CHAPTER V

SHOPKEEPERS OR PHILANTHROPISTS?

I

It was not commerce, but Christianity, that supplied the first link between England and India. More than a thousand years ago, King Alfred, in discharge of a vow made when he was ill, sent alms to the poor Christians of India, living on the coast of Malabar. Then the curtain fell, and was not lifted till British merchants, following in the wake of Vasco da Gama, began to find their way round by the Cape to that same Malabar coast of distant India. The motives of the early venturers were frankly selfish and commercial. They came to sell their wares and still more to purchase what India alone could supply for the West. The enterprise was looked on with disfavour by English public opinion; for it tended to keep much of England's shipping (and potential navy) in distant waters; and, as imports from India far exceeded exports to India, it involved a constant flow of bullion out of the island, and therefore was regarded by the political economists of the time as "bad" trade.

Only very gradually did the East India Company reconcile itself to any interference in India's political affairs. The business of the Company's officials in

India was trade, not politics, and they were enjoined to confine themselves to such minimum of interference with state affairs as might be absolutely essential to secure the safety and development of commerce.

It is important to bear this in mind if we are to understand the aspect our rule in India bears in the eyes of instructed Indian opinion to-day. We are regarded as a "nation of shopkeepers" who are in India for our own interests first of all. Educated Indians often find it very difficult to allow to us any measure of disinterested concern for India's good. Our most beneficent measures are put down to far-sighted statesmanship, which prudently seeks to secure a peaceful, prosperous and contented India, in the interests of the expansion of British commerce and wealth. A prosperous India, from this angle, means an India able to buy as much as possible of British goods. "When," I have been asked by Indian colleagues, "has the English nation ever done a generous or beneficent thing that was not at the same time in her own interests?"[1]

Doubtless it is true that the great majority of Englishmen (and in this connection Scotsmen are not excluded!) who come to India, have come there for a career or to make money. And yet there is a very different side to the story of the Raj in India, and one which will always make an Englishman's blood tingle with honourable pride.

[1] For a frank statement by a responsible English-edited newspaper of British purpose in India, see Appendix, p 248.

There stands by the roadside at Jabalpur a cross with this inscription :

TO THE MEMORY
OF THE
OFFICERS OF THE CENTRAL PROVINCES
WHO SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES TO THEIR
DUTY IN THE STRUGGLE TO SAVE LIFE DURING
THE GREAT FAMINE OF 1896-1897.

On the reverse side are the names of five members of the Indian Civil Service,[1] one executive engineer, one police officer, and two lieutenants of the Indian Army : nine Englishmen who came out to India for a career, but stayed to give their lives for the people they were serving. The thing was typical. Only last month an English railway guard, doubtless in India for what would be termed selfish ends, in a successful effort to save the life of an Indian passenger who was falling from the train, slipped himself, and was cut in two by the train which passed over him. No V.C. was ever won by simpler gallantry. There is a grave at Lucknow bearing the inscription

HERE LIES
HENRY LAWRENCE
WHO TRIED TO DO HIS DUTY

That too is typical. These things are the secrets of our rule in India. Alongside and underneath the ordinary selfish motives that prompt men everywhere, there seems to be in the average Englishman some

[1] The Commissioner of the Division, three Deputy Commissioners, one Assistant Commissioner.

inherited gift which tempers these motives and tends to make him put responsibility to those he serves above private gain. Whether this is a British or a European or a Christian, or simply a human, trait need not be here discussed.

The point is, it is there, and it profoundly modifies the character of what would otherwise be a purely selfish rule. India is dotted with the graves of English men and women who, whether in the service of the State, or as missionaries, or in the ordinary avocations of life, unobtrusively and unsparingly, and without hope of tangible reward, often in loneliness and ill-health, have devoted the best years of their lives to the service of an alien people in order that India might profit by all the best they had to offer. They sought to build into the India of the future something of good that might endure. Nowhere has the ideal which has inspired the lives of countless Englishmen in India found nobler expression than in a moving utterance of Lord Curzon. The words have the ring of autobiography :

To fight for the right, to abhor the imperfect, the unjust or the mean, to swerve neither to the right hand nor to the left, to care nothing for flattery or applause or odium or abuse—it is so easy to have any of them in India—never to let your enthusiasm be soured or your courage grow dim, but to remember that the Almighty has placed your hand on the greatest of His ploughs, in whose furrow the nations of the future are germinating and taking shape ; to drive the blade a little forward in your time and to feel that somewhere among these millions you have left a little justice or

happiness or prosperity, a sense of manliness or moral dignity, a spring of patriotism, a dawn of intellectual enlightenment, or a stirring of duty, where it did not exist—that is enough, that is the Englishman's justification in India.

It is worth while to develop for a moment some of the implications of this unselfish side of empire. It is a significant, if an unconscious, tribute to the Christianity India expects of Britain, that it should even be thought possible for Britain to have any other aim in India than the serving of British interests. It is none the less a perfectly legitimate expectation and demand. For it supplies the only possible justification of empire, of any empire that is not slavery or exploitation. And to say that India expects Britain to be Christian is just to say that she expects her to be good.

There is an acid test that, wittingly or unwittingly, every Indian applies to every Englishman he meets: "Is this man in our country for his own interests or for ours? When Britain's and India's interests seem to clash, whose interests is he going to serve as long as he remains in India?" On the answer to that question turns the Indian's desire for the continued presence or for the departure of any Englishman. The issue is ultimately an unreal one; for at bottom the true interests of no two countries ever clash. But the superficial divergence reaches sufficiently deep below the surface to supply a very salutary test in self-examination.

What have been the achievements of this imperial

service, and what the solid gain to India? They defy enumeration. There have been law and order and internal peace; a holding of the scales even as between sect and sect, between rich and poor; a refuge of justice to which the oppressed could fly; a knitting of India into one, through a common language and a centralized administration, through roads and railways, posts and telegraphs; millions of acres redeemed for the production of human food by irrigation, and the development of natural resources of all kinds; schools, and the flooding of India with the light of modern science and knowledge; hospitals, and the sharing with India of all the health-giving and pain-reducing discoveries of medicine. But most of all there has been the imparting, by daily contact with simple English men and women, of new standards of integrity and duty, of public service and philanthropy.

But alongside this record educated Indians, when they are forming their appraisement of English character, set another and darker narrative. Our imperialist text-books, belauding all things British in the past, do not give educated people in England as accurate a knowledge of the shadier side of our empire as Indian students pick up from their history books. There can be no more eloquent testimony to the integrity of the lives of the countless Englishmen who have built up the reputation for honour and straight dealing which the English name connotes to-day in India, than the contrast afforded by the sordid story of earlier times. Here is an extract, with which not all Englishmen are as familiar as most

educated Indians, from Mr V. A. Smith's *Oxford History of India*, admittedly an authority of high value. After Plassey, he writes :

Mir Jafer received the reward of his treason and was formally installed as Nawab by Clive. . . . The new ruler was made to pay well for his promotion. . . . Clive received the gigantic sum of £234,000, and Members of Council from £50,000 to £80,000 each. A little later Clive also obtained from the Nawab an assignment of revenue on the lands south of Calcutta, which was known as " Clive's Jagir," and which brought in nearly £30,000 a year.[1]

The story of Clive's forged treaty[2] is perhaps better known. The study of such passages serves at least one useful purpose. It not only enables us to understand our Indian fellow-citizens when they pass less sympathetic estimates on English character and the Raj than we would relish ; it supplies a tonic for the drooping spirits of those who despair of the integrity of Indian public life ever rising above its present level.

And there have been dark deeds that cannot but evoke fierce anger in the Indian breast, deeds such as those against which Disraeli protested in a noble speech in the days when vengeance was being taken for the Mutiny :

I for one protest against taking Nana Sahib as a model for the conduct of the British soldier. I protest against meeting atrocities by atrocities. I have heard things said and seen things written of late which

[1] V. A. Smith, *Oxford History of India*, p. 494.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 492.

would make me almost suppose that the religious opinions of the people of England had undergone some sudden change, and that, instead of bowing before the name of Jesus, we were preparing to revive the worship of Moloch.[1]

A thoughtful Indian shrewdly, if somewhat caustically, remarked the other day: "It is one of our misfortunes that we Indians are ruled by a race which is characterized by a vein of idealism. So cordially does the average Englishman admire certain moral and political ideals that it never occurs to him to doubt whether he is himself living by them." We find it difficult to believe that we can be lacking in practical sympathy with another nation in its aspirations after those free institutions we so highly value for ourselves. Yet it is only the hard hammering in of clamorous demand that has opened the eyes of many Englishmen in India to the naturalness and legitimacy of Indian desire for free nationhood. Hard facts have compelled hard thinking, and there has been of late years a very remarkable movement in the direction of sympathy and understanding of Indian nationalism amongst Englishmen in India. It has affected all classes of Englishmen, official and un-

[1] At Newport Pagnell September 30, 1857 *Cf* Lord Canning to Queen Victoria "There is a rabid and indiscriminate vindictiveness abroad, even among many who ought to set a better example, which it is impossible to contemplate without a feeling of shame for one's own countrymen Not one man in ten seems to think that the hanging and shooting of 40,000 or 50,000 men can be otherwise than practicable and right" Mr Edward Thompson in his book, *The Other Side of the Medal*, has now given ample recognition to these facts.

official, and not least the merchant. Witness a recent utterance of the chairman of the European Association at Karachi:

We are in principle committed to the gradual realization of self-government in this country, and I venture to believe that it would really clear the air if our Diehards would recognize this fact, and, instead of maligning those who have created this situation, would assist in shaping European public opinion as to how this principle is to be carried out in practice. . . . Practically every educated Indian wants to take a more prominent part in the government of his hearth and home. No one can deny that this is a very legitimate aspiration. . . . There will, however, still remain the British commercial community. On them will fall the burden of maintaining, in co-operation and partnership with Indians, the good government which we have enjoyed in the past and of maintaining law and order, justice and equity, in which all are mutually interested and which is essential to the stability of a commercial community.

