

THE MORAL ISSUE IN INDIA

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THE MORAL ISSUE IN INDIA

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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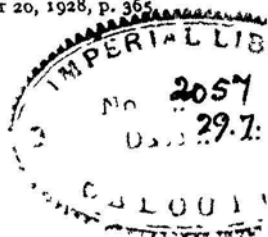
FORMERLY FINANCE MEMBER OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S COUNCIL
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AGRA AND OUDH

"We are here by our own moral superiority, by the force of circumstances and the will of Providence. These alone constitute our charter of government, and in doing the best we can for the people we are bound by our conscience and not by theirs."

LORD LAWRENCE (*shortly after the Mutiny*).

"Untouchability poisons Hinduism as a drop of arsenic poisons milk."

GANDHI, quoted in *Young India*,
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INTRODUCTION

BY

THE RIGHT HON. LORD MESTON, K.C.S.I., LL.D.

WE all tend to the lazy use of labels ; and several readers of this little book will not get far with it before they label it as reactionary, because it does not accord with their conceptions of our problem in India. I hope this will not deter them from reading it thoughtfully ; there are points in the book with which I personally do not agree, and there are things which I should have put differently ; but it is an honest and competent attempt to claim the attention of our people to an aspect of the Indian question which runs a real danger of being overlooked. Our responsibilities are grave, they have never been graver ; and we dare not attempt to discharge them on grounds of political expediency, or misquoted promises, or Nationalist sentiment, or any of the other easy comforts which we lay to our souls when we wish to evade hard facts. There is no short cut to a solution of the Indian problem ; we must face its difficulties.

The first difficulty, as Mr. Stokes perfectly

justly emphasizes, is that the nationalism of the Indian patriot is not, as a rule, the same sentiment as we know by that name in the West, "not primarily love of country, but love of racial, caste and personal prestige." In other words, it is not, in its present stage of development, a foundation on which we can hope to establish a democratic system of self-government. This in itself must give thought to those who were carried away by the flood of generous, but vague, sentiment which accompanied the sittings of the Round Table Conference last winter.

The second difficulty is this. Apart from the Muslims, whose objections to uncontrolled Hindu domination show no sign of abatement, the leaders in the Indian agitation for self-government belong to an almost microscopically small class of English-educated men and women. This is common knowledge, and it is partly offset by the powerful influence which this class is capable of exerting over the masses. But the point which Mr. Stokes particularly takes is that the great bulk of those who demand self-government belong to the tribes of the priests and the money-lenders, the "inmemorial oppressors," as he calls them, of the masses. Among them there are unquestionably men of the highest motives and ideals, whose example, it may be hoped, will in time leaven the whole lump. But the prevailing tradition of Hinduism has not been a tradition of social service and equal opportunities. It would be

folly to believe that political independence would, of itself, change the tradition. If reform was coming, there has already been ample space for it under the friendly British administration ; there has been unlimited scope for it in the Indian States.

The third difficulty consists of certain inherent weaknesses in Hinduism as a social and religious rule of life. Some of these are discussed in the following pages. There must always be a hesitancy in writing freely about these evils : first, lest we be guilty of claiming an unctuous superiority for Christianity over Hinduism ; second, because we have evils and weaknesses enough in our own Christian civilization. The justification for dwelling on the topic, however, is that the major differences between Hinduism and the West are such as to prevent India from stepping at once into the ranks of modern progressive nationhood. Her ancient splendours nobody denies, or her capacity for philosophic speculation, or the brilliancy of her best brains. But there remain, inherent in Hinduism, practices and habits of mind which debar India, under modern conditions, from becoming a great and balanced nation. Without our aid, it is doubtful if these evils will ever be eradicated. Even with our aid and protection, time will be necessary ; and thus the case against the immediate, or even the early, surrender of India's government to her own leaders is rounded off.

In developing his argument, Mr. Stokes at

times hits hard, but never below the belt. It was inevitable that there should soon be some plain speaking. We have been surfeited with sentiment and oratory; and there is a definite reaction against the emotional appeal of the Round Table Conference, especially since events in India have begun to show the dark realities which it was designed to conceal. There is also a growing resentment at the persistence with which the Indian politician belittles and maligns our work in India. Men who have given their best to the country and its people are being subjected to murderous attacks and scandalous abuse—either or both indiscriminately—and it is not unnatural that the moral standpoint from which these assaults are delivered should come in for questioning. Nevertheless, Mr. Stokes has set down nothing in malice, but only tells us, with sincerity and courage, what needed to be told.

MESTON.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE limits of space set to this little book necessarily restrict it to the single primary question now at issue in India, but those who care to pursue the important subsidiary issues raised may be referred to *New Imperial Ideals*,¹ Book II, chapters i-vi and xix-xx.

For the opinions set forth I am alone responsible, but I must acknowledge the deep debt of gratitude I owe to Lord Meston for his characteristically able and stimulating introduction; to Lord Sydenham of Combe, Sir Michael O'Dwyer and Mr. Waris Ameer Ali for most helpful criticism and suggestions; to Sir Reginald Craddock for kind help in proof-reading; and to Mr. Philip Farrer for advice on some political implications of the policy recommended. I am indebted to Miss Katherine Mayo's book, *Slaves of the Gods*, for the quotations prefixed to Chapters VI and VII.

ROBERT STOKES.

NO 1 DR. JOHNSON'S BUILDINGS,
INNER TEMPLE, E C 4
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¹ John Murray, 1930 (10s 6d net)

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CHAPTER I

INDIA AND THE EMPIRE : A MOMENTOUS DECISION

"India is the pivot of our Empire"—LORD CURZON.

