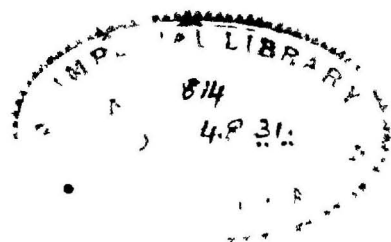


THE INDIAN OUTLOOK

A STUDY IN THE
WAY OF SERVICE

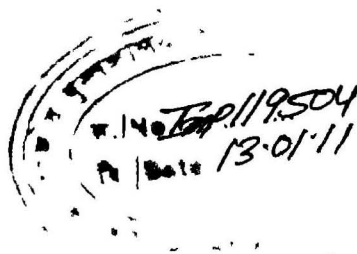
BY
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The Goal of India, etc.



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TO MY WIFE

*without whose encouragement and comradeship,
sure criticism and unfailing resource, this
book would never have been written.*

PREFACE

FIRST, omissions. Moslems constitute nearly one-fifth of the population of India. They occupy an insignificant place in these pages. Women are more than a half of India. Yet in this book very little is said about India's women. The reason in both cases is the same: I had either to take second-hand or to say little. I chose the latter.

Next, acknowledgments. My chief obligation is expressed in the dedication of the book. My second is to Mr Kenneth MacLennan and the Rev. W. Paton, who between them have undertaken the editing of my work. To their skill and sympathy I owe the recasting and, in part, rewriting, of one earlier and two later chapters. I have also to thank Dr J. N. Farquhar, who has given especial help with the chapters which deal with Hinduism, and the Rev. R. L. Pelly for much help on the last three chapters. And then there is my indebtedness to many friends for constant help and criticism: and prayer. My debt to books and writers is for the most part acknowledged in footnotes.

Third, a confession. This book has been written to order. It has in it much more of politics than I would wish, but the times constrain. At certain points it has been difficult to refrain from indignant

comment. For I long that by frank confession of the blemishes that tarnish, my people shall redeem the most glorious pages of British history. But conscience will react more healthily to truthful record of fact than to personal opinions. I have, therefore, sought to reduce comment to a minimum.

Parents are said to love their firstborn best, which is perhaps the reason why I would refer all readers to Chapters II and III of *The Goal of India* for a more satisfying account of Indian religions.

What really matters is that this book may help to call out England's response to India's call for service. Only those can really serve who love. And in the last resort we love because He first loved us. In the twentieth century it still is true that India will be served best by those whose lives have been refashioned by the old, old story of Jesus and His love. If the Son make India free, she shall be free indeed.

W. E. S. H.

ALWAYE, April 1926

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THE INDIAN OUTLOOK

CHAPTER I

THE ESSENTIAL INDIA

I

"It is our chief fault that we are incorrigibly religious." So speaks the greatest of India's living poets. Nothing else than religion can be the first note of a book that seeks to interpret the heart of India to the modern world.

Stand in the corner bastion of Akbar's fort at Allahabad on the great day of the Kumbh Mela, a festival that recurs every twelve years. Below you, strips of sand reach down to the meeting of the sister sacred rivers, the Ganges and the Jumna. The English police officer, who by a strange anachronism is master of the ceremonies in this old-world Hindu festival, will tell you that as you gaze over the wide-stretching sands you are looking at a crowd of three million people. They have come, some of them two thousand miles and more, many of them tramping every mile of it on foot, to wash away their sins¹ at the meeting of the sacred rivers. It is not Wembley Exhibitions but religious meetings that draw crowds

¹ Only it must be said that the sins which weigh upon their consciences are for the most part mere breaches of ceremonial law: the touching of an outcaste or the eating of forbidden food.

in India. And as you thread your way through the devout and courteous masses, in place of merry-go-rounds and shooting galleries you will see holy men who, as a religious discipline, are sitting on beds of spikes or holding their hands above their heads till they shrivel up as stiff as sticks. Or you will be stopped by what forms the climax of the festival, a procession of over a hundred thousand devotees, twenty thousand of them, including a sprinkling of women, destitute of any shred of clothing. These are only a representative few of the two million men and women in India who, as members of ascetic orders, have given themselves to a life of mendicancy and rigour, that they may win salvation.

But religion in India is not a matter for great occasions, or one day in the week, or even for temple services. It is the thread on which a Hindu's daily life is strung. His bath, his meals, his intercourse with wife and friends and servants, are all regulated and sanctified by religious rule. A religious ceremony preceded his conception and accompanies every important occasion or happening thereafter.

Indeed, Hindu religious imagination deifies the entire universe and everything that is in it. It is not only that Indian philosophy, in remorseless monism, affirms that everything that is must be divine. Popular fancy, in a riot of superstitious awe, more fear than reverence, has created lesser deities, numbered by the hundred million—some of them, spiteful and malevolent enough, ready to leap out from wayside tree or stone on the unwary traveller.

There is an all-pervading sense of the divine that

makes one tread gently as one moves about in India. You see it in the fearlessness of beast and bird, their trustful approach to humankind, protected by the reverence for all life which Hinduism teaches. You see it in the big, grave, lustrous eye of the cow that strolls through the front door of the one-roomed cottage to find its home with the family inside. You see it in the bulbul that perches on your bedpost, waiting for the crumb from your morning tray of tea, or the squirrel clambering down the veranda post to the corner of your breakfast table.

This reverence for animal life is probably parent rather than child of the doctrine of Ahimsa (harmlessness), taught with such impassioned fervour by the Buddha. For it is also found in the independent and contemporary sect of Jainism. The distinctively Hindu spirit shrinks sensitively from the taking of animal life. Meat diet is repugnant to a large proportion of Hindus. It would be an interesting study in psychology to trace the history of one particular form of this repugnance—the universal and deep-seated Hindu abhorrence of the killing and eating of the flesh of the cow. Indeed this feeling, along with observance of caste and reverence for Brahmans, is one of the three distinctive marks of Hinduism. It is either cause or symptom of the acutest phase of the Hindu-Moslem schism, which rends India vertically from top to bottom, and makes her political unity so infinitely difficult of realization. There is something to be said for those who hold that this doctrine of Ahimsa, in its inhibition of the taking of life, is one of the greatest specific contributions India has to make

to the progress of humanity. The inexplicable thing about it is its co-existence with a widespread indifference to animal pain.

But the impress of religion goes deeper far than this. (Or is it the effect of climate?) There is a momentous and deeply instinctive divergence in the scale of virtues, East and West. Ask any British public schoolboy what are the two virtues he instinctively admires most. You will practically always get the same answer: truth and courage, straightness and pluck. Speak to him of some one as "a good man with a hot temper" and he will understand. The type will be quite familiar. But speak to him of some one else as "a fine character and a really good man, but a liar whose word cannot be trusted," and he will gape at you in sheer bewilderment. Ask an Indian student what are his two cardinal virtues, and he will at once reply: "Gentleness and patience." With my history class I was finishing the reign of Edward I, and summing up I remarked, as an Englishman would. "I suppose we may say that Edward was a good and devout man, with a hot temper." The class burst into a roar of laughter. They thought I was trying to be amusing. Seeing me grave and surprised, the laugh stopped in an instant, and was succeeded by looks of blank puzzlement. "A good man with a hot temper! What does he mean?" Now both the English and the Indian ideals are excellent, but defective and needing complement. Not that gentleness and patience are by any means universally practised in India. But they are the instinctive admiration of the Indian, and the ideal towards

which character in its upward trend tends to approximate. Out East, one comes to see the sheer power of the gentler virtues—the nobility of gentleness, the strength of patience.

The patience of India is something past all praise. You will see it in any railway station. There is the bewildering mass of individuals, articulated into family or village groups, through which you warily pick your tortuous way lest you should trample on some sleeping form. They are squatting all over the platform, some smoking hookahs and chatting, some playing cards, some asleep. They overflow on to the roads beyond, where by roadside fires you will see them, camped or cooking their evening meal. Others are washing hands and feet and utensils under the platform pump. All are utterly content, prepared to spend one night or two. No bustling impatience, or expressions of tedium. Ignorant of time-tables they turned up at the station when it suited them, to wait till providence should be propitious and send along a train to carry them to their destination. You may spend many years in India, but her patience will be to you each day a source of new wonder.

But there are other grounds for wonder. What is the secret of the evident deference and respect, shown by all he passes, for that grave figure in flowing robe of salmon pink, with his calm smile of other-world serenity? In him you see symbolized (whether he be humbug, or good man and true) India's ideal of holy poverty. He is a sadhu or sannyasi, one of India's two million "holy men." Perhaps in nothing do East and West differ more profoundly than in the

place assigned to wealth. To us it is almost incomprehensible, but it is none the less plain fact, that the amassing of wealth (as distinct from the pressing problem of getting a livelihood and a comfortable competence) simply does not interest the Indian. What his soul worships instinctively, passionately, is poverty. "Not the master of industry with his millions, not the 'Boss of Big Business' has roused India's enthusiasm and thrilled her imagination; this has been done only by the sannyasi, going out from house and home, with no possession but his begging-bowl, to be alone with God."¹ Gandhi's bare feet and single garment are no small part of the hold he has on Indian reverence. The heart of India will draw instinctively to Him who had not where to lay His head.

