouchable”, prince and peasant, a medley of ethnic types and a babel of tongues—but it is important not to miss the wood for the trees.

There is no such thing as an Indian race, but then there are few (outside Nuremberg) who could produce a certificate of “purity of blood” through the forty centuries which is roughly the historic age of India. The peoples of India are of varied blends, Aryan, Dravidian, and Mongoloid, with more or less accent on one type or other in different parts of the country. But so thorough is the blending that even regional generalizations are unsafe. Rabindranath Tagore was certainly a Bengali, but his patriarchic features had nothing Mongoloid about them. The south, largely Dravidian, can produce many who could be modelled for the typical “Aryan”. It is sometimes said that Hindu-Muslim differences derive from basic racial antipathies, but at least four-fifths of the eighty million Moslems of



India are more or less recent converts from the Hindu fold.

There is no such thing as an Indian language, but one language, Hindi, is understood by nearly 150 million people. And one of Britain's greatest contributions to India is, of course, the English language, the administrative and higher educational medium of the country to-day. To that may be added the observation that Russia defends herself heroically—and prints her communiqués—in twelve different languages. And little Switzerland proclaims the neutrality of her four million people in four different tongues.

There is no such thing as an Indian climate. Some of the hottest, the coldest, the driest and the wettest areas of the world are to be found in India. But then, there is no Russian climate either, or Chinese, or a brand marked "U.S.A." And most Londoners will agree that it is better to have definite climates in different areas than to sample every type in the same week and place!

## CHAPTER II

### THE FIRST FOUR THOUSAND YEARS

IN India some 4,500 years ago you could have rented a self-contained flat or apartment with bathroom and kitchen attached and a separate staircase from the street. The burnt brick house of your choice would have had ample doors and windows and may have been two or more storeys high. Water was not "laid on" but you drew it from your own filter-well just outside, and, eminently practical detail, a chute from the tiled kitchen took the rubbish straight down to the street bin at the back.





Such is the startling detail with which excavations, begun in 1930 in Mohenjo Daro and Harappa of the Punjab province, have dispelled the hypotheses of generations of scholars. It was axiomatic among them that the "Aryan" tribes which penetrated India about 1500 B.C. gave the country its civilization. Archaeological work of the last decade has pushed India's long history back by about two millennia. A seal of the "Indus valley people" as the inhabitants of these cities are now called, has been dated 2500 B.C. and the deeper layers of excavation yet to be done are expected to reach a thousand years earlier still.

Mohenjo Daro—the name means "city of the dead"—was an admirably planned city with straight, well laid out streets and spacious houses. Its inhabitants cultivated wheat and barley, ate pork and mutton, fish and poultry, domesticated the ox, the camel, and the elephant, dressed in well-woven cotton and wool, and adorned themselves with gold and silver jewels, jade and lapis-lazuli. Their pottery was turned out by the fast lathe and glazed beautifully. They were skilled metal workers and cast vessels and statuettes in bronze. They moved about in chariots, developed music and dancing, and did not forget to make pretty little toys for their children. They wrote a pictorial language and knew the world outside, for their seals have been found in Sumerian remains.

These people of forty odd centuries ago worshipped a Mother Goddess and a three-headed deity, probably Siva himself, but they do not seem to have built elaborate temples or palaces. Most remarkable of all features so far discovered is the abundance of well-built dwelling houses and the absence of any that are overwhelmingly pretentious. Contrasting sharply with all other ancient ruins, Mohenjo Daro and Harappa had no slums, no painful conflict between palaces and hovels. On the contrary, a distinct workmen's district



Mohenjo Daro is as well laid out as the rest, with two room tenements, each with its bathroom. Of immense sociological interest too is the fact that these men who worked copper and bronze made indeed hunting and domestic weapons, but none for martial purposes. They had no armoury and no fortifications.

Harappa and Mohenjo Daro are fully four hundred miles apart—a continental distance for the ox-cart—and traces of the same civilization are reported from places hundreds of miles east and south of these cities. Here therefore were no mere oases of civilization or isolated foreign colonies, but a widespread culture which covered much of India. It was into an India with an old civilization that the Aryan tribes wandered in search of pasture.

They came in waves, immigrants, not invaders, with their families and few possessions, a light-skinned people, speaking a highly developed language, led by tribal chiefs who had priests and bards with them to propitiate the deities and sing their deeds. They called themselves "Aryans" and spoke contemptuously of the earlier inhabitants as "dasyus" or slaves. Professor Max Muller, the great German orientalist, who invented the word "Aryan", meant it as a lingual not racial classification. The language of these people was definitely Indo-European, but the languages of people of very different ethnic stock may be closely related. Who the Aryans were is as yet indeterminate, but it is now held as least unlikely that they were Persian. Another German scholar, Baron von Eikstedt, sweeps aside the terms "Aryan" and "Dravidian" altogether and calls these immigrants "Indids".

The Aryans or Indids fought their way to a foothold and kept moving more and more deeply into the country as more and more immigrated. A pastoral people at first, they soon learnt to dwell in cities. With more or less success they struggled to maintain their racial





identity and even when this failed asserted for themselves leadership of the peoples into whom they had become absorbed. It is through their lyrics and hymns and their later epics that the history of India bares itself for the next thousand years.

These compositions were not written down. They were the sacred and secret scriptures learned by rote by schools of initiated pupils and so passed from generation to generation. In their passage additions and subtractions are bound to have occurred, and the "Vedas" or the books of wisdom are probably of diverse authorship over many centuries. Earliest of these is the Rig Veda, a collection of lyrics addressed to different Gods. Then came the Sama Veda, more of the character of chantable hymns, and the Yajur Veda which was interposed with ritual instructions in prose. And the last is the Atharva Veda which mingled beautiful lyrics with magical incantations. To these were added the Brahmanas or prose commentaries and, about 800 B.C., the Upanishads, the profound philosophical basis of Hinduism. Then appeared the Dharma Sutras which laid the foundations of Hindu law and code of morality. Later still came treatises on prosody, grammar, phonetics, and drama, and the two great epics. Of these the *Mahabharata*, probably the older, runs to no less than 100,000 couplets. The *Ramayana* of 24,000 couplets attributed to the sage Valmiki is still the most beloved story in India.

Historically the "Vedic Age" terminated about a few centuries before Christ, but it is important to realize that in all matters of religious usage the 300 million Hindus of to-day conform more or less strictly to the precepts of the Vedas. To-day, as in 1500 B.C., the priest whispers into the ears of the Hindu boy being initiated into his religion the Gayatri *mantra* or formula: "Let us meditate on the glories of God; may He enlighten our understanding." The prayers are the same



morning, noon, and night, identical for the same caste all over the country. The wedding and funeral rites are the same too with but minor local variations. And not only in ritual does the Vedic Age permeate the life of Hindu India to-day. Universally and without distinction of caste or region, Rama is still the model of all things manly, Bharata is the example of fraternal duty, and the "sophisticated" Hindu girl may pluck her eyebrows or powder her nose but will not deny that Sita is the ideal of wifely conduct.<sup>1</sup> Kings and conquerors there were in the Vedic Age, but it was the beggarly saint that was exalted above them all. So to-day Mahatma Gandhi's immense appeal derives from the fact that he conforms in his personal life so closely to the ancient Hindu ideal of austere selflessness. The late Maharajah of Mysore was venerated all over India not so much for his magnificent services to his people but because he was in personal life a man of saintly simplicity.

Primarily the Aryans were simple nature worshippers who apostrophized though not quite anthropomorphized the Sun, the Moon, the Dawn, Fire, Varuna, the god of the skies and rain, and Indra, the ideal warrior. But the ethical and philosophic content of Hinduism developed through centuries of thought, and shows, perhaps, the fusion of the Aryan and earlier Indian culture. The religion which was thus evolved was not a dogma of faith, one irrefutable revelation, but a comprehensive synthesis of spiritual experience. "Hinduism is a process," says Professor Sir Radha Krishnan, the most eminent of modern Hindu philosophers, "not a result; a growing tradition, not a fixed revelation. It never shut out by force wisdom from any source, for there is no distinction of mine and thine in the Kingdom of the Spirit." The cornerstone of a Hindu's faith may

<sup>1</sup> The *Ramayana* is the story of Prince Rama, his brothers, of whom Bharata was one, and his wife Sita.





be taken to be the belief in a World Soul, or rather, a soul of all the Universe, *Paramatma*, the Supreme, the one reality of which all individual souls are part. Defining the purpose of life to be self-realization, which means harmonizing one's individual soul with the Infinite, the philosophers of the Vedic Age examined rationally every means of achieving this end, the beatitude of being merged in the Supreme. Postulating the oneness and the only-ness of the Supreme and the spark of divinity in all living things, the sages did not disdain any faith which was sincere, any ritual which was helpful to those who could not dispense with such aid. No single idol is mentioned in the Rig Veda, though hymn after hymn rises to ecstasy over sun and moon and fire. But later thinkers accepted all the methods of worship they found around them, and wove every village deity, every tribal god, every petty "patron saint" into myth and fable and allegory with which to point the higher lesson of all religion. Thus if there was a five-headed serpent of demoniac powers, its terrors were admitted, but the fable was created of the little human, very human, child Krishna who could dance on the hood of the dread monster.

Apart from the conception of the *Paramatma*, the Vedic sages developed certain doctrines of importance or interest. One was metempsychosis. They pictured the individual soul as journeying through the experience of many lives in different material forms to attain at last unity with the Infinite. Then there was the doctrine of *Karma* or retribution, that all acts good and bad must inevitably be paid for and that the consequences of acts in one life follow the person into the next. There was also the theory of *Maya* or illusion which through infinite refinement of metaphysics sought to establish the unreality of all experience, of all phenomena, save the spiritual. But neither *Karma* nor *Maya* nor any other philosophic theory, except the ideal



the Universal Soul of which a spark exists in every living thing, is sacrosanct or binding. None is postulated as irrefutable revelation, but advanced only as a line of approach elaborated by one saint or school, to be accepted or rejected by each man's own conviction. That is to the Hindu the greatest thing about his religion: its catholicity, its universal tolerance and comprehension.

Vedic social organization was marked by the evolution of the unique Hindu caste system. When they first came into India, the Aryans do not seem to have known it, and only one verse of the Rig Veda, and that probably a later addition, refers to the four "Varnas". But the later Vedas speak definitely of the four groups, the Brahmins or thinkers, the Kshatriyas or warriors, the Vaisyas or businessmen, and the Sudras or labourers. "Varna" means colour, and originally the system was at least partly based on racial considerations, but later the distinction became more occupational. At its best the device was a remarkably successful attempt to organize within one society people of different races in different cultural levels, and it achieved the magnificent result of preventing the country splitting up into warring racial units. For at its best the caste system was neither hierarchical nor exclusively hereditary. It was possible for a man to pass from one caste to another by change of occupation, nor was any inferiority in the eye of man or God implied by his caste. Rama, the *avatar* hero of the *Ramayana* came of the second caste, and Krishna, the *avatar* in the *Mahabharata*, was but a humble shepherd. Endogamous restrictions which prevent members of different castes intermarrying, were few and slack, and Manu the law-giver provides in his code for inter-caste marriages. Those of the Greek soldiers of Alexander the Great who elected to stay in India were admitted into the Hindu fold and given the Kshatriya or martial caste. The moral code of each



caste was also high and generally adhered to. The Brahmins, freed from all material cares, were expected to devote themselves to matters spiritual and help direct the communal life without thought of private gain; the Kshatriyas were enjoined to keep fighting fit and entrusted with maintaining law and order. The Vaisyas were to consider the wealth they amassed as a social trust which involved the duty of maintaining the economic life of the community. All the three groups were responsible for justice to the unskilled labourers of the fourth order. Such an organization demanded the highest sense of social obligation in every rank of life. Caste in the purity of its Vedic conception was thus more than an expedient to evolve harmony out of diversity. It did not seek to abolish the motive of economic gain, but it exalted the selfless who rendered disinterested service to social leadership. The price of rank was the surrender of self-seeking.

That even in the Vedic Age caste degenerated is only to be expected for so composite a morality is difficult to maintain. The surprise rather is that it functioned for centuries to impress the country indelibly with a cultural unity and a character all its own. But the corruption set in, and we find the *Mahabharata* already stressing that not birth nor learning but only conduct is the test of high caste. The epic recalls that Manu the law-giver had definitely declared "that there is no point in distinctions of caste if character is not considered". Caste was evidently becoming rigidly hereditary, the higher classes making a close preserve of their privileges. "Mutual respect and consideration between the castes weakened to social arrogance." But even so, it is most important to observe that caste had little to do with the political organization of the Vedic communities. The popular fallacy abroad that the caste system somehow militates against the successful working of democratic institutions in India is contra-

dicted by the country's history from the Vedic Age downwards. The foreign observer is sometimes surprised to note that Brahmin subordinates and secretaries take their orders from Ministers of "lower" castes. And the Hindu is surprised by the surprise. It has never been otherwise, and democracy is no more a stranger to India than to ancient Greece.

The Aryans came into India as tribes organized under kings and chieftains, but the earliest records speak of kings who neglected their duties and were banished. A little later, when the Aryans had settled down into organized states, the kings were invariably guided and controlled by popular assemblies called *sabhas* which later became the standing committees, as it were, of *samities*, elected bodies which controlled groups of villages. The early Vedas never speak of arbitrary or irremovable monarchs. They were all elected rulers needing the continuous support of elected popular assemblies and councils. The epics mention powerful dynasties but even in their time it was more than any king could do to disregard the advice of his ministers. Later still we hear of complete republics coexisting with neighbouring monarchies of more or less constitutional character. When Alexander invaded India in the twilight of the epic age, he fought kings and chieftains, but he also records the existence of republics. Alexander's successor sent an ambassador, Megasthenes, to the court of a great Hindu Emperor, but he records that in numerous parts of the country autonomous states still survived, and many of them were full-fledged and powerful republics.

But, whether the state was republican or monarchical, it is useful to remember that through the Vedic Age and for centuries thereafter, administration was highly decentralized and the unit of state was a virtually autonomous *grama* or village. These were governed from pre-Vedic times by *panchayats*, elected bodies





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which cut across all divisions of caste and were responsible to the totality of the people. To this day the *panchayats* persist. Their powers are attenuated and their prestige low, but they survive, and have behind them an unbroken tradition of nearly four thousand years, a longer background than that of any other human institution. Nowhere else in the world has government based on the will of the people deeper roots than in India.

The republican state was very much alive in the time of Gautama Buddha who was himself born in a state largely or completely republican. Buddha styled the order of monks he founded "The Republic of the Bikkus". This was not merely a name, as Lord Zetland (former Secretary of State for India) points out. The assembly of monks functioned with an analogue of the Parliamentary "Mr. Speaker". Some of the motions were required to be read three times before enactment, and each time, if necessary, after voting by ballot!

The age of the Hindu Empires which succeeded the Vedic Age was ushered in by the advent of two great religious teachers, both of whom revolted against the Brahminical tyranny which had elaborated Hinduism into tortuous extremes. Vardhamana Mahavira, born about 599 B.C. of the royal house of a small state in the modern Bihar province, ruled his kingdom till he was thirty, then abdicated in favour of his brother and be-took himself to an ascetic life. About ten years later he received enlightenment, and for the next thirty years preached his new doctrine. Mahavira practised extreme asceticism and the essence of his rigid doctrine was insistence on righteous thought, and deed. He taught that all living things had souls and carried the principle to its logical extreme, his followers going to extreme pains to avoid the slightest hurt to the smallest creature. But Jainism never set up as a distinct religion nor could



his austerities appeal to the masses. But there are still in India about one and a half million Jains, a small but wealthy community. Their faith forbids them entry to many professions and they generally concentrate on commerce and banking. Many fine hospitals for animals and endowments for the care of birds derive from their munificence. But the Jains accept the general principles of Hinduism and are to be considered a reformed sect rather than a separate religion.

Gautama Buddha, born probably in 563 B.C., the son of a chieftain on the Nepalese border, is the great religious figure of the age. After a youth spent in the comfortable surroundings of his estate, Gautama, oppressed by the spiritual confusions of his time, renounced wife and child, and for six years led the life of a wandering mendicant. He studied under learned Hindu ascetics for a time and then practised penances and austerities till he nearly died—but without finding solace. Then one day, sitting in deep meditation under a *pipal* tree in Buddh Gaya, he received enlightenment. He hastened to Benares and there in the Deer Park preached his first sermon, the eightfold path to salvation: Right understanding, Right resolve, Right speech, Right action, Right living, Right effort, Right mindfulness, and Right meditation. The Buddha (meaning the Enlightened One) produced his own theory of the Atma and Ego and expounded his philosophy in great detail, but the essence of his teaching was simple and direct. Sacrificial rites and prayer, he taught, are idle things, and he insisted on deliverance from caste and ritual. The necessity of kindness to all living things, purity of heart, truthfulness, charity and the conquest of greed, fault-finding and violence: these were the cardinal virtues he proclaimed as the way to salvation, to *nirvana*, the supreme beatitude. Buddha's influence on contemporary India must have been profound, and though the religion he founded has flourished only outside India the



essence of his message is still part of Hindu heritage and has its influence on the people's outlook.

The first considerable invasion of India occurred in 516 B.C., when an admiral of the Persian Emperor Darius sailed the Indus river and annexed the Punjab. It is a coincidence, but of some interest that this happened in the lifetime of Buddha whose basic teaching was *ahimsa* or non-violence. But the Persian conquest was short-lived and yielded place to the more serious invasion by the Macedonian Alexander the Great. Having smashed his way through Afghanistan the previous year, Alexander stormed through the tribal areas on India's north-west and penetrated the country a little above the Khyber Pass. He marched deep into the Punjab and only a mutiny among his war-weary soldiers prevented his reaching the Gangetic plain as well. Alexander returned, sailed down the Indus, fought several Hindu states, and returned home, master of the Indus valley. But a year later this outstanding military genius of the ancient world died in Babylon at the age of thirty-three and the empires he had aggrandized in Afghanistan and India fell to pieces shortly after.