WHAT may prove to be the gravest decision in the history of the British Empire is likely to be made within a very few months, when the future of India falls to be decided. It is a decision fraught with consequences of infinite moment, not merely to the 351,000,000 people of India, whose immediate happiness is in the balance, but to every single citizen of the Empire and indeed of the world, for there is substantial ground for believing that the very existence of the British Empire is at stake.

It is not merely that premature "self-government" for India may mean the impoverishment of Sheffield and the ruin of Lancashire. The sober truth is that a false step in India now may mean desperate civil war in India, and ultimately "Chinese anarchy" and the loss of the entire Indian Empire. The reality of this danger has not only been made clear by the facts in the *Simon Report*, but the actual danger involved in such a false step as weakening the

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Army in India is abundantly vouched for by the highest military testimony.

The Indian Empire includes one-fifth of mankind and more than three-quarters of the total population of the British Empire. Its loss would mean the loss of assured markets which annually absorb £87,000,000 worth of goods made in Great Britain. More than that, it would mean, substantially, the loss of the total capital sum which we have invested in India, and how great that sum must be may be gauged from the fact that the capital invested in the Indian railways alone amounts to over £600,000,000. The collapse and loss of the Indian Empire would be a loss comparable only to the cost of the Great War to us, but it would be a loss borne by us alone and not balanced by corresponding losses among our rivals. It would probably treble our permanent unemployment at home and cripple our finances beyond the possibility of maintaining our Navy. At one fell stroke it would reduce us to the level of a second-class Power. The break-up of the Empire itself could only be a matter of time. As has so often happened in the history of our country, the bulk of the people of England are approaching the crisis in blissful ignorance; yet in this gravest of decisions every adult man and woman in England will have a share, for the politicians are divided and public opinion is likely to be the deciding factor.

It is not the purpose here to discuss the larger possibilities. In the main such signs of interest

as have appeared suggest that public opinion in Great Britain is likely to approach this great question, not upon the plane of expediency or of our own interests, however vital, but from the simple Christian standpoint of our duty to India and of trying to discover what is best for the peoples of India. It is from this point of view that it will be discussed here.

From that standpoint the issue is really quite plain and simple. It is this: *Is India to be governed upon Christian ethical principles, as hitherto, or upon Hindu principles?* That is the fundamental question at issue between the two great schools of thought which exist regarding the political destiny of India, and it is primarily upon that question that public opinion is called upon to decide. It is a choice between (1) the school of thought which bases itself upon the principles of trusteeship and morality, and seeks the real progress and happiness of the peoples of India; and (2) the school of thought which looks primarily to the upper classes of India, regards "self-government" as essential to their self-respect, and busies itself with constitutional development. It will be convenient to say something first about the school which emphasizes trusteeship.

CHAPTER II

TRUSTEESHIP AND HAPPINESS

"The efficiency for which we stand in India is honesty in public dealings, honesty of purpose, honesty in the Courts, honesty in success and honesty in failure. In our patient and plodding way we have laid the foundations on rock, and were commencing the superstructure, and now has come the political theorist to tell us that we builders are no longer required, that our buildings and sites should be abandoned in favour of a new building founded on sand and inscribed with a big notice 'Democracy.'"

SIR REGINALD CRADDOCK, *The Dilemma in India*, p. 77.

INDIA is at present governed in all really important matters, such as defence, police, finance and justice, by Englishmen trained in the public schools of a Christian country or by Indians trained by such Englishmen; and in every sphere certain fundamental principles of Christianity prevail. These principles may be roughly described as trusteeship, honesty, incorruptibility, impartiality, humanity (in the sense of detestation of suffering and cruelty) and in general a deep respect for the sanctity of human life. To illustrate briefly the working of two of these, namely, impartiality and humanity, it may be noted that, in British India, the Brahmin and the untouchable have

been made equal before the law, which is not the case in Hindu native States; and that a British-made law abolished *sati* ("suttee," the cruel custom of burning widows alive), though its abolition was bitterly opposed by Hindu religious opinion.

Of course no attempt is made to proselytize or, normally, to interfere with the religious life of India. There is no attempt to enforce the detailed code of Christianity. Bigamy, for example, is not made a crime, and indeed unlimited polygamy has the fullest sanction of the law. But inasmuch as the fundamental Christian ethical principles of trusteeship, of humanity and of impartial, incorrupt justice inform the whole spirit of government, we may claim that in a broad sense the Government of India is a Christian Government. The school of thought which emphasizes trusteeship is not opposed to Hindu participation in government. On the contrary, it welcomes such participation and would gladly increase it more rapidly, but only on one condition: that the members of the Hindu upper classes who participate acquire a sense of trusteeship for the vast inarticulate masses of the people of India and genuinely try to act on the elementary ethical principles which have been mentioned.

That this is quite possible for Hindus is proved by numerous individual cases, and in the long run it might be possible to build up a body of Hindu administrators capable of really impartial and incorrupt government. But this

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school of thought cannot blind itself to the plain facts:

(a) That the cruel principle of caste, which is the root principle of the whole structure of Hindu society, is the very antithesis of impartial justice.

(b) That, however much *individuals* may have advanced, the Hindu intelligentsia as a whole are frankly corrupt, their public opinion commonly regarding bribery and nepotism as natural and right.

(c) That improvement of this public opinion can only come very gradually—the difficulties arising from the fierce struggle for existence caused by the over-population of India, from the customs of the Hindu joint family system (saddling officials with the upkeep of numerous indigent relatives) and from the overwhelming importance of the family in Oriental life.

(d) That even when the individual Hindu (or Muslim) does in fact achieve impartiality, his countrymen simply do not believe in it.