The average Englishman sometimes finds it difficult really to believe there is anything he needs to learn from India. Let such a one ponder the worth to western civilization of a deep inoculation of India's sheer indifference to wealth, her instinctive admiration of the man whose material wants are small. That way comes freedom and independence and a new dignity of manhood. Then man and things begin to take their proper place. Simplicity and content may lead to a happier and more companionable world than greed and hurry.

Traits of character, now instinctive, do not develop in a day. Hinduism is venerable with an antiquity surpassed only by the faith that had its nursery among Jewish patriarchs. Its power of sheer persistence is sufficient evidence of its vitality. It gave

¹ J. B. Pratt, *India and its Faiths*.

birth to, and then expelled completely from its borders, the great rival faith of Buddhism. It withstood, with losses, it is true, but with vigour unimpaired, the assaults of Islam. No wonder the nationalist of to-day is inclined to regard Hinduism as a sacred heritage to be clung to, apart from all question of its truth or value.

So massive a faith has, of course, left an indelible impress on Indian character. It would be hard to define the seat of authority in Hinduism; but it is committed to the closed revelation of the Vedas and the immutability of ancient social custom. Islam, hitherto its great competitor in India, is similarly bound by the letter of a verbally inspired scripture, completed and closed twelve hundred years ago. The influence of religion in India is thus all against progress. The dead hand of the past lies heavy on the land. Hinduism and Islam, so far from providing any stimulus to progress, contain no reserve for adjustment to changing conditions and modern life. The authority cannot be altered. It must be obeyed or left behind. Moreover, incurable fatalism dogs both religions. Hinduism affirms that not only all that happens to us, but all we do and are, is inexorably fixed for us by our conduct in previous incarnations. Islam attributes all that is or happens to the inscrutable will of an irresponsible omnipotence personified as God. And Hinduism at least provides no spring of hope to nerve to effort or inspire reform. Its golden age is in the past. It teaches that for us to-day there is no escape from the grinding out of an Age (Kalpa) doomed to steady deterioration till the

crash and final abyss. It is futile to seek to alter or improve.

When such religions are left to work out their influence upon a people enervated by climate and temperamentally indisposed to effort, progress can only be achieved by a force violent enough to neutralize religion. Nationalism might appear to be such a force. But in India it is heavily handicapped. Indeed, nowhere is the all-dominating supremacy of the religious motive in India more clearly demonstrated than in the fact that the one man who has ever established a political leadership throughout the peninsula owes his sway chiefly to the profound spiritual impression created by his character.

There is a further influence of religion to be taken into account when assessing the permanent qualities of Indian character - the divorce between religion and ethics. He is a good Hindu who observes the rules of caste and the dictates of religious ceremonial, be his moral character what it may. No Hindu is ever out-casted for theft or lying. The Musalman who recites the creed, keeps the fast, observes the statutory prayer, gives tithes and goes the pilgrimage, can look the world in the face as an irreproachable Moslem though he may break all the last half of the ten commandments. And when the divine incarnations which Hinduism teaches a man to worship are of more than questionable morals, and when sensual delights figure large in the Moslem paradise, you are confronted by problems as grave and delicate as those which face reformers in any country.

II

There is truth in the oft-repeated saying about the spiritual East and the material West. But it needs heavy qualification. Poverty has brought it about that among the masses in India there is a squalid absorption in the struggle for existence, which makes not horse-racing and the latest murder case but rupees and pice almost the only topic of conversation you will overhear in town bazaar or along country road. Amongst the educated classes there is a corresponding ignoble and unashamed abandonment of any other vocational aim than to secure the post within reach that has the biggest salary attached. Not long ago, at least before the nationalist idealism of recent years, it would have been true to say that, of a hundred persons in Calcutta or Bombay who were devoting themselves to lives of disinterested and self-denying service, ninety would be men and women (mostly missionaries) hailing from the materialist West. The Principal of an Indian college would be hard put to it to name any Hindu student who had gone out to devote his life to a religious mission. The spiritual East has nothing to set beside the thousands of English graduates who enter the sacred ministry.

There is another* most powerful cause making for the passivity of Indian character—climate. And this is a permanent influence that must always be allowed for in any forecasting of the future. Whether it be scorching furnace for half the year in the North Indian plains or Deccan table-land, or hot-house steaminess in Bengal and on the western coast, the result is the

same—lassitude and enervation. And then, always hanging in dread suspense before the village population who are nine-tenths of India, is the possibility of failure of the monsoon and the appalling threat of famine. The grim knowledge that your most careful planning and your utmost industry may be completely unavailing annihilates hope and emasculates effort. Dull listlessness of character is too often the result. The wonder is that, as everywhere, humanity rises superior to its environment and forges new virtues out of its very difficulties. Rabindranath Tagore traces this influence of geography much further. In a striking passage he contrasts what he calls the "walled-cities habit" of the West, where rival cities fight for nature's scant and hardly-won supplies with the "jungle habit" of the East, where there is room for all in the luxuriant hospitality of the boundless forest. Strenuous individualism and companionable content are the types of character respectively produced. Some would press the issue to a conclusion. Recently it has been stated, with what authority is not known, that the average Indian blood pressure is some twenty per cent less than that of the European; and it is argued that this stamps the Indian as a permanently inferior race. It depends upon the standard by which we measure. It may be that Indian sun and rain tend to produce less martial restlessness and vigorous masterfulness than the more bracing climates of the West. But are these necessarily the highest qualities in man, or those most needed in a world which has at last discovered to what paralysis and desolation war and competition lead? May that race not claim

some useful superiority which, schooled by climate or religion, can contribute to the common whole those gentler qualities of patience and content which may help to build a more neighbourly and reasonable world? West and East are complementary. Each needs each. Do Britain and India find themselves alongside to serve a larger purpose than the Raj?

An Indian, reading the Sermon on the Mount, turned to his teacher with the comment: "Sir, the meek may inherit the earth, but if you tell an Englishman he is meek, he will feel insulted." The nations give some indication of their ideals by the devices of their standards. Those of Europe are often lions and eagles. But lions and eagles do not inherit the earth. To-day you have to pierce to desert fastnesses to find them, whereas the cow and the sheep are everywhere. The meek inherit the earth. Fighting animals have to be destroyed; fighting races have to be restrained.¹ In the world of to-morrow there will be no room for any but the companionable nations who can co-operate.

III

Hinduism is more a spirit and an attitude to life than a system of dogma. So bewilderingly diverse, indeed so mutually destructive, are the host of practices and opinions admitted that it is difficult to obtain even a working definition of the religion. You may be a theist, pantheist, polytheist or monotheist, and still be an orthodox Hindu. Yet Hinduism is the one uniting force that binds together with a real

¹ I owe this illustration to the Rev. A. G. Fraser.

community of sentiment and spirit races perhaps more diverse than those that people the continent of Europe. For with all the wide variety of types found in the peninsula there is something as subtle as it is distinctive, that makes them unmistakably one. Hinduism, by its dominance, fixes a cultural type, which it imposes even on Musalman and Parsee, marking off the Indian decisively from every other race. It would be easier far to mistake a Russian for an Englishman than an Indian for a Chinese or Arab.

And yet they are a picturesquely diverse and motley crowd : speaking a dozen major languages and some scores of lesser dialects, with English as their only common medium of communication. You may see them on the railway platform in Delhi or Calcutta or Bombay : rollicking Punjabis, with plus fours of baggy cotton tapering to the ankles ; tall Sikhs with martial whiskers, and uncut hair tucked away in a knot under their turbans ; sturdy Mahrattas, with the front half of the head clean shaven ; emotional Bengalis, with green or blue shawls thrown loosely across their shoulders ; smart Rajputs, with immense pink or yellow pugarees, and white cotton Jodhpur breeches ; fair-skinned, sometimes blue-eyed, graceful Kashmiris ; oval-faced Tamils, with Shiva's trident painted on their foreheads ; intellectual Malayalis, in pure flowing white.

Yes, diversity of race is an immensely important factor to be taken account of when visualizing India. Black Dravidian, white Aryan, yellow Mongol are inextricably mingled in Indian blood. And to-day, Punjabi, Tamil, and Bengali are unmistakably distinct

racess, with an immensity of clannish feeling. But the differences can be altogether over-stressed. If the writer may quote from personal experience, having through twenty years of intimacy come pretty close to Hindustani and Bengali in the North, he felt at once entirely at home among the Malayalis in the extremest South. The diversity of India's races is often a good deal over-emphasized.

Hinduism unites. But it also divides by the cruellest bars of iron-exclusiveness ever devised by wit of man.

You are passing along a country road in Travancore, under an avenue of feathery-foliaged palms. On either side stretch fields of emerald green paddy, which covers and conceals the sheets of water in which it grows. A string of labourers in single file—for most of their walking has to be done on the narrow mud ridges that divide the water of the rice fields—approaches from the opposite direction. Suddenly, about a hundred feet away from you, the whole line swings off, making a wide detour, knee-deep, through the water of the paddy fields, and rejoins the road, having completed the semi-circle, about a hundred paces to your rear. They are untouchables, some of the sixty millions of human beings whom the Hindu caste system consigns to unspeakable and irremediable degradation.