Closely studying Alexander's strategy was a young Indian prince, Chandragupta, who turned his observation to such good account that he first put an end to Greek rule in the Punjab, returned to his birthplace of Maghada on the Ganges, to set up his rule there, and then extended his empire from Bengal to Kandahar. And he built so surely that a few years later he soundly defeated attempts of Alexander's successor to recover the Punjab. Chandragupta's minister was a remarkable Brahmin statesman, Kautilya, the probable author of the astonishing treatise on politics called the *Arthashastra*. Here is a book about twenty-three centuries old in which every problem of power-politics is discussed with ruthless realism. Kautilya, for example, dis-

linguishes no less than six shades of neutrality and non-belligerency and examines nicer points of the fine art of fifth-columning! The empire which the author of the *Arthashastra* helped to rule was, as may be imagined, an extremely well organized bureaucracy. It was severe but by all accounts fair and incorruptible.

But the dynasty which Chandragupta founded is exalted and all the world's history enriched by the reign of his grandson, the Emperor Asoka. Asoka inherited an empire which stretched from Kandahar to practically all India, except the tip of the peninsula. He fought and won in the first years of his reign the only war of his reign over Kalinga (modern Bihar) and thus rounded off a continuous territory which was greater in size, population and wealth than the Roman Empire at its height. But the bloodshed he had caused preyed upon Asoka's mind. He became a Buddhist a few years later and for the rest of his reign laboured untiringly for his people. Despite a troublesome frontier, Asoka alone among kings solemnly renounced war as an instrument of policy. He dug wells, planted shade trees, built great highways, set up schools and colleges and erected hundreds of hospitals. He extended his compassion to beast and bird as well, renounced the royal hunt, and begged his officers to persevere in trying to win the confidence of aboriginal tribes. He raised pillars and monuments at public places all over his vast Empire, carving thereon not the metaphysics of religion but the basic virtues which are the essence of all right teaching. He humanized the efficiency which his government already possessed and infused into the administration his own spirit of devoted service to the common man. Himself an ardent Buddhist, he enforced the most complete religious toleration throughout the empire. Freedom of speech and opinion naturally flourished under a king who publicly declared that even treasonable deeds should be endured as long as humanly possible.





He sent great civilizing missions to every country he knew, and the modern history of Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Japan, and Tibet may be considered to have begun with the advent of the Buddhist influence which Asoka thus liberated. Every form of art and literature flourished under his patronage. For forty years, without a day's holiday, Asoka laboured to enrich and ennoble his people. In the constellation of all the world's monarchs, writes H. G. Wells, Asoka's name shines and shines alone, a star.

Sixty years after Asoka's death, the dynasty was lost and his great empire broke up. Then followed a troubled period of minor invasions by Bactrians, Parthians and Scythians at different periods and the setting up of more or less vigorous kingships till in A.D. 320 emerged the Gupta empire which for one hundred and fifty years maintained its hold on most of north India. The dynasty produced a great emperor in Vikramaditya under whom the empire reached the height of its power and prosperity. In Vikramaditya's court flourished the "Nine Gems of Hindu literature", a constellation of great literary men which included Kalidasa, the author of *Sakuntala*, and other masterpieces of literature. Generally referred to as the "Golden Age" of the Hindu Empires, the country seems to have thriven exceedingly under the Guptas, and every form of art and literature reached perfection under munificent patronage. The Chinese pilgrim Fa Hien, who travelled extensively through the kingdom, has left a detailed and enthusiastic description of the efficiency of administration, the plenitude of public services, the perfect religious toleration and the general high level of culture. At least one piece of the art of the period is still glowingly alive in the Ajanta caves of Hyderabad. Hindu culture was so celebrated at the time in all Asia that its influence travelled far afield. It helped to bring about the Chinese renaissance



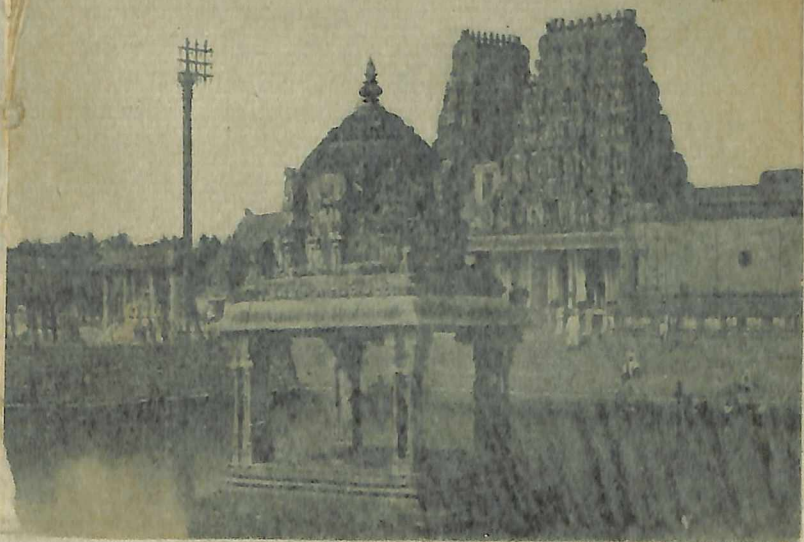
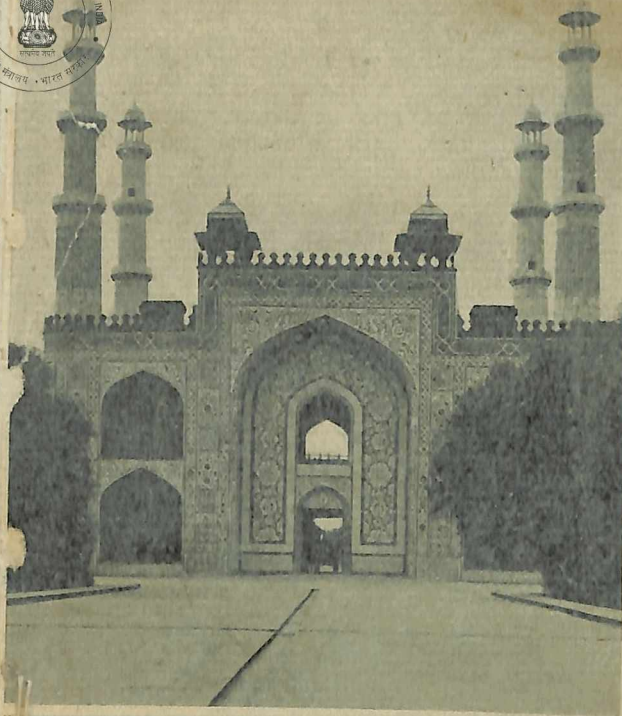
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III.  
ARCHITECTURE

1. GATE OF AKBAR  
TOMB

(Paul Popper)

2. GREAT TEMPLE  
CONJEVERAM  
(E.N.A.)







of the Tang period (A.D. 618-905) "and thus indirectly assisted in the emergence of Japan as a civilized state". It is of some interest that this Golden Age of Hindu culture coincided roughly with the beginning of the Dark Ages in Europe.

The Gupta Empire was disrupted in the beginning of the seventh century by internal challenge from powerful groupings north and south. The idea of a political hegemony all over India yielded to that of small independent monarchies. The period was further confused by the incursion of central Asiatic invaders collectively called the Huns by Indian historians. In the beginning of the eighth century, however, Harsha, a lad of sixteen, assumed the rulership of a Gangetic state and then proceeded in six years of campaigning, during which period "his elephants were not unharnessed or his soldiers unhelmeted", to establish an empire which covered all the Gangetic area and the Kathiawar peninsula.

The southern peninsula continued under its famous old dynasties of Chalukya, Chola, and Chera. Harsha's reign was fully described by another observant Chinese traveller, Hieun Tsang, who toured the country extensively and returned to China to write a vivid description of the imposing power of the army, the splendour of court, the efficiency of administration, the wide diffusion of education, the encouragement of all forms of scholarship, the complete religious toleration, the frequent great debates between Brahmin and Buddhist savants, and the piety of the monarch.

Harsha's half a century of peace was succeeded by disintegration all over the country, except in the peninsula where the Cholas asserted, about A.D. 1000, hegemony over most of the south. North India, particularly the North-west, was breaking up more and more with rival Rajput and Punjabi kingdoms, a state of affairs which led to a series of Moslem invasions from

the eighth century onwards. For six centuries thereafter the history of India is one of sanguinary confusion. Most of the Mohammedan incursions of this period were raids for plunder and loot but some were attempts at conquest or even extirpation. Muhammad Ghazni raided the country no less than seventeen times, each time leaving behind him trails of death and destruction. Another named Ghorî carried out a campaign of massacre and loot and then precariously set himself up in Delhi. A reign of terror followed under him. And then followed the dynasty of a slave of his who rose to found his own lineage, of which the ablest was Muhammad Tughlak. But throughout, "the people", according to a chronicler of the time of the eccentric Tughlak, "were never tired of rebellion or the king of punishing".

The six centuries of confusion ended when a young man of the blood of Timur and Genghis Khan—the two most famous Asiatic conquerors—fought his way to Delhi and set up the Mogul dynasty. Babar was essentially a military genius, and his heart was always in the kindlier home he had left behind. But he was no mere raider and he set himself to organize the territories he had conquered into a stable political unit. The work was carried to fruition by his grandson, Akbar, another great monarch. Called to the throne at thirteen, Akbar's first twenty years were occupied with consolidating his empire. He established himself firmly as master of India from the Indus to the mouth of the Ganges, and from the Himalayas to the Vindhya. For over a quarter of a century thereafter Akbar worked to give his people prosperity and good government. His able Hindu minister, the Raja Todarmal, worked out a complete system of administration which though essentially bureaucratic and highly centralized, yet functioned fairly and efficiently through the reign and thereafter. He fashioned a land revenue system notably



more equitable than the confused feudal types used before; a system which still functions to some extent in many parts of India. Akbar was a man of prodigious energy and intellect, and the keenest powers of reasoning. He was blessed too with the good taste and love of beauty which ran in his family. He built a summer residence at Fatehpur Sikri, and liberally patronized art in every form. Under his encouragement arose Hindu-Persian schools of painting and architecture. But the main greatness of Akbar was that he thought of himself first and last as an Indian, and sought to weld consciously the diversities of the country into a firm national unity. He abolished penal discriminations against the Hindus, appointed Hindus and Mohammedans to positions of power according to their merit, and signalized his tolerance by himself marrying a Hindu princess. In his court met Portuguese Jesuit priests, Brahmin scholars and Moslem divines for public debates to which the Emperor listened with keen interest. He even sought to reconcile Hinduism and Mohammedanism by elaborating a new basic religion, and, though he failed to achieve much this way, he firmly established religious toleration throughout his domains. Peace, order, justice, and toleration flourished under him again as they had not done for centuries. Contemporary of famous rulers—Elizabeth of England, Henry IV of France and Shah Abbas of Persia—Akbar has probably the truest title to greatness.

Akbar was succeeded by Jehangir, and he in turn by Shah Jehan. Neither of these reigns was notable for anything except the typical Mogul love of art. To Shah Jehan's romantic love for his Queen, Mumtaz, we owe that glory of Indo-Saracenic art, the Taj Mahal.

While Shah Jehan was still alive, his sons warred for succession, and the third of them, the bigoted, crafty Aurangzeb managed to defeat and execute two of his brothers, drove the other out of the country, seized and



imprisoned his father and proclaimed himself Emperor. Then commenced a reign of fanatic intolerance, of continuous warfare to subdue rebellions and of benighted unwisdom. When Aurangzeb died in 1707, the Mogul empire was already dead. In the south-west, goaded to desperation by the fanaticism and cruelty of the Emperor, the Marathas had risen in power and had found in Sivaji not only a leader of outstanding military genius but a national hero. Sivaji consolidated a great empire despite all the Emperor's attempts to crush him, and, though he died in 1680, the empire he had founded endured long after Aurangzeb's death. Likewise in the north-west the Sikhs had risen as a powerful militant section of Hinduism determined to overthrow Moslem rule. Soon after Aurangzeb's death fresh invaders poured in, and one of them thoroughly sacked the capital, where a son of Aurangzeb was still nominally the ruler. But the Mogul Empire was dead. Everywhere petty chieftains and adventurers were setting themselves up with more or less show of title to more or less independent kingdoms. It was in this state of the country—when a great central power had collapsed, when ambitious chiefs hastily helped themselves to what territory they could, and when India was a changing pattern of Hindu and Mohammedan rulers, and when insecurity and confusion prevailed throughout the land—that certain foreign traders who had settled down on the coasts some years before, quietly moved to the centre of the stage.





## CHAPTER III

## BRITAIN AND INDIA

MANY, in Britain as elsewhere, often wonder how the British from a small island thousands of miles away, managed to "conquer" India. A rational explanation would run somewhat as follows. The British came to India when the country was drifting into a chaos of warring states, and during the two and a half centuries which it took Britain to establish control, no united Indian power could assert itself. The British vanquished their European rivals by mastery of the sea, and their Indian challengers by the superior firepower, mobility, and discipline of their troops, and by an adroit combination of diplomacy and warfare.

But, paradoxical as it may sound, the initial advantage with which the British started on the way to conquest was that for at least a century and a half they quite sincerely had not the slightest desire or intention of conquering. Because they were traders they roused no serious antagonism, and their footholds in the country went unnoticed: footholds which consisted of a few fishing villages, but behind which rose overwhelming naval power.

At a later stage, however, when it should have been clear that these foreigners were seeking hegemony over the whole country, how was it that some national confederation did not arise to challenge them? One basic consideration may be urged. The age of the British rise to power was not only anarchical, but an era of religious persecution, warring religions as well as warring autocracies. The common man had come to the point when all he longed for was order, security, and freedom of conscience. He did not care who won, and was quite prepared to back anyone who left his religion alone and seemed likely to succeed. This explains the fact that



India was conquered by Britain largely with Indians. Of the army of 120,000 which Lord Hastings marched against the Marathas only 13,000 were British or European.

The first European power to establish itself in India preceded the British by one century, but came with a definitely imperialistic plan and a brutally proselytizing "Christianity". The Portuguese established themselves at Goa (near Bombay) in 1510 with a preliminary massacre. Then followed a barbarous inquisition which tortured and burned those who would not embrace their "religion"—or their men. But this "Empire" dwindled when Portugal was merged in Spain in 1580, and has long been what it amounts to to-day—Goa and two other unimportant places totalling 1,570 square miles. The French came later and developed into a considerable challenge, but the other European powers who essayed Indian trade, the Dutch and the Danish, were never serious rivals.

Six years before the founding of the Virginia Company, on the last day of the year 1600, Queen Elizabeth signed the charter of the East India Company, a charter for exclusive trade. Unlike the American enterprises, the licence was to trade only, not to colonize. For some years the voyages of the Company were directed to the East Indies, rather than India, but in 1618 Sir Thomas Roe, Britain's first Ambassador to India, presented himself at the court of the Emperor Jehangir. He sought trading facilities, particularly a permit to set up a "factory" or depot at Surat on the west coast of India. In 1613, despite the intrigues of the Portuguese at the court, the request was granted. The Ambassador advised the East India Company "not to waste money on military adventures like the Dutch and the Portuguese who seek plantation here by the sword". "Let this be your golden rule," he wrote, "that if you will seek profit, seek it at sea and in quiet trade."





For over a century the "quiet trade" was pursued with factories at Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta and other places. Of these, Madras was a desolate stretch of beach that had been farmed out by the local potentate; Bombay was handed over by King Charles II, who had acquired it as part of the dowry on his marriage to Catherine de Braganza; Calcutta was a mud flat assigned by the then Nawab of Bengal, a feudatory of the Mogul Emperor. The factories soon developed into forts capable of self-defence. But no one in London bothered much about the peculiar legal situations that were developing. Trade was good. For thirty years from 1662 the average return to the stockholders was 22 per cent per annum, which, of course, was exclusive of the enormous fortunes accumulated by the servants of the Company in India under the guise of "private" trading.

The British move into the *mêlée* of eighteenth-century India was precipitated by the outbreak of war between France and Britain in Europe. The French from their settlement in Pondicherry fell upon Madras and seized it. The train of events thus started developed with each side supporting rival claimants to the throne of Arcot in South India, and the issue was finally settled in favour of Britain. Thereafter French influence in India continually declined, atrophied as it was by loss of sea-power. Years later, Napoleon planned a conquest of India, and exchanged correspondence with Tippu, the sultan of Mysore, but, with the fall of Napoleon and the subsequent troubles of France at home, French influence disappeared from the Indian scene. To-day their old settlement, Pondicherry, a small but interesting town, and two minor towns, a total area of 196 square miles, are all their remaining possessions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> French India is De Gaullist, having been one of the first French possessions to declare for Free France.



But the first conflict with the French decided more than the fate of the French empire in India. An experiment in king-making had succeeded. Compact, well-drilled troops armed with muskets had proved far superior to the rabble of the Indian princes. The merchants of Madras were no longer the protected but the protectors. And an ex-clerk of the Company, Robert Clive, had proved himself a military genius.

In Calcutta about this time the relations of the Company with the Nawab were strained, till he marched on the settlement and completely sacked it. Into the ethics of this episode it is needless to go for neither side was embarrassed by rectitude. The incident of the "Black Hole" tragedy is asserted to have happened during this conflict, and 123 of 143 prisoners locked up in a room twenty feet square alleged to have perished overnight. The incident may indeed have taken place, though Indian writers adduce evidence that it did not; but if it did, it seems to have been due more to the callousness of some blundering subordinate rather than the fiendishness of the Nawab.

