CHAPTER VI

AT THE CROSS-ROADS

I HAVE described a visit to the tôls of Navadvîpa in Chapter IV., and have pointed out that in spite of the rapidity with which English high schools and colleges have become multiplied, it would be a grave mistake to suppose that the indigenous system of education is defunct. No accurate estimate of the number of indigenous institutions in existence is possible, but it is certainly large. The number of private tôls is known to be upwards of 1500 in Bengal alone; and the returns used in the compilation of the seventh quinquennial review of the progress of education in India (1912–17) show the existence of nearly 38,000 private institutions, the majority of which consists of tôls and pathshalas, madrassas and maktabs, and it is probable that there are many which find no mention in the returns.[1]

In spite, too, of the demand for medical educa-

[1] Economic pressure, especially in the case of private institutions devoted to indigenous classical learning, is said to be making itself felt; and in the quinquennial review for 1917–22, published since the above was written, the number of private institutions of all kinds in British India is estimated to be about 35,000, with an attendance of 640,000. With reference to the tôls and madrassas of Assam, Mr. J. R. Cunningham, C.I.E., writes that Hindus and Muhammadans who are in close touch with the more modern civilisation, though they may be drawn by sentiment towards the old institutions, feel nevertheless that the day of tôls and madrassas is past, "and that the tempering of modern life and learning with the ancient wisdom can be best achieved, so far as it can be achieved by educational means, by bringing the old and the new together in the higher institutions of learning with a view to interaction and the survival of the best in both".

tion on Western lines, the wide extent to which indigenous systems are practised is instructive. Here again no statistics are available, but, as a result of a very careful inquiry, it was ascertained that a very large proportion of the total number of persons practising medicine in Bengal was made up of *Kavirajes* and *Hakims*. And the inquiry left little room for doubt that, quite apart from the fact that the village *kaviraj* was the chief medical resource of the bulk of the population, the orthodox *kaviraj* and *hakim* were held in high esteem by the better classes, and were not infrequently preferred by them to the Western practitioner.

The method of instruction in vogue among the *kavirajes* is characterised by one of the most distinctive features of the ancient educational system of the Indo-Aryan people. Every *kaviraj* of repute gathers round him a little band of disciples who receive free board, lodging and instruction at his hands. And it is notable that when representative *kavirajes* were asked how best Government could assist with a view to improving the teaching of Ayurveda, they deprecated the establishment of institutions on Western lines on two main grounds, firstly, that this would mean the setting up of courses of instruction available only on the payment of fees—an idea altogether repugnant to the orthodox *kaviraj*; and secondly, that it would imply the addition of a course in Western science resulting in a hybrid product half-*kaviraj*, half-doctor, in whom the people would have little faith. As one eminent *kaviraj* put it, "a mixture of the *kaviraj* and of the doctor is not at all wanted in the country. It cannot be said with propriety that an allopathic practitioner would supplement his knowledge with that in Ayurveda. Why, then, should Ayurveda be supplemented by Allopath?"

But more significant than the persistence of indigenous institutions are the signs of a revulsion against the exclusively Western type of institution among those who have themselves been brought up in it. A notable feature of the political ferment in Bengal at the time of the partition was the establishment of national schools wholly Indian in management and altogether free from foreign control. It may be true that these institutions were the direct outcome of a desire on the part of those who were then ranged against Government to provide for persons who were expelled from Government and Government-aided schools, or whose animosity against the British made attendance at such schools distasteful, rather than of any genuine revolt against the Western system of education which they stood for. But it would be rash to assume that this latter sentiment was not present as well, and it defined itself more clearly later on with the formation in Madras of a society for the promotion of national education, and again in the course of the controversies that arose out of the storm of political unrest that swept over the land at the close of the Great War.

Dissatisfaction with the educational system was by then apparent in different quarters. A demand for vocational courses was being made by the very classes which had been mainly responsible for the rigidly literary bias which the system had acquired. The driving force behind this demand, however, was not sentiment but the economic strain upon the middle classes. The colleges were turning out a supply of graduates and undergraduates in arts largely in excess of the demand, whence the agitation for courses of a more practical type. The demand for medical training in Bengal, for example, became clamorous and widespread. It was, indeed, necessity rather

than predilection that was the determining factor in this movement. So much was admitted by one of the most prominent of the Indian-owned newspapers in Calcutta, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, which early in 1921 was bewailing the extent to which education was being dominated by economic necessities. The vast majority of Indian parents subjected themselves to real hardships in order to provide their boys with a Western education; and the tendency of the day to belittle academic education was to be explained in the main, by the disappointment caused by the failure of the boys to give a good return for the money invested in their education. The rush for the medical, engineering and other institutions giving technical education was the direct result of this disappointment.[1]

But apart from the economic aspect of the question Western education was condemned as such by extreme nationalist opinion; and if this sentiment was visible in the attack upon the schools and colleges in 1907, it was violently in evidence in the campaign against the Government led by Mr. Gandhi in 1921 and 1922, when students were persuaded to leave their schools and colleges *en masse*. In the heat of the political battle reason was ousted by political prejudice and passion. "English learning", declaimed Mr. Jitendralal Banerji, "may be good; English culture may be good; their philosophy may be good; their government, their law, everything may be good; but each one of these but helps to rivet the fetters of our servitude. Therefore I say to the English, good as these things may be, Take them away; take them away beyond the seas, far off to your Western home, so that we and our generation may have nothing to do with them

[1] See an article entitled "Western Civilisation and Western Rule" in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of January 7, 1921.

—may not be accursed with the contamination either of your goodness or of your evil ".[1]

Few, even under stress of intense political excitement, would go so far as Mr. Jitendralal Banerji. Nevertheless it would be a mistake wholly to discount such sentiments as the froth and bubble upon waters lashed to fury by a political storm. There are many Indians who are far from hostile to the British connection, who ardently desire to see a more distinctively Indian orientation given to the education imparted to their people. The views of such persons were voiced by Sir Rashbehary Ghose in the course of a speech delivered in 1911, in support of the establishment of a Hindu university. "Education", he said, "must have its roots deep down in national sentiment and tradition. . . . We are the heirs of an ancient civilisation, and the true office of education ought to be the encouragement of a gradual and spontaneous growth of the ideals which have given a definite mould to our culture and our institutions. . . . In our curriculum, therefore, Hindu ethics and metaphysics will occupy a foremost place, the Western system being used only for purposes of contrast and illustration. Special attention will also be paid to a knowledge of the country, its literature, its arts, its philosophy and its history." Similar views have been repeated frequently of late. Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, C.I.E., presiding at an annual educational conference in Madras in May 1921, declared that it was the conviction of the educated community that the Western system of education had been barren of results, and he traced this alleged failure to the fact that those who were responsible for its direction and control had ignored India's racial psychology, history, literature and religion, and patriotic ideals and

[1] In a speech in Calcutta on February 10, 1921.

aspirations. A year later another Indian publicist, while protesting against undiscriminating condemnation of the Calcutta university, laid stress upon what he regarded as its main defects, and asserted that, apart altogether from political considerations, an education directed by men of an alien race, however noble their motives, must inevitably be out of touch with the inner soul of the people. "This education", was his verdict, "has not been able to build up the new culture on our real life." [1] Opinion has moved far since the days of Ram Mohan Roy and David Hare.

A closely reasoned statement of the view set forth above is to be found in a paper by Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore, published by the Society for the Promotion of National Education in Madras in 1919, with the title of "The Centre of Indian Culture".

The burden of the theme is not that the learning of the West is valueless for the people of the East, but that under the existing system foreign education occupies all the available space in the Indian mind, and so "kills or hampers the great opportunity for the creation of a new thought power, by a new combination of truths". English education as now given is for the Indian mind "a kind of food which contains only one particular ingredient needful for its vitality, and even that not fresh, but dried and packed in tins. In our true food we must have co-ordination of all different ingredients—and most of these not as laboratory products, or in a desiccated condition, but as organic things similar to our own living tissues." The crux of the whole matter lies in the last few words of the above quotation. One comes across the same sentiment clothed in different words over and over again. "It is

[1] In an article contributed anonymously to the *Englishman* in June 1922.

hopeless to cater for some clamorous demand of the moment by endeavouring to fashion the history of one people on the model of another—however flourishing the latter may be. . . . For India to force herself along European lines of growth would not make her Europe, but only a distorted India." [1]

He deals forcefully with the question of language which he regards as a factor of paramount importance in the whole educational problem. His experience as a teacher goes to show that many pupils are naturally deficient in the power of learning languages. And given this premise, it is difficult to resist his conclusion that it is an appalling waste of national material to cut off all higher educational facilities from the thousands of pupils who have no gift for acquiring a foreign tongue, but who possess the intellect and the desire to learn. Or again that even in the case of those who possess an average ability for acquiring a foreign tongue, "the knocking at the gate and turning of the key take away the best part of their life".

Looked at from a somewhat different point of view the use of English inevitably tends to turn the Indian mind Westwards for its source of inspiration; and, indeed, the education given in the universities "takes it for granted that it is for cultivating a hopeless desert", and that language, mental outlook and knowledge must be imported bodily from across the sea. "And this makes our education so nebulously distant and unreal, so detached from all our associations of life, so terribly costly to us in time, health and means and yet so meagre of results." The emphasis here given to the weight of the incubus laid upon the educated classes in having to imbibe

[1] "The Message of the Forest", by Dr. R. N. Tagore, in the *Modern Review* for May 1919.

their education through the medium of a foreign tongue, acquires additional significance by comparison with the views of fifty years ago, when it was the fashion of the educated classes to regard the use of the Bengali tongue as undignified, and when—as I have been told—men like Michael Madhusudan Datta boasted that they even dreamed in English.

The difficulty so often paraded of the multiplicity of tongues in India, is shown to be the product of superficial thinking. It is due to a habit of thinking of India as one thinks of one of the countries of Europe, whereas one should think of her as one thinks of Europe herself with a common civilisation and an intellectual unity which is not based upon uniformity of language. Just as in Europe there was a time in the early days of her culture when she had Latin as the one language of her learning, so in India, in the corresponding stage of her evolution, there was one common language of culture,, namely, Sanskrit. But in Europe the perfection of her mental unfolding came later. "When the great European countries found their individual languages, then only the true federation of cultures became possible in the West, and the very differences of the channels made the commerce of ideas in Europe so richly copious and so variedly active." And if this diversity of tongues proved to be no obstacle, but on the contrary a stimulus to the growth of a distinctive culture and civilisation in Europe, why should it not act in the same way in India?

In his views on the language question Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore is, as I have already shown, voicing a considerable and growing volume of opinion. For many years past an association called the Council of Indian Education, which was formed in Madras in 1900, has urged that the

vernaculars should be the media of instruction in non-language subjects in secondary education; and in 1915 a resolution was moved in the Imperial Legislative Council by the Hon. Mr. Rama Rayaningar recommending that steps should be taken for making the vernaculars the media of instruction, and the study of English as a *second language* compulsory in all secondary schools. Elsewhere the matter has been carried further, for, in the State of Hyderabad definite steps were taken four years later to put this suggestion into operation.

Amongst the officials of the State was a little group of men with whom the belief had steadily been growing that if modern education was to reach the masses, it must be imparted to them through their own mother-tongue. Prominent among them were Nawab Hyder Nawaz Jung Bahadur, the able Financial Minister of the State, and the Director of Public Instruction, Nawab Masood Jung Bahadur, a grandson of the famous founder of Aligarh. By the exertions of these men, carried on with the warm approval of His Exalted Highness the Nizam, the foundations of a teaching and examining university under the title of the Osmania University were laid, the outstanding feature of which was the employment of Urdu as the medium of instruction. The initial difficulty, namely, the lack of suitable text-books, was vigorously tackled from the start by the establishment of a Bureau of Translation with a staff of qualified translators under the direction of a noted scholar and writer; and to such good purpose has the Bureau worked that the translation of over one hundred and thirty volumes, on such varying subjects as history, philosophy, economics, mathematics, physics, chemistry and law has already been successfully accomplished. Other features of the scheme

which are worthy of note are the acceptance of a school leaving-certificate in respect of certain of the subjects required for matriculation, and the compulsory teaching of English as a second language throughout the high school and college courses and of theology or ethics throughout the latter.