Caste splits Hindu society horizontally into "about three thousand hereditary groups, each internally bound together by rules of ceremonial purity, and externally separated by the same rules from all other groups."¹ Passage from one caste to another is for

¹ V. A. Smith, *Oxford History of India*, p. 34.

ever barred. The barriers are diet and marriage, and sometimes touch. You may neither eat with nor marry one of another caste.¹ If your caste is far enough below that of another man, you may not even touch or come within a certain distance of him. Approach may defile. You summon your Pulaya gardener to give him orders. He stands in front of you with hand over his mouth, lest his breath should defile you. The outcaste is denied ordinary human rights. His cattle and his dogs may use the village well and tank, but not himself. He may not even traverse the streets of the Brahman quarter. Hinduism, for political purposes and communal representation, reckons him a Hindu; yet he may enter no Hindu temple, and no Hindu priest may minister to him. And it is a bar in perpetuity. The untouchable knows that every one of his descendants, down to ten thousand years ahead, will be an untouchable like himself. Could hopelessness impose a more crushing load of inhibition on self-help and uplift?

At the other end of the scale stands the proud Brahman, of priest caste, given a position of hereditary prestige and power such as is accorded to no other privileged class in any country. It is significant of the place religion has in India that king and warrior

¹ You have to go to the Malabar coast to find the *reductio ad absurdum* of these rules. In order to prevent the subdivision of property, the younger sons of a Nambudri Brahman are forbidden to marry a girl of their own caste. They must marry in a lower caste; but would suffer defilement and lose caste if they ate with the sons they thus beget! Indeed, they have to purify themselves each time they leave the wife whom their caste rules compel them to marry.

rank second to the priest. With, until recently, a virtual monopoly of knowledge (no Sudra or low caste man might even read the Vedas or sacred lore) the Brahmans have known well how to adjust themselves to changed conditions so as to consolidate their position in the India of to-day. They occupy a large proportion of subordinate administrative and clerical posts. Only a few follow the priestly calling. This entrenched hereditary aristocracy is one of the most real obstacles to freedom in India of any democratic type.

Caste is indeed the frame of Hinduism. It is fundamentally a social system. It is caste which gives Hinduism its enduring and massive strength, enabling it to combine rigidity of social structure with extreme flexibility of opinion. The peoples of India are not politically minded. Government has seldom been strong. It is caste which has given India its cohesion, its stability, its social ordering, its code of conduct, down the centuries. It serves many of the purposes of a trade union, ensuring the benefits of hereditary skill, apprenticeship and joint action, and avoids many of the evils of competition. It has made a Poor Law system unnecessary in India. Each caste is its own relieving society. It is a most effective organ of public opinion, enforcing its will on all its members with an iron hand.

But if caste is Hinduism's strength, it is also India's weakness. Says Rabindranath Tagore, "The regeneration of the Indian people, to my mind, directly and perhaps solely depends upon the removal of this condition of caste."¹ Caste is destructive of *

¹ C. F. Andrews, *The Renaissance in India*, p. 183.

conscience. The rules of conduct it enforces are for the most part superficial and external. Most Hindus would be far more horrified to discover that they had drunk water from the hands of a low caste man than to be detected in a lie or cheating. Instances are on record where a parent has rather had his child die from drowning than have him rescued by an untouchable.

True, the rules of caste are changing. But only in their most superficial application. The rules are often as ridiculous as they are inconvenient. As Warden of a Hostel at Allahabad I had to provide thirty-seven kitchens for a hundred Hindu students! The conditions of modern travel have necessitated the relaxation of the requirements in regard to food, water and touch, and the withdrawal of the ban upon sea voyages. But there is no sign of any breakdown of the restrictions upon marriage. Even Mr Gandhi, while vehemently attacking untouchability, defends caste. And it is these marriage restrictions that give caste its exclusiveness, its divisiveness, its permanence, and its tyranny.

Caste is the colour bar. The very name for caste, *varna*, means colour. It is an outcome of the desperate attempt of the old Aryan invaders (our own first cousins) to keep themselves white and free from contamination by the dark aborigines. It is exactly the colour feeling of the Englishman in regard to the Asiatic, and it shows itself in the same social exclusiveness and bitter repudiation of intermarriage. "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone."

Caste is not class feeling. Classes in the West are

fluid and have no religious sanction. But in India religion reinforces and sanctifies caste. Caste is flat and deliberate denial of the brotherhood of man. It humiliates one-sixth of the people of India in unspeakable degradation. It attributes class differences to a permanent and hereditary difference of soul. Planting its heel on the submerged classes, it says to them: "You shall not rise."

How are unity and the corporate feeling essential to a body politic to come to a nation split into three thousand hereditary watertight compartments? Can it be right to hand over the submerged sixth to the government of the literary classes, who are chiefly recruited from those same high castes who down the ages have been their oppressors? These are some of the problems caste raises for the patriotic nationalist.

IV

If Hindu caste divides India horizontally into thousands of isolated strata, Islam has caused a vertical division that has rent the entire fabric of society throughout the peninsula into two unequal parts. Entering India through the passes of Afghanistan in a series of invasions covering centuries, first as raiders, then as rulers and colonists, the Musalmans have become a permanently settled element in the country. Hardy mountaineers of Arab, Aryan and Mongol origin, they swooped upon the milder Hindu population of the rich Gangetic plain, and by forced conversions, intermarriage, persuasion and

natural propagation, have grown to a community seventy million strong. India is now easily the largest Mohammedan power in the world. No sovereign has so many Musalman subjects as King George. Though largely Indianized by blood, climate and contact, they yet remain an absolutely separate entity. And again, because they are Indian, the call of religion seems louder to them than the call of country. "I am a Moslem first and an Indian afterwards," said Mohammed Ali at the National Congress in 1923. In the realm of sentiment, the Indian Mohammedan has always tended to be more conscious of his kinship with his fellow-Moslems of other lands than with his Hindu fellow-countrymen. It is impossible to exaggerate the seriousness of the Hindu-Moslem cleavage as a permanent factor militating against Indian unity. It is not only alienation in sympathy; it is an hostility bred partly of pride, partly of fear. The Indian Moslem is soaked in the proud traditions of a ruling caste: till the advent of the British Raj, the Musalman had never been in India save as ruler. But now they are in a minority—one-fifth of the whole population. They have lost their military supremacy. Indeed it had already gone, to Mahratta and Sikh, before ever the English came to power. Until recently they have tended to regard the British Raj as their only protection from perpetual servitude under Hindu rule. But of this more anon.

Cleavage apart, the Musalman has left another deep mark on India. For seven centuries now the Hindus have been a subject race. By the Moham-

medans they were conquered. But after the early days of conquest the Musalman dominion ceased to be a case of foreign rule. The rulers freely intermarried with their subjects. By blood and cultural assimilation the Musalmans became so naturalized in the country that their government was rather a case of Indians ruling Indians. None the less it meant political subjection for the Hindus; though the virtual independence of powerful Hindu States, and the increasing participation of Hindu officials in the Mogul administration, was rapidly transforming titular Moslem into actual Hindu rule. The growth of British power meant renewed Hindu subjection. The impact on Indian psychology has not been healthy. It is not good for the virility of any people to be too long in political subjection. "Subjection for a long time to a foreign yoke is one of the most potent causes of national deterioration."¹

Perhaps nothing so embitters the patriotic Indian as the "slave mentality" of which he is keenly conscious, but which he charges against the domination of his foreign rulers.

V

But this political self-consciousness has, until quite recently, been confined to that tiny fragment of India's vast population which has been cognizant of and wishful to take its part in public affairs. The essential India is not to be found in towns and schools. It is the three hundred millions, almost, who live in

¹ Seeley, *Expansion of England*, p 242.

villages. If you would visualize India, remember all the time that eighty-five per cent of her people are field workers, digging, planting, tending, reaping the things that God makes to grow. As you cross from one side of India to the other, whirled by express train for two days and two nights across boundless plains, what you see is not desert. Those vast expanses hum with life and industry. But even each two hundred miles, each six hours' run, does not bring you to a city. It is villages, villages, villages all the way. You watch the bullock-cart creaking along roads of hardened mud; the ploughman, shoulders, arms, legs and feet all brown and bare, driving his shallow wooden blade behind a pair of oxen; another pair of bullocks, ceaselessly, uncomplainingly tramping round and round as they work the Persian wheel that lifts the water from the well below; a string of men and women, knee deep in mud and water, humming some chant in minor key as they bend double over the rice-plants they are thinning out; a boy perched aloft in a tree on a tiny platform under a straw canopy, pipe in mouth, to drive the birds from the surrounding crops; half a dozen ugly buffalo, lazily recumbent in the muddy pool that covers all but nostrils, eyes and horns; imps of five and six, fearless, with stick in hand, in charge of a herd of cattle, goats or pigs, driven with great thuds and whacks in front of them; women with even full-arm stroke pounding and husking rice in solid wooden bins—and you remember that this is the essential India. You throw yourself back in thought to the days of Akbar, and Alexander, and Buddha (and centuries beyond), and you know that

they gazed on the very scenes you see, unchanged. Armies have passed, kings have come and gone, empires have risen and fallen, but village India persists, immutable, illiterate and scarcely aware. It is the patriarchal ages lived before your very eyes in this twentieth Christian century. What is the key to this India ?