(e) That there are still rampant in Hinduism a whole host of horrors and evils, such as brothel-temples and child-marriage, which could never be eliminated under self-government; and

(f) Last, but not least, that until Hinduism can win the confidence of the great Muslim minority of 80,000,000, with its fighting spirit and its traditions of seven centuries of rule in India

before British power arose, that minority will not tolerate a Hindu oligarchy, but will fight, and those who know India can form some conception, from the normal horrors of Indian rioting, its bloodshed, rape and arson, with what carnage that civil war would be waged in the merciless East.

This school of thought, then, which includes the vast bulk of those who really know India, favours the continued increasing association of suitable Indians with Englishmen in the government of India, both in the Provinces and at the centre, but as regards the fundamentals of government would retain in the last resort : (1) British control in India both in the Provinces and at the centre ; (2) British supervision in London ; and (3) as a necessary consequence, the continued government of India on Christian principles. This school of thought is not willing to hand over either (1) or (2) to Indians until there is a guarantee that the Indians to whom these powers are handed over will exercise them incorruptly, impartially, and humanely, or until those who would suffer by their ill-use can protect themselves.

This school of thought is not wedded to the *status quo*. It is in fact anxious to replace diarchy in many Provinces and to allow a greater variety and elasticity of development in the various Provinces. It looks forward to ultimate "self-government" in India, but it believes that this can be achieved only by a long and painstaking effort that will give the

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masses as well as the classes a share in the government and means of protecting their interests, and will educate a far larger proportion of the intelligentsia in the spirit of trusteeship.

CHAPTER III

THE DREAM OF "SELF-GOVERNMENT"

"Those of us who have been working all our lives for the Indian peasantry view with dismay this betrayal of their interests in the name of democracy."

SIR MICHAEL O'DWYER, *India as I knew it*, p. 58

THE school of thought which favours early "self-government" has a very different background. It is little apprehensive either of external subjection or of internal chaos in India. It fixes its gaze on the political institutions of the West, rather than on the conditions in India. It believes, though upon scanty evidence, that these institutions themselves can create anywhere the spirit of freedom and fairness which animates them among Nordic peoples. It believes that the Indian intelligentsia are the "natural" leaders of India, but that "self-government" is essential to their self-respect, and that once they have attained this they will set themselves not to exploit but to elevate the masses, and to purge Hinduism of its abuses. In argument the exponents of this school criticize the existing system, but they especially found themselves upon the contention that the Indian

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nationalist movement is irresistible, and upon the moral argument that our promise of "self-government" to India is a promise to the upper classes of India of early and unfettered control. This is the naked reality of the "freedom" which is promised to India—a more complete and slavish subjection to its old oppressors, the Brahmin and the money-lender. This is the dream of "self-government."

To be more precise, this school of thought is in favour of handing over, in effect—with some temporary paper "safeguards"—all British power in India to the tiny minority of Western-educated, urban Hindus, by the method of transferring the power to the democratic machine of legislatures, etc., which we have set up and which only this educated minority can understand and work.¹ When the transfer has been made to the Hindu oligarchy of both the control in India and the London supervision, India, it is said, will have both "self-government" and "Dominion status."

Coming now to the arguments, the criticisms of the existing system may be divided into three groups, according to their source:

¹ Only a small fraction (3 per cent.) of the illiterate millions have been enfranchised, and the farce by which that fraction votes is described in the *Simon Report*. In vol. 1, p. 135, of that Report there is a specimen ballot paper, in which opposite the name of each candidate there is a picture of some common object such as a bicycle, an umbrella, or a tree, and the illiterate voter places his cross or thumb impression opposite, not the name, which he cannot read and may never have heard of, but the umbrella or tree which he has been told by the educated represents the candidate for whom he should vote!

SYMPATHY WITH PEASANTRY 11

(1) *English* criticisms of the existing regime commonly dwell on the cumbrousness of the machinery of justice, and on the preoccupation of Government with "politics." Neither criticism constitutes an argument for early Indian control. Litigation is India's chief amusement, and rights of appeal are highly valued. The result is bound to be cumbrous justice, but it is not in human nature to expect its improvement from the Hindu intelligentsia, so many of whom are lawyers. Nor is it reasonable to expect that Government would concern itself less with "politics" if the politicians had more power.

(2) *Indian* criticisms generally dwell on the "soulless" nature of bureaucratic government, on its tendency to "over-regulate," and on the alleged "alien aloofness" of British officials. The complaint of "over-regulation" is curious, seeing that most of the politicians' favourite schemes would involve still further "regulation" of the peasant, and what is worse, heavy taxation. The complaints of "soullessness" and "aloofness" have a plausible sound in England, but in the East they are recognized as the eternal complaint of the would-be user of personal influence who has not succeeded. In point of fact, the British official generally achieves a closer contact and a warmer sympathy with the peasantry than the Indian official ever attempts. In any case, a certain kind of "aloofness" is forced upon all administrators in India—upon Indians just as much as upon Englishmen—by the fact that Indians

will not believe in the impartiality of a judge or an administrator where actual friendship is involved. Even in the case of mere acquaintanceship, partiality is suspected.

(3) *Both British and Indian* critics sometimes argue that the "alien" character of the Government makes it unnecessarily diffident about reforming social evils which have their roots in religion ; and that Indians have hitherto lacked sufficient power to develop in them a sense of responsibility. Such diffidence about reform does undoubtedly exist, but it only dates from the Morley-Minto reforms, and only became intensified as a result of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. It is hardly an argument for further "reforms." The implied suggestion that a Hindu Government would be more active in reforming finds no support in the annals of municipal government, where there has often been complete Hindu control, or from experience of Hindu power either in British India or in the Indian States. It is a suggestion which is found most convincing by those who have no conception of the *vis inertiae* of Oriental fatalism. Modern reform movements in Hinduism ¹ have been the fruit of European criticism and of contact with Christian standards, not of any inherent self-reforming tendency in Brahminism. The second argument is sheer nonsense. Indians have wielded enormous powers in the Provinces, but their general irresponsibility, with some notable exceptions, has

¹ Not excepting the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj themselves.

been very disappointing. Responsibility in the larger sense of responsibility to an electorate cannot exist until an intelligent electorate exists. Indians will continue to shirk responsibility and to fail disastrously in Provincial and municipal administration, and for the same moral reasons, until such time as a system of moral education is built up in India, beginning with the schools, and produces a generation of incorrupt and public-spirited politicians.