We are a shrewd and politically minded people, and the new attitude of respect for Indian opinion and claims observable everywhere in European society reveals a rapid adjustment of English sentiment to the facts of the changed situation.

There can, however, be no doubt that a great bar to advance in the direction of inter-racial co-operation in India lies in that sense of colour prejudice which seems to be in a peculiar degree characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. This feeling is often singularly absent in the griffin (the Englishman just out from

home); but it tends to develop rather quickly after a few months' residence in the country, being easily caught in the infectious atmosphere of a "station club," and it soon shows itself in an ill-disguised attitude of contempt as of an inferior race. There is nothing more galling or irritating to the ruled. It is extraordinarily widespread and all the more dangerous because generally unconscious. It is nowhere more likely to escape detection and to be indignantly denied than in missionary circles, and among those whom self-devotion and genuine philanthropy blind to the existence in themselves of a paternal condescendingness that blights all their most strenuous service. Of the wide spread of this taint one example (than which many more sensational might be cited) may be sufficient evidence.

Not so very many years ago I was travelling from Lucknow to Allahabad by the night train. I had booked my second-class sleeping berth. On my arrival at the office to enquire, the stationmaster took me out on to the platform to ask of his inspector what arrangements had been made. The inspector, an Englishman of the retired non-commissioned officer stamp, was standing with his back to a second-class carriage, and behind him was a neat and respectable looking Indian gentleman. To the stationmaster's question, "What have you arranged for Mr Holland?" the inspector replied: "Well, sir, I can give him an upper berth anywhere, but the only lower berth vacant is in this carriage, and he won't like travelling with a native." No explanation, no courtesy, could ever obliterate that utterance from the Indian's memory.

He knew now exactly what the ordinary Englishman really felt.

An American on board a steamer bound for India, observing the aloofness of the English passengers from their Indian fellow-travellers, remarked to me: "You English are the strangest people. If you really want to hold India, why do you not take more pains to make Indians like you?"

Race feeling is generally treated as something instinctive and inbred. Its supreme authentication is taken to be the revulsion which perhaps most Englishmen would experience if sister or daughter were to be married to an Indian. It may, however, be questioned whether this widespread revulsion from mixed marriage is really at all a case of colour instinct. The revulsion may be due, not to colour instinct, but to a sense of social incongruity and to the conviction that a large field of common interests and outlook is essential to any happy marriage. Any father would react against the marriage of his daughter even to a man of his own race, if that man were drawn from a social stratum of very different tastes and upbringing · especially if he knew that the offspring of the marriage would labour under grave disadvantages, educational as well as social.

But if the colour bar can be thus resolved into a particular, though acute, case of those class cleavages and social barriers of which modern life is full, we at least need not despair of a way through. These are the very problems to the solution of which Christian fellowship is setting itself with a determination as hopeful as it is clear-sighted.

II

In an India whose future is to be based on the close co-operation of the Indian and the English peoples, what is to be the distinctive contribution of the English nation? It has sometimes been suggested that that contribution might lie in the imparting of new standards of integrity and duty. The suggestion does honour to the English race. But it is not what would have been expected of a "nation of shopkeepers"; and it is not the line generally taken by the apologists for British rule in India. More often one is treated to an enumeration of the material benefits conferred on India by British rule, and to a catalogue of railways and irrigation, of schools and hospitals, of jute and tea and coal and shipping industries. This line of defence, if not very inspiring, is at least natural and familiar. But here again we quickly run into difficulties. For it is precisely on a supposed neglect by Britain of India's material development that the latest and sharpest criticism of British administration has fastened. For example, we are told that India's grievances against Britain are economical, not political. We are thus at once challenged on what we had always taken to be an impregnable justification of our rule. "The one outstanding fact," our critics state, "which dominates the whole Indian problem is the grinding, hopeless poverty and degradation of the greater part of the population." [1]

[1] An American writer in the *Round Table*, September 1924, p. 744.

There is little unrest in Dutch and French colonies, where economic advancement has always been the first consideration: much in the Philippines and India, where the reverse order has been followed. Probably the masses in India do not greatly care who rules them, if only they are fed and prosperous. There is much to be said on the other side, much which goes to suggest that Indian unrest is fundamentally emotional, and that its chief factors are wounded sensitiveness and a sense of national humiliation. Admittedly the movement has not been upwards, originating with the poverty stricken masses, but downwards, starting with the intelligentsia. But equally undeniable, the weapons with which these same educated classes have been able to move and inflame the placid and long-suffering villager have been drawn from the armoury of economics, and have chiefly consisted in the attribution of all the ryot's poverty and sufferings to British misrule.

The threat that Indian politicians brandish at the Englishman to-day is this: that if he fails to grant self-government, they will foment an agrarian rising from one end of India to the other, a rising which will sweep the Raj into the sea. Mr Gandhi's attempt at a peaceful revolution has proved that the threat is not an empty one. Those at the head of affairs in 1921 will testify that, with the masses at his back, he came within an ace of succeeding. There can be little doubt that a materially prosperous India would rid England of much of her Asiatic problem.

But how much truth is there in this reiteration of India's poverty, and the charge that Britain has

neglected India's material advancement? In regard to India's poverty,

there seems to be very little difference of opinion about the facts. Few persons who have lived in India deny that conditions are appalling. They may even be the worst in the world, taking everything into consideration.[1]

It is matter of common knowledge that the present income of the country, even if it were equitably distributed, would not suffice to provide the population with even the most indispensable elements of a reasonable life.[2]

It is not really the insufficiency of the total food so much as the fact that certain classes of the population are too poor to buy all the food they require.[3]

Their difficulty is not to live *human* lives—lives up to the level of their poor standard of comfort—but to live at all, and not die.[4]

Single rooms house ninety-seven per cent of the working-class families in Bombay with an average of over four inmates to each room. In London the average is 1.78. It is not surprising, therefore, that the infant mortality of Bombay has risen as high as sixty-six per cent of registered births. The annual death-rate in India exceeds thirty per thousand. In Great Britain it is under twelve per thousand. Poverty is the immediate and most powerful factor

[1] An American writer in the *Round Table*, September 1924, p 745.

[2] W. H. Moreland, in the *Quarterly Review*, April 1917.

[3] Indian Fiscal Commission.

[4] W. S. Lilly, *India and its Problems*, p. 285.

in producing these shocking figures. The average income per head of the people of India is reckoned at about five pounds a year, or two shillings a week. There is little margin here, be prices never so low.

How far are the causes that have produced such widespread and abject poverty remediable by government action ? In part India's poverty is due to a listlessness induced by climate and a helpless fatalism nurtured by religion ; in part also to an unprecedented growth of population in recent years. In 1872 the population of India was two hundred and six millions, in 1921 it was three hundred and eighteen millions, an increase of fifty-four per cent in fifty years. This fact is in itself a great testimony to the improved conditions under British rule, though it is part of the charge against the British government that it has not helped so to improve the methods of agriculture as to secure a corresponding rise in the production of food and raw materials.[1] (Always remember the central fact of Indian economics, that agriculture is the occupation of over seventy per cent of her population.) More potent still in causing poverty are certain Indian social customs, which nothing but a changed public opinion can alter. Foremost is the early age at which Hinduism forces marriage and motherhood on India's women. Indian girls are often mothers at fourteen. The result is enfeebled mothers, puny and sickly infants, and the distress and waste of an appalling child mortality.

[1] The average yield of wheat in India is only 12 bushels per acre, as compared with 32 in Britain and 26 in Egypt.

Another cause is the denial of human rights to sixty millions of India's people whom the caste system crushes into a nameless degradation. The laws of succession, by which at death landed property is divided among the male heirs, are a hardly less powerful agent in producing poverty. Their result is frequently a subdivision of agricultural land into fragmentary holdings which can never maintain a family. Another factor is the immobility of the caste system, preventing any change of antiquated methods, *e.g.* the inhibition of the handling of animal and bone manure except by outcastes. And even more important is the tendency of the joint family system to produce drones and laggards who are unashamedly content to depend on the exertions of other members of their family for maintenance.