Search down the millenniums of India's history for all that is characteristically Indian, whether in achievement or personality, and you will find it to be religious. Religion is the hall-mark of the truly Indian spirit. To India a quarter of the men and women living in the world to-day owe their religion ; for both Hinduism and Buddhism had their birth in India. It is her glory that she is spiritual mother of one-fourth of the human race. Among the great literatures of the world, Sanskrit is perhaps the most ancient ; and most of it is religious literature. The hymns of the Vedas¹ are the praises of the gods. India's two monumental epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, are the chronicle of the two principal incarnations of the Deity. Intellectually India ranks with Greece, a queen among the nations ; but India's record of intellectual culture stretches unbroken over a period twice as long as that of Greece.

No other country can exhibit such tireless search into the mystery of the universe and the problems of existence. Never has religion been served by more daring metaphysics or more remorseless logic. Still is thought made dizzy as it strives to visualize the bold abstractions of those hermit thinkers in their old-

¹ The sacred scriptures of the Hindus.

world forest retreats, with their twin conceptions of *Brahma* and *maya* (illusion). "*Brahma* is the one without a second," the world soul, the only real existence. Nothing else than *Brahma* is or ever can be. This world soul is a great colourless IT, a whole without parts, a genus without species, a noun without adjectives; at once smaller than the point of a needle and vaster than all space. It is identical with everything that really is. For all is one and indistinguishable—"Thou art That." Emancipation comes when a man can, with real perception, make the tremendous assertion, "I am *Brahma*." We (and not only we, but also all the different things about us, with all their rich variety) only "seem" to have any existence as separate entities because we are the victims of a gigantic Fraud or Hallucination. But this Hallucination which causes everything to seem what it seems to be, does not itself exist at all. It is a bad dream never dreamt by any one, a universal delusion which deludes nobody, because the only thing that exists, the almighty IT, can never be deluded.

This philosophy unconsciously pervades all classes in India. Even the countryman is affected by its wistful dreaminess; while any student will split philosophy with you for hours. But remember, all these soaring speculations have a high and practical aim, and that a religious one. The aim is *moksha*, the salvation of the individual, his merging with the Infinite. Sage, philosopher, poet and teacher, artist and builder, all who down the centuries appear in India's roll of fame, all have been dedicated to religion. India's chief claim to intellectual pre-eminence is as

a philosopher nation; and from start to finish her philosophy is religious—the quest for God.

Essential India! Does that include the tiny English colony which now administers there?

At least the last two hundred years have left so deep an impress on India as must profoundly alter and affect all her future history. Under the British Raj India has grown to an entirely new consciousness of national unity. The ideal and the possibility of national self-realization are Britain's gift to her. English education has introduced her to the whole world of modern culture and scientific achievement. Internal unity has been secured by a network of communications, which have also shown her how to abate and almost neutralize the horrors of recurrent famines. The door has been opened for a larger use of her natural resources, and she is already one of the eight great industrial nations of the world. Vast areas of desert have become a fruitful field for the feeding and employment of her growing millions. She has enjoyed decades of unprecedented justice, peace and order. New ideals have come to her of the uplift of the oppressed, a fuller life for women, and better health for all. Have these come to stay? Are they now part of the essential India?

CHAPTER II

SEVEN FATEFUL YEARS

1919-1925

THE most potent forces in the making of a nation's character and destiny are seldom things that can be catalogued in a column of dates. Of no country is this more true than of India. History tends to seem an irrelevance to the student of the changeless East. Life there seems a deep, unmoved by the happenings of a moment or a century. But the fact is that to-day the changeless East is changing at a pace of almost terrifying rapidity. She has been caught midstream in the turmoil of the nations. And it is possible to name the series of events which have rudely awakened India from the sleep of centuries.

The first disturbing influence was the momentous decision announced in Macaulay's Minute of 1835, by which it was decreed that English was to be the medium of India's education. That decree meant the throwing down of the barriers which for ages had separated East and West, and the pouring of western civilization down all the channels of Indian life. It was the birth of a new India.

Upheaval followed. The shock was first felt in religion: Hinduism busily addressed itself to reform. Next came the turn of politics. In a continent still

hardly emerged from patriarchal conditions, the ideas of Burke and Mill, of Gladstone and of Morley, were revolutionary. The cup of constitutional freedom has been put by us to India's lips. She has drunk full draught and has come to share the ideals of her instructress. She demands to take at a single leap the centuries of constitutional progress in Europe. Nothing but her own experience will make her refuse that democracy which is the accepted form of progressive government in the West.

Macaulay nobly conceived the future :

It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown our system ; that by good government we may educate our subjects into capacity for better government ; that having become instructed in European knowledge, they may in some future age demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come, I know not. But never will I attempt to avert or retard it—whenever it comes it will be the proudest day in England's History.

That day is upon us now.

The second influence is the effect of world happenings beyond England's or India's control. Chief among these—indeed quite alone in its tense world significance—was the defeat of Russia by Japan in 1905. The whole East thrilled. A door of unimaginable hope had opened. Then an Asiatic people could aspire to an equal place in the commonwealth of nations ! Living in India, one felt what was never uttered. It was the birthday of Indian national aspiration.

Rather less than a decade later came the cataclysm of 1914, itself symptom, and in turn immense reinforcement, of the new tide of militant nationalism which threatens to engulf civilization. The reaction of western nationalism is the most powerful force in Indian politics to-day. But we are anticipating.

The third and most immediate influence has been the impact of our own administration: on the one hand, the infection of our British enthusiasm for national independence and democratic institutions, and on the other, a series of critical decisions which have stirred Indian sentiment to its bottom depths.

It is our aim in this chapter to understand the Indian view of those recent events which have so deeply stirred that country and which have unhappily created such a wide chasm between Britain and India. The Bengal partition, the Rowlatt Act, Amritsar, Kenya, and Guru-ka-Bagh are names that have a sinister sound even in British ears. But only as we learn to interpret these things can we understand where the issues between the two peoples really lie. Whether or not we agree with the Indian, unless we clearly apprehend his point of view true co-operation between Britain and India is impossible.

The comfortable and diplomatic thing would be airily to dismiss the bitter controversies which have bitten so deeply into the Indian mind. But the man who does so when trying to explain India to-day is fool or knave, or perhaps only coward. If England is to understand modern India, it is simply essential that she shall know how Indians feel about these things. An Ex-Secretary of State for India writes:

The one characteristically salient and crucial event in modern Indian history was the slaughter at the Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar. It is idle to protest that this unhappy event ought to be forgotten, and that it is mischievous to be continually stirring up bad blood by recalling it. It was a crucial historic event, because, more than anything else, its particular quality and the manner in which the British nation still appears to Indian opinion to continue to judge of it, has struck the imagination of all India as characteristic.

Anyone who has shared an educated Indian's confidence knows that these are the open sores that embitter and estrange. And the dominating factor confronting British statesmanship to-day in India is nothing else than estrangement and loss of confidence.

I

This estrangement has its root in a series of events beginning with the partition of Bengal in 1905.

In Bengal Lord Curzon was faced by a problem that had long called for settlement. The province simply had to be divided. A population of eighty million was too impossibly large for sound administration. The unimaginative official mind conceived the simple procedure of drawing a straight line down the middle to divide it into equal parts. Moreover, this would give the neglected and backward Mohammedan community a fair innings in at least one of the two new provinces. But to do so meant to cut in two the most defined, self-conscious and closely knit community in the Indian continent, and by certain readjustments

of boundaries and populations to reduce it to something like political impotence in either province. The whole force of racial feeling in Bengal rebelled against this national dichotomy. For once Lord Curzon of the strong hand forgot imagination, forgot that to override sentiment is never good administration. In the teeth of unprecedented public protest the division was forced through. The Indian felt that an affront had been offered to national sentiment which he could not forget. It was almost as though, on grounds of administrative efficiency, the United Kingdom were redistributed, Yorkshire and Lancashire with the four northern counties being put into Scotland with Edinburgh as their capital. The undoing of the partition a few years later and the creation of three provinces, less convenient but more true to racial boundaries, came too late. The Bengal partition had already given anti-British bitterness to the rising tide of Indian nationalism.

Sedition followed. First, the attempted boycott of British goods. And then a new monster reared its head in India: a conspiracy of assassination, armed with the revolver and bombs of western science. The network of subterranean plottings spread from Bengal throughout Northern India, finding its twin focus among the Mahratta Brahmans of Bombay. The breeding grounds of the new disease were the educated and half-educated middle classes of Bengal: highly strung, emotional, with the pressing economic stimulus of probable unemployment. At first English officials, later Indian subordinates, especially in the Police, were the target for assassination. The student class

throughout India seethed with sedition and murderous conspiracy ; and one year later every month or two saw fresh assassinations.