Fairly weighed, it is not an impressive list of criticisms. Fortunate indeed is the Government of any country to which no more serious objection can be taken. It is not, however, mainly on this criticism that the case for "self-government" rests, but on two facts, namely, the nationalist movement and certain promises. These must now be considered.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

"An educated class has been created which is wholly divorced in mental outlook from the vast mass of the people."

LORD RONALDSHAY (now Lord Zetland), *The Heart of Aryavarta*, p. 71.

THE two facts upon which the real case—such as it is—for Indian "self-government" rests are: (1) the growth of the nationalist movement; and (2) a series of Royal and other promises of eventual "self-government" for India. Upon the first is grounded an argument of expediency, upon the second a moral argument. The present chapter will be devoted to the first.

When we forget its origin in propaganda and rupees, the superficial facts of the nationalist movement in India have a certain undeniable impressiveness. Even allowing for the rupees, the sustained insistence of a large majority of educated and articulate Hindu opinion upon the demand for "self-government" and "Dominion status" cannot be dismissed as without significance. But significant of what? To those who are unfamiliar with the East, or

have been denied, for whatever reason, an insight into the workings of the Oriental mind, the matter is quite simple. The demand is due, they think, to the spread of ordinary European nationalism to the East. Such persons, not comprehending the almost exclusive predominance of caste, religious and family feelings in Eastern minds, whether educated or not, imagine that it is possible for "nationalism" to produce in Indian minds a feeling about India akin to the feelings of, say, a Frenchman about France. They accordingly argue somewhat in the following strain.

India, they emphasize, has been subjected to active Western education on a large scale for the better part of a century. This education, they observe, has included the political philosophy of a free people and has engendered in the Western-educated Indian a passionate longing for political "freedom," a natural aspiration that his native land should throw off the fetters of an alien servitude and assume her rightful position in the company of free nations. Furthermore, it is argued, this Indian nationalist movement is part of a great awakening of Asia. Like the nationalist movements of China, Persia and Turkey, it is big with promise of great developments, in which Asia, ancient mother of the oldest civilizations of the world, will take back the torch of learning and progress from the hands of the West and worthily bear it onwards. Far from being a movement confined to the Western-educated minorities of

the East, they insist that its larger ideals of freedom and self-respect are capable of comprehension by the most lowly, and in India, where individual copies of vernacular newspapers penetrate occasionally to even remote villages, who can say what endorsement and support the great movement may not have evoked in the silent, inscrutable masses of the people? Surely then, they submit, it is not merely statesmanship, but the veriest common sense not to oppose this great movement, which is the direct and inevitable result of our own example, system of education and general influence upon these people, but to help it and guide it into wise channels. In any case, they conclude, the movement has now reached such proportions that it cannot be coerced, and public opinion at home would not consent to its coercion.

Now this line of thought cannot be dismissed off-hand as mere nonsense. It undoubtedly contains at least an element of truth. Nevertheless, it does not follow that Eastern nationalism really resembles its Western namesake *in the least*. In fact, the normal content of the Eastern mind quite clearly forbids that it should. Nationalism cannot possibly take in an Eastern mind the position which it often takes in Western minds, for the simple reason that in Eastern minds there is not, so to speak, room for it, after the overwhelming prior claims of religion, caste and family. To emphasize everything is to emphasize nothing, and these

already receive in the East an amount of emphasis that Western minds can but dimly realize. All that can be said is that nationalism does make some appeal, even in a diversified sub-continent like India, and as it happens, there is a very obvious and almost universal Oriental characteristic that entirely explains the appeal.

From Constantinople to China a peculiar and special value is attached to personal dignity, and a value of a kind that is radically though subtly different from the corresponding values of the West. The fierce dignity and readiness to take offence of the Arab, the careful preservation of *izzat* of the Indian, the Chinese fear of "losing face," are but a few illustrations of a widespread and in its way a very deep attitude. The difference from Occidental values is too subtle for accurate expression in words, but it is felt by every traveller of any sensitiveness in the East. Perhaps as good an illustration as any is the contrast between an Englishman's special fear of looking ridiculous and the Oriental's special fear of being scored off. The Englishman who is scored off is not thereby made to feel particularly ridiculous, and he would far rather be scored off than made to look a fool in public; but the Oriental, who minds less about looking a fool, dreads being scored off. In a word, the Englishman dreads ridicule; the Oriental dreads contempt. But such verbal expressions do not really convey the whole difference accurately. Suffice it to say

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that a special sense of dignity and fear of contempt are a very deep and real element in the Oriental mind. But it must also be observed that they occupy a less and less important position as we descend the social scale of Oriental life. To be badly scored off in public by an equal without a chance to retaliate would annoy a coolie. It might conceivably kill a Brahmin.