Great progress has been made during the half-dozen years of the university's existence. Fourteen high schools are at work preparing boys for the Osmania College, where 700 students are already undergoing undergraduate courses in buildings temporarily assigned to it; and preparations are in hand for a large expansion in the near future. A site of 1400 acres has been selected for permanent buildings, and a sum approaching a crore of rupees is to be provided by Government for their erection. High schools affiliated to the university are to be established at the head-quarters of every district throughout the State, and arrangements are being made to accommodate 2000 university students, it being estimated that this figure will be reached within the next six years. In brief, the goal which the State has set before itself is, in the words of the Nizam, the creation of a national seat of learning, "where full advantage may be taken of all that is best in the ancient and modern systems of physical, intellectual and spiritual culture".[1]

All these things are straws which show which way the wind is blowing, and the growing desire on the part of many to see religious instruction become once more an integral part of the educational course, is a finger-board pointing in the same direction. The most marked development along these lines is the establishment of denominational universities at Benares and Aligarh.

[1] From His Exalted Highness's *Firman* authorising the establishment of the university.

But these two institutions, though the best known, are by no means the only examples of the kind. Other striking enterprises which bear witness to the kind of unrest of mind of which I have been writing are to be found in the Hindu Academy of Daulatpur in the district of Khulna in Bengal, in the educational activities of the Arya Samaj in the United Provinces and the Punjab, and in the school founded by Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore at Bholpur in Western Bengal, which has recently developed into a university known as the Visva Bharati. Of this latter institution I shall have something to say later on; in the meantime let me conduct the reader to a rural district in Bengal, where on the banks of the Bhairab river, in the heart of the countryside, stand the buildings of the Hindu Academy of Daulatpur.

CHAPTER VII

A RE-ORIENTATION OF AIM ?

THE whole of the teaching staff and the majority of the six hundred students attending the classes at Daulatpur reside in hostels of various types, the most striking of which is a group of thatched cottages built in the immemorial style of rural Bengal. In addition to the hostels and the laboratories and class-rooms, there is a guest-house and a temple.

The idea of the institution was explained to me by the little band of enthusiastic workers, to whom it owed its existence, on the occasion of an informal visit. They told me how, nearly twenty years before, they had been struck with the grave defects of an educational system under which the teaching was wholly divorced from religion. Was it not possible, they asked themselves, to bring about a harmonious combination of the Religion and Philosophy of the East with the Arts and Sciences of the West ? And for the answer they pointed to the buildings all round ; the chemical and physical laboratories much of whose equipment had been manufactured upon the spot ; the simple hostels half seen amid clusters of typical Bengali trees ; the playing fields, and the temple on the floor of whose quiet and shaded portico a Sanskrit pundit was expounding the śastras to an eager but reverent group of boys. The whole scene was a crystal-

lisation of the idea with which they had started, "the combination", to use their own words, "of secular education with moral and religious training based on the highest ideals of life expounded by the Hindu Acharyas of old".

In practice the two distinctive types of education, the Eastern and the Western, flourish side by side, the former being represented by a chatuspathi and the latter by a college affiliated to the Calcutta University. The chatuspathi is conducted in strict accordance with ancient Hindu ideals. Instruction and, in the case of resident students, board and lodging, are provided free of charge. Classes in grammar, literature, Hindu law, Mîmâmsâ and Vedanta are held by the acharya and competent pundits in the court of the temple. Its students have no part in the college; it is a purely indigenous institution. It exercises a marked influence, however, upon the college, for the temple is the point at which the two systems meet.

It is stated in the trust-deed that "a symbol of God Dadhibaman (Vishnu) was installed in this Institution on the 13th Magh 1310 (February 1, 1904). We dedicate this Institution and all property connected herewith to him. Henceforth He will have His seat in this Institution and will be the proprietor of all its property, both present and future, and also of all its work." And it is in the presence of this symbol of the Eternal installed in the shrine of the temple that teachers and students of the college and chatuspathi alike meet, and have expounded to them the dharma-sastras of old.

My hosts were somewhat diffident in informing me of the exact extent of the religious instruction given. Much was left to the discretion of the acharya, they said. But in the report of a university inspector drawn up some years ago, I

found it stated that instruction from the Manu-samhitâ given by the acharya was compulsory in the case of all Hindu students; and the same writer stated that he could himself bear witness that "a beautiful prayer for the fruitfulness of the day's labour and the happiness and prosperity of the Motherland, chanted simultaneously throughout the whole college at the beginning and the end of each day's work, produces a permanent impression, even upon an uninitiated onlooker".

The influence upon the college of the Eastern tradition as represented by the chatuspathi and the temple, is apparent even on a cursory inspection. It attracts one's attention in the library where the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" shares a shelf appropriately enough with the compendious "Śabdakalpadrûma", and "Journals of the Chemical Society" stand side by side with the "Rigveda Samhitâ". The college time-table follows Indian rather than European custom, the classes being held between 6 A.M. and 10 A.M., and again in the afternoon after a long break in the middle of the day.

As one passed from its class-rooms to its simple hostels one became aware of a distinctive atmosphere, and standing in converse with the earnest band of workers in the shadow of the temple portico, the hush of the tropic noon scarcely broken by the soft murmur of the Bhairab river pursuing its eternal journey from the mountains to the sea, with the restful features of the acharya and his fellow-pundits outlined against the gloom which brooded like a softly draped figure of Night behind the open door of the inner shrine, it was easy to believe that the hope of its founders had been realised—that the college had, indeed, "grown under the shade of the temple", and that the teachers and students had found "in their pursuit of knowledge the Worship of God"

A more drastic break with Western tradition, and a more complete return to that of the East than is provided by Daulatpur, is to be found in the educational activities of the Arya Samaj. The early history of the founder of the Samaj, Mulshankar, now known as Swami Dayanand Saraswati, bears a striking resemblance to the story of the early years of Gautama Buddha.[1]

Like the famous scion of the Sakya clan he brooded deeply upon the problems of life, and equally with him he failed to find satisfaction in the creed current among his family and immediate neighbours. As in the case of Gautama, so in the case of Mulshankar, his parents sought to distract him from his melancholy meditations by pressing upon him the joys and duties of married life. Less amenable than Gautama, he refused his assent to the marriage arranged for him, and when at length, at the age of twenty, the importunity of his father seemed likely to overcome his resistance, he, like Gautama, went forth from his home on the same quest, discarding all for the saffron robe of the wandering ascetic, possessed of but one idea—the discovery of the hidden portals giving egress from the bewildering thaumatrope of human existence which for more than two millenniums, has weighed so heavily upon the soul of India. This was in the year 1845.

For fifteen years Mulshankar led the life of a homeless wanderer, travelling far and wide, and questioning pundits and sadhus in his search after truth. Nowhere did he find satisfaction. The learning of the day seemed to him like the ashes of a dead fire. The intellectual vigour of the great sages of old had burned itself out; the teachers of to-day were the slaves of dogma, intellectually and spiritually bankrupt. One sage

[1] See chapter vi. of my "Lands of the Thunderbolt"

only did he find towards the end of his long search at whose feet he was content to sit—a sannyasi of the same order as Dayanand himself, Swami Virjananda Saraswati, whom he encountered at holy Mathura, the reputed birthplace of Śrî Krishna. For more than two years these two kindred spirits lived as guru and chela, and when the time came for them to part Virjananda asked of his pupil in payment of the fee customary on such occasions in ancient times, that he would wage unceasing warfare against the dogma and the idolatry of the Purânic faith and establish education in accordance with the great Brahmanic tradition of pre-Buddhist days.

The pledge was readily given, for Dayanand had emerged from his long probation a stern iconoclast. He lashed the theologians of a decadent church with the fiery zeal of a protestant reformer. The six systems and the eighteen Purânas he cast aside. For him salvation lay in the worship and service of the One God, the Creator of the Vedas and of the World; and for his country in the rejection of the mythology and idolatry of the vast mass of theological literature which had laid its parasitic grip upon the Vedic tree, and an unconditional return to the teaching of the Vedas in all its purity. Such was the founder of the Arya Samaj which first took form in Bombay in 1875, and received its final constitution two years later in Lahore. He himself stated quite categorically that he entertained not the least idea of founding a new religion or sect. His sole object was to lead men back to the repository of all knowledge and religious truth—the original Vedas, the Word of God Himself.

The whole history of the Arya Samaj is of extraordinary interest, particularly for the light which it throws on the present-day tendencies of the Indian consciousness to assert itself. But I

am mainly concerned here with its educational activities, which in themselves are typical of the aim and guiding principle of this powerful movement for the restoration and rejuvenation of the spirit of primitive Hinduism. Every Arya is required to subscribe to ten principles which constitute the creed of the Samaj. Of these the eighth lays down that ignorance must be dispelled and knowledge diffused, and in proof of the zeal with which the application of this principle has been pursued, it is claimed by the Samaj that in the United Provinces and the Punjab, at any rate, its educational work is second in extent to that of Government alone. It possesses two colleges which may be taken as typical of its educational ideal, the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College at Lahore, and the famous Gurukul near Hardwar. Its other institutions are primary and secondary schools of various types, and a certain number of establishments modelled on the Hardwar Gurukul.

The reasons which led to the establishment of these institutions are set forth in the first report of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic college. After admitting that Western education had stimulated intellectual activity, and had produced some men of whom the country might feel proud, the report goes on to point out that such education has nevertheless produced a deplorable schism in society. An educated class has been created which is without precedent in any country on earth, a class wholly divorced in mental outlook from the vast mass of the people. National education demands among other things adequate study of the national language and literature, and in particular of classical Sanskrit, "wherein lie deep buried and crystallised the fruits of whole lives spent in secluded meditation upon the nature of soul, of virtue, of creation, of matter

and, so far as can be vouchsafed to man, of the Creator". And it is stated that the primary object of the founders of the college is to "weld together the educated and uneducated classes by encouraging the study of the national language and vernaculars; to spread a knowledge of moral and spiritual truths by insisting on the study of classical Sanskrit; to encourage sound acquaintance with English literature; and to afford a stimulus to the material progress of the country by spreading a knowledge of the physical and applied sciences". What is aimed at here is clearly a rational synthesis between the learning of East and West, and it has been claimed for it that while it has created an atmosphere of Hindu nationalism, it has at the same time turned out graduates who are playing a leading part in the public and private life of the country.[1]

Nevertheless it failed to satisfy a considerable volume of opinion within the Samaj itself, which demanded a much more drastic severance with Western tradition, and which was responsible for the establishment in the year 1902 of the famous Gurukul near Hardwar.