Some of these customs call for more detailed notice. The joint family is an institution at the heart of Hinduism, which has to be appreciated if India is to be understood. In India a man when he marries does not set up a home of his own. He brings his wife to the paternal (or, quite as often, the grandfatherly) roof, where the families of brothers and cousins live together side by side under the rule of the old man at the head, who receives the earnings of all, distributes to the needs of all, and settles the work and careers of all—an autocracy only limited by the authority of the old lady at his side. "It is an association that guarantees the minimum of subsistence to every member, which supports the old and infirm, which is responsible . . . for the cripples, the widows and the orphans." It teaches

respect, patience, co-operation. But these gains may be too dearly purchased, if their price is the depression of individual personality and the loss of sturdy independence.

Hardly less disastrous in their incidence upon the village home (and that means ninety per cent of Indian homes) are the customs connected with marriage. It is a disgrace, so deep that it hardly ever occurs, for a daughter of the house to be left unmarried when she has reached the age of fourteen. And rigorous custom fixes the scale of dowry and wedding festivities. There are few villagers who will not spend on the wedding of a daughter the net income of many years. All over the world the precarious nature of their calling makes debt an unescapable incident in the life of farmers. But these risks and uncertainties are incomparably greater in a country like India, where the failure of a monsoon means not only the disappearance of an entire crop, but the death of all live stock. The resultant of marriage customs and seasonal failures combined is a crushing burden of debt which grinds the agricultural masses of India into a poverty that means at best little more than a starvation existence.[1] And, be it remembered, thirty per cent is a common rate of interest charged by money-lenders, and much higher rates are not uncommon.

Poverty so abject must be a primary concern of any decent government. What has Britain to her

[1] There are in fact only three ways by which the impoverishing over-pressure of population on India's arable land can be relieved. One is by the creation of alternative industries, another is by the

credit in this respect after an occupation covering more than a century? First and foremost this, that she has banished beyond the bounds of reasonable probability the worst horrors of famine—the spectre that always haunts the Indian agriculturist. By a network of railways that can pour in supplies to any famine-stricken area and by relief organization perfected by the codified experience of the past, she has brought it about that famine now need seldom mean starvation. More recently, by the institution of co-operative banks, government has brought the lifting of the burden of debt from the back of the agriculturist within the bounds of reasonable possibility. British engineers, by immense systems of irrigation, have transformed millions of acres of sandy desert into waving fields of corn: thus greatly adding to the food supplies, and bringing profitable and healthful employment to thousands of needy peasants. The enterprise of British pioneers has retrieved the waste

successful exclusion of foreign cotton (Mr Gandhi's way—if indeed it be a possible way); the third is by an immense increase of agricultural productivity through improved methods, and the bringing into use of the forty per cent of cultivable land which government estimates to be still unused. The obstacle in the path of this third line of advance is no longer the conservatism, but the poverty, of the peasant. "It is now recognized that the Indian cultivator is as ready to take advantage of improved methods of cultivation as anyone else." The Research Institute at Pusa has shown the way to immense improvements in choice of seeds and provision of manures, the only limit to whose use is poverty. "The Indian ryot has proved himself susceptible to the lure of increased return, and the problem now before the Department is not how to get into touch with him, but of finding him necessary means to finance improvement." *Review of Agricultural Operations in India*, 1921-2, p. 69.

of millenniums, and cleared of primeval forests thousands of square miles, which are now the trim tea gardens or rubber plantations of thriving industries. British manufacturers have provided a market which has tempted half a province to exchange rice harvests for more profitable jute. British capital has created railways and steamship lines, and has begun the exploitation of India's vast mineral resources. Under British direction India has come to rank in the League of Nations organization at Geneva as one of the first eight industrial countries of the world.

Here is a solid contribution to India's material betterment which may make Englishmen justly proud. But there are other aspects of the situation of which we in England are seldom allowed to hear. What Indian discontent and criticism chiefly fasten on is the catalogue of things left undone. It is maintained that some at least of the factors that make for Indian poverty lie within the sphere of government influence. It is a reflection that, in spite of the growing appreciation in the West of the importance of the education of the people, ninety per cent of India is still illiterate after more than a century of our rule. Yet only the spread of education can effect the changes in social custom and industrial method on which the national welfare and prosperity depend. Here is neglect of a primary factor of improvement which it is difficult to excuse. Of course the fault does not lie only with government. Pressure of economic need makes the ryot unwilling to spare his child from the field to go to school, and it may fairly be said that the educated classes have until recent

years been deficient in that missionary spirit which would have done as much for popular education as any government could do. Nevertheless, the failure to deal adequately with national education cannot but be laid at the door of authority, and it is a failure which prejudicially affects the entire agricultural classes —that is, almost three-fourths of India's population.

But the disastrous consequences of this neglect of education fall heaviest on those depressed masses trodden underfoot by Hindu tyranny, whom we have proudly regarded as our special charge, whose championship we supposed to be the sufficient justification of our rule in India. True, we have assured them of justice in open court. We have protected them time and again against oppression. We have rescued them from the worst horrors of famine. But few facts are more humiliating than that at the end of a hundred years of British rule there is hardly any appreciable improvement in the economic condition of India's sixty million outcastes. We have had them in our hands for several generations. But we have failed to give them the education through which alone self-help can become a practical proposition. Political India now asks to be allowed to have its turn.

Again, it is pointed out that, in the debates in March 1925 on a bill for the raising of the "age of consent" from twelve to fourteen, English official members combined with the ultra-orthodox Hindu wing to throw the bill out,[1] though a majority of

[1] A bill has since been passed, officially sponsored, which raises the age of consent to 13 years in marriage and 14 outside marriage.

elected Indians supported it in the Assembly. Fear of "moving too fast" is felt by reforming Indians to have atrophied the social sympathies of a government that in earlier days did not scruple to deal with sati and infanticide.

Lastly, it is urged that government ought long ago to have taken the initiative in such a modification of the succession laws as would prevent the subdivision of property beyond a certain figure.

It is true that government departments are now vigorously engaged in agricultural and industrial research, and in the fostering of Indian enterprise. But India has had to wait until the twentieth century for the creation of these departments so vital to her national well-being. Nor is it easy for government to disclaim all responsibility for the deforestation which makes the peasant use as fuel the cow dung which should go to the land as manure; and for failure to improve India's wretched live stock by control of breeding, though here the Hindu refusal to kill cows, resulting in the maintenance of an enormous surplus of cattle which are not killed but can hardly be said to live, must bear a major part of the blame. A more serious fact is that India has only of quite recent years been granted autonomy in the levying of customs and import duties. Till now India's economic expansion has been severely limited by consideration for British interests. Agriculture and industry have been so developed as to secure that India shall supply Britain with the maximum of food and raw material, and receive in return the maximum of British manufactured products. Indian patriots argue

that conditions would have been vastly different had India for the past century possessed a government which had devoted itself singly to the development of Indian prosperity and welfare as its first aim, sternly requiring that British interests should always—in India—stand second to those of India.

Here is a situation the essential facts of which are sufficiently plain. "Nature has marked out India as a politically independent and an economically self-sufficing country."[1] Her immense exports of grain are sufficient indication that at any rate she raises enough agricultural produce to satisfy the demands of her total population. She is amply supplied with coal and iron, more than sufficient for all her own needs. Probably no country in the world possesses such enormous reserves of water-power. She has a virtual monopoly of the world's jute, and could herself meet more than the world's entire demand for tea and rubber. She is rich in copra and oil-seeds, she conducts a very large export trade in hides, and she contains one of the world's largest oil-fields. There are very few of India's needs that could not be met from her own resources, were her industries properly developed.

Therein lies the gravamen of her charge against her British rulers: that India has been developed principally as a feeder for English markets and a market for English manufacturers. The creation of a national and self-contained prosperity has far too little and too intermittently been the conscious and determined aim of government. England's pros-

[1] P. A. Wadia and G. N. Joshi, *Wealth of India*, p. 15.

perity, and India's as a means to that, has in practice been the ruling consideration.[1] But to treat another nation as a means of your own greatness establishes a relationship which comes perilously near the slave relation—the slave whose good the wise master sought in his own interest. It is this that embitters.