Robert Clive, dispatched from Madras on receipt of news of these doings, first made a secret arrangement with an uncle of the Nawab who commanded a division, and then won a resounding victory. The aforesaid uncle was set up as Nawab, and, according to Clive, gave him a personal gift of £234,000 in cash and an estate worth £30,000 a year. But the troubles of king-making are apt to become chronic, and the ingrate Nawab seemed to have thought—as well he might—that payments made to Clive would excuse him from further demands by the Company. He was replaced. But fresh faults developed in the new man, and the next, till eventually another great battle was fought and another resounding victory achieved. The British had now become masters of North-east India.

British historians of the old school were apt to gloss





over the morality of these transactions. It is only necessary to say that it was an age of lawlessness, and the Company's servants, suddenly stepping into power without responsibility, proved no exemplars of virtue. Clive was a military genius, an inspired buccaneer, and a human and interesting personality. But to make him out to be a hero is a doubtful service to British children.

To take up the tale of British expansion, the next considerable stage was under Lord Wellesley, who was appointed Governor-General of the Company in 1798. Wellesley arrived with a determination to bring the country entirely under the Company. He had the simple faith of the imperialist that the rule he could give was an unqualified blessing to the people. He first badgered the Nizam of Hyderabad, the most considerable southern power, to accept British protection—and to pay for it. He then launched full-dress offensives against the redoubtable Tippu of Mysore, who fought hard but was eventually annihilated. The Governor-General then sought out a scion of the ancient Hindu family which had previously ruled Mysore, and installed him as ruler under his protection. Then followed the wars with the Maratha power with fighting on a more sanguinary scale than ever before. It was in these battles that the Governor-General's brother, Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington, hero of Waterloo), first distinguished himself. The Marathas were obliged to accept unfavourable treaties, though their power was not entirely overwhelmed. The aggressive Governor-General was recalled after seven years by the Company, which was alarmed at the expense and seeming endlessness of the campaigns.

For eight years thereafter conquest held breath, and trade was consolidated. Then under Lord Hastings from 1813-18 a series of campaigns was waged, first of which was a clash with the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal, which resulted in a treaty by which the Nepalese



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#### IV. CITY AND COUNTRY

I. NEW DELHI: THE ASSEMBLY BUILDINGS  
(E.N.A.)





ceded certain territory but were recognized as an independent state. This treaty of friendship and non-aggression signed in 1816 has been honoured in letter and spirit by both sides to this day: a fact worth recording in our age.

Then came campaigns against the *pindarees*, wandering hordes of freebooters owing no definite allegiance, who pillaged and terrorized villages all over central India. But the main achievement of Lord Hastings was his systematically waged war against the Maratha princes which completely broke their power. A series of treaties brought their territories either directly under British administration or reduced them to the status of the other Indian princedoms. British paramountcy was by now virtually assured.

There were two struggles yet before that position could be firmly consolidated. An expedition against Afghanistan in the mid-nineteenth century failed disastrously and, partly with a view to restore prestige after this defeat, a war of aggression was launched against Sind as the result of which that province was completely annexed. But the real challenge came from the Sikhs in the Punjab, the last remaining unsubdued Indian power.

The Sikhs had developed as a militant sect and steadily extended their influence over Punjab. Under the great Ranjit Singh their territories covered Punjab and Kashmir. He had organized a magnificent army officered by, among others, two of Napoleon's generals. He had also established a stable and beneficent administration, and, though he certainly did not love the British, he realized that it was not policy to challenge them. He therefore signed a treaty of friendship and non-aggression. But when Ranjit Singh died in 1839, statesmanship was replaced by heedlessness, and in 1845 the Sikhs invaded British territory. A series of fierce battles ensued and the struggle was keen. But the



Next year the Sikhs were heavily defeated, and a further campaign three years later completely broke the Sikh armies, despite a heroic struggle. The Punjab was totally annexed in 1849.

Thereafter no major wars were fought on Indian soil, but annexation did not stop. Lord Dalhousie elaborated the "doctrine of lapse", according to which, whenever an Indian ruler died without leaving direct heirs, the Company was entitled to annex the territory. Under this device several smaller princedoms were annexed and, with another minor war against Oudh, British rule over most of India, and control over the entire country excluding Nepal, was firmly established by 1857.

But India was not to settle down without a convulsion. In 1857 broke out sporadically and in an unorganized manner the struggle termed "the Indian mutiny". "Mutiny" is hardly the right word to describe so extensive a flare-up, but neither can it be called a "War of Independence". The Bengal Mohammedan troops who set the blaze alight at Cawnpore by shooting their officers, rode off to Delhi and proclaimed the old Mogul Emperor. Down in the south, the heroic Rani of Jhansi fought and died at the head of her men in an effort to restore the Maratha Empire. And the Sikhs who but eight years earlier had fought for their independence, now marched with the British to besiege Delhi, the stronghold of the mutineers. The great mass of the people everywhere remained indifferent.

In a legalistic sense one might argue that the mutiny did succeed. It killed the "East India Company". Public or rather Parliamentary opinion in Britain was deeply shocked by the event, and the British Crown assumed control, with a famous proclamation by Queen Victoria. This announced a general amnesty, guaranteed the Indian princes due fulfilment of their treaties





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with the Company, renounced further expansion of territories, guaranteed religious freedom, and promised that public offices would be thrown open to all Indians without restriction of creed or religion. "In the prosperity of our subjects", concluded the Queen, "shall be our strength, in their contentment our security, and in their gratitude our best reward."

The change from Company to Crown was important because responsibility for the governance of India was now directly vested in the British Parliament. But it made no immediate difference to the country because from the beginning of the century the Company had been less and less a trading concern and more and more an administration. Its affairs had been brought more and more under Parliamentary control.

As an administration, the Company had already built up an efficient Civil Service. Land revenues had been systematized on one or other principle, more or less equitable. Hindu and Mohammedan civil laws and a criminal law based on British jurisprudence were administered, and the judges from the beginning established a tradition of integrity. After a long controversy between "Orientalists" and "Occidentalists", English was chosen as the medium of higher education, and a general educational programme prepared. A step in correcting social abuses was the abolition of *suttee*, the cruel custom (without any basis in Hinduism) by which wives immolated themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands.

Construction had begun on the main lines of several railways. The Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta had already passed the capital and was stretching towards Lahore. A letter bearing a halfpenny stamp, posted in Calcutta, could be expected to reach Madras in a fortnight. One could also telegraph, between the main British-Indian towns. Five hundred miles had been dug on the Ganges irrigational canals.



Freedom from external aggression, internal security, a rough justice and uniform administration: these results the East India Company had already established. For all these things and the beginnings of commercial progress, India paid heavily, but this is perhaps inevitable when a country acquires these elementary blessings through foreign agencies. Inevitable it was too at this stage of consolidation that the administrative machinery was rigidly centralized and entirely bureaucratic. In all matters of day-to-day administration the Governor-General and the Governors in their sphere, and then the district officers under them, were satraps of despotic power.

## CHAPTER IV

### INDIA ASKS FOR MORE

WHEN the Crown took over from the Company, a new member was introduced to the British Cabinet, the Secretary of State for India, a Minister answerable to Parliament and therefore the ultimate authority over the governance of India. But the administrative machine in India was retained substantially intact. There was the Governor-General, later called the Viceroy,<sup>1</sup> who directed the provincial heads called the Governors. Each province in turn was divided into "Districts" administered by the District officers.

Three years after the transfer to the Crown, "Legisla-

<sup>1</sup> The "Viceroy" and the "Governor-General" signify, of course, one and the same person. The former title has no statutory validity though it is used in Royal proclamations and may be regarded as an indication of status rather than a term of law. The Viceroy has had still another title since 1935, the "Crown Representative"; this he uses in his dealings with the Indian States.



“Legislative Councils” were set up to aid the Governor-General and the Provincial Governors. “Non-officials”, i.e. persons not in the services of Government, were nominated to these councils. They were not elected, and represented nobody but themselves, but they were people who had the confidence of the Governors or the Governor-General. But the councils called “Legislative” did not in fact legislate. They were purely advisory bodies which expressed opinions and made recommendations to the Governors on matters which the latter permitted them to discuss. These councils were therefore in the nature of the *durbars* of Indian rulers, dignified bodies of citizens who had won the confidence of the monarch, giving advice on matters on which he sought their advice. Nevertheless it should be recorded that many of the people nominated to these councils in the provinces were Indians.

In 1883, a quarter of a century after the Crown took over, a great Viceroy, Lord Ripon, initiated Municipalities and District Boards patterned largely on English local government. And he set them up with deliberate purpose “chiefly” as he wrote, “as a measure of political and popular education”. The significant thing about the change was that the municipal councils and rural boards were elected.

The public hailed the step with enthusiasm. For the new class of English-speaking Indians was already beginning to assert itself with public associations centred in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. Already there had been demonstrations against restrictions on the freedom of the nascent press. The departure of the progressive Lord Ripon “aroused the most extraordinary demonstrations of enthusiasm among his Indian admirers. Hundreds of addresses were presented to him, and his journey from Simla to Bombay resembled a triumphal procession”. This growing public opinion was organized by the founding in 1885 of the Indian National



Congress, still the dominant political body in the country.

Paradoxical as it may sound, the Congress was founded largely by the enthusiasm of an Englishman, a retired member of the Indian Civil Service, Allan Octavian Hume. There is even support for the theory that it was the then Viceroy of India, Lord Dufferin, who initiated the idea. The aims of the body were defined as national unity and regeneration and the "consolidation of the union between England and India by securing the modification of such conditions as may be unjust or injurious". Founded under such auspices, the first few years of the Congress were free from Government hostility. High British officials attended its meetings, and the resolutions were profuse with expressions of loyalty. But from the beginning the Congress demanded representative institutions. Congress influence multiplied with every session, and it soon became the mark of social distinction for educated men to attend its meetings. In the first decade of its existence no less than ten thousand delegates are computed to have travelled thousands of miles at their own expense to attend its annual sessions in different towns.

In 1892 came a partial answer to the Congress demands when the elective principle was admitted for the legislative councils. It was provided that some of the Councillors should be elected. But the pace of nationalism was quickening rapidly and an event happened which inflamed the feelings of the most emotional of provinces—Bengal. This was the "partition of Bengal", the ill-advised decision of Lord Curzon, able but imperious Viceroy, to bifurcate the province into two. The people protested, then agitated further, then passed on to boycotting British goods and a campaign of sedition. The Government met the situation by severe repression. This only resulted in the movement being first driven underground and then breaking out





in acts of murder and terrorism and the organization of secret revolutionary societies. All these doings inevitably changed the mood of nationalism, and in 1907 the Congress session broke up in disorderly clashes between the extremists—those who demanded that “the mendicant policy” should be given up, and the moderates who were still for the method of memorials. Balganadhar Tilak, able Maratha lawyer and scholar, emerged as the outstanding “extremist” leader, and the Congress objective was defined as *swaraj*, the simple word easily understood all over India, meaning self-government.

But one development of the period challenged congress influence. In 1906, the Muslim League was founded. The most influential Moslem of the time, Sir Sayyid Ahmed, became convinced that, because his community was not as well educated as the majority, it ought to have its own organization.

The next important constitutional step came in 1909 with the Minto-Morley Reforms, so-called from the names of the then Viceroy and the Secretary of State. This Act enlarged all the Legislative Councils, provided for Indian majorities composed of elected and nominated members in all of them, and allowed the enlarged councils to vote on all matters of administration including the Budget. But their powers were limited to criticism. The Governors and the Viceroy were free to accept or reject the advice of the Legislative Councils. Following the Act, an Indian was appointed to the Viceroy's Executive Council and similar positions were given in the provincial Cabinets or Executive Councils. Lord Morley had already appointed two Indians to his advisory council in London. The stage thus reached in 1909, half a century after the Crown took over the government of the country, was therefore this: individual Indians occupied high executive positions in the government; partially elected councils with Indian



majorities were free to criticize the administration and did exercise a certain influence; but the acts and policies of the central government of India in the hands of the Viceroy, and the provincial governments controlled by the Governors, were untrammelled by public control.

Another important development occurred when, introduced by the 1909 scheme, the Mohammedan community was given representation on the Councils by means of separate electorates. Lord Minto, the Viceroy, originated this innovation, unique in democratic history, in answer to a Moslem deputation headed by the Aga Khan.

For a time these reforms improved the atmosphere in the country, though the Congress protested vehemently against the introduction of communal representation. Political agitation for responsible government, however, went on, and the ferment of nationalism activated larger and larger numbers of the people. It was becoming evident that the educated middle classes were not only quoting the phrases of English liberalism learnt at college but expressing also the spirit of a regenerated people.

The next step forward came when Edwin Samuel Montagu, liberal-minded Secretary of State for India in August 1917 defined the policy of the Government as "the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". In the year following, Mr. Montagu visited India, met leaders of public opinion, and in 1919 was enacted a new India Act.

It was now provided that all the Provincial legislatures should be further enlarged, most of the members being persons elected on a widened franchise. Further,





The provincial government was divided into different portfolios and some of these—including Education, Agriculture, Health, etc.—were to be made over to Ministers responsible to the legislature. The vital departments of Finance and the maintenance of Law and Order were, however, to continue to be governed by Executive Councillors, officials appointed by and responsible only to the Governors. This was the famous principle of “Diarchy”, the curious expedient of half the Government being administered by elected Ministers and the other half—the better half, too—controlled by bureaucrats. No such attempt at partial transfer was made in the Central Government. There the Viceroy continued to rule with his Executive Councillors. But the Legislature was divided into an Upper House called the Council of State, largely elected on a limited franchise, and a lower house, the Legislative Assembly of 146 members, of whom 106 were elected. The representative character of this Legislature was thus strengthened, and its powers of criticism extended over the whole range of Government, including the Budget. But the Executive was not bound by the decisions of the Legislature and the Viceroy had powers to disallow any proposed bill or to ordain any law or regulation, whether the Legislature approved it or not. A beginning had been made in transferring power to the representatives of the people.

But even if the Act of 1919 fell far behind public expectations, it would perhaps have been given a fair trial had not other events ruined the atmosphere. A week after the publication of the new proposals, a Committee under the chairmanship of Justice Rowlatt, which had been inquiring into subversive activities in Bengal and elsewhere, recommended an Act with sweeping provisions for arresting, imprisoning, and deporting without trial, persons suspected of complicity in such activities. Now public opinion all over India



was solidly against the terrorism which these measures sought to curb. But equally solidly it protested against these arbitrary proposals.

By this time a new personality had emerged in the ranks of the Congress: one destined to play the greatest single role in the history of modern India. Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had successfully experimented with passive resistance in his struggle for elementary rights for his countrymen in South Africa. On his return to India, he had carried out some small local campaigns with equal success. And now he stepped out to lead the country's protest calling a national general strike, a *hartal*, or day of mourning. This was the initiation of the *satyagraha* movement—the word meaning righteous indignation. Gandhi's basic principle was that the movement should be scrupulously non-violent, but partly owing to mob indiscipline and partly to police intemperance, a series of disorderly scenes occurred, with rioting by excited mobs, the liberal use of *lathis* (heavy staves) by the police, and occasional shooting. Gandhi realized he had launched a movement calling for great discipline and training without adequate moral preparation, and withdrew the campaign.

But the disturbances had a tragic repercussion in Punjab. The Governor had issued a series of edicts following mob attacks on four Englishmen. At a meeting assembled at Jallianwalla Bagh, a section of Gurkha troops opened fire, killing 379 and leaving 1,200 wounded. The effect of Jallianwalla Bagh on the Indian public mind was profound.

About the same time Indian Moslems bitterly resented the humiliating terms imposed on Turkey by the Treaty of Sèvres. The Congress session of 1920 therefore passed by an overwhelming majority Mahatma Gandhi's resolution of non-co-operation. It was a comprehensive movement to break all contact with the





“satanic” government of the country. Men who held honours from the Government were asked to return them, civil servants and other Government employees were asked to resign, the Government schools were to be emptied, the Government courts of law forsworn, and British goods boycotted. And, inevitably, in the passionate mood of the country, elections to the Councils under the 1919 Act were boycotted.

Some useful work was undoubtedly done by the Ministers in the new Councils, but with their own powers uncertain and the majority of their people contemptuously disowning them, it was natural they could not handle major problems. In the central legislature at Delhi the Factories Act was amended, a bill to regulate labour in mines and another providing Workmen's Compensation were passed. In 1919 Parliament had recognized the right of India to frame her own fiscal policy and a convention was established that if the Government of India and the Legislature at Delhi were agreed on any fiscal measure, the Secretary of State in London would not overrule it. Thus, despite stormy protests by Lancashire manufacturers, a Tariff Commission was set up and certain protective duties imposed to help Indian industries.

Other steps of the period tending to the establishment of India's distinct status in the British Commonwealth were her membership of the League of Nations and of the International Labour Office, and her separate representation in the Imperial Conferences of 1921 and 1923. But none of these measures or the elevation of an Indian to the House of Lords and his subsequent appointment to the Governorship of a province, mollified public opinion, and the non-co-operation movement continued with telling effect on British trade with India. But passive resistance calls for discipline and organization even more intense than a military campaign, and in 1921, no less than twenty-one police



Officers were murdered by an enraged gang of nationalist volunteers. Mr. Gandhi was mortified by the outbreak and roundly condemned it. Shortly afterwards, he was arrested and on the 18th March 1922 sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

Two years later, Mr. Gandhi fell dangerously ill in prison and was operated on successfully for appendicitis by an English surgeon, and thereafter released.

