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# MY IMPRESSION OF INDIA

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*Sketch by Moira Sorensen*

‘  
*My*  
*Impression*  
*of*  
*India*’

· *By*  
*R. W. SORENSEN*  
~

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TO MY WIFE MURIEL

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## PREFACE

YES, I know this is another book about India, and that it is just the sort of thing a visitor to India for six weeks should not do. Nevertheless, I have the temerity to offer it for your perusal, and in partial extenuation will state (although without intention of transferring responsibility) that I was asked to write it!

So much has been written about India by a variety of competent authors as to make it advisable for me to explain that the only original contribution I make is my own personal experience and approach. In that respect each one of us is singular and, possibly, interesting. For what they are worth, I offer "My Impressions"—the impressions of one who for fifteen or sixteen years has been earnestly concerned with Indian life and political affairs, and has striven to gather available knowledge and to give what service he could.

During the war years I felt strongly that India offered a great opportunity for the implementation of those high principles for which that terrible conflict was being waged. I am afraid that some M.P.s and even Ministers were not only unappreciative of my motives but apparently assumed they contained mercenary elements. I gather that this may not have been altogether absent from the consideration of suitable personnel for the Parliamentary Deputation, for which, however, I was privileged to be selected. There is, of course, not a particle of truth in the suspicion; and in view of the personal devotion of so many in the Labour,

Socialist, and other movements it seems strange that there should be reluctance to recognise a similar spirit might animate those who are concerned with India. But I confess that I have received abundant reward in the satisfaction of believing I may have contributed a little towards human liberation.

For many years I have acted as Parliamentary Secretary of the India League. It is an unusual organisation, in that although its activities have been extensive it has no paid officials and depends entirely on the voluntary service of its friends in this country. Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon, M.A., B.Sc., Barrister-at-Law, its Honorary Secretary, is equally unusual. He seems to live on nothing but tea and buns, and this dynamic ascetic, apart from his work as a Borough Councillor, literally lives day and most of the night for India. I dissent from him in many respects, but I deeply honour his exceptional knowledge of Indian affairs, the explosive zest of his mind, his fine integrity, and his friendship.

My activity in regard to India has not been confined to the India League. Both within the Labour Party and in other directions I have been active. Yet, until the beginning of 1946 I had not physically been to India. My life heretofore has allowed no opportunity for distant travel, either in respect of time or financial resources. This provoked the inevitable criticism that I could not speak with authority about a place I had never visited. As I have never claimed to be an authority the criticism hardly applied. In any case, it seems irrelevant to the study of astronomy that those who peer through telescopes have actually never set foot on the stars and planets they scrutinise at a distance. If this sounds facetious then I must ask

whether all politicians must remain dumb until or unless they have spent some time in every country on the earth ? †

Moreover, I must add that I know many who have resided in India for some years, including incidentally eminent Indians themselves ; but some appear to be as reactionary or as progressive in their judgment at the end of their sojourn as at the beginning. I think a great deal depends upon one's personal faith and outlook.

The taunts, friendly or otherwise, I received because I had not been to India led to an interesting incident. Lady Astor, when M.P. for Plymouth, was well known in the House for her spasmodic temperament. As I was putting a question one day to Mr. Amery, then Secretary of State for India, I saw her enter the House, and I was impelled to add that when I sat down possibly the Honourable Lady the Member for Plymouth would ask yet again why I did not go to India. That is actually what she did do. Whereupon Commander Southby, Conservative M.P. for Epsom, rose and besought plaintively: "When the Honourable Member for West Leyton does go to India will he please take the Honourable Lady with him ?"

I have now been to India, but not with that lady. She is no longer a Member of the House, but no doubt she continues to provide pleasant, erratic interludes to political discussions wherever she may be.

Frequently before going I was assured the experience would alter my convictions. I did not see why, and in fact it has not done so. Nevertheless, the experience was invaluable, and has left precious memories. I am indeed grateful at being a member of that Parliamentary Deputation which swept the pathway along which the authoritative Government Mission passed shortly after.

My deep appreciation of the kindness and hospitality extended to me and the whole Deputation during our sojourn in India is here recorded. To the Indian Government Information Bureau I make thankful acknowledgment for permission to reproduce a few of the pictures taken by their ever-competent, helpful, and friendly photographer. My similar acknowledgments are made for other photographs. I also extend my warm gratitude to those friends who have given me practical assistance in the preparation of this modest literary venture.

I could have produced a weightier volume had there been real necessity and ampler leisure. But the list of books I append have been written from varying stand-points and indicate how well the ground has been already covered. I have contented myself with seizing odd hours for the writing of this book in the hope that those who read it may find in it whatever value may be attached to the observations of an odd back-bencher politician.

One day I hope to revisit India. When I do I shall not see, as I did this year, my friend, Dennis Stoll, wandering around in Indian garments and hungrily gathering every element of Indian life into his soul; nor will Chris Boyd, late Indian Civil Service, be available as the gentle guide he was when acting as Secretary to our Deputation; nor will many of the good British folk I met then be there. But perhaps I shall meet again Sudhir Ghosh in Calcutta, V. Narasimhan in Madras, and Mohammed Yunas in Peshawar, with each of whom I spent delightful hours. I shall certainly be reminded of my fellowship with nine Parliamentary colleagues; our dissimilar interest yet common earnestness; our occasional

conferences as we tried to adjust contrary plans and compare divergent impressions; our hours together in the aircraft, during which the kindly Godfrey Nicholson would distribute liquid refreshment considerably brought by him as part of his luggage; my unfulfilled hope that we might get to know something of the inner thought of each other's minds and how we looked at life (what strangers we do remain in this mortal world !); and of the unperturbed geniality of our Deputation leader, " Bob " Richards.

Then, too, when I go again to India I hope and believe it will be to a free India where I may be granted a few minutes by those political spokesmen I met before, but who will then be responsible Statesmen of a land becoming transformed under their guidance and rich with promise of great human achievement.

For all inaccuracies, inadequacies, and lack of charity I offer apology; for the joy of memories and service, thanks; for knowledge of human travail, compassion; for the future of India, hope and faith.

*June, 1946.*

R.W.S.



## CHAPTER I

### THE PARLIAMENTARY DEPUTATION

**A**N old and familiar Indian parable is that about the blind men and the elephant. Each one touched some portion of the animal, one its tail, another a leg, another an ear, and so on. According to the impression each man received so he declared an elephant was like a piece of rope, the trunk of a tree, a large leaf, or other designations. None of the blind men comprehended the whole elephant, the conception of each one being therefore partial and deceptive.

¶ Nine men and one woman visited India for five weeks in early 1946 as members of a Parliamentary Deputation. Did they resemble the blind men? I hope not. They all saw many phases of Indian life and the relationship of these to the Indian demand for Independence; and the morning after their return to this country they conveyed their collective and individual impressions to the Prime Minister and his colleagues. A few days later it was announced that a Government Mission would proceed to India, and Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, M.P., and Mr. A. V. Alexander, M.P., left by aircraft on March 19th. †

The Prime Minister made an arresting speech on India in the House of Commons on March 16th, and this gave great encouragement to many who were convinced that India should have Independence without delay. The atmosphere of the ensuing debate

was vastly different from previous parliamentary discussion on this subject, and there was greater hope and expectancy regarding an equitable settlement than there had been for many a day.

The parable of the blind men and the elephant, I believe, is not appropriate to our Deputation. Yet this is true: impressions received cannot be detached from an inner criterion of judgment and values. The tourist may pretend to be just gazing at unusual or arresting sights, or listening to curious statements; but even he does not possess a completely blank mind, though he may look like it! He has prejudices, preferences and principles of some sort, and the reaction to what he sees and hears are affected by preceding accumulations of hearsay, disposition, tradition, information, and vague feelings of like and dislike.

Much more than that is required if the human mind is to avoid being little more than a junk shop. A visit to India needs some understanding of its history, culture, economic conditions and political issues, an imaginative yet discriminating vision, and an intelligent standard of judgment. Thus, the ten of us who were sent to "see and hear things for ourselves" possessed to a greater or less degree an informed background against which we could reflect on our experiences, and according to its nature largely determine our individual lines of approach.

At the risk of laying myself open to an obvious taunt I stated when I reached India that I had not come "with an open mind." Apart from the frequency with which open minds are open at both ends I made this statement in order to emphasise that after many years of reading, thought and activity respecting

India it would have been somewhat absurd for me to suggest my mind was devoid of opinions and convictions about the land and the people now brought into more immediate contact. This, however, did not mean that new facts and experiences were incapable of modifying, amplifying, or confirming my knowledge and belief.

The Deputation was fairly representative of Parliament. It consisted of Professor R. Richards, M.P., Alderman A. Bottomley, M.P., Major Woodrow Wyatt, M.P., Mrs. M. Wallhead Nichol, M.P., R. Sorensen, M.P., Lord Chorley, Brigadier R. Low, M.P., G. Nicholson, M.P., Lord Munster, and R. Hopkin Morris, M.P., the first six being Labour, the three next Conservative, and the last, Liberal. Mr. Richards was Under-Secretary of State for India in 1924, and Lord Munster Under-Secretary from 1943 to 1945. We varied in temperament as much as in political outlook, but for all that we made no obvious attempts to push each other out of the 'plane.'

On January 2nd the Deputation left England by Sunderland flying-boat, and reached England again by air on February 12th. Its members visited Karachi, Delhi, Lahore, Amritsar, Peshawar, Bombay, Hyderabad, Madras, Calcutta, Jamshedpur, Allahabad, Lucknow, Agra, Jaipur, Gwalior, Mysore, Travancore, and Bikaner, and some twenty or more villages. Not all went to each place, although this was mostly in respect of the Indian States, and there was considerable divergence of interest and activity concerning the many aspects of Indian life. Mr. Bottomley (now Dominions Under-Secretary), for instance, having been a Trade Union organiser, was naturally particularly anxious to know about the Indian Trade Union movement; Lord

Chorley, a professor of law, was zealous respecting the curtailment of civil liberties; Mrs. Nichol was especially concerned with medical and educational services; the writer was determined to gather all the information possible from first-hand contact with the villages; the Conservatives made diligent inquiries about military affairs and the Princes' States. From time to time we conferred together and interviewed a large number of representatives of various organisations, deputations, and important public men. Apart from those specifically arranged there was an embarrassing number of "gate-crashers," earnest men and women who had sometimes travelled long distances to advance special cases or make ardent pleas about the needs of fishermen or Untouchables, orthodox Hinduism or strange mystical sects, wonderful constitutional proposals or individual grievances. More than once the writer was interviewing at one o'clock in the morning, and had individuals patiently waiting for him before breakfast.

We saw practically all the well-known political leaders, and many groups of the Congress and the Moslem League, besides Parsees, Sikhs, Unionists, Mahasabha, Anglo-Indians, Christians, Aborigines, Scheduled Classes, Trade Unionists, Radical Democrats, Communists, Ministers and officials of the Princes, social workers, educationalists, and many others. Several discussions took place with the Viceroy, Government Ministers, Provincial Governors, and high Civil Servants. Of course, there were several Press conferences, and mixed gatherings sometimes described as "cocktail parties." The latter sounds frivolous, but in fact all it means is that at private meetings in Indian households where political discus-

sions were arranged one could be refreshed if necessary by imbibing a " cocktail "—or a glass of tomato juice.

Excellent facilities were given to the Deputation, and the members were perfectly free to do as or go where they wished. The only general terms of reference were that we made contact with the Indian people and conveyed to them the positive interest and goodwill of the British Parliament.

The Viceroy and the Provincial Governors offered their hospitality, but if members preferred to stay in Indian homes or elsewhere they could do so, and did. Whether our hosts were members of the Congress or the Moslem League, we deeply appreciated the warmth of the welcome extended to us; and everywhere, whatever may have been the intensity of political convictions, personal relationship was most cordial. The writer is particularly indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Shiva Rao for their warm hospitality at the beginning and end of the tour.

These are human details, but they are mentioned because they form an essential element in an invaluable experience. Political views are not unrelated to these matters, for politics is interwoven with every aspect of the real humanity of men and women. How illuminating it was, for instance, to enjoy the personal friendship of Jawaharlal Nehru in his own home, and to draw inspiration from the kindness and mental vigour of himself, his daughter, and his sister, Mrs. Pandit, lately returned from her lecture tour in the U.S.A. Or to dwell in the household of the young Congress Moslem, Mohammed Yunas, in Peshawar, on the North-West Frontier. Or to drink tea from the best, though chipped, cups that a village panchayat provided in the Punjab. Or to accept the milk from

coconuts brought down by an agile climber from one of the trees overshadowing the Madrasi fisher-folk, with whom we talked for an hour.

These and other human contacts had still to be made when we arrived at Karachi after a slightly adventurous journey (we hit a flare-buoy when we "touched down" one night in the Persian Gulf) and then changed into a Dakota for Delhi. As we passed over the vast spaces of India, perhaps we gathered up a few main points of Indian history. And perhaps, also, it would be appropriate now to recollect some of these.

From my study shelf I take down a school history book, *A Brief Survey of British History*, by G. Townsend Warner, M.A., and therein I find a typical source of youthful imperialist fervour:

"When we look at a map of the world, and see how wide is the red that marks the British Empire, we may well feel proud. . . . We owe our Empire not only to the courage and enterprise, but also to the wisdom and sense of duty which have animated the best men of our race."

Yet I ought to quote another passage from the same primer:

"Our empire in India, like most of our possessions abroad, was founded by the enterprise of merchants. . . . Clive . . . definitely started the Company (*the East India Company*) on the policy of interfering among native princes in order to acquire territory. . . . One by one native rulers would fall before the Company and it by degrees would become master of the whole. This is actually what came to pass." ✱

The East India Company had French and Portuguese rivals, but Providence, or a less august

determinant, enabled British enterprise to triumph. There had been many previous invasions of India, the Indians themselves in fact having been remote invaders, but the commercial activities of the East India Company were an effective preparation for the formal annexation of India made in the proclamation of Queen Victoria in 1858. In 1857 the Indian Mutiny took place, when Indian peoples of many kinds united to overthrow the British, but in the end were defeated. Much terror and cruelty were endured by both sides during the conflict, which left a bitter heritage among many Indians. For the edification, however, of the Indians of that time, and now of ourselves, the Queen declared:

‘ Whereas, for divers and weighty reasons we have resolved by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in Parliament assembled, to take upon Ourselves the Government of the territories in India heretofore administered by the Honourable East India Company:

Now therefore, We do by these Presents notify and declare that . . . We hereby call upon Our Subjects . . . to bear true allegiance to Us, Our Heirs and Successors, and to submit themselves to the authority of those whom We may . . . see fit to appoint to administer the Government of Our said Territories.’

We deeply lament the evils and misery which have been brought upon India by the acts of ambitious Men (*this reference is to Indian rebels and not Warren Hastings, Clive, or the Honourable East India Company*) who have deceived their Countrymen . . . and led them into open Rebellion. Our Power has been shown by the Suppression of that Rebellion in the field; we desire to show Our Mercy by pardoning . . . those . . . who desire to return to the path of Duty.

When, by the Blessing of Providence, internal Tranquillity shall be restored . . . And may the God of all Power grant to Us . . . etc., etc.”

It is stated that Prince Albert of Saxe Coburg Gotha, Consort of the Queen, expressed his approval by inscribing on the final draft, “Recht gut.”

From this date onward began the still present phase of Indian history. It may be appropriate to mention that such is the singularity of moral estimation among us all, and members of our Deputation in particular, that Indian history itself is subjected to considerable divergence in personal assessment. Thus, one Conservative member of the Deputation stated in a speech in the House of Commons in March:

“I see no reason to apologise for the British record in India. We have made mistakes and blunders . . . not blunders which have arisen from a lack of desire to do our duty towards people whom, as we believe, Providence has for a certain period given to our charge . . . we have done our best to do our duty, not for ourselves, but with only a thought for those for whom we have regarded ourselves as trustees.”

Without probing too embarrassingly into such a sincere though familiar assurance respecting the selective benignity of Providence, I will also quote from my own remarks recorded in the same debate: “Reference has been made . . . to the fact that we must not dwell in the past. I, too, share that view fully, but I think it can sometimes be overstressed.

We cannot ignore reference to the past if the past is still a fact of to-day, and the cumulative mistakes and errors of omission and commission are still here to be removed before we can press forward . . . On the contrary, it is better for us to confess that as a nation

we have made mistakes, and that sometimes our high motives have not been unadulterated by other motives.”

This may illustrate the previous suggestion that observation of external facts is affected by subjective prejudices or principles. More recent events can also supply evidence of this.

In 1885 the Indian National Congress was founded, and although the British and Indians who were then closely associated with it had excellent intentions, largely of cultural character, Congress in due course became a militant and political force. Many of its members and leaders have served long terms of imprisonment, and its present leaders now guide what is undoubtedly the largest single political organisation in India.

✕ The Moslem League began in Bengal in 1906 and for some years co-operated with Congress. It is purely a communal body and in 1941 Pakistan—the partition of India so that one part becomes a separate, sovereign Moslem State—became its official policy and main objective. ✕

Since the last war there have been some reforms, and the 1935 Government of India Act established eleven Provincial Governments in British India. Congress won or had majority support in eight Provinces. Soon after the outbreak of this war Congress resigned its offices, and when the 1942 Cripps' offer proved abortive the Congress Working Committee and others were arrested before they could embark on the path of civil disobedience. They were detained without charge or trial until first Mr. Gandhi and then other major and minor leaders were released in 1945/46.

Severe, widespread outbreaks occurred after the arrests, and there was much destruction of life and property. Meanwhile the Moslem League gathered substantial support, and in the 1945 Legislative Assembly elections based on 1,600,000 electors, of whom 540,000 voted, it secured all the thirty Moslem seats in an Assembly of 142. Lord Wavell, at Simla in 1945, made strenuous efforts to re-form his Council on the basis of equal Moslem and non-Moslem representation, but Mr. Jinnah, the Moslem League Leader, rejected this because he could not nominate all the Moslems; and the Simla conference failed.

During the war some two-and-a-quarter million Indians served in the Indian armed forces, and many detachments fought outside their country against Fascist oppression and tyranny. The Japanese captured about 67,000 Indian troops after the fall of Singapore. Some of these were formed into the Indian National Army and fought against the British in the belief that thus they could liberate India from British rule. In 1943 came the disastrous famine, in which millions starved to death.

This is a very elementary historical reference and it is desirable that a few facts be added regarding existing conditions. India now has a population of probably 420,000,000, of whom it is claimed a little less than a quarter are Moslems. The country is divided between British India, with its eleven Provinces, and the Indian States. The former covers roughly four-sevenths of the whole area, and contains over three-quarters of the population of all India. The Government is vested in the Viceroy, who has a Council of fifteen Ministers, whose "advice," however, he can veto. There is also a State Council of thirty-two elected members and twenty-six nominated, and the Assembly has 102

elected members and thirty-nine nominated. Each Province has a Governor, who has complete authority and responsibility where and when Provincial Governments resign or cease to function. The Secretary of State for India is a Cabinet Minister of the British Government whose ultimate responsibility is accountable only to Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the Indian National Congress, with the Moslem Maulana Azad as its President,<sup>2</sup> and the Moslem League, whose leader is Mr. M. A. Jinnah, the chief other bodies are the Mahasabha, a Hindu communal body; the Liberals, whose outstanding leader is Sir Tej Sapru; the Unionist Party and the Akalis in the Punjab; the Nationalist Moslems; the Congress Socialist Party, whose leader is Jai Prakash Narain; the Anglo-Indians; the Radical Democratic Party; the Communist Party; and the Trade Unions.

Leaders and representatives of these and many others were interviewed both centrally in New Delhi and in provincial towns and cities. Students and specialist groups in great variety were also received, and both prominent and humble individuals. I estimate there were well over one hundred arranged interviews, apart from individual contacts and arrangements. Correspondence and literature became a flood with which it was impossible adequately to cope. I received personally over a thousand letters.

We had ample opportunity of hearing the views of these political leaders, and of appreciating their personalities; but as an illustration of the wide range of human contacts apart from the better-known public

<sup>1</sup> With the formation of the Nehru Government this is now in the melting-pot.

<sup>2</sup> Succeeded in 1946 by Jawaharlal Nehru.

men I give the following chance sample from my own personal experience:

The ex-Metropolitan of the Anglican Church in India (Dr. Foss Westcott); the Secretary and other officers of the Madras Fishermen's Union; Managers and staff of Tatas; the religious leaders of Hyderabad; the women organisers and members of the Calcutta jute workers' Trade Union; the editor and staff of the Agra Congress newspaper; the warden and members of the Friends' Ambulance Unit; the Prime Minister of Jaipur State; a young Bombay bank branch manager; the head master, staff, and students of the Hindu College, Madras; the (Moslem) Ismalia College near Peshawar, and other colleges; and the superintendent of the Lahore prison.

This assortment has been written down haphazardly and could be expanded to fill several pages, but it may suffice to indicate the brief yet valuable experience of very many phases of Indian thought and social activity. We also had some direct acquaintanceship with Indian art and culture, and these spoke eloquently of the rich capacity and achievement of the human spirit. True, one only tasted of an abundant feast, but our main function precluded anything more than intermittent digressions. Even so, it was to me both a precious experience and one essential to an appreciation of elements in the complete life of the Indian people. There were also, naturally, many occasions when one talked with Indians on these matters, and I had three or four opportunities of talking to large audiences on subjects not exclusively political.

The night, for instance, before I left New Delhi for Karachi and home I promised to speak to the South India Club, and so went along to what I had assumed

might be 150 people, only to find a huge marquee overflowing with possibly 2,000. Mr. M. R. Masani, an outstanding Congress Socialist, was in the chair, and despite our different backgrounds we found ourselves philosophically akin in our general approach to life.

It might be legitimate to advance the criticism that even six weeks' intensive tour could only contribute a quantitative rather than qualitative impression of Indian life and affairs. I recognise this with due humility, but in partial defence observe how frequently those with many years of experience seem to have gathered only a superficial impression. Anyhow, I have tried to sort out my experiences, and in the following chapters I deal with certain of their main aspects, fully conscious of their limitations, but hopeful of their interest and value both to those who know more and to those who may know a little less than I do.

If at least in some measure I succeed in conveying a picture as pulsating with the sorrows and joys, the murk and the wonder, the debasement and the inspiration of India as the one I was privileged to know then I shall have indeed made a worthy gift to my readers; for that six weeks will remain imperishably in my memory.

I shot no tigers and climbed no mountain peaks, so thrilling adventures of the traditional type provide no glamour to my story. Ah, but I nearly forgot. There was one occasion that certainly made my heart lose a couple of beats. It was outside the large Delhi Mosque among the crowd of itinerant vendors. I had just reseated myself in Mrs. Shiva Rao's small car when I heard a bump and a slight scream from Mrs. Shiva Rao. Glancing sideways I saw two or three yards away a man with a heavy lump of rock

or stone about to hurl it at me. I ducked my head, expecting a terrific crash. Nothing happened, and on looking up I found a crowd struggling with the man. Apparently he had flung one missile and missed, but had been about to correct this failure. Someone jabbered to Mrs. Rao, which she later said was an explanation that the assailant was mad and that it would be advisable to get away quickly. We willingly accepted the advice.

I did not inform the police, partly because I did not want any fuss made or any apprehension of political hostility to be fostered, and perhaps partly because any Press report might have put nasty ideas into other queer minds.

That was a bit of a thrill I would sooner have done without. This applies also to a less dramatic near-shave in a narrow defile by the Viceroy's house, when the car I was in only escaped a head-on collision with another car that shot at right angles round a corner at a murderous speed by my driver dexterously driving the car up on to the pavement and scraping the wall. Such incidents, however, are regrettably commonplace wherever cars are driven, though I must confess the anarchial defiance of all sane road regulations by many Indian drivers is too exhilarating for me.

And now I must leave such extraneous matters for those that stimulated my spirit rather than my nerves. To me they are more enthralling. I will seek in the following pages to describe the immediate impacts of my Indian journey, and my outer and inner impressions. I do not forget I was one of a team, but we have made no public collective report, nor will do so; and therefore I have thought it may

be of value if I give my own personal reactions and reflections, fully conscious that these may be peculiar to myself alone. Personally, I can state that the picture I saw did not seem unfamiliar; but it became vivid and illuminated. It was as if the picture came to life.

The picture my colleagues saw may be in some respects unlike mine, for we each have a particular angle of vision. In that sense socialists like myself are also individualists. We seek to liberate "persons" from gregarious amalgamation as well as economic enslavement. Most human beings are so tragically stunted and unfulfilled as to know little of the real splendour of life radiating through their own sensitive self-consciousness. Yet I am sure in the separate selves of all my colleagues there were kindred qualities that generated similar reflections on our Indian fellow human beings, and the life that should be theirs.

We had much in common, although each had personal reactions to the wretchedness we saw, and the beauty. Persons impressed us differently, and political judgments varied, but our common understanding was deepened. Only Mrs. Nichol and Major Wyatt shared the unhappy experience of having all their luggage stolen, recovering only two bags filled with Indian bricks! But even this grievous loss (not peculiar to India) will not impoverish their appreciation of India. In telling their own story they, and my other colleagues, may translate such incidents as symbols not only of our physical but also psychological distinctiveness of experience. Mr. Attlee and the Cabinet Ministers who received our individual reports must have been well aware of our distinctiveness, even though we were agreed on the urgency of the situation.

## CHAPTER II

### RURAL GLIMPSES

**N**EWSPAPER editors frequently assume that their opinion is public opinion? It would be more correct to state that they do not necessarily assume anything of the kind, but that they hope by giving the impression that this is so they will thereby help to make it so.

Similarly, one is apt when referring to Indian political thought to ignore the fact that this may simply be true of a small percentage of the Indian people. When it suited their purpose, I have known Conservative speakers and writers emphasise that we are misled if we imagine Indian "agitators" are at all truly representative of the "teeming millions" of simple Indian peasants and rural workers. If that warning were true then it could at least equally be said the British Conservative Party was certainly not an accredited interpreter of the needs and desires of that Indian multitude. One might extend this issue further and argue that no politically articulate minority, including editors, at any time or in any land represent anyone but themselves.

There are others, however, besides British Conservatives, who make this distinction between the few and the many, and who do so not in order to discredit the significance of the few but so that the real India may be fully appreciated. Here again comes a further consideration, for one sometimes comes across references to "Indian India" (and there is a magazine

with ~~this~~ title) with the obvious implication that there exists an Indian India and a non-Indian India. Actually what is meant is that the India of the Princes' States is more characteristically Indian than the eleven Provinces of "British" India, even though there are roughly three times as many Indians in the latter compared with the former. Nevertheless, the assumption conveyed in the description of "Indian India" is that a few hundred romantic feudal autocrats are more characteristic of the Indian people either than the political "agitators" or the over-300,000,000 who dwell in the eleven Provinces. Many Conservatives appear to endorse this, in so far as they are insistent on British obligations to the Princes, and are rarely, if ever, found to be as eager in insisting on discriminating between the few Princes and their many subjects as they are between Indian politicians and the rural masses. We may interweave a figure eight around logic and bias to find an explanation.

Representation is capable of many translations. It can mean illustration of a type, democratic election, autocratic identification, or advocacy on behalf of others. The Princes may be representative in the sense that they insist on determining how their subjects shall live, even as "Daddy knows best." This paternal responsibility, of course, is always the idealistic justification for authoritarianism, and this is implicit in the pride with which social reforms are elevated for approval in some of the Indian States. Even so, and even though the duties of "trusteeship" can be advanced alike by the Right and the Left in politics, other translations of the ambiguous term inevitably impinge themselves disconcertingly. The

politicians, for instance, may also claim to know what is best for the common people, and their rival assertion may be just as authentic. Indeed, it is possible that they may be a truer projection of human need than those whose lives are not and need not be so intimately related to popular endorsement.

We are venturing too far into the realm of political philosophy, although a passing glance at this is necessary in any reflection on the alleged divergence between the nature of urban and rural society in India. Gandhi certainly not only became very conscious of this distinction and spent a vast amount of his energy in an attempt politically to awaken the rural worker, but also developed his economic theories from his valuation of simple rural life. Because of this, alone, it would not be accurate to accept the contention that there is such a wide chasm as some would declare. Yet, there is a difference, and it is necessary to bear well in mind that, as in many other lands, the peasant and country dweller should not necessarily be identified either with the wage-earner and industrial proletariat, with those who altruistically frame policies designed to liberate them from burdens, or with those invested with the nominal power to treat fellow human beings simply as human furniture.

There are upwards of 700,000,000 villages in India where 85 to 90 per cent of the people live. "Public opinion" among the other 10 to 15 per cent is not necessarily that of the Indian majority. Mainly for this reason I decided to see as much of village life as possible, and altogether I spent varying periods of time in some twenty different villages in various parts of India. Most of the rural population are peasantry with their own tenant holdings, but less than half are

hired agricultural labourers, their pre-war wages of 2d. to 5d. per day having risen about 50 per cent. There are about 2,000,000 landowners, half with thirty acres or less. The villages I saw were samples, and my impressions were supplemented by conversations with men and women, Indian and British, whose experience was far wider than mine and who would therefore be far more entitled to be listened to than I am. I only give my limited impressions for what they may be worth, although I found general confirmation from those more qualified authorities.

The process I sometimes adopted was to select a roadway running out of a town, determine arbitrarily to travel along from fifteen to forty miles, turn off the main road for a few miles, and then make my way to some village within sight. As a rule some of my colleagues accompanied me, and generally we had more than one interpreter so that their interpretations could be checked. This was particularly necessary as there had been sceptical expressions regarding accuracy of translation, and the suggestion that everything had been "arranged." This was quite incorrect, and I think even the most cynical of pressmen who chose to follow in separate cars were convinced that a genuine, impartial inquiry was made within the time at our disposal.

Apart from certain main roads the tracks over which our car swerved and bumped often became so shrouded in dust in the wake of the car that it was impossible to see whether other cars were safely following behind. Looking through the rear window one simply saw a yellow-brown blur. Yet, somehow, when we stopped, within a few minutes the other car or cars would come

groaning and snorting out of the distance, and in time the dusty mist would settle.

Most of the villages appeared as mere huddles of mud hovels, as if a large mud bank had been deeply incised and hollowed out for human occupation. Some of the habitations seemed fairly firm, although others were crumbling and looked as if a good push would bring them tumbling down. Cow-dung plaster, or lapai, had been smoothed over the floors and the walls, with now and then simple patterns scratched or painted. The family establishment appeared to consist of two or three recesses, with charpais (or beds), consisting of an oblong frame on four or six legs, covered with rough webbing; a few earthen and metal pots; odd garments and mats; little images; and a small grey smouldering fire, with cow-dung pats nearby to serve as fuel.

The sylvan southern villages of India employed more timber, with thatched roofs. Around all villages were cultivated stretches of land, fertility depending on the caprice of the sky or on availability of tanks and wells. The wells frequently consisted of a deep hole with crude apparatus by which a buffalo moved continuously up and down an adjoining slope, drawing up on the downward journey a large leather sack of water which was pulled on one side to allow the water to flow out and down a trough to the fields. Often there would be a larger dwelling or two, one of which being a kind of club for the elders, with a few chairs and a curious assortment of pictures on the wall. I gathered that in some cases when a panchayat functioned (i.e., a village council of five), this would be its meeting place. Then there was generally a



*Top:* Mahatma Gandhi with Hopkin Morris, Richards, Bottomley, Sorensen, Lord Chorley, Mrs. Nichol, Low Wyatt, and Nicholson.  
*Below:* Congress leaders and Deputation. *Front:* Chorley, Richards, Azad, Patel, Hopkin Morris, Asaf Ali. *Rear:* Krupalani, Pant, and Prasad. [Photo: Shamma, New Delhi.]



*Top:* A chat with Pandit Nehru.

*Bottom:* Mr. M. A. Jinnah, Moslem League Qaid-i-Azam

*Photo*

small temple somewhere, or a mosque, and several shrines or sacred objects.

As we approached a village a few inhabitants would appear, and soon a small crowd, including children. Some of the youngest were practically naked, though the little girls generally had long skirts dipping in the dust. The women speedily either vanished or stood in small clusters at a distance, and if we did manage to draw near them either they were completely impassive or else averted their faces and only glanced round furtively, the Hindu sarees being half drawn across their features. In the south, many of the men were half-naked, especially when working.

The children at first were shy and almost apprehensive, the younger ones clinging to their parents, often their fathers nursing them in their arms. I tried out some of the conjuring and ventriloquial tricks I knew, and found this worked splendidly. Smiles dawned, and even vocal merriment, so that I became not only popular among the children but quite attractive to the adults, although I hope I did not leave an exaggerated impression of European magic to arouse the jealous enmity of professional native magicians.

Sometimes we found ourselves hemmed in by a thick circle of shaven or bearded men, but at other times I was offered a stool or I squatted on a rush mat. The majority would study us in silent curiosity, leaving the discussion to one or two, unless I spoke directly to individuals in the background. They were always friendly even though some were reticent, and with a little coaxing would reply to a long series of questions. Always at some point I asked them what they considered were their main needs, and I found

the following were invariably mentioned: water supplies, schools, kerosene (many had no means of lighting after dark), cloth or yarn, and medical services. When I asked if they knew of Gandhi I only found one who did not, and it was later explained to me he was a bit daft! Asked what Gandhi represented, the replies ranged from "He makes us happy" and "A good man" to "He will make our country free" and "Swaraj." Many had heard of Nehru and some of Jinnah, and most were vaguely or definitely aware of the meaning of Pakistan. They had heard of the King-Emperor (in response to an earnest inquiry from one of our Conservatives), but did not appear particularly enthusiastic about him. Local government officers were well known, and some had heard of the British Labour Party and of the Labour Government. Very frequently some pressing urgent local need was expressed, with apparent anticipation that I and my colleagues could and would do something about it. ↵

Occasionally the villagers appeared more concerned about the name of some local personality than about national politicians. I found one village very appreciative of Colonel F. L. Braine, whose activities had been directed towards the improvement of village life, and whose book I have had the pleasure of reading.

In one village a youngish man proudly showed me a large metal box wherein he kept a few well-worn books, writing materials, and a register. He had been slowly teaching himself to read and write with only occasional assistance, and in turn he was instructing others, both adults and children, with men exclusively among the former and mainly boys among the latter. Women, I was assured, did not need or want to

become literate; but it was a man who gave this information. In the same village I noticed, some ten yards or so away from the crowd, two wretched looking men whom I was informed were Untouchables from a separate hamlet. I spoke to them, but practically all I could get from them was that they needed more food. The villagers concurred in this, and stated it was their need also, but that they were kind to the Untouchables and out of their own resources always gave them food. When I pressed for the reason why the Untouchables could not sit with them and share their life, I was told this could not be because it was not the custom. And when I asked why they should maintain the custom, I was told because it was the custom—a reply not dissimilar in substance from any attempted defence of British rural or other customs.

In the Madrasi fishing village where we were refreshed with coconut milk, I entered a hut to find four women wailing before the corpse of an old woman propped against the wall; and in another hut, wherein I could hardly stand upright, I could just see through the gloom a woman and four small children huddled in a corner. Thirty miles or so from Calcutta I visited Debipur, where the Friends' Ambulance Unit have built three spacious, attractive workshops where hand weaving and spinning were taught and fabric and carpets made for sale. Half the men in this district had perished in the 1943 famine. I met here, and elsewhere, several malarial cases, though, unlike elsewhere, medical attention had been available. Here, too, I spoke to a little widow of eight whose boy husband had died a short time before. Child marriage is still frequent although, of course, the young couples do not live together until puberty. It was incongruous to see

this lassie and then another of the same age who had just returned from school carrying her bundle of "exercise books" of long leaves under her arm.

At a large Punjab village we had an interesting time discussing the position of women. Out of some 2,000 men, women, and children, it had 440 male and fifty female voters. When I inquired of the group that gathered round me whether all women as well as men should have a vote I was informed it was not necessary for women to vote but if they could and did they would use their vote as the men directed. To my suggestion that the women might vote as they pleased, and differently from the men, it was emphasised this was impossible. On my insisting that they might defy masculine direction both Moslem and Hindu looked at each other incredulously, and then one intimated to me that if such an outrage occurred they would soon get rid of the women. I gathered they would not exactly push such a miscreant down the well but turn her out of the village. There were others elsewhere, however, who raised no particular objection to feminine enfranchisement, although they were far from enthusiastic.

In two villages I came across zamindars, who cautiously vouchsafed information concerning land tenure; and I gathered knowledge respecting the scope and mechanism of the money-lender. In another I found a young man with a B.A. degree who could find no work save such agricultural toil as the village could provide. In most villages I talked with demobilised service men, and these, or ex-servicemen of the previous war, were the only ones who had been out of India. I discussed at some length in several villages the working of the Panchayat system of

village government and found it had lapsed in many areas. Conversation also ranged over the method of tillage; commodity prices and their rise; marriage customs; infant and maternal mortality; impressions of the wider world; the size of families (with a contradiction between the economic advantage yet also disadvantage of having many children); attitudes to life, politics, and religion; abortion; domestic woes and joys; aircraft; recreations; the uses of cow-dung; and many other topics. Nowhere did I find evidence of serious Moslem-Hindu friction, and I was assured that members of both religious communities normally lived amicably together in the villages.

A friendly discussion between supporters of the Moslem League and others took place in one village; but they agreed to differ, and then jointly invited me to a light meal, during the enjoyment of which before a benevolent throng a very noisy pipe band broke the peace. I prepared to accept this additional honour, but the admiring crowd rushed to the doorway of the yard where I was sipping tea and there engaged in loud and vigorous altercation. The band had been hurriedly assembled by one of the Moslem Leaguers, not, I regret, so much in my honour but as a cacophonous act of defiance against the opponents of Pakistan, many of whom had gathered before me. Lest this be taken as inconsistent with my previous statement I add that my anticipation of a regular shindy was not fulfilled, nor was it when we left the village in a car and were held up by rival groups. While the unintelligible interchange of political comments proceeded briskly I was temporarily forgotten, and so was able without further hindrance to speed quickly through a cloud of dust towards the high road.

My predominant impression of village life and its dust and mud is one of gross elemental poverty. It would be foolish to generalise on the basis of visits to some twenty villages, and yet, within the limits of such sampling amplified by the experiences described by others one may approach a fairly accurate estimation of general rural conditions. I had several talks with Indian and British social workers and investigators, including District Officers, and what I saw and heard was not essentially different from their own wider and deeper knowledge. This was augmented further by conversation with one or two individuals who spent a good deal of their time wandering from place to place. One of these was a namesake, but not a relative, and I confess to a little astonishment when I met a fair-featured gentleman in a coloured robe who declared that he was Alfred Sorensen, that he came originally from Jutland (from whence also came my paternal grandfather), lived alone for part of the year in a lonely place on the slope of the Himalayas, and for the rest of the year travelled on foot through India. He discoursed on mysticism, and since then I have received a long letter from him on the virtues of silence, but I have not taken this as a personal hint. On the contrary I am grateful he was not practising silence when he gave me much valuable information about his experiences in the remote parts of India.

On another occasion I met Mira Ben, at one time associated with Gandhi's Ashram, and there were other equally interesting individuals upon whose knowledge I was able to draw, including many of the Indian and British associates of the F.A.U., whose main activities were in Bengal villages. From such diverse sources,

supplemented by my own amateur investigation, I gathered up my impressions.

The primitive poverty is widespread, although there are some villages much superior to the average. In Jaipur State, for instance, largely through the progressive zeal of Sir Mirza Ismail, the Prime Minister, there was evidently a vigorous drive at improvement, and model mud and stone houses were in course of erection in some of the villages. In Hyderabad I found a co-operative movement having a beneficial effect, and was informed that a third of the 21,000 villages in that State had been drawn into co-operative activities. In a North-West Frontier village there were two or three large houses that seemed to lift up the village beyond customary dejection, and in two or three other villages I found signs of modest comfort and well-being, and of that greater vitality which is associated with ampler nutrition.

The level of political and social interest also varies, some being livelier than others, and I formed the opinion that in many cases a great deal depended on the headman or some local personality. But poverty and malnutrition can enervate even the most vigorous temperaments, and this was evident in many quarters. Some of the children looked fairly healthy, but others I saw were obviously suffering physically and needed both better quantity and quality of food and medical attention. The women-folk generally, despite the attractive coloured sarrees many of them wore, appeared far too passively resigned to fate. I shall refer later to this fatalistic acceptance of life among women.

In some villages there were crude wooden spinning wheels and looms and simple handicrafts. Goats, poultry, cows and buffaloes, miserable-looking dogs,

and occasionally small herds of pigs meandered around. I came across one or two small temples, and many shrines and graves, sometimes with a small flag drooping on top of a long thin cane, and sometimes with patches of coloured powder. These reminded me of intermittent breaks in weekly routine, and of the periods of mourning or of religious festivity that provided an emotional variation. Beneath the human surface on which I gazed there must have been the ordinary human stresses, conflicts, pleasures, affections, hopes, and sorrows that made life something more than the dull continuity suggested by dust and mud and the arid environment. Moreover, in some parts vegetation was more profligate, and this organic exfoliation was an obtrusive emphasis on the positive struggle for survival. Yet, whatever the local environment the striving to escape decay and death was remorseless and inescapable. Human life was elemental in its dominant need to avoid the trap set by the natural conflict between procreation and subsistence. The Malthusian thesis is only too valid under some circumstances.

The average villager identified political leaders and movements with his own and his community's necessity of sustenance and of freedom from heavy burdens. Intertwined with this are apparently incongruous religious, superstitious, magical and traditional elements. He has his inhibitions and mysteries, his solemnities and duties, nourished by the immediate impact of impersonal forces and also by the social inheritance of these translated theologically. Custom, rational and irrational, intrudes authoritatively whether in worship or work, in moral codes or psychological reactions. Innovations are suspect, as everywhere else, and imitativeness is a dominating law. Enlighten-

ment will always find it difficult to raise the eyelids of custom, and interference with powerful behaviour-patterns becomes automatically reprehensible.

The representative of law and order and the militancy of the reformer or agitator have alike to bear respect, however reluctant, to Krishna, Siva, Vishnu, and Kali, and the erotic, heroic, horrific, or gentle forces they personify, or to Allah and His Prophet, Mohammed. Even medical and hygienic knowledge has to contend with powerful resistances, and nowhere more resolute than in the sphere of sexual relationship. The liberation that is needed is not only from hunger, but from a mental concentration camp surrounded by psychological barbed-wire.

The time was when, it is claimed, rural life was far sounder and happier. It is said the village panchayats flourished and were not only representative of each village community but also maintained acceptable justice and oversight. This was largely shattered during the expansion of the East India Company and the development of British Government policy. With this dissolution, it is also claimed, declined also the system of village economy with its system of storage against emergency and crisis. A further criticism is that the village educational system was likewise devastated, and whereas probably a majority of children received elementary education in most villages now this only exists in a small minority.

Finally, there is the allegation that both the landlord and moneylender increased their power over the peasants, with the connivance or actual support of government, and that government made no real attempt to assist rural life to withstand the effect of the

dislocation of traditional economy through its subordination to British rule and interests.

Much has been written substantially to support these indictments, but I feel that even allowing for this, certain essential problems remain and would have appeared in any case. The fertile area of India is not unlimited, and with the growth of population old methods would have proved incapable of supporting the larger numbers. Moreover, assuming that despite much that is questionable in industrial development there are nevertheless available valuable scientific contributions to the liberation of human life from primitive burdens, then undoubtedly the country-side needs to receive a share of those benefits. There is, therefore, an urgent necessity wisely to relate agrarian life to industrial expansion.

Irrigation, for example, though possibly previously adequate with a much smaller population, requires a comprehensive national plan to ensure that no part shall suffer from drought. This is impossible without the advantages of modern engineering as one important aspect of modern industrial resources.

The Indian village in some respects retains its ancient characteristics, and it should not be assumed that there is not much wisdom and practical sense within a good deal of village technique and craftsmanship. It has had its value, born out of long experience, and it still possesses this; Mr. Gandhi has performed a great service in encouraging rural self-reliance and the intelligent employment of village craft experience and knowledge. Much could be done under stimulation and guidance in this regard. But much more is necessary to secure that prosperity which the village can enjoy, and this requires a conscious

political effort that links rural life to the advantages of modern industry within a national policy.

This need is not peculiar to Indian rural life. Everywhere the peasant has been enslaved to elemental toil, and the lyrical eulogies of country life emanate from those who have enjoyed some measure of liberation from it. There is no doubt a simple virtue associated with work on the land and reliance on rural craftsmanship, but unless the human mind has already been well nourished it remains enclosed within the barriers of natural necessity. Habits and customs become socially integrated into a hard framework, and much of its virtue is merely the traditional morality of strict observance of local conventions. In India, for instance, in those areas where the principle of inheritance requires the fragmentation of land, it might seem impious to interfere with this principle, even though it would be socially moral to do so in the interests of efficient agriculture. The conservative lives longest in a primitive world, at least psychologically.

Nevertheless, rustic continuity becomes broken either through the intrusion of fragments from a wider world or through rebellion against cumulative burdens. For this reason I found not only a mood of fatalistic resignation in the country-side but also the groping of a giant towards a nebulous freedom whose human symbol was the nationalist politician.

## CHAPTER III

### URBAN LIFE AND CONDITIONS

URBAN poverty is set in a different mould than that of the countryside. It is less isolated and primitive, for there is greater external variety and the daily impact of a more complex scene. On the other hand, the congestion is less escapable, for space has contracted. Relaxation must take a different form, and the pressure of human necessities is more comprehensive. The individual becomes less significant by multiplicity, and the impersonal world is mechanical and not vegetative. Dirt takes the place of dust, and squalor spreads itself out. Whether around Bombay, Lahore, Calcutta, or Old Delhi, the dwelling and working places of the proletariat have greater common resemblance than they have with rural poverty.

Nightly one can see thousands of the homeless sleeping on Bombay pavements and open spaces. But I also glimpsed the interiors of the homes of the slightly more fortunate. One room per family, sometimes two or even three families, are prevalent conditions. In Calcutta suburbs I visited the jute workers' "lines"—rows of one-roomed tenements approximately eight feet square, where I was informed six or seven persons had their habitation. There was no furniture in that space, and a bag or box and a few utensils sufficed. A water tap some distance away ensured adequate ablutions, and a few small shops displayed simple commodities. Within this company-

owned area I saw a typed notice prohibiting trade union meetings. One must not ignore the fact, of course, that the Indian climate is hot and indoor life less necessary for the greater part of the year. Even so, a small space where six or seven people alone can have shelter and privacy indicates a dire poverty, which though involving simplicity of living does so without also supplying the values that make simplicity a thing of ascetic grace.

Elsewhere in great blocks of flats multitudes of families dwelt in congestion even more intense, for there is some mitigation when one only has neighbours horizontally, and not vertically as well. The streets received the human shoals going to and from their homes, and along these thoroughfares were the narrow shops, like large cupboards, in the midst of whose goods squatted the proprietors and assistants. One bought direct from the pavement, and without rising the shopkeeper handed over packets or utensils, or a measure of peas, millet, or grain. Spidery money-lenders sat beside their safes, with little piles of coins and account books ready for customers. Vendors of drinks or tobacco offered refreshment or opiates. Coloured prints of gods and goddesses, sacred bulls and exotic symbols, were displayed along with pictures of Gandhi, Nehru, Subas Bose, or Jinnah. Bangles and fairings, slippers and pots, bananas and cabbages, awaited purchasers in the bazaars, which close down late at night, the assistants apparently having no specific hours of duty and often sleeping at night inside the shop. They must welcome for non-political reasons the occasional "hartals," or closing down of all businesses, that are instituted for political purposes.

There are laws and regulations applying to large factories, but small workshops and business premises are largely exempt. Hours of work in these are very long and conditions oppressive. In the big industrial establishment the statutory minimum conditions are far below those in this country. Child labour under twelve is prohibited in factories, and no children or women are now employed in the mines of British India.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Ambedkar, the Minister of Labour, and the leader of an Untouchables organisation, reinstated female labour in or on the mines as a war-time necessity, but this ceased while the Parliamentary Deputation was in India. 'The general hours of factory or textile mill employment are sixty per week, and the pay ranges from 4s. 6d. to 12s. 6d. per week.'<sup>2</sup> There are several trade unions, and most of these are associated either with the Indian Trade Union Congress or the Indian Federation of Labour, most of the substantial ones being allied with the former. The Indian Federation of Railway Trade Unions remains aloof from both organisations, and so did the Ahmedabad Labour Association inspired by Mr. Gandhi, although it is now affiliated to the T.U.C. The task of trade union organisers is exceedingly difficult and needs the utmost zeal and persistence. But it was heartening for Arthur Bottomley and myself to address several thousand trade unionists at a specially arranged night-time demonstration in Jamshedpur. We had other contacts with trade unions, and made visits both to modest tea-gatherings, such as the one

<sup>1</sup> According to Indian Government Statistical Summary, published in 1945, the 1939 average daily earnings of underground workers in the Jharia Coal Mines, for example, were 9 annas 9 pies per day, or roughly 10d.

<sup>2</sup> Plus war-time dearness allowance averaging 40 per cent.

presided over by the T.U.C. veteran Mr. N. M. Joshi at the Madras Ramakrishna Mission Settlement, and to trade union offices. Trade union officials sometimes led us on local journeys of inspection, and were invaluable informants.

The largest steel works in the British Empire is owned by Tatas at Jamshedpur, and there we spent some hours watching the various processes, later viewing the re-housing scheme the firm had initiated. We also observed various welfare schemes in operation and visited the hospital maintained by Tatas. Conditions were certainly far superior in Jamshedpur to most other industrial areas, and there is credit due to this vast concern that they have not only built up a great industrial plant during the past forty years, in an area that before then was jungle, but also that they have exercised a laudable sense of responsibility by avoiding chaotic industrial slumdom in contrast both to Indian and British industrial areas. To walk round the sheds where hot metal was being hammered and turned to many shapes, and through laboratories and testing rooms, offices and storeyards, so similar to great European or American undertakings but served by dark-skinned people in the heart of India, seemed almost grotesque.

We had many other experiences of economic and commercial Indian life—the distinctive trade streets or bazaars of Peshawar, each one exclusively devoted to gold and silver crafts, or copperwork, or pottery and so forth; the great ships in the Hooghly, with British as well as Indian and foreign names; the crowds flooding out of factory gates; the construction of buildings with scaffolding of bamboo or long twisted poles, and peculiar implements; the printing works

of the daily *Hindu*, with the latest available machinery, but with a delightful garden where we were entertained to tea; the coal mines visited by some of the deputation; the local urban gathering of industrial workers I addressed by the light of a single lantern, and which I reached after a longish drive through wretched labyrinths of factories and dwellings in the Howrah area—these and others were a grim and often sordid picture, broken by sight and remembrance of varied garments and features, repugnant beggars with physical deformities, scrap banners with political slogans, now and then hints of personal conflict, a wedding or funeral with tawdry decorations, and such-like incidents.

In an industrial urban area one Sunday I stood in a crowd watching a fierce-looking magician who appeared to hypnotise another man and then slice out his tongue with a knife. Not until he had secured a bowl full of annas and my rupee note did he restore the severed portion of the tongue to his prostrate victim and bring him out of the trance. I trust that was simply very clever deception. Twice I was jostled by a funeral procession, in one case the corpse, which was borne at shoulder height on a simple bed by four men, rolling macabrely from side to side as the men and a few followers pushed their way through an unconcerned bazaar crowd. I will also record a strange sight, when a rickshaw puller evidently disagreed both with his customer and another rickshaw man. Whereupon, after a crescendo of altercation, he took off his slipper and heavily slapped the face of his rival, who then utilised his own slipper to slap him back. After a rhythmic alternation of such slipper slapping, the slippers were replaced and



*Top:* Flashlight of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and son.  
*Bottom:* Gaffar Khan addressing N.W. Frontier election meeting.



Afghanistan, vista from Khiber Pass, N.W. Frontier

the first rickshaw man retired after vehemently directing the other to go to hell. My translator assured me this was an accurate interpretation of the vernacular, and that in this area quarrels did not justify punching but only open-hand or slipper concussion. The exhibition was really spontaneous and not for my benefit, for I was unobserved.

I have suggested to my wife she might in her magisterial duties intimate to some of those charged with assault that this practice would be the less of two evils. Her response was unsympathetic.

Although industrial life of all kinds absorbs approximately 15 per cent of the Indian people, the proportion is bound to increase. One sincerely hopes that trade union activity and Government legislation will speedily lift the workers out of their dire conditions and improve their standard of living. The housing problem is terribly acute and demands immense efforts to solve it, and town planning, appropriate to Indian life, is imperative. In Bombay 74 per cent live in one-room tenements, 35 per cent living five or more in one room. Hours of labour and rates of pay are shocking, the latter sometimes being as low as 1s. to 1s. 6d. per day. And despite the passion for washing, promoted equally by thermal, hygienic, and religious necessity, very much requires to be done to secure effective and decent sanitation. Neither open drains nor peculiar personal habits should remain unreformed.

When a peasant settles in a town does he become one of the proletariat? Naturally, I am very familiar with that word, but I confess to the failing that I have never been quite clear as to its meaning. I observe the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines

proletariat as: "n. (Rom. Hist.); often contempt, lowest class of community; (Pol. Econ.) indigent wage-earners, labouring classes (F.F. proletariat)," and that Chambers' *Dictionary* adds: "the lowest class (L. proletarius). In ancient Rome, a citizen of the sixth and lowest class, who served that State not with his property but with his children—proles, offspring." But I am afraid neither source helps very much. "Lowest class" could be a designation of the Indian Untouchables. Labouring classes could include any or all poor workers in town or country. The service of breeding, if of value to the State, seems rather overdone. It is an ambiguous word much used by Socialists, and I ask my original question because there has been much talk of "workers and peasants," and so I presume a discrimination is necessary.

Certainly, as industrial and urban life expands and steadily absorbs more and more from the country-side a distinction does arise. Conditions are different in the towns compared with rural districts, and this is bound to have its effect on human behaviour. I have mentioned that the urban dweller is less iso'ated and his life is more impersonal. I remark further that he experiences more variety, and despite his poverty, this can provide a different stimulation. He has impacts other than those generally experienced by the rural worker. If he works in a factory he is conscious of himself as a serf to the machine and subject to a different type of impersonal force. And he finds the same impetus as factory workers the world over have found towards trade unionism.

Very few, relatively, are trade union members. Shiva Rao estimated there were about 350,000 in 1939, though not all in registered trade unions. But trade unionism is familiar, and in time should gather in a majority of those engaged in industrial pursuits. By experience the Indian town-worker is finding the necessity of organisation to defend and improve his conditions. Meanwhile it is within the mind of the proletariat (by which I will mean the poorly paid town-worker) that Socialist and Communist ideas are scattered, to atrophy or germinate. It is here where some, but by no means a complete, similarity exists between the Indian worker and his British prototype. There are mass meetings, and knots of enthusiastic pioneers who think out other ways and means of stirring the masses. There are excited processions, and sometimes nasty clashes with the police or occasionally between rival communities. There are newspapers, and the circulation of literature; and there is the influence of the discontented intelligentsia and student class. It is easier in urban areas to stir and heat up individual and gregarious emotions that generate a positive "class consciousness." Hence it is in the towns where militant Socialist and Communist agitation thrives best. Although this may mislead the Left into assuming that because of support received from the urban masses this is therefore the voice of India, this would be incorrect. A gathering of twenty, thirty, or fifty thousand for a demonstration appears impressive, but what are these compared to the total 420,000,000 population and the vast proportion of country dwellers scattered throughout India? Urban India is not necessarily representative of all-India, even though its life is more articulate in

expressing discontents. Yet urban India possesses its social and political dynamics and cannot but have a radiating if restricted influence on rural India. There are filaments that stretch out from, yet well beyond, the congestion of the towns, even though the two worlds are different.

The bazaars are full of rumours and gossip as of old, and wild fire travels quickly through the crowds. Many opportunities exist between the haggling and chaffering for argument, hearsay, surmise, and bits of information, true, false, or distorted. Here arise mass feelings that at all times can provide suitable material for the conscious or unconscious agent of propaganda, and so quicken the obligation of politicians to provide easement of burdens and wise guidance for the multitude.

There are many others besides factory workers. Little shopkeepers and owners of small workshops possess their own small property characteristics, and maintain a more firm paternal hold over their assistants. Lower down there are itinerant hawkers eking out a precarious livelihood; and there is also the vast army of bearers and dhobies, the one supplying domestic service and the other washing garments for the comfortably off. What a contrast with London laundries, when in India one gives out dirty linen in the morning and receives it back in the evening, clean, ironed, and aired. I must add that the sight of the dhobies dipping the garments in a stream, flailing them on solid objects, or pounding them heavily with stones, did not seem to encourage durability and makes me wonder whether this is not a British practise as well.

The bearers, or man servants, vary considerably in their lot. Some respond suitably to the requirement of obsequiousness, although what goes on behind the silent obedience and humble posture is another matter. Some are treated as human beings, and some are not. Some are reliable, and some are a burden. Many have strong convictions regarding the kind of jobs they will do or will not do, insisting, even more meticulously than do British aristocratic grades of domestic servants, on preserving status, so that one man may carry in a plate but another man must carry out an ash-tray. In some households the function of bearer seems almost a jealously guarded inheritance.

These types of workers, at one time or other, contribute to the human streams flowing along the streets. In the roadways men and women dig holes for drainage or repairs; women scavengers with inefficient whisks sweep the refuse; small carts and laden human or animal beasts of burden pad slowly along; bicycles pass, and now and then a car speeding dangerously just misses scurrying pedestrians. And the women silently drift by, their long coloured skirts swinging on and over the dirt and muck of the ground.

Street scenes are much the same in all the towns, although there is architectural variation. Bombay's vast buildings on the waterfront seem a flamboyant anachronism; Calcutta, in parts, was transported from England, particularly from St. John's Wood and Regent's Park; Madras looked more appropriate, as if it had Indian roots, despite odd ecclesiastical foliage; Delhi is a Jekyll and Hyde capital, one half enclosing Mutiny memories within its rags and the other representing the spacious complacency of British conquest,

complete with a condescending inscription over a Secretariat portico to the effect that Indians may have liberty when they prove they deserve it!

There are common features in the other towns we visited, including, of course, the poverty of the proletariat. Lucknow possesses its Residency ruins, in the grounds of which a monument bears testimony to the gallant stand of British troops against the enemy, i.e., the Indians. And in each town there is a political vibrancy beating through outer appearance.

In my desire to sense the life of urban dwellers I was privileged to experience brief glimpses of other Indian homes than those wherein I stayed for a night or two. I sat inside the "bustees," with their miserable squalor, and visited one-roomed family workers' tenements. Higher up the scale one or two of us chose to spend a delightful couple of hours having tea in the home of one of the ordinary grades of Indian civil servants. The two young daughters were modest and shy as I asked them about their school life, but their elder brother quietly yet avidly sought information from us respecting England and English literature. He was about fourteen or fifteen, and when I inquired what he wanted to do in later years, he replied earnestly: "I want to serve my nation." I enjoyed equally warm hospitality in the home of the extremely efficient Government officer who took most of the photographs in this book.

Besides these "visits to the interior," we all had interviews with representative groups of workers, when they acquainted us with their pay, conditions of work, and grievances. More than once Indian "Bevin boys" sought me out. These were young technicians who had been members of one or other of the contingents

sent to England for nine months to gain experience in the Letchworth training centre and in provincial factories. Mr. Bevin, when Coalition Government Minister of Labour, had initiated the scheme, and hundreds of these young men have benefited thereby. Several of them I had entertained at the Letchworth war-time habitation my wife and I secured when we were bombed out temporarily from our own home. During that time I discovered a dark suspicion in certain quarters that my sojourn in Letchworth had been arranged because of the presence of these Indian "Bevin boys!" As Parliamentary Secretary of the India League probably it was melodramatically assumed I had a sinister political intention, and I was informed that instructions had been given to the technicians not to attend any Indian meeting arranged in Letchworth or to acquire any India League literature. I expect special "intelligence" gentlemen sleuthed around, and even may have attended the church services I conducted, and still conduct, monthly in the Garden City to see what I was up to. Let us hope they gained inspiration, and contributed liberally to the collection.

It was all very silly, but despite this I had several interesting, innocent contacts with them, and I am glad to record that both the Letchworth Trades Council and other bodies were very helpful. The complaint of many of the young men I met again was that, having acquired greater skill and a higher income during the war they were now faced with a calamitous reduction, and would be unable to meet the financial obligations arising from the improved standard of living, including accommodation, acquired during the war. Such misfortunes are very common, and the frustration and disappointment of large numbers of lower middle-class

young men who complete legal and other professional training and then can find no suitable post leads, naturally, to bitter discontent. Yet India urgently needs all the professional skill available, though legal achievements appear to be greatly disproportionate to other qualifications.

These and other direct contacts enabled me to get the "feel" of Indian urban life, its particular nature, and its problems. It is the India of a small percentage of the Indian people, but one that is destined to expand. It is an India of rubbish, smells, and untidiness; and also of rumour and gossip, with a capacity for swift transmission of political excitement. Somewhere in every town there was busy political activity, and journalistic centres from whence newspapers circulated to a relatively small section of local inhabitants. And always there is poverty contrasting with the spaciousness and comfort of the few who were better off. In this India one felt at any moment one need but make a sign and out of innumerable recesses would come human floods to gather up the passers-by and sweep them onward into a vast collective expression of woe and resentment against conditions that oppress the human spirit.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Was this the underlying stimulus to the Calcutta communal riots of August, when 3,500 Indians were killed by Indians ?

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WOMEN OF INDIA

**A** PART from a splendid minority the women of India endure a double enslavement. That minority consists of educated middle-class women for the most part who are filled with a passionate zeal not only for political liberty but also for the liberation of their sisters from physical poverty and sex subordination. There are a few women who enjoy the same emancipation of tinselled frivolity as their western prototypes, and there are also those who live in comfort and become spiritually and physically obese. I am not much concerned with either of the two last groups but only with the responsible minority and the pitiful majority.

No doubt a transitory visitor like myself can be misled, and if my judgment appears too superficial to those who know better I offer my apologies. This may apply, for instance, to my cheerless experience in one city where I had been invited to attend a private gathering to meet, I was informed, some younger politicians.

On arrival I found myself besieged on the verandah by ardent, aggressive Pakistanians, who barraged me with declamations and allowed me no time to answer one point without thrusting in another. I became a little restive at this assault and insisted on breaking away from the score of assertive voices and going inside the house. Therein I was surprised to discover about two dozen women, beautifully adorned, decoratively

sitting all round the wall of the large room. Dutifully I greeted each one and conversationally tried to draw many of them out of dumb passivity, but found only a faint response from one or two. They appeared to me to be obeying the irritating exhortation often directed to me in my childhood to be "seen but not heard." Perhaps they had been inspired by some Indian equivalent of "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever," and were meditating on its dubious virtue. I have rarely met such collective feminine paralysis, and I felt depressed.

On the other hand, I met many Hindu and Moslem women who were far more articulate, as well as possessing great charm. There was one extraordinary gathering at Lahore where a number of vivacious Moslem ladies engaged in a vigorous political discussion which led on to a musical rendering of verses extolling the prospective glories of Pakistan, and ending incongruously with the singing of the Red Flag!

I also met many Hindu women with alert, well-informed political minds, and who were extremely active in the Congress movement. Then there were devoted trade union and social workers, in whose souls burned richly the fire of sacrifice and service. These were grand women who are a witness to what the future can hold for all Indian women.

Yet purdah still casts its shadow over womanhood, and even in unexpected quarters it exists, though modified. Thus I was perplexed to find that even the intelligent wife of Mohammed Yunas in Peshawar (the secretary to Dr. Khan Sahib, and with whom I stayed) dared not go beyond the inner doorway of the house when I sought directions from her to find my way to a particular street. Elsewhere she could

have ventured out, apparently, but not in Peshawar for fear of public disapproval. Yet, of course, she was far removed from those women who on marriage disappear inside their homes and never again meet a man save he be a near relative.

Purdah has many degrees of modification, and in time will disappear. Of necessity its outward evidence is very slight among those who have to work in the fields, or have to perform domestic tasks such as those we saw in the Khyber Pass slowly making their way to or from wells with petrol cans or more traditional water pots balanced on their heads. Yet even those who came near the road were careful to avert their gaze, and I found myself wondering extravagantly whether if one were firmly to look towards us with a smile she would be instantly "bumped off" by her super-jealous masculine lord. But in the same extravagant mood I told myself that the gentleman might conceivably interpret the smile as one of pity or even contempt for a being like myself, so obviously inferior to her impressive martial husband. The rifle slung across each man's back stimulated all sorts of romantic conjectures.

Many Moslem women who are not secluded in zanas or the like wear the "burka" when walking out. This astounding garment, that seemed to look like a sheet dropped over the woman and completely enclosing her, very similar to a huge candle snuffer, gave one the impression of a substantial gliding ghost, or a mobile white monument. There are small lace-covered patches for sight and breathing, but the woman inside her tent must find it extremely uncomfortable and unhygienic. Possibly there is some truth in the assertion that husbands are startled

to find they have trailed home the wrong woman when the "burka" is raised at home after an outing. I confess I still find this garment incredible, and a violent contrast in feminine adornment to the wisps of cloth worn by our seaside bathing damsels. The contrast is almost as great when one sees, though very rarely, an Indian girl in shorts playing tennis.

There have been several writers on the psychological significance of clothes, including Carlyle, the late Dennis Bradley, and Professor Flugel, and I am sure the latter would agree with me that the "burka" is a garment of pathological jealousy and possessiveness. Yet, lest these animadversions appear too partial, one must remember how western women strangled their waists with corsets in comparatively recent times. I had an aunt whom I am sure went to heaven earlier than was necessary because of her lifelong insistence on trying to sever herself horizontally.

I was informed at a hospital that there was much diffidence on the part of Indian women to take up nursing or the medical services, the Moslem women because of the influence of purdah and the Hindu women because of caste. Although I met Indian nurses and women doctors it is certain that the need of overcoming this prejudice is most urgent. Among patients I found there was frequently strong reluctance, and even refusal, to receive treatment for religious and "moral" reasons, though this was overcome in most cases.

Purdah, I was assured by an emancipated Moslem woman, is an ancient institution not peculiar to, or necessarily identical with, Islam. The fact, however, that she caused quite a sensation some years ago when she not only repudiated purdah but insisted on

speaking at a public gathering is a testimony to her courage, and also to the tenacity of the institution. Her husband and her two lovely daughters were justifiably proud of this lady's activity and strength of will, and as I sat talking with them at midnight they appealed to me to recognise, not only her valour, but also that she represented a growing host of enlightened modern Moslem women.

Certainly an increasing number of Moslem women are liberating themselves from purdah and its shadow, and one appreciates this to the full. But again, one realises there is still much to be done when one sees not only the abominable "burka" but also the passing tonga or other vehicle on which hangs a curtain shrouding a woman from public gaze. I must add that feminine curiosity asserts itself even in such circumstances, for I noticed more than once an obscure female peeping past the edge of the curtain. There have been times when a passing wind of political excitement has blown purdah away. May a cyclone come soon.

Moslems affirm that their womenfolk enjoy substantial advantages over their Hindu sisters, particularly in respect of inheritance, and that whereas the Hindu women cannot or do not normally inherit anything at all Moslem women must receive by Islamic law half the amount their brothers receive. Polygamy is sanctioned by Islamic law, but only up to four wives if they can be properly maintained by the husband. Yet this latitude is usually not operative, for arithmetical reasons. There are not so many more women than men to make polygamy general. I was curious to know to what extent jealousy and domestic unhappiness operated within polygamy, and I was

informed this varied considerably, as in monogamous households, much depending on temperament and common sense.

My Hindu friends maintain, on the contrary, that the status of their womenfolk is superior because no divorce is allowable as in Islam, and husband and wife are so closely identified as virtually to equate the woman to the man and make the union sacramental. I confess that this idealisation of connubial adhesiveness does not impress me. Wives should not be postage stamps, however æsthetically precious they may appear. I found that polygamy was not unknown among Hindus and receives sanction when the first spouse is barren. I met and talked with polygamous Hindu men, one of whom stated he had married his deceased brother's widow in addition to his first wife, particularly because she was blind and crippled. I was struck with the man's explanation that it was a sense of family duty and possibly compassion that had led him to take a second wife, and I expressed my appreciation of this. But I added the cowardly request to the pressman I discovered taking notes that he must be careful in its publication of this appreciation lest the cable's report appeared in England that I was in favour of polygamy!

Whether precisely he was actually married to the second wife or whether he was not married to her but simply cohabiting or even simply had his sister-in-law in his household I am not sure. Apparently in some areas there is a good deal of fusion of both Moslem and Hindu custom. Again, the rule concerning no widow remarriage must be breaking down, for the Press contains in its matrimonial columns many advertisements for widows, if only as "not objected to."

Marriage is invariably a family arrangement in both communities and not the result of individual choice. In some newspapers there are scores of advertisements describing the kind of girl or young man needed by parents. Thus one finds such as the following:—

Hindu match, bachelor or issueless widower, for highly beautiful and accomplished lady doctor. M.B. and B.S. (25). Medical Officer on Rs230 per month of a first-class institution and daughter of a civil officer (titled and gazetted). Khatri preferred. Box — C, c/o —.

Match for a pretty, tall, highly accomplished and cultured music-knowing girl. B.A., aged 18½. Father Khatri title holder, Deputy Commissioner. Brother Imperial Service Officer. No. — C, c/o —.

Wanted a tall, beautiful, educated, cultured Hindu or Sikh girl for a young Hindu bachelor of 26, well settled in business, son of a millionaire, caste and dowry immaterial. Beauty the only condition. No. — C, c/o —.

Foreign educated, tall, well-built Punjabi Khatiya bachelor, 37, drawing Rs1,000 monthly, residing outside Punjab, wishes contact preferably rich, elderly widow, any age for marriage. No provincial or communal restrictions. Correspondence strictly confidential. Write Box No. —.

Khatri virgin from high family for bachelor Khatri, LL.B., well-established Advocate of High Court, aged 26. Gazetted. Office Box No. —.

A suitable match for healthy Sikh arora dumb youth, aged 23 years, running independent business yielding Rs200 per month; houses; property at Lahore. Apply to —.

Wanted a suitable match for a Brahmin boy, age 32, earning Rs100. Girl must have knowledge of Hindu, perfect lady character, strict faith in Lord Krishna. Please apply to —.

Suitable match for educated Sarswat Brahmin girl (16), most beautiful, little defect in one eye, girl's father medical practitioner and first-class contractor, highly connected. Write —.

Match for a Khatri bachelor (25), business Rs500 per month. F.A. Simple, immediate marriage. Happy marriage. Applications —.

These examples are non-Moslem, but they are extensions into the public Press of the semi-business-like arrangements common to most Indians. They may seem strange to British conceptions of romantic matrimonial choice, for although there are matrimonial newspapers published here they are obscure specialist journals and one never sees such advertisements in the ordinary Press. It should be remembered, however, that marriage by family arrangement is widespread throughout the world, and formerly prevailed in this country. Nor has it died away entirely even now. Royal and aristocratic families still exercise a certain amount of judicious selection, and even lower down the scale family considerations and influence are very important. To "ask father" for the betrothal of his daughter is still a tradition, exercised nominally out of courtesy even if it really does not deter the couple from deciding for themselves. No doubt elopement from parental despotism is a pathway sometimes taken by Indian couples, even as in Britain before our modern times.

If to some this family decision seems a little repellent to our modern romantic assumptions one

could plead for dispassionate detachment from emotional reactions in order to consider objectively whether in fact the older procedure may not have its points. Modern marriage in the West is not an invariable success, and I estimate there are only about 25 per cent of our marriages that are really happy and successful. Thus, free romantic choice is not necessarily a guarantee of success. Moreover, if the public description of the matrimonial goods, so to speak, seems too commercial, one should honestly ask whether considerations of the advertised advantages of beauty, wealth, disposition, and so forth, are really entirely absent among British young people needing or seeking partners. Of course they are not, however euphemistically disguised they may be. Altogether, there is something to be said for individuals being quite honest about their requirements, and for parents with the advantage of experience and mature judgment exercising responsibility in respect of their sons and daughters.

Personally, I admit that I am quite unattracted to this more ancient matrimonial arrangement, and I am quite sure that my two sons and daughter would have anxious concern for my sanity if I suggested they might sympathetically consider it. Nevertheless, I simply recognise, apart from my conditioned preferences, there are other methods of determining marriage than the one prevailing with us now.

British moralists and preachers talk solemnly about the beauty and significance of family life, and how it is the basic unit of society. That may be so, but I think they need to define their term of reference. An Indian "family" is not just the idyllic father, mother, and our British one, two, or, exceptionally, three offspring, but parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts,

nephews, nieces, and numerous "in-laws." A family of 200 or so has its drawbacks, particularly when they are fairly contiguous. Considerable homage is given to the senior women of such a family, but this imposes yet a third enslavement on the younger ones. The firmest opposition to changes that could lighten feminine burdens comes often from the old women with their senile tyranny.

I am sure that very deep and powerful bonds of affection exist within Indian households, even though I suspect they may be sometimes as glutinous as those of ponderous Victorians. There are affinities and harmonies of the spirit that assert themselves under very diverse circumstances; and where temperaments are endowed with tenderness and some measure of poetic insight this will shine through the firmest of disabilities or the most suffocating psychic cerements. This I know is true of many Indians I met, and I am confident that there are countless numbers whose deep human joy is a reality that surmounts all impediments.

Indian parents love their children very dearly, and I saw many a father nursing a small child, and even a baby. But for women, early and frequent pregnancies somewhat tarnish their maternal glory. Child marriage at quite an early age is still common, and I have referred already to the young widow of eight whom I met and photographed. Naturally, not until puberty in their 'teens do these young brides become mothers, but from then onwards I surmise with many young mothers maternity becomes a great burden. I made such inquiries of men as I could, and whilst some asserted that their wives liked having large families others confessed that it was not a question of

whether they did or not but of a dutiful acceptance of their function. I found some who regretted large families on economic grounds, particularly in view of scanty harvests.

From men and women doctors I was told that in fact many women whom they had attended for confinements or for gynæcological troubles really dreaded excessive pregnancies, and when they dared to break through their reserve or to verge on what might have seemed to be impious rebellion they expressed their dread quite definitely. Very few, however, accepted contraceptive advice, and even those who did either could not or would not adopt it. Whether or not birth control is desirable, it is most unlikely for some time to become popular. Even official or semi-official deliberations on population increase and on the lot of women rule this out as immediately impracticable. And so the population increases about 5,000,000 each year, and probably to-day is round about 420,000,000. This is despite high mortality. Thus infant mortality is 167 per 1,000, compared with fifty or so per 1,000 in England and Wales, and in particular districts the percentage is very much higher. The expectancy of life at birth is twenty-seven years, and if it were nearer our own sixty-two years the problem of nutrition would become correspondingly more acute, unless food production or imports increased proportionately.

Production ranges from fifty-two to fifty-four million tons of food grains per year. Malnutrition and disease serve as a "natural" check, and still leave a grave problem unsolved.

Abortions are frequent, and some of these are self-induced, but most are otherwise and are due to

preventable causes. Apart from this there is much ill health, faulty hygiene, physiological ignorance, and sheer superstition, often with tragic effect on individual well-being and happiness. Miss Mayo's familiar book, *Mother India*, while revealing much that was hideously true, nevertheless contained a distorted collection of the worst elements of feminine experience in particular, and was generally ill-balanced and unfair. One could describe the life of British women very harshly if one made a similar one-sided selection of facts.

Yet, while keeping a sense of proportion, avoiding exaggeration, and fully recognising other more attractive feminine aspects, it cannot be denied that the general condition of many women is depressing. There is likewise a tragic lack of general medical and nursing services and hospital accommodation, despite the devotion of many Indian and British doctors and nurses, and several fairly well equipped hospitals, many run by Christian missions. In British India there is only one hospital or dispensary for every 41,000 people; one bed for every 4,000; one doctor for every 9,000 people; and one nurse for every 86,000; compared with one doctor for every 776 and a nurse for every 435 persons in this country. It has been estimated that 700,000 doctors and 1,400,000 nurses are required for British India alone.

Among Hindu women widow remarriage is not allowable according to orthodox teaching, though I have cited matrimonial advertisements as evidence that this is breaking down. But many maintain the orthodox tradition, and in some cases this has led to the widows drifting to the towns, sometimes to enter "the oldest profession in the world," although in

most cases they remain, of course, within the larger family.

In Lahore, Bombay, and Calcutta I saw prostitutes openly awaiting their clients on the threshold of their establishments. In many chakla areas, as in Lahore, there are whole streets graded according to price, where the girls squat far from gaily at the entrance to the shabby small rooms that adjoin and open on to the street. In Bombay it looks particularly repellent to see these girls seated behind what looks like the bars of a cage. This form of prostitution is confined to the large towns, and elsewhere it is less open. Poverty probably plays a pre-eminent part in sustaining prostitution, but this is not an exclusive cause. Temple prostitution is well known, but one first needs to appreciate the somewhat different interpretation of sex in order to secure objective judgment on this. One can understand, although emphatically not endorse, child marriage as possessing a precautionary significance, in the light of other erotic assumptions and fears. Leaving aside this sordid aspect of feminine life, and recognising it is not peculiarly Indian or oriental but common to modern and ancient civilisations alike (with the apparent exception of Russia), I feel bound to recognise that even the average Indian woman is resigned to a life of hardship, docility, and ignorance. This appears to me a terrible fact, alongside of which one remembers with admiration those fine women who are doing much to raise their sisters from such wretchedness.

Previous to our tour, the All-Indian Women's Conference had been in session under the chairmanship of Mrs. Mehta, and had I been able to attend I know I would have been heartened and inspired by

the vitality, determination, and vision of the delegates. Meanwhile, one facet of the freedom India needs is the liberation of her women from their dual enslavement. Until that is achieved women will stand as mute challengers to a man-made and women-accepted world.

May I again emphasise that there does exist a splendid and increasing community of women who are enthusiastic and devoted in service both to Indian womanhood and to a new India. Thousands of these have endured severities and imprisonment with quiet, undeviating heroism. Many women occupy public and administrative offices, or fill posts with distinction in educational, medical, political, and other spheres. They are as fully aware as any non-Indian critic of many indigenous weaknesses and clamant necessities, and are far better able to deal with these than outsiders, however sympathetic. These women are conscious of a great responsibility, and are honoured for their devotion by their Indian men colleagues.

They are resentful at the disproportionate and indiscriminating criticism of those who are not identified with the pangs and pulses of Indian life and aspiration, but approach India as external examiners and scrutineers. Indian women need friends and comrades who will appreciate that the task in India is a human one requiring helpful co-operation from all, but only certain to be accomplished by enlightened Indians themselves because these belong to India. They alone can realise fully the intimate frustrations of Indian life and use their racial identity as a means of securing receptivity to their emancipating guidance.

## CHAPTER V

### INDIAN STRATIFICATION

I HAVE already referred to the Untouchables, but it is necessary to amplify that. Soon after our arrival in New Delhi we motored out to the Red Fort and then to the sweeper colony. During the tour I visited other similar habitations. These I gathered were classified as Untouchables (of whom there are 50,000,000 in India), although identified with them was much social driftwood such as we know in Europe. Each colony contained many scores of families living in ramshackle dwellings, often simply of rags propped up with sticks. I picked up a fly-infested infant from a pile of dirty rags, and thought of my first child when I held her in my arms one morning years ago.

Life here was as primitive as it could be, and the squalor most abject. Rubbish and humanity seemed synthesised as one picked one's way through the colonies and through swarms of debased adults and children. Not all Untouchables live thus, and in the villages there are places apart, or separate villages, confined to these unfortunates. Some do secure education, and these and others manage to rise above their lowly station and become influential and prominent public persons.

The Mayor of Madras was, or is, an Untouchable, and I met students, teachers, and men and women of academic attainments who were technically Untouchables. Best known of all is The Rt. Hon.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc., leader of the All-Indian Scheduled Classes Federation and a most stalwart personality. He sounded embittered, but one can appreciate why, even though one regrets this; for even when he returned with his doctorate from America he found it impossible to secure other accommodation than that which he had had among his own community before becoming a university student. He was Minister of Labour for the war years, and I was assured that it was with great reluctance he reintroduced women labour into the mining industry as a war necessity. (The defence given to me in the Commons was that men would leave the mines unless they had their wives with them.) Only three members of his organisation were successful in the elections, although Untouchable adherents of Congress had many successes. This, however, it is alleged by Dr. Ambedkar, is due to a deceptive and unfair electoral system by which candidates from a separate electorate are not elected solely by that electorate.<sup>1</sup>

No one seems quite sure of the origin of untouchability, though one theory is that Untouchables originally were early inhabitants of India before the Indians came who were not absorbed into the Hindu caste system. Thereafter, as with the castes, the child was born into the status of his father, which was no caste at all. It is said that even the shadow of

<sup>1</sup> He is particularly angry with Mr. Gandhi who fasted in 1932 in protest against separate electorates for "Depressed Classes," and who thus successfully brought the "Poona Pact" into being—an agreement that drastically modified the previous Communal Award establishing a complete separate electorate. Dr. Ambedkar has no appreciation at all of Gandhi's motives, and his case is fully elaborated in his book, *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables*. Thackers, Bombay, Rs12.8.

an outcast was considered an agency of pollution by some high castes. But this curse of contamination has been modified considerably, and Congress lays it down emphatically that in the future Constitution it shall provide that: "All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of religion, caste, creed, or sex." "No disability attaches to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed, or sex. . . ."

Gandhi himself has worked strenuously against untouchability, and his influence in this respect has been profound. One of his fasts was designed to secure the opening of temples to the Untouchables with some success; and his own journal, *Harijan*, ("Children of God"), is so named in their honour.

Most people, save Dr. Ambedkar, recognise this, and although I am sure Dr. Ambedkar has done a great deal to stimulate the dignity and self-reliance of the "Scheduled classes" his bitter hostility to Mr. Gandhi personally seems to me unnecessary and lamentable. In talking with him I received the impression that he had allowed deep subconscious, personal resentment to discolour his obviously sincere and passionate protest against the degradation of his community.

The full ramifications of caste are too complex for adequate description in these pages, and I need only mention that there are certain castes, including the Shudras, Vaishyas, Kshatriyas and Brahmins, but also there are three to four thousand sub-divisions and gradations, with complex, rigid regulations respecting matrimony, domestic obligation, occupation, and purity. In addition, I was exceedingly perplexed one afternoon, when at a garden tea gathering where we met Ministers of the Indian States, to receive an

unarranged deputation representing a strata between the Untouchables and the lowest caste. Across the wide lawn, while we were sitting round the tea tables, came a group in incongruous contrast with our hosts. They poured out their grievances and pleas, somewhat to the embarrassment of the various State Ministers, and assured us they were not Untouchables and yet were of no caste. A kind of touchable Untouchable, as far as I could tell; and to this day I do not know how to place them.

I must state that some of the Ministers appeared anxious, once they had overcome their surprise, to offer modest hospitality to the unexpected guests. Similarly, at one home where I had the privilege of staying, my Brahmin host came into our evening meal with a broad caste-mark on his brow, no doubt to impress me with his status, but rather disconcertingly as until then he had had no such painted decoration. Yet he was most kind and considerate both to me and the scores of people of all types who called to see me in the early morning before breakfast and far into the night hours. His courtesy to all betrayed no distinction. Possibly the high-caste mark was to him an equivalent of our caste-mark of a boiled shirt for evening dinner, even though the latter is now confined to the aristocracy. Good trade union organisers apparently believe that sometimes a stiff white shirt and dinner jacket or "tails" are necessary equipment for their proletarian task. Therefore in due course it may become the accepted thing for any Hindu on special occasions to decorate his brow with paint.

Caste is by no means peculiar to Hinduism, for the most powerful of all castes in India is the British caste. It can be very exclusive, and I found clubs in India

from which Indians are barred. Our British life has had its severe caste system, for the Feudal system included that, and modified caste continues. There is a royal caste, and heirs to the throne are confined to this. Birth is as much a determinative factor among royal claims as it is in the Hindu caste system. And what is the House of Lords, our Public Schools, and our traditional diplomatic service but an expression of the governing caste assumption? True, in our country and the U.S.A. there are financial castes, and as Galsworthy illustrates so well in *The Skin Game*, these can clash with the caste of "breeding." They can also fuse, and I understand Charles II was not the only monarch by divine right who nevertheless contributed a great deal towards modifying the exclusive caste of birth.

The roots of caste are very deep in human nature, but the social extension of endogamous groups has become most powerfully systematised and sanctified in Hinduism. Yet, many forces are having a tremendous effect on this, and the temporary breakdown of caste that occurred among Indian troops when hard pressed is but one symptom as well as source of the transformation that is taking place.<sup>1</sup> There are many centres of resistance to this decline, apart from the political agitation of the Mahasabha, and this was borne in upon me when I gave an interview one morning to two representative Sanatanists<sup>2</sup> who had travelled from Madras to New Delhi, had sought out where I lived, and had patiently sat from dawn on the verandah outside my bedroom window. One of them, with a really aggressive triple caste-mark, pleaded emotionally that I should see nothing was done to interfere

<sup>1</sup> This also applies to factories and industrial centres.

<sup>2</sup> Actually, they were officers of a body known as "The League of Mutts"!

with ancient Indian religious practices respecting marriage and inheritance. He seemed akin to those elderly Christian evangelists who earnestly and tearfully expressed their horror at the idea of the Garden of Eden being only a legend and that eternal damnation was not an essential Christian belief. But even as our evangelists have now been punted into a side-stream, so no doubt this is likely to be the experience of the gentlemen from Madras. Incidentally, they were particularly irate with an eminent retired Indian judge who had drawn up proposals to codify drastically and reform liberally a mass of semi-legal traditions related to Hindu marital affairs. They were unaware that he was actually staying in the same house with me, and passed them when he went out! The struggle between the old and the new never ceases, but its Indian incidence can only adequately be dealt with by Indians themselves.

Much has been made of other wide differences within India—racial, political, linguistic, religious, geographical, economic, and constitutional. These are, of course, powerful, although often exaggerated. Personally I find them not only very enriching but also an impressive encouragement of the hope that variety within unity can and will be constitutionally vindicated in the India of the future. Europe is just as varied, and if India can avoid the political segregations of Europe and maintain an underlying unity it will provide an invaluable object lesson to Europe from which Europe may learn before it is too late.

One of these divisions is that between British India and the Princes' States. In the 1941 census the population of the former was 296,000,000, and of the latter 93,000,000, the respective areas being 886,000

square miles and 690,000 square miles. The total Indian population has probably increased by 25 to 30 million since 1941. There are eight Provinces of British India and 562 States, some like Hyderabad, with a population of 17,000,000, having a larger area than the British Isles, and others hardly bigger than our West End parks. I visited two large States and passed through some of the smaller States. The latter I found impoverished and anachronistic absurdities, as if someone was playing at "empires." Many of the Princes gathered at the Chamber of Princes, and we were able to visit a session and study both the amazing collection of turbans and also the extremely dull procedure. No doubt there is historical romanticism in the appearance of these feudal Princes, but I smelt mothballs, with all due respect to many whose sagacity and authority are no doubt very weighty.

I spent two nights in Hyderabad and had the privilege of visiting His Exalted Highness the Nizam, who is entitled to a salute of twenty-one guns. After passing several sentries, some of whom, with their beards and lances, brought me nostalgic juvenile memories of my toy lead soldiers, I entered into the royal palace. The large room where I was seated contained a truly remarkable collection of Mid-Victorian domestic decorations, although the life-sized nude pink half-seated model of a woman balancing herself on a rock in the centre of the room seemed æsthetically inappropriate to the aspidistras decorating the base. However, there was much that was equally arresting apart from this, although I cannot go into details. The Nizam is reputed to be worth £300,000,000, but he is extremely frugal and abstemious. This did not prevent his offering us a

cup of tea and a biscuit, which I duly enjoyed as I meditated on the interior decorations and the arresting Nazim's appearance and observations.

I was taken by car to half-a-dozen various mansions, where I signed the visitors' book, and I and two of my colleagues had lunch with all the State notables in a large hall in another part of the town. During the lunch I could appreciate the blue glass chandeliers, the Landseer pictures, the mahogany-framed, enlarged photographs of past Hyderabad celebrities, and my dinner plate that had "Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep" (or was it "Little Boy Blue," etc. ?) inscribed round the edge—a delightful episode. And so was the initial garden party at which I was the sole representative of the Deputation.

Here I benignly shook hands with all the 300 or so guests gathered in little groups round tables, and I am sure not even my Conservative colleagues could have justly criticised my suave and successful deportment. I think this is called "rising to the occasion." Well, I trust I rose, and I confess to enjoying the rising in my own way, for it was an auspicious event in Hyderabad; so much so that I had to be photographed by the State photographer, who disappeared beneath the covering of his elaborate tripod as I presume photographers did when photographing Queen Victoria and her family. I have a photograph of myself in the centre of the religious leaders of Hyderabad, who have their own Association, but compared with the venerable gentlemen either side there seems to be an ascetic touch about my appearance. Amazingly, I discovered there were Communists present, though I do not imagine they had been invited as such, but rather in another capacity. The Indian Bishop of the American

Methodist Church was present, and as it was Sunday he suggested I should attend his service. I gave an ambiguous reply, but at 6-30 that evening when about to prepare for an evening conference and dinner, I was informed a car had arrived to take me to the American Methodist Church. I hurriedly went, and immediately on arrival found myself ushered into the pulpit simultaneously with an announcement to the congregation that I would deliver a sermon. It is a difficult task to speak appropriately at one second's notice to a large audience, especially in a church, but I managed to speak for fifteen to twenty minutes before retiring and then being swiftly driven back to the Guest House to finish my preparation for the evening's function. An ecclesiastical jack-in-the-box!

On returning from a village next day I heard deeply-toned bells jangling, and was informed that an elephant awaited me to convey me to lunch elsewhere. Mounting the great beast requires a certain dexterity, otherwise one is apt to slide off ignominiously as the animal rises to its feet. But the experience in Hyderabad enabled me a fortnight later, at Jaipur, to convey a nonchalant impression of familiarity when I had to mount another elephant that then padded slowly up the hillside to the fort.

Hyderabad is an autocracy, and measures are taken by the Nizam and his Ministers to see that no unsuitable political literature or other contamination enters his dominion from outside. The internal press is also censored, and public meetings must only be held if specific permission be granted. Yet there are signs of social if not of political progress. A large area in Hyderabad city is being cleared of slums, 40 per cent having been demolished, and four different types of

homes have been and are being erected, ranging from a rental of ten rupees a month down to one rupee per month, the lowest being for one room and an alcove. The better type have two or three rooms, a small yard, and a place for bathing. This is very encouraging, and the sight of children's recreation grounds, with swings and see-saws as in England, even if it were only a show-piece, was nevertheless equally pleasant. One six-rupee house I entered was occupied by a school teacher, who informed me his gross salary was fifty-four rupees per month, and that his dwelling was definitely superior to accommodation he would otherwise have had to accept. (A rupee is roughly 1s. 6d.)

One-third of the villages I was informed (i.e., 7,000) had accepted co-operative methods and principles to some extent, both for marketing and sales, and this had proved very beneficial. But political interest was weak in the villages, and there was detectable nervousness when political questions were asked. It is probable that behind the mask of caution there was more political interest than outwardly confessed. Certainly in Hyderabad City itself I heard subterranean rumblings, although there was little indication above ground. I met here an earnest group of women who were very concerned about the plight of their sex, and I conjecture that one ardent little woman among them will prove irrepressible. Among the groups I managed to interview was one that seemed sycophantic in its loyalty to the Nizam and his expansionist policy which included a demand for a corridor to the sea. The most vocal member of this group appeared in two other groups, so evidently his advocacy was as popular as his interests were varied. One of his other groups was of Moslems, who, however, made no mention of

Pakistan. The Nizam himself is a Moslem, although 85 per cent of his subjects are Hindu, and there were several murmurs of resentment at the alleged disproportionate number of Moslems in important posts. (In other parts of India where Hindus predominate, I heard Moslem complaints of undue Hindu preferments.)

The northern State of Jaipur, I found similar in some respects to Hyderabad. The Prime Minister, Sir Mirza Ismail, is well-famed for his progressive activity and social reforms in Mysore. Prime Ministers of States shift about in this manner very much as in this country a successful managing director of one large company will cross over to another. He is indeed a live personality, and is leaving his mark in his new sphere. A Moslem, he is as yet also opposed to Pakistan. I found him extremely hospitable, progressive, and human.

Jaipur city looks at first like a pink vanilla fancy cake. Some time ago a ruling Prince had a passion for pink, and thenceforth this tincture had to prevail. Literally, the inhabitants live "in the pink." Rehousing was also expanding in this State; while in a village I visited I was shown model village houses being erected. I was not clear of what they were a model, for mud still looks mud even if it be called "model." Perhaps the mud was high-grade. In any case, although the village seemed somewhat tidier and more spacious, poverty and primitiveness still abounded. I became extremely popular by consenting to scatter to the children the contents of a large bag of monkey nuts before I returned.

The palace and council buildings were most ornate, and the museum and art gallery had excellent exhibits of antiquities and of more modern craftsmanship and

art. A Legislative Council existed but the ultimate autocratic principle, of course, remained. Both in Jaipur and Hyderabad I was given much information about the considerable economic achievements and potentialities of the respective States. Apart from a brief visit to Jodhpur, where my Conservative colleague, Godfrey Nicholson, and I utilised a lunch-time break in an aerial journey to speed by car through the city and up the mountain to the picturesque "fort," I visited no other State. My colleagues, however, went either to Travancore, Mysore, Gwalior, or Bikaner, and in respect of the first reported on the much higher degree of literacy of 47·7 per cent compared with British India's 12·5 per cent, although they were critical of its autocratic constitution.

The administrative divisions of India are not identical with its racial divisions. Some States or Provinces are predominantly Moslem and others Hindu, but even this is not strictly a racial difference. Moslems are Indians of varying racial stock who prefer the faith of Islam. But there is considerable racial distinction between, say, the Pathan and the Bengali, the Rajput and the Tamil, and between all these and the aboriginals. It is estimated there are some 25,000,000 aboriginals, many of them pre-Dravidian. I visited the aboriginal tribes of the Ho's, and was struck by their distinctive characteristics. Thousands had gathered from miles around for their weekly fair, and I moved freely among them, watching the maidens purchase metal bangles and anklets; the boys playing around as boys do the world over; the womenfolk buying grain and other foodstuffs; the sellers of fighting cocks; and the purveyors of sweetmeats. My interpreter was well known and jocularly chatted with

many, who then helped to swell the crowd that followed at our heels. The drawing-on of evening caused many to start tramping for their distant homes, with bundles balanced on their heads. I had time to visit a near-by village where the young men brought out their drums, and I was able to look inside the huts and talk freely with both men and women.

The women impressed me particularly with their self-reliant bearing and confident demeanour. Unlike the hidden Moslem women, or the Hindu women who drew their sarees across their features when a strange man passed by, these sturdy Ho women had no sign of self-consciousness, diffidence, or furtiveness. I was informed that there was virtually sex equality, and that although family decision prevailed in some aboriginal tribes yet among the Ho's marriage was largely a matter of personal choice. In appreciation of my interest in these people, with their animistic religion and their distinctive tribal code and customs, I was invited to attend a tribal dance on the following evening and gladly consented.

The dance was held in the darkness illumined by lanterns. An audience of some thousands was seated around a wide area, and presently into this space came young men with drums tapped in pulsating rhythm. In front of them gathered the women dancers, their arms around each other's waists and chanting in unison. Sometimes the dance was circular, the whole line moving together, and at other times the line broke up into sections with one section behind the other. The drummers faced the women and moved backwards, the dancers themselves swaying from the hips, thumping their feet on the ground and

dexterously gliding sideways. Young boys gave a hunting dance display, and for an hour or more various dancing groups gave other special displays. Then there came a break for rice wine served in cupped leaves, after which there was a distinct increase in liveliness. Delightful floral garlands were hung around our necks, little girls giggled and sought to emulate their older sisters, the leader made a speech, another gyrating dance of maidens began, and then four smiling damsels appeared before me whose strange tongue I interpreted intuitively. They were inviting me to join them in dancing. I did, and I trust my boots and clumsy feet were forgiven by the bare-footed ladies who insisted on twining their fingers in mine as they swayed rhythmically round the ring for twenty minutes or so.

Before leaving I was presented with bows and arrows for myself and my friends; and for me in particular, with somewhat unconscious inappropriateness, a battleaxe. Whether it was ever used to sever heads I do not know, but I have found it very useful for wood-chopping. I trust this is no debasement of the weapon. The bow and arrow seems to have no utilitarian purpose for me, for I am a humanitarian even in respect of squalling cats, but when I let fly two or three of the arrows down the length of my garden, so that one had to be dug out of the trunk of a distant apple tree, I realised it is just as well for the cats that I possess these humanitarian inhibitions. They are not toys or merely ceremonial weapons, but had been used in hunting, and in human conflict they would be exceedingly unpleasant. Primitive as they may be I reflect that they will be as effective as rifles or tanks in an atomic war of the future.

There is a strong political consciousness awakening among these people, and their leader, Jaipal Singh, described as Adbasi President, who gave me extremely interesting information about this as well as respecting their tribal lore and behaviour, was a candidate at the then forthcoming elections, even though very few had votes. One of their demands is that the whole extensive area in which the Ho and other tribes dwell should be a separate autonomous Province. Besides this, there was special stress on their educational and economic needs. The Ho tribe has much in common with other aboriginal tribes; although not entirely so, for Verrier Elwin, originally an Anglican priest but who became a layman, has written much concerning the Gonds, and W. G. Archer about the Uraons, and this seems not always applicable to the Ho's. Moreover, the animistic aboriginal tribes are in a minority, most of them apparently having nominal attachment to one of the great faiths.

A short visit can but give one an impression, even though it be fortified by a mass of description from the educated English speaking Ho leader himself. But of this I am assured: the absence of caste, the sense of equality, the quiet self-confidence and good humour, despite privations and alleged social backwardness, make them a delightful people among whom I would love to dwell for a while, and not simply because of the dancing maidens. Their mental and spiritual world may be filled with many animating spirits, and they may heed neither the Hindu gods and goddesses nor the monotheistic austerity of Allah, but at least they retain or have attained a measure of spiritual freedom that is refreshing both

in contrast and by its intrinsic merit. We heard much of the outstanding qualities of this or that Indian race, but the aboriginals I met have their own attractive uniqueness.

The Hindu caste system is only one aspect of the stratification in Indian life. Just as important are the strata represented by the Princes, the British, the Capitalists, the Landowners, and the religious interests; and like the substance of our physical earth these are not always compact and regular but overlaid, split and fused.

## CHAPTER VI

### KEEPING LAW AND ORDER !

**I**N the struggle for freedom hundreds of thousands of Indians have gone to gaol. Gandhi and Nehru have spent many years of their lives in prison or detention. Every member of the Congress Working Committee has endured intermittent incarceration, and for this we British are responsible, whether the penalties and restrictions we inflicted were or were not justified. The offences committed by political prisoners range from technical defiance of the law inspired by a high sense of moral duty to a knife stuck in the back, from the refusal of young girls to desist from picketing to stone throwing by a howling mob. For many long years repression, legitimate or otherwise, has been suffered, culminating in the disturbances after the abortive Cripps' offer of 1942, when 60,000 Indians were arrested, 958 flogged, 1,630 wounded, and 940 were shot dead. A score or so of British servicemen were also killed.

Indians were seriously wounded, railway and police stations were burned or wrecked, telegraph wires and railway lines were cut, villages were destroyed on military orders, collective fines were imposed, human backs were flogged, and terror reigned in the land.

Whatever the contributing factors, however the brutality arose, whoever bears a degree of blame, it is in any case a tragic fact that India and Indians have known so much suffering and savagery. Nor am I

ignoring the viciousness of dacoity, nor the strain and hazards endured by the British who were caught in whirlpools of violence. Many British people have also suffered, but the volume of suffering is mainly Indian. One may look back to the perpetration of evil deeds done by Indians on Indians in pre-British days, and one cannot unequivocally deny that this is impossible in the future even though one has faith that it will not be. Meanwhile, however, it remains true that we British have ruled the Indians, and that sad and terrible things have been inflicted on Indians in our name.

Slowly the release of prisoners and detainees continued after the war, but the remembrance does not pass away, nor the lamentable residue of bitterness. This could and would have been greater were it not for the example and exhortation of such as Gandhi, and the Indian acceptance of imprisonment as the price to be paid willingly in the service of India. If I refer to the incidence of repression now it is not for the purpose of recrimination, nor in order to keep alive what one prays will pass away from brooding minds. It is simply that one must complete the picture, "warts and all."

I interviewed life-serving prisoners in gaol. No official was within earshot, for we were able to talk with these prisoners without interference. One man with whom I talked in gaol had entered at seventeen years. He was then a student who had been associated with a political terrorist movement and had received a life sentence. He was now thirty-four. There were others enduring similar sentences. I spoke to another man who professed to be a simple school teacher but who had been brought to Indian shores in a Japanese

submarine. And there was Jai Prakash Narain and his colleague Dr. Lohia, in Agra prison, still waiting without charge or trial for ultimate release.<sup>1</sup>

Narain is leader of the Congress Socialist Party. His name appears in the British Government White Paper as an organiser of the 1942 disturbances and a Congressman. I remember well that White Paper, which purported to fix the direct responsibility for the upheaval on the Congress, and its lack of evidence of Congress instigation. There was certainly a letter reproduced from Jai Prakash Narain, but though he was a member of Congress this was not proof at all that he acted otherwise than on his own initiative or in co-operation with his own factional friends. I sought everywhere in India for specific evidence of Congress incitement and direct responsibility and could find nothing. What I did find, and what I already knew, was that Narain and others disagreed with Mr. Gandhi's repudiation of violence, and when Congress leaders were arrested some Congressmen and their allies of their own volition were prepared to use violence primarily against property, and did.

Nehru and other Congress leaders assured me the suggestion or charge that Congress had planned physical violence was entirely without foundation. And indeed, when I have pressed some of those who had said there was all I could extract was the contention that Congress and Gandhi, by their inflammatory speeches and the threat of positive non-co-operation, had created an emotional atmosphere that inevitably provoked violence. That is a matter of opinion, but it is very different from conscious, deliberate planning for armed insurrection. Moreover, Narain himself

<sup>1</sup> Released this year, but re-arrested later in Goa.

disowned any collaboration or collusion with Congress leaders in this respect. Quietly and frankly he averred that here he disagreed with Congress and considered violent methods justifiable and necessary under certain circumstances. He pointed out that guerilla warfare by the French against the Nazi army received enthusiastic approbation, and that the Second World War itself was a wholesale expression of the conviction that organised violence was necessary in the overthrowing of an organised evil. Further, there is the fact that whether in respect of the "rebels" in the American War of Independence, the Russian Revolution, or the Irish Rebellion, "nothing succeeds like success," so that the "criminals" of one day became the accepted, and even honoured, national representatives of the next.

It is difficult to refute this, and it is impossible intelligently to dismiss as unworthy, unprincipled irresponsibles those who like Narain endorse violent methods as necessary in some circumstances to attain political ends. One may reject the philosophy that issues in such endorsement, but unless one is to scorn 99 per cent of our fellow human beings one has to treat that philosophy and those who actively pursue it with respect. So far as Jai Prakash Narain is concerned, the group of us who met him came away deeply impressed with his high integrity and fine personality, however much we disagreed with his methods.

We arrived at the gaol towards evening and were met by the Superintendent and a group of officials who conducted us through heavily barred gateways, with much clanking of bolts and keys, past vast halls open both ends though covered with bars and behind which

prisoners squatted on their haunches, until we reached a small compound. Into this came Narain and Dr. Lohia, around whom we formed a circle of chairs and talked quietly for nearly two hours. The Superintendent and his staff retired into a distant corner and there remained, while two storm lanterns were fetched and provided dim illumination after darkness had fallen. It was a strange sight—the compound and its high walls, the pale yellow splashes of light in the gloom, the distant group of prison officials, and half-a-dozen British M.P.s bending forward and chatting with a couple of “dangerous” Indians indefinitely in gaol. When the friendly discussion at last came to an end, to the relief of the puzzled officials, we paid a brief visit to the open cells of our Indian friends and saw the simple furnishings and the extensive collection of books on poetry, philosophy, art and sociology.

If at any time they had recanted from their convictions they would have been liberated. But they would not, and both of them stated there were more important matters than their release, and that they were quite resigned to remaining where they were indefinitely. They shook hands and bade us goodbye as if they had been entertaining a few acquaintances and would then retire to continue the enjoyment of private homes.

It is poignant, nevertheless, to reflect on a strange world when such men (and not only in India) can be gaoled. It is more than poignant to know that other political prisoners also suffered physically. Narain had been subject to “third degree” methods for a week at the beginning of his arrest. For many hours he was interrogated by groups of officials at all hours of the day and night. Sometimes exhausted he would be allowed to lie down for sleep, only to be awakened

a few minutes later for further questioning. This process is known technically as "breaking down,"<sup>1</sup> but in Narain's case it did not succeed and his resistant will triumphed. Nor did it always succeed in other cases, even when, so it was alleged, physical inducements were applied. I had been told many stories of physical suffering imposed on prisoners, but I did not accept them at their face value, and responsible authorities disclaimed their authenticity. Thus I was assured prisoners had been beaten, starved, placed in fetid dungeons, made to sit on ice, literally sat on by warders, and generally maltreated. I had heard similar stories about prisoners in other lands, and knew some of these stories were true, even if others were exaggerations or concoctions. Many of the allegations regarding the treatment of Indian prisoners may have been false, but I am satisfied some are true.

At a certain house in an equally ambiguous town I received a visit from an Indian "on the run." For months and indeed years he had evaded arrest. He told me his story through an interpreter, a man of the highest integrity, and solemnly declared every word of this was true. My interpreter stated he had no reason to doubt the man, and that he accepted his statement as accurate.<sup>2</sup> I give a few extracts from this:

"I was arrested on January . . . , 1943, at . . . a.m., at Bazar Sitaram, Delhi, with . . . nine others. We were taken to the police lock-up in Chandni Chowk . . . . It was bitterly cold . . . and we were given two old torn and insect-infested blankets each . . . .

<sup>1</sup> I have in my possession the illuminating typescript of a prison lecture on the technicalities of effective interrogation of prisoners.

<sup>2</sup> The complete document is in my possession. I have omitted certain names, although this may now be unnecessary.

“ On January 7th I was taken from the cell to the police station . . . I was there first beaten with fists on my cheeks . . . The following night I was removed to a room at one of the cells in the Red Fort. There were five or six plain-clothes men. I was asked to give information in my possession regarding Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani (wife of the general secretary of the Congress), Mrs. Aruna Asaf Ali, and other workers . . . I pretended to be A . . . , J . . . 's cook . . . and that I knew nothing about the friends who were visiting him . . . I only told them that I had casually heard the names of two Congress workers being mentioned. I was taken back to the police station. I found on arrival two big blocks of ice. There were bits of ice scattered about. I was forcibly made naked. I resisted and was beaten and I hit one of them back. Then four or five of them forcibly put me on those two blocks of ice kept lengthwise, with my face upward. I do not know how long I was on the ice because I lost consciousness . . . I was left alone for two days after this incident.

“ On January 12th I was again taken into the interrogating room of the police station . . . I was compelled to keep my legs apart and stand in that position all night . . . On the 13th a tall man, who looked like a sub-inspector, came with the intention of taking down a statement from me . . . I gave a statement but every word of it was false . . . I gave my name as B . . . I was released on the afternoon of January 16th.”

The signatory to this statement was 35 years old. He participated in the Salt Disobedience Movement of 1930, became a peasants' organiser and a propagandist, and served six terms of imprisonment before January,

1943. Following his release he became one of the underground workers and was one when I saw him secretly by night, although I understand the warrant for his further arrest was withdrawn soon after.

Among other ex-prisoners I have the names of those who declare solemnly they were flogged for refusing food, and who described the detailed process of the flogging. Apart from these I interviewed life-serving prisoners and others in gaol, and these stated that they had not been beaten for many years, although they were in the beginning. Responsible prison officers denied knowledge of maltreatment of prisoners, and in two gaols I was taken around the cells and other rooms and was assured there was nothing hidden away from my attention. That may be so, for I am not psychic enough to register the impression of episodes I had never seen. But while one must exercise every reserve in listening to harrowing allegations, nor forget official allegations of provocation, I know it has been confessed to me by responsible British persons that ugly things were done behind prison walls when hate and fear brooded over the land.

Moreover, even if one-sided, there is evidence of dark, wretched events outside of prison. I turn to a local weekly Indian newspaper printed in English, and there on two large pages is the description of "What happened in Midnapore. Harrowing tales of Repression: Loot, Incendiarism, and Assault on Women." The issue is dated Sunday, December 16th, 1945, and the name of the journal is *The Bharot Jyote*, but the reference is to "The Happenings in Tamluk Sub-Division of Midnapore during the period from August, 1942 to September, 1944." A non-official committee of Congress lawyers and others investigated allegations

respecting incidents in the Midnapore District, west of Calcutta, and the newspaper deals with the Report.

Even though it may be inadequate I can only here give a few scattered but typical extracts and sub-headlines:—

MEETINGS AND PROCESSIONS BANNED. . . . Even in respect of a purely non-political subject, namely, cess revaluation of the district, Congressmen were refused permission to hold meetings. (*Owing to Defence of India Act*).

DENIAL POLICY: HOW PEOPLE SUFFERED A GREAT LOSS. . . . Hundreds of boats were burnt and destroyed and thousands of rupees' worth of valuable property wantonly destroyed ("*Scorched earth*" policy against Japanese invasion).

FIRST POLICE FIRING.—Public protest against export of rice.

Government offices boycotted.

Fight deepens. Plan for simultaneous attacks on Government offices.

Revolutionaries rush on in face of bullets.

Indiscriminate firing on unarmed people. Women's courage.

The aftermath. Soldiers' raid on villages. Houses burnt and looted.

Then came cyclone. Revolutionary activities stopped for relief work.

Congress in relief work. Government relief.

Details of oppression. Firing and lathi charge. Offences against women. Tortures on men. Inhuman, filthy, and obscene (followed by description of alleged tortures inflicted on the person).

Huge loss of property. Houses burnt, dismantled, and looted. Collective fine.

HARROWING TALES. STATEMENTS OF WOMEN CRIMINALLY ASSAULTED.—(E.g., “I am Sindhubala Marty, wife of Adhar Chandra Marty, village Chandipur, P.S. Mahishadal. Am aged nineteen years. I have got a child. On 9/1/43 last about 9-30 a.m. a police officer came to our house with a band of armed troops. They caught my husband and took him away and forcibly committed criminal assault on me. I became senseless. . . . This is the second time I have been criminally assaulted.”)

HORRIBLE TORTURES.—(E.g., “I went to offer Satyagrahaat Ramtarakhat in Union No. 4 of Tamlukthana . . . A police officer . . . stripped me of my clothes and severely beat me. After some cruel beating he made me stand with my legs apart and . . . This caused me severe pain . . .”)

There are detailed descriptions of whippings, finger-nail prickings, pressure on legs, private parts smothered with soda and lime, and other unpleasant details. And finally there is a detailed list of men and women, their names, ages, habitations, together with dates when they had suffered in this district, of which I give the following totals:—

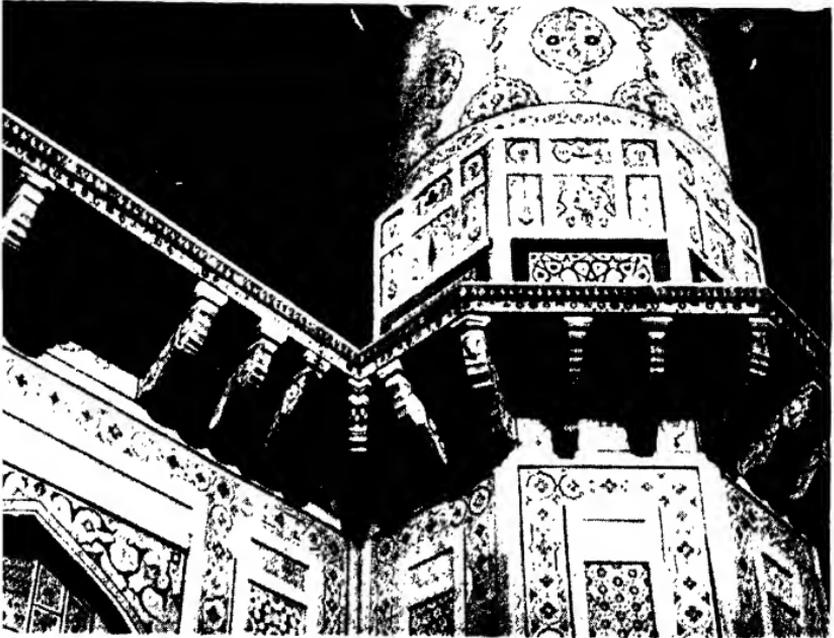
Killed by bullets, forty-one; raped women, seventy-three (some more than once); houses burnt by soldiers, fifty-two, and another sixty-three on the day of the cyclone.

This is one Sub-Division, and one can speculate on the effect of this being multiplied many times. Again, making every allowance for exaggeration, yet still the story is terrible, whatever the circumstances, whatever the immediate causes. Transpose the personal and place names into German and this would then seem to be a description of typical Nazi barbarism. Probably



*Top* - Abandoned town at Jaipur, with "my" elephant!

*Bottom* - Corner of Late Steel Works, Jaipur (page 47)



top: Urban slum scene, Howrah.

bottom: Example of mosaic work, Fatchpur Sikri (See p. 129)

the Nazis could also have told of another side to the case—how the people had “asked for it” by their behaviour, and so on. But the horror remains, and incidentally may remind us that no people or nation has a monopoly of a potential brutality that awakens into life under suitable provocation.

These reports and what they portray have sunk into millions of minds, even as have those about Nazi misdeeds in Europe or Japanese cruelty in Asia. Of course there are considerable differences, for Fascist, Nazi, and Nipponese sadistic conduct became coldly, extensively systematised, and misdeeds in India were not. Nothing similar to the wholesale extermination of Jews, I believe, has taken place in India. The savagery in India was by way of reprisal (which is a euphemistic synonym for vengeance) and not sustained, deliberate Government policy. Nevertheless, there are points of resemblance that are not entirely superficial.

Little was said about these tragic events in Britain during the war, mainly because the censorship of news was so complete, but partly because there is an aversion on the part of the British public against giving credence or importance to stories reflecting on British moral prestige. We prefer to believe that such reports are impossible, or else that they were indications of the sort of thing that always happened in certain parts and probably are a regrettable necessity. It has been, indeed, extremely hard for the average middle-class Englishman, comfortably enclosed in his respectable suburb and permeated by a tradition of decent behaviour, even to tolerate the idea that he has any responsibility whatever for ugly vicious things perpetrated elsewhere.

Because certain standards glow gratifyingly within him he is apt to assume that their generous radiance penetrates throughout his Empire. For some time he saw, and probably sees, no relationship between the aerial hell he suffered and that which was also imposed on the cities and peoples of his enemies. Of course, it can be argued that the terror we inflicted was by way of "reprisals," or a military necessity in order to shorten the war. Even so he assumes, naturally, that his moral attitude remains superior, and that there is no danger of his moral declension. Therefore, his reaction to charges of brutality in India, or elsewhere in the Empire, is frequently one of incredulity or of disdainful repudiation.

Again I reiterate that there is a difference between our own national policy and that of degenerate States; but cruel anomalies have existed, and our cardinal weakness has been that of a self-righteousness that has enabled departures from our standards to be perpetrated without full appreciation of the inconsistency. Yet, it must also be emphasised that our democratic liberty and vitality have enabled voices of protest to be raised, censures to be given, and remedial action to be sought. And, of course, it remains true that some Indians themselves have committed atrocious acts on their own and other peoples, and that subordinate Indian officials were implicated in the alleged barbarities of recent years. Floggings and tortures were carried out by Indians on Indians, though the responsibility remains primarily with the supreme British authorities for permitting a system that enabled the barbarities to take place, and even condoning them. I discovered the attitude of some highly placed British people was to admit and deplore

certain of the allegations, but to urge that to seek punishment of those implicated would be wrong in view of conditions prevailing at the time of the incidents and the great strain under which Indian officials had striven to restore law, order, and discipline. In short, the fault was one of excessive zeal that should be accepted and overlooked in a context that should now preclude punishment. One could, of course, exonerate quite a number of Nazi sadists with such a defence.

Another aspect of public decency and social probity to which a brief reference may here be made concerns the many charges I heard, and of which I have read (both respecting business and administrative life) of corruption, nepotism, and similar malpractices in India. Some unsavoury cases have been brought into the open. Apart from these, however, I was assured that bribery on a large as well as a small scale was deplorably prevalent. I had no time to investigate this, although I found responsible persons admitted the scandal certainly existed in some quarters. Although this is the case, it is not, of course, applicable to responsible political leaders, save in instances as rare as in Britain. Among the smaller fry probably some do succumb to temptation, and about these there is truth among some of the wretched stories conveyed to me.

This does not indicate necessarily a wholesale intrinsically poorer social rectitude among Indians; for one has only to be acquainted with the shameless black market operations and racketeering engaged in by Europeans in post-war conditions to realise the disgraceful depths to which people of all races may fall. Yet undoubtedly one of the tasks awaiting responsible

government in India is that of cleansing public and communal life of vicious practices. This necessity applies to every land, and unless it is accomplished a secret rot brings about an ultimate internal collapse as surely as any successful external assault. One factor of the problem arises from the existence of a foreign governing class, for this is liable to stimulate an evil sycophancy that is prepared to adopt almost any means to secure favour. Also, though this should not be so, it tends to identify law and order with detested authority, and thus breeds cynical indifference to its personal moral implications.

I have no doubt myself that once the Indian people know they are complete masters in their own house that this will have the most profoundly beneficial influence in encouraging standards of rectitude.

This also applies in respect to the pitiful record of violent treatment suffered by Indians during repressive periods under British rule. I have given some instances of this, but there is much more that could be extracted from the volume of reports familiar to those acquainted with the seamy side of Anglo-Indian relationship. Stories during the last 150 years, of shootings, beatings, burning of villages, and the like, are manifold, and many are well authenticated. Partisan nationalists naturally do not stress the other side of these stories, any more than did the Irish in their vehement denunciation of Cromwellian repression or the operation of the Black and Tans in the 1916 "troubles." This also applies to Czechs, Poles, French, and all those who suffered under German occupation. The suppressed always contain some who can be and are as murderous and brutal as their oppressors. The fact remains, however, that the

conquerors have the primary responsibility and culpability arising both from their conquest and from its provocative effect. The British authority in India cannot evade this, nor the fact that under its rule dreadful incidents took place, whatever the alleged extenuating circumstances may have been.

A free national government will have to face its own problems of maintaining law and order, from mob violence and dacoity to sedition and fraud; and it may be involved in imposing severe discipline that will also evoke vigorous reactions. During the experience of Provincial Governments from 1937 to 1939 there were occasions when they had to exercise police and penal powers against political disturbers of the peace, although this was on a minor scale. Such circumstances may come in the future when Indian governments may be confronted with defiance of the law. One trusts and believes this will not be widespread or drastic, and that the embarrassment to responsible Indian government will be relatively slight. Certainly there will be the great initial advantage that Indians will know they have their own government with which to deal, and that those in authority are drawn from and responsible entirely to the Indian people themselves. If there are to be law breakers, criminal or political, they will be breakers of Indian and not alien law. And if there does arise the moral complication of political minorities refusing to recognise the validity of an Indian government they detest, one hopes the Indians will be more humanely successful in solving this problem than some European and Asiatic governments have been.

## CHAPTER VII

### SOME PERSONALITIES

**L**ENIN and Gandhi I count as the two most remarkable world personalities of the twentieth century, although they are in complete contrast. Of the two, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, I think, is actually the more challenging. The Deputation as a group saw Gandhi twice. He was in Madras, staying in a building attached to a large institution. Crowds were always outside the gates, but early each day he led a prayer meeting in which thousands joined. To reach him one had to satisfy the youthful guards at the main gate, walk down lengthy paths, pass more guards and a number of temporary canvas dwellings and finally, after satisfying those at the doorway, enter, pass up the stairs and then out on to a verandah.

We sat in a semi-circle, with the Mahatma seated on the floor on a large white cushion under an electric light. On the first night we kept him for nearly two hours as we exchanged thoughts and queries, there being no one save him and ourselves at the interviews. He is shrewd and jocular, but can become seriously insistent. His mind works persistently but in his own way around the point of discussion, and behind his geniality one feels there is an adamant determination. Sometimes there appear to be inconsistencies and contradictions in his arguments, although he invites corrections from his critics. Equally, there are apparent personal irrelevancies, though he seems confident of a cohering relationship of all his interests

within his own soul. His religious and ethical approach is paramount, and very disconcerting to the ordinary politician. Queer as it may sound to those to whom vehemence and enmity are the condiments of polemics, Gandhi is perfectly genuine when, for instance, he states respecting the implications of "Quit India": "In this scheme, there is no room for hatred of the foreigner. If we fear him, that gives rise to hatred. If fear is gone, there is no hatred." He means what he says when he exhorts his fellow-countrymen to strive for truth and freedom without malice, but with an earnest fraternal concern for the antagonists—a somewhat rare ingredient among political leaders.

Gandhi informed us that he himself had not invented the cry "Quit India" but that he accepted it, and by it he did not mean that the British as persons must leave India, so long as they were good citizens, but that their imperial power and domination must go. Strange and challenging figure as he may look to our British eyes, and quixotic even to some Indians, yet it cannot be doubted that for millions of Indians he is the personification of their urgent needs and hopes. To the masses he is not simply a political leader, but a revered and idolised "Mahatma." Leading British persons whom we met willingly or grudgingly admitted that no one else possessed such influence or authority as he does, and that whatever may be the tortuousness of his thought his fundamental integrity and devotion were beyond question. Despite adverse criticism and the signs of contrary developments, his sway remains profound and comprehensive.

Some are inclined to believe that he half-consciously dramatises himself, and the series of guards around

his temporary dwelling place was taken as one indication of this. I think this is unfair, for without such precautions there would be a very real danger of his being swamped by the demonstrativeness of the crowds, and of his daily tasks being made impossible. Any popular personality would require safeguards to ensure a minimum of privacy and working conditions. On the other hand, probably Gandhi does not altogether escape the tendency of all dominating personalities to seek the imposition of their wills on others by indirect as well as direct means, even when they sincerely believe they are anxious only to serve the truth.

Apart from the two collective interviews, Major Wyatt and I were able to spend an hour with him at 6 a.m. Slowly pacing the short roof, with a pause now and then, he emphasised important points or listened to some clarifications of our own. Brigadier Low and Lord Munster arrived at 7 a.m. for their interview and looked a little surprised that we had been there at an earlier hour. Mr. Gandhi presented me with an autographed book on the "Teaching of Jesus" as I left, which gesture I greatly appreciated, although I have found the book in parts distinctly misleading.

Despite the candour of Gandhi's autobiography, his penetrative reflections, and his spiritual sagacity, I consider his asceticism becomes psychologically dangerous if expounded as necessary for general human application. Christian saints often fell into that error, and one can respect and admire them as well as the Indian Mahatma while recognising they can possess the vices of their virtues. Infinite harm has been done to human life through very good men not realising they can be rather stupid in some respects. Insight sometimes gets mixed up with short sight.

Apart from Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and M. A. Jinnah are the two best known personalities. As I have mentioned, it was my privilege to stay with Nehru, as well as meeting him on two other occasions. He is a warmly human as well as a finely cultured Indian leader. Awkward as it was for him to have thousands of Ganges pilgrims wandering about his garden and gathering before his house (notwithstanding the understandable chagrin and protests of the gardener), and for him to withdraw from meals, desk, or discussion every twenty minutes or so in order to say a few words to the throng, it was obvious he was glad to meet and talk briefly with those humble folk. As soon as he had appeared and spoken the collective shouting would cease and the audience quietly withdraw, only to be replaced by another gathering a few minutes later. I estimate that 20,000 or more assembled at his house, "Anand Bhawan," during that day, and each day for about three weeks.

Within that quiet, shortish, bald-headed figure with patrician features, kindly eyes and resolute lips there is an undying fire. Differing philosophically from Gandhi, he yet has a deep respect and affection for him. There is an underlying spiritual link between Gandhi's medievalism and Nehru's modernism, and this is to be found in their common humanism. They both love their fellow-men, and their devotion to the liberation of India goes far beyond the purely political issue. But this is expressed differently, for while the older man finds nourishment in mystical reflection, the younger one is a rationalist. Gandhi's pathway is ascetic, while Nehru's is æsthetic. Yet both are idealistic, for Gandhi and Nehru alike look at the Indian peasant not simply as he is but as he could be.

Pandit Nehru's thought has been powerfully influenced by Marxism, although emotional currents supplement this and save him from doctrinaire rigidity. Yet his socialism is sure and persistent, and in days to come he will probably lead the Socialist movement when the political struggle has been won. He finds inspiration from the audiences he addresses, and responds more spontaneously to the magnetic warmth they generate than does Gandhi. Hence it is at times that his reported utterances convey not only his careful judgment but also tinges of emotional contagion, and even bitterness. Gandhi occasionally sounds caustic, although he would disavow this content and explain it as being righteous severity. Nehru's bitterness is simply a streak of intensity within his human passion.

In the British Press it was reported Nehru had described our Deputation as "a huge hoax," later corrected to "a huge joke." But he informed me that this, too, was incorrect. He had spoken in Hindustani and had not seen the published translation until much later, and then was grieved at the misreport; for he explained that what he had said was a word-of-welcome at the prospect of the Deputation, but also that it seemed a bit of a joke that such a deputation had not come before. Such inaccuracies of transmission are inevitable and should not disturb one unduly. During the first days of my sojourn in India I was myself a victim of this Press weakness, for I was reported as having said that "I was very amused at being in India after years of political activity in respect of India," whereas actually I stated "I was very impressed . . ." In one sense the word "amused" could have stood, for there was amusement in the thought

of the chidings I had previously received that I had not visited India, and also in the fact that some had disapproved of my going.

While it would be improper to give a detailed report of the conversations I had with Nehru and other political leaders, I can state that I questioned him regarding his own assurance that there was no intention of compelling any substantial minority to remain inside a new free Indian Constitution. My object was to discover any possible bridge between the Congress and the Moslem League in respect of Pakistan. He was cautious in his reply, and emphasised that such contingent secession must be preceded by a plebiscite of both Moslems and non-Moslems in the areas involved. It seemed fairly evident to me that there had been and would be many vigorous tussles in the Congress Working Committee over such tentative approaches to the Moslem League claim. With him, as with others whom we met, a great deal of ground was covered, including explorations extending beyond the immediate Indian field. With Jawaharlal particularly I was conscious of large international sympathies, and a deep concern with world democratic movements and the urgency of world peace. He was also most anxious to have information respecting not only internal British political activities but naturally especially so respecting the Labour movement and its concern with India; and he was greatly appreciative of the sterling work of V. K. Krishna Menon and the India League, while desirous of knowing the significance of other organised activities relating to India.

Perhaps among many vivid impressions I have brought away from my visit to Allahabad one of the most lasting will be that of my journey with Nehru to

the junction of the Jumna and Ganges, where many thousands of pilgrims had gathered. On the wide stretch of sand were assembled men and women who had come great distances. Some sat in hollows cooking their meal on a small fire; some wandered past the stalls that sold a variety of cheap goods. The pennons and banners of priests hung high above the multitude, and several large compounds and shelters had been erected for religious and social purposes. Nehru led me among the people until the word went round that he was there, and then two or three trotted alongside of us until accretions expanded to hundreds. As voices were raised excitedly so the hundreds threatened to become thousands. Little vendors with their sweetmeats, fruit, or pottery displayed on the ground were in danger of becoming overwhelmed by the expanding flood, with disastrous results. I perceived the danger and besought him to rejoin his car, which he did, moving off to a great chorus of shouts and a dense enveloping cloud of dust. A quarter of a mile further on we alighted again, only to have the same experience; and yet again when we had escaped from this; ultimately we had to retire completely or I would probably have been suffocated, or trampled into the sand by a myriad feet. I expect many an Indian has described in his distant village how he saw and touched Jawarharlal Nehru at the bathing festival, and possibly one or two have also mentioned that he was accompanied by a very odd sort of Englishman, and wondered why.

When we saw Mahomed Ali Jinnah he was immaculately dressed in a European suit with a monocle hanging on a cord. He is an arresting figure with eyes of steel set in finely drawn, severely lined features. He is in deadly earnest, and his

references to "Pakistan or Perish," the slogan of the League, makes my adjective even more appropriate. His inner excitement becomes concentrated in a smile compounded of implacability and charm. He is a sword of Islam resting in a secular scabbard.

Like both Gandhi and Nehru he is a lawyer, and again like them he has resided in England. It is stated he was desirous at one time of being a British parliamentary candidate and that he joined the Fabian Society. Political and other strains have left their visible marks now that he is the Qaid-i-Azam ("Great Leader") of the Moslem League. We met other Moslem Leaguers, but one thinks of Jinnah and the Moslem League as synonymous. Undoubtedly he stands out pre-eminently as the League spokesman. He is in a far different mental world and category than any other Indian public man, and appears to be conscious of the fact.

At its inception, and for some years after, the Moslem League co-operated with the Congress, of which Mr. Jinnah had been an active member. Steadily it diverged and gave voice to alleged disabilities Moslems suffered under Congress Government, and attributed to Hindu domination. During the 1937-1939 period of the Provincial Government administrations, when Congress Ministers controlled the majority of the Governments, it is asserted by Jinnah and the League that Moslems suffered severe slights and injustices. Moreover, generally it is non-Moslems who control powerful financial and industrial interests, to the detriment, it is alleged, of the Moslems. Further than this is the assertion that the respective cultures, ethical systems, and ways of life of Moslem and Hindu are so distinctive

that a gulf yawns between them. From these elements has arisen the endorsement of Pakistan.

Originally the "student's dream" of Chondary Rahmat Ali at Cambridge received little support (although the late Lord Lloyd and Mr. Winston Churchill, it is said, gave it some encouragement), but it became in time so attractive as to be officially adopted at the League Annual Session in Madras in 1941. In the succeeding years it has gathered considerable mass support. Beyond the general claim for the incorporation of the six areas of the North-West Frontier, the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistān, Bengal, and Assam<sup>1</sup> in an independent, predominantly sovereign Moslem State, it is impossible to secure definition. "Concede the principle," Jinnah argues, "and we can then discuss the details of implementation. Frontiers can be redrawn, concessions can be made, compromises effected. But first and foremost recognise that Pakistan has got to be. On that we are firm and unwavering, and there can be no peace until and unless this is appreciated."

We twice talked as a group with Jinnah in his garden. He and his handsome sister greeted us and led us through the house on to the lawn, where we seated ourselves in a circle around him. In the distance pressmen and photographers patiently waited, and when the interview concluded, they swarmed around us, the Moslems eagerly searching for a sign that we had been impressed or some hint of our acceptance of their ardent demand. The military and economic disadvantages were stressed during the

<sup>1</sup> There has been some variation in the designated areas, e.g., Kashmir has also been mentioned. The original inventor of the name Pakistan has also gone further, and proposed the carving up of India into several "'stans."

discussion, but the Moslem Leader was not moved by this. "We are different people, but want to live in peace. Let us build up our own society and the Hindus theirs in separate areas, and let us do so without conflict. As to military and economic difficulties—well, give us the chance and we will show you how we can successfully deal with them. Grant Pakistan, and we shall demonstrate our capacity." Such was the essence of his reiterated retorts.

Jinnah is completely sincere. If he be described as a fanatic this is not necessarily a disparagement, for such could also be applied to Congress leaders. A fanatic focusses his enthusiasm so that it becomes concentrated conviction. He is the incarnation of one idea. But the idea can be fertile once it has succeeded. Therefore Moslem Leaguers are in earnest when they believe that Pakistan is the inviolable prelude to their communal well-being and prosperity. They may or may not be deluded in this, other elements may adulterate their zeal, but in the emotional fervour of the two thousand or so students who greeted us with green flags chanting "Pakistan" in unison at Lahore; in the frenzied cries that met Jinnah when he spoke to thousands in the same town when we were there; in the long, elaborate exposition I heard at a Moslem tea gathering at Allahabad; in the somewhat confused utterances of three opulent and corpulent Moslem spokesmen at Peshawar (including Abdul Quaym, who had been a Congressman until a few months previously and who had written a severe criticism of Pakistan); in the persistence of those who pursued me at the last Indian gatherings we had at Karachi; and in a score

of other instances, I perceived that Pakistan had "caught on" with large numbers of Moslems and had become an intense political-religious faith.

Jinnah, of course, was completely aware of this, and the results of the Central Legislative elections provided him with further endorsement. He spoke with the unwavering assumption that he was the voice of the Moslem community. Moslems, he insisted, were not a minority, but a nation, and he spoke for that nation. There was no other organisation or body entitled thus to speak: they were mere incidental irrelevances if they did exist, with the facade of a few Moslem "quisling" names.

Individual members of our Deputation had other interviews with Mr. Jinnah, but our two collective contacts, and his garden party that we also attended, left us with the impression of an incorruptible personality completely identified with an uncompromising demand. "Well," said he quietly as I bade him good-bye, "you know the position. It is up to you."

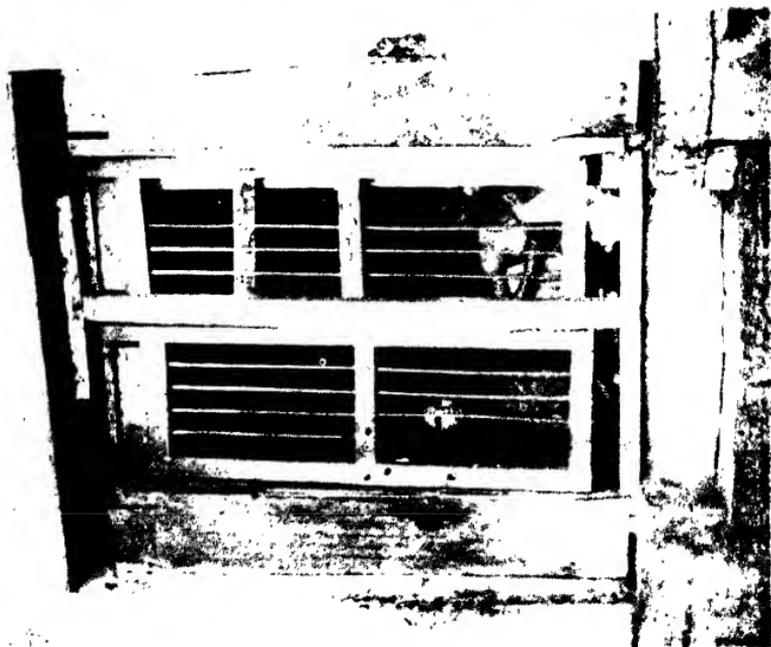
Let me turn to two other Moslems. In the North-Western Frontier Province some of us met Abdul Gaffar Khan and his brother, Dr. Khan Sahib. The latter is Prime Minister, having succeeded a Moslem Leaguer. Dr. Khan Sahib is a Congressman, married to an Englishwoman, and a medical man who was in Europe for fourteen years, partly in England and partly during the First World War serving with the R.A.M.C. on the Continent. He is a ruddy, genial personality for whom the Governor and many others have a high regard. We had a meal in his house, and in his garden gathered a score or more of poor people who surrounded him as he came out of his house,



*Top:* Rural scene, with primitive spinning wheel, or charka.  
*Bottom:* Itinerant hypnotist and musician (see p. 18).



A talk with a villager.



Another scene: The "oldest profession" (see p. 69).

thrusting pieces of paper describing grievances before his nose, or, being mostly illiterate, talking to him eagerly. Patiently he secured quiet and listened to their stories, as he does every day when at home. He is a popular Premier, with considerable admiration for Soviet Russia, but without necessarily endorsing Communist philosophy. I stayed at the entrancing house of his secretary, Mohammed Yunas, forty-second child of his father (who had eight wives, I should add, at one time or other), and who married one of Gaffar Khan's daughters. It is situated in the centre of Peshawar, with a carpeted courtyard open to the sky, a large reception room without a wall on the courtyard side, decorated fretwood inlaid with glass on the opposite wall of that room, and two large charcoal braziers for heating in the centre.

It was there I enjoyed the task of sitting on floor cushions to eat a meal off a foot-high table. I had less difficulty than my colleague, for I have no problem of abdominal curvature.

Abdul Gaffar Khan I first saw in a village some distance from the Khyber Pass. Richards, Yunas, and I arrived as hundreds of Pathans were converging, and on our alighting we heard the wild strain of a small band. The band insisted on piping and tom-tomming us to a platform where we were seated on chairs. Presently Gaffar Khan arrived from his prayers in the local mosque, but before he spoke to the large audience seated on the ground before him a kind of litany with responses was chanted by two "Red Shirts," at the end of which came a collective response from the crowd. I had noticed two men with old-fashioned muskets, and one of these employed his weapon by shooting an explosive cracker into the air. Gaffar Khan

then gave an election address in his native Pushtu tongue, quietly but with obvious appreciation on the part of the people. I thought of him with his home-spun garments, his burning but kindly eyes, his short cut grey beard, and his long, powerful body turning this way and that as he pleaded and exhorted, as resembling an Old Testament prophet. When he concluded he walked with us to the dak bungalow for a cup of tea and a chat.

We asked him about his outlook and work. He told us that the most formative influence in his life was that of Canon Wigram, an Anglican Church teacher in his youth. This had given him the ethical and spiritual inspiration for his service to his people and his advocacy of non-violence. He first suffered imprisonment for opening schools, which had been declared illegal, and since then he had had many terms of imprisonment. His famous Red Shirts, or Khudai Khitmatgars (Servants of God), were so called simply because the most accessible local dye was of red colour. They were pledged to non-violence, and purges sometimes took place to make sure that members of the organisation were loyal to their pledge, and acted as a disciplined whole. He travelled to other parts of India when the law exiled him beyond his own Province, and he had made a lasting friendship with Gandhi. While firmly opposed to British domination, he felt no personal hostility to British people and he gave me this simple message, which I scribbled down at the time:—

“ We do not want to keep on quarrelling with the English people. We are servants of God, and do not want to quarrel with any people. We all want a change of heart, with ourselves and with the English people.

Our objective is to serve humanity, irrespective of caste, creed, or colour. That is the great need of all mankind.”

As we said farewell to this remarkable man and his over six foot son, and drove back through the brief twilight and then the darkness, I felt that though I was a temporary voluntary exile yet distance and time had little meaning whenever and wherever the deepest experience of the human soul finds utterance. The setting was strange but the spirit was familiar, and the inner kinship transcended mortal diversity

To add to the contrast between Moslems, I must mention Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Asaf Ali, both Congressmen, the former being President<sup>1</sup> and the latter a Working Committee member. Azad is a distinguished Moslem scholar, and although described by his opponents as a Congress showpiece and, together with Asaf Ali and other Congress Moslems, receiving the epithet “ quisling,” this is an expression of anger at the Congress Moslem refutation of the Moslem League claim to be the sole representative of all Moslems.

Azad is trimly bearded but of ambiguous years, although his mind is alert and shrewd, and he conveys the impression of an earnest and learned sage. He has stated he wants to see a socialist India, but he has not heretofore been active in socialist advocacy. He is an oriental linguist, and prefers not to speak in English, although he frequently did so with us, now and then returning to his own tongue. We met him with Nehru, Prasad, Pant, Patel, Krypalani, and Asaf Ali at the Congress office in New Delhi. As chairman of the gathering he meditatively smoked his cigarette as

<sup>1</sup> Now retired from the office, and succeeded by Nehru.

we moved beyond a little preliminary coolness to a definitely more cordial atmosphere. At one stage Patel's emphatic utterance reminded me of Ernest Bevin, but the whole discussion was frank yet friendly. The Maulana suffered internment with the other leaders in 1942, and is completely at one with them in their general policy. Yet he is conciliatory, and he is no narrow nationalist, for often he has stressed the need of India playing her full part in world affairs and co-operating in efforts for international peace. He realises that independence does not and should not mean segregation or isolation.

He was desirous of meeting us again and we intended to do so, but owing to a misunderstanding this did not take place. Our aircraft took us direct to Agra from Lucknow four weeks later, and only after we had found ourselves stranded at a deserted landing-field and had met a very troubled District Commissioner who rushed up in a car did we begin to realise that something had gone wrong. Thus we missed responding to Maulana Azad's proposal that we should see him again, even though probably there was not much that would usefully have been added to our first discussion.

Asaf Ali is short, dapper, and slim, with an incisive manner of speech and a persistence in exposition. He was very concerned to prove the impracticability of Pakistan from the defensive and economic points of view, and had arranged for large wall maps to be available the better to illustrate his case. His wife lived "underground" since 1942 and has only recently been able to appear in public again, which she has signalled by a series of fiery speeches. I was

unable to meet her, but on two or three occasions had the advantage of talks with her husband.

Although I have referred to these four prominent Moslems it would be misleading if I left the impression that they definitely represent a Moslem force as strong as that behind Jinnah. The Provincial election results testify otherwise, although it is well to realise, firstly, that during the major portion of the war the Moslem League had the field largely to itself; and, secondly, that outside the ranks of the enfranchised are large numbers of Momins and other poor Moslems who may stand aloof from the Moslem League. The Momins (weavers and the like) have proclaimed their dissent, as I well know by the many cables that have reached me. During the war one of these stated that "on behalf of 45,000,000 Moslem Momins" they repudiated Mr. Jinnah. Mr. Amery, then Secretary of State for India replied, when I drew his attention to this, that the cable must have meant "four to five million" and the House laughed at my apparent discomfiture. A week later I had a further cable stating it was "45,000,000." Whereupon Mr. Amery still insisted that was false but that they might number six or seven million. Let us be content, therefore, in stating that there are somewhere between four and forty-five million Momin Moslems opposed to the Moslem League!

There are, of course, other non-League Moslems, including the Khaksars, the Nationalist Moslems, the Syed Group in Sind, the decimated followers of Fazlul Huq in Bengal, and the Moslems in the Unionist Party of the Punjab. A prominent leader of the last-named met us, and we asked if it was correct that he had recently stated he supported Pakistan.

He replied that was so. "Then what do you mean by Pakistan?" he was asked. Whereat he answered, "I don't know." After a disconcerting pause he added pleasantly, "Does Mr. Jinnah know? If so, why does he not explain and define what he means by Pakistan? Until he does . . .!" We saw the point.

In Bengal we met not only the bulky Mr. Fazlul Huq, who was vigorous in his protests against physical attacks made on him and his supporters, and from whose lengthy expostulations I slipped away when the advent of Lord Munster and Brigadier Low disturbed the tea party, but also Mr. Suhradwardy, the Bengal Provincial Moslem League leader. He is an extremely able man, very astute and certain of himself and his cause, and was convinced of the success of the League at the elections.

Among many other political personalities, we had interviews with Mr. C. Rajagopalacharia, Sir Tej Sapru, the Liberal leader, and Mr. Bhulabhai Desai. All have first-class minds, but "C. R." is obviously weary of disputation within the Congress. For a time he left Congress over his proposed concessions to the Moslem League. He had rejoined when we met him, but was uncertain of his position. As subsequent events have shown there was a definite split in Congress over him, some Congress members viewing him with hostility and even enmity. Sir Tej was engaged in a legal case at Lucknow but spared a couple of hours before lunch and came to us straight from court, with his King's Counsel white tabs still around his neck. He elaborated the thesis of the weighty proposals of the Sapru Committee, but I felt while his contentions were eminently rational he was insufficiently appreciative of powerful emotional factors, particularly those relative

to Pakistan. Democratic politics, after all, is the art of directing the irrational towards the rational, and not of imposing the one on the other. I had not so much time with him as the others, owing to my inescapable siege by a score of young Lucknow journalists.

Mr. Bhulabhai Desai is as ebullient as a bouncing ball<sup>1</sup>. He, too, had been out of favour with Congress, but had secured a come-back through his brilliant legal defence of I.N.A. prisoners. He and the local Congress leader were involved in animated disagreement during the afternoon tea gathering with us, and our leader Richards genially reassured them both that we quite appreciated the nature of these family rows. I believe the domestic wrestling continued long after we had left.

I was disappointed at not seeing either Tara Singh, leader of the Sikhs in Amritsar, or M. N. Roy, of the Radical Democratic Party in Bombay. I visited Amritsar, but called at a village on my way and arrived at Amritsar in the late afternoon. My first desire was to see Jallianwala Bagh, where in 1919 General Dyer caused a large demonstration to be fired on, with the result that 379 lost their lives and 1,200 were wounded. The space is enclosed with buildings and is now laid out as a recreation garden, although much in need of attention. I saw the carefully paint-encircled bullet marks in the walls, and could appreciate something of the shocking scene when thousands tried in vain to escape. The steward in charge recognised me by my photograph and insisted on my inscribing a message in his visitors' book, so that by the time I left I found I had no time in the

<sup>1</sup> Unhappily, he died suddenly in the Spring.

twilight to visit the Golden Temple with the Deputation leader, or call on Tara Singh. Bottomley, Mrs. Nichol, and Wyatt did so some days later, and found Tara Singh and his associates insistent on Sikh rights and strongly opposed to Pakistan.

M. N. Roy, leader of the Radical Democratic Party, I also missed, though I met groups of that Party more than once. I wanted particularly to meet him as I had met representatives of his Party in London. I understand they considered me rather hostile, largely because of an interjection I made in the House of Commons. Lord Winterton, who identifies political zeal with irascible pugnacity, had quoted Mr. Roy as evidence of the unrepresentative nature of Congress. Whereat I interposed an interrogation as to whether that gentleman had not received a subsidy from the Government, amounting to £12,000 per year, to which there was no reply. This was taken as a reflection on the Radical Democratic Party, though I do not see why this should be so. It is beyond dispute that a considerable sum of money from Government resources was paid, but it does not follow that Party benefited financially thereby. Moreover, it was given in order that the war effort might be encouraged, and I should have thought the Radical Democrats would be pleased it was for such a purpose. As to the merits of the Party I offer no opinion, although their social policy appears to be associated with fierce attacks on all other parties. In this they are not singular, by any means. They also appear to advocate that Indian freedom should not become operative until or unless either our own Labour Government could firstly guarantee social justice to Indian workers or the Radical Democratic Party and its policy had achieved success.

Surely this would involve intolerable, dangerous, and provocative delay, and an assumption of responsibility we could not discharge, urgent as the dire need of the Indian workers undoubtedly is.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu must not be omitted from these brief references. A distinguished poetess, who is now an elderly lady, and the only woman member of the Congress Working Committee, she retains her effervescent vitality, her sense of fun, and her warm humanity. Her irrepressible spirit must burst out often among her political colleagues like a refreshing fountain.

Apart from these I and others met a vast host of varied Indians and Britons. There were the Governors of Provinces, though one I did not see, I was informed, assumed quite falsely this was because of political aversion on my part. Governor Casey of Bengal I had met in London and was surprised that he should recognise me, as the London contact was only when I formed one of an audience to hear him in the Empire Parliamentary Association room at Westminster Hall. He is a forthright man, and I conjecture he was not at all sorry to be leaving. Whatever criticism may be levelled against him by Indian politicians I can at least state that in his conversation with us he still further contributed to my, and our, conviction that India must have complete freedom and responsibility. Governor Colville of Bombay I had known as a fellow-M.P., though being a Tory only slightly, for I have never had the inclination or the ability to fraternise with my political opponents in the House, or for that matter with many of my political friends. Like others, I have little time to drink coffee or whisky in the House of Commons smoking room, and, incidentally, I drink neither.

I met two of Gandhi's sons, one whom my daughter had met in South Africa where he lived in his father's old house; and the other, the burly, Khaddar-clothed co-editor of *The Hindustan Times*. Then there was Chief Justice Spens, also a former M.P. associate; the Begum Shah Nawaz, a charming, ardent Moslem Leaguer; Sir Theodore Gregory, overworked and highly strung, but with facts and figures regarding food needs and economic resources at his finger-tips, for he is Economic Adviser to the Indian Government; the Editor of *Dawn*; Dr. John Sargent, whom I had once known as Director of Education for the Essex County Council, of which I was a member, but who now was Education Adviser to the Indian Government, and a baffled, disappointed man unable to implement an excellent plan of mass education; the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly; the Nawab of Bhopal, Secretary of the Chamber of Princes, and an intrepid air pilot; Mr. Frank Anthony, earnest and competent leader of many Anglo-Indians, and many others.

Before I conclude this very restricted survey of personalities I must add a word or two regarding the Viceroy. Altogether we met him nine or ten times, including at luncheon or dinner parties in his palatial Viceregal House, where we stayed for two brief periods. Shortly before he left London to take up his office I saw him for an hour in a bomb-battered West End house. On that occasion I cannot say we talked. Certainly, I did, and found the predominately one-sided conversation somewhat awkward to sustain. Strong, silent men are familiar characters in novels, but authors do not have to converse with their own characters, and strength through silence can be very exacting in real

life. However, I suppose he wanted to "size me up," and though I may have then received very low marks, possibly for being different and much more simple than he had been led to believe, yet I discovered he well remembered me. He and his wife, the Vicereine, were extremely kind host and hostess, and this penetrated easily through the ceremonious formalities of life in their official establishment. I understand they have dispensed with much of the formalism that previously prevailed. Even so, I should hate to be Viceroy. On the other hand, I can mention that a young R.A.F. corporal whom I left in one of my rooms at the Viceroy's house, while I rushed off to a Press conference, not only greatly enjoyed the tea and cakes brought to him by a picturesquely ornate "bearer," but also strolled out into the gardens and spent half an hour talking to one whom he thought was an English gardener, but who turned out to be Colonel X, a relative of the Viceroy. A good yarn for the boys at the camp that night.

Lord Wavell was very, very cautious. But behind his justifiable reticence it was abundantly clear that he fulfilled his Viceregal task with deep seriousness and conscientiousness. Slow and deliberate of speech, he yet conveyed his full appreciation of an approaching crisis, and of his earnest desire and determination to give unremitting devotion to India and towards a peaceful solution. His act of visiting the famine areas immediately upon reaching India as Viceroy and Governor-General will not be forgotten as an index of his liberal humanism. He is greatly respected by Indians, and should go down in history not only as the last Viceroy, but also as a Viceroy who was a human being deeply concerned with the millions of other

human beings for whom he had supreme official responsibility on behalf of his King-Emperor and of Parliament. This human interest was shared by Lady Wavell, and by his son and daughter whom we met, the latter tragically losing her husband in a motor accident soon after our return.

But though I greatly appreciate the kindness and zeal of the Viceroy and Lady Wavell, and although I gleaned much from the scores whom we met at the Viceroy's house, I was conscious that New Delhi was not India but a conqueror's capital. The Union Jacks that flew over Government buildings and gaols may have evoked in us patriotic sentiments and homely memories, but they were anachronisms. I saw many fluttering banners in India, but they were nearly all either Congress tricolours embossed with the charka (or spinning wheel), or else the green flag of the Moslem League and Pakistan.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE REALM OF THE SPIRIT

**T**HE animism of Indian aboriginals is generally classified as an early form of religion, and students of comparative religion accept it as a stage in religious evolution. Some declare both primitive and advanced religious patterns are equally irrational, and are gross or refined deposits of superstition, ignorance, and phantasy. The ethical concepts associated with this or that religion, it is claimed, are largely accidental and not necessarily to be identified with the religion.

Morality, it is further explained, is derived from custom, as etymologically the word itself suggests. Therefore, some moral assumptions or practices may contain a core of usefulness, while others either never had real human value, or such value as they had is now outworn. The ancient Hebrew distinction between clean and unclean animals, for instance, is really very arbitrary, and modern attempts at justification on hygienic grounds a mere artificial euphemism. Moreover, the enveloping of certain moral concepts with an aura of mystical authority becomes, consciously or unconsciously, a psychological instrument to assist in the subordination of the masses to their rulers. Hence, the adoption and adaptation of Charles Kingsley's original warning into Lenin's epigram, "Religion is the opiate of the people."

Others do not dismiss the religious manifestations of human reaction to life so iconoclastically. They see in all religions human attempts to comprehend and interpret intangible but very real forces that course through the mystery of life; and that behind metaphor or myth, image or ritual, may be meanings that have validity within expanding human minds. External signs are at best clumsy or subtle attempts to project into rational consciousness the fuller content of mortal experience; and, personally, I consider all religious, ethical, and cultural forms, however gross or superstitious they may be, must contain real elements that contribute to the elusive composition of human experience. One needs imagination to penetrate effectively into the richer content of normal life.

I visited mosques, and in my shoeless feet was gravely shown an alleged hair from the Prophet's beard at Delhi and a petrified imprint of his foot. This was as near as possible, I suppose, to an Islamic prohibited reproduction of a living being. I saw florid Hindu temples with exteriors smothered with curious figures, and peeped into interiors whose religious furnishing could only be understood by those well-versed in Hindu religion. I saw the tiny village mosques and temples, and for congratulating the donor of one of the latter a wizened old lady suddenly dropped on her knees and kissed my feet. I entered Sikh temples, with their greater restraint, and watched mothers touch the temple steps with their own brows and with those of their babies. I saw the Parsee Towers for the dead; talked with ascetic Jains; spoke to Christian groups, both Indian and British; met representatives of the few Buddhists left in India; and saw one of the famous Buddhist

stupas (reminding me of the far-off days of the great Asoka) on the North-West Frontier. I observed fakirs and religious mendicants; shrines and graves; a stone that had become sacred, though comparatively recently only erected to prevent vehicles knocking against a house, because someone had sprinkled red powder upon it; pious Moslems stepping aside to pray on a strip of carpet they carried; sacred cows and monkeys never restrained however inconvenient, wasteful, or mischievously harmful; and much else that spoke of religious diversity and intensity. A good deal of this seemed to me childish and grotesque, but I knew that it was not without human meaning, even though it would be replaced by more mature symbolism in course of time.

We all live in a world where the vocabulary of symbolism is inevitable, including in the spheres of science and mathematics. Even poetry is an imaginative attempt to translate intangible reality. A flower has more than its botanical significance.

Religious feeling, crude or refined, simple or profound, traditional or intellectual, plays a great part in the life of India. As with Christianity and with any ethical or political ideology, it can be associated with the perverse and obscurantist, the oppressive and myopic, the brutal and the callous; or equally with the inspiring and stimulating, the liberating and enlightening, the compassionate and morally courageous. It all depends on the quality of the personality and its mental sensitiveness whether the emotional stream ends in human stagnation or flows onward to human fulfilment. In that belief I personally analyse my contact with Indian religious

externals, and perceive therein intimations of the fears, hungers, hopes, and wonders of the precious human spirit.

One need not necessarily be theological in referring to the human spirit, but no other description seems so apt when considering the whole vital being of man. There are his powerful biological forces and his conditional nervous reflexes; but there are also other fine and complex qualities that steadily emerge through consciousness and establish their own world of values. These are evident, not only in religious patterns, but also in art and culture. Yet even here there can be no complete dissociation.

The curator of a museum gave me a large picture of Maya, the Mother of Buddha. It was a delicate reproduction of one of the famous Ajanta Caves' paintings, and not until later did I discover it was not a coloured print but an original water-colour. Artistically it is the creation of the human spirit, but it also combines with its technical achievement the sensitive beauty of the Ajanta artist's conception of a young mother destined to give birth to a great religious leader. So, also, Christian artists have idealised Mary, the Mother of Jesus; and in either projection of the artistic comprehension of significant motherhood one can feel a human effort to invest maternity with radiance. I would reveal a pitiable atrophy if I could not especially treasure the gift of that curator.

There was little opportunity to study the human spirit enshrined in sound or form in India, but I made use of that little. The Hindu-Moslem architecture of religious and secular buildings could at least be glanced at as one travelled. Now and

then we had an hour or so for closer scrutiny and were able to see and reflect on the genius that built domes and arches, fashioned exquisite decorations, and practised the skill of mosaics and carvings. Naturally the Taj Mahal, despite an English journalistic critic, remains an impressive memory of marble harmony and beauty, although a memory interwoven with reflections on the human injustice that enables so much labour and thought to be devoted to the grief of one man over his beloved while so many were, and are, robbed even of the joy that precedes the grief.

The idea that a better tribute to human love could have been given by the building of homes for the poor would have seemed ludicrous, even if it ever entered the head of Shah Jahan. One has to accept the paradox that, as with so many lovely things, individual wealth has enabled us to receive what otherwise might not have been created. That tomb is the by-product of extravagance, and yet we convert the extravagance to a social inheritance. I reconciled the disparity of emotional reactions by mentally transforming the Taj Mahal from a testimony to individual sorrow and love into a monument to all the bereaved lovers of human history, including Jahan and Mumtaz-e-Mohal.

About twenty-five miles from Agra, at Fatehpur Sikri, some of us spent the only free day during the whole of the tour. Through the kind hospitality of Sir Akbar Hydari and his family we visited the famous deserted "fort" of Akbar. Although there are many other similar abandoned establishments we could enjoy inspection of this one at our leisure. Akbar sought in some measure to synthesise Moslem and Hindu thoughts and forms, and this was evident in

many of the buildings we saw. There also we visited the Moslem mosque for some of his wives and the Hindu temple for the others. We were informed that a mural painting in another building depicted a Christian theme. Had it been a Christian chapel? Akbar was evidently neither a monogamist nor a Pakistanian.

Apart from the æsthetics of architecture and painting, I saw something of the skill of metal engraving and enamel work, and of fabric weaving and designs. Twice I experienced, and in some measure enjoyed, Indian music, although I regret that at a specially arranged concert by leading Indian musicians round about midnight I fell asleep. This is no reflection on the music, however, for I have often listened in London to the very un-Occidental strains of Indian music and found this far from soporific. I saw most of an Indian film portraying a famous Indian story, but this again was near midnight and I found it difficult to follow it closely.

An hour's dancing, with Sri Jopinath as the male principal, I found enthralling. Much in Indian dancing depends on limb and finger movements, and although I was uninstructed respecting the details I found the flexibility of expression and the subtlety of gesture and movement movingly eloquent. The aboriginal dancing was quite different, for in that no apparent significance is attached to hands and fingers or to individual expressive symbolisms. Rather is such dancing a collective rhythm, although possessing its own elemental poetry. The specific Indian dancing I witnessed was so vital and fascinating that I deliberately chose to delay joining my colleagues in our second interview with Gandhi, and I told him the

reason without apology. I hope Gandhi is not too ascetic to appreciate why that art so fascinated me that I could prefer to watch dancing for once than listen to him.

We had cultural contacts at universities and colleges, and with one or two specialist societies. Some of us visited the Ismalia College beyond Peshawar and found it well equipped, with hundreds of black garmented students who for the most part were ardent supporters of Pakistan. They must have spotted me the next day in the centre of Peshawar, for suddenly from the loudspeaker of an election van filled with students the Pushtu announcements ended and a few declamatory sentences in English were loudly addressed to me by name. The same liveliness was displayed at Hindu colleges, at one of which I was the only M.P. to turn up and had to be adorned with the gold-wire garlands intended for my colleagues as well as the one for myself. Here they staged a brief parliamentary session, during which they were courteous but very frank in their political observations.

At a Delhi college, where I addressed the students in a large declivity in the grounds, I was delighted to see a large number of girl students. Autograph hunters at this place almost caused a riot, and the head master seemed drowned beneath an effervescent sea of youth swelling around me and my car after the meeting had concluded.

Some of us accepted the invitation of a nominally cultural organisation in one of the cities. I arrived at the building after having been detained with Mrs. Nichol and Lord Chorley at a tea-meeting arranged by the local Scheduled Classes Association, and forthwith had to consume another repast. A huge floral

garland was dropped over my head, and although I meekly accepted such tokens at other times on this occasion my pleasure was not unalloyed, for the garland was dripping with water that immediately soaked through my thin shirt and left little streams of water running uncomfortably down my body during the rest of the proceedings. We adjourned to a very large hall packed with people whom I was called upon to address, and again I was impressed by the boiling synthesis of culture and politics that prevailed everywhere in India. It seems impossible to secure a cool, academic atmosphere of reflectiveness in India, and one can appreciate the reason, for the Indian mind is surcharged with vibrant political issues and is likely to be until present tensions arising from the acute political struggle have found satisfaction in national liberation.

Before leaving these references to cultural, æsthetic, and intellectual contacts I must mention one or two specially religious contacts, each one of which has a symbolic or representative significance.

There are approximately 7,500,000 Christians in India, roughly half of these being Protestants and the other half Roman Catholics, apart from the ancient Syrian Christians of about 400,000, erroneously said to have been established by St. Thomas, although certainly of Nestorian origin.

I was struck by the relatively large number of churches in Madras; and Madras has indeed a larger proportion of Christian adherents than any other part of India. I glanced into one or two of them, and also observed the number of evangelical missions striving to save souls in their characteristically British Nonconformist fashion. Incidentally, in Karachi it

seemed extremely incongruous to notice a small group of serious British servicemen trundling a harmonium down the main street and assemble at a street corner, where they sang their plaintive hymns and exhorted the indifferent passers-by, just as similar rather pathetic groups do in English towns on Saturday nights. It only needed the seductive pungency of fish and chip shop odours to complete the picture.

I had personal contact with only two Free Churches in India, one at the Hyderabad American Methodist Church and the other at New Delhi Free Church, where I talked to soldiers and airmen for an hour in the minister's house. Some miles outside Calcutta I stopped to speak to an Anglican clergyman who had been stationed there many years, and who showed me round his delightful little church with its appropriate ecclesiastical adaptation of Indian characteristics to the Christian emphasis. He loved his work and was beloved in the district, both by Christians and non-Christians, and the brief time I had with this gentle soul and his affectionate appreciation of his Indian environment were most inspiring. Before I left he unobtrusively placed a record on a gramophone in a corner of the church, and through the late afternoon air there rang the amplified tones of the bells of St. Margaret's, Westminster, the Parish Church of the Houses of Parliament. One's reactions in such a setting were in their own way as startling as the sound was to the parakeets in the surrounding trees.

Elsewhere I talked for a time to an old bearded Jesuit, who informed me that by the regulation of his religious Order he would never return to his native land of France. He, too, had ministered for many years to the Indian soul, and although I gathered

numerical success in securing adherents had not been very great, yet he was well content to feel he had served his Master, not only by securing converts but by sharing kindly helpful fellowship with the people of his neighbourhood. Such transmission of spiritual values simply through the single-heartedness of personal living contributes richly to the graciousness of life, quite apart from theological considerations.

I had a brief conversation with two of the very few Buddhists remaining in India, and also with two different Jains. These two were not of that austere category of ascetic Jains who even brush the path before their feet lest unwittingly they violate their doctrinal injunctions to avoid destroying any living thing. With Moslems I had a little discussion on their faith, although I found it difficult to secure even temporary detachment of this from political issues. I watched, however, more than once, the pious Moslems at their prayers. Of Hinduism I also had discussion, though most of the Hindus I met were also too absorbed with politics to spare much time considering the comprehensive nature of Hindu beliefs. Many educated Hindus are largely agnostic, I imagine, or leave Hindu traditions as a vague yet still influential background to their lives. There are many grades of personal interpretation of Hindu religions and philosophical thought, ranging from the rigid orthodoxy of the couple who travelled hundreds of miles to beseech my aid in preventing any interference with their ancient practice to the almost complete evaporation of religious conviction into a vaporous symbolic appreciation of Hindu philosophic values.

I possess a collection of coloured prints sent originally to "Bob" Richards (Professor Robert Richards, M.P.,

more formally), who handed them over to an assistant clerk at the room in the New Delhi secretariat which was our official headquarters. As I had been searching for such prints I begged a few from the clerk, and was chided by Bob that I had accepted the lot when proffered to me by the young man. Richards blithely assumed they might be pretty pictures to interest the clerk's young children. As the clerk was a Moslem I could fortunately explain that neither he nor his children would be likely to appreciate a number of coloured illustrations of Hindu gods and goddesses. The pictures convey a psychological intricacy, sometimes spiritually menacing, that is strange to a British mind. There is one of Lakshmi, pink robed, surrounded by the sea, an owl at her feet, two of her four arms holding lotus flowers in her hands, and the other two respectively a casket and a small sheaf of wheat. There is one of Radha Krishna, a blue-skinned Krishna himself being seated on a swing holding a flute in his hand and smiling at a maiden near by. There is another of Ganesh Janani, with a female figure pensively holding a scarlet elephant-headed child on her arm; another of Kali, with extended tongue, garland of decapitated heads, and a blood-stained chopper; another of Hanumanji, the monkey god, a human figure with semi-simian features and a long tail; and a variety of others with a mass of symbolism that would require lengthy exposition.

Three of the pictures are more humanistic and deserve mentioning. The first depicts the young Krishna standing on the back of another boy, who in turn stands on the back of a third, in order that he might secure the ghee (a kind of butter) his mother had hung near the roof, which she assumed would be

out of his reach. The second is of a four-armed Krishna in an amorous embrace. The third shows him seated on the branch of a tree playing his flute, while on the branches hang the garments of eight maidens bathing below, three of them looking towards him with folded hands, and a fourth standing on a step to the lake gazing at him adoringly. (In Homer, we are told that when Ulysses emerged from the sea and surprised the maidens playing on the shore they all ran away, save Nausicaa. An interesting comparison.)

The meaning of the many forms, signs, postures, and colours, as well as the eroticism in some of the pictures, seems obscure and bewildering to western minds, and requires some acquaintance with elaborately complex Hindu mythology and legend. So would the Hellenic or Egyptian tales of ancient myths and polytheistic episodes to those who read them for the first time. The Iliad and the Odyssey are just as curious as any Hindu legends, and for that matter much in the Bible would appear strange to a rationalist mind that had no inkling of Judaic-Christian traditions.

Psychologically and psycho-analytically I find them fascinating revelations of human consciousness. They are projections of the amazing intertwining of many strands of all the tensions and urges, the dark broodings and the sensuous longings, the menace and tenderness that human life has known and knows. To fathom all the intimate meanings either of the figures in my pictures or the wild profusion adorning Hindu temples needs great familiarity with Hindu literature, tradition and history, and a sympathetic acquaintance with the vast expanse of Hindu philosophy. Yet to the Hindu, even though his exact knowledge may be slight, those representations convey or awaken emotions full

of terrifying or gratifying associations that are sub-consciously absorbed into deep recesses. The mental and racial background is different from our own, and seems as difficult to comprehend as does a foreign language we do not know. But like the language which when learnt enables us to understand and communicate with those who otherwise would remain detached and strange, so with the symbolism of a different sphere of reflective experience.

The analogy can be extended. Linguistic knowledge makes it clear that although the vocabulary and grammar of another tongue is distinctive, yet in fact the foreign language deals with much the same necessities of human need and relationship as our own. Hence, also, though the psychological projections of Hinduism are singular and incomprehensible, once they are understood then we find though forms and patterns are different yet they enclose the same material as that in our own experience. The stresses and translations vary considerably, and scientific analysis or more refined perception may cast aside anthropomorphic and allegorical imagination as infantile toys. Nevertheless, even child-play has its significance to adulthood; and maturity can possess wisdom enough to understand the measure of kinship between itself and simpler brethren.

We may resolve the accumulated thought-forms of the past into poetic legends, but there may remain deposits from the old in the new, and the sap may run from dark roots into an exquisite blossom. In fact, the most prosaic of us draw from the deep wells of past mental experience, and the actual words we write are rich with that refreshment. Tagore could

appeal to the modern mind, but his soul contained within it the substance of the past.

How far does an Indian rationalist sever his connection with Hindu traditions? Consciously to a very great extent, but beyond that there are impressions that he cannot eradicate because they are part of his psychological inheritance. Gandhi reveals this, of course, most surely; and openly accepts the fact and uses it in his appeal. As the present-day Christian relates his own traditions to the impact of modern needs, so does the articulate Hindu. Without this much seed would fall on stony ground. Because of the inherent psychological communion there is receptivity.

This does not ignore the fact that under distressing circumstances sheer elemental necessity may shatter and break through traditional psychological barriers. This was evident in the French and Bolshevik revolutions. Hungry, angry men are apt to sweep aside every other consideration than that of food or vengeance. A starving Indian will not reject rice offered by a Christian. (Although one has heard interesting reports of the famished refusing uncustomary or religiously unsanctioned food, and presumably the sacred cow must not be killed even to avoid starvation.) At least it is unlikely that a drowning Baptist would scorn a lifebelt flung towards him by an atheist. Yet even the Soviet Government has relaxed the severity of its restrictions on religion, and has opened up a compromising pathway of concessions for the alleged religiously drugged, thus recognising that even for economic purposes religious antagonism should be minimised. Moreover, from all revolutionaries, soon or late, comes an appeal to moral precepts of brotherhood, justice, and other virtues,

often embedded within hoary theological forms, as an ultimate justification for revolutionary action. The means by which the elemental physical pre-moral demand is met inevitably involves moral issues. Desperate Italians went Fascist, Germans Nazi, and Russians Communist; and fascism, nazi-ism, and communism embody spurious or genuine moral concepts.

It is generally found expedient in the long run to avoid frontal attacks on religion, for this is liable to intensify resistance. It is wiser to rely on subterranean and indirect influences that undermine antiquated foundations. Correspondingly, gradually the old gods grow pallid and fade into ghosts and abstractions. In this age the process may be more rapid, and possibly in a generation the withdrawal will become a stampede before the cumulative pressure of science. Ere that takes place it is better meanwhile that the dissolution is not decelerated by open assault. A natural process will continue on its way, however deviously.

This seems to be accepted by modern rationalist minds in India. Nevertheless, it is also true that the gods have a habit of reviving from their anæmia for a while when once the more direct pressure of primitive need is eased or scientific notions lose their novelty. Moreover, one can observe how imagination at all times is the raw material of image-making, and how there springs from the arid plain where yesterday's plants have withered, a new crop of myths and idols. Simple human beings tend to incarnate their emotions in new figures, and to enshrine new social habits in appropriate mysticism. Possibly the age of reason will yet dawn without fresh illusions, but possibly that age will also bring with it a new appreciation of old truths

in new guises. Until, and even then, will remain real values in the perception of human meanings within the queer forms of yesterday. In the revered Vedas and Upanishads there are rich philosophical and ethical elements discernible amid an abundant historical undergrowth, and it is these that matter most to those who would discover eternal values.

Islam offers a severe contrast, in its deistic unitarianism, to the profuse exfoliation of Hinduism. There are bridges, however, and Sikhism comes near to being one. So does the Brama Somaj, a monotheistic Hindu movement that provided a stimulus to the rival Arya Somaj, which jealously sought to preserve the integrity of Hinduism within more modern dress. The Vedanta movement, inspired by Swami Vivikinanda and Sri Ramakrishna, with the Ramakrishna social missions, also has played a great part in modernising and rationalising theistically the Hindu faith.<sup>1</sup> Many of these missions are actively serving India and Indians in the cities, and are an important counterpart of Christian missions. Nevertheless, Islam retains its exclusive monotheistic hold on over 90,000,000 souls.

There is much in the Koran that is sagacious and sane, and of course in some measure it has affinities both with Judaism and Christianity. It reveres Moses and Jesus as well as Mohammed, the last and greatest of the prophets. Yet there is also much in the Moslem scriptures that is untenable to the rational modern mind, and is equivalent to obnoxious Christian fundamentalism. Mohammedism is a militant faith; and although there are laudable moral exhortations to

<sup>1</sup> See *The Life of Ramakrishna*, by Romain Rolland.

months. The Hindu God lives at Benares: the Mohammedan God at Mecca; but He who made the world lives not in a city made by hands. There is One Father of Hindu and Mussulman, One God in all matter: He is the Lord of all the earth, my guardian and my Priest."

Here one reaches a spiritual generosity and a penetrating vision that reaches to the depth of human experience, and vanquishes the pitiful doctrinaire monopolism so frequently associated with organised religion. The rival assumption of many religious bodies seems almost like a number of ecclesiastical football teams in constant competition for a celestial trophy. They appear unable to realise that some particular quality in their own form of religion will lose nothing if the qualities of other forms be warmly recognised. Instead of which there is the tendency to emphasise differences and to assert not only a peculiar value in the religion accepted by the individual, but also the alleged error and falsity of all other religions.

One can understand why this has been so. Mohammed and his followers, for instance, were so repelled by doctrinal and representational extravagance that he and they reacted fiercely, and not only denounced this but also sought for all time to banish utterly these assumed blasphemies. Some explain ruthless Islamic monotheism as having arisen originally from mental brooding in the omnipotent solitude of the desert. This speculation may be as good as any other, and the impetus gathered in reaction to the awesome wastes may also explain its emotional intolerance of the exuberance that has characterised Hinduism; this religion, it is suggested, having been

originally stimulated by the dark wildness of the jungle. This does not explain why non-desert peoples have, nevertheless, accepted Islam.

Whatever the germinal conditions may have been, these two faiths must have had other nourishment as well, and their respective strength is now derived much more from developed psychological and social circumstances. Yet, though they correspond to certain innate human requirements they also betray their limitations. Many fields of art would be closed for ever if Moslem precepts were completely to prevail, notwithstanding Moslem art finding compensation in doctrinally enforced concentration on geometrical pattern and design. On the other hand, the unrestrained lavishness of Hindu art has suffered by its æsthetic dissipation, and this applies also to its theological activities.

The tendency among many who deplored religious bigotry and exclusiveness and who came to appreciate the "many-sidedness of truth" found an expression in theosophy. At one time it looked as if Dr. Annie Besant and the Theosophical movement would grow into lasting power. After a remarkable career in this country as a clergyman's wife, atheist lecturer, and Socialist reformer, Mrs. Besant adopted Theosophy as her religious faith, and expounded it in Britain and in India with all the power of her silver eloquence. She and others hoped and believed this would become the great religious synthesis of East and West. Moreover, this was closely allied with Indian political aspirations, and Dr. Besant became President of the Indian National Congress.

In time she disagreed with her Congress colleagues and parted company. The Theosophical movement also declined after her death, although it left its

mark and still has devoted Indian and British adherents. Probably many people are essentially Theosophical but without necessarily endorsing the occult and esoteric teachings. The impressive headquarters of the Theosophical Society stand on the water banks near Madras, and I paid a brief visit to it, admiring particularly the splendid main hall with its several panels representing the main religions of the world. I also had a short conversation with Mr. C. Tinarajadasa, its distinguished head. But as I drove away I felt that here was yet another monument to expectancy unfulfilled, and that the contribution of Theosophy was to-day permeative and diffusive rather than direct.

The protestant reaction of the Sikhs and the Buddhists deserves more than the passing glance one can afford. The former drastically simplified and transformed the Hindu inheritance, until to-day, with five to six million in the Sikh community, mainly in the Punjab, it not only practises its monotheistic puritanism but also is renowned for its martial valour. Buddhism now has only 230,000 adherents in India, although having many millions elsewhere, its reformist ethical energy having become reabsorbed by tenacious Hinduism. Then there are the Parsees, numbering only some 150,000, who have great business interests and possess far greater influence than their numbers indicate. Originating in Persia, their Zoroastrian belief in Ormuzd and Ahriman, rival forces of good and evil, has inspired them to considerable public service and benevolence. The Jains number 1,500,000 and pursue a severely ascetic faith, originally an offshoot of Hinduism.

There is another faith, for such it is, although having no open theological connotation, and that is humanism. As in Britain so in India, there are many who grow sceptical or weary of all theological interpretations and turn instead to the fostering of ethical idealism without supernatural reference. Some, like Nehru, synthesise this with a positive Socialist or Marxist ideology. Others simply loyally pursue the good, the true, and the beautiful, and the expression of these supreme virtues in social service to a more gracious age. In one sense this provides a plane on which the New Delhi Free Church minister, the kindly Jesuit priest, the devoted Anglican with his backwood church, can find a measure of unity with Hindu, Moslem, Parsee, Agnostic, and Socialist. Nevertheless it is a faith, for it assumes that the values one should cherish, the devotion most gladly given, the hope of the future one must preserve, are all valid and worth-while, despite the mountainous menace of cruelty, callousness, inertia, and folly. To believe that these lovelier qualities in human life will triumph, and that the sacrifice involved in fidelity to them cannot be lost, does in the end compel one, as I see it, to explore the infinite world beyond near horizons. And as one does this, so one discovers experiences that require all the resources of intellect and imagination to illustrate their significance. The deepest humanistic faith should awaken a sympathetic discernment to the human soul behind all its fumbling external expressions.

It is this awareness of spiritual contents dwelling within the varied facade of human thought and belief from animism to humanism, and dwelling, too,

within all cultural forms, that can convey the vaster meaning of the social and political tensions of to-day. Even as each individual can be traced back from his deeds and words, through his general attitude to life, into the inner world of his reflections and reactions, so also with India as a whole. To appreciate the face of India one needs to become sensitive to the invisible spirit that gives it animation and character.

Mahatma Gandhi himself is the most arresting illustration of this, for he strives to demonstrate the inescapable relationship of religion and politics. Apart from idiosyncracies of temperament or traditional inheritance his essential witness is to the reality of spiritual values that link social morality to ethical authority and require of man that he should order his personal and social life in accordance with the deepest law of his soul. Gandhi's teaching of Satyagraha and Ahimsa, the reliance on non-violent soul-force, is but a technique applied to the political struggle that draws its strength from ancient Hindu sources. It may be inexplicable to Christian minds because of its close resemblance to the technique and teaching of Christ!

Mystics of all religions have found a significant similarity of experience and affirmation, and even the phraseology they employ has remarkable resemblances. So much so that respective theologians sometimes display anxiety lest their assumed theological singularity becomes lost in a spiritual apotheosis. This jealous insistence on religious distinctiveness, even within the realm of intense mystical illumination, is a peculiar phenomenon. Yet many Christian teachers in India must have been somewhat baffled

by this representative instance of Mahatma Gandhi, who remains a Hindu and yet suffuses this so naturally with a devout reverence for the personality of Jesus Christ. Likewise, Gandhiji (as he is called by his friends and followers) may assist his co-religionists to penetrate beyond their own devotional traditions into more spiritual truths that can awaken in them a liberating sympathy with other forces of faith.

Christianity in India has sometimes been associated with British political and imperial policy, and this has bred among some Indians suspicion and even hostility. Nor has the exhibition, at times, of unimaginative theological arrogance among some Christian missionaries been a corrective. It has taken a long time for Christian exponents to learn that humility and appreciation are necessities in the approach to human souls they desire to convert, however superstitiously enwrapped they may seem to be.

The large number of hospitals, schools, and other benevolent services provided by Christian agencies are certainly a testimony to the compassionate zeal of Christian disciples, and this possesses profound intrinsic value that must not be confused with political or imperial intentions. Disinterested love of Indians, or human beings who need devotion to body and soul, has animated the great majority of those Christians who have taken their faith to India, however limited may have been their judgment in some respects. Such practical fraternity has been inspired by a deep religious experience and has made a rich contribution to India. On the other hand, despite brave efforts at identification with Indian political aspirations such as characterise those like the

ex-metropolitan of India, Dr. Foss Westcott, there does remain an unhappy sense of superiority and detachment among some Christian personalities and enterprises.

Moreover, there also exists this fundamental issue as to wherein the Christian way of life in the final analysis differs from actual European and imperialist practice. Does it offer any complete challenge to capitalist exploitation and martial devastation? There has been no clearly sustained indication of this, and one can therefore understand those Indians who contend that however sincere may be Christian motives, and however exalted may be individual Christian mystical experience, it does not, nevertheless, make any direct social difference to the fact that the processes and institutions of capitalist and imperialist Britain remain dominant. Similar criticism, however, can apply to all religious and moral professions.

It is here, very crucially, I consider Gandhi makes an incalculably valuable contribution to Christianity. Apart from his own intellectual and temperamental limitations he embodies a supreme question that all Christians must answer: Why does not the deepest mystical experience of God and spiritual values issue not only in a distinctive individual morality but also in a drastically different social relationship? Imperfectly it may be, but none the less arrestingly, he at least attempts to translate alleged absolute spiritual truth into human practice. Gandhi, in effect, asks of Christians who claim to follow Christ to the uttermost why in fact they stop short of their own religious logic?

This may be impossible to answer because life is greater than logic, or because there is a conflicting logic within the mortal paradox. Yet, for all that,

Gandhi's attempt to project mystical discovery into mundane affairs possesses an influence that reverberates far beyond his Indian homeland. He performs a salutary service to Christianity itself, and to all those who profess and call themselves Christian. He endeavours to reveal spiritual reality as possessing direct mortal authority, and not simply as the mystical property of aristocratic souls.

## CHAPTER IX

### POLITICAL FOCAL POINTS

**M**OST writers on India refer to the confusing divisions of India, and to its extremely variegated society. Some may have done this with an ulterior motive, their emphasis being designed to accentuate the difficulty of securing a free united India. Others are genuinely bewildered by the multitudinous impressions one can receive, and the task of clarifying and classifying them into a coherent pattern.

Many books have been written giving a wealth of description and detailed information, and it would be redundant simply to cover the same ground. Nevertheless, having attempted to give my own immediate impressions of the Indian scene I will attempt to relate these to the political focus. There may be several foci, but I believe these are related to the supreme issue of independence. Unless one is simply providing a literary museum through which one can quietly saunter, it is necessary to indicate the underlying political significance of one's material. From that standpoint I shall try to extract essential issues and describe their convergence.

We brood in the present over the past in order to assess the future. Otherwise we become paralysed by retrospection. We look backward to origins and development, but forward to fulfilment. In so doing we become aware of the interaction between human beings and their inheritance and environment, and seek if possible to guide our affairs according to a criterion

of values. How those values arose within consciousness and what is their nature are issues of supreme importance, and involve recognition equally of the impact of external circumstance on Man and the impact of Man on circumstance. The interaction is subtle, and it is difficult precisely to tell to what extent human behaviour is due to complex conditional reflexes imposed by external pressures, or whether and when the behaviour registers some intrinsic quality by which Man can increasingly impose his own psyche upon his enveloping world.

Those racial waves that flowed into India were of course deeply affected by geographical and climatic facts, but it would extend intellectual ingenuity into extremely imaginative hypotheses to try and explain all the shades and patterns of social living by reference to precise physical sources. We may broadly trace general origins and perceive different soils that promote particular main growths, but the subsequent exfoliation may involve new and different considerations.

There are schools of thought where the explanation of human variability can be attributed to predominating external factors, ranging from sun spots to the instruments of production. Yet granted their full influence, I consider, nevertheless, that it is necessary to go beyond the instrument to its creator, and then to the realm of instinct and motive within the creator. And even in respect of the effect of irregular solar energy one needs also to consider how we adapt ourselves to these caprices so that some perish and others survive. Biological and genetic facts are also of importance as providing organically variable individual endowments. And, personally, I would also contend that to a

greater or less degree psychological factors penetrate through the composition of fertile nature, and can possess their own particular determinative uniqueness and strength.

There are many intricate elements interwoven in human experience, and while one may predominate at one time it may also become subordinate at another. A dead fish floats with the stream, but a live one will swim either with or against it until it dies.

In India there has been the same obedience as elsewhere "to increase and multiply," and there is the same ruthless struggle between reproduction and subsistence, even though modifiable by native shrewdness, fortunate discoveries and applied science. Theoretically, it may now be possible to provide sufficient food for all Indians from infancy to ripe old age. The theory, however, remains so restricted in practice that millions are never adequately nourished, and many slowly or swiftly die from malnutrition or its direct or indirect consequences. Sheer absolute poverty is therefore identified with a large proportion of the Indian people and provides a primary problem for political solution.

I write "political solution" because wherever Man has established some kind of social coherence he has politically to determine whether to accept malnutrition and the natural elimination of surplus population as inevitable for a large or small section of his society, or whether there are social and technical remedies he could and should apply. This applies not only to food but also to other physical necessities and to amenities. The distribution of resources is unequal even in primitive communities, where instinctive gregariousness may be most powerful; and throughout

civilised history the inequality becomes systematised, legalised, and sanctified in a variety of forms, including class divisions.

The contention that political forces in any given society correspond to its economic stratification has considerable truth. Yet I would submit it is not the whole truth. There are convergencies of interest, but they may be of need or of greed, of class protection and also of class aspiration, of utilitarian and also of idealistic or ethical significance; and all these interact. An impulse to conserve finds political expression, but so also does an impulse to acquire; and a disposition to maintain order against forces of disintegration may be in conflict with a disposition to thrust off traditional limitations. Law and liberty contract an uneasy marriage.

Analysis of political movements and organisations can reveal in each not simply one exclusive motive or purpose but a variety of psychological elements though with one predominant. The British Conservative Party may be at this time the political expression of the interests of the whole British economic governing class. Yet within it still lingers the old conflict between landed and financial interests, and it also incorporates elements that simply cherish tradition for its own sake; or that accept servile dependence on social superiors as virtuous; or that find inspiration in the concept and reality of national expansion. The slums of Birmingham for many years nourished the most intense imperialistic sentiments, and cathedral cloisters have found a curious political affinity with neighbouring public-houses. In British Liberalism one can perceive a similar variety of elements from the residuum of *laissez-faire* to

deposits of the nineteenth century Nonconformist conscience, and from Shelleyan dreams of anarchy to the passion for civil liberty.

In the British Labour movement we can easily discern wide diversities not only of Left and Right wing but also of emphasis and valuation, some of this arising from variation of temperament, some of it from specific sectional interests, and some of it from philosophical conviction. Inevitably domestic issues appear paramount to the ordinary working-class supporter of the Labour Party, partly because the individual hardship he experiences is the stimulus of his demand for the hardship to be eased, and partly because of the fostered assumption that his country is entitled to particular privileges. He has taken imperial advantages for granted until recently, and is only just beginning to appreciate why these are fading and should fade away.

The impetus to Indian political movements is traceable through several tributaries to a single confluence. Hardship, poverty, famine, and social discontent all play their part; but these in themselves can find differing political expressions, and can produce diverse reactions. Passive resignation to fate can be as definite a reaction to human wretchedness as active rebellion. Prudent obedience can be as frequent as resolute resistance. Much depends on the personal influence of singular individuals in the nourishment and direction of latent social dissatisfaction. The multitude awaits leaders, who may be good or bad, for the focussing of their emotions and the promise of fulfilment of their needs.

Beyond this are indignations arising among those who know something of the luxury of pride and dignity, and in whom the sense of personal and communal

importance is strong. This may be associated with economic interests, but it need not be; and many a middle-class man has scorned the comfort he could have achieved or preserved because of values he accepts as an invisible authority. This may simply take the form of an emotional "love of country," or just a passionate resistance to the humiliation of strangers imposing their will upon him. In either case it can possess intense energy; and so can even a richer idealism sustained by deep compassion for the suffering of others, or by an acute ethical and moral sensitiveness.

Hence it is that so many who have identified themselves with popular movements have come from a class that would derive no tangible benefit from such movements. This is as true of Jawaharlal Nehru as of Karl Marx. However, there is also another fact, and that is the natural human tendency to assemble all social discontents at a point of common resentment. In a conquered land the focus of enmity becomes the conqueror, and this becomes emotionally intensified by the greater difference between the conqueror and the conquered. Outstanding distinctiveness is a frequent provocation, and British distinctiveness is so obvious in India that even normal reaction to an occupying race is profoundly coloured by this fact.

The Indian nationalist movement, therefore, is essentially a protest against the foreigner, the obvious foreigner who has sought to impose his alien will. Even if this imposition had brought prosperity and material well-being there would have been continuous protest; but physical wretchedness, economic rivalry, and social idealism have nourished the protest until it became a positive, comprehensive movement of national and social emancipation.

Many criticisms have been levelled against the Indian National Congress, no doubt some of them justifiably. Yet, whatever may have been its weaknesses and errors, it remains an inescapable embodiment of India's political determination to become a free and independent country. It is not so much a political party as an organised movement containing within it a wide variety of political elements who are united in pursuit of one common objective. Although predominantly Hindu (India itself being predominantly Hindu), it is not a communal body; and although through the growth of the Moslem League it has lost a great deal of its Moslem support, yet it still has Moslem elements as well as membership drawn from the smaller communities. Individuals join not because they are Hindu, Moslem, Sikh, Parsee, or Christian, but because they are simply Indians with nationalist conviction.

The ordinary financial contribution for Congress members is four annas per year, and on this basis it had a pre-war membership of five million. Several wealthy men also made and make substantial contributions. It is powerfully and efficiently organised throughout British India, with branches, regional divisions not coterminous with the Provinces, a national Council, the annual Congress with upwards of 6,000 delegates, an All-India Congress Committee of about 350, and a Working Committee, or executive, of 15 members.

At the Provincial elections in 1946 it secured a total number of 929 seats, out of the full total of 1,585; the Moslem League secured 429 seats, mostly for the 482 Moslem reserved seats; of the 151 reserved Scheduled Classes seats Congress secured 142, and these are included in the above Congress total. It

obtained complete majorities in eight of the eleven Provinces, and forms part of the Coalition Government in the Punjab.

In its official election manifesto in December, 1945, the Congress outlined its political objective and social programme, and half of the document was devoted to the latter. It set out precisely the principles it intends to embody in a new constitution, and these are as follows:—

1. Every citizen of India has the right of free expression of opinion, the right of free association and combination, and the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, for a purpose not opposed to law or morality.

2. Every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practise his religion, subject to public order and morality.

3. All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of religion, caste, creed, or sex.

4. The culture, language, and script of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected.

5. No disability attaches to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed, or sex, in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling.

6. All citizens have equal rights in regard to wells, tanks, roads, schools, and places of public resort, maintained out of State or local funds, or dedicated by private persons for the use of the general public.

7. Every citizen has the right to keep and bear arms, in accordance with regulations and reservations made in that behalf.

8. No person shall be deprived of his liberty, nor shall his dwelling or property be entered, sequestered, or confiscated, save in accordance with law.

9. The State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions.

10. The franchise shall be on the basis of universal adult suffrage.

11. The State shall provide for free and compulsory basic education.

12. Every citizen is free to move throughout India and to stay and settle in any part thereof, to follow any trade or calling, and to be treated equally with regard to legal prosecution or protection in all parts of India.

The State shall further provide all necessary safeguards for the protection and the development of the backward or suppressed elements in the population, so that they might make rapid progress and take a full and equal part in national life. In particular, the State will help in the development of the people of the tribal areas in a manner most suited to their genius, and in the education and social and economic progress of the Scheduled Classes.

Congress represents the main focal point of India both by reason of its nominally comprehensive nature and because of its great popular support. Not exclusively but supremely it has represented the insistence of India that she is a conquered country; and that Britain, the last of several conquerors, must relinquish her imperial sceptre. The movement of resistance and liberation expanded during the past fifty years until it became irresistible. Britain thus became confronted with the alternative of either

deciding to "Quit India" decently and with dignity or of accepting the intolerable strain of maintaining the conquest by violent repression.

The social and economic task awaiting a free India is formidable. But this would be infinitely worse if Britain remained. The territorial, constitutional, racial, religious, economic, linguistic, and political variability of India does not need emphasis. Europe displays variations just as great; but with the additional disadvantage of possessing no measure of administrative, spiritual, and economic unity such as India does enjoy. The Europeans are engaged in what may be the forlorn task of striving to establish continental homogeneity; and if India can not only preserve what unity she has but further integrate this, it may well be that thus she will encourage Europe by her example. Even though underlying Indian unity may owe much to the external pressure of the British occupation this has now been translated so firmly as an alien imposition that even the minimum degree of acquiescence, let alone co-operation, by which the imposition could continue no longer exists. The internal divisions would have found a temporary unity in fierce exhausting hostility against a common enemy, with incalculably disastrous effect on the United Kingdom.

On moral grounds, the position seems abundantly clear. Both consistency with democratic professions and recognition of the spiritual intensity of national aspiration demand that India shall completely accept the complexity and magnitude of her own task. Only thus can Indians test and prove their faith and their

capacity; and they should receive from us not croaking words of foreboding and apprehension, but positive goodwill and appreciation.

Many proposals for Indian political and economic reconstruction have been advanced by British people. No doubt these are familiar to Indian politicians, who will extract from them whatever they consider useful; but by now it is clear that what Indians wanted was not simply benevolent intentions from "foreigners" but the power to decide for themselves exactly what they shall do with their own country. British Governments and statesmen have, indeed, declared this was also their desire, but that the lack of Indian unanimity had been the obstacle.

Indians have been accustomed to accuse Britain of deliberately encouraging these divisions for ulterior purposes, and there is some evidence for this in the words of past British spokesmen. Even when there has been no direct or conscious encouragement it does appear that Indian disagreements have been to British advantage. And where and when British attempts were made to overcome these the efforts have been frustrated in part by prejudice and suspicion regarding British sincerity. A Trojan horse may look an attractive steed, but the modern Trojans can be excused if they have examined it at a distance with wary scepticism.

This is not to brush aside the serious issue of Pakistan as just a British-inspired subterfuge. The Pakistan demand has cleaved into "Independence" and is an indigenous disturbance, whatever may have been the aggravation of it by Britain. It is also true that caste is an internal Indian issue, the nature



Women dancers (see p. 130).



Village Shiva Temple (see p. 126)

of which cannot be attributed to British machinations. The Moslem League demand for Pakistan is not due simply to British initiation.

The social policy of the Moslem League is less elaborate than that of Congress. In more general terms it also subscribes to the need of drastic social reconstruction, and its Left wing has grown considerably in recent years. This has no doubt had great influence, although it has not yet reached equal cogency. The assumption is that the political demand for partition is fundamental to all else, and upon it rests the determination of future economic life and its appropriate planning. Between the League and the Congress there was at least a precarious bridge in the mutual acceptance of a possibility of some kind of separate autonomous Moslem area. Beyond this disagreement was wide.

Complete Pakistan in the sense of an absolute separation of six Provinces into a distinct sovereign Moslem-dominated State always seemed to me impossible as well as undesirable. To have in India two Pakistan areas and a Hindustan, with no co-ordinating authority over common subjects of mutual importance, with large minorities of Hindus in the Pakistans and of Moslems in Hindustan, with broken communications and fiscal rivalry, and with disparate economic resources, would provide most violently explosive material.

Theoretically, Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Communications might optimistically be referred to treaty agreements *after* partition, but in practice this would be completely shattered by bitter enmities, manœuvres and indictments, and by the confusing conflict of paramount divergent policies. Only mutual agreement that interlocked the "two nations" in

mutual action would avoid this catastrophe; and this, in effect, would involve a central authority that virtually became a central government.

It is idle to point to the pacific separation of Norway and Sweden as an example of what is possible. In each of these countries there was a clear territorial distinctiveness. Nor was there any correspondence between the circumstances of those Scandinavian peoples and the historical heterogenous intermingling of Moslem and Hindu in India.

Nevertheless, a drastic degree of separation appears necessary, provided essential subjects are retained by a central authority. The emotional intensity of large numbers of Moslems has become so focussed that only its implementation in a distinctive venture can satisfy it. To implement this, however, on the basis of "two nations," if the major premise is the necessary supremacy of a religion, leads dangerously towards theocratic totalitarianism. Protestant Geneva and Papal Rome are warnings as to what this could mean. On other grounds there are also perils, but they may be less serious than this.

Democracy involves an effective relationship of majority and minority rights, and this can take many forms. The problem is to find an appropriate form that avoids an impetus towards disintegration on the one hand, and on the other a tyrannical consolidation. But in the attempt to assure liberty to a minority rather than secure unity by coercion it is possible to become so hopelessly confused in the pursuit of a delicate logic that in the end one has simply to fall back on the empirical test. Grant complete Pakistan, for instance, and there seems no reason why the 6,000,000 Sikhs should not then establish Sikhistan, and in turn why

dissident Sikhs should not incorporate themselves in a further independent fraction, until one reaches the *reductio ad absurdum* of an indefinite aggregation of separate entities.

Equally, if it be desirable to insist on a United India, then why not a united Asia, and a united world state? Why not indeed? But the exact nature of such a united world state is of supreme importance. This might either mean the complete subordination of every progressive part to a reactionary whole, or the due preservation of the needs of every progressive part within a federated whole. To assist India to preserve maximum possible unity, and thus to encourage desirable world unity, requires negotiation and compromise such as the Labour Government Mission of Pethick-Lawrence, Cripps, and Alexander sought to promote. Adjustments and adaptations can be achieved neither at a distance nor by reiterating generalities. The job is to see what will best fit into a complex situation.

The Moslem League and the Congress could either batter each to pieces or seek a qualified synthesis of their claims and their needs. Let us hope that this will yet emerge out of wise deliberations. Meanwhile, the Moslem League also possesses its Working Committee and all the impedimenta of a great organisation, and thereby sustains its purpose and intensifies the zeal of its members. May we, then, also hope that in the autonomous area that may be designated *a* Pakistan, though not *the* Pakistan, Moslems will be released from their fears, and a happier era of co-operation may be born.

Beyond this second focal point are others of very great importance. The Scheduled Classes, otherwise

known as Depressed Classes or Untouchables, 50,000,000 of them, present a further problem and responsibility. Although Congress policy insists on equality (and with Moslem League policy the issue does not arise, because of the absence of "caste"), yet it is imperative that constitutional measures be taken to vindicate this. The 26,000,000 people of the tribes have likewise to insist on complete recognition of their needs and democratic rights within the Indian constitution, and the India of to-morrow.

The position of the 562 States is yet a further issue. Personally, I am satisfied that the democratic reforms announced by the Princes (despite the sanguine ambition of the Nizam of Hyderabad to secure a separate dominion status and a corridor to the sea!) signifies that with the passing of British guarantees they know they must and will conform to the requirements of a free India. The States are bound to be drastically affected by the political activity in the Provinces contiguous to them, even if unwisely they ignore the red light. Popular pressure from within as well as without will prove irresistible. And the Princes know it.

Lastly, there remains the focal point of social justice for the poverty stricken masses. It is only because the political issue primarily and urgently demands settlement, and because such a settlement then opens up new vistas, that the political issue receives prior attention. With that settlement must come the rapid expansion of economic demands and a different orientation of human claims. These are anticipated, and in some measure embraced. With political

satisfaction and power the toiling millions can formulate afresh their pressing needs, and seek without distraction their liberation from economic burdens.

Meanwhile, resentment to all such burdens and the expectancy of social transformation have become indissolubly identified with the passion for a free India. With the effect of political implementation of liberty it is probable that new political forces and organisations will arise, some from within Congress, but others from outside, that in time will provide a very different pattern of Indian political life.

## CHAPTER X

### 'THE LIBERATING SWORD

**T**HERE are three specific Indian challenges to Gandhi and his philosophy, apart from the virtual qualification of Congress by which the non-violent technique becomes less a comprehensive principle than a restricted expedient.

Jai Prakash Narain and his Congress Socialist Party have emphasised their dissent; and their insistence, that under some circumstances violence is politically necessary. Likewise, the Communist Party also justifies violence when essential to the success of a proletarian revolution. Then there is the significance of the late Subas Bose and the Indian National Army, both having stimulated public imagination and roused romantic fervour, particularly in Bengal.

I met Nataji Subas Chandra Bose years ago at tea on the terrace of the House of Commons. He had recently been released from detention, modified towards the end into house confinement owing to his ill health, and I found him self-assured, zealous, and resolute. He then seemed pale and slim, whereas the many portraits of him I saw everywhere displayed in Calcutta showed him plump and ruddy. Many students and others wore buttons showing his portrait, coloured prints of him were displayed in the shops, and many times we saw banners hanging in his honour, one across a roadway bearing the inscription " God bless our Nataji " being typical.

Subas Bose had been well to the Left of Congress and was leader of the Forward Bloc, becoming Congress President until, largely under the pressure of Gandhi, he resigned this office. He left India during the early part of the war and broadcast against Britain from Japanese stations. After the collapse of Singapore and the Japanese advance through Malaya and Burma, over 60,000 Indian troops were captured, and about a third of these were induced to form the Indian National Army under the command of Bose, who insisted they operated as a distinctive unit with the objective of securing Indian liberation. They achieved some success, but ultimately shared the defeat of the Japanese. Bose himself was killed in an air crash.

Technically, from the British standpoint the I.N.A. was a seditious organisation, and consequently after the Japanese collapse its members were placed under arrest and its leaders sent for trial. The British authorities, however, realised that there were other aspects than the technical; that rightly or wrongly the I.N.A. claimed to be inspired by patriotic motives; and that their action was accepted as such by a large number of Indian people. Actually, therefore, only a handful who were accused of particularly grave offences, or of cruel treatment (by I.N.A. officers) of Indian soldiers, were brought to trial.

Elsewhere I have made reference to these facts, and the reason why I deal with them again is because it is necessary to appreciate the extent to which the interpretation of the I.N.A. differs so widely between the British and the Indian, and that there is a powerful Indian element which in practice repudiates Gandhi's non-violent teaching. Nehru and other Congress

leaders have dissociated themselves from the I.N.A. but have insisted on full recognition of the motives that led men to join this organisation, and have condemned the trials that took place. Gandhi himself was hard put to it to make clear his repudiation of I.N.A. activity, and yet his appreciation of the essential value within their, to him, misguided policy.<sup>1</sup>

When I talked for an hour with two of the I.N.A. leaders who had been tried and sentenced but had been discharged from prison and dismissed from the Indian Army proper, I was struck by the pathetic eagerness with which they sought to convince me they had been dominated not by pro-Japanese sympathies, or even Anti-British, but by pro-Indian. At some length they explained the mental processes by which they were impelled to choose the least distressing of several alternatives, and it seemed obvious to me that there were still conflicting elements in their minds. Undoubtedly, very deep feeling was aroused by the trials, and the popular demonstrations at the time, although no doubt largely an emotional vent for frustrated nationalist feeling, also contained a measure of endorsement of the military instrument for liberation.

It would have been possible for these three divergent movements from Gandhi to find association at least temporarily; and had this stage been reached then civil warfare would have shook the land and involved Britain in military operations and repression that would have strained most seriously her military and economic resources. Besides which, the political

<sup>1</sup> One of my Conservative colleagues reported that a valiant member of the Indian Army who refused to join the I.N.A. asked, indignantly, "If these I.N.A. men are good Indian soldiers then what am I?"

repercussions would have been both great and grave. To maintain law and order in a land of 420,000,000, with large numbers everywhere engaged in systematic violence, and with uncertainty respecting the Indian Army itself, would have evoked a crisis of the highest magnitude. Even aircraft and aerial bombardment, against which revolutionaries have no effective defence, would not have sufficed. Every bomb dropped would have intensified the depths of bitter resistance until India was consumed by hatred and soaked in blood.

Some 2,250,000 Indians have received military training, and of these over 15,000 during the war have been trained as officers, although relatively few in the higher posts. This is a factor of obvious significance both in respect of the knowledge of arms and military discipline and also in relationship to consultations respecting the future defence of India. In 1857 Britain was able in the end to suppress the "mutiny" (which from another angle might be described as "national resistance!") through the competence of Lawrence and Nicholson. But for some time the issue seemed to hang in the balance, with large numbers of Indian troops, including whole regiments, deserting the British flag.

Circumstances this time would have been far less favourable to Britain than in 1857. Then there were no nation-wide, disciplined, powerful political organisations effectively canalising social discontent and Indian nationalist fervour. This alone would make all the difference. But there is also the other fact, that in the middle of the last century Britain had not suffered the terrific strain of a devastating world war, and was not urgently intent on economic and social

reconstruction. In short, we were able to bear the strain in those days, but we could not do so to-day without the possibility of cracking under it.

The cynic might assert that it is this danger that induced the British Government to make an earnest attempt to withdraw from the imperialist domination of India. No doubt this had its subconscious influence, but I believe the far stronger motive of the British Labour Government was an anxious desire to implement its democratic principles. Nevertheless, in any case it is necessary to appreciate that the alternative would be charged with great peril to Britain, and only fools suffering from acute imperialist intoxication or crass political myopia would ignore the fact. Mr. Winston Churchill himself at times seems incapable of shaking himself into political sobriety, and talks as if we were still living in 1857.

On the other hand, with the withdrawal of British domination the issue of Indian defence remains a severe problem to India herself. Discussions on this matter have not been entirely one-sided, and India and Britain alike are concerned with problems of mutual importance from the military standpoint. Undoubtedly one aspect of our relationship to India has been that of maintaining naval ports, strategic centres, and military and aerial resources. From a defensive standpoint we have needed to control our trade and our trade-routes against potential enemies, and in the North-West we have considered it vitally necessary to guard the historic land gateway into India. This is apart from any assumption that our commercial and economic interests in India required the directive supervision of force, openly or behind the scenes.

India has been in the past a most lucrative source of economic power, and this has helped Britain to become prosperous. That is less so now than formerly, but the assumption has persisted that without imperialist and military domination of India Britain would suffer economically, both by the cumulative loss of economic advantages and also by more direct prejudicial action by a free and independent Indian Government. In fact, the steady growth of Indian industrialism and the measure of self-determination in fiscal and other matters possessed by India have certainly diminished the imperialist economic advantages enjoyed in the past. It was natural, therefore, that fear of this process continuing still further to the possible detriment of British interests should weigh very heavily in some British minds.

Military necessities are in large measure economic necessities. The bayonet guards the cash box, no doubt. Yet this is not necessarily simply the cash box replenished from Indian resources. The loss of India, and of the military, naval, and aerial advantages India provides, it is considered by many would be likely to endanger the whole of our Far-Eastern and antipodean trade and prestige. Hence that, too, necessitates the maintenance of imperial Indian interests, according to one point of view.

With the defeat of Japan there is only one great Power that becomes a serious menace in Indian waters, and that is the U.S.A. To attempt to hold on to India in order to prepare for the remote eventuality of war with the U.S.A. may have been an arguable proposition, yet one both untenable and intolerable, particularly with an India itself permanently hostile. The possibility of such conflict in the near future

seems unthinkable, and one is inclined to dismiss it from consideration. If, however, we overcome this and look ahead twenty years, perhaps in view of the manner in which impossible antagonisms have developed the unthinkable may insist on becoming thought about. American expansionism could, paradoxically, be an offspring of American isolationism, though the gestation might take longer than the customary period.

Nevertheless, we must agree that this is a distant and not an immediate contingency. In which case reflection on British military necessities in India in respect of the U.S.A. becomes irrelevant. This, in fact, applies to every other Power save the U.S.S.R., and any open or secret fear of Russian designs involves land rather than sea operations. If Russia, therefore, is the actual danger then undoubtedly we must turn to North-West India and consider how far Britain has defensive interests involving that area.

Conceivably, if war between Britain and Russia, or between Britain and America and Russia, were to become a dismal reality, India might suffer attack and invasion from the North-West. Often one heard the suggestion that it was necessary for Britain either to retain her imperialist hold on India or to form a close military alliance with India, because otherwise India would not be able to defend herself from land or sea attack. As it has been put colloquially more than once: "If we walk out, isn't there a danger that some other Power would walk in?" The "some other Power" can have no other possible translation to-day but "Russia," and it is better frankly to say so than to be so timorously evasive.

This is really the supreme issue; and whether from the British or the Indian side all deliberations respecting defence are concerned about the likelihood of Russia invading India and what actions should or could be taken to meet this. What other serious possibility exists? When Congress spokesmen argue against the feasibility of Pakistan on the ground that it is militarily and defensively impracticable; when Moslem Leaguers insinuate that British support for Pakistan could lead to a profitable military bargain with Britain; when British soldiers and politicians talk sagely about the military necessities of India that must bind Britain and India together, they are actually predominantly concerned about the possibility, however remote, of war with Russia.

We have to ask ourselves, therefore, what is the nature of this? Is Russia likely to undertake a great military adventure simply for the sake of aggression, when she needs all her time and energy to vindicate her own Communist objective and to reconstruct her much-shattered economic life? To say the least it would be most irrational for her to do so, and likely to imperil the very existence of her Communist State. It could be submitted that ideologically she may be attracted to the desirability of acquiring a vast potentially Communist republic either as an ally or as a further extension of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Even if this were so, it could not be for many a day yet, for it will take her a long time to recover from the ravages of the last war, let alone equip herself for so hazardous an invasion. It could also be suggested that even as Napoleon and other liberators became involved in the transition from defence to aggression as a means of defence, so might Stalin or his

successor, or the powerful party whose policy they represent. But the parallel is unsound, both because the Bolshevik revolution possessed a far different economic and political content than the French revolution, and also because Russian expansion of defence into offence presupposes an active danger existing from Anglo-American hostility.

Russia has, indeed, brought certain European countries under her influence, and these have the appearance of obedient satellites. Yet, however this may be criticised, it seems certain that Russia has pursued this diplomacy and strategy precisely because she desires to attain the utmost security possible. To attempt the acquisition of even the northern part of India would yield her no advantage in respect of increased security, but very much the reverse.

Despite all these considerations, supposing one assumes that for any reason whatever Russia at some distant date may attempt the invasion of India, then either this will occur because of considerable sympathy existing between Russia and a large section of Indian opinion, or if not, then Russia will be confronted with intense enmity by India's millions. In the former case what would be the position of British forces attempting to meet the invading host and surrounded by Indian foes in a hostile land? The position would be impossible.

British forces could only become effective in India if they were there with the consent and in co-operation with the Indian people and its government. It rests, therefore, with India whether it wishes to enter into a military alliance or not; and if it does, what form it shall take and how it shall operate. And that, in turn,

is intimately related to the foreign policy of the future Indian Government and the reality of the United Nations Organisation. If that policy is to be one of friendship with the U.S.S.R., then it is probable India will not enter into any military alliance that requires foreign troops to be stationed in her territory.

If the policy is not one of friendship, or if the friendship breaks down, then it is Britain that has to decide, if India desires an alliance to meet that eventuality, whether it would accept such an alliance and to what extent it could and would implement military obligations. Here we must face domestic facts and frankly recognise our limitations. We are not, numerically, a vast people like the Russians and the Americans. They number respectively over 180,000,000 and 130,000,000, while in the United Kingdom we are 47,000,000. Add to that the 20,000,000 white people of the British Dominions, and we only number all-told of British stock 67,000,000—far less than either of the others in the Big Three. Even if the Colonial people are brought in we could only add 70,000,000. But, even if we were certain of relying upon millions of Colonial peoples to respond to the call to furnish levies for a war in India against Russia, or even outside, it is highly unlikely that these could be sufficiently trained, equipped, and conditioned to embark on overseas campaigns with military value commensurate to the enormous demands. African and Colonial troops did certainly play a valuable part in the last war, but it by no means follows that they would either be as ready or as available in large numbers to engage in a campaign against Russia.

It seems to me in my amateur reasoning that in the grotesque possibility of a Russian invasion of India

Britain could do very little about it, even if she were invited to do so by an Indian Government. British total manpower cannot supply a large army for overseas activity. Our population is becoming numerically stabilised, and for years every able man will be needed in economic reconstruction at home. Seriously to reduce our labour power would not only bring British internal social plans to a standstill but also impose upon her the financial and economic strain of an undertaking that she could not and would not be able to bear. (Our maximum armed forces reached 4,683,000.)

My contention is that if Russia intends to invade India Britain cannot do much about it, apart from furnishing supplies, munitions, and aircraft to any defending Indian Army; and if this was her function she would in fact be at war with Russia and would need all she had to defend her own homeland. If, however, there was an Anglo-American alliance against Russia it is America who would have to bear the main burden of the war; and unless India herself formed an alliance with America then America could not operate in India against Russia without an act of aggression against India. Moreover, this would place Britain in complete tutelage to the U.S.A.

Whichever way one ponders on the issue it appears fantastic to visualise Britain engaging in any effective military operation in India. If India chooses to arm herself against Russia, then it must be India's decision and India's responsibility. We can do little, if anything, without her co-operation, and even with it we could but supplement Indian resources.

It is true that it would take some years for India to raise and equip a vast army, air force, and navy, even if she were in an economic position to do so. India's





Dubious European example to young India!

poverty cries aloud for easement, and this in turn depends on great economic expansion. Until and unless this is achieved she cannot hope to possess military resources adequate to the necessities of a major war. How she is likely to deal with this is her concern, and short of intimidation we cannot alter that fact.

Heretofore we have omitted the most important military fact of all. The atom bomb is a reality that seems not to have exploded inside the average military mind. Apprehensive hope that it will not be used in the future and that atomic warfare will recede into the form of an unpleasant ephemeral nightmare is just mental cowardice. All kinds of devastating weapons will be employed, but probably atom bombs or something equally diabolical will be used in the initial stages of the struggle. Confronting this India will need to determine whether she dare be involved in widespread annihilation; and Gandhi's conviction respecting non-violence may move from the sphere of an ethico-mystical renunciation into that of a practical necessity. It may be that this would simply be a wider extension of the fact of expedience that sanctioned the restricted application of the technique in the internal political struggle. Even so, in the future it may seriously be considered as a means of ensuring survival.

Whether this withdrawal from war-like preparation would actually become a national Indian policy is **extremely** problematical. There will be many whose judgment or temperament would urge the necessity of military preparation, come what may. Many would be prepared valiantly to accept every dread possibility rather than tolerate aggression. Others would pin their faith to the persistence in India of large numbers despite widespread decimation, and that these would

be inspired by the dreadful ordeal into a mighty regenerative effort. And others again would brush all suggestions of prudence aside and respond instinctively and completely to their martial impulses. It is, I think, very possible that the advocates of non-violence as a national policy would fail, and military preparations and armament would be adopted as in accordance with natural necessity and national pride.

After all, we must not forget the traditional " martial races," so frequently elevated to splendid superiority over the rest ! The Sikhs, Punjab Moslems, Gurkhas, Rajputs, and so forth have been extolled so frequently by novelists, militarists and Conservative politicians that one could have the impression of these being alone the manly, intelligent element of India, while the rest was spineless and effeminate. This impression is not confined to those whose criterion of strength is still that of a spontaneous impulse to punch an offender on the jaw, or who ferociously rejoice in the opportunity to stick a bayonet into an enemy stomach. It is also a loose assumption among many ordinary people that some Indians are courageous like ourselves, and some just soft and passive. This accords awkwardly with the fact that a dozen consumptives could liberate a rocket bomb to slaughter ten times as many Appollos, and that political agitators who suffer bravely for their cause come from all races without distinction. When one speaks of martial races one needs to define the word " martial " in these days otherwise than in terms of physical bellicosity or cunning.

Nevertheless, it may be that the " martial element " in Indian human nature will prove to be as assertive as in our own, and that therefore the majority of Indians

may insist on transmitting this through every modern martial channel of discipline, armament, and organisation. It is quite possible this will be so. So be it. In this case the Indian Government itself will determine how to raise its armed forces; with what they shall be equipped; how the financial burden shall be borne; and with what Power or Powers it will enter into alliance or agreement. It will also, presumably, play its full part in the United Nations Organisation, and endeavour thereby to secure the settlement of disputes and the restraint of aggressors. It will share the hopes and the dangers as an equal within the whole comity of nations, and it will be involved with all the peoples of the earth in the frantic task of somehow averting the catastrophic consummation of the tension between the creative and the lethal forces embedded in our bewildered humanity.

Alike in the politician who in the last analysis seeks to overthrow oppression by throwing bombs and in the statesman who seeks to resist foreign aggression by dropping bombs systematically, there is the same sanction of the euphemistic sword of liberty. But the symbol of the liberating sword has become a hypnotic myth. It is not the liberating sword that will really count in the future but the annihilating bomb.

Police forces may always be necessary in India as well as elsewhere, and weapons may be required to ensure the civil maintenance of law and order and the peace of the realm. This has frequently been identified deceptively with the whole armoury of modern war, until the international legal instruments of the future seem likely to approach the stage when more persons will be slain and wealth destroyed by the law preservers

than by the law breakers. The policeman's truncheon will be projected through the stratosphere and obliterate a hundred thousand lives.

This curious phenomenon in human evolution needs the careful scrutiny of Indian people, and they are no more and no less capable of wise conclusions than ourselves. May their wisdom be far-seeing and exemplary, before it is too late; for the "liberating sword" has become a diabolical magnet drawing romanticed dupes into annihilation. This insidious fascination can be rationalised and justified by a score of arguments about self-defence, justice, honour, punishment and so forth, but a sober glimpse of its ultimate significance should prove salutary. Perhaps India has the spiritual endowment that will enable her to escape from our social illusion.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

I DEVOTED a previous chapter to reflections on the inner spiritual significance of Indian life. There are those who may consider that is largely a waste of time, an excessive concern with fungoid growths; and that it is the tangible, political, and economic realities that matter most.

I consider, however, that those political and economic issues are themselves embodiments of bio-psychological realities possessing a philosophical significance. We have become aware by now that political movements cannot be understood without reference beyond their external name and expression to their sociological origins. The psychological element in this is of great importance, although this claim, I know, provokes denial and the counter-assertion that political movements are directly traceable to economic interests.

Granted much evidence for this, I still hold that economic interests are closely identified with, and are largely projections of, what I describe as bio-psychological facts. The biological urge transmitted through nutritional hunger and erotic desire instinctively directs the primary behaviour of man and beast, and establishes a variety of neurological patterns in all living species. In obedience to this, they seek satisfaction and the overcoming of many obstacles. Dexterity and pugnacity are but two of the methods by which this may be achieved, and these can take either an individual

or a collective form. Political strategy in modern civilisation obviously continuously registers both these and other adaptations to frustrations.

It will be said that collective behaviour-patterns are themselves designed to secure the means of physical satisfaction; and that the possession of comfort or the lack of it shape political activity. Conquerors devise political means to preserve their conquest; and the conquered express their resentment by equally appropriate or available political means. The exploiter has also his own political instruments; and the political activity of the exploited conforms to his need of resisting the exploitation. Hence Nationalist and Socialist politics are respectively projections of a suppressed nation and an oppressed class.

Yet what really is the meaning of this but that human nature responds within itself to the lust for power or the acceptance of submission? There are elements in our human life that impel towards domination or exploitation, and other elements towards resignation or co-operation. The acquisitive instinct is abnormally strong in some, and subnormally weak in others. The reformer and revolutionary alike have to contend not only with the capacity of others to respond sympathetically, but also with a capacity for inertia and unsympathetic resistance. And so with those who enjoy power, whether it be in terms of property or territory, the fact is it is their psychological desire to retain power that provides the content of the political struggle between themselves and those who would divest them of the power.

The reader must forgive these musings, but they have a direct bearing on economic need, and in particular on the economic need of India. If India be

poor, the cause of that poverty, both relative and absolute, the means by which it can be relieved, and the nature of a superior economic life, involve the considerations to which I briefly allude. Otherwise, one may survey existing facts and not know what to do with them. Or one may arrive at false conclusions, and on that erroneous basis construct an abortive policy.

Is India poor and hungry, for instance, because of the evil of foreign government or because of an intrinsic natural disability? Has she been drained of her wealth from the days of the East India Company onward, and her appropriate economy disastrously destroyed, or is that but an aspect of an inevitable process of dissolution? Are her people malnourished because of exploitation, or because there are too many of them in a land of limited subsistence? Will she be economically better off or worse when politically free? And when free, is it the economic policy of Nehru or of Gandhi that will be more beneficial?

Gandhi's emphasis is not only non-capitalist but also non-industrial. He does not completely exclude mechanical aids, as his dangling watch may well remind us. But he would firmly and deliberately restrict modern mechanical power, and certainly does not look towards it as the means of social salvation. Unlike Lenin, he finds no attraction to electrification as the highway towards proletarian economic liberation. He contemplates the machine age with disfavour and alarm, and directs human thought back towards decentralised, ordered simplicity. Each village unit must revive its crafts and intelligently utilise its resources so that it can enjoy modest security and find therein spiritual contentment. Even on the threatened advent of famine in India, he gave detailed proposals of the

means by which seeds could be sown even in small receptacles, waste could be utterly avoided, and local resources could be best utilised.

His campaign for the revival of the handloom and spinning wheel, and his