The crucial example is the cotton trade. Cotton is marked out by history and circumstance as India's staple and essential industry, after agriculture. It is the one industry whose safeguarding and development should have been a chief care to any Indian government. Except his food and cooking utensils, there is only one thing that every Indian must have: his cotton clothing. Cotton is a natural Indian product. For centuries India was the home of cotton manufacture. The very name calico tracks it to Calicut as the port of distribution. Until the eighteenth century it was India that supplied Europe with all the cotton that she used. Spinning and

[1] How deeply this poison has eaten into England's political conscience is illustrated by a recent utterance of a British Cabinet Minister:

"We did not conquer India for the benefit of the Indians. I know it is said at missionary meetings that we conquered India to raise the level of the Indians. That is cant. We conquered India as the outlet for the goods of Great Britain. We conquered India by the sword, and by the sword we should hold it. (*Shame.*) Call shame if you like. I am stating facts. I am interested in missionary work in India and have done much work of that kind, but I am not such a hypocrite as to say we hold India for the Indians. We hold it as the finest outlet for British goods in general, and for Lancashire cotton goods in particular." (Sir W. JOYNSON-HICKS, *Home Secretary*. Quoted in *The Indian Social Reformer*, November 28th, 1925, a weekly paper edited by a Hindu.)

weaving were the subsidiary cottage industries on which Indian agriculture thrived: just as was the case with wool in England. It was in a country so conditioned that the competition of Lancashire machine-made cotton was allowed to kill India's cottage industry. No great imagination is required to picture the mass of suffering and poverty which followed. For, unlike England, agriculture had to continue to be the livelihood of the great majority of India's population: only an agriculture which, robbed of its subsidiary industries, could never again offer more than a bare subsistence. And, again unlike England, there is no new factory industry to receive the displaced workers and reduce the pressure of population on the fields. Had the British government, taught by Britain's own experience in previous decades, taken care to see that the destruction of Indian cottage industries was accompanied by the development of an Indian factory system, the transition from cottage-made to machine-made cotton would not have affected India so disastrously. Millions of Indian factory workers would then have found employment in the milling of Indian cotton. The suggestion may seem to postulate an impossible unselfishness in politics. But for a government of India to have any other aim than India's welfare, or to be deflected by the competing interests of the ruling race, is to be guilty of treason against the nation committed to its trust. Instead, the British government allowed, and even seemed to welcome, the passing of this vital Indian industry into the hands of Lancashire.

That the competition of distant Lancashire need not necessarily have been fatal to the Indian cotton industry is suggested by the fact that the English government held it necessary to protect Lancashire cotton as against the Indian product by imposing an excise tax of five per cent on all Indian-made cotton.[1] Either the tax was unnecessary, or without it Indian cotton would have held its own. At least the Indian government need not have assisted in the killing of India's principal industry. Having said this, one finds pleasure in recording the fact that the cotton excise duty has now been finally abolished. It was suspended in December 1925, and its final removal announced in the Budget of the present year. The immediate effect was the cessation of a great cotton strike, but the profounder results of the removal of an ancient grievance are already seen in the tones in which the Indian press has welcomed the new policy.

III

In regard to the possibilities of India's industrial advance, it has to be remembered that there are certain marked advantages which India possesses over English industry. England has to depend on foreign countries both for the supply of raw material for her manufactures, and for markets for the sale of the finished product. India on the other hand finds within her own borders almost all the raw

[1] This was to balance the import duty of five per cent paid on all imported goods, and thus enable Lancashire to compete successfully with Indian cotton.

material for her industries, as well as a vast market for the sale of the manufactured articles. Few countries offer such a field for immense independent and self-contained industries. India can produce what she consumes and consume what she produces. A wealth of employment and new prosperity would have been created had pains been taken to develop coal and iron alongside jute and cotton.

What can be accomplished in the way of creating Indian industry is strikingly exemplified by the history of the Tata steel corporation. The story of Jamshedpur reads like a fairy tale. The city, not yet twenty years old, with almost a hundred thousand inhabitants, stands in the centre of rich coal and iron fields, where in 1908 was barren jungle. Admirably planned, and with a network of affiliated industries, its population may soon reach a quarter of a million. The conception, the directorate, the capital, the labour, all are Indian, the management and supervision to-day are chiefly American and English. It is believed that it will take twenty-five years to train Indians to replace the European supervisors. The whole enterprise is a parable of the true place of Britain in the India that is to be : not the ruling of India, but the helping of Indians in the ruling and development of their own country.

Indian capital is becoming increasingly available for such enterprises : witness the mill industries in Bombay. And, as the development of internally-held concerns brings into Indian hands those profits and savings out of which only new capital can be created, Indian commercial capital will steadily ex-

pand. But for a long time to come British capital will continue to find in India a lucrative and growing field for use.

Grave dangers, of course, beset the dependence of a country on foreign capital. Said a Dundee jute-merchant to the Governor of Bengal not long ago: "It's a grand countree. It's an awfu' pity thae natives is in it." During the closing years of the war, there were not many jute concerns that were not making over a hundred per cent, some of them many hundreds. Yet the jute-grower—the man who lived on growing it—and that means almost half Bengal's forty-seven millions—was getting the pre-war price! It was hard to answer a charge of British exploitation.

The mischief eats deeper still. A few years ago an Indian leader, afterwards a member of the Indian Council in England, met me on the Senate of Calcutta University. He said to me: "Mr Montagu is coming out and wants us to give him proposals for Indian self-government. There is not one of us that is capable of working out a constructive scheme. It is not our fault. You have never allowed us any experience or responsibility. We have had nothing to do but mere destruction: to sit in opposition and criticize. Can you bring together half a dozen sahibs, men who sufficiently share our point of view for us not to have to argue on fundamentals, who will help us to knock together a scheme that will at least be an 'Aunt Sally' for Mr Montagu's pot-shots?" I tried, and got together three English officials, men who were at the head of the departments of educa-

tion, justice, and administration. I wanted to secure the help of one or two non-official Englishmen, and arranged to meet three of Calcutta's leading merchants. After dinner one of them set the ball rolling. "If we have babu government, they will want to take their extra money out of us. Capital is shy. Look at what we are doing for the country. All the tea, all the jute, all the coal, all the steamships, all the railways, are run by British capital. If British capital takes alarm and withdraws, Bengal will relapse into its native rice-swamps. We are here for the good of the country." I replied: "Take that position, that you are here for the good of the country, and there will be no collision. Ask the hugest salaries you can name, half what the Viceroy gets, and say that, given them, you will for the rest work for the development of the natural resources of the country; and they will give you any figure you like to ask." There was a silence, broken at last by the remark: "We are not philanthropists." Had those same men, the best product of our English universities, entered the Civil Service or any other of the public services in India, they would, for a fixed salary, have given India their very best, and in plague or famine time would have laid down their lives for the people under their charge. But caught in the meshes of our commercial system, they had lost their ideals. So long as British policy in India is largely dictated by the requirements of British trade and capital, Indians cannot feel that the political determination of their country's economic future can safely be left in foreign hands.

I once asked Mr Ramsay MacDonald how he reconciled the Labour Party's backing both of the White Australia party, and of the Indian National Congress. He replied at once: "Perfectly simple. Every nation with complete rights in its own country. A white Australia, and (if I may be pardoned the expression) a brown India." The two policies surely stand or fall together. If it is right to protect the Australian against unfair Asiatic competition, it is surely equally right to protect the Indian merchant or industrialist from unfair European competition.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that what has held back the development of Indian industry even more than the lack of capital is the inefficiency of Indian labour. An industrial class can hardly be said to exist. Agriculture remains the substantive employment of the floating population which supplies the workers in an Indian factory. At the back of all lies the joint family system. Under the pressure of debt or a bad harvest, or the steady strain of agricultural poverty, or the expenses of a marriage, a member of the family will go up to Bombay or to a coal-field for a few months, to collect his little pile and send it back to his country home. For the time at least he eases the burden at home. But the call of the land and of his family drags him back. No Indian can be content without his share, however small, in landed rights. An exceptionally well-managed mill reports that the entire factory staff changes once in eighteen months. In most mills the average period of service must be much shorter.

With so unstable a body of workers no high standard of efficiency is possible.

The instability of industrial labour is aggravated by the deplorable conditions under which the employees live and work. Housing conditions in Bombay, where even the improved " model " dwellings consist of one-roomed tenements with no through ventilation, are so appalling as to make life there a misery. Fresh from the sociableness of his village, weakened of independence by the habit of reliance upon caste, the countryman in Bombay finds himself insupportably alone. There is no one to advise him. A dozen different languages are spoken in his factory, and there is never-ending trouble, leading often to dismissal, because neither his English manager nor his Indian foreman can properly understand him, or he them. There are few amenities in the factory which constitutes the worker's home for most of the waking hours of the day. (The jute-mills of Bengal are an honourable exception.) It does not offend the English manager to see his workers come carrying their wretched bundles of stale food to be eaten in the din and dirt of the workshop, or exposed to sun or rain outside. There is generally little in the way of lavatories; still less of ambulance or medical aids. Drinking water is by law provided, but effort is seldom made to keep it cool. The humane as well as the economic value of furnishing healthy and pleasing environment has hardly begun to be recognized even now. Yet on the provision of reasonably attractive conditions turns that advance to stability of labour and industrial efficiency

upon which India's economic future and prosperity depend.

And yet—before one surrenders oneself to the creation of an industrial India, with the drabness and the squalor that only the most determined foresight can keep out—how wistfully one turns back to reconsider the Utopian vision of Mr Gandhi's simple rustic India living its contented and self-sufficient village life! We can understand the appeal that it makes to the heart of a large part of thinking India. But that way lies crushing poverty—unless India can be completely isolated alike from the competition and the economic advance of the modern world.