The avowed aim of its founder, Mr. Munshi Ram, is the revival of the ancient practice of Brahmacharya; the resuscitation of ancient Indian philosophy and literature, and the building up of a Hindu literature which shall absorb all that is best in Occidental thought; the production of preachers of the Vedic religion and of a culture in which the loftiest elements of the civilisation of East and West shall be harmoniously blended. He took as his model the famous universities of ancient India--Taxila, Sridhanya Katak, Nalanda, Odantapuri and Vikramasila—

[1] Speech by Lala Lajpat Rai delivered in London in June 1915. See "The Arya Samaj" by the Speaker, to which I am mainly indebted for the facts and the quotations here given concerning the educational activities of the Samaj.

and at a spot not far removed from Hardwar, where the holy Ganges issues from the heart of the majestic Himâlayas, sheltered from the restless activities of man, amid such surroundings as throughout the ages have been sought and prized by the sages of India, he has succeeded, according to Mr. Myron Phelps, an American writer, whose account of the Gurukul is endorsed by its founder, in creating an atmosphere "saturated with the Vedas and the Upanishads". Mr. Munshi Ram has himself described how, when he was searching for a suitable site, he was offered the gift of a large tract of land, chiefly jungle. No one who has appreciated the part played by Nature in the shaping of the thought and culture of India in the past, could doubt the satisfaction with which this gift was accepted. For now, as then, the soul of India feels irresistibly the urge towards Nature. She still delights to linger in reverent prayer in softly lighted glades of the silent forest, as in the hushed aisles of a cathedral not built by hands; now, as then, she listens for the "still small voice" calling to her from the infinite soul of the world, in the eternal murmur of her glorious rivers, hallowed by the adoration of generation upon generation of the great and unceasing migration of mankind across the toil-worn sands of time; she still sees in her mountains—immutable and sublime—the divine handiwork of the unseen, but ever-present architect. And amid such surroundings she still seeks a place of spiritual reconcilement, where the finite may approach the infinite, a meeting-place between the soul of man and the soul of the world, a vast temple of nature where, if anywhere, the Eternal manifests itself to man as God immanent—omnipotent, omniscient, yet lovingly accessible.

A boy enters the Gurukul at the age of seven or eight, when he takes a vow of poverty, chastity

and obedience for sixteen years, during which time he remains in almost complete isolation from the outside world. Though the parents are permitted to visit the institution at intervals, the inmates are only allowed to return to their homes, during the period of their education, under circumstances of a very special and urgent nature. Discipline is strict and life regular. The day begins at 4 A.M., and prayer and worship are offered morning and evening. The former consists of the individual repetition of Sanskrit texts and the latter of the fire oblation prescribed by the Vedas. Much time is also given to moral, ethical and religious instruction. The medium of instruction is Hindi; but great attention is paid to Sanskrit and English. By the age of seventeen or eighteen the boys read, write and speak the former fluently, and are giving much time to the study of Indian philosophy and logic, while the latter is a compulsory subject from the sixth to the fourteenth year. Physical culture and games also occupy a regular and important place in the curriculum.

While the outstanding feature of the Gurukul is its rejection of the purely Western system of education which has taken root under official auspices and encouragement, and its reversion to a system more in keeping with the traditions and genius of the Hindu people, Western learning has by no means been discarded. And in the estimate of Mr. Myron Phelps, the boy at the end of his tenth year at the Gurukul is at least on a par in intellectual equipment with the student who has reached the intermediate standard in other colleges.

It was inevitable, perhaps, that the loyalty of the Arya Samaj to British rule should be questioned. In the Punjab exception was taken to its political activities—or those of some of its

prominent members—both in the disturbances which occurred in 1907 and again in 1919. Controversy has raged over the question. It has been hotly attacked and as hotly defended. The question of its loyalty or otherwise to British rule, however, is irrelevant in the connection in which its activities have been examined here. From this point of view its main interest lies in the fact that its educational activities are the outcome of a revolt against the domination of an alien ideal. And it is interesting to note that Mr. Munshi Ram himself has adhered faithfully to the path of life laid down in the ancient scriptures of the race as the ideal one for the twice-born castes; for in 1917 he brought to a close the period of his life devoted to active pursuits—the second of the four stages described in the Institutes of Manu—and since that time, under the name of Swami Shraddhananda, has lived the life of a sannyasi. And if his recent association with the *shuddhi* movement, the object of which is the restoration to the fold of Hinduism of the Muhammadan descendants of converted Hindus, has involved him in activities which are hardly in accord with the isolation from the world required of the strict Sannyasi, this must be attributed to his zeal for the Arya Samaj as an active missionary body.

Such institutions as the Hindu Academy at Daulatpur and the Gurukul at Hardwar provide striking illustrations of the swing back to Indian tradition which has been noticeable in many quarters in recent times. A reaction of the same kind is to be observed, as I have already indicated, in the strongholds of the Western system themselves. The Western-educated Indian of to-day no longer looks upon his country's past with the contempt of his predecessor of fifty years ago. On the contrary, his tendency is, rather, unduly to exalt it. At the second Oriental Conference—

itself an indication of the rapidly growing interest of Indians in their own past—the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, the late Sir Asutosh Mukherji, C.S.I., took pride in the fact that the University had been " the first in academic circles to recognise the supreme value of oriental studies by the foundation of a chair in ancient Indian history and culture, by the establishment of a new department for advanced instruction and research in that fascinating domain, and by the institution of a special degree for the encouragement of meritorious students ". And an examination of the work of the department of post-graduate studies, which came into existence towards the close of 1917, is sufficient to show how eager is now the desire among Western-educated Indians themselves, to probe into tnat vast storehouse of ancient lore which Macaulay dismissed with a gesture as a contemptible collection of crude puerilities and fantastic superstitions.

With the inauguration of the department there was brought together, under the shadow of the university, a staff of fifty scholars devoted exclusively to teaching and research in various branches of ancient Indian learning. Sanskrit, the sorry vehicle less than a century before of history, physics, theology and metaphysics, for which Macaulay could find no epithet other than " absurd ", was now divided up into ten great groups of subjects under the charge of twenty university teachers. Fourteen more devoted their time and abilities to ancient Indian history and culture, ten to Pali, and six to Islamic studies, Arabic and Persian. A chair of Indian Fine Arts was created and a famous Indian artist, Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore, appointed to it. The scientific study of Indian vernaculars was undertaken, and a scheme inaugurated for the institution of a special degree therein. In 1922 the

Indian Vice-Chancellor of the University which in 1861 had withdrawn from the candidates for its entrance examination the right of answering in their own tongue, and which in 1864 had gone a step further and removed the vernaculars from its B.A. courses altogether, spoke with enthusiasm of "that great department of Indian vernaculars which is a special feature of our university, and which should constitute its chief glory in the eyes of all patriotic and public-spirited citizens".[1] He went on to declare with obvious satisfaction that for the first time in the history of higher education in British India an attempt had been made to impart instruction to students in "Indian Epigraphy, Indian Fine Arts, Indian Iconography, Indian Coinage, Indian Palaeography, Indian Architecture, Indian Economic Life, Indian Social Life, Indian Administration, Indian Religions, Indian Astronomy, Indian Mathematics and Indian Race Origins". And, gazing back down the vanishing vista of the past over the century of growth of the educational system, he pronounced his verdict upon it; the attempt to modernise the East by the importation of Western culture to the complete supersession of Indian ideals had proved a failure; the Indian universities had not succeeded in taking root in the life of the nation because they had been exotics. And he concluded with a profession of the faith that was in him: "Western civilisation, however valuable as a factor in the progress of mankind, should not supersede, much less be permitted to destroy, the vital elements of our civilisation".

Nor was it in the Calcutta University only that there were indications of a quickening interest on the part of Western-educated Indians in their country's past. In northern Bengal a

[1] Address by the late Sir Asutosh Mukherji, C.S.I., at the annual convocation of the Calcutta University, March 18, 1922.

little body of Indian gentlemen had formed themselves in 1910 into a society for the promotion of systematic archaeological research. The field of their labours was a wide tract of country known in Sanskrit literature as Varendra, the home of the great Pala dynasty which rose to power towards the close of the eighth century A.D., and which made of its kingdom a great centre of Buddhist culture. When in November 1919 I had the pleasure of opening the admirable museum which was one of the first-fruits of the society's activities, it contained a collection of nearly 1350 Sanskrit manuscripts, gold, silver and copper coins; some of the earliest copper-plate records hitherto discovered in India; a number of images in metal, and a collection of several hundred specimens of sculpture in stone.

All this is significant. It is the repetition in India of a process through which the British people themselves passed before the wonderful flowering of English literature and learning took place. It is sometimes forgotten that just as India of the nineteenth century felt the necessity of a foreign language as its vehicle of learning, so did Great Britain in the sixteenth and preceding centuries experience the same necessity. For centuries English occupied the same position as did the vernaculars of India at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In cultured circles it was regarded with contempt as the jargon of the people. "If a man would commune with great minds," as a recent writer has reminded us, "whether of the past in their writings or of the present by cultured speech, he must have Latin. Would he be a churchman, an administrator, a diplomatist? He must speak fluently, he must read and write with ease, the international tongue. . . . Would he be a man of science, of medicine, of law, of letters? Again he must

have Latin, for there were not the books in English. Without Latin he could neither learn nor teach." [1] But silently and even unperceived perhaps, at the time, the soul of England was preparing to blossom forth in raiment of its own, and the dialects of those centuries "barbarous and most unstable", have since become the mother-tongue of 180,000,000 people, and of all the languages of Europe, the most widely spoken in the other continents of the world. Englishmen can scarcely view with anything but sympathy, then, such attempts of modern India as have been described above, to strike root once more in her own intellectual soil. Such sympathy would have been deeper and wider spread, had it not been for the fact that in the sphere of politics the resurgent spirit of India has at times been perverted along channels which have led to rebellious movements against the existing order. A notable case in point was the revolutionary movement in Bengal which was responsible for a formidable volume of political crime during at least a decade from 1907 onwards, and which has lately made a sinister reappearance upon the scene of its former activities. There is no sadder chapter in the history of modern India than that which recounts the callous perversion of the emotional enthusiasm of a number of the young men of Bengal by the organisers of this criminal conspiracy. A study of it will be found illuminating.

[1] Mr. H. W. Household, in the *Hibbert Journal* for April 1923.

CHAPTER VIII

PERVERTED PATRIOTISM

In January 1918 a Committee assembled in Calcutta under the chairmanship of the Hon. Mr. Justice Rowlatt, judge of the King's Bench Division of His Majesty's High Court of Justice, to investigate and report on the nature and extent of the criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movement in India. Their report was submitted to Government on April the 15th, the conclusion which they had arrived at being that all the conspiracies which they had investigated were directed towards one and the same objective, the overthrow by force of British rule in India. Speaking of Bengal in particular they expressed the opinion that the revolutionary outrages with which they were concerned were all "the outcome of a widespread but essentially single movement of perverted religion and equally perverted patriotism".

This movement had broken out in anarchical form in Bengal in 1906, and during the succeeding ten years had been characterised by a long series of outrages including an appreciable number of assassinations.

Between 1906 and 1917 twenty-one police officers had been murdered in the Presidency besides a public prosecutor, the headmasters of two schools, two witnesses who had given evidence against members of the revolutionary party, and

fifteen other persons who were believed to have given information to Government. In all, eighty-two persons in Bengal lost their lives during the period, and one hundred and twenty-one were wounded; while attempts were made upon the lives of a number of high officials, including a lieutenant-governor, a district judge, and a district magistrate. The fresh outbreak in 1923 was destined once again to stain the honour of Bengal with some peculiarly revolting crimes, of which the cold-blooded murder of an Indian post-master in Calcutta on August the 3rd, 1923, and the callous assassination of an English assistant in a Calcutta business house in broad daylight in the most fashionable thoroughfare in the European quarter of the city on January the 12th, 1924, provide outstanding examples. The latter crime was not rendered less shocking by the confession of the perpetrator that he had mistaken the murdered man for his intended victim—a high official. It was rendered all the more brutal by his attitude in the dock, and by his insolent declaration that he hoped that others would be found to complete his uncompleted task. What is the nature of the impulse which has prompted such revolting deeds?