. It is this peculiar sense of dignity that is, more than anything else, behind the nationalist movement in India. Western education has not inspired in the Indian either respect or esteem for the West, but it has inspired the liveliest sense of present inferiority, and worst of all, a sense of being scored off. The educated Indian is not, as a rule, grateful for Western education, but he feels—mistakenly, for he has more power than he realizes—that the West has scored off him by excluding him from the control of his own country. It is a question of *izzat*. In a word, his nationalism is not *primarily* love of country, but love of racial, caste and personal prestige. To quote the *Simon Report*:

“We have indicated the strictly confined range within which the flow of political consciousness manifests itself; within those limits there are many cross-currents. But what is the general direction of the stream? We should say without hesitation that, with all its variations of expression and intensity, the political sentiment which is most widespread among all

educated Indians is the expression of a demand for equality with Europeans and a resentment against any suspicion of differential treatment. The attitude the Indian takes up on a given matter is largely governed by considerations of his self-respect. It is a great deal more than a personal feeling; it is the claim of the East for due recognition of status. . . . While the experienced Indian member of the Services will admit the benefits of the British Raj and realize the difficulties in the way of complete self-government; while the member of a minority community, putting the safety of his community first, will stipulate for safeguards; and while the moderate may look askance at extremist methods which he will not openly denounce; all alike are in sympathy with the demand for equal status with the European and proclaim their belief in self-determination for India."

It is impossible not to feel the deepest sympathy with this very natural, very human, desire. But three things must be said. In the first place, by its very nature it is a desire the force of which varies with the education and existing status of those who feel it. The Princes do not as a rule appear to feel it, for their semi-royal status is already in a sense above that of the ordinary European in India. And for an opposite reason the peasantry do not feel it, for to them the European, although, when drawn from the English land-owning class he may be nearer to them than their own urban compatriots, is still a being of another world, almost

incomprehensible and far above all the gradations of status in their world. Nor are such of the peasants as have sensed the trend of some recent British policy impressed with the advantages of raising the status of, and conferring more power on, the priests and money-lenders—the politically minded class whose existing status is now exalted at their expense, and who are most resolute in denying equality of social status to the lower castes and the outcastes.

In the second place, this inherent restriction of the nationalist movement to the tiny educated minority robs the argument, derived from its rapid growth among that minority, of all moral impressiveness. *Our duty as rulers of India is to the people of India as a whole, not to the educated minority.* The moral argument is an argument enjoining infinite tact, politeness and consideration for the feelings of the educated minority, and for continued association of selected members of it in the business of rulership, and it is an argument for nothing else whatever. “The promise of the proclamation by the Queen ‘for the benefit of all our subjects,’” as Sir Reginald Craddock has written¹—

“constitutes a sacred trust for all alike. It includes the intelligentsia and the ignorant, the richest noble and the poorest ryot, the proudest Brahmin and the humblest Sudra. Authorities in this world may have the will to protect and

¹ *The Dilemma in India*, p. 297.

not the power, or the power and not the will. Only the paramount power in India has both, and no section of the people, least of all the poorest and most defenceless, can be handed over to the custody of another unless there is complete certainty that the section to whom it is handed over has the same will and the same power to protect all alike. That is the sacred trust."

Thirdly and finally, this restriction of the nationalist movement to the intelligentsia robs the argument from expediency of its weight. This is no *irresistible* movement of the peoples of India before which British power must bow and abandon its duty. It is a very natural feeling and deserving of sympathy. It is not a juggernaut. If ill-informed persons in England think that it may be, that merely shows that it is essential to educate them. The ignorance of democracies is ever their weakness in governing Empires, but a wise statesman will make it his aim not to humour the whims, but to educate the mind of an Imperial democracy.

CHAPTER V

THE REAL MEANING OF THE PROMISES

"India is a land of minorities. The spirit of toleration, which is only slowly making its way in Western Europe, has made little progress in India."

Simon Report, Vol. II, p. 22.

THERE remains the moral argument based on a long series of promises to India that the ultimate goal of her political evolution shall be "self-government" and "Dominion status." Those promises were succinctly summarized in a leading article in *The Times* on November 1, 1929, as follows:

"For the last ten years—ever since the debates on the Government of India Bill in 1919—there has been no difference in the language held on that subject by Englishmen of every party. Mr. Montagu described it during the Second Reading of the Bill as the opportunity of Indians 'to control their own destinies,' and Sir Donald MacLean spoke on the same occasion of 'the future of India within the circle of the British Dominions.' The Governor-General's own instructions, framed in the same year, set out, as he recalls this morning, the

Royal will and pleasure that 'by the progressive realization of responsible government . . . British India may attain its due place among our Dominions.' The Duke of Connaught, inaugurating the new regime at Delhi two years later, bore a message from the King, which wished for India 'progress to the liberty which my other Dominions enjoy.' Lord Reading, who was at that time Viceroy, was speaking soon afterwards of 'that high destiny which awaits India as a partner in the British Empire.' Lord Olivier, as Secretary of State in 1924, suggested that 'the peoples of India might eventually take their place alongside the other free nations in the British Commonwealth.' Lord Birkenhead himself, following him in the same high office, expressed his desire for 'the progressive realization of responsible government in British India as an integral part of the Empire,' and foreshadowed more precisely 'the precious promise of a Constitution which might bring India on equal terms as an honoured partner into that free community of British Dominions which men knew as the Empire.' Finally, Mr. Baldwin, as Prime Minister, added that 'in the fullness of time we look forward to seeing India in equal partnership with the Dominions.' All these various but essentially consistent definitions of the ultimate goal are no more than repeated in Lord Irwin's statement that 'the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as contemplated in the declaration of 1917, is the attainment of Dominion status.'"

That is a formidable list, yet on examination all these promises, with one doubtful exception,

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contain or imply three limitations: (1) In the first place they refuse to lay down a time limit; (2) in the second place, they make the promise (with one doubtful exception) to "*India*," that is, including the Indian States, *not* to "*British India*" alone; (3) and thirdly, no promise of complete power over all the peoples of India is made to the small educated minority.