Grave, desperate, appalling—and yet this was all the fungus outgrowth on a healthy spirit of patriotic nationalism that was slowly finding shape. *Swadeshi* (one's own country) was the keyword of the new movement ; *Bande Materam* (Hail Motherland) its trysting song. It was in contradistinction to their foreign rulers that the many tribes of India became conscious of their unity, and Indian national sentiment began to form. This rising tide of new patriotism found expression in an artistic and literary renaissance.

Even Britain could hardly fail to feel an instinctive sympathy for that same patriotism in others which she so valued in her own people. The Morley-Minto reforms (1909) were the result, admitting Indians for the first time to the highest executive councils both in England and India. But, partly, they were unsatisfying to India ; partly, they came too late. Conspiracy and assassination steadily gained ground.

Then in 1914 came the crash of war. For a moment everything trembled in the balance. Which way would India go ? Had she wished, she might have added immeasurably to our difficulties. But anti-British feeling was so far confined to the intelligentsia. The conservatism of the masses, their sense of security under British justice, and the excellence of the allied propaganda, saved the situation. India's conscience was on our side. Moreover, she believed England's might to be invincible and her leaders expected better

things from democratic Britain than from autocratic Germany.

The war lifted Indian political hope and expectation to an immensely higher level. The allied propaganda of "self-determination," "the championship of weaker nations," and "the war for freedom" raised great anticipations. In President Wilson's noble and eloquent idealism, the deep but voiceless sentiments of subject India seemed at last to find articulate expression. British official endorsement of the same wrought expectation to fever pitch.

England responded. The prophet voice of Wilson had helped to recall her to the ideal of her mission in India, which had been outlined for her a century before by some of her ablest servants and to which she was committed by all her own invincible pursuit of freedom, but from which her Indian policy had long been drifting. From his place in the House of Commons on August 20th, 1917, the Secretary of State for India made this solemn declaration :

The policy of His Majesty's Government . . . is that of 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.

A Report presented to Parliament in 1918 used brave language. It dared to say :

We take these words to be the most momentous utterance ever made in India's chequered history.

They pledge the British government in clearest terms to the adoption of a new policy towards three hundred millions of people. The policy, so far as Western communities are concerned, is an old and tried one. Englishmen believe in responsible government as the best form of government they know; and now, in response to requests from India, they have promised to extend it to India under the conditions set out in the announcement.

It is a noble ideal sanely conceived, worthy of the best in all our history. In it the British people set their hands to the most gigantic task ever attempted by any race in history: the lifting of three hundred millions of a medley of subject races into unity and free membership of the world's sisterhood of nations. The most glorious chapter in all our annals opened before us. Difficulties? Yes, stupendous. Uncertainties? Yes, grave. But an enterprise to which all our past both challenged and fitted us. a challenge to the greatness that is greater than rule and empire, even the greatness of service.

The war had created an agonizing problem for every devout Musalman in India: the dilemma between religious and political allegiance. Obedience to the call of his sovereign meant war against the head of his religion. The urgency of the dilemma was only in part abated by the pronouncement of the ecclesiastical authorities of Islam in India that this was not a *jihad* (sacred war). Musalman opinion in India became increasingly restive as it was realized that on the battle-fields of Palestine and Mesopotamia the temporal power of the sacred Caliph was being over-

thrown by Indian Musalmans in league with "infidels," whether English or Hindu. Towards the end of the war, when it became imperative to raise additional forces in India, which should liberate British troops in the Near East for the crucial battle-fields of France, Mr Lloyd George on the 5th of January 1918 made a speech in which he said :

Nor are we fighting . . . to deprive Turkey of its capital or of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace which are predominantly Turkish in race.

And a few weeks later he asserted that these words were part of a considered statement. Fuller knowledge may reveal that in the Allied Conferences Mr Lloyd George fought hard to make good this commitment, but the actual terms of the Treaty of Sèvres turned out to be a flat violation of the Premier's pledge. Rightly or wrongly, Musalman opinion in India felt it had been betrayed.

The war ended with great expectations on the part both of English and Indians in India. On the one hand Englishmen reckoned that an India who had learned the horrors of modern war, and the crushing costliness of the armaments which would be necessary if she were to be self-dependent for her defence by sea and land, would never wish to stand alone outside the protection afforded by the British empire. And on the other hand, India, who had learned how much she counted in the balance of the nations, who had stood true and helpful to Britain

through the mortal agony of the war, who had signed the peace treaties as an equal member with the Dominions and with independent nations, expected that she would be splendidly rewarded by an equal place in the councils of the empire as a free and self-governing Dominion. For this she was prepared to wait. She knew it might take time. But she counted on being thenceforth treated with the dignity of an equal and with the free trust her faithfulness throughout the war had merited.

II

All these high hopes were dissipated by what can only be described as a lack in peace time of that imagination in statesmanship which had served so well during the war. In less than six months after the armistice, in that same trusty Punjab province which, though containing less than one-twelfth of the population of India, had provided us with almost half our Indian army, and had been true to us to the very last day of fighting, there occurred the horror of Amritsar; and the Gandhi who, till November 11, 1918, had been recruiting for the British Army which he regarded as the champion of world liberty, was preaching non-co-operation and heading revolt against what he now described as the "satanic" British government. What had happened in those six months to work so calamitous a revulsion in the Indian mind?

In one word, the Rowlatt Act, passed within three months of the close of the war. And yet that Act was based on the Report of a Commission as judicial,

as temperate, as fair as could be framed. Towards the end of the war, with a view to the extinction of anarchical crime, government had interned, in scattered villages under police surveillance, several hundreds of suspect revolutionaries. The cases of all interned were investigated by special process, without public trial or lawyer's defence, the reason being that terrorism and assassination of witnesses in previous cases had made it impossible to produce in open court evidence against revolutionaries.

The procedure naturally evoked intense public protest, and a special committee was appointed to investigate in the fullest manner all the evidence bearing upon the sedition movement in India. The chairman was Mr Justice Rowlatt, of the Court of King's Bench (who came over specially to India for the purpose), and the other members were an Indian and an English High Court Judge, a well-known Indian lawyer, and a member of the Indian Civil Service. This committee unanimously recommended that the ordinary provisions of the law were unsuitable for a situation such as government had been called to face in India at the beginning of the war. Its views were reinforced by another smaller commission, composed of Mr Justice Beachcroft of the Calcutta High Court and Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, an ex-Judge of the High Court of Bombay, who were appointed to examine in detail each of the cases of internment in Bengal. Eight hundred and six cases were examined, and the committee decided that in all but six cases there was every ground for detention. The remaining six were ordered to be released, on the ground that the orders

against them were in the judgment of the committee not supported by sufficient evidence.

Undoubtedly these two committees, by their reports, afforded solid grounds for the contention that the special powers, taken during the war, had not in fact been abused by the government. Government, moreover, were anxious to secure legislation which should enable them to pass through the difficult time between the cessation of hostilities and the establishment of permanent peace conditions. They therefore framed a Bill making permanently available, in emergency, special powers for internment without trial in districts proclaimed as seditious. The Bill—afterwards known as the Rowlatt Act—was passed, with a practically unanimous India against it. It needs to be remembered that the Act involves power to resort to the suspension of Habeas Corpus in case of emergency, and renders any Indian citizen liable to arrest and confinement at police instance without public trial or legal defence. What might be regarded as defensible in war time needed, to Indian eyes, more justification than it had received if it was to become a permanent part of the system of government of the country.

"Bill No. 1 of 1919" was the official title of the Act. The date and number are ominous. It was disastrously timed. It was Britain's first concrete act in the year after the war in her dealings with the India who had stood by her throughout the war. To the Indian peoples, looking for a new trust and respect, it seemed an insult. Britain had just made public profession of her desire to rule by India's

will ; but the Indian mind argued that only an alien government could require the protection of such an Act : it expressed, not confidence in India, but profound distrust.

Though there has been more than one outbreak of murderous conspiracy since, the Rowlatt Act has never once been used. Administratively justifiable, it is now regarded as a capital blunder in statesmanship. But the complexity and uncertainty of the situation that confronted our post-war administrators must always be borne in mind. Imagination, not intention, was at fault.

The effect of the publication of the proposed Act was instant and profound. It was greeted throughout India with indignant protest. Against a storm of popular opposition it was forced through. Educated India fell from eager trustfulness to sullen and resentful bitterness.