The situation he then found was very different from what he had left. Non-co-operation had petered out. Kemal Pasha's Turkey had itself abjured the Caliphate and this had knocked the bottom out of the Moslem agitation. In the Congress itself Chitta Ranjan Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru<sup>1</sup> had altered the non-co-operation programme and prevailed on the majority to vote for contesting the elections and entering the councils. "The intellect of the country", said Mr. Gandhi, "seems to be ranged against my ways of thought and action." For the next three and a half years he retired from politics and concentrated his attention on improving Hindu-Moslem relations and the lot of the untouchables, and on the propagation of homespun.

The next stage of Indian politics comprised the appointment of a Parliamentary Statutory Commission under Sir John Simon, a renewed campaign of passive resistance, the Congress declaring "Independence" as its goal, and the Muslim League reviving its activities to make sure of the position of the community in forthcoming constitutional changes.

In 1929 the new Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin (now Lord Halifax) proceeded to England and had momentous consultations with the Cabinet. As a result he returned to India and announced that "it was implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress as there contemplated

<sup>1</sup> The great lawyer statesman and father of the present nationalist leader, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.



was the attainment of Dominion Status". He also invited representatives of Indian opinion to meet British representatives in conference in London. He met Mr. Gandhi, and from the first seems to have created a profound impression on the Mahatma. But the conferences failed, and Gandhi launched his campaign of "Civil Disobedience". This is another term of Mr. Gandhi's invention, and part of the parlance of Indian politics. Civil Disobedience is an extension of non-co-operation and calls for active refusal to obey or for violation of some chosen law of the land. This is done in a public ceremonious manner and naturally forces the Government to arrest the violaters. In the movement Mr. Gandhi now launched thousands of people were so arrested, men and women. "Civil Disobedience ruined the trade of towns, pressed heavily on finance, strained police organization and the jails to the utmost, and added greatly to the intolerable burden of administration." This state of affairs was put an end to by the Viceroy when, thanks to the mediatory efforts of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. M. R. Jayakar, an accommodation was reached with Mr. Gandhi. The movement was suspended and Mr. Gandhi went to London as the sole delegate of the Congress at a "Round Table Conference".

Mr. Gandhi returned to India at the beginning of 1932. Lord Irwin had been succeeded by Lord Willingdon. Mr. Gandhi was arrested soon after arrival. Toward the end of 1932, the British Government issued a White Paper summarizing the conclusions arrived at as a result of three Round Table Conferences. These were then submitted to a Joint Select Committee of Parliament and eventually the new Government of India Act was passed on 20th December 1935.

The 1935 Act was thus the result of over six years of discussion and negotiation. Its basic plan was quite simple.



The most important provision was the granting of full autonomy to the provinces of British India. These were to have their elected legislatures and cabinets of Ministers responsible to the legislatures. The Governors were to continue. For all intents and purposes they were to function as the King in Britain, but they were given reserve powers to override the will of the ministries in grave emergencies and in order to secure just treatment of the minorities. Except where such interference was called for, the elected ministers were in full control of the whole range of provincial government including the police and justice and finance. This is the provincial autonomy part of the Act which came into force on 1st April 1937. Elections to these legislatures, on a franchise roughly 10 per cent of the population, were keenly contested, and as a result the Congress Party secured clear majorities in six of the eleven provinces—Bombay, Madras, United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, and Central Provinces—and formed the largest single party in Bengal, Assam, and the North-Western Frontier Province. Only in two, Punjab and Sind, was it of negligible strength. After securing something like an assurance from the Secretary of State that the reserve powers of the Governors would not ordinarily be used, the Congress formed ministries in the provinces it controlled. By the end of July 1937, all the provinces in India were governed by elected Indian ministries.

But what about the central government of the country? The 1935 Act provided for federation of British Indian provinces, and the states ruled by the Indian princes. There was to be responsible government here, too, in all matters except Defence and Foreign Affairs and the minor matter of the control of army chaplains. These subjects were to be reserved for administration by the Governor-General who was to be responsible, not to the Indian legislature but to the





Secretary of State for India. In all other matters the administration was to be transferred to Indian Ministers responsible to the Federal Legislature. This Legislature was to be of two houses in both of which Indian princes as well as the provinces would be represented. This scheme of federation was bitterly opposed by the Congress. The main criticisms were: firstly, that defence and foreign affairs should also be transferred to Indian control; secondly, that the composition of the legislatures gave an excessive representation to the Indian princes, whose nominees—not elected representatives of the peoples of the states—would hold the balance of power in the legislature. But the Act provided that federation was not to come into being till a certain number of the princes agreed to accept it by executing instruments of accession with the Viceroy. Negotiations to secure these were being carried on between the Viceroy and the Indian princes—many of these princes insisting on reservations and safeguards to prevent the federal legislature encroaching on the internal government of their states—when war broke out.

## CHAPTER V

### ON COWS, AND CASTE, AND OTHER THINGS

IT appears to be widely held that Indians (i.e. Hindus) worship 330 million “gods”, as well as cows, deer, monkeys, peacocks, and snakes.

But who are these “gods”? The 330 millions of them—a god a-piece per head of population—are characters in the prolific mythological literature of the country; heroes and saints of local celebrity; the monsters and demons of folklore and the phenomena of



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nature. Hinduism tolerated these folk beliefs and recognized that temples, idols, even minor divinities, may be necessary to those who could not do without such aids. Sublimation, not suppression, was the method of its sages. To-day the Hindu peasant recognizes that the great temples where the Brahmins officiate are the true churches of his faith. But he is as superstitious as the Russian or the Chinese or the central European peasant, and he thinks a little appeasement of the minor myths, monsters, and patron saints may serve as further coverage in a world beset by tribulation. He now understands that vaccination is desirable but still makes a little offering to Mariamma the small-pox goddess—just in case. In the same mood the southern European consults the oculist but makes his vow to St. Lucia.

As for the cow-worship, Mahatma Gandhi, who undoubtedly understands the spirit of the people better than any other Indian, calls it "a poem of pity". Now no one pities a God. Because the cow is an invaluable asset to a pastoral people, the ancient Hindus hedged in protection for it by numerous superstitions. Their object probably was to save its being killed in time of famine. But it is protection, care, kindness, tenderness that is enjoined, not worship. It did lead among the particularly superstitious or the ostentatiously orthodox to fantastic excesses, rather like that of the Spaniard who swallows a picture of the Virgin Mary bought from the Church, as a cure for disease. As to the snake, the mystic twined snakes (exactly the same as on the rod of Aaron and Hermes) are indeed sculptured all along India roadways. But we must also remember that when the peasant sees a living one he proceeds to thrash it to death—although he may then bury it ceremoniously with a libation of milk, again a useful precaution as well as a salve to the god. Monkeys, Sir Edward Blunt remarks, are sometimes caught and carted away rather





than killed wholesale. But then is it not rather cruel to kill any being which is seldom more than a nuisance and which, after all, is so very human? All these superstitions will be found to have some rational basis or at least an historical explanation. And the unlettered peasant takes them all with a good pinch of salt. Learned observers might well do the same.

The chief features of Hinduism are, according to a writer, bathing fairs and pilgrimages—as I might say one of the chief features of Christianity was the Christmas pudding. Pilgrimages are desirable things in themselves, thinly veiled with sanctity. They offer the only opportunities of travel for most Indian families. Suggest to a middle-class Hindu that he should take his family for a holiday and he would consider such conduct wholly unethical when he has still to provide for his son's education or his daughter's marriage. But when the grandmother or aunt or wife—usually it is a woman—vows to visit a temple hundreds of miles away, well, then it becomes an inescapable obligation. The disadvantage of the pilgrimage system is that the people herd together on certain auspicious days, and a famous temple or riverside or beach is often as crowded as Brighton on a bank holiday, or Niagara Falls at the height of the honeymoon season. Further, the most sacred temples are not always in the most salubrious parts of the country. Only recently is the idea of an educative or recreative holiday spreading even among the few who can afford it.

The Hindus celebrate with local variations about ten public holidays a year, and the Mohammedans six. The Christians have their own as well, and since the most important holidays are taken advantage of by all the communities, working India may be considered to do quite well compared to Britain. Longer working hours and the rarity of holidays with pay must of course be borne in mind in this connexion. The Hindu holi-



days are of diverse origin. Krishna Jayanti, for example, celebrates the birth of Krishna; Divali the festival of lights, relates to a mythological fable; Pongol and Holi are joyous spring festivals. The chief Moslem holidays are Ramzan and Bakrid, celebrated in the same way as all over the Mohammedan world.

Excessive ritualism still marks Hindu life. This is particularly so of the "higher" castes, the "twice-born" Brahmins and Kshatriyas who wear the sacred thread. Elaborate ceremonies mark birth, baptism or naming, initiation into the religion in early boyhood, marriage, fatherhood, and so on till death, when the eldest son cremates and takes up the sequence of ceremonials. In between the adult ceremoniously remembers his ancestors once a month and goes through day-long fasting and prayer once a year. Together with daily prayers (which should be said thrice a day but generally are not) the Hindu of to-day is constantly reminded of the discipline and ideals of his faith. He may be as perfunctory as he likes about these ceremonials, but he is nevertheless obliged to maintain the continuity of tradition. Consciously or unconsciously, therefore, his home develops an atmosphere and his outlook a character of its own.

Generalizations about national character are notoriously dangerous, but India's accent on certain cultural values might be noted. Our people generally exalt moral obligation above contractual liability. This does not mean that contracts are not kept but that, when they are broken, the reproach would be, that the sanctity of the plighted word had been violated, not that an agreement had not been performed. Most Indians instinctively draw back from harsh application of the *quid pro quo*. And it very seldom occurs to an Indian when he sees someone in trouble to say, "Well, but I am not responsible for it." Brought up in the tradition of the joint-family, very few develop an aggressively possessive





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distinct in matters material. Nurtured in a faith the reverse of sanctional and dogmatic, and universally catholic, the average Hindu readily tolerates alien peoples, beliefs, and habits, and seldom develops abiding racial antipathies. He also tries consciously not to hurt anyone more than he can help. He respects intellect for its own sake, and can think habitually in abstract terms, but the easiest basis of approach to him is through the heart. He prizes above all simplicity and sincerity in personal life. Gandhi's politics may be controversial but his place in the heart of India cannot be shaken by any number of political mistakes he may make—because Indians know that he is utterly sincere. The one Indian prince whose memory India honours is the late Maharajah of Mysore who was simple in life, austere, and who sincerely tried to help his people. The one Viceroy for whom the people at large felt a deep respect was Lord Halifax, again because he created an impression of sincerity and simplicity. British Governors and Viceroy who have sought to impress with their pomp and power have invariably been the most complete failures.

The caste system was, as we have seen, of mixed racial, functional, and occupational origin. To-day it is obviously moribund, but new occupational groups have in recent times tended to register themselves as distinct "castes" and no less than 2,500 of these groupings were listed in the 1931 census. The very idea of social divisions is irksome to nationalist sentiment and the younger generation is determined caste must go. Changing conditions of life help the same trend. It is impossible to avoid contact with inferior caste people in trains and buses. New professional opportunities arise with the development of the country. A Brahmin sets up in the leather trade, and those of "humbler" caste become lawyers and political leaders. In towns, people of different castes are necessarily thrown together in the course of their work, and only the very



old-fashioned object to "inter-dining", i.e. people of different castes dining together. The authority of the caste *panchayats*, the honorary bodies which used to regulate observance of the rules, is everywhere decaying. Reformist bodies like the Arya Samaj, which seek to rationalize Hinduism with its pristine faiths, are gaining steadily in numbers. Conscious reformism and natural decay are therefore active and caste is definitely less apparent. No less than two million people refused to declare their caste in the 1931 census. Most tenacious of the caste restrictions is the rule of endogamy which bars marriage outside the caste one is born into. The reasons for this are that the sentiment of older relations in joint families operates powerfully in the matter of marriage, that different food and ceremonial usages add to the difficulty. Besides, the natural tendency all over the world is to marry in roughly the same cultural and social background. Intercaste marriages are becoming more and more common, although they are still unusual enough to be news-items. "One such marriage of unusual interest and influence was that of Mahatma Gandhi's son with the daughter of the Brahmin ex-Premier of Madras, Mr. Rajagopalachari."

But the problems of caste and intercaste are of less importance than the fate of the casteless. Fifty-one million people live on the fringe of Hindu society—they are Hindus largely because they profess no other faith, but they remain outside the fourfold social organization. Their lot is indeed grievous. These are the *pariahs* or the *panchamas*, people whose very touch is considered to pollute the caste Hindus. In the kindly nomenclature of Mahatma Gandhi, they are *harijans* or children of God, and in the clumsy terminology of the Government of India they are the "scheduled castes". Racially of aboriginal stock not assimilated into Hindu society, these people have been condemned to live out-





side the villages in hamlets of their own, not to use the main streets of the village, nor to enter even the precincts of temples. They cannot send their children to the same schools, nor even draw water from the communal well. They are condemned to loathsome tasks, considered too unclean for the others, scavenging, tanning, cobblery, guarding cremation grounds, and so on. The caste Hindu has to wash himself clean of pollution if he even accidentally touches them, and some Brahmins even hold that they should not approach within several yards of their presence. The cruel iniquity of untouchability persists to this day, though unapproachability is virtually dead. Probably no man has done more to eradicate this blot on Hinduism than Mahatma Gandhi. He has inveighed mercilessly against it, adopted an untouchable child himself, lives surrounded by untouchables, and has repeatedly staked his political authority on their behalf. Most devout of Hindus, Gandhi declares, "I would rather that Hinduism die than untouchability live." A great movement to abolish untouchability is now in full swing. That great Brahmin Pandit Malaviya himself formally took hundreds of them into the Hindu pale. In 1936 the young Maharajah of Travancore, by an edict on his twenty-sixth birthday, threw open the ancient temples of his state to the Untouchables, an act which stirred all India. The issue of this struggle with obscurantist orthodoxy is already a foregone conclusion.

The Untouchables have begun to agitate for political position, and Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Doctor of Science of Columbia University, returned to India to become the political head of his community.<sup>1</sup> He worked successfully for separate electorates for his community to be included in the framing of the 1935 Act. But Mahatma Gandhi vigorously opposed the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Ambedkar had been sent abroad as a state scholar by that enlightened prince, the Gackwar of Baroda.



decision on the ground that such separate electorates would perpetuate the status of these "depressed classes". He then began a "fast unto death" to change the decision. Hindu and Untouchable leaders met in frenzied conversations, and on the seventh day of Gandhi's fast, a compromise was reached which the Secretary of State for India accepted. The "Depressed" or "Scheduled" castes now vote in the same general constituencies as the other Hindus, but a substantial number of seats in the legislatures are reserved for their representatives.

Caste by its uniqueness has drawn world interest, but another Hindu institution, "the joint-family", has probably exercised a much greater influence on Indian society and outlook. Those in the west embarrassed by a mother-in-law may be consoled to know that families of ten or more living under one roof are by no means unusual in India. This is the agnatic unit which Hindu law constantly seeks to uphold, the father, mother, son, and grandson, together with the corresponding women-folk, families "joint in food, worship, and estate". Fortunately, however, provisions were made for division of property on one of three different systems, and one could break away to set up separate existence if he so desired. But till very recently partition was the exception, particularly in the villages. One of the merits of this institution is that the old enjoy a secure and honoured place—an outstanding blessing when one recalls the loneliness of the aged in the west. The other advantages are rather mixed. Continuity of tradition is assured, but chronic conservatism may be inbred; self-discipline is enforced and consideration for others, but individual initiative may be blunted; a minimum living is guaranteed, but then the butter is spread too thin and individual capital cannot be accumulated. There are many to help when one falls ill, but then there is always someone in the family who *is* falling ill. The



old are revered, but youth may be thwarted. And the one member who earns most may feel aggrieved that his reward is not proportionate to his effort. No major matter can be decided without a parliamentary debate, and where families are so large charity may frequently end at home.

The joint-family is to-day a survival of a condition when a rural life made collectivism economic, and there could not be great disparities of earning capacity. To-day members of the family follow different careers with varying success in widely separated places. Western individualism is also an active ferment spreading down to the villages. The joint-family, like caste, is slowly yielding to another order of life, a fact of profound importance to India's future. Nevertheless, the ties of family are still long and strong. The employee who asks for leave in order to attend the wedding of his sister's husband's second cousin should, of course, be cross-examined, but he may possibly be telling the truth when he declares it is a family necessity for him to be present.