(1) The first limitation needs no emphasis. These are promises regarding the *ultimate* goal. There is no promise that that goal can be attained before there is evidence that the educated minority will wield their power impartially and humanely, or before the helpless, illiterate millions have at least educated spokesmen from their own ranks to represent and lead them.

(2) The promises are to *India* as a whole, not to *British India*. At first sight the passage in the Governor-General's instructions may seem an exception, the phrase here being that "by the progressive realization of responsible government . . . *British India* may attain its due place among our Dominions." But the words "our Dominions" are here clearly used, not in the special technical sense of "self-governing Dominions"—an uncertain phrase doubtfully including Southern Rhodesia—but in the ordinary wide sense in which they are commonly used in instructions to Governors and Governors-General throughout the Empire—the sense, in short, that the words "British Dominions" bear in the King's title. This gen-

eral limitation of the promise, however, by which it is to operate only upon India *as a whole*, is merely a common-sense recognition of the plain facts of geography. The Indian States—nearly half of India if Burma obtains separation—interlace with British India in the most intricate manner. Roads, railways, rivers, canals, markets, pilgrimage routes, every sort of human and commercial tie connect the States with British India; and by more than forty treaties and innumerable engagements the Crown is pledged to preserve the peace, and protect the rights, of the States. Were British India to become a Dominion by itself in the sense that Canada is a Dominion, the rights of every single Indian State would be a perpetual potential cause of friction between the new Dominion and the British Government, to say nothing of the friction they would cause between the Provinces of the Dominion if it were a federation. It would be an impossible situation. The limitation of the promise, then, to operation only when at least the major Indian States shall have agreed to enter the new Dominion, is but a recognition of obvious facts. A simple illustration will serve as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the contrary view. If British India were declared a Dominion and elected to leave the Empire and transform itself into a "Union of Soviet Socialist Indian Republics" under Russia, what would be the position of those great Indian States—some of them as large as European countries—which remained

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loyal to the King-Emperor and entitled to his protection, but were entirely surrounded by Soviet territory?

(3) Lastly, a promise to "India" does not mean a promise to a minute fraction of India, however articulate. *A promise to India is a promise to the peoples of India—not to their priests and lawyers and money-lenders only, but to all.* It may not in the event prove possible to safeguard the interests of every minority. British commercial interests, Christians, Parsees and the pathetic millions of semi-savage little people in the forests and backward areas—some of these are certain to suffer terribly; but the great minorities, the 80,000,000 Mohammedans and the 66,000,000 of the Depressed Classes, surely a promise to "India" is meant to hold out something to *them*. Moreover, according to the recent census, the minorities of India now actually outnumber the caste Hindu *majority*. And last but not least, the Hindu peasantry who are a *majority* of the Hindu population—can a promise to "India" ignore *them* and hand *them* over in their millions, like a transaction in cattle, to their immemorial oppressors—the priest and the money-lender? It is inconceivable that a moral argument can be built upon such a basis.

We are bound by our promises, but we are equally bound under high heaven to respect the limitations which are inherent in those promises and which cannot be neglected without committing upon a gigantic scale the

gravest moral wrong. We are bound to give India " Dominion status " when the Princes and the great minorities agree to its implications, and when the vast bulk of the people of India have been adequately safeguarded, but not before. And it is merely common honesty to make it clear to the intelligentsia that the bond will be honoured in the fullness of time, but not until the interests of the masses have been protected, and until the intelligentsia have demonstrated their capacity over a long period to mete out justice between creed and creed, man and man, and to preserve the elementary decencies of civilized government.¹

¹ The larger implications of the main arguments in this and the preceding chapters are discussed, and the *Simon Report* is examined at length, in *New Imperial Ideals*, pp 107-139. The position and future of the Indian States are also discussed (pp. 221-244)

CHAPTER VI

THE HORRORS OF HINDUISM

"The Hindu religion teaches that they are born outcaste because of sins committed in some former life and must remain outcastes until they die."

BISHOP HENRY WHITEHEAD, D.D., *The Outcaste of India and the Gospel of Christ*, p. 5.

"We do not believe in the Hindu religion, nor do we hold it in high esteem.

"We do not desire to keep any close social or political contact with the caste Hindus, who think they are polluted by our mere touch, or even by the casting of our shadows on them, though they endeavour to count us with them so that they may enjoy greater rights at the expense of ours. . . . In the name of humanity and the British sense of justice we beseech you to take such steps as you deem necessary, so that our vast community may no longer be denied the natural rights of the citizen of British Empire and be not left at the mercy of the Hindu tyrants."

Petition of the Untouchable Association of Jullundur to the Simon Commission, 1928.

"There are, I am sorry to say, many temples in our midst in this country which are no better than brothels."—GANDHI.

[Quoted in *Slaves of the Gods*, by Katherine Mayo.]

THE case against early "self-government" for India does not rest merely on the negative ground that the proposal is a product of ignorance and misunderstanding, unsupported by any valid argument. It is based upon the un-

questioned fact that early "self-government" can only mean the tyranny of a Hindu oligarchy ; upon the present unregenerate horrors of Hinduism, and their effect of incapacitating the Hindu intelligentsia *as a whole* for the conduct of government according to the ordinary standards of civilized decency ; and upon the anarchy and civil war that, mainly owing to this incapacity, are the predictable consequences of early "self-government."

The horrors and evils of Hinduism are an integral and very important part of the problem of Indian government, and however repellent the subject may be, it is not possible or right to enter upon a discussion of the general subject without considering how far our conclusions are likely to modify or increase these horrors and evils.