Some part of the momentum has undoubtedly been derived from sources outside India. During the war some at least of the organisers of the conspiracy effected touch through tortuous channels with German agents; and a similar connection has been traced between the more recent developments of the movement and hostile elements in Russia. I am not so much concerned to trace the movement to its source, however, as to examine the methods by which the organisers of the movement—whoever they are and whatever their motives—have sought successfully to commend their programme of violent crime to

appreciable numbers of young men, the sons of respectable and law-abiding parents. The mentality of such persons does, indeed, provide a psychological study of extreme interest. In the course of a jail inspection I was brought into personal contact with a number of young men charged with the murder of a police officer. They were all of the Hindu middle classes known as *badralôk*. They showed no disposition to deny the charge, but at the same time appeared to be oppressed by no sense of moral guilt. One at least appeared to cherish feelings of genuine regret that circumstances should have necessitated his being a party to the assassination of a person against whom he harboured no feelings of personal hatred. But he seemed to be troubled by no doubts as to the righteousness of his action.

Further light was thrown upon this aspect of the case by the literature of the movement, notably by a document in which was set forth an elaborate scheme for the organisation of the revolutionary forces. In the course of some introductory remarks it was stated that Salvation was the goal which every member of the league wished to reach. Mention was made of certain essentials to the winning of the goal. Salvation, it was stated, was not possible without the revival of the ancient Hindu spiritual culture in all its phases. The spiritual idea, it was explained, demanded the formation of national character on the basis of national education in indigenous institutions under independent Indian management. For this, political independence in its entirety was a pre-requisite. After this preliminary explanation the writer went on to describe the details of the organisation. Minute instructions to the active organisers of the league were drawn up under different heads such as training, the diffusion of literature, the formation

of character, discipline, intelligence, finance and recruitment. The instructions under this latter head were significant. Among the agencies to be employed for securing recruits were school-masters and professors of colleges, philanthropic associations, religious institutions and associations, students' messes, hostels, reading clubs and so on. A digest of the subjects which should be discussed with the recruit was then given. This began with questions of a general nature calculated to arouse his interest. He was to be asked to consider the nature of man; his existence and the cause thereof; his origin and the reason for his life upon this earth; his relation and duty to the world and his environment. From these generalities he was to be brought to particulars. He was to be asked to consider the duties he owed to India. A picture was to be painted for him of "India past, India present, and India future in its three phases, political, religious and social". The future India was to be set up as the goal for which he was to strive.

Philosophical and religious literature was to be given to him to study. It was to be impressed upon him that religion should be his goal and moral scruples his guiding principles; that life was a mission and duty the highest law. "Each one of us", declared the writer, "is bound to purify his own soul as a temple, free it from egotism, set before himself, with a religious sense of its importance, the study of the problem of his own life, and search out what is the most striking and most urgent need of the men by whom he is surrounded." Finally, the man who was to become a genuine member of the league must become consumed with "a yearning for unity, moral and political, founded upon some great organic authoritative idea, the love of country, the worship of India, the sublime vision

of the destiny in store for her, leading the Indians in holiness and truth".

A study of the document of which the above is a very brief outline, left little doubt that success in recruiting was obtained by appealing to the idealism which is so marked a characteristic of the Indian mind. Innumerable examples could be given to show with what fidelity these instructions were carried out. A young man stated in explanation of how he became involved in the movement, that it was through a teacher in a certain high school. "In December he began to lecture me on religious and moral subjects, advised me to practise Bramacharya [the study of Brahman] and to give up play. He used to give me books to read on religious and moral subjects. By and by I was given to know by him that there was an Anushilan party whose aim was to do good to the country. At first I had no idea that this party also planned murders and dacoities; but gradually I came to know this."

This case provides a very good example of the insidious methods by which the seed was sown. The boy was advised to practise Bramacharya, *i.e.* the study of Brahman. To a Hindu boy the word Bramacharya is full of meaning. It brings vividly to his mind the rigid ordering of the life of the priestly caste laid down by the code of Manu—a life divided into the four definite stages of studentship with its study of the vedic system and its rigorous discipline, of family life with its duties as a householder, of retirement from the society of men with its mortification of the flesh; and finally of life divorced from home and all earthly ties devoted to the practice of asceticism. In other words, it brings to his mind something which is peculiarly Indian; something of which he, as an Indian, is the privileged inheritor. He is led to ponder upon the India of the past, and

to contrast it with the India of the present, and it is an easy step from the contemplation of the past and present to speculation as to and hope for the future.)

(Other statements came to my notice which showed how responsive was the youth of Bengal to this subtle appeal.)

"From my early life", wrote a young Bengali whose imagination had been captured by it, "I was of a religious turn of mind and was in the habit of nursing the sick and helping the poor. . . . I began to feel a peculiar despondency and was pondering over my life's mission, which I thought should be towards the amelioration of the condition of the poor and the needy, when I met A, with whom I had some conversation on the subject. After a few days I met him again and he gave expressions congenial to my religious tendencies and encouraged me in my line of thought. (After some days more he gave me a book called 'Desher Kotha'[1] to read, which I did. On reading the book I got an excitement of mind, thinking of our past glories and the present deplorable condition of the people of this country.) Suspecting nothing, I began to have closer intimacy with him and to have religious discourse with him at times. Gradually he began to insert ideas of anarchism into my religiously disposed mind, saying that religion and politics are inseparable and that our paramount duty should be to do good to the people of our country." The writer then tells how he was given another book to read entitled "Pathrabali",[2] by Vivekananda, and how he learned from it what self-sacrifice the author had made for the good of his country. Later he was asked if he had read the books of Bankim babu,

[1] The title signifies "all about the country", and the book deals with the economic condition of the country, with the object of casting the blame for all that is unfavourable upon British rule.

[2] Collection of letters by the great apostle of neo-vedantism.

and it was suggested to him that he should read "Ananda Math".[1] He did so, and his mentor then discussed it with him and pointed out the morals of the story and suggested that much good could be done to the country if only one desired.

A vast accumulation of evidence of a similar character pointed definitely to an earnest groping after an ideal by the impressionable young men who became entangled in the movement; though only too often the ideal was lost sight of in the dust stirred up by the perpetration of deeds of violence. Many episodes took place which showed that the weapon of violence was a two-edged one which recoiled upon those who employed it. It became apparent in many cases that a man who had once adopted the rôle of the highwayman in the interests of an ideal before long adopted it in the interests of himself. The economic pressure upon the educated middle classes of Bengal is severe; and among the revolutionaries themselves quarrels arising out of the misappropriation of party funds were frequent, showing that under this pressure degeneration set in, and that a man who had once stolen for an ideal was in danger of becoming little more than a common thief.

Nevertheless the ideal was there—the yearning for a revival of the ancient culture of the Hindu race, the natural corollary of the reaction against the excessive Westernisation of the country described in the foregoing chapters. This in itself provides an explanation of the exclusively Hindu character of the revolutionary movement in Bengal, for the ranks of the secret societies contained neither Moslem nor peasant, but were confined to the educated Hindu middle classes, *i.e.* those who were conscious of being the inheritors of a distinctive culture—that of the

[1] For the story of this remarkable book see Chapter X.

Indo-Aryan race.[1] The revolutionary movement in Bengal was *au fond* this yearning, expressing itself in terms of force. This at any rate is the interpretation placed on it by Indians themselves, who, while differing from the revolutionary party upon the question of methods, share with it a passionate admiration for the spiritual genius of their people and a longing for a renewed flowering of the ancient culture of their race. Such an interpretation of the anarchical movement in Bengal is vividly set forth in a memorandum in my possession, by an Indian gentleman who was placed by circumstances in a position in which he was in the confidence of some, at least, of those who were connected with the movement.[2] The following précis contains, I think, a fair presentation of the writer's views.

[1] This was of course before the defeat of Turkey in the World War brought the khilafat movement into existence and excited Muhammadan sentiment against Great Britain.

[2] The author of the Memorandum was Mr. B. C. Chatterji, barrister-at-law.

CHAPTER IX

PANEGYRICS OF THE PAST

THE Memorandum of which I have spoken purports to be an explanation of "the storm that had been gathering in the heart of India for the best part of a decade, and would demand immediate attention at the close of the War". A desire for release from foreign tutelage is postulated, and the writer begins by tracing a history of the methods by which educated Indians have endeavoured to bring about, in the government of their country, "the principle of national liberty, which has for its outer embodiment in England the British Parliament".

First came the Indian National Congress, whose leaders made speeches, passed resolutions, and thought that by much importunity they might obtain their desire. "But the doom of this easy political doctrine was drawing near", and the partition of Bengal is cited as "a conclusive object-lesson in the impotence of that method of mendicancy by which Indians had been dreaming of securing self-government". The attitude of Government is depicted as a complete answer to those who sought to attain their ends by constitutional means. "The united voice of the whole nation rose and fell like the voice of one crying in the wilderness. None heeded it. The Viceroy persevered in his scheme of administrative division; and the English Parliament pronounced

its benediction upon it. The political method of the Congress had been tried and failed—and the people fell upon bitterness."

Into these black depths of despair, we are next told, there suddenly fell a spark of light. Japan, an Eastern nation, had flung aside the tyranny of the West and had gloriously vindicated her right to unfettered independence by her victory over Russia. Henceforth a new hope—the hope of liberty and independence—burned with a bright flame in the soul of Bengal. A gifted prophet of this new creed arose in the person of Bepin Chandra Pal,[1] "who threw the whole strength and passion of his being into the work of proselytising his countrymen to the creed of his adoption". And hard upon the footsteps of Bepin Chandra Pal came Arabinda Ghose, who "aspired to work out for the whole continent that liberation of the human spirit which Bepin Chandra Pal was accomplishing in Bengal".

So far, then, the explanation of the ferment in Bengal is a sufficiently simple one. It discloses the not unfamiliar spectacle of a subject people girding against their impotence to influence the decisions, still less to control the actions of their alien rulers. But we now come to a contributory cause of a far more subtle and illusive character. Speaking of Arabinda Ghose, the writer declares in a fine passage that "the aspirations of Young India were in his writings, a divining intention of the spirit of liberty, the beating of whose wings was being heard over Asia; an exaltation, an urgency, a heartening call on his countrymen to serve and save the Motherland, an impassioned appeal to their manhood to reinstate her in the greatness that was hers. Had she not once been the High Priestess of the Orient? Had not her

[1] The author of the essays referred to in the Prologue, and now a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly.

civilisation left its ripple-mark on the furthermost limits of Asia? India still had a soul to save, which the parching drought of modern vulgarity threatened daily with death; she alone in a pharisaical world, where every one acclaimed God in speech and denied Him in fact, offered Him the worship of her heart; she alone yet gave birth to the choice spirits who cast aside the highest of earth's gifts in their enraptured pursuit of the life of life. Show us the country but India that could produce in the nineteenth century the Saint of Dakshineshwar.[1] The saving wisdom was still in the land which taught man how to know and realise his God—the wisdom which had been gathered and garnered in their forest homes by her priest-philosophers, the builders of the Vedas, the thinkers of the Upanishads, the greatest aristocrats of humanity that had ever been. But how should the culture of the soul survive in the land where a shifting materialism was asserting itself under the ægis of foreign rule? Had not the fools and the Philistines, whose name was legion—the monstrous products of a soulless education nourished on the rind of European thought—already begun to laugh at their country's past? And dared to condemn the wisdom of their ancestors? Was India to deform herself from a temple of God into one vast inglorious suburb of English civilisation? Even beauty, the vernal Goddess enshrined in her hymns and her poetry, was feeling the country chased by a hungry commercialism pouring out its flood of ugly and worthless wares owing naught to art or religion. This doom that impended over the land must be averted. India must save herself by ending the alien dominion which had not only impoverished her body, but was also

[1] Ramkrishna. For a description of this widely respected saint see Chapter XIX.

strangulating her soul. It was only in an independent India, with the reins of self-determination in her own hands, that the ideal could be re-enthroned in its integrity of high thinking and holy living, which cast on every man the obligation to cultivate throughout life the knowledge of Atman (Self and God), and of striving to realise in conduct the code of humanity that Gautama Buddha had enjoined. It was from the height of this vision of India to be that he called upon his countrymen to prepare themselves to be free, and *not* for the mere secularity of autonomy and wealth, the pseudo-divinities upon whose altars Europe has sacrificed her soul and would some day end by immolating her very physical existence."