Perhaps the wildest gamble one could make in life would be to marry a stranger, but in India the risk is habitually taken—and the results compare favourably with those achieved in the west. Most Hindu and Mohammedan marriages in India are family arrangements in which bride and groom play but two of many parts. It is still true that most Hindus marry girls whom they have never seen before, although the "progressive" youth more and more frequently insists that he should meet her first. To all exclamations on the process, the orthodox Hindu will smugly quote the cliché: "We marry and love, you love and marry." Marriage, to the Hindu, is a social obligation, a religious necessity. The family line must be continued and a male child is eminently desirable to perform the funeral obsequies of the parents. Men, therefore,

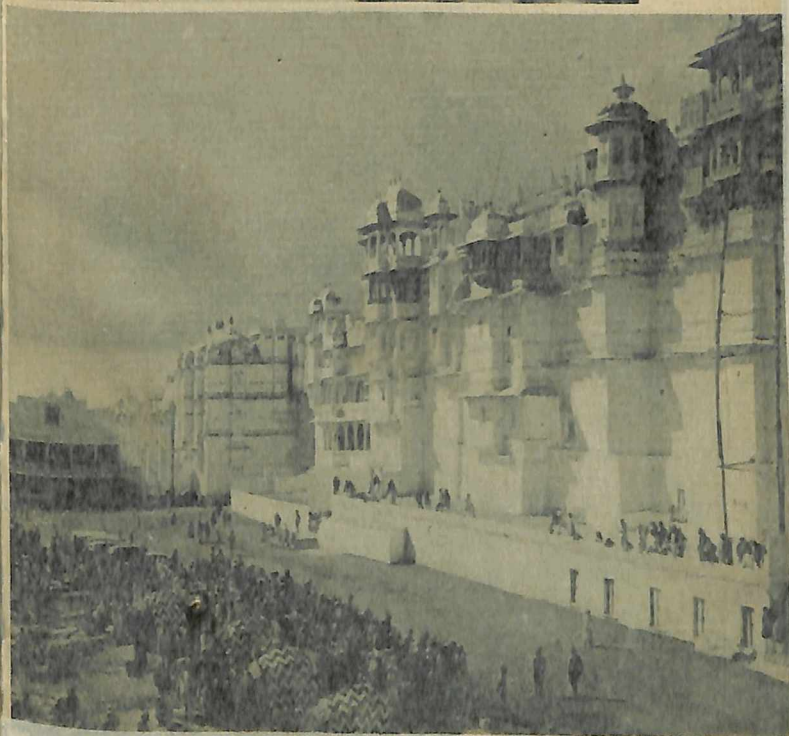
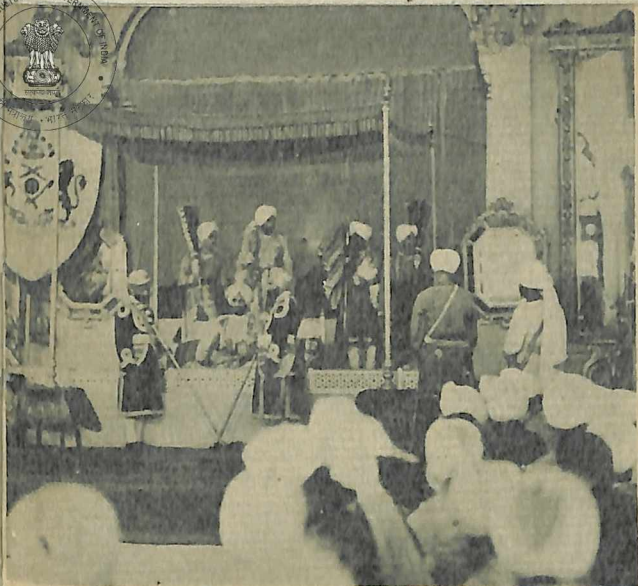


CSL  
V.

CEREMON

1. IN THE DU  
BAR HALL,  
PATIALA  
(Fox Photos)

2. IN THE  
PALACE COUR  
YARD, UDAIPI  
(Paul Popper







According to the Hindu idea, should marry in a spirit of social duty, and the ceremony is no contract between one individual and another, but a holy sacrament and a social duty. Divorce is, practically speaking, not allowed, though certain castes have developed it as customary law. The remarriage of widows is not general either. An act passed as far back as 1856 established the legal validity of remarriages of Hindu widows, but few such marriages take place, though the numbers steadily grow.

Shrewd Western observers are frequently surprised at the percentage of evidently happy marriages which are achieved in India under what seems to them a highly irrational system. But a successful marriage requires not love only but a sense of duty. The well brought up Hindu couple are deeply imbued with that sense of social duty and generally develop understanding and affection. And, west or east, the rapture of idyllic (and abiding) love is extremely rare.

One aspect of Hindu marriage is definitely evil. Too many are married too young. One in six of Hindu married women were married before they were fifteen, according to the 1931 census, and marriages between boys and girls of ten or less are frequent. Hindu ideals which insisted that girls should marry before they attain puberty are responsible for the practice. The Sarda Act passed in 1930 made the marriages of girls under fourteen a punishable offence, but the law is frequently evaded one way or another.

Infant marriage is a social evil of the country and reformers are struggling to eliminate it. But it is most important that one popular fallacy abroad should be dispelled. The Hindu "marriage" is in reality a sacramental betrothal. After the wedding, bride and groom return to their homes and cohabitation does not begin till some time after the girl has attained age. The average age at which a girl begins living with her hus-



and is between fourteen and fifteen. But this is a few years too early, even allowing for tropical conditions.

Many Hindu women have their first child at sixteen or seventeen, and thousands are mothers of six at thirty. Only intensive education in the physical and sociological effects of too early marriage can improve the situation. To-day probably not one per cent of educated Hindus would defend the practice.

Marriages in India are often elaborated through four or five days of ceremonials. The length—rapidly shortening nowadays owing to economic conditions—is an excuse for orgies of feasting. Nowhere in the world has the culinary art been developed so greatly as in India. The visitor who has had “curry” served in European hotels and boasts that “he likes it hot” does not necessarily know very much about Indian food. “Curry” is an Anglo-Indian generic term covering hundreds of ways of cooking meat and vegetables, the one common factor of which is a liberal use of spices. But the test of a good “curry” is not that it should be “hot” but that the spices blend subtly. All over India the same type of food obtains, though with several local variations. Religious restrictions enter strongly into the food of the people. Mohammedans do not take pork, and Hindus abjure beef. Brahmins, particularly in the orthodox south, are generally vegetarian, but no generalization about food taboos in India is safe, and the troubles of cosmopolitan entertaining are many. Sections of southern Brahmins ban the onion and execrate garlic. Nevertheless, India is the vegetarian’s paradise. A closer study of these dishes may help to popularize vegetarianism abroad. The finishing touch of a good Indian meal is *pan*—nuts and spices wrapped in pan leaves and chewed together. But, sad to relate, chewing-gum now competes with this immemorial habit!

The fact of occasional sumptuous banquets should



not blind any one to the appalling hunger and under-nourishment of the country. Millions cannot afford one satisfying meal a day. Sir John Megaw, former Director-General of the Indian Medical Service, estimates that the average quantity of milk consumed per adult is three and a half *ounces* a day, and of butter about half an ounce. Punjab is the best nourished of the provinces, and fats and proteins are taken there to a greater extent than in other parts. But food scarcity all over India is more acute than in any other country of the world except China. Sir John Megaw reckons that 39 per cent of all India might be considered "well nourished", but 61 per cent are "poorly" or "very badly" nourished. Accurate food surveys often reveal heartbreaking facts. A group of schoolboys given an extra eight ounces a day of *dried, skimmed milk*, in three months increased in height one-third of an inch more than the other boys. The food of millions of children is hopelessly inadequate for normal growth. Malnutrition is sometimes due to ignorance, and this can be and is being remedied. But poverty is the main culprit. Millions of peasants spend less than four shillings or one dollar a month on food, and the minimum suggested diet works out at nearly twice that, a figure quite beyond their reach. It is futile to suggest better food in place of the cheap and bulky rice diet, and Sir John Megaw fittingly quotes Queen Marie Antoinette's question: "If they have no bread, why don't they eat cake?"

Objectively speaking, neither drinking nor drug-taking are major problems of India. Mahatma Gandhi would vigorously dissent from that view, but the best estimates reckon that not more than 10 per cent of India's population drink alcohol in any quantity. To the Indian villager as well as the industrial labourer, imported liquors are prohibitively costly. Nor has he any taste for them, and the indigenous drinks are



Generally between 25 and 50 per cent under proof. Prohibition is an article of ethics with Mahatma Gandhi but there is more than the ethical point involved in his efforts completely—and compulsorily—to eradicate drinking. The peasant who earns about five pence a day or even the urban labourer earning a shilling, simply cannot afford to drink, and these are the people who most often do. The object of the prohibition move in India is not to prevent middle-class drinking but to remove temptation from the way of the peasant and the labourer. When the Congress party assumed control of seven provincial governments, they began introducing prohibition in stages. There were all the usual arguments against—it was too expensive; too difficult to compel; it was better to educate; it failed in the U.S.A. All of which ignored the fact that in India, among Hindus and Mohammedans, it always has been considered *infra dig.* to drink. The conscience of society was in favour of the move. In the Madras districts where the experiment was first tried, there is no doubt that it succeeded in weaning thousands of the poorest from the habit. The success seems much more qualified in Bombay, a large, cosmopolitan port, but the experiment still continues.

Colonel Chopra, an Indian medical officer who has done magnificent work on the subject, reports that in extensive areas of India, consumption of opium is much less than that laid down by the League of Nations as suitable for the medical and scientific needs of the population. And what there is of the habit is mainly the eating, not the much more dangerous smoking of opium. The Government of India has pruned poppy cultivation to the minimum. The excise tax which yielded £5,000,000 in 1891 amounted to less than £200,000 in 1936. Smuggled cocaine was developing into an appreciable danger, but the most rigorous measures are being taken to counteract it.



India of the towns has taken enthusiastically to most organized games. In hockey, for example, she has held the world championship through the last three Olympiads. The annual cricket tournaments in the provincial capitals are festivals which dominate the cities—and much of the press—for the period they last. But though one of the greatest cricketers of all time was an Indian, the late Prince Ranjitsinghi, India's teams have yet to show they can hold their own with the best of Britain and Australia. Watching the keen faces of schoolboys, and hearing them rolling out international batting and bowling averages, and describing every finesse of the game, one cannot doubt that they will some day. For some reason, football, though popular, does not command the same mass following as cricket. Tennis, till a few years ago considered a gentle girth reducer for the *bourgeoisie*, is now coming into its own, and India may figure more prominently at Wimbledon and in the Davis Cup matches of the future. To the place from which tennis has been promoted golf has stepped up. There is, fortunately, no industrialization of sport in India yet, although all the organized teams as well as the olympics are now regularly organized and controlled on an All-India basis. India holds premier world ranking in polo, and this is but fitting, because the game was introduced to the western world from Manipur, the Indian state in the north-east corner of India. But the champion polo player, the Maharajah of Jaipur, may hardly recognize the game they still play in Manipur precisely as they did in the fifteenth century: with ponies no larger than the Shetland, a minimum of rules, players coming in and going out as they please and the game ending only with the sun setting.

In India, as in the west, horse-racing is the chief sport, and races are run practically throughout the year in one town or the other. Celebrated jockeys and great thoroughbreds increasingly find their way to the



country. But the characteristic sport is pig-sticking. On which subject something must be said, if only because no one can stay long in India without hearing of the glories of the Kadir Cup—the spectacular annual tournament at which the wild boar is chased through fifty miles of clearing in the jungle by champion ponies and riders. Spectators follow on elephants and camels.

Of greater importance than polo or pig-sticking, to the nation at large, is scouting. The movement has passed through some vicissitudes, but now counts some 170,000 Boy Scouts and a few thousand Girl Guides. An indigenous movement which has recently attracted considerable following is the Bratacharya, which embraces adults as well as children. It seeks to inculcate the joy of living, vigour, and a sense of service with exercises, games, and folk-dances. The Bratacharya vows are, however, much more comprehensive than the Scout promises.

The chief amusement of the people in India as elsewhere, is the mass-produced film. Films are now turned out by Indian studios at the rate of about two hundred pictures a year and are screened by over a thousand cinemas. Only some three hundred theatres in the larger towns now show Hollywood and British pictures. When the towns are done, the Indian "All-Star 100 per cent Singing Talking" mounts the lorries with a tent and a spluttering dynamo to visit the villages where the peasant, in his capacity of "one anna floor-seat" critically savours its delights. He insists on the songs, and prefers a well-worn piece of mythology whose story he already knows thoroughly. The result is that Indian films generally carry about fifty songs apiece and run for no less than two and a half hours. In the last few years, however, "social themes" are "portrayed", films with a strong didactic motive, films against infant-marriage, for widow-remarriage, anti-drink, anti-untouchability, and so on. These are now





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succeeding, and the film is becoming an immense  
educative medium. But the length of the "features"  
gives little chance for the news-reel or the educational  
"short". The provincial governments are interesting  
themselves in the new medium and silent pictures are  
quite extensively used to educate the peasant in health,  
sanitation, and improved agricultural methods. But the  
scope is immense and a great deal more could be done.

The theatre in India has always been largely operatic.  
It is so to-day, though Bombay and Bengal have made  
headway in pure drama. Song, however, still has an  
immense lead over histrionics and Indian music is as  
highly developed as Indian acting is elementary. In  
town or village a musical concert draws full houses, not  
only for the "popular" singers but for the great classical  
experts. The gramophone and the film have stimulated  
public interest in music, and to-day the Indian musician  
probably does much better for himself than at any time  
since the age of great Hindu princes. In music as in  
every other expression India has a fundamental unity  
and a distinct national character, though the differences  
between the north, strongly influenced by the Persian  
schools and the south, free from such blending, are  
considerable.

One of the oldest art-forms of the world, classical  
Indian dancing, is now enjoying a halcyon revival,  
thanks mainly to Rabindranath Tagore, who gave it a  
place in the curriculum of his university at Shantineke-  
tan; to Anna Pavlova, who included items she learnt on  
a visit to India in her great recitals; to the American  
dancer Ruth St. Denis; and the ablest of Indian dancers,  
Udhay Shankar. Ballet dancing, which was fast being  
forgotten, is now a frequent entertainment in public  
performances and society functions. And in the wake  
of the classical art all the folk-dances enjoy a new life,  
too.

In all this national renaissance the Indian press has



played a very great part. The 129 daily papers published in the country devote considerable space to these topics although their main preoccupation is with news. A diligent reader of the Indian papers—the thirty-nine published in English, or the others printed in the various languages of the country—could indeed claim to be a well-informed person. The reporting is invariably straight and scrupulously accurate. The main news coverage is by Reuter, its Indian organization the Associated Press of India, and the Indian-owned United Press of India, but the leading papers supplement these with special correspondence from abroad. In India, as in the United States, distances prevent great national circulations and the top figure is registered by a Bengali paper with 66,000 copies. The largest English circulation is 60,000, and 10,000 is generally reckoned a mark of success and relative stability. On the whole, about 1,200,000 copies of papers are sold every day throughout the country. But the newspaper in India is not something to be left behind in the bus or tram. It is a family possession, and one copy is frequently shared by five or six lawyers or doctors living in the same street. Villages seldom get more than one copy. But it is diligently read out by the post-master or other literate person to a group of the avid unlettered. The reader-value of Indian papers is therefore many times the circulation figures, and the Indian daily press serves its readers with a sober sense of responsibility. The periodicals are many and range from philosophic journals to the lush film magazines with their colourful pictures. But there is little scope, happily, for one type of magazine, the women's fashion journal. The *sari*, the graceful single-piece costume of Indian women, is changeless and all-covering. Changeless, too, is the coiffure, and despite the Indian film stars, make-up is virtually unknown. Slimming advice and beauty hints sound queer to Indian women, and an occasional





women's page with useful cooking hints satisfies their special wants.

In a country of 400 million people, 88 per cent of whom are illiterate and live in villages, broadcasting obviously has an immense educative scope. But the country is poor, and to-day, though there are nine medium-wave stations and six short-wave, licence-holders number only about 150,000. The service therefore became a State responsibility, and the Government spends about £200,000 a year on it. Communal receivers are installed in parks and other public places in the towns, and many villages are also being provided with portable sets which automatically switch on and off at stated times. At present the programmes are crowded with no less than twenty-eight news bulletins a day, but talks, music and comments are also plentiful. Nevertheless, broadcasting has not yet come into its own in India. Both radio and the film might be used on a much greater scale to help solve the problems of literacy and education.

Broadly speaking, India suffers from a quantitative as well as a qualitative educational problem. The two are not unrelated, because if education is not of the right sort then it does not spread fast enough and—if a very unpedantic expression may be forgiven in this context—it does not stick.

Just under 10 per cent of the population can read and write a letter in their own language. And in the ten years from 1921-31 the "progress" was from 8.3 per cent to 9.5 per cent. At present about eight and a half million pupils go to the 170,000 primary schools in the country. But there are 50 million boys and girls between the ages of six and eleven, so that evidently only the fringe of the problem is being tackled. There are immense difficulties in the way. Over half of the 700,000 villages of India have populations of less than 500. Social customs like early marriage of the girls and



OF COWS, AND CASTE, AND OTHER THINGS 79  
of *pardah* (the seclusion of women practised in parts of India) deplete the number of available female teachers and pupils. Untouchable pupils are frowned upon by those of the higher castes, and, in some parts, Moham-medans and Hindus insist on schools of their own community. But above all, the peasant does not quite see how his child is going to fare better for the schooling. The result is that only 25 per cent of the boys are put to school, and 13 per cent of the girls go through with it till they reach literacy. The type of instruction in the primary schools is also vigorously debated. Mr. Gandhi has developed a programme of vocational education—education through purposeful, creative activities—the work of the children helping to pay the cost of the schools. This is the famous Wardha Scheme. A closely similar system is being worked with remarkable success by the American Presbyterian Mission school at Moga in the Punjab: “providing an education based on the child’s experience and environment, to prepare him through his natural impulses for service to the community”.

Recently in Madras the methods used by the American educationist Dr. Laubrach in the Philippine Islands have created great enthusiasm, and Adult Literacy Conferences are being promoted.

At the other end of the educational scale arises another acute problem. The nineteen universities in India turn out about 15,000 graduates a year, and an even larger number of “failed B.A.s.” Already there are far too many lawyers, too many with just an Arts degree and a thirst for jobs. This leads to such fantastic waste as that of graduates starting as postmen or policemen. Schemes for reorganizing the whole school and college systems are now being worked out. There are few subjects educated people in India talk about as much as education. What broadly is happening is that the system which grew out of the East India Company’s





primary objective of training a useful subordinate class of clerks is now being criticized from the standpoint of national productivity. The problem of readjustment is immense but the example of China where, despite the war, no less than 44 per cent of the children of school-going age are being educated, show that the difficulties are not insuperable.

Even so brief a reference to education would not be complete without grateful mention of the magnificent work that Christian Missions have done in the country. Thousands of non-Christians as well as Christians have benefited by their services. But in recent times Christian leaders urge that the higher educational activities of the missions should be reduced on two grounds: first, that the community should spend more on primary education of the converts, and second, that the missions are merely duplicating the non-Christian education already provided by the Government. "Only 54 per cent of the tutors in Christian colleges in South India", complains Bishop Whitehead, "are Christian, and only 26 per cent of the pupils, while in the north, the Christian tutors are 42 per cent and the students less than 6 per cent." This according to the Bishop, is a "fatal defect" from the "Christian" point of view. Missionary organizations should carefully consider that statement. The country may be much the poorer, and the Missions not more successful from the "Christian" point of view if, for such reasons, they curtail their noble higher educational work.