Perhaps the Act had no more calamitous result than its psychological effect on Mr Gandhi, of whom there will be more to say anon. At this juncture it is only necessary to refer to his influence upon the events we are considering. Up to the signing of the armistice Mr Gandhi had been a convinced and reasoned supporter of the British Raj, and a recruiter for the army. Three months later he was leading India in a movement of non-violent revolt against the British administration. Study of Mr Gandhi's speeches and writings at this period makes it clear that owing to the framing and the timing of the Rowlatt Act, and the pressing of it through in spite of a practically universal outburst of Indian protest,

he had come to lose all faith in the purposes and sincerity of the British government. He felt that it was impossible for a self-respecting people to submit to such a measure so forced on them, and accordingly he launched a campaign of *Satyagraha*. Literally this means "pursuit of truth"; in practice it means the withdrawal of co-operation by the people with the processes of government, and the refusal of obedience to certain specific laws. The conditions of satyagraha are that no violence must be used, and that the acts of disobedience must cause suffering to no one but oneself. By this method it was hoped to bring irresistible moral pressure to bear upon the administration, and in the last resort, without the use of any violence, to bring the machinery of government to a standstill. The aim was to use peaceful means to force a government, which Mr Gandhi declared had forfeited their respect and trust, to recognize and conform to public opinion. Throughout, Mr Gandhi failed to realize that when you are dealing with masses of unregenerate humanity, civil disobedience on a large scale must end in violence.

Constitutional opposition and the expression of public opinion having both failed, Mr Gandhi called on the people of India to endeavour by this method to procure the recall of the Rowlatt Act. That the Rowlatt Act was by far the most important factor in the outbreaks that followed is indicated by the fact that the Official Commission of Enquiry in their Report upon the causes of the Punjab disturbances devote five pages to the consideration of educated India's political expectations after the war

and the effect of the Rowlatt Act, and less than two to all other causes put together, among which they recognize only as important the Treaty terms with Turkey, and, possibly, the high prices obtaining in the country, and less probably the methods of recruitment followed in the Punjab.

The first method chosen by Mr Gandhi was the proclamation of *hartals*, or the cessation of all work and business, and the closing of all shops as a protest. March 30, 1919, was the first date on which a hartal was held. On that day a crowd of protestors at Delhi proved so unruly that the police fired and eight persons were killed. On April 6th hartals were observed in Delhi, Amritsar and forty other places in the Punjab. But, except for the trouble at Delhi on March 30th, there was no violence anywhere till April 10th, the day after Mr Gandhi's arrest, news of which quickly spread.

On that day there were outbreaks in several places.¹ That at Amritsar has figured most largely in the development of subsequent troubles. It was primarily due to the deportation of two local political leaders. A mob, excited but unarmed, gathered in the city, and attempted to march into the civil station in order to

¹ On so important and controversial a matter the author has preferred to draw exclusively from the signed Report of the Official Commission of Enquiry (Cmd. 681). This Commission comprised five English members (including Lord Hunter of the Edinburgh High Court, and Major-Gen. Sir G. Barrow, K C B., K C M G., Commanding the Peshawar Division), and three Indian members. Critical statements are quoted verbatim. It is important to remember that these are taken from the Majority Report, signed by all the five English members. The three Indian members signed a Minority Report, which has nowhere been quoted in the text.

induce the Deputy Commissioner to cancel the order of deportation. "There is on the evidence very slender ground for supposing that this crowd in its initial stages was possessed of any definite common intention save that of angry and obstreperous protest in force before the Deputy Commissioner at his house and for the purpose of overawing him." The police were ordered to stop the crowd and in order to do so had to fire. Three or four of the crowd were killed. The mob "saw red," and poured back into the city vowing vengeance and determined to have the blood of any European they could come across. Three English bank managers, living in the city, were done to death and burned in their premises. A lady missionary, bicycling on her rounds, was struck off her cycle, repeatedly beaten, and left for dead.¹ Guard

¹ It is sometimes sought to justify the measures taken in Amritsar and elsewhere on the score of the danger of outrage to the honour of English ladies. The danger was small. Such outrages seldom occur in India. No single outrage was proved even in the Mutiny, not even at Cawnpore. On this point the statement of Sir William Muir, afterwards Lieutenant-Governor of the U.P., is decisive :

"In connection with the Intelligence Department, at the headquarters of the Government of Agra, my work has brought me during the past six months into contact with messengers and spies from all parts of the country. I gladly add my own testimony . . . that nothing has come to my knowledge which would in the smallest degree support any of the tales of dishonour done to English women current in our public prints. Direct evidence, wherever procurable, has been steadily and consistently against such stories. The people who must know, and had there been any case of outraged honour, would have told us, uniformly deny that any such things were ever perpetrated, or even thought of. Judging from the great accumulation of

Robinson was beaten to death near the railway station. It was an afternoon of appalling outrages, the guilt of which nothing can obliterate. That the excesses were unpremeditated and were mainly the result of the day's events, is indicated by the fact that on the very preceding day a religious procession in the city, accidentally viewed by the Deputy Commissioner, was, he writes, "as a rule very civil, every car in the procession stopped in front of me, and the band played God save the King." Earlier on the actual day of the outbreak, before the firing of the police had taken place, Europeans had mingled with the crowd unmolested. Thereafter the position was ugly and dangerous enough, calling for just that high statesmanship, combining tact and firmness, which British administrators have time and again displayed, and which explains our continued rule in India. An Indian mob was amok. The first step of lawless violence was theirs. With a populace that was "seeing red," stern and even drastic measures were needed. The situation had clearly passed beyond civil control. Martial law was proclaimed. General Dyer, in command of the small garrison, prohibited by proclamation all public meetings, which would be

negative evidence, supported as it is at many points by positive and direct proof, it may be safely asserted that there are fair grounds for believing that violation before murder was in no case committed.

"W. MUIR, Dec 30, 1857"

Quoted in *Young India*, Nov 6, 1924

The most that could be proved before the Hunter Commission was the publication in one township of a poster inciting to such outrage.

dispersed by force of arms. On April 13th, in defiance of these orders, a large meeting assembled in the Jallianwala Bagh, a large open space, all but closed by buildings, and with but few and narrow exits. Most must have known of the inhibiting order. There were also present, however, "a considerable number of peasants . . . but they were there for other than political reasons."¹ But the majority must have known they were there in flat violation of military order. Severity was needed, to ensure that there should be no repetition of the disobedience. Firing, and some casualties, were possibly inevitable. Had that been all that happened, the world would have heard little of Amritsar. But the situation was ugly enough to test to the full the judgment even of one who had risen to high rank. The story must be told in the words of the report by the English members of the Hunter Commission.

General Dyer proceeded [to the Bagh] with a special force of twenty-five Gurkhas and twenty-five Baluchis armed with rifles, forty Gurkhas armed only with kukris, and two armoured cars. On arriving at Jallianwala Bagh he entered with this force by a narrow entrance which was not sufficiently wide to allow the cars to pass. They were accordingly left in the street outside. . . . As soon as [he] entered the Bagh he stationed twenty-five troops on one side of the higher ground and twenty-five troops on the other side. Without giving the crowd any warning to disperse, which he considered unnecessary as they were there in breach of his proclamation, he ordered his

¹ Punjab Government Report, Cmd. 534.

troops to fire and the firing was continued for about ten minutes. There is no evidence as to the nature of the address to which the audience was listening. None of them were provided with firearms, although some of them may have been carrying sticks. . . . Approximately three hundred and seventy-nine people were killed. . . . No figure was given for the wounded, but their number may be taken as probably three times as great as the number of killed. . . . General Dyer's action in firing on the crowd is open to criticism in two respects: *first*, that he started firing without giving the people who had assembled a chance to disperse, and *second*, that he continued firing for a substantial period of time after the crowd had commenced to disperse. . . . Notice to disperse would have afforded those assembled in ignorance of the proclamation and other people also an opportunity to leave the Bagh, and should have been given. . . . General Dyer had in view . . . the desire to produce a moral effect in the Punjab. In his report he says:

"It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect from a military point of view . . . throughout the Punjab. . . ."

In our view this was unfortunately a mistaken conception of his duty. If necessary a crowd that has assembled contrary to a proclamation issued to prevent or to terminate disorder may have to be fired upon, but continued firing upon that crowd cannot be justified because of the effect such firing may have upon people in other places.

The Commission had before it the unhesitating opinion of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, that "General Dyer's action

that day was the decisive factor in crushing the rebellion, the seriousness of which is only now being generally realized." None the less, in spite of this weighty opinion, the five English members of the Commission proceed immediately to the unanimous remark :

The action taken by General Dyer has also been described by others as having saved the situation in the Punjab and having averted a rebellion on a scale similar to the Mutiny. *It does not, however, appear to us possible to draw this conclusion, particularly in view of the fact that it is not proved that a conspiracy to overthrow British power had been formed prior to the outbreaks.*

The sentence we have italicized is important. A limited amount of firing, after warning, followed by a score or so of casualties, would have been widely regarded as justified by the conditions. But the only conceivable justification of the absence of warning and the continued firing, would have been that General Dyer knew of, and felt bound to crush, a widespread conspiracy for the overthrow of the British Raj. Informed official opinion is decisive against the existence of any such conspiracy,¹ and is corroborated by the complete absence of any use of firearms. The Punjab Government Report, the Deputy Inspector General of Police, and the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar (the authorities who on

¹ The salient points of the evidence given on this crucial point by the principal government witnesses may be found in an Appendix (p. 243), and should be studied.

such a matter would be best informed of all), alike deny all knowledge of any widespread conspiracy of violence preceding the events of April 10th. That the news of what had happened at Amritsar cowed unruly mobs elsewhere is certain. But more ordinary measures of firmness and severity might well have accomplished that.