Legislative help is slow and scanty. Not till 1881 was child labour under seven years old prohibited. In 1891 the hours of work for women were limited to eleven in the day; in 1911 the hours for men were fixed at twelve and in 1922 at eleven. Not till 1922 was women's labour confined to the hours of daylight, and one day's rest a week prescribed. Eleven hours in the day remains the working limit, but the total must not exceed sixty in the week. Inspectors are few and it is to be feared that the laws, though now in advance of those obtaining in other tropical countries, are only partially observed.

The assistance that might be forthcoming from trade unions is still slower. With so shifting a population a stable union with funds and cohesion is all but impossible. And the leadership has almost all to be supplied by amateurs from outside. Strikes fail because there is no labour solidarity nor authoritative body that can negotiate.

India's economic development must lack both health and vigour so long as she is politically dependent on an alien race. We seem to be entering on a new era in which that dependence will be superseded by free and mutually respecting industrial co-operation between the two races. It may be that the stream of administrators from English public schools will be succeeded by a larger stream of English merchants and industrialists coming out to direct and supervise the expansion of Indian industry under Indian control. The field offered to English enterprise, if different, will be wider. And it will have this glory that we are helping more effectually, if more humbly, to build a sister nation.

CHAPTER VI

AN AGE-LONG QUEST FOR GOD

THE world-old cleavage between prophet and priest, radical and conservative, runs in India very deep. And the priest seems to have it. The social reformer, the political revolutionary, are pouring into India their new wine. But the wine-skins do not seem to burst. Hinduism, with its *vis inertiæ* and its amazing capacity for combining opposites, seems able to contain the new wine. But the corrosive ferment is eating deep into the skin. Every fibre is left tense to snapping point. We are witnessing the greatest battle in history between religious conservatism and the forces of human progress. And the issue is not yet.

Nowhere is the dominance of religion in India more clearly seen than in these two facts, that it is the religious chasm between Hinduism and Islam which is the despair of every nationalist, and that it is to the religious motive that every political reformer makes his appeal. Political movements tend to appear as new religious sects. The Arya Samaj, Mrs Besant's blend of Hinduism and theosophy, and the Ramakrishna Mission through which Swami Vivekananda's teaching finds its propaganda, though at heart religious movements receive much help from the strong nationalist passion of to-day. The text-

books of anarchical conspiracy and crime reek with the odour of religion. Mr Gandhi's hold on India (to which it would be difficult to find a parallel in history) has been palpably due to the appeal he makes to the deeper religious instincts of the Hindu. Hardly a social or political reformer but has had at each step forward to tie round his feet the clog of a fresh compromise with Hinduism.

What is this arch-power in the land, so venerable, so persistent? Hinduism is incapable of definition. There is no description that can make it easy. Sixteen years ago, when the introduction of the methods of representative democracy made it plain that in the future political issues were going to be settled by the counting of heads, Mohammedans set to work to whittle away the Hindu majority by challenging the right of Hinduism in the approaching census to reckon as Hindus the sixty million outcastes, who may enter no Hindu temple, to whom no Brahman priest may minister, and whose touch defiles any Hindu. One result was a symposium conducted by a leading Hindu journal on the question, "What makes a man a Hindu?" Of sixty replies only three agreed. Their answer was: He is a Hindu who was born of Hindu parents, and has not publicly renounced Hinduism. That anything so vague should prove itself so tenacious is one of the conundrums of social psychology. One answer is that Hinduism is not a religion but a social system: that caste is Hinduism. Yet he who has once sensed Hinduism knows that it is as much a spirit, an atmosphere, an attitude to life, as a stratified system of society.

Perhaps the simplest method will be briefly to indicate the two chief rivers that have fed Hinduism. The diverse watersheds it has drained have left entirely unharmonized deposits. A man to-day may be a monotheist, a polytheist, a pantheist, or an atheist, and still be an orthodox Hindu. Hinduism is more medley than blend. There is in it so much of good, and so much also of evil. Here lies the weakness. It waits for a fan that will separate the wheat from the chaff.

The first river traces from the Aryan invaders, our own fair cousins who, through caste rules, have ever since been engaged in the hopeless endeavour to keep their blood white and uncontaminated. They were light-hearted nomad nature-worshippers, offering their sacrifices and singing their jubilant hymns to Sun (Surya) and Rain (Indra) and Sky (Varuna) and Storm (Rudra) in hope that they might win from the gods the cherished boons of family or flocks. But in time most of these gods themselves have perished and are mere names to-day. Only the hymns remain, collected as the Vedas, in a language (Vedic or Sanskrit) inaccessible to the people. The stream broadened out into schools of philosophical reflection, whose text-books are known as the Upanishads. To them may be traced some of the fundamental ideas which give Hinduism its distinctive flavour. Their soaring idealism, their tireless questioning of the universe till it shall yield its secret, uplift as well as stimulate. Some later writings, such as the Bhagavad Gita, are among the world's spiritual classics. The master minds of

Indian philosophy—Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, each founder of a separate school of thought—are still names to conjure by. Nobly has India sought down all the ages. When is seeking to bring finding?

Hindu philosophy is always search with an object, not abstract enquiry into truth for its own sake. It is always the effort to discover the way of release from further existence. It is prompted by a profound pessimism. Existence is so bad that the only thing to do is to get rid of it. It is this utter pessimism about the material world which in part explains the exalted value India sets upon the spiritual. Till this is understood it is surprising that a country so spiritual in its values as India should have been so harassed and obsessed by the problem of material suffering. But behind this enquiry there lay also a noble insistence that the universe must at its heart be just, and therefore that all suffering must be deserved. The experiences of life led straight to a belief in previous—and also in succeeding—existences. The babe born blind must have been a grievous sinner in a previous life. And sins committed in this life will receive an adequate penalty in a future birth to pain, whether as rat, tree, man, or what not. All that happens to me is caused by previous deeds of mine, and my present deeds need a future birth in which I can receive their exact reward and consequences. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." Life thus becomes an endless chain of cause and effect, of deeds and rewards. Only, to reap the consequences I have to live a life of further deeds, which in turn involve further existences for

the reaping of their reward. Life is thus a clock that winds itself up as quickly as it runs down: never ending, and leading nowhere. Existence is regarded as an aimless and weary round; and the only hope is to find some way of breaking the iron chain and ceasing to exist. The justice of the universe is vindicated. But at what a price!

This is in brief the Hindu doctrine of *karma* and rebirth. Release comes when you have recognized the unreality of the whole material universe. Only spirit (Brahma) really exists The visible world and all its happenings are an illusion (*maya*); or else they are a sport (*lila*), created by the gods in a moment of freakishness. In so far as you and I truly exist, we are identical with that spirit. Our sense of separateness is the height of the illusion. Once illumination has been reached, and you can make the supreme affirmation, "I am Brahma," the chain of cause and effect is broken, and you are free. You have merged in the infinite, as a drop in the ocean. This is salvation.

But this cold intellectualism could never satisfy the warm and eager heart of India. Teachers began to insist that there were other ways to salvation besides knowledge (*jnana*) or austere practices (*tapas*). Hinduism has never lacked its theistic prophets, teaching *bhakti*, the way of passionate devotion to a deity. They are the saving line of Hinduism, carrying on the torch, one from the other, through the centuries: Ramanuja, the philosopher; Ramananda, the preacher; Kabir, his Mohammedan convert; Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikhs; Tulsi Das,

one of the greatest of India's poets, and the sweet singer Tukaram. Selecting one or other of the leading gods of popular mythology, they elevated him (or her) into a position of sole supremacy, the sun round which the other gods of the pantheon revolved. The choice of the reformers generally fell on two of the three gods of the Hindu trinity: Brahma, the Creator; Siva, the Destroyer; and Vishnu, the Preserver. Sometimes it was Siva, but most often they selected Vishnu, and sang of his repeated incarnations. For "whenever godliness decays and ungodliness gains ground," Vishnu appears on earth in some new form "for the protection of the good and the destruction of sinners."

Siva and his spouse, Kali, supply a large percentage of India's idols. Others are shapeless stones or stumps of trees daubed with vermilion. Idolatry is defended as helpful imagery or symbolism. But if the idol is only a symbol, why is it fed and bathed and cooled by fans? Why the ceremony of "quickening," by which the god is induced to take up his abode within it? Why is the image of a god in one place more likely to grant male offspring than another image of the same god somewhere else? And what of helpful suggestiveness as to the nature of the unseen God can come from a hideous image or a shapeless stone? What conception of the loving Father will a villager derive from the image of Kali drinking blood and with the skulls of her victims hanging in a chain about her neck? Indian idol-worship can do little to uplift or purify a Hindu's thought of God.