## CHAPTER VI

## INDIA AND THE WAR

## I

THE outbreak of war averted one political crisis in India, but precipitated another. In August 1939 it looked as if a major conflict was imminent on the reconstruction of the central government of the country as prescribed by the 1935 Act (see p. 59). The first part of the Act which gave complete provincial autonomy had already been put into force and was working with conspicuous success.

In all the eleven provinces Indian ministries responsible to elected legislatures controlled every department of provincial government. The British Governors appointed by the King were still there, and the Act had given them powers of interference with the Ministries in certain circumstances. But, in actual practice, these powers were not resorted to, and the Governors conducted themselves generally like the Governors-General in Australia or Canada, or the King in Britain. The permanent civil service found their position radically changed, from units of bureaucratic power to purely executive officers, but they too played the game and carried out the policies of the ministers. "The Honourable the Minister" was frequently someone whom these same civil servants had sentenced to political imprisonment, but his orders were now loyally carried out. The police, accustomed to the ultimate control of British Commissioners and Governors, worked just as efficiently under the new dispensation. The Ministers for their part used their very considerable and very real power with zeal and responsibility. They generated a new energy which activated every nation-building department. But they made it quite clear that





The first business of a government is to govern and that they would not tolerate lawless demonstrations from the more zealous of their followers. Clever political analysts had urged a hundred reasons why this complete transference of power in the provincial governments would fail, but the result disproved these fears. In eight of the eleven provinces, the Congress party had formed the governments by virtue of electoral majorities, and in the other three coalition governments held office. But all the eleven governments functioned with conspicuous success, and Viceroy and Secretary of State paid high tribute to their work.

At the outbreak of the war, however, the central government—the “Government of India”—was still the 1919 pattern of a Viceroy and his “Executive Council”. The 1935 Act had provided for a federation of the British India provinces, and the Indian “States” or princedoms. But a certain proportion of the states had to agree to join the federation before this part of the Act could be put into force and the Viceroy was striving to get the princes to federate. Now the princes, who at the Round Table Conferences had been enthusiastic about federation, were in 1939 not quite so sure. They saw that the Congress Party which held power in most of the provinces would inevitably be the strongest party in the federal legislature. And the Congress Party certainly does not love the maharajahs. At best it might be induced to tolerate them if they ceased to be autocrats and became constitutional monarchs. Political agitation for responsible governments was spreading in every state. The princes therefore briefed able lawyers to examine the Viceroy’s terms for accession clause by clause, word by word. They wanted to make quite certain that their absolute right to govern their princedoms as they liked would not be interfered with by the federal government-to-be. And the Viceroy was doing his best to smooth these fears.



## VI. DEFENCE

1. MACHINE-GUN INSTRUCTION

(Paul Pothier)

2. INFANTRY ON PARADE

(Black Star)





The Congress Party working the eight provincial governments was determined that they would have none of this projected federation. Gandhi was warning the country to be prepared for another great struggle. The objection of Congress was not to the idea of federation but to the powers and composition of the federal legislature enacted by the 1935 Act. The party pointed out that the new federal government would still leave Defence and Foreign Affairs in the hands of the Viceroy. Secondly, it insisted that the federal legislature was so contrived that the balance of power would be held by the deputies of the princes. They demanded that the states should send elected representatives of their peoples, not "palace nominees", and also that the numbers should be reduced.

Meanwhile, the Muslim League, claiming to speak on behalf of India's eighty million Mohammedans, was also very agitated about the prospect. They realized that the majority in the Federal Legislature would be Hindu and were by no means sure that the rights of their community were safeguarded sufficiently by the 1935 Act. Under the leadership of their able leader, Mr. Muhamad Ali Jinnah, the League demurred to the very idea of majority rule and decried "arithmetical democracy". They argued that eighty million people could not be considered a mere minority, denounced the Congress Party as attempting to establish Hindu hegemony, levelled various charges against the Congress hegemony, postulated that the Moslems were indeed a separate nation, and thus "grew to a point". The point was "Pakistan", the idea being that certain areas in India—the North-West and the North-East, where the Moslems form the majority—should be constituted into an independent country or countries.

None of these internal differences was reflected in the country's attitude to the international situation. There never has been and there never can be the



slightest doubt about India's attitude to Nazism and Fascism. Without difference of race or religion or party, Hindu and Moslem, prince and peasant, politician and illiterate, detested and abhorred the Nazi-Fascist demonology of brute force, state-worship and mad racial phobia. India indeed might claim to have been the most consistently anti-Nazi country in the world. Abyssinia, Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia—there was no question that India's heart went out to each of these victims. Consistently the nationalist press denounced Britain's pre-war foreign policy of appeasement and supported Mr. Winston Churchill's resolute stand against aggression. When Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was in Prague in 1938, he so curtly declined an invitation to meet Hitler that Goebbels launched a violent personal campaign against him. Likewise, Mussolini knows how vain have been his efforts to attract Indian leaders to the shallow end of the pond. Italian and German pseudo-Indian propaganda was received with derision and contempt in India. "Spare India," wrote Pandit Nehru's paper, the *National Herald*. "It is not for Hitler and Ribbentrop, men whose hands are reeking with the blood of mutilated Czechoslovakia and Poland, to champion our cause. For, even if these men speak the Gospel, the world will not believe them, and India's cause suffers thereby." When Hitler said that he would bow to Britain if she granted independence to India, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, a staunch nationalist paper, inquired if the independence the Fuehrer had in mind was of the same sort as he had conferred on Czechoslovakia and was about to confer on Poland!

India's anti-Nazism derives from the depths of her national character and has to be borne in mind by anyone who would understand Indian politics. Hinduism with its instinct for venerating the saint above kings and commanders; Mohammedanism, perhaps the most



equalitarian of religions; Buddhism the essence of which is *ahimsa* or non-violence—all alike are revolted by the Nazi dogmas. It is not without significance that the nationalist movement in India has throughout sought to keep clear of violence and racial bitterness. Those who would ignore the strength and integrity of India's opposition to Nazism and Fascism belittle the country's character. The strength of his country's anti-Nazism is to an Indian one of the most heartening things, for it is proof of the basic cultural unity of the country underneath all its differences of race and religion. Anti-Nazism too is a sentiment in which the spirit of modern India rings true to her ancient culture.

Nor has India any illusions as to what a Nazi victory would mean for her. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once recalled that, according to that eminent anthropologist, Adolf Hitler, Indians occupy a place in the ladder of creation somewhere between ape and man. But the prodigious promise-makers of the Third Reich have played other tunes as well. Night after night the Nazi broadcasts pour out blandishments, offering India "freedom", "full freedom", and even, forgetting Japan for the moment, "a place as the supreme Asiatic power". The veriest peasant is not taken in by such talk. The most sincere recognize that it would spell even greater calamity for India than for Britain. For under the Nazi heel the united nation we have been striving to build would break into a thousand pieces. It is not fashionable in nationalist circles to acknowledge the fact so bluntly, for fear that it would weaken their bargaining position, but their policies and, occasionally, their words, show how well they realize the position.

What gives Indian anti-Nazism its greatest importance is its fundamentally ethical basis. It is the Nazi exaltation of might, their organized suppression of truth, their concept of the State as supreme, and their pernicious racialism, which the Indian execrates.



By the same token the sympathies of India have been wholeheartedly with China in her heroic resistance. Japan till very recently was much admired by Indian youth as an exemplar of progress. But since 1932 her militarism has nauseated the country, and, when she fell upon China, India wholeheartedly denounced the crime. Without organization of any sort, a virtual boycott of Japanese goods developed, and doctors, nurses and ambulance cars were sent to China.

## II

Thus, when the Viceroy of India followed Mr. Neville Chamberlain with a declaration of India's belligerency, he was doing something which was entirely in tune with public opinion in the country. For India was, if anything, more fervently anti-Nazi than the Chamberlain Government. Legally, too, the Viceroy was entirely within his rights, for control of India's foreign policy was entirely in his hands. Indeed he could not have done anything else, for his responsibility was to the Secretary of State for India. But an act legally right may be (and often is) politically inexpedient. For though India is constitutionally a dependency, she has to-day an acutely sensitive political consciousness, and the pride of the country was hurt. "Official circles" in London have for some time been willing to admit that this declaration of belligerency without previous consultation with leaders of Indian opinion was a political mistake—a blunder which could easily have been avoided without any prejudice to the war situation.

A few days after, the Congress Working Committee—the Cabinet of the party often referred to as the "High Command"—met in anxious deliberation. How the discussion turned is not known. There was no question of where the sympathies of the country lay,





and Mahatma Gandhi had declared that if the Congress were to offer co-operation at all it should be unconditionally given. In those first few days he himself does not seem to have made up his mind as to a definitely pacifist stand. But the extreme leftist circles of the Congress remembered what they considered the moral waverings of the appeasement period. Jawaharlal Nehru who was in London in the Munich days had been bitterly disappointed by the failure of progressive circles in Britain to take their stand on uncompromising principle. And there must have been also a natural impulse to drive a bargain. Whatever the balance of forces may have been, the upshot was the greatest political party in India taking a conditional attitude which Nehru formulated in logically impeccable words.

The Congress declared its anti-Nazism, but proceeded to demand whether this was a war merely to maintain the *status quo ante* of the British Empire or for the principle of democracy. If it was a war for democracy, then was India included in the scope of the war-aims? The party therefore called upon the British Government to define its war aims, to declare that India was entitled to independence. This stand was further crystallized into a demand that India should be entitled immediately after the war to frame her own constitution by means of a "Constituent Assembly" to be elected on adult suffrage, and also that this pledge of post-war freedom should be implemented immediately by the reconstitution of the central government of the country as a national government responsible to the existing central legislature.

There followed a series of meetings between the Viceroy and the leaders of various sections; also a long-range controversy between Indian leaders and the Secretary of State. The Viceroy issued a statement reiterating that Britain was anxious to further attain-

ment, by India of her place among the Dominions, that at the end of the war the Government was prepared to modify the scheme of the Act of 1935 in the light of Indian views. This statement failed to satisfy the Congress Party, and to mark its protest and as a first step in non-co-operation, the Congress executive called upon the party's ministries to resign office. Eight of the eleven provinces were then governed by the Congress, and all these ministries at once obeyed the orders of their party executive. In seven provinces no alternative government was possible, since the Congress held absolute majorities in the legislatures. Under an emergency provision of the Act of 1935, the Governors therefore assumed for the time sole charge of the governments. Provincial autonomy thus ceased in the Congress provinces. In one of the provinces, however, an alternative coalition government was found possible. It must be understood that the Governors assumed control only because the ministries refused to continue, and that it is open to the ministries to take up office again.

Notwithstanding the resignation of the Congress ministries, negotiations between Congress leaders and the Viceroy continued for a time. The Viceroy urged that any considerable change in the central government should be preceded by some understanding between the Congress Party and the Muslim League to work together. The Congress refused to accept this argument. The Muslim League maintained its advocacy of an independent Muslim India as the only acceptable post-war solution. The controversies became every week more and more acrimonious and involved. The war in the west hung fire. At the back of every Indian leader's mind was the subconscious assumption that Britain would, somehow, win the war. And so the controversy grew.

These illusions were shattered by the happenings of May and June 1940. With the fall of France, India



recognized with a shock the possibility of a Nazi victory. At the same time Italy's entry into the war brought Suez, India's strategic outpost in the west, into the battle-zone. The Congress Party met in anxious deliberation, and reoriented its policy in a new statement. The importance of this statement lay in the explicit declaration that the Congress could not see eye to eye with Mr. Gandhi in the extreme pacifist stand which he had by this time taken. The Mahatma's policy of non-violence as the sole means of attaining the country's self-determination was wholeheartedly approved by the great majority of the country. But he now asked the Congress executive to declare that it applied the principle to external aggression as well, i.e. to condemn even armed self-defence against aggression. He envisaged India not only as attaining her self-government by exclusively non-violent means, but as maintaining her independence without an army. He wanted India to provide the first example of a country which would defend its freedom by passive resistance only. The Congress executive's reaction to the fall of France, was publicly to disavow this extreme pacifist ideal, to relieve Gandhi of the leadership of the party, and to offer to throw all its weight behind "effective organization of the self-defence of the country", provided the Government granted its terms. These terms were "an acknowledgement of the independence of India", and the immediate implementing of this declaration as much as possible by the formation at the centre of a national government responsible to the existing central legislature.

Britain's response to this move was the famous and ill-fated declaration of the 8th August 1940. The main points of this well-intentioned declaration were as follows:

1. It reaffirmed that the proclaimed and accepted goal of the Imperial Crown and the British Parliament



was the attainment by India of *free and equal partnership* in the British Commonwealth.

2. It promised that with the least possible delay after the conclusion of the war, a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life would be set up in order to devise the framework of the new constitution.

3. The British Government would at this conference lend every aid in their power to hasten decisions on all relevant matters. Even during the war the Government was prepared to help promote every sincere and practical step by Indians to reach friendly understanding among themselves as to the nature of the post-war constitution.

4. The Government further agreed that the framing of the new constitution should be primarily the responsibility of Indians and according to their own political, economic, and social conceptions. The fullest practicable expression would be given to this right of self-determination subject to the due fulfilment of Britain's obligations in the country.

5. The Government further stipulated that the future constitution should be acceptable to the "large and powerful" minorities. Britain could not contemplate transference of its authority to any government whose authority would be defied by powerful minorities. Full weight should therefore be given to the views of the minorities in the post-war constitution.

6. As to the immediate future, the Government pointed out that great constitutional issues could not decisively be resolved in the midst of a life-and-death struggle, and therefore offered a half-way house to full responsible government at the centre. The Viceroy invited Indian leaders to join his Executive Council. In order to associate public opinion still closer with the conduct of the war, a War Advisory Council composed of representatives of the Indian states as well as British India was proposed.





A week before the declaration was published, the Viceroy communicated its terms to the President of the Congress Party and invited him to a further conference. But the leaders of the party refused to negotiate on the "framework" of the declaration. They declared that neither the promise as to the future nor the performance as to the present met their demands. The post-war constitution-making body would be just another Round Table Conference at which the British Government would set up spokesmen of diverse conflicting interests. They regarded the assurance to the minorities as giving these elements a veto on all constitutional progress. As to the immediate advance, they insisted that expanding the Executive Council was no answer to their demand for a responsible national government. This last was the crux of the criticism. The Congress insisted that the test of British intentions was what they offered at once, and by this test, it was argued, Britain was evidently not prepared to transfer any real power to Indians.

Was the judgement sound? There cannot be any doubt that the full scope of the British Government's offer was not understood by the leaders of Congress. Writing several days after he knew the terms of the offer, Pandit Nehru made a series of charges all of which were unfounded and served only to prove the depth of the misunderstanding. He asserted that the majority in the new council would be officials; that all sorts of odd groups and interests would be chosen, and that the nominees would be there not as representatives but as individuals; that they would not be given portfolios but just tacked on to the official members.

Were these the Government's intentions? The Secretary of State's explanations in Parliament completely disproved every one of these hasty criticisms. He indicated that a very considerable expansion of the Executive Council was intended. (It was an open secret at the time in London that the number contemplated



was eleven or twelve.) He indicated that the majority of the new Council would be Indian, that the new members would hold important portfolios; that they would be chosen, by the Viceroy indeed, but from names submitted by the various parties; that they would not, in the strict constitutional sense, be responsible to the Legislature, but would naturally be very responsive to their own parties; that, though high policy would still remain in the hands of the Viceroy, their influence on all matters was bound to be immense. He earnestly pleaded that the offer was a genuine attempt to transfer a very considerable degree of power in the central government of the country to Indian leaders, that it was one of those advances which could not be gone back upon, and that in the process of common working on such a basis the party-leaders would naturally come to that better understanding which was essential to secure further progress after the war.

But the Congress Party had made up its mind. Within the party, extremists were straining at the leash and issuing warnings against "compromise with imperialism".

In an atmosphere of good will, the terms of the 8th August could very well have served as a basis of negotiation. A very close approximation to the Congress demands might have been achieved in actual practice. Power in war-time depends not so much on exact numbers in council or on the letter of the law, as on the actual weight of influence one man or party can bring to bear on the war effort. How else does one account for the portentous influence of Labour in the British Cabinet to-day, though Labour is but a Parliamentary minority? The Indian leaders on the Viceroy's Executive Council would have had an immense part to play in guiding and controlling the war effort of the country. They would have been backed by the majority in the central legislature. Their parties would



also have been in control of the provincial governments of the country. And when the war was over, how could it be otherwise than that these men, who had contributed so substantially to victory, would have established and strengthened their position in Britain, in India, and in the opinion of the world? Their team-work could not have failed to lessen internal tension, nor would the administrative experience have been wasted.

The Congress, however, was in no mood for such patient examination. Ultimatums were in the air. The Party's executive vehemently rejected the scheme, and forthwith summoned Gandhi to the supreme leadership again. And he took upon himself plenary powers to evolve a new movement of protest. It was a very curious movement which the world abroad has found considerable difficulty in understanding. Nevertheless, it was the logic of the highly artificial circumstances into which the Congress had worked itself.

For the Congress is as vehemently anti-Nazi as it is nationalistic. From the beginning every leader had firmly insisted that it was no part of his policy to embarrass the country's war effort. Any mass movement of passive resistance was therefore ruled out. Nevertheless, Gandhi, now called to the active leadership again, had to devise some protest which would be effective enough to force the government to further concessions. As he put it, "we cannot carry non-embarrassment to the point of self-extinction".