These facts have not been recalled to stir up bitterness. It has been necessary to go thus far into painful detail in order that we may be able to understand the attitude of educated Indians to our rule to-day, and the fierce intensity of feeling roused from one end of India to the other when the facts about Amritsar came to light. It is easy to be wise after the event. Solitary English officials were handling excited mobs, clean out of hand, who in more than one place had tasted blood. Weakness would have been fatal. Stern repression seemed plain duty. But although force may for the moment save the situation, it settles nothing. Most educated Indians one meets would say that if India be indeed a "lost dominion," it was lost at Amritsar.

The Non-co-operation movement gained rapidly in volume and intensity. It is significant of the domination exercised by Mr Gandhi that not even the fierce passions aroused by the happenings at Amritsar could divert organized Indian opposition into paths of violence from the method of peaceful non-co-operation preached by him. Few things are more remarkable than the disappearance of bomb and revolver from Indian political agitation just at the time when Ireland and Russia seemed to be achieving a

large part of their national aims by the use of force and assassination. British opinion has been slow to recognize its obligation to Mr Gandhi in this respect. In his vehement repudiation of violence and assassination, and his passionate advocacy of the methods of peaceful protest and voluntary suffering, he was preaching something deeply congenial to the heart of India. So deep was the conviction produced by this appeal to India's conscience that many years must probably elapse before the advocacy of assassination as a political method can again receive any wide response.

Meantime the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme for the reform of Indian government, in fulfilment of the pledge given in 1917, had been published (1918). Seldom, if ever, has any country conceived a nobler measure of generous statesmanship. In it the British people bent itself to the colossal task of the rapid democratization of an Eastern nation, traditionally monarchic, preponderatingly illiterate, and divided by every cleavage of race, language, religion and iron hierarchy of class. Perhaps never before has one great nation deliberately divested itself of power and dominion in order that another people, older, vaster, but also weaker than itself, might rise to the dignity of free nationhood. The pity of it was the hurry with which, under the imperious pressure of impatient demand, a measure of democracy had to be granted to a nation ill-prepared. The situation lent colour to the charge hurled against the British people that, while they have shown themselves supremely successful in the achievement of political freedom for

themselves, they have signally failed in training and preparing subject nations for the liberty on which they themselves set so high value.

The Reform Scheme¹ marked a great advance in the direction of Indian self-government. It was undoubtedly conceived in good faith and, if worked with goodwill, might yet constitute an invaluable preparation of India for that complete self-government which is now the pledged aim of British policy. But it was born in the black shadow of the Rowlatt Act and the Amritsar tragedy. It was read in the light of that grim twofold commentary on British intentions and was never given a chance. Hostility to Britain, rather than to the actual reforms, declared itself in the refusal of the non-co-operators to have anything to do with the new machinery. It was hoped in this way to bring England to her knees, to secure the withdrawal of the Rowlatt Act, a national confession of penitence for Amritsar, and the concession of Turkey's demands.

III

✓ For the next act in this unhappy series of events we must go to Africa. The national pride and self-consciousness of India had for long been jealously sensitive in regard to the status of Indian labourers working under systems of indenture in Fiji, South Africa, East Africa, and other British colonies. During the nineteenth century the need for cheap labour

¹ Further details of its scope will be found in Appendix on page 245.

in colonies whose tropical climate rendered rougher manual work too arduous for European settlers, had led to the importation of considerable bodies of Indian labourers who were recruited in India under a system of indentures. The conditions were often open to grave objection alike on humanitarian and political grounds. But it is not these that arouse such bitter resentment in India. The real trouble arises in regard to the treatment and status accorded to the descendants of these labourers (originally recruited by the colony in its own interests), who stay on for reasons exactly similar to those which attract British settlers. Both groups of colonists are alike members of an empire which is constantly seeking to impress on its Indian subjects the dignity of their equal citizenship, the cry that rallied Indian recruits by the hundred thousand to our armies in the war.

Trouble first came to a head in Natal. Government there imposed on Indian settlers (of whom there were about one hundred and thirty-three thousand in the colony) a tax, which Bishop Whitehead estimates as often equivalent to "an income-tax of seven shillings in the pound for families with an income of £50 a year!"¹ But what roused fiercest resentment were lesser acts of petty insult and injustice. The point is well stated by the *Cape Times*, the leading newspaper in South Africa :

Natal presents the curious spectacle of a country entertaining a supreme contempt for the very class of people she can least do without. Imagination can only

¹ Whitehead, *Indian Problems*, p. 232.

picture the commercial paralysis which would inevitably attend the withdrawal of the Indian population from that Colony. And yet the Indian is the most despised of creatures; he may not ride in the tram-car, nor sit in the same compartment of a railway carriage with the Europeans; hotel-keepers refuse him food or shelter, and he is denied the privilege of the public bath.¹

"It may be added that the Indians could not walk on the public foot-paths without the risk of being insulted, and according to law could not be out after 9 p.m. without a pass."²

But Indians, though deeply resentful of the dishonour done to their fellow-countrymen in South Africa, yet recognized that the British Cabinet was, beyond a point, powerless in the matter and was not responsible for the injustice shown by a self-governing Dominion. But differential treatment also arose in Kenya, a colony directly under the administration of the Colonial Office, and here, to the Indian, was the acid test of British sincerity. The question they asked was, Were British and Indians to receive equal rights as citizens of one empire?

Kenya offers all the elements for inter-racial trouble and the occasion for scrupulously just and far-sighted statesmanship. The population of the colony comprises roughly two and a half million Africans, twenty-two thousand Indians, ten thousand Europeans and

¹ Quoted in *Indian Problems*, p. 233.

² Whitehead, *Indian Problems*, p. 233. See also article by Bishop Fisher in the *National Christian Council Review* (India), January 1926.

eight thousand Arabs. In 1896 the government imported about twenty thousand Indian coolies, along with a number of artisans, traders and clerks, for the building of the railway from the coast to the Victoria Nyanza. If English enterprise has been first in the field, it is yet interesting to remember that it was indeed this railway built by Indian labour which introduced the colony of English settlers; for it opened up to cultivation the only area in Central Africa with a climate suitable for European colonization, the fertile highlands of Kenya. White settlement in Kenya created a demand for labour, and out of this demand arose acute problems with regard to the African native. If the aim of government was African prosperity through the encouragement of agriculture in native farms, then there simply would not be enough African labour for the working of the English plantations. The home government was bound by the principle of "trusteeship" enshrined in the Covenant of the League of Nations, and the white settlers of Kenya, growing restive under the Colonial Office's regard for African interests, pressed for "responsible government." By "responsible government" was meant the conferring of the franchise on six thousand Europeans out of a total population approaching three million.

The demand for responsible self-government at once brought about a conflict of claims with the Indian population. The Indians, out-numbering the English settlers by three to one, and paying a far larger share of the taxation, demanded proportionate representation. They were willing to have the fran-

chise fixed by a high educational standard, provided the same conditions were required of European voters also, and they urged therefore that there was no danger of English settlers being swamped by an illiterate Indian vote.

The controversy was further embittered by the demand of the English settlers that the Indian population should be segregated and confined to certain areas, and that the highlands should be reserved exclusively for Europeans. Now it may at once be conceded that the highlands are pre-eminently suited for white settlement and that the ideas of the East African Indians on sanitation and hygiene leave very much to be desired. For a crucial factor in the whole situation is the fact that recruitment has been made for the most part from the less desirable ranks of Indian society ; a fact of which the Indians have shown themselves to be aware by expressing their willingness to accept a high educational standard for the franchise. But Indian opinion regards it as fundamentally unjust that Indians, who pay the larger share of town taxes, should have no elective representation on municipal councils, while the greater part of the taxes paid by them goes to the improvement of the European quarters. Nor does this seem to them the way to secure a more sanitary Indian quarter. Indians, in moods of candour, will admit that the relationships between English and Indians in Africa have as an almost exact parallel those obtaining between caste men and untouchables in India. But no Englishman would accept that as sufficient justification of his policy.