Here we have clear intimation of something other than mere political unrest. The passage gives a vivid idea of the clash of two distinct cultures—those of the East and of the West. The idealism of the one is contrasted with what is pictured as the materialism of the other. The whole passage portrays a violent reaction against the tendencies of the nineteenth century, which have been described in the earlier chapters of this volume; and an appeal is made to instincts deep-rooted in the Hindu mind. The effect, according to the writer, was profound. "The nation felt a quickening in the beating of its heart, a stirring in its blood, the vibration of chords long silent in its race consciousness."

The apostles of the new movement were not slow to grasp the advantage of playing upon the religious side of the people's mind. Following in the wake of Bepin Chandra Pal and Arabinda Ghose there appeared a fiery prophet of the new nationalism in the person of Barindra Kumar Ghose, who breathed forth contempt and ridicule against the constitutionalists. What he demanded

of India was men—"hundreds of thousands of them who are ready to wipe out with their blood the stain of her age-long subjection". And the burden of Barindra Kumar Ghose's song also (if the writer's interpretation of his propaganda is correct) was that the soul of India was being strangled by the materialism of the West. Unless they bestirred themselves they would become a race of slaves. "And then? Good-bye for ever to the India of Vâlmîki and Vyasa, of the Vedas and Vedanta, from whose sacred soil had sprung Lord Krishna and Gautama Buddha. Farewell Priestess of Asia, mistress of the eastern seas, temple of Nirvana to which pilgrims journeyed from Palestine and Cathay. . . . Come, then, with the vow of death that you may renew life. Remember the soil that your blood will manure shall bear the florescence of a new faith that shall redeem mankind, the fruitage of a new manhood that shall readjust the rights and wrongs of the world."

By temperament the people of Bengal are imaginative and highly emotional. Appeals to their pride of race were well calculated to sweep them off their feet. The fiery oratory of Barindra Kumar Ghose and his fellow-workers and the writings of an unrestrained press, which sprang into existence as the new movement spread, "smote on the heart of the people as on a giant's harp, awakening out of it a storm and a tumult such as Bengal had never known through the long centuries of her political serfdom".

From this brief précis it will be seen that one of the factors which go to make up a complex whole is nationalism expressing itself in terms of religion. And in India, indeed, religion enters into politics as it does into most of the activities of man which in the West are usually described as secular. Not long ago at a large gathering of

politicians in Bengal convened for the discussion of non-coöperation, the outstanding political controversy of the day, the speech of the principal speaker, babu Sarat Chandra Ghose, was described by one who heard it as "a discourse on the abstract truth of Hindu philosophy rather than a political address". Similarly, at an earlier date before the birth of the non-coöperation movement, Mr. C. R. Das, soon to become the leader of the extremists of Bengal, delivered an address from the presidential chair at the annual meeting of the Bengal provincial congress in 1917, which reflected views similar to these which have been set forth above.

Mr. Das spoke, indeed, with all the ardour of a missionary. He smote in pieces the golden calf which he set up as symbolical of the ideals of Europe, and with the fervour of a seer, he pointed the way to a promised land. His dominating note was hatred—and dread—of everything that savoured of the West. The industrialism, the commerce, the education, the very mode of life itself of Europe—all these were held up to opprobrium and denounced with undiscriminating bitterness. It was the pursuit of these false gods that had converted Bengal from a smiling land of happiness and plenty into a salt waste over which brooded stagnation and death. With a fine disregard of historical accuracy, the India of pre-British days was pictured in glowing colours as a land of happiness and prosperity. "We had corn in our granaries; our tanks supplied us with fish; and the eye was soothed and refreshed by the limpid blue of the sky and the green foliage of the trees. All day long the peasant toiled in the fields; and at eve, returning to his lamp-lit home, he sang the song of his heart." But these things were no more. "The granaries are empty of their golden wealth; the kine are dry and give

no milk; and the fields once so green are dry and parched with thirst. What remains is the dream of former happiness and the languor and misery of insistent pain." How, he asked, had this fearful nakedness and desolation come about? The whole significance of the speech lay in the answer which he gave to this question. It was repeated over and over again in varying form throughout the discourse. "We had made aliens of our own people; we had forgotten the ideals of our heart. As I look back on the dim darkness of this distant century, the past seems peopled with vague and phantom shapes of terror; and I repeat again that the fault was ours. We had lost our manhood; and losing manhood we had lost all claim save the claim of life. Miserable as we were—our commerce, our manufacture, our industry—we sacrificed it all on the altar of the alien tradesman. The wheel and distaff broke in our household; we cut off our own hands and feet; we strangled fortune in her own cradle."

Word pictures of a golden age of peace and plenty before the advent of the British have become so common a property in the nationalist orator's rhetorical stock in trade, that some comment seems called for. Perhaps the best corrective for these strange historical aberrations is provided by the literature current amongst the peasantry itself. For centuries past there have been sung and handed down from father to son amongst the peasant population of Eastern Bengal a whole collection of ballads, the faithful record by village poets of episodes in the daily lives of the people. A number of these illuminating songs has recently been collected, edited and translated by Rai Bahadur Dinesh Chandra Sen, who has done so much to make better known to the world the literary treasures of Bengal. Amongst these ballads is the story of Kenaram, a famous robber

chief. This interesting work, composed by the poetess Chandravati, is described by the editor of the collection as a historical account by one who knew them at first hand, of events in Bengal during the closing quarter of the sixteenth century. There is every reason to suppose, therefore, that it contains an accurate account of events in Mr. Das's golden age before the advent of the British.

The tale which it unfolds is that of a land racked and riven by anarchy, of deserted homesteads, and of a people harried and panic-stricken under a chaotic administration. "The people buried their wealth under the earth for fear of plunder", sings the poetess. "The robbers strangled the wayfarers with nooses of rope. Many villages presented a scene of total desertion under the rule of the kajis." And with particular reference to the activities of Kenaram—"the very leaves of the trees shivered as if in fright: none dared to light a lamp in the evening lest it should attract notice to the house, nor dared to come outside after dark". An interesting commentary, surely, upon Mr. Das's glowing picture of the peasant toiling in the fields all day and "at eve returning to his lamp-lit home" to sing the song of his heart.

Nor does this historical ballad bear out the contention of Mr. Das and his fellow-thinkers that famine is a product of British rule. "At this time", declares Chandravati, the village poetess, "the district of Mymensingh was visited by one of the most cruel famines that had ever come upon Bengal." And she describes its horrors in graphic detail. "The homes of many families became scenes of terrible suffering, and men and women died by hundreds. . . . Husbands sold their wives and wives their children. All convention, all affection and feeling were gone,

and men became like lower animals seeking the whole day long for something to live upon."

It would seem, therefore, that even before the advent of the British there were sombre interludes amid the golden days of brimming granaries and sweet content. Mr. Das's history would, indeed, profit by a perusal of the whole collection of these interesting ballads, even if in the process it lost something of its bold and picturesque originality.

Let me now return to Mr. Das's speech. From contemplation of the prostration of the country-side he turned his gaze upon the cities, and poured the vials of his wrath upon the commercialism of the age.

The industrialism of Europe was anathema—a thing accursed. "Christian Europe within the last two hundred years has forsaken Christ and set up the mammon of industrialism", and had trodden in pain the path of sorrow. Could they not heed the writing upon the wall? Must they too grope blindly after this grisly monster? "In our heart of hearts, this one thing we must remember for ever, that this industrialism never was and never will be art and part of our nature. . . . If we seek to establish industrialism in our land, we shall be laying down with our own hands the road to our destruction. Mills and factories—like some gigantic monster—will crush out the little of life that still feebly pulsates in our veins, and we shall whirl round with their huge wheels and be like some dead and soulless machine ourselves; and the rich capitalist operating at a distance will lick us dry of what little blood we still may have."

The Western system of education had been imposed like shackles upon the people. In the golden days of Āryâvarta education congenial to the people had been diffused in the household of

the guru, in the institutions of domestic life, through *jatras* and *kathakathas*, in the songs from Ramayana and Chandi, in Sankîrtans, and in the *Bratas* and rituals of the women-folk. "But, like other ideals, our ideal of education also has become mean and impoverished. We have set up the huge structure of the University, . . . but this abnormal system has brought many evils in its train, and it will continue to be a source of evil in the days to come. For one thing, it has imparted an element of unnecessary anglicism into our manners and modes of life, so that in outer seeming it might almost appear as if the educated Bengali had little organic touch with the heart of his countrymen." This more than anything was destroying the genius of Bengal. It might be suited to other lands and other peoples, but for Bengal it was an empty simulacrum, a system without a soul, a lifeless image standing upon feet of clay, which must be broken and cast out of the national temple of learning. "To me it seems perfectly clear that if we want to lead our newly awakened consciousness in the paths of true knowledge, education will have to be diffused through the medium of our own vernacular and not through the unwholesome medium of English. The education which we now receive is a borrowed and imitated article; it does not co-operate with the national genius of our being, and hence it is powerless to enrich the life blood of our soul."

Even in their politics, the speaker declared there was no life or reality, merely mimicry of an alien system. They had borrowed the phrases and the formulæ of the West, and in doing so had neglected the one thing essential. They never looked to their country, never thought of Bengal, of their past national history or their present material condition. Hence their political agitation was unreal and unsubstantial, divorced from

all intimate touch with the soul of the people. Down in the depths of their soul they, the educated people, had become anglicised. They read in English and thought in English. Their borrowed anglicism repelled the masses of their countrymen, who preferred the genuine article to the shoddy imitation. Thus in every aspect of their present life—in commerce, in industry, in education, in politics, in social custom—they found the taint of anglicism. "Mimic anglicism has become an obsession with us; we find its black footprint in every walk and endeavour of our life. We substitute meeting-houses for temples; we perform stage plays and sell pleasures in order to help charities; we hold lotteries in aid of orphanages; we give up the national and healthful games of our country and introduce all sorts of foreign importations. We have become hybrid in dress, in thought, in sentiment and culture, and are making frantic attempts even to be hybrids in blood."

Quotations might be multiplied, but enough has been said to show that the speaker had gone forth to preach a sermon and to point a moral. The state of the country to-day stood in sombre contrast with the Bengal of old. This calamity had been brought about because, in the dust which had been raised by the clash of ideals of East and West, the people had lost sight of their own divinities, and had cast their offerings upon the altars of strange gods. But the speaker did not stop here. He asked his audience to consider how it was that the people had been thus led astray, and having answered this question, he pointed to the signs which had been given that the scales were falling from their eyes, and while exhorting them to pay heed to these signs and portents, he himself assumed the rôle of prophet, and pointed the road to the promised land. How

was it that they had succumbed to this passion for alien culture and foreign ideals? It was because when the English came to Bengal the people of the land were decadent. They were a people whose vital spark had burned low, whose Religion of Power had become a mockery of its former self—had lost its soul of beneficence in the repetition of empty formulæ and the observance of meaningless mummeries. As with religion, so with knowledge; the traditions of Navadvîpa's ancient glory and scholarship had become a mere name and memory. And so it had happened to them as it happens to all the weak. From pure inanition they had accepted the English Government, and with that the English race—their culture, their civilisation and their luxury. But the time had come when they must cast off the spell which had lain upon them. Already prophets of the race had arisen who had kindled once again the fires on the ancient altars. Bankim had come and had set up the image of their Mother in the Motherland. He had called unto the whole people, and had said, "Behold, this is our Mother, well-watered, well-fruited, cooled with the southern breeze, green with the growing corn; worship her and establish her in your homes". Time had passed. The trumpet of *Swadeshism* had begun to sound in 1903. The *Swadeshi* movement had come like a tempest; it had rushed along impetuously like some mighty flood, submerging them, sweeping them off their feet, but revitalising their lives. Under its reviving influence they had steeped themselves once again in that stream of culture and civilisation which had been flowing perennially through the heart of Bengal. They had been enabled once more to catch glimpses of the true continuity of their national history. The main problem for their consideration, therefore, was this—how to develop

fully and adequately the newly awakened national life of Bengal? And assuming the rôle of priest and prophet, he pointed the road. In this critical period of nation building they must root out and cast aside the European ideal of indulgence, and must cleave fast to their native and ancient ideal of sacrifice. Problems of education and culture, of agriculture and commerce, must be dealt with in the light of their treatment in the past. The connection of these things with their ancient social system must be considered. And not this alone. They must consider also the precise relation in which all their thoughts, endeavours and activities stood, and still stand, with reference to the question of religion, for they would misread and misknow all things unless they kept this point steadily in view. They must accept only what was consonant with the genius of their being, and must reject and utterly cast aside what was foreign to their soul. What they formerly possessed, the permanent and perennial source of their strength, was still theirs. The stately and majestic rivers of Bengal which rushed impetuously towards the sea and the strength and might of which it was impossible to resist—they still flowed onwards in all their ancient majesty and might of strength. The august Himâlaya, ancient of days, still stood lifting up its brow towards Heaven. The great permanent features of earth upon which the life and soul of Bengal were founded—they were still there, permanent, immutable, majestic. Theirs the task to restore the life that had fled, to revivify the soul that was all but dead.