Vishnu's two principal incarnations are as Rama and as Krishna, the themes of the two great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Rama is a noble warrior prince, and his wife Sita the chaste ideal of Indian womanhood. Krishna, as he appears in the Mahabharata, and still more in that section of it known as the Bhagavad Gita, has many attractive features. Such names take their place in the world's great story-book among the heroes which it will never wish to forget. Unfortunately, it is on the far less wholesome figure of Sri Krishna as he appears in the Puranas that Indian devotion has fastened for the outpouring of its rapture and for the nursery tales on which childhood is nurtured. Krishnaite fervour reaches its climax in the ecstatic celebration of the god's illicit amours with Radha and her train of milk-maids. "To the pure all things are pure" and doubtless cultured minds, and simple folk as well, can find in these tales a relatively harmless allegory; but for the common run they remain none the less an unhealthy poison. What moves to despair is that to find the worst in India you have to go to its religion and its temples; there to find a sensual and unspiritual priesthood, children gazing at foul carvings, which have to be protected from prosecution for indecency by a special clause of the Indian Penal Code, and temple prostitutes dedicated in their infant innocency to this life of shame.[1]

[1] *Cf.* Govinda Das, a Hindu reformer, on the orgies of a large sect in Bengal: "Nothing but nervous breakdowns and bestiality of character can result from such foul depravity masquerading as religion." *Hinduism and India*, p. 127.

Each year's residence in the country casts on one more deeply the spell of India's lovableness; but—or perhaps for that very reason—these ghastly outrages on India's childhood, supinely tolerated for centuries without protest, make one boil with indignation. Even the great Ramanuja complacently tolerated the disgusting sculptures and the dancing girls of his own temple in Trichinopoli. Mr Gandhi has begun a protest. Will he see it through?

There is vice enough in the West and to spare. But you do not go to the New Testament to find it. The protest of the majestic Figure in the Gospels is constant, uncompromising, crystal-clear. The sins, the shame, of Western Christendom are in spite of, not because of, its religion.

The baffling paradox of Hinduism is that side by side with so much that is morally depressing, it contains elements which are for the permanent enrichment of the race. It is an arresting tribute to India's genius for religion that she can produce such pearls as this:

I long to see thy face,
But ah, in me hath holiness no place.

By thy strength succour me,
So only, only I thy feet may see!

Though Sadhu's robes I've worn,
Within I'm all unshaven and unshorn.

Lost, lost, O God, am I,
Unless thou help me, Tuka,—me who cry![1]

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[1] Tukaram, a famous Maratha poet of the seventeenth century. Quoted from *Psalms of Maratha Saints*, edited by Nicol Macnicol.

or this by Tirunavukkarasu Swami, a Tamil Saivite poet who lived in the seventh century:

As the vina's pure sound, as the moonlight at ev'n,
As the south wind's soft breath, as the spring's growing heat,
As the pool hovered over by whispering bees,
So sweet is the shade at our Father-Lord's feet;[1]

or this poem of self-surrender by an Indian poetess of the fifteenth century:

Kanh[2] have I bought; the price he asked I paid:
Some cry, "Too great" while others jeer, "'Twas small":
I paid in full, weighed to the utmost grain,
My love, my life, my self, my soul, my all.[3]

Verses such as these help to reveal some of those veins of gold in Hinduism which explain both the power of the religion and the qualities of Hindu piety that so attract: its worship of the omnipresent divine in life, its preference for spiritual over material values; the honour paid to simplicity and poverty; the dignity and patience of the Hindu, his gentleness and courtesy; his open-handed hospitality and his love of children. These, and songs like them, play a large part in the family religion of Hindu homes: and that term covers not only the educated classes, but also that solid block of perhaps a hundred and fifty million Hindu agriculturists who are the backbone of Indian society, a block as yet almost unreached by Christian missions. The Sudras, or members of the lower Hindu castes, constitute a

[1] *Hymns of the Tamil Saivite Saints*, edited by F. Kingsbury and G. E. Phillips.

[2] A colloquial corruption of the name Krishna.

[3] *Poems by Indian Women*, edited by Margaret Macnicol.

kind of peasant aristocracy, proudly aloof from the untouchables or outcaste serfs. The religion they share with the higher castes is, on its ritual side, unedifying, superstitious and degrading enough, the worship of bloody Kali or pot-bellied Ganesh, or hideous Hanuman, or sensual Krishna. The religious precepts are not moral commands, but a mass of petty inhibitions connected with unlucky dates and omens and astrology. Yet, when contrasted with the animism of the outcastes, their cult appears eminently respectable, and is accompanied by an evident sincerity and reverence. A family or caste priest, often quite illiterate, and mostly greedy of gain, is the guru (religious guide) of the household, whose rare visits are the occasion of payments and instructions and ceremonies. In some dark shelf or corner are the family idols, before which the women, and less often the men, perform their daily rites, with offerings of flowers and grain and water. Hymns and stories of the gods take the place of religious education. The great occasions in religious life are a marriage or a funeral anniversary; while the family expedition to some distant place of pilgrimage marks an epoch. Festivals and pilgrimages supply colour and excitement, but little of moral dynamic or inspiration, and nothing that can ever satisfy the human spirit's yearning after God.

But it is time to turn to the other river that has fed Hinduism, a river whose muddy waters are largely responsible for the befouling of its earlier hope. We have spoken of Hinduism when more properly we might have said Brahmanism. The picture drawn

has been of the religion of the Hindu castes. Below and outside caste, spreading upwards an infection that has permeated right through the Hindu castes as well, is the outcaste population whose native religion is animism.

Enter the squalid and insanitary huts that form the fringe of most South Indian villages. There, crouching in the dark and smoke, you will see a family puny in physique, nearly black in skin, and with faces often very irregular in feature. For months of the year, when their labour is not wanted in the fields, they hover on the verge of actual starvation. Drink is their only alleviation. They feed on offal and on carrion. They may not use the village well. Their habits are indescribably filthy. Eight of the ten children born in the family will have died in infancy.

And their religion, the one ray of light that might bring comfort to such dark homes? It is an unrelieved mass of fear and superstition. Their worship is of devils, or at its best, of ghosts. The unseen world for them is peopled by myriads of malicious, vengeful demons, ready to leap out at them from every wayside tree or stone. The universe is unfriendly; its spiritual inhabitants are only moved by spite and hate. You are lucky if by some stratagem or ceremony you can outwit them. The wizard is your only friend, and your weapons of defence his meaningless mutterings and incantations. For defend yourself you must; and so there has been evolved a mass of superstitions which absolutely rule your life. There are thousands and thousands of

them, covering every circumstance and happening. Your only safety lies in knowing as many of them as possible by heart, and scrupulously following them, even when they are contradictory. And so life becomes one long slavery of fear, the kaleidoscope of each day disclosing some new grouping of your demon foes.

Here are some prescriptions. When starting on a journey, it is inauspicious to see a jackal cross the road from the right, a crow on a dead tree, or a dog shake his head so as to flap his ears, to meet a one-eyed oil-man (unless he laughs he should be beaten !), to see a cat crossing a road, or meet a barren woman early in the morning. If a man reach a village at dusk, or after nightfall, and hear a woman crying, he must go back home at once, or at least go as far as another village to rest for the night, and then go home, or he may sit down and smoke and then go on.[1] If a woman want a son, she should feed ants daily with a mixture of sugar and flour, fish with balls of flour, and water a pipal tree daily for a year. There are other devices for other ends. A hoot owl which has been carefully kept for a year is furnished with an image of a tiger on which to ride, and is made drunk with liquor. If a man takes the ashes secured by burning this owl's eyes and rubs them into his own eyes, he obtains magical power which puts under his control any woman upon whom he looks ![2]

We need constantly to remind ourselves that all

[1] George W. Briggs, *The Chamars*, pp. 159, 160.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 120.

this, and not attractive extracts from Sanskrit books, or the cultured practices of the higher castes, is the kind of thing religion actually means for millions of our neediest fellow citizens in India: a thing of terror and torment, a bondage that robs life of any reason and the world of any meaning. Here is a dead weight to be lifted before social and political reform can get seriously to work with scores of millions at the bottom of the ladder. Contamination with this aftermath of aboriginal religion is the price Brahmanism has paid for its continued hold upon the people.

Indeed, religion supplies all the more serious obstacles that bar the way of the nationalist reformer. Hinduism is more socially depressing than any other known religion. Not only does it deny human rights to the helot population, and plant its heel firmly on the necks of those who would rise; the degradation of woman is a social calamity more disastrous even than untouchability. Woman belongs to an inferior order; the fate to which she is born is the consequence of evil deeds in a previous existence. She is married in childhood. (This marriage is more of a solemn betrothal than a marriage, for no girl may live with her husband, by law, until the age of thirteen.) The family system by which all the sons bring their wives to live in the family home prevails. The bride is thus just one more addition to the women's part of the house, and is in complete subjection to her mother-in-law. Frequently she is a mother within a year of puberty; though among more educated and enlightened Hindus the age at

which girls are married is steadily rising. A woman's sons are hers only until they are seven years old. True, these are the all-important years; but then the boy goes to live in the man's part of the house, and thereafter his mother sees less of him. Early marriage deprives an Indian girl of that which is, perhaps, the happiest of all times for English girls, the period between childhood and adult womanhood. The child, with no transition period, becomes all at once a woman with a woman's responsibilities. Through early marriage health is often impaired.[1]

Every political reformer knows that such motherhood dooms Indian manhood to racial inferiority. But he has the leaders of religious orthodoxy against him at every step. Year by year the Hindu Mahasabha [2] passes pious platitudes in favour of widow re-marriage, the removal of untouchability, and the rest, but prudently defers action to a future date.

But the saddest of all India's women are her widows. The last census enumerated three hundred and thirty-five thousand widows of less than fifteen years, and

[1] Mrs Annie Besant in a lecture to Indians some time ago spoke as follows.

"I had a letter the other day from a friend of mine. A girl relative of his had been married at twelve. She became a mother next year at thirteen When childbirth was upon her, she lay for four days in agony with the unborn child, in an agony none know save those who have gone through the gateway of motherhood. At last it became so intolerable to those who watched her that they put her under chloroform; for ten hours she lay under chloroform, then the child was born dead; the mother died. A girl of thirteen was sent through that agony."

[2] The annual congress of Hindu leaders.

eighteen thousand of less than five years old. No widow may re-marry. She is forced to shave her head and become the dishonoured drudge of the family. Her widowhood is richly deserved, for surely it is the penalty for former sin. What despair! Calcutta has more prostitutes for its population than any European city; and they are mainly recruited from the widows. These widow-prostitutes are to be found in every larger Bengal village. From such a fate the agony of sati was for many a merciful escape. Sati, however, was a mark, not only of the sanctity of marriage, but also of women's inferiority. No faithful Hindu husband ever leapt upon his wife's funeral pyre.

Among the upper classes in the greater part of India women are still confined to the inner courtyard of the house as their whole world. They may never go out into the fields or streets except under a heavy veil. And how can they fill the long days? Only eleven out of a thousand of India's women can even read.

Hardly less serious than the position of women is the heavy handicap set on progress by the reflex influences of some of the cardinal Hindu tenets. It is not only that caste is divisive, rending India horizontally into a thousand watertight compartments, nor that Hinduism is radically and incurably conservative and opposed to change of any kind: but it induces a lethargic and unprogressive type of character. The denial of value or reality to the material world, and the exclusive exaltation of the spiritual, indisposes you to any serious effort to better

things around you. And the central doctrine of karma, teaching that all you are and do is the necessary and inevitable result of the deeds of a past incarnation, makes straight for fatalism of the most depressing type. It necessarily discourages from any effort after the social uplift of the less fortunate members of society. Why seek to relieve pain or misery? The sufferer is only meeting with his deserts. Help him, and you only postpone his day of retribution. Such a religion, with its indifference and hopeless fatalism, superimposed on a people climatically indisposed to effort and discouraged by their helpless dependence upon uncertain seasons, makes advance and progress an uphill task that deters all but the most dauntless spirits.

But the most grievous disservice rendered by Hinduism is its divorce of morals from religion. If national advance is in the first instance a matter of morale, if the greatness of a nation depends finally on the character of its citizens, then a religion which fails to relate orthodoxy with morality must reduce a patriot to despair. What moral uplift or regenerating power can there be about a religion which attributes to its deities indulgences which no decent Hindu would permit himself? With many an Indian schoolboy, tales of the deities, instead of encouraging him to fight upwards, must push him gently down the slippery slope of self-indulgence. And what light is the struggler after better things likely to receive from a system which makes disrespect to a Brahman a graver matter than adultery, and imposes its severest penalties, not on deceit or lying, but on the

crime of drinking water from the hands of a low-caste man? [1]

In this respect the wave of new nationalism has not helped matters as much as might have been expected. Its enthusiasm for social service and reform has been handicapped by a revulsion from western religion and a strong reaction in favour of all things Indian. A small army of apologists and champions of Hinduism has appeared. Mrs Besant, Swami Vivekananda and Dayananda Sarasvati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, were, in their different ways, the first to give coherent expression to this tendency and to make Indians feel that to deny Hinduism was not an essential sign of culture. Instead, it became the mark of a patriot to champion Hinduism, blemishes and all, as the most distinctive product of India's venerable antiquity. To abjure Hinduism for the foreigner's religion was treason to your country. Immense impetus has been given to this tendency by growing acquaintance with

[1] *Cf. The Student Movement, January* 1926, p. 74. "The defect of Hinduism is not accidental but essential. Hinduism is wrong at the very centre, and not merely in its circumference. . . . By the impersonal character, and lack of moral responsibility, in its conception of Brahma, the Supreme Being, conjoined with a pantheistic philosophy, Hinduism cuts the nerve of moral responsibility in man. Thus at best it has a defective conception of sin. Its ethic is in effect an arbitrary legalism consisting largely in ceremonial and caste rules. The belief that the human individual is an emanation or temporary manifestation of the Impersonal Supreme leaves no permanent worth or moral ideal to the individual. And the belief in the illusory character (*maya*) of the world produces a pessimism that must result in acquiescence in evil. These things are fundamental to Hinduism."

the pagan materialism of English business life, the hideous squalor of British slums, and the shame of Piccadilly, and still more by the impotence of Christianity to avert the débacle of the war. "Surely in the sphere of religion at least India has nothing to learn from Europe."

A healthier manifestation of this tendency has been the appearance of two reforming sects in Hinduism, the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj.

The Brahmo Samaj was the first reaction of Hinduism under Christian stimulus. Early in the nineteenth century Raja Rammohan Roy, a Hindu of high family and noble character, founded a religious society, which, shaking itself free from the corruptions and superstitions of idolatrous Hinduism, was to form an international theistic Church, drawing its inspiration alike from Jesus Christ and all enlightened spiritual teachers. Under the fervent leadership in later days of Keshab Chandra Sen, it became the spiritual home of the progressive and devout in the more cultured circles of Bengal society. Its most notable adherents are the famous Tagore family. Latterly, nationalist and political impulses have tended to depress the primarily religious motive of the Samaj.

Markedly nationalist from the first has been the virile and aggressive Arya Samaj with its home in the hardy Punjab. There can be no doubt that the rugged personality of its founder, Dayananda Sarasvati, was powerfully moved by anti-western bias and reaction. The aim of the Samaj has not been the unfettered search for truth, but such a minimum

purging and reformation of Hinduism as shall enable the old national religion to hold its own against the inroads of the West. It takes its stand on the verbal inspiration and authority of the Hindu sacred scriptures, though interpreted by canons as arbitrary and untenable as were ever forced into the service of religious obscurantism. But nationalism can furnish religion with a most robust and vigorous motive; and, freed from some of the more obvious abuses of their creed, the disciples of the Arya Samaj are making Hinduism a missionary religion. At present the principal activities of the Samaj are directed against Islam in India, and are a most provocative factor in the recent recrudescence of inter-communal bitterness and hate.

In other directions the same motive may be detected in the frankly reactionary movement of theosophy,[1] and even in the Ramakrishna Mission, though the latter is chiefly known for its quite admirable emphasis on social service.

Nothing is more hopeful in the new India than the place given to social service. In the forefront stand the Servants of India, a remarkable society of men who, with almost monastic simplicity and self-denial, have devoted themselves to public work of every kind. Their founder was Mr Gokhale, the greatest

[1] It is important to bear in mind that under Mrs Besant's leadership, theosophy is in India as definitely Hindu and anti-Christian as in England it professes to be Christian. It has a murky and unwholesome atmosphere, revealed in the records of the Madras High Court and the publications of the Madras Christian College. See the excellent summary in Farquhar's *Modern Religious Movements in India*, pp 267-291.

statesman modern India has so far produced. Living in a community on a bare subsistence allowance; bound by rule to years of rigorous study before they take part in public life; the Servants of India are at their country's call wherever they are needed, either for political information and advice, based on scholarly and thorough study, or for practical relief and humble service in time of flood or famine, or disaster of any kind. Trusted for their integrity by the public and by government, they took a prominent share in many of the measures taken to repair the havoc of the Moplah rebellion.

But of recent years it has come true that almost any Indian college will have its night school for the depressed classes, or its band of volunteers, eager at once to serve in any time of calamity or distress. Not once or twice have I personally watched the students of a college taking to boats in flood time to rescue hundreds of lives, and for days and weeks afterwards keeping up relays of workers to distribute food and clothing to the homeless and starving. In Bengal to-day it is hardly necessary for government to do more than co-ordinate and give right of way, on the occasion of a flood or famine, to the organized bands of voluntary workers who at once are on the spot, ready with their services.

This is a new thing in Hinduism. It is due, a Christian may not unfairly claim, to the infection of Christian teaching and example, powerfully reinforced by the patriotic appeal of Indian nationalism. The Principal of any college recognizes with joy that to-day he has a new motive to which he can con-

fidently appeal in his effort to train and inspire his students for disinterested public service. The love of country is moving men who twenty years ago were sluggish and impervious to any motive other than that of a good post, and the getting of their bread and butter. Up and down the country may be found individual Brahmans and men of high caste who are working for the removal of untouchability and who will publicly sit down to eat with outcastes. Mr Gandhi has had to urge caution on over-zealous reformers, eager to tackle the problem of prostitution in Bengal. Time was when reformers had to look to government for a lead in any matter of practical reform. The abolition of sati is a sufficient illustration of what is meant. To-day responsible Indian opinion is ahead of government in its demand for primary education, and for the prohibition of early marriage. It is government which, on the plea of discretion, applies the brake. The record of the last session of the Legislative Assembly at Delhi is significant. A resolution was passed by a large majority in the teeth of official opposition, asking government to accept, as its ultimate policy, total prohibition of the manufacture, import and sale of alcoholic liquors, except for medicinal and scientific purposes. A resolution for female suffrage was passed unanimously. And laws were passed for the legalization of inter-caste marriages; and for the suppression of the traffic in minor girls destined, under the title of *devadasis* (servants of God), for a life of prostitution in Hindu temples.

It is in education that the new nationalism is

bearing some of its most healthy fruit. There is Santiniketan, the "home of peace," at Bolpur in Bengal, where a poet's dream from some Utopia has materialized as a school and university. There are no classrooms. Each teacher sits under his tree and his class squat on the grass all round him. When it rains they take refuge in the simple dormitories built of bamboo and grass. You are awakened at dawn by the school choir, bare-footed and white-robed, which makes the circuit of the dormitories outside, singing a morning hymn. Later you will see the meadows dotted by white figures, each on his own mat, for his devotions. Punishments are rare. The disapproval of public opinion, expressed in a boycott for a specified term, is normally sufficient for the purpose. At intervals through the day, groups meet for religious teaching at the feet of the poet whose dream has come to earth, Dr Rabindranath Tagore. Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans are among the savants who have gathered there as the nucleus of what is to be an international university, just as, long ago, scholars from Lombardy and Constantinople and anywhere settled on the banks of the Isis to study and share their learning with poor English lads attracted thither by their presence. Bolpur has a fragrance difficult to describe.

A sterner, hardier life is lived by the pupils in the seminary of the Arya Samaj, by the clear mountain waters of the Ganges, near Hardwar The boys live by quasi-monastic rule based on the old traditions of the Hindu scriptures (Shastras). They come at the age of seven or eight for a term of seventeen

years, during which they may return home but seldom. It has yet to be proved that this drastic sexual segregation is healthy. The life is hard and simple. There is a virility about the place which is most attractive, although the atmosphere strikes one as somewhat narrow and reactionary. The education is, nominally, based on Sanskrit, but the curriculum has a distinctly western flavour. If beauty and poetry are the inspiration of Bolpur, nationalism is the driving force at the Kangri Gurukula.

From it go out the Arya missionaries who are seeking to reclaim the Hindu perverts lost to Islam and Christianity. The theological weapons which they use are antiquated, drawn from the armoury of Tom Paine and Bradlaugh, and fall powerless before any intelligent presentation of the Christian message to-day. For their bellicose methods of attack, which lack any effort to appreciate, the earlier methods of Christian propaganda are perhaps largely to blame. But, stimulated by the religious rivalry which is the necessary result of a democratic counting of heads in a country where the several religions constitute the chief political parties, the Arya Samaj is responsible for a serious aggravation of Hindu-Moslem tension. The Suddhi (purification) movement, which aims at the reclamation of Hindus who have been converted to Islam and Christianity, is arousing the fierce antagonism of Moslems in the Punjab.

The latest reactions of nationalism upon Islam are interesting. Mohammedans in India, equally disliking alien rule and a system of representative democracy which must leave them a permanent minority

under Hindu rule, have of recent years inclined more and more to the Pan-Islamic movement, which tends to make them find their *patria* not in India but in the community of Moslem peoples. "We Moslems are proud of our international outlook," said Sir Abdur Rahim the other day.[1] There can be no doubt that Indian Moslems have been much more deeply stirred by the imperilling of the Caliphate and the sacred places than by the fortunes of the Swaraj movement or the Indian National Congress. Indian Moslems were much more closely touched by the fortunes of Turkey against Italy in Tripoli, and by the whole course of the Græco-Turkish war, than by the feats of the Indian army on the side of Britain. Turkey's victories were Islam's triumph, and every Indian Moslem flushed and thrilled with pride. The bond of Islam has established an undeniable inter-racial brotherhood amongst the faithful; so strong that within Islam at least religion seems a closer tie than blood. Ten years ago the Moslem was dreaming of an inter-racial alliance of the faithful, stretching from Morocco through Egypt, Persia and India into China, in unbroken line, with its political centre and religious capital upon the Bosphorus. But Pan-Islamism has been sorely wounded in the house of its friends.

First, the Sherif of Mecca by his revolt against the Turks in 1916, and then the impieties of Kemal Pasha, split Islam and knocked the bottom out of the Pan-Islamic movement against Britain. Britain was the protagonist of Europe, the enemy threatening the dignity

[1] *The Statesman*, December 31, 1925.

and independence of the Caliph (the Commander of the Faithful); Kemal was the champion of the sacred Caliphate. But, lo! this Kemal it was who exiled the Sultan and abolished the temporal power of his office. The next issue was the sacred places—principally, Mecca and Medina. Anything was better than that the custodianship of the sacred places should be in the hands of the King of the Hedjaz, Britain's puppet—for all the blue blood of his Arab stock. Ibn-Saud, the Wahabi leader, must supplant Britain's protégé. But, again—so report has it—this same Ibn-Saud, of all atrocities, bombards the Prophet's tomb!

Indian Islam is sorely put to it, between British and Hindu sovereignty. Islam is not really an Indian religion: which is why it has had so little treatment in this volume. And yet India is the largest Mohammedan power in the world. King George rules over more Moslem subjects than are to be found in any other country. Where is Indian Islam to find a real patriotism?

One question remains: the bearing of the new nationalism on India's attitude to Christianity. There has been the powerful revulsion among the educated classes in favour of Hinduism as the supreme patriotic asset. But it is only at intervals, and under the sway of particular leaders, that the villages have yet felt the influence of this nationalism. The village population is still as open as ever to receive the Christian message. The outcaste peoples are still crowding into the Church, which stretches out to them the hand of human brotherhood. Indeed the tendency

of the depressed classes to embrace Christianity wholesale, often chiefly with a view to simple human betterment, is one powerful incentive now moving the high castes to extend to them human rights. For politics have introduced the fear of any numerical loss to Hinduism.

But the revulsion amongst the intelligentsia against westernism in religion has had one compensation of incomparable importance. India is challenging the right of Europe, which is so hesitating and half-hearted in its following of Christ, to be any longer the exponent of His teaching. There is an increasing appreciation of the fact that Christianity is in origin an Eastern religion. While there is a growing revulsion against European Christianity, educated India is each day more and more powerfully attracted by the figure of the Christ. His irresistible spell is already upon India. It is a most rare thing to-day for the missionary working amongst the educated classes to come across any opposition to the person or claims of Jesus Christ. His way is open as never before to the heart of thinking India. But this belongs to another chapter.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHURCH IN INDIA

It is a new India that to-day confronts the missionary whose contacts happen to be chiefly with the upper strata of her society, an India of incalculable opportunity for any disciple in whom men can see the living likeness of his Master. Religious thought among the educated to-day is dominated by the personality of Christ. One is met constantly by serious expressions of modern Indian thought in which pre-eminence, explicit or implicit, is accorded to Him in the religious sphere. Among educated Hindus hostility to Jesus Christ is a thing all but unknown. For an educational missionary to urge on his class the claims of Christ to their respectful study would be a waste of time. He will most rapidly establish touch by assuming that Christ's supremacy as teacher and example is admitted and unchallenged. To the Christian teacher it is a new experience, a thing full both of awe and inspiration, to stand before his class of Hindu students, and know that between him and them reverence for Christ is common ground. The public press of India to-day teems with manifestations of this changed attitude. Here are a few excerpts culled from utterances of the past few years:

The solution of the problems of the day depends upon the application of the spirit and mind of Jesus

to those problems. (From the *Indian Social Reformer*, an influential political weekly paper, with a Hindu editor.)

It is incumbent on us to come to terms with Christ. We want Him and we cannot do without Him. (A Hindu lecturer addressing his own students.)[1]

There is no one else seriously bidding for the heart of the world except Jesus Christ. There is no one else in the field. (Written by a Brahmo Samajist.)[1]

If there were formed a society of men who want to follow Jesus and who are left free to decide for themselves by what method to follow, we should join by our thousands. (A Hindu student speaking to the Principal of his college.)

It is a new experience. This disappearance of animosity and bitterness amongst educated Hindus does not date back much more than five or six years. It is the more remarkable because of the antagonism to Western Christianity which Nationalism has at times tended to display. In part it is due to a growing differentiation between Christ and the practices of Western Christendom, and to the disentanglement of His personality from Europeanism which was effected by the war. In part it is due to the fact that so much of the spirit and methods of Mahatma Gandhi, the religious ideal of modern India, is plainly derived from and inspired by the character and teaching of Jesus Christ. But chiefly it is the fruit of a hundred years of faithful missionary labours. We are at last seeing the effect of the wide dissemination of the Bible and the printed page over many decades. Said an English

[1] From a paper by Dr Stanley Jones.