Controversy grew hot and fierce. In India the treatment of Indians in Kenya became a burning issue. British sincerity and impartiality was on its trial. The national self-respect and dignity of India were at stake. The English colonists threatened to enforce their claims by armed rebellion. The British Cabinet rightly decided that trusteeship for African interests required that the administration of the colony should remain with the Colonial Office. The elective Council must therefore be only advisory ; but why then, ask Indians, should they not be represented in this Advisory Council on the same electoral basis as the Europeans ? Instead, there was to be a certain proportion of representatives elected by the white settlers, and only a much smaller proportion elected by the Indians. Indian amour-propre was further offended by the decision to continue the restriction of settlement in the highlands to Europeans, which they regarded as an unnecessary provision ; for had the matter been left open, very few Indians would have chosen to live on the colder plateau. There was, further, sufficient reason to fear that immigration regulations would be manipulated to restrict Indian immigration, while leaving European immigration unrestricted. " But if the welfare of the Africans is the paramount consideration, the immigration of both Europeans and Indians alike ought to be carefully regulated and restricted." ¹

It cannot but be that British sympathy should go out to the vigorous band of English settlers. None

¹ Whitehead's *Indian Problems*, ch. xvii., to which the author is heavily indebted throughout this section.

the less one would wish that patriotic feeling might lead them to waive some of their narrower interests for the sake of the empire as a whole. In Kenya the principle on which we hold our Indian empire is at stake. Indian opinion is clear that if that empire is to hold together there must be no discrimination against Indians. Mr Gandhi's repeated demand must be conceded, "that there shall be no legal racial inequality between different subjects of the crown."¹ It is on the face of it absurd to expect Indians to be loyal to an empire in which they are treated as an inferior race.



IV

Hard in the wake of the Kenya decision followed another serious event. No race in India has been more faithful to the British Raj, or has more bravely fought its battles, than the martial Sikhs of the Punjab. They stood by England in the Mutiny. They have been a steady strength to her ever since. The Punjab government has been faced by a most perplexing issue. A reforming party among the Sikhs, eager to rescue their temples from the corrupt and wholly selfish administration of a priestly hierarchy, have not been content to accept the rather colourless compromise offered them by government legislation. Though by profession a race of warriors, they had been sufficiently

¹ Cf. the declaration of four leading Bombay citizens in answer to the question, "What action can England take that would convince you of the honesty of her intentions?" "Give us fiscal autonomy, a national militia, and equal treatment in the colonies."
—J. T. Gwynn, *Indian Politics*, p. 8.

influenced by Mr Gandhi's preaching of non-violence to eschew the use of armed force. Instead they simply walked in, and by sheer weight of numbers took possession of temple properties. The extruded Mahants (high priests) appealed to the law, and government stepped in to protect vested interests. Government was faced by no simple problem. Its business is to maintain law and order. The conflict came to a head at a temple-property near Amritsar, called Guru-ka-Bagh. A *jatha* (detachment) of a hundred unarmed Sikhs presented itself each day to take possession. A police cordon barred the way. The front rank of Sikhs said its prayers, advanced, and was laid out by the long weighted sticks which were the police equipment. Sikh ambulance cars drove up, Sikh doctors removed the men and drove away; and the next rank in the *jatha* marched up, and received like treatment. It will hardly be credited, but the same procedure was followed every day for six and a half weeks, until there was scarcely a Sikh village in the Punjab which had not its beaten man; for the whole affair had been most carefully organized. One day's *jatha* consisted exclusively of soldiers with British service medals, some of them without arm or leg. Led by a veteran non-commissioned officer, they protested their readiness again to fight for the King if he required them, and their puzzlement that he had been so misadvised as to interfere in their religion; for duty to religion must come before even duty to King. They were not beaten, but removed to jail. Finally, the impasse was ended by a Hindu banker, who purchased the property and handed it over to the re-

formers.¹ It is significant of the efficiency of press control that the whole story is probably unknown to most Englishmen who were in India at the time. Yet English people are expected to take an intelligent interest in the affairs of the India which they rule !

The result has been that the great majority of the once trusty Sikhs became bitterly and morosely anti-British. Nothing is more eloquent of the deep root taken by Mr Gandhi's doctrines than that martial Sikhs should have come forward by their thousands to receive tamely a beating by the police. The problem before government was bewildering enough. They must strive to be impartial as between Sikh reformers and reactionaries. They must, if need be by force, uphold law and order, and protect the legal holders in their property. But the procedure chosen was surely incredibly stupid. We hold India to-day because as a rule our administrators have discovered better ways than that of dealing with difficult situations. Had a Nicholson or a Lawrence been in charge of some of the issues we have been tracing the result might have been altogether different.

Yet, if mistakes there were, they were mistakes of judgment rather than crimes of intention. Seldom have rulers been faced by graver or more bewildering problems. Fifty years ago politics were parochial, isolated. To-day the whole world listens in. Each local official has become a world administrator.

The future may show that the seemingly isolated

¹ The story, as told by a retired Indian civilian, is given in *Indian Politics*, by J. T. Gwynn, a book to which Lord Meston contributed the preface.

happenings of these seven years have had effects undreamed of by those primarily concerned in them. These same events may yet radically alter the entire fabric of the British empire. At least the East is changing.

CHAPTER III

A PROPHET

I

THERE is no quicker way to understand the heart of India than to study Mr Gandhi. In him is expressed as nearly as may be India's ideal—the type of character she worships. Probably no man in his lifetime has ever commanded the affectionate reverence of so many millions of his fellow-men. He is a politician who yet owes his sway primarily to his religious character.

A small, weak man, with a lean face and tranquil brown eyes, and with spread-out big ears. He wears a white head-dress, a coarse white cloth covers his body, and his feet are bare. His food consists of fruit, rice and water; he sleeps on the floor; he sleeps but for a short while; and he works untiringly. His bodily appearance does not count at all. An expression of great patience and great love is what strikes us at first when we see him.¹

"It is in the fitness of things," writes Tagore, "that Mahatma Gandhi, frail in body and devoid of all material resources, should call up the immense powers of the meek."²

¹ R. Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

Few in India appreciated the moral stature of the frail, insignificant, ascetic man, who, after nearly twenty years of absence, landed on her shores in July 1914.

I shall never forget my own first sight of him. A crowd of many thousands had assembled at an open air meeting in Calcutta to do him honour. There were two hours of oratory, and flattery even fulsome, in praise of India and Mr Gandhi. For most of the time he sat on the platform, his head on his hands between his knees, as though in pain. Then he stood up to thank the assemblage for their welcome and the honour done him. The crowd shuffled into comfortable positions on the ground to listen to the great speech of the day. Mr Gandhi faced his audience for a moment or two, and then said very slowly and without preface of any kind (if my memory is to be trusted): "There is only one contribution I feel I can usefully make to this evening's proceedings, and that is to say that, speaking for myself, the deepest lessons of my own life have been learned from one who never set foot in India."¹ And he sat down. For a moment puzzlement reigned. Was it all over, the great man's speech? And what did he mean, and why had he said it? Then quietly and very thoughtfully the assembly dispersed.

I was deeply impressed. I wrote to ask if I might

¹ It is not clear to whom Mr Gandhi referred. The words have commonly been taken to refer to Jesus Christ, but this has been authoritatively denied. The story is quoted here to illustrate Mr Gandhi's singular independence of thought.

go to see him ; or, if that were inconvenient, would he come to see me ? Two days later he came, bare-foot and wearing a single cotton garment. In an instant the news was round the college. It was known that he could only be with us for twenty-five minutes ; but the East can hurry itself when it chooses. In ten minutes a garland had been bought, and an impromptu reception organized in the college hall. A quarter of an hour was left. Two short speeches of welcome, poor enough in quality and unprepared, were followed by the singing of *Bande Materam*, the national song. Then Mr Gandhi rose to reply. This time I had pencil and paper ready. I felt sure he must express his appreciation of his welcome by my students so entirely spontaneous, and their best. Instead, without preface of any kind, these were his words :

You will bear with me, my brothers, if I tell you how pained I was to notice the tone in which you sang that sacred song just now. It is the praise of our motherland. Not one word of it is true of India to-day. There is only one attitude in which any of you may ever again sing those words : on your knees in prayer to God that He will make our country what the poet paints her to be.

And, with Mrs Gandhi on his arm, he got up to leave. A strange feeling was on us all as he passed out,

So we may come to understand something of the secret of the hold he has on India. Singularly unimpressive in appearance, there is about his presence a transparent sincerity, an utter fearless-

ness, an evident selflessness which, with Indians at least, compel a reverence that almost amounts to awe.

At the outbreak of the war Mr Gandhi was a convinced believer in the righteousness of the British cause. His sufferings at the hand of governments had not soured his judgment. As leader of the Indian movement in South Africa, he had served many sentences in jail. He had come out of jail to take the lead in recruiting armed forces for the Government that had imprisoned him. In 1899, after the outbreak of the Boer War,¹ he had raised an Indian Ambulance Corps nearly a thousand strong. Of Mr Gandhi's work in this connection a European campaigner writes :

After a night's work [on Spion Kop] which had shattered men with much bigger frames, I came across Gandhi in the early morning, sitting by the roadside, eating a regulation army biscuit. Every man in Buller's force was dull and depressed and damnation was heartily evoked on everything. But Gandhi was stoical in his bearing, cheerful and confident in his conversation, and had a kindly eye. He did one good. It was an informal introduction and it led to a friendship. I saw the man and his small undisciplined corps on many a field of battle during the Natal campaign. When succour was to be rendered they were there. Their unassuming dauntlessness cost them many lives, and eventually an order

¹ "On one occasion he had the privilege, which he greatly treasured, of bearing Lord Roberts's only son out of action and carrying him eighteen miles on a stretcher to the base."—C. F. Andrews.