Another complication was that Gandhi had by now firmly taken an ultra-pacifist stand. He had decided that abandonment of violent self-defence was the sole means of salvation for the world. He managed to persuade the Viceroy into actually sending a message to the War Cabinet, advising it to surrender armed defence and to organize passive resistance—a message which served only to pain and puzzle the British people, then enduring the worst air raids. While the Government's



Declaration disappointed the leaders of the Congress. Gandhi, according to his private secretary, thought it was a political defeat and a victory for non-violence". He therefore now proceeded to equate his own pacifist stand with the political objection of the bulk of the Congress. And this he did by asking the Viceroy whether the Government would give freedom to propagate non-violence. The Viceroy replied that Indians in India had precisely the same freedom for speech on this issue as Britons in Britain. An individual could declare himself a conscientious objector, he could even profess himself such in public; but if anything he did actually interfered with the war effort of the country he would be restrained. Gandhi refused to accept this as adequate for the special circumstances of India. It must be said, however, that his attempt to make a burning issue of this point left the country very lukewarm indeed.

Nevertheless, Gandhi launched his campaign. It is important to realize that this movement, unlike his previous campaigns, was not an attempt to paralyse the administration by mass passive resistance. Such an attempt might seriously upset the war effort, and such was not Gandhi's purpose or the country's mood. The movement was therefore in the nature of a symbolic and dramatic protest. Selected leaders were asked individually to offer civil disobedience, to speak or write something against the war, something calculated to force the Government to arrest them. One by one, leaders of the Congress, former Ministers and legislators, followed this behest ceremonially, and were duly arrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. When this list had run out, Gandhi prepared further lists, and then eventually threw the honour of political imprisonment open to the rank and file. In this way several thousands were put in prison. The whole process was carried out with ludicrous unrealism.





Many of the leaders who obeyed Gandhi's orders certainly did not believe in pacifism. And many of the rank and file were sentenced by the magistrates—with commendable sense of humour and proportion—not under the Defence of India Act, but under the Town Nuisances Acts and the Traffic Codes.

As the movement progressed, it became evident that nationalist circles themselves had no confidence either in its ethics or its efficacy. The leading nationalist newspaper, the *Hindu* of Madras, came out last March with a clear-cut demand that the campaign be dropped and some way found to "liberate the energies of the nation's leaders for positive tasks". The Congress leader, K. M. Munshi, who had been a minister in the Congress government of Bombay, when released from prison, declared against the campaign and resigned from the Congress party. Another prominent dissident was Dr. Satyapal, noted Congress leader from the Punjab.

Meanwhile the Government of India, having realized that neither the Congress nor the Muslim League would negotiate on the basis of their scheme, decided nevertheless to go ahead with it. In September 1941 the Viceroy announced that he had decided to expand the Executive Council and to include in it distinguished non-official Indians who were prepared to co-operate. This decision was carried out. The Viceroy's Councillors to-day are twelve in number. New portfolios have been created to accommodate all of them. Eleven out of the sixteen members are Indians, a remarkable point.

And they are not Indian members of the government service but "non-officials". Most of them have excellent records of administrative experience. Sir Akbar Hydari, in charge of the new portfolio of Information, was a conspicuously able Prime Minister of the largest Indian state. Mr. Raghavendra Rao has functioned successively as chief minister of a province, Governor, and adviser to the Secretary of State in London. Sir



Ferozekhan Noon was High Commissioner for India in London and has won many friends in Britain and the United States. Mr. M. S. Aney was the leader of the "Congress Nationalist" party, and, though not an orthodox member of the Congress, is respected all over India as a staunch nationalist. Sir Hormusji Mody, the new Supply member, is one of India's commercial leaders. General Archibald Wavell, as Commander-in-Chief of India, is the member for Defence. The two other portfolios held by British members are for Home and Finance. There is no gainsaying that these are key portfolios, but the handing over in war-time of all the other departments of government to non-official Indians must be noted as significant. Nor can the collective influence of the Indian majority on general policy fail to be considerable.

At the same time, a Defence Council, including princes and representatives from Indian states, as well as members from the British Indian provinces, has been set up according to the terms of the 8th August declaration. What the function of this body is to be is not quite clear. They are expected to meet regularly and to discuss the conduct of the war. They will be given, it is understood, periodic confidential reports on the war position.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CRIPPS MISSION AND AFTER

#### I

THE story of India's war-time politics narrated in the previous section, covers the period till October 1941. Its value to-day is in the perspective it gives to the more dramatic developments which followed. Gandhi's symbolic passive resistance movement had



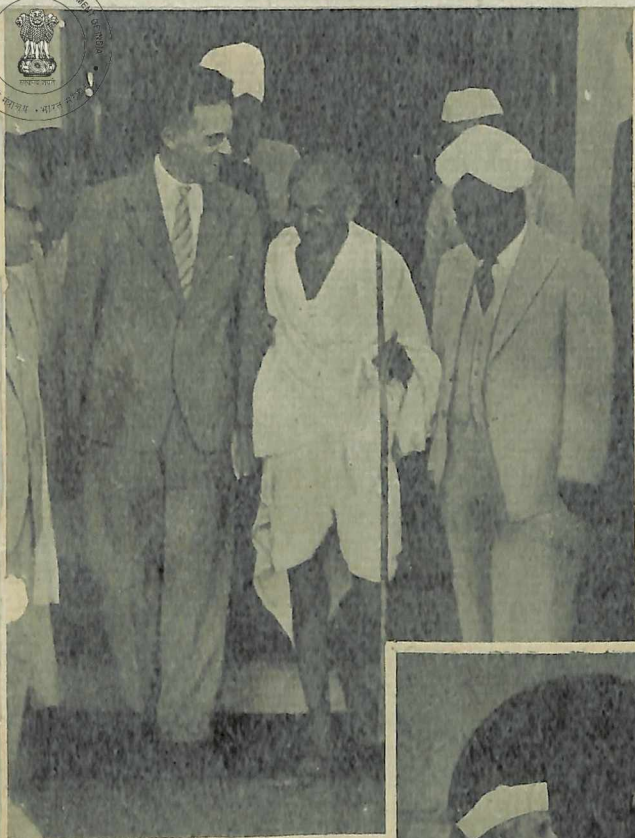


pursued its "languid" progress to the logical end that most Congress leaders at the Mahatma's behest had found their way to jail. But it was evident that many of these leaders and the public at large were appraising the policy afresh. It had yielded no political results. It had not brought the country any nearer settlement and some at least of the Congress leaders felt strongly that a war-time settlement was essential to fortify the country against gathering perils.

At the same time there seemed to be no possibility of the ill-fated 8th August declaration being reconsidered. Mr. Amery made successive speeches arguing, urging, and explaining. Those who had been convinced before of the sincerity of that declaration found fresh justification in these speeches. But the others—and that meant the great majority—were only the more irritated. It is not much use arguing that their suspicions were ill-founded, as they probably were. That these suspicions were really felt was painfully evident.

The Government of India then moved with a stroke of real statesmanship and unconditionally released all those convicted in the course of the passive resistance movement. A small number of communists and some of little political consequence who had been charged with acts of violence, were still detained, but all the Congress Party leaders were released.

One of them was a powerful member of the Congress Party's Working Committee ("the High Command" of the party), a man little known abroad, of meek and retiring personality and handicapped, besides, by a very long name, C. Rajagopalachari: known affectionately all over India as "Rajaji" or "C. R."; former Prime Minister of the province of Madras, life-long devotee of Gandhi and recognized by those in the know as the keenest intellect in the Congress Party. Yielding to none in his patriotism, Rajaji has the advantage over most Congress Party leaders in his practical statesman-



## VII. THE CRIPPS MISSION

1. SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS  
WITH MAHATMA GANDHI

2. WITH PANDIT NEHRU







ship. The Viceroy of India, several Governors of Provinces, Gandhi and Nehru, the liberal Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jinnah of the Muslim League, and Dr. Ambedkar of the Untouchables—all alike have expressed to the present writer the greatest respect for his ability and integrity.

Soon after his release, Rajaji joined issue with Mahatma Gandhi on the principle of non-violence. He declared that neither he nor the great body of opinion in the country believed that non-violent resistance would avail against external aggression. He demanded that the political issues be not mixed up with “non-violent ideologies” and said that if the party’s political demands were conceded by the Government, then it should assume responsibility and wage war against the menace which the country faced. And then, as if to underline his words, Japan struck at Pearl Harbour, struck heavily all over India’s far-eastern ramparts and bared the fact that invasion of India was not a possibility but a near probability.

The effect was that in January, a few weeks after Pearl Harbour, Gandhi suspended his “symbolic passive resistance”, announced that the released leaders were not to seek prison again and asked to be relieved of his leadership of the party. Thus the issues seemed to have been put back on a clear political basis and the way to further negotiation was no longer blocked by Gandhian pacifism. Rajaji made it clear at the All India Congress Committee’s meeting in Wardha, that he would not whittle down the political demands. He only wanted to make it clear that, if these demands were conceded, the Congress Party would shoulder responsibility and wage war on India’s behalf against the Axis. What were the demands? He summed them up as the recognition of India’s independence and the giving as much effect as possible to that recognition immediately.

Rajaji’s resolution was passed by “an overwhelming



majority" according to the official report, but the actual showing of hands was about 45 for and 15 against—with about 140 members not voting. And even this doubtful passage would probable have not been secured if Gandhi had not answered perfervid demonstrations of confidence in him by assuring the members that though he was resigning, his guidance would still be available. What really had happened was that Rajaji had talked his party into acquiescence for the time. He and those who believed with him were for a war-time settlement and wanted to negotiate further with the Government. The others saw no harm in the negotiation while they reserved judgement till the result of the negotiation was before them.

The stage was thus set for the Cripps Mission. But before that, there was another episode of importance, the visit to India of Marshal and Madame Chiang Kai-Shek. Evidently the main purpose of the visit was to talk to India's political leaders, to urge the importance of a united front against Japan and to demonstrate the friendly interest of the head of a powerful neighbouring government in the cause of India's self-government. China may feel assured that despite the paucity of immediate result, the visit of her leader to India was as worth while as it was gracious.

No better envoy could have been chosen for his mission than Sir Stafford Cripps, life-long advocate of Indian self-determination, and a personal friend of several leaders in India. The draft declaration which he carried and his explanations also seemed to be designed specifically to meet the three clichés into which Congress Party's criticism of the previous proposals had hardened: "that Britain should make up her mind to part with power", "that she should not play 'divide and rule'", and "that the test of British sincerity was not her promises as to the future but the immediate transfer of as much power as possible".





The most striking features of the Cripps declaration were the clarity and concreteness of its post-war proposals. Here indeed, for the first time in Indo-British politics, was a hard and fast commitment on behalf of Great Britain. Suspicion about British intentions in India derived from the vagueness and indefiniteness of previous British declarations. India's complaint was not that Britain had broken any promises to her—as some self-elected friends of India suggest—but that she refused to give a hard and fast pledge, a promise definite as to time and method. The most important feature of the Cripps proposals was, therefore, that the promise it contained was not remote, not conditional. Here was no talk of “goals” and “objectives”, of guarded advances or subtle constitutional adjustments or conditions precedent.

Immediately after the war, elected Indian representatives would meet and draw up a federal constitution for the new Dominion-to-be of India, a free and equal partner of the British Commonwealth, a partner, besides, with the right to walk out of that commonwealth at any time if she elected to do so. That was something hard and definite. Its only remoteness was the date of the end of the war and Sir Stafford could not possibly have guaranteed that! The method of constitution-making, an elected constituent Assembly, was also the method which the Congress Party itself had suggested.

There was no serious objection to this part of the proposals, although the resolution of the Congress Party affects to make much of the provision that the States, too, would be represented and that the States' delegates would not be the elected representatives of the people, but nominees of the rulers. The total States' population, however, is a fifth of the whole country, and representation was to be in strict proportion to the population. The Congress leaders knew very well that either before or soon after the setting up of complete



self-government in the rest of India, the States would inevitably have to become constitutional monarchies.

As important as the clarity and concreteness of the Cripps proposals was the way they helped lay the ghost of "divide and rule". The draft declaration provided that any province that elected to do so might keep out of the federation. Thus the charge of seeking to divide India might plausibly be advanced but, and here is the important point, the federating as well as the seceding provinces would become equally self-governing, and free to make their own arrangements with each other, and with Britain. Divide, plausibly, but not divide and rule, so far as Britain was concerned.

Why then were the Cripps proposals rejected?

In his letter to Sir Stafford the President of the Congress Party agrees that the independence of India is implicit in the declaration. Substantially, the post-war part of the declaration was acceptable to the Congress Party—despite certain trumped-up criticisms—that is why they accepted the proposals as a basis of negotiation; that they did in fact negotiate for over three weeks. That is also why acute differences of opinion have now developed among Congress leaders themselves. The Cripps proposals undoubtedly guaranteed the full self-determination of India immediately after the war and this was done without seriously offending the Mohammedan minority.

So much for the post-war self-government of the country. How was government to be carried on during the war and the constitution-making period immediately thereafter? Sir Stafford invited leaders of Indian parties to "participate immediately and effectively in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth, and of the United Nations". He proposed that all portfolios in the Viceroy's Executive Council, with the exception of Defence, should at once be transferred to representative Indians. Argument developed immedi-



totely about the solitary exception, and Sir Stafford with the full agreement of the Viceroy, agreed to the appointment of a representative Indian as War Minister.<sup>1</sup> To him would be delegated all powers over the defence of the country, subject to the operational and strategic part of defence being under the control of the great soldier who, happily, is India's present Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Archibald Wavell.

It is widely believed abroad that this question of the Defence portfolio was the rock on which the negotiations floundered. But if one remembers what great powers over the country's war-effort would actually have been transferred, it should be easy to avoid over-estimating the importance of this issue. General Wavell would be Commander-in-Chief, but representative Indians would have controlled all war supplies, war-finance, transport, and the Ministry of the Interior. They would have controlled Civil Defence, Information, and the Police. It would no more have been possible for the Commander-in-Chief to ignore the opinions of the twelve other members of the Executive Council than to disobey the orders of the War Cabinet or the Pacific War Council. Various alternative plans were drawn up and discussed as to the division of powers between the Commander-in-Chief and the Indian Defence or War Member. None of these is supposed to have met the assent of the Working Committee of the Congress Party, but it is a safe assumption that if there was any reasonable prospect of settlement at all, several of the i's could have been dotted and t's crossed to evolve a satisfactory formula.

A more substantial issue was the one of "National Government". All these negotiations were based on one assumption accepted by the Congress Party: the axiom that constitutional changes are impossible during the war, that a radical solution of the problem could

<sup>1</sup> This appointment was in fact made in July 1942.



here and then be worked out, and that constitutional changes were not demanded. The idea was that as much power as possible should be transferred while keeping within the framework of the present constitutional position.

Had the Cripps plan been accepted the administrative position in India would have been as follows—not after the war but *now*, to-day if the proposals had been accepted yesterday :

*The Provincial Governments.* All the eleven provinces of the country would have again enjoyed the provincial autonomy to which they are entitled, i.e., they would have been governed by elected cabinets responsible to elected legislatures.<sup>1</sup>

*The Central Government* would still technically be the Viceroy and his Executive Council, but twelve out of the thirteen Members would have been representative Indians delegated by the principal political parties. The central Legislature would remain the same and its vote would not bind the Executive Council, but since the Members of Council would be answerable to their respective parties and these same parties also comprise the overwhelming majority in the Legislature, it follows that the Government would be very responsive, if not legally responsible, to the Legislature.

Further, an Indian, a representative Indian delegated by agreement among the principal political parties, was to sit as member of the British War Cabinet and another was to become India's representative on the Pacific War Council.

What else was possible within the framework of the present constitution? It is suggested that the Viceroy should give an undertaking to be bound by the advice

<sup>1</sup> They were so being governed to the satisfaction of all parties, till the Congress Party which holds the majority in seven of the eleven legislatures, resigned office. It is open to them to resume government at any time they choose to do so.

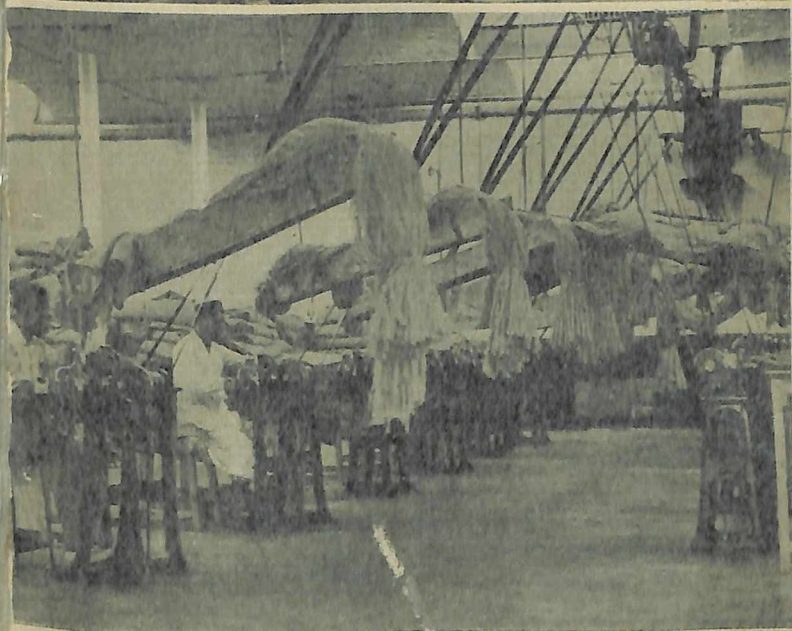




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of the majority of the Executive Council. Apparently herein lies the difference between the pattern of administration outlined above and the magic "National Government". But it must be pointed out that inevitably the Viceroy would have to abide very largely by the advice of an Executive Council composed of representatives of the principal political parties in the country, which same parties governed in all the provinces and had a delegate sitting on the British War Cabinet and the Pacific War Council. There cannot be any doubt that the influence of such an Executive Council was bound to be felt not only by the British War Cabinet but by the United Nations as a whole. It should not be forgotten that India is not only important but vital for the United Nations and that the morale of a country facing invasion is a factor of prime military value. It should also be remembered that even in the provinces, the Governors do have reserve powers and have given no formal assurance that they will not use those powers, but that the Congress Party itself found out by actual experience that no such assurance was necessary.