The horrors of Hinduism are as the sands of the seashore innumerable, and those who probe that religion find, beside lofty speculations, terrible religious injunctions to the most appalling crimes, cruelties and bestialities. But from the welter certain major horrors and certain broad effects stand out. The major horrors are : (1) the caste system, with its cruel degradation of the outcastes to a position *lower than that of brute beasts*, whose touch does not corrupt. Outcastes are denied the wells, the temples, the schools, and in South India the roads. In some cases their mere presence pollutes at a distance of 64 feet ! (2) The worship of sex, and a whole train of unmentionable hor-

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rofs which flow from this. (3) The institution of temple-brothels, to which unwanted girl babies are sold—bound for their lives to a life of unspeakable *Eastern* degradation, from which their own religion and the whole organization of Hindu society forbid their escape. (4) The cruel and foolish custom of child marriages, leading inevitably to cohabitation before or immediately after puberty, to racial degeneration on a vast scale, and to unimaginable sufferings and mortality among the child-mothers—a custom which is reinforced by the sanction that parents are *doomed to Hell* who allow a daughter to reach puberty unmarried. And (5) the ban on the remarriage of widows with its rules which frequently ensure that a widow's life shall be a Hell upon earth—and "widow" includes the mites of eight and nine who have been "married" to husbands whom they have never seen, and who have become widows before they could be handed over to them—in the hope that her shaven head, single garment, single meal a day, and other degradations and miseries may drive her to the "glorious" suicide of *sati* ("suttee"). *Sati* is illegal by British-made law, but even now occasional instances come to light, and it is the firm opinion of not a few who know India well that a Hindu Government would not be firm in suppressing it. It is less likely that they themselves would now legalize *thuggee* (the murder of travellers in honour of the goddess Bhawani), ritual murder, or the burying alive of lepers,

but they might in time wink at the use of judicial torture, which to-day is not unknown in some Indian States.

One might name a good many others, such as female infanticide, but these are among the worst. Yet terrible as they are, and terrible as is the prospect of handing over India to the priests and others who live by this system, it is nevertheless questionable whether in the actual sphere of government the more general evils of Hinduism are not worse.

It is an extraordinarily selfish religion, and the holy man who abandons wife and children and devotes himself to the contemplative life of a religious mendicant, receives no popular censure. It is a religion of ruthless cruelty beyond the power of words to describe, and it inevitably breeds cruelty. It has been described as "the ideal religion for a money-lender," and the money-lenders who batten in their thousands on the peasantry (there are 40,000 money-lenders in the Punjab alone) form a respectable proportion of the Hindu intelligentsia. They are among the most devoted adherents of Mr. Gandhi, who himself belongs to their caste.

Lastly, it is a religion in which, as is common throughout the East, "the family is everything, the State nothing." Its practical effect is to inculcate the very reverse of public spirit, for it exalts the claims of the family to a degree that in practice makes it the understood religious duty of a public man on almost every kind of

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occasion to sacrifice the public interest to that of his family.¹ Where it lifts its head at all and issues any wider commands, these are *in practice* limited to the caste, or at best to the Hindu religion itself.

Some reference must here be made to corruption, which the Hindu family system so greatly fosters, and which is not merely demoralizing, but is a constant instrument of injustice and oppression. For Indians, and especially for Hindus, corruption is the bane of official life, but the root of the evil is that there is not in Hinduism the moral force necessary to condemn it. Among Indian subordinates in Government service it is not regarded as reprehensible but as natural, and it is intensified by the Hindu joint family system, which obliges men in receipt of low salaries to maintain numerous workless or work-shy relations. Hitherto it has been kept in check by British traditions applied by English and Indians who have absorbed modern views. With the relaxation of their control and its replacement by the sway of graft-ridden politicians, such corruption, from being a minor evil of life, will become a dominating factor in the lives of all the rural masses, filching unjustly their little savings, a curse poisoning all their scanty happiness almost literally from the cradle to the grave, and perpetually driving them to the desperate remedy, which will then be their only remedy,

¹ This needs some qualification in the case of actual kings, the Hindu conception of kingship being a benevolent one.

of revolt. This evil may not flaunt, as it were, the crimson livery of some of the other evils, but in its all-pervading extent, in its unimaginable sum-total of injustice and human misery among all the peoples of the great sub-continent, it may not unreasonably be ranked with the major horrors and evils of Hinduism.

The Hindu intelligentsia, to whom "self-government" would transfer the trusteeship for all the peoples of India, not only include the high-priests and prime practisers of these horrors and evils, but are bound by the nature of their religion and the structure of Hindu society to accord to these men every honour and influence. Brahmins were all-powerful in the Governments of the Marathas, pulled the really important strings in most of the Moghul Governments and would be absolutely irresistible under *swaraj*. *No juggling with paper "safeguards" or other constitutional machinery can alter the fact that it is mainly to men steeped in these horrors, or who thoroughly approve them, that the real citadel of power in India would pass.* How long they retained it would depend on their success in retaining the British army to crush the revolts against their enormities, or in substituting for it a mercenary foreign-led army. With a British army of some strength they might retain the chief power for several decades before they were overthrown by the Muslims of the north. It is beyond question that the 80,000,000 Muslim minority would not

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peacefully tolerate control by this Hindu intelligentsia. The fighting races are not all Muslim, but within India the balance of martial spirit is so clearly with the Muslims that their eventual domination of at any rate Northern India is certain.

The misery is incalculable that the decade or decades of Hindu control might be expected to bring upon the bulk of the 351,450,689 people of India, who form one-fifth part of mankind; yet even that misery would be as nothing to the subsequent decimation of the population as the great sub-continent sank gradually through civil wars between Muslim and Hindu—which Mr. Gandhi complacently contemplates as continuing until one community is “wiped out”—and between the Provinces and the Princes, into the “Chinese anarchy” from which Great Britain rescued it, giving it unity, peace, good government and justice.