With the economic theories propounded by Mr. Das—viz. the superiority of the system of production which existed in all countries before the introduction of steam power—I am not here concerned. The real interest of the address lies

in the insight which it gives into the working of the speaker's mind. That his whole outlook upon life is dominated by racial bitterness is plainly apparent: that the intention no less than the effect of his words must be to foster racial antagonism is scarcely open to doubt. Of course Mr. Das condemned the revolutionary crime which he described as the outer manifestation of the feeling of impatience and despair which had permeated the minds of the younger generation—impatience and despair born of the thwarting by the bureaucracy of a noble and overwhelming desire to serve their Motherland. Nevertheless, it was the doctrine set forth by Mr. Das and others before him, and the preaching of it, which were largely responsible for the illegitimate outlet which this pent-up energy sought. The people of Bengal are peculiarly susceptible to the influence of oratory. Appeals to their past greatness, couched in powerful and moving language, are capable of stirring their souls to their very depths. And naturally enough, perhaps, the darker shadows in the picture of Indian life as it existed when Great Britain took up her beneficent task find no place in these glittering but fanciful panegyrics of the past. The inhuman practice of suttee, in accordance with which, year after year, hundreds of unfortunate women were burned alive on their dead husbands' funeral pyres—a custom upheld by the priesthood as having been ordained by the earliest scriptures of the race—finds no mention in them. Neither does the scourge of the Thugs, by whom murder by strangulation followed by robbery was reduced to a fine art under the religious sanction of the goddess Bhawani; nor yet the equally heinous practice of infanticide, which in some parts of the country was responsible for the wholesale slaughter of female children. Still less does

the fact that it was a British Viceroy who brought suttee to an end; that it was British initiative that brought to justice in the brief space of six years two thousand Thugs, and so ridded the land of one of its most cruel afflictions; or that it was, once again, British action which purged India of the cancer of infanticide.[1] Forgotten are the mutilations and other forms of torture inflicted as punishments at the individual caprice of those who administered what passed for a system of criminal justice, before the British established a new and merciful reign of law; forgotten is the devouring sword of the Pindharis who swept over the land, leaving in their train the smouldering ashes of perished homesteads, the anguish of tortured and ravished humanity, side by side with the lifeless bodies of the victims of their blood lust. For these twentieth-century audiences hypnotised by the persuasive oratory of Mr. Das and his colleagues, these things might never have been. For them the India of pre-British days was a golden land of peace and plenty: the India of to-day a sick and stricken land, lying pale and wan under the deadening shadow of the West.

[1] A startling illustration of the magnitude of this evil before the intervention of the British is provided by the case of the Chauhan Thakurs, a numerous and important Rajput clan in the district of Mainpuri in the United Provinces. When in 1842 serious steps were taken by the authorities to deal with the evil, it was found by Mr. Unwin, the officer concerned with the matter, that there was not a single female child alive amongst the Chauhan Thakurs in the district. Within a year 156 girls were enumerated, and by 1847 this number had risen to 299.

CHAPTER X

"ANANDA MATH"

THE revivalist character of the extremist movements of recent years has been emphasised in the foregoing chapters. A survey of the literature of the revolutionary movement in Bengal discloses overwhelming evidence of the religious sanction with which its chief organisers sought to endow it. Revolutionary documents such as letters, orders, proclamations and pamphlets were commonly headed with the Hindu invocation "OM!" And with this mystic syllable were frequently to be found associated the words "Bande Mâtaram".

The first of these two invocations is associated in the mind of every Hindu with the distinctive philosophy of his race. The opening sentence of the "Khândogya Upanishad" runs as follows, "Let a man meditate on the syllable OM". By concentrating his thoughts on this syllable he gradually excluded from his consciousness all other subjects. He underwent a process of mental hypnotism until the chambers of his mind were emptied of everything except the syllable OM. The syllable then became the symbol of a transcendent idea, the omnipresence of the Highest Self or Brahman. Recognition of the Universal Self entailed acceptance of the central doctrine of the Vedanta philosophy, namely, the identity of the Self in man with Brahman, the

Universal Self or Absolute. To a true Hindu, therefore, the syllable Om was a reminder of the belief (a Hindu would say knowledge) which was the special possession of his race—the supreme fact of Hindu national life according to Mr. B. C. Pal, which should constantly be borne in mind by the modern nation-builder in India.

But in India philosophy and religion have always gone hand in hand; and if the syllable Om placed upon the nationalist movement the seal of the particular philosophy of the race, the cry "Bande Mâtaram!" likewise gave it a religio-patriotic sanction. "This new nationalism which Bande Mâtaram reveals", said Mr. B. C. Pal, "is not a mere civic or economic or political ideal. It is a religion." The salutation "I reverence the Mother!" or, as it is more generally translated, "Hail, Mother!" derives its significance from the circumstances of its origin. The invocation was put into the mouth of one of the characters in his book, "Ananda Math", by Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the most famous and most popular of the novelists of Bengal, of whom mention has been made in an earlier chapter. (I have given an instance in Chapter VIII. of the use which was made of this book by the members of the revolutionary organisations for inculcating their ideas into the minds of the impressionable young Bengalis whom they sought to recruit. So closely, indeed, did the revolutionary parties in Bengal follow the ideas contained in this romantic story, that one could ask for no better introduction to an understanding of the movement than is provided by the novel itself.)

An indication of the position occupied by Bankim Chandra Chatterji in the world of letters in Bengal has been given in Chapter III. Until his day Sanskrit reigned supreme. Bengali was for the most part looked down upon by cultured

society as a vulgar dialect altogether unworthy of its pen. From this position it was raised by Bankim Chandra Chatterji to that of a living language capable of giving expression to great and moving thoughts and ideas. *Banga Darsan*, the Bengali periodical which he founded in 1872, became a focus for the literary talent of the day. Dinabandhu Mitra the dramatist, Hemchandra Banerji the poet, Ramdas Sen the antiquarian, Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya and Akshoy Chandra Sarkar were among those who contributed to its pages. But prominent even among the contributions of these men were those of Bankim himself—his novels and his scathing criticisms of current literature. In his capacity of literary critic he made use of the pages of *Banga Darsan* to purge the Bengali tongue of those weaknesses and mannerisms which had hitherto marked it; and he discharged the duty which he had set himself with a remorseless pen. His novels were read with surprised delight by his fellow-countrymen. They have been described by Mr. R. W. Frazer in his "Literary History of India" as a revelation for the Western reader of the inward spirit of Indian life and thought. The same writer has assigned to him the position of the first creative genius modern India has produced. He has been compared by his admirers to Sir Walter Scott, particularly in regard to the intense patriotism which runs through his writings. And it is to be noted that his patriotism is deeply tinged with religion. "He perceived that the strongest sentiment of the Indian as well as the most pronounced element in Eastern civilisation is the religious sentiment", and he was led "not only to imbue patriotic sentiments with religion, but also to conceive nationality itself under the category of religion."[1] Another writer refers to

[1] Nares Chandra Sen-Gupta.

the magic charm of his pen which imparted to the Bengali language a unique life and vigour, and adds that "during the latter days of his life he devoted himself to religion and religious literature, the inevitable *dénouement* of an Oriental's life-story". He was a staunch upholder of the British connection—for some time he was in Government service—and the mission which he set before himself was that of bringing about "a synthesis of the ideals of the East and the West in the life of the Indian".[1] Violence was abhorrent to him. "Revolutions", he wrote in his preface to the first edition of "Ananda Math", "are very generally processes of self-torture and rebels are suicides. The English have saved Bengal from anarchy. These truths are elucidated in this work." It was a curious irony of fate, surely, that it should have been upon this very book that the revolutionaries should have drawn so deeply for inspiration.

The story, which is described by Mr. Nares Chandra Sen-Gupta as "a parable of patriotism", is founded upon fact. It purports to be a narration of events in a certain phase of the disorders which attended the dissolution of the Moghul empire. In the early seventies of the eighteenth century northern Bengal was infested with roving bands of marauders who roamed over the country in the guise of ascetics, committing widespread depredations. Frequent mention is made of their lawless activities in the letters of Warren Hastings, and so prominent did they become that the episodes for which they were responsible came to be known as the sannyasi rebellion. It is from the sannyasi rebellion that Bankim Chandra Chatterji has drawn the material which he has woven into the romance entitled "Ananda Math". The sannyasis appear in it

[1] Nares Chandra Sen-Gupta.

under the title of *the children*. Children of whom? Of the Motherland which is mysteriously identified with the great Goddess of the Hindus in her many aspects, Jagaddhatri, Kâlî, Durga. Indeed the intention which is read into the story by the nationalists of Bengal, if we may accept Mr. B. C. Pal as a trustworthy exponent of their views, is the interpretation of Kâlî and her different manifestations and forms such as Jagaddhatri, Durga, Bhawani, etc., as symbolic of the Motherland and the Nation spirit.[1]

The story opens in a year of famine with a vivid description of the plight of the people brought about by want and disease. Mahendra Singha, the landlord of a village once rich and prosperous, now desolate and almost deserted, decides to make an attempt to reach the nearest big town with Kalyani and Sukumari, his wife and daughter. They set off on foot in the month of Jaistha (May-June). "The sun was furious and the earth like a furnace. The wind spread fire all round, the sky looked like a canopy of heated copper and the grains of street dust were like sparks of fire."[2] While Mahendra is hunting round for food and water in a deserted village where they purpose spending the first night, his wife and daughter are carried off by a band of common outlaws and hidden in the depth of a dense forest. The outlaws quarrel over the division of the trinkets which they have taken from her, and during the fight which ensues she escapes with her child into the darkness of the forest. Overwrought and exhausted she loses consciousness, and on awaking from her swoon, finds herself in a room in a ruined monastery and in the presence of a venerable and saintly

[1] See "The New Spirit", a selection from the writings and speeches of B. C. Pal.

[2] This and the ensuing quotations are from the translation by Mr. Nares Chandra Sen-Gupta.

man with flowing hair and beard who thus addresses her, "Mother, this is a place of the gods, you need not be afraid". He learns from her the story of her adventures and promises to try to obtain news of her husband, and with this object in view seeks out from a band of armed men hidden in the recesses of the forest a young man, Bhavananda.