Nor would the Muslim League have countenanced any such formal agreement by the Viceroy. The majority of the Executive Council would inevitably have been Hindu and the majority of the Provincial Governments as well. The Muslim League sought—though vainly—to invoke the reserve powers of even the Governors when Congress governments were in office in seven of the provinces. Mr. Jinnah summed up his position thus to the present writer in the course of a recent interview: "There are two different propositions, a radical settlement and an interim war-time arrangement. I am prepared for either. But I will not allow the two to be confused. I will fight any 'solution' which under the guise of an interim arrangement radically prejudices the Muslim position in the future."

In the strict sense of the law it was impossible within



## VIII. INDUSTRY

1. HAND LOOM  
(Black Star)

2. JUTE FACTORY  
(E.N.A.)





the framework to achieve a "National Government", i.e. one directly responsible to the people. But, if there had been some general understanding between the two principal parties in the country and they had worked harmoniously in the centre and in the provinces, there can be no question that in fact they would have had their way in all matters of Indian policy. The limitations on their power exercised through the Viceroy or the Commander-in-Chief, would operate only if their will clashed on major issues of the United Nations' strategy or war policy. Their inherent importance, the country's present strategic position, their internal solidarity and their unity of purpose with the United Nations—these would assure for the new Indian administration the "substance of self-government" and great influence on the United Nations even during the war. Nor should it be forgotten that any one who would value the goodwill of India in the post-war years must necessarily show deference to these heirs-apparent to full rulership of the country immediately after the war. Even if the cheque for full Dominion Status was literally post-dated, no practical politician in any country would have hesitated to cash it immediately.

Therefore, since the leaders of the Congress Party are indeed practical politicians, something else lay behind their rejection of the proposals.

The crux of the conflict within the Congress Party was not on these arguments over fractions of war-time power, but on a more national issue—that of a war-time settlement. A few weeks before the arrival of the Cripps Mission, the question asked by high Government officials in India was "Do they mean business?"—in other words, would they be prepared to accept the very best possible war-time arrangement?

"We thought when we set out from England", said one who was intimately associated with the negotiations, "that our chances were three to seven, but we decided



try.” The figure was not a nice balancing of political forces but a reference to the fact that three members of the Congress Working Committee were known to be definitely for a war-time settlement and seven were known to be equally definitely against the assumption—on any practical terms—of the perils of war-time responsibility and formal identification with the United Nations.

Heading this latter group are the little-known figures of Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhai Patel.<sup>1</sup> Priding itself on its “realism” this group reasons that non-violence—like honesty—is the best policy. “On the whole”, Mr. Rajendra Prasad thus summed up the position of this group in a recent conversation with me—“the advantages of abandoning non-violence now for the sake of a war-time settlement, are not as great as the disadvantages”—a peculiar way, to say the least, of professing faith!

The calculations of this group run somewhat as follows: All that a war-time settlement would give would be substantial power for the two or three years that the war may last but, for that advantage, we have to assume all the perils of power during an invasion and be responsible for a series of arbitrary, unpopular things, from food control to scorched earth; things which may well break up the party and undermine its hold when the time comes for constitution-making. We may also have to yield a good deal more to the Muslims in return for their working together harmoniously with us. Further, assumption of office at this stage may not materially improve the country's war-effort—neither war-production nor recruitment can be improved substantially. These things depend and de-

<sup>1</sup> Pandit Nehru is in neither camp. His position in the Working Committee is *sui generis*. The radical in him would probably have yielded to the fervent anti-Nazi if the rest of the committee had voted the other way. Some reports had it that he was “furious” at the rejection. Kalam Azad, the President of the Congress, inclined to the Rajaji group but he voted neutral.





pend only on the equipment and industrial capacity of the country. *Therefore*, "on the whole", it is safer to continue sitting on the fence.

Those were the calculations, sinuous and super-clever, that torpedoed the Cripps Mission. And the decision was taken when a wave of pessimism was sweeping the country, immediately after the fall of Singapore and almost coincident with the reports of a powerful Japanese invasion fleet in the Bay of Bengal and the first raids on Ceylon.

It should be made quite clear that the calculations of the Rajendra Prasad element are not influenced in the least by any illusions about Japan and Germany. They know that an Axis victory would be disastrous to India, know it as clearly as Nehru and Rajaji do, but they reason that assumption of war-time power and formal identification with the United Nations is neither worth while nor likely to add materially to the chances of winning.

The Muslim League also rejected the Cripps offer, but it is fairly clear that if the Congress Party accepted, they too would have fallen in. Since the Congress rejected it, however, there was no point in the League accepting, because the proposals would have been put into effect only if both the principal parties agreed. And so the Muslim League also filed a resolution of rejection, adducing as its principal reason the allegation that Muslim right to secession from the post-war federation had *not* been sufficiently guaranteed—precisely the opposite of the Congress criticism that the right to secession ought not to be allowed.

## II

It was clear from the beginning that any war-time settlement would have to exclude certain elements in the Congress Party. The genuine believer in non-



violence cannot, obviously, take office in a government whose chief purpose would be to organize violent resistance. Further, it has been clear to Indians who want their country's freedom *and therefore* want the Axis defeated, that it would not help India or the United Nations if some of the pseudo-pacifists took office now. Those who are likely to place party expediency above the country's needs, those who do not believe they can improve the war-effort, or those who shrink from the unpopular necessities of war-time government, had best keep out.

But, equally, a settlement with all the other elements in the country, is extremely desirable, particularly as India is facing the physical impact of war on her own soil for the first time in living memory. A war-time settlement is urgently needed, a settlement with all sections in the country prepared to shoulder the responsibility of war-time government without any qualms or mental reservations. The "failure" of the Cripps Mission has helped sharply to define this proposition, and events may prove that Sir Stafford's work in India, precisely like his mission to Russia, may, despite first appearances and gloomy forebodings, eventually prove triumphant.

Events since Sir Stafford left India have brought out into the open the inner conflict within the "High Command" of the Congress Party.

The majority in the Working Committee which secured the breakdown of the negotiations has made its stand explicit in an All-India Congress Committee resolution. Again the voting was by a large majority, *but* with an even larger number of members neutral or absent.

The resolution plumped squarely for non-violent non-co-operation. It emphasized in uncompromising words that Japan must be resisted and stated that in all places where there is fighting non-co-operation would, ob-





viously, have no place. "Not to put obstacles in the way of the British forces would often be the only way of demonstrating non-co-operation with the invader." Then the resolution went on to bar the door on further negotiations with Britain by declaring "that it is only on the basis of independence that India can deal with Britain or other nations": a sentence which marks a clear break from previous Congress policy, the demand for a recognition of India's right to independence plus the immediate grant of as much power as possible within the framework of the present constitution. To demand independence here and now is, of course, only a way of stating that the party will not negotiate during war-time, for it is truer to-day than ever before that constitutional changes are impossible just now. And then, as it were to lock and bar the door thus shut, the resolution went on to speculate that if India had been free, "she would have determined her own policy and might have kept out of the war, though her sympathies, in any event, would have been with the victims of aggression". Finally—a *non sequitur* which we probably owe to Pandit Nehru—the resolution winds up with a statement that if circumstances had nevertheless obliged India to join the war, then she would have fought, but as a free country and by the methods *not* of the non-co-operation commended in the earlier part of the resolution, but "with a national army under national control and leadership in intimate contact with the people"!

While this section of the party was thus defining its stand, the minority which felt differently was also staking out its position. Mr. Rajagopalachari resigned from the Working Committee of his party, roundly denounced its policy and made a series of moves which mark the most significant development in Indian politics since the war. He described the policy of the Working Committee as one "of satisfaction with things



they are, of pointing out the faults of the British and other parties plus what I consider, in the net result, to be a policy of neutrality to the Axis". He flatly declared that non-co-operation is futile in the present circumstances.

Backed by a practically unanimous vote of the Congress Party members in the Madras Legislature, he served notice on the party "High Command" that the Madras members wanted immediately to resume government in the province. Simultaneously (again backed by the overwhelming majority of Congress strength in Madras), he agreed to the justice of the demand that Muslims should be allowed the right to secede from the post-war federation if they insisted on it. He then launched a nation-wide campaign for a "new national front, a new national policy, and a national army to combat the threat of Japanese aggression".

Will the move succeed? If the test of success is to get the whole of the present leadership of the Congress Party to its view, then it is most unlikely to succeed. But Rajagopalachari's approach has a far greater measure of support in the country at large and in the rank and file of the party than the vote in the party committees may indicate. By and large, the people of India certainly do not want a policy "which in its net result amounts to neutrality to the Axis", and the true believers in non-violence are as few and far between in India as they are in Britain or the U.S.A. The Cripps proposals certainly made a deep impression of honesty and sincerity on the overwhelming majority of educated people in the country, and, for the first time, the conspiracy of irreconcilable, destructive criticism has been broken by an appeal for a workmanlike solution from a man with a record of devotion and sacrifice to his country as long as that of Mahatma Gandhi.

Rajaji's move has the solid backing of the party strength in his province. With him go two members of





the Working Committee, Mr. Asaf Ali of Delhi and Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant, former Prime Minister of the Congress Party in the United Provinces. The Punjab and North-Western Frontier Province Congress Committees have come out supporting him. Sections of the Congress all over the country, particularly in Bombay, approve. Former dissidents from the party like Mr. K. M. Munshi, Home Minister in the Congress Government of Bombay and Mr. Khare, former Congress Party Premier of the Central Provinces, are largely with him. The Muslim League wholeheartedly approves the move and so do leaders of several smaller groups, the Liberals, the Radicals under M. N. Roy, and the Communists, who are now for unconditional support to the war effort. Every week brings fresh accessions of strength to this far-reaching challenge to the group of Congress leaders, who, with the indirect support of Gandhi, want to keep the country from committing itself to war-time power and complete identification with the United Nations.

And once before Gandhi had to say, "I see the intellect of my country ranged against me."

What of the prospects then? Once the Rajaji movement has consolidated itself and worked out an understanding with the Muslim League, it would turn for a resumption of negotiations with Britain. Rajaji will insist on the utmost possible power being transferred at once, but he will stand firmly by the proposition that it has to be within the framework of the present constitution. He may ask for all the things the Congress Party demanded, but he will ask as one genuinely anxious to arrive at a quick, sensible settlement in order to throw all the resources of the country against the Axis. He will ask, too, as a practical administrator who knows exactly how to make the best of his position, ask with the support of all in the country who genuinely seek a settlement during the war. And of his complete



integrity in fighting Japan and Germany by every possible means, no one need have the slightest doubt.

The first reaction in Britain to the Rajaji move—Mr. Amery's statement in the House of Commons—shows that the Cabinet is just as anxious for a settlement on the broad basis of the Cripps plan as when Sir Stafford went to India.

## III

Thus a settlement of the Indian political problem may yet be reached during the war on the broad basis of the Cripps offer. But whether it is reached or not, it ought never to be forgotten that India as a whole has no illusions about the Japanese or the Germans. Every responsible Indian realizes that a Nazi-Japanese victory will spell disaster to the hopes of the country now on the threshold of full self-government. Colourful stories about "fifth-column" possibilities may be discounted. As Pandit Nehru put it to me, in India's 389 millions there may indeed be some fools and knaves, but in no part of the country is fifth-columning ever likely to materialize into a considerable factor.

Nor should it be forgotten that Gandhi's philosophy is not non-resistance but non-violent resistance. Should the Japanese gain a foothold in the country—a possibility we have to envisage—Gandhi's help in organizing in the occupied areas special measures of economic and social boycott and organized law-breaking, may indeed prove invaluable. On these weapons he must be reckoned the world's foremost professional expert. Meanwhile, his efforts to organize unofficial agencies in such matters as Civil Defence, maintaining food supplies, preventing panic, and combating enemy inspired rumour, may occasionally be confusing but will in the whole be helpful. And the genuine Gandhites will do nothing to embarrass or dissuade the Indian



Army or the Allied forces on Indian soil, or the great majority of our people who do not believe that non-violence will work against the Japanese or the Germans. A feeling of helplessness is the greatest danger to guard against in a country the great masses of which cannot be armed. And against that danger, the glorifying of non-violent means, whatever befalls, is not without its psychological value.

Gandhi apparently means to go on issuing these peculiar statements in his capacity of the apostle of non-violence pure and simple—statements which sound just as unpractical to us Indians as to the people in Britain or the United States. The one difference is that they do not sound new to us, because the soil of India is soaked with these ideals. Some holy man or other has always been saying these things, but the country has nevertheless fought its wars and produced in all her ages a stoic peasantry which could “take it” and some of the toughest fighting men in the world. And, after all, the ideal of turning the other cheek must be remembered even while we hit back—*and hard*. India knows how to venerate Gandhi, and even when it differs from him, and the world must not make the mistake of giving an exaggerated political import to these Gandhian essays in abstraction.

India to-day has an army of over a million men. Her troops have given a magnificent account of themselves in every theatre of war in which they have figured. In Libya, Abyssinia, Eritrea, Somaliland, Syria, and Iraq, they have richly earned the tributes that have been paid them by the King, Mr. Winston Churchill, and General Sir Archibald Wavell. When I met General De Gaulle, he greeted me with the words, “It is an honour for a soldier to shake hands with a Hindu.” Every report of his from the Middle East, he said, spoke volumes in praise of Indian troops. The point of General De Gaulle’s praise is not the gallantry



of these men—which no one who knows of their performance in the last war could have doubted—but the rapidity with which they have got used to the circumstances of the fully mechanized land-air warfare of to-day. Another factor of importance for the future is that in this war for the first time a considerable number of the commissioned officers are Indians. General Heath, the hero of Keren, the commander who led his Indian troops in that crushing assault on Eritrea, told me that his young Indian officers compared with the best of any country.

The Indian Air Force is a very young service, growing as rapidly as training facilities allow. But the officers who have so far seen active service—batches of them serve in Britain—have proved notably good. The Royal Indian Navy is rapidly expanding, its officer personnel more than quadrupling itself since the outbreak of the war. Their work on convoy duty, submarine-hunting, coastal patrol, and landing operations has received enthusiastic praise from those exacting critics, the British Admiralty.

Even greater than India's man-power contribution is her economic effort. India is still a predominantly agricultural country, but by prodigies of industrialization since the start of the war, she has now become the most important source of supply in the eastern hemisphere. To-day she makes not only rifles and machine-guns, small arms and ammunition, as in the last war, but guns and howitzers up to six inches, heavy armour-plating, tanks and Bren carrier bodies, heavy ammunition, floating docks, anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, mines, depth-charges, and machine tools. An aircraft assembly factory under expert American guidance has now gone into production and all-Indian trainer and fighter planes are now being turned out in South India. Auto-assembly plants pour out chassis to the tune of several thousands. Out of the 40,000 articles which go





to the equipment of a modern army, India now makes about three-fourths and is rapidly improvising means to make or provide substitutes for the others. How rapidly this process is being accomplished is proved in another and a highly technical field. India, at the outbreak of war, had to import 72 per cent of the medical requirements of the army. To-day she is at least 60 per cent self-contained.

Her industrial importance is illustrated by the enormous development of her steel output, which to-day is sufficient to meet all her civilian and war needs. She still has to import certain qualities of high-grade steel, mainly from the United States, but against that she has actually been able to spare light steel and ingots, as much as 100,000 tons a month, for export to Britain. The idea of India exporting steel to Britain would have sounded fantastic a few years ago.

In the field of textiles, India has a premier position in the Eastern hemisphere. Her four hundred cotton mills now turn out all the cotton requirements of India's own army at home and abroad and supply besides the Empire and Allied troops all over the Eastern hemisphere. She has already supplied over one billion jute sandbags, enough if placed from end to end to reach the moon and back. Most of the armies of Allied troops in the Middle East march on Indian-made boots, and, in addition, India now exports several thousand pairs a month to Britain herself. Likewise her supplies of saddlery, blankets, tents, and every variety of garment for the troops has reached immense proportions.

And out of her raw-product resources India pours out oil-seeds and timber, tea and coffee, mica and manganese, and a hundred other commodities in quantities limited only by one factor—the shipping space available. The United States depends very largely on Indian manganese and mica, both vital strategic materials. At the same time the development



of other resources, such as bauxite and chromite, mineral deposits, now goes on apace. India, therefore, is entitled to the title of the Arsenal of the East, for, from Suez to New Zealand, she is the bulwark of war-time supply. Her central situation between the Near and Far East adds to her importance in days when shipping space and time are so vital. It is natural therefore that the Eastern Group Conference met in India's capital, under an Indian chairman. This was a conference of the representatives of sixteen Empire countries east of Suez, countries which account for about three-fifths of the British Empire and a population of over 500 millions. It met to pool and co-ordinate the resources and the war-production of the various countries and to try to make the Allied and Empire countries in the Eastern hemisphere as completely self-sufficient as possible for all the needs of the war. It is presided over by the representative of Great Britain. The other members are from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and India. India plays a predominant part in the Group and has undertaken great liabilities for supply.

Such, then, is the magnificent part that India plays in men and material. There is not one responsible politician who would do anything materially to prejudice this magnificent effort, and when the tally is made at the end of the war it may be found that India has played a part only just below Britain, the United States, and Russia. And that part would have been played even had the political problem not been solved meantime.





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