The strictures upon Hinduism which have been passed in these pages are not intended to be a complete picture of that religion. No one who has studied it can deny that it combines with its horrors lofty and fascinating speculations, or that its over-emphasis on the family goes far to render a poor law unnecessary in India, or that its theoretical morality includes many a precept of exalted altruism; but neither is it possible to deny the stark facts of its larger evil side, and those facts are such that either Hinduism itself must undergo a moral transformation, or its victims must be educationally

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and otherwise equipped to resist it, before it can be possible to make out a good moral case for the substitution of the ethical principles of Hinduism for those of Christianity in the government of India.¹

¹ Exception may be taken to the fact that only the Hindu community is here criticized, whereas it is notorious that there are also backward Muslim communities in India. The omission is deliberate. There is no proposal to hand over India as a whole to Muslim rule, but the proposal is being seriously made to place India as a whole under the corrupt and cruel tyranny of a Hindu oligarchy.

CHAPTER VII

THE ONLY ROAD TO SELF-GOVERNMENT

Orthodox (Hindu) opinion has been against all reforms. It has been from time immemorial in favour of human sacrifices. It has been in favour of *suttee*. It has been in favour of infanticide. It has been in favour of baby marriages. I ask you, are you going to truckle to this opinion without examining whether it is reasonable or in consonance with the requirements of modern society? "

SIR HARI SINGH GOUR, *Legislative Assembly Debates*,

September 8, 1928, p. 388.

"You may get the finest constitution that is conceivable dropping upon you from the House of Commons. It will be worthless if there are not men and women fair enough to work that constitution."

GANDHI, *Young India*, September 15, 1927.

[Quoted in *Slaves of the Gods*, by Katherine Mayo, p. 255.]

If it has been established that the elementary Christian decencies must continue for the present to prevail in the Government of India, there can be little hesitation about a choice among the four detailed plans for constitutional change, which have so far been put forward. Three of them are admittedly designed merely as transitional stages to early or comparatively early "self-government," and are therefore but transitional stages to disaster. We may therefore rule out these three, that is to say:

(1) The fantastic scheme of the Round Table Conference for an all-India federation having "responsibility with safeguards" at the centre. The value of paper, "safeguards" may be gauged from the working of the right of appeal in the Irish Free State to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council! As it happens, however, there is no likelihood of Hindu-Muslim agreement, the indispensable pre-requisite of such a constitution; and happily there are signs that the Princes are now realizing in time that for them federation must involve a greatly impaired and truncated sovereignty.

(2) The scheme of the Government of India Despatch, commenting on the *Simon Report* and advocating government "responsive" (i.e. *voluntarily* subject) to Indian control, and largely freed from London control; and

(3) The more reasonable but equally transitional scheme of the *Simon Report* for provincial "self-government," with strengthened control at the centre.

There remains the scheme which was briefly described in Chapter II, and which has the support of the vast majority of those who have had *prolonged* experience of India, for cautious local development and experiment in the various Provinces, and the maintenance of British control at the centre. It is not an heroic or high-sounding scheme, and since its very essence lies in local freedom to develop, it is not susceptible of cut-and-dried exposition. One or

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two general conceptions and policies, however, obviously suggest themselves.

In the first place, the roots of India's troubles are moral evil and the helpless ignorance of the masses, and neither can be removed in any other way than by education. Whatever changes or rearrangements of services take place, one change should be made at once in all the Provinces. Education should be taken back, at least partially, and made very definitely a reserved subject. Special attention should then be devoted, either through a public school system or through some similar system, to moral education and character-forming.

This country, and to no less a degree the Government of India, are committed to the policy of fitting India for self-government. Instead of fondly imagining that it is possible for Orientals or anyone else to jump from, say, the eighth to the twentieth century in a single generation, accomplishing in decades what it has taken Europe whole centuries to evolve; and instead of vainly summoning Round Table Conferences to apply inapplicable American constitutional devices to India, why should not the Government of India set itself to attack cautiously some of the moral obstacles to Indian self-government? Why should it not take over one or two of the Indian universities and try, in connection with a special school or schools, to educate a section of the children of the Hindu intelligentsia in elementary morality, and both them

and a section of the Muslim community in mutual regard. The experiment might fail. On the other hand, it *might* produce some Indian administrators who could really be trusted, the supreme test being trust by *both* the Hindu and Muslim communities.

We are pledged not to attempt to uproot the Hindu religion, and no one suggests that we should. But where that religion oversteps the common bounds of natural law, admitted and approved by all other civilized societies, and launches out into frank barbarity and bestiality, such as is universally condemned and loathed by mankind, it is but the plain duty of those who hold the ultimate power in India to forbid such practices; and the only really effective means of preventing them is in the long run moral education of some kind.

Again, why should not the farce of elections by illiterate voters be dropped, and an attempt be made to provide representation of the bulk of the people by a system of village, district, provincial and all-India *durbars* for them? The idea is not new, but it is worth trying. It might not succeed in developing political consciousness in the peasantry, but it might well place government in possession of valuable links with rural and peasant thought. The rural population is over 90 per cent. of the whole. It would at least provide a system which they would have a *chance* of working, and which would be consonant with Indian traditions and thought. It might also conceivably be made a vehicle for

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establishing some beginnings of Hindu-Muslim concord.

"Self-government" is the ultimate goal, but it can only be attained by removing the disabilities which now prevent it. The greatest of these, as also a principal source of the communal hatred, reside in the moral iniquities of Hinduism. Even had we no other moral right to govern India, our duty to suppress these would be a sufficient charter of government. It will be in no small part by our success or failure to remove these that our stewardship of India will be judged at the bar of history; and their gradual removal or mitigation would be in itself a boon beyond price to the millions of people comprised in what is at once one of the greatest divisions of the human family and one of the most miserable.