The latter finds Mahendra and guides him to the monastery—Ananda Math, the abbey of bliss—engaging him in conversation on the way and singing a song which interests but puzzles Mahendra. "Hail! Mother!" sings Bhavananda. "Who is the Mother?" asks Mahendra. Bhavananda makes no reply but sings another verse. "It is the country and no mortal mother," cries Mahendra. "We own no other mother," retorts Bhavananda. Mahendra then understands that it is of the Motherland that Bhavananda sings, and asks him to repeat the song. He perceived that as he sang his companion wept, and he asked in wonder who he was? "We are the *children*," replied Bhavananda. "Whose children are you?" he persists. "Our Mother's." In due course they reach the abbey, and Mahendra is taken charge of by Satyananda, the venerable ascetic who has already given asylum to Kalyani and her daughter.

Before conducting him to them, however, he takes him to different temples in the abbey precincts, in which he shows him different images. He is first shown Jagaddhatri, and is told to perceive in her the Mother as she was. Next he is taken to a dark chamber where he sees a fearful figure. Trembling, he cries, "This is Kâlî!" and it is explained to him that this is the Mother as she is to-day. In the last shrine he sees a female figure more glorious than Lakshmi or Saraswati, in whose company she is seated, to whom the

whole universe is depicted as paying homage. This, he learns, represents the Mother as she would be. At the sight of this last image Mahendra becomes greatly moved, and asks when they will see the Mother in this glorious form. "When all the children of the Mother learn to call her so," he is informed. He is then conducted to his wife and child. There is no need to dwell upon the author's description of their meeting; what is of importance is that Kalyani and he agree that wife and child shall return home, so that Mahendra may be free "to take the glorious and heavenly vow of service to the Motherland".

A series of exciting episodes which may be passed over briefly are next described. Three of the characters, Satyananda, Kalyani and Sukumari, meet with mishaps. The two latter are rescued by two of the *children*, Bhavananda and Jivananda respectively. The former places Kalyani in safety in a neighbouring town; the latter takes the child to his sister Nimi, living in a cottage in the seclusion of the forest in company with Jivananda's wife Santi, who figures later in the story. Satyananda is taken captive by a company of Government troops and incarcerated. News of this latter happening spreads rapidly and brings the *children* in large numbers to the abbey. Here they are addressed by a *child*, Jnanananda, who adjures them to go forth and rescue Satyananda, "who has pledged his life for the revival of the True Religion and whom we look upon as an incarnation of Vishnu". They sally forth "with slow and solemn steps chanting Harinâm aloud", overcome the resistance of the guard and restore Satyananda to freedom.

On his return to the abbey Satyananda has a long talk with Mahendra, whom he desires to initiate into the Society of the *children*. The conversation is of importance, because it can be

interpreted as giving the sanction of religion to deeds of violence. He explains to Mahendra that the *children* are all Vaishnavas. The latter objects that the avoidance of all bloodshed is considered the highest virtue among Vaishnavas, while the *children* fight and take life. Satyananda then points out that Mahendra is thinking only of the creed of Chaitanya.[1] The ideal of true Vaishnavism is the chastisement of wrongdoers and the salvation of Mother Earth. Chaitanya's Vaishnavism is only half the true faith. Its God is only Love; but the true God is not Love alone, but also Infinite Power. "Chaitanya's Vishnu is all Love; our Vishnu is all Power. We are all of us Vaishnavas, but the creed of either is only half of the whole creed." Mahendra asks for further explanation, and is reminded that the Deity consists of three gunas (qualities)—sattva, rajas and tamas.[2] These three gunas, he is told, have to be propitiated by distinct modes of worship. "From sattva springs God's mercy and Love, and this is to be propitiated by Love. That is what the followers of Chaitanya do. From rajas springs his Power. This has got to be propitiated by fight, by slaying the enemies of the gods. This is what we do. From tamas the Lord takes what form he chooses, and has to be worshipped with garlands, *sandal* and so on. This is what the ordinary man does." "Then the *children* are only a religious community?" asks Mahendra in conclusion. "Quite so," replies Satyananda, "we do not want sovereignty; we only want to kill these Mussulmans,[3] root and branch, because they have become the enemies of God."

Mahendra is then taken to the temple of the

[1] For some account of Chaitanya see Chapter IV.

[2] See p. 120 forward.

[3] The events recorded in the book took place during the latter days of Muhammadan rule in India.

"Mother as she would be", and, in company with another candidate who is discovered praying before the goddess, takes the vow of the *children*. They swear to renounce family and riches, to conquer all passion and "never even to share a seat with a woman", to fight for the true religion, and as children of one mother to give up caste. They then sing the hymn to the Mother and are initiated in due form.

The second candidate for initiation mentioned above turns out to be Santi, Jivananda's wife, in disguise. She is brought into the story in this way to emphasise the importance attached by the *children* to the vow of chastity. After initiation she reveals her identity to Satyananda, and later to Jivananda himself. The part she plays in the remainder of the story is an illustration of how a woman, setting aside all earthly relations with her husband, may yet live with him in intimate spiritual union. At the conclusion of the last victorious fight of the *children* described in the book we are given a picture of Jivananda and Santi discussing their future. "We can no more be householders," said Santi; "we shall be ascetics like this for ever and keep the vow of virginity. Come, let us now go about visiting the shrines."

"What, when we have done that?" inquires Jivananda.

"After that we shall build ourselves a hut on the Himâlayas, worship God and ask for the blessing that good may be our Mother's share."

Jivananda's acceptance of a life of renunciation is made known with an appropriate simplicity. "Then the two arose and departed hand in hand —to eternity it would seem—in the dead of that moonlight night."

The lesson of chastity, which the author seeks to enforce by the example of Santi and Jivananda,

is repeated with additional emphasis in the case of Bhavananda. It will be remembered that Kalyani was rescued by Bhavananda and placed in safety in a neighbouring town. A visit paid her by him, at which he confesses his love for her, provides material for a dramatic scene. On hearing his confession she asks him what of his vow to the *children*? "In the fire of thy beauty the creed gets burned to ashes," he replies. Kalyani says, "I have heard from your lips that it is a rule of the *children's* creed that he who is swayed by passion has got to expiate his sin by death. Is it true?" He admits it, and begs her to remember him when he is dead. Kalyani dismisses him with scorn, telling him that she will remember him when he is dead "as a sinner, and as one who has transgressed his vow". Bhavananda is killed soon afterwards plunging into the forefront of a fight between the *children* and a company of Government troops to expiate his sin.

I have given some prominence to these episodes because, as I shall show later, they provided a lofty ideal for the Bengali revolutionaries—an ideal which, however criminal were their methods and however sordid many of their actions, was still to be caught sight of like a ray of sunlight breaking through the clouds of a dark and menacing sky. It is unnecessary for my purpose to do more than touch very briefly upon the remainder of the story. Two battles between the *children* and the troops are described, from each of which the *children* emerge victorious.

The scene after victory is thus depicted: "On that night that part of the country rang with shouts of Harinâm. . . . Everybody said, 'the Moslems have been defeated and the country has come back to the Hindus; cry Hari! Hari!'"

The conclusion of the book is designed by the

author to show that the advent of the British and their rule for a time is necessary to the re-establishment of the True Religion, and provide him with an opportunity of dissociating himself from the lawless deeds of the *children*. Satyananda, who had returned to the abbey after the battle, is roused from meditation by a mysterious ascetic of high authority, who bids him now desist from the struggle and accompany him to the seclusion of the Himâlayas. Satyananda objects that the task is but half done. Mussulman rule has been brought to an end, but the power of the Hindus has not yet been established. The saint replies that Hindu rule will not yet be established, for it is necessary for the good of India that the English should first hold sway. Satyananda still objects, and the saint explains further. "You have won victories with the proceeds of robbery. A vice never leads to good consequences, and you may never expect to save your country by a sinful procedure." Moreover, the advent of the English with their Western knowledge is essential to the re-establishment of the true faith. True Hinduism is based on knowledge, and not on action. Knowledge is of two kinds, subjective and objective, and until the latter is acquired the former, which is the essential part of the true faith, cannot flourish. Objective knowledge has long passed away from India; the English will bring it back. They will spread it throughout the land, and India will then be able to comprehend subjective truths once more. But "till the Hindus are great again in knowledge, virtue and power, till then English rule will remain undisturbed".

In the end Satyananda is persuaded, and hand in hand they pass out of the scene of active strife.

It will be seen from the foregoing summary that the essence of the story is a Hindu revival, necessitating the overthrow of the enemies of

Hinduism—at the time of the events narrated, Mussulman rule—which was to be achieved by a body of men pledged by solemn vows to the service of the Motherland. It provided the revolutionaries with an ideal which made a strong appeal to their imagination, and with the framework of an organisation admirably designed to meet the circumstances of their case. For the Mussulman rule of the novel they substituted British rule, and by so doing they ignored the conclusions drawn by Bankim Chandra Chatterji at the close of his book on two points—the benefits of British rule, and the fallacy underlying the assumption that the attainment of any particular end justified the employment of any means. It is an interesting fact that the conclusions arrived at by the author of "Ananda Math" on these two points were accepted in many cases by prominent revolutionaries; but only after terms of imprisonment or restraint, during which they had opportunities for reflection uninfluenced by the appeal to their emotional nature made by revolutionary oratory and literature, or by the glamour of the idea of a great Hindu revival to be brought about by successful revolution. In other respects the secret societies modelled themselves closely upon the society of the *children* of "Ananda Math".)

("Bande Mâtaram!" the battle cry of the *children*, became the war cry not only of the revolutionary societies, but of the whole of nationalist Bengal, which differed from the societies in method only, and not in aim.) (One of the most desperate of the gangs of Bengali revolutionaries, that of Jotindra Nath Mukherji, two of whom were killed in an encounter with the police in the district of Balasore in 1915, adopted the names of the chief characters in "Ananda Math". As was the case with the *children*, the

members of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti were required to pledge themselves to lives of continence and moral rectitude. "Come, sons of India, casting aside desire for pleasure, luxury, wealth and worldly attachment, come forward to devote yourselves to the worship of the Mother." So runs an appeal entitled "A call" and headed with the invocation "OM: Bande Mâtaram!" which made its appearance in the summer of 1913. More striking still, one of the four vows taken by the members of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti was almost identical with the vow of austerity and renunciation administered to Mahendra by Satyananda. That part of it which pledged the initiate to a life of rigorous continence was drafted with much greater elaboration than is the case in the novel, and gave a list of the acts which were to be eschewed with a wealth of detail which could not have been set forth in a novel without gravely offending against accepted canons of decorum. It concluded with these words: "If I flinch from this solemn vow or in any way act contrarily, the curse of God, of Mother and the mighty sages will destroy me ere long". The vow was administered before the image or picture of Kâlî and a binding religious sanction was thus given to it.

(It was, indeed, no empty undertaking, for in the case of a breach of its provisions the penalty was exacted, and the culprit died as did Bhavananda for his conduct towards Kalyani. I can recall no less than four specific cases which were brought directly to my notice of members of a society thus meeting with summary justice at the hands of their fellows. Against this it would be possible to set the case of a man who was alleged to have caused the assassination of a fellow-member, who had become aware of certain grave offences against morality of which he him-

self had been guilty. But I am not so much concerned with the frequent and serious lapses from an ideal of which individual members of the secret societies were guilty, as with the search after the existence of an ideal itself in the background of an admittedly criminal movement. The view which I have put forward that there was an ideal—that of a Hindu revival—receives added testimony from the persistence with which the organisers of the movement sought to give not merely their aims, but their methods also, the sanction of the Hindu scriptures. And in the "Bhagavad Gîtâ", the most widely treasured, perhaps, of all the sacred books of the Hindus, they found material which, torn from its context, could be made to wear the appearance of giving sanction to deeds of violence. No study of the psychology of the movement would be complete without some examination of the use to which the organisers of the conspiracy were able to put this sacred volume; and in order to make this clear some account of the book and its meaning is a necessary preliminary.

CHAPTER XI

THE SONG OF THE LORD

THE "Bhagavad Gîtâ" seems to have been composed at a time when Indian thought was experiencing a desire for a reconciliation between the idealistic teaching of its recognised exponents and the stubborn facts of everyday existence, and was disturbed and perplexed by the difficulty which it experienced in effecting one. The ills of human existence—and, indeed, that existence itself—were due to karma (activity); and in theory, at any rate, there was a perfectly simple antidote in abstention from all activity or, in other words, in renunciation of the world. And it was renunciation that the exponents of Indian thought, consequently, preached.

If the premises were accepted the conclusion was obviously unassailable; equally obviously the remedy was incapable of universal application. There was the adamantine institution of caste with its restrictions and its obligations. How, for example, was the man of the kshatriya caste, the warrior whose duty (dharma) it was to fight, to avoid a life of action? It was this problem which the author of the "Bhagavad Gîtâ" attempted to solve. There were other reconciliations to be attempted. The conception of God as a shadowy and dimly apprehended abstraction remote from anything known to human experience, a veiled enigma whose nature

was hidden from the understanding of the ordinary man in a bewildering maze of metaphysical verbiage, an insentient, inexorable existence uninfluenced by, and wholly indifferent to the affairs of men groping their way blindly from life to life in an endless and hopeless cycle of birth and death, may have sufficed for the sannyasi who sought salvation along the passionless path of inaction and renunciation. But the man of action required something less elusive to turn to in his hour of need, and acting upon the innate tendency of mankind to anthropomorphise, he evolved a personal God. Here again the author of the "Bhagavad Gîtâ" essayed the impossible task of reconciling two such widely differing conceptions of the supreme Being. No such attempt could hope to be wholly successful, and it is not surprising to find in the "Gîtâ" a somewhat confusing juxtaposition of contradictory ideas. The Hindu mind, however, is remarkable for its toleration and flexibility, and this characteristic of the "Song of the Lord" has never presented the same difficulty to the Indian mind as it has to the more methodical and exacting mind of the European. A mind that can convince itself not merely that there is truth in all religions, but that all religions are true,[1] is not likely to be troubled by the inconsistencies contained in the "Gîtâ".

The poem occurs in the 6th book of the Mahabharata and is a description of a kshatriya episode. There are two characters of major and two of minor importance in the story. The latter are Dhritarashtra, the head of two princely houses, the Pandavas and the Kurus, who with their armies are arrayed against one another in battle; and Sanjaya, a messenger who brings the old king news from the scene of action. The two

[1] As did Keshub Chandra Sen, for example: see Chapter V.

characters of major importance are the warrior prince Arjuna, the second of the Pandavas, and Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, who acts as his charioteer. The scene is laid upon the field of Kurukshetra, where the opposing forces are drawn up. Struck with a sudden pang of remorse at the prospect of the slaughter of his relatives in the ranks of the opposing army, Arjuna stays his hand and appeals to Krishna for instruction. The latter replies in seventeen discourses, interrupted only by occasional questions put by Arjuna.[1] It is this dialogue retailed by the messenger Sanjaya to the old king Dhritarashtra that constitutes the "Bhagavad Gîtâ". And in these discourses, presented to the reader as having been delivered on the field of Kurukshetra more than two thousand years ago, is summed up a profound philosophy, the contribution of Indian thought towards the solution of those problems which for all time have exercised most deeply the mind of speculative man—of thought so penetrating and so appealing that it has winged its way triumphant down the flights of time and lives with unimpaired vitality enshrined in the heart and intellect of her sons to-day.

The picture of Arjuna, the famous representative of the warrior caste, smitten suddenly with anguish at the prospect of the task which lies before him, torn between the promptings of an awakened conscience and the requirements of the duty imposed upon him by circumstances and by caste, is one which at once attracts attention and excites sympathy, for it portrays a dilemma in which few men have not found themselves at one time or another when a decision has had to be taken between two alternative courses, the advantages and disadvantages of which appear

[1] The whole book consists of eighteen discourses, but Krishna does not begin his reply to the questions put by Arjuna until the second.

to be evenly balanced. Krishna experiences no difficulty in pointing the right way. "Smiling, as it were", he enters into the explanation contained in the second discourse. The teaching here is based on the cosmogony of the Sâṅkhya system, which recognises two eternal and, in a sense, independent verities, spirit (purusha) and matter or Nature (prakṛiti). Sentience is exclusively a quality of the latter, which is made up of three constituents called guṇas (usually translated by the word qualities), namely, sattva, rājas and tamas, which may be rendered for want of better words, goodness, desire and indifference.[1] As long as the three guṇas are in a state of equilibrium, consciousness is latent. It becomes manifest when, in some unexplained way, a union takes place between purusha and prakṛiti, resulting in a disturbance of the state of equilibrium of the guṇas. In other words, the phenomenal universe, or world of experience, is inherent in prakṛiti, but only becomes manifest in conjunction with purusha. It follows from a true understanding of the real nature of these two verities that the real man (purusha) is absolved from the consequences of his actions in that they appertain to prakṛiti only. This is brought out in the discourses which Krishna delivers.

The eternal nature of that which is real in man is set forth with an emphasis which recalls the teaching of Buddhism upon the meaninglessness of the word creation. "Nor at any time verily was I not, nor these princes of men nor verily shall we ever cease to be hereafter." The dweller in the body is defined in accordance with the teaching of the Vedanta philosophy. Human beings are but embodiments of the Eternal.

[1] Mrs. Besant, in her translation of the "Bhagavad Gîtâ", explains the word guṇa as an attribute or form of energy. Sattva she translates rhythm, harmony or purity; rajas, motion, activity or passion; and tamas, inertia, darkness or stupidity.

"Know That to be indestructible by whom all This is pervaded," declares Krishna; "That" being the essence of the universe or God and "This" being the universe as it appears to man. The eternal nature and the indestructibility of "That" is affirmed over and over again. "Nor can any Work the destruction of that imperishable One. . . . He is not born nor doth he die; nor having been, ceaseth he any more to be; unborn, perpetual, eternal and ancient, he is not slain when the body is slaughtered."

It follows from this that, when a man in his ignorance imagines that he has slain another, he has in reality but caused him to change his form, for his body is as a garment which is put on and taken off without affecting the essential nature of the wearer. But this is not all, for "he who regardeth the dweller in the body as a slayer and he who thinketh he is slain both of them are ignorant. He slayeth not, nor is he slain." It may be said that the one follows from the other, that if no one has been slain there can have been no slayer. But more than this is involved in the statement that "he who regardeth the dweller in the body as a slayer" is ignorant. Looking at the matter for a moment from the point of view of ordinary experience; when a man A is slain by a person B, who is it or what is it that has done the slaying? the answer is not in doubt; it is B who has done the slaying and who is responsible for the deed. But looked at from the point of view of the Sâṅkhya system, this is not so. The deed is the outcome of the moods of Nature (prakṛiti), "for helpless is every one driven to action by the moods (guṇas) of Nature (prakṛiti)".[1] These have been made active, it is true, by a mysterious union between spirit (purusha) and Nature (prakṛiti), but for

[1] "Bhagavad Gîtâ", iii. 5.

the character of the deed the former is in no way responsible. "All actions are wrought by the qualities (guṇas) of Nature (prakṛiti) only. The self deluded by egoism thinketh 'I am the doer'."[1]

Arjuna is not convinced. If it is thought by Krishna that knowledge is superior to action, why does he urge him to terrible deeds? "With these perplexing words Thou only confusest my understanding; therefore tell me with certainty the one way by which I may reach bliss."[2] And Krishna replies once more that there is a twofold path, that of salvation by knowledge of the Sâṅkhyas and that of salvation by action of the Yogis; and that of these two paths the way of action is the best—at least, we may presume, for the ordinary man. But in order to lead to salvation, action must be performed with a single end in view—the discharge of duty. A man cannot escape the duty imposed upon him by his caste. "Bound by thine own duty, born of thine own nature, that which from delusion thou desirest not to do even that helplessly thou shalt perform."[3] But he can and should avoid action which is not assigned to him in the course of his own duty. "Better is one's own duty though destitute of merits than the well-executed duty of another. He who doeth the duty laid down for him by his own nature incurreth not sin."[4] Even so a man's duty must be performed in a spirit of lofty altruism. He must act because it is his duty, *and for no other reason.* Action performed with a view to results is fatal and binds the doer to the ever-revolving cycle of existence. "Better death in the discharge of one's own duty; the duty of another is full of danger."[5] This is the great lesson repeated over and over again throughout the discourses. "Thy business is

[1] "Bhagavad Gîtâ", iii. 27. *Ibid.* iii. 2.
Ibid. xviii. 60. [4] *Ibid.* xviii. 47. *Ibid.* iii. 35.

with the action only, never with its fruits";[1] and again, "He that performeth such action as is duty independently of the fruit of action, he is an ascetic. Hoping for naught his mind and self controlled, having abandoned all greed, performing action by the body alone, he doth not commit sin."[2]

The similarity of the teaching here to that of Buddhism is immediately apparent. It is desire, attachment to life that has to be eradicated. If this is successfully accomplished, the real man, the shackles of this world thrown off, exists in a state of complete harmony unaffected by pleasure or pain, and from this lofty altitude of serenity gazes down unmoved at the actions in which his physical nature is engaged. He has, in fact, reached the state of the arahat of Buddhism.

But it is in its attempt to meet the craving of humanity for a personal God that the author of the "Gîtâ" parts company with the founder of Buddhism. The teaching so far set forth is mainly philosophical, and is based on existing systems—the Sâṅkhya and Vedanta. But throughout the discourse ideas which are purely religious compete with those which are purely philosophical. It is as if below the surface of the author's mind there was being waged a continuous struggle between the cold reasoning of his intellect and the passionate craving of his emotional nature. An early indication of the theism which later becomes so marked a feature of the poem is met with in the 7th verse of the second discourse, when Arjuna, perplexed as to his duty, cries out, "I ask thee which may be the better—that tell me decisively. I am thy disciple suppliant to Thee; teach me." In the seventh discourse Krishna himself begins to reveal himself as the one God. "All this world, deluded by these

[1] "Bhagavad Gîtâ", ii. 47. [2] *Ibid.* vi. 1; and iv. 21.

natures made by the three qualities (guṇas) knoweth not Me above these imperishable. This divine illusion of Mine, caused by the qualities (guṇas), is hard to pierce; they who come to Me they cross over this illusion." [1] And in the ninth discourse his godhead is fully proclaimed. "I the Father of the Universe . . . give heat; I hold back and send forth the rain; immortality and also death. Even if the most sinful worship Me with undivided heart, he too must be accounted righteous. Know thou for certain that my devotee perisheth never. On Me fix thy mind; be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me; prostrate thyself before Me." [2] But perhaps the most pronouncedly theistic passage of all is that in the fourth discourse, in which there is a definite statement of God made man. "Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bharata, and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then I myself come forth for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers; for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness I am born from age to age." [3] Finally, in the eleventh discourse Arjuna prays Krishna that he may see him in his form omnipotent, and being given for a space the divine vision, he perceives him as God all-marvellous, boundless, with face turned everywhere, shining with the splendour of a thousand suns. As infinite form he is pictured with "mouths, eyes, arms, breasts multitudinous", radiant and rainbow-hued with shining vast-orbed eyes; filling entirely "the earth, the heavens and all the regions that are stretched between", at once glorious and terrible. It is interesting to find here infinite form and infinite power represented by the same symbolism which is invariably employed by the Indian artist for the same purpose.

[1] "Bhagavad Gītā", vii. 13 and 14.
[2] *Ibid.* ix. 17, 19, 30, 31 and 34. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 7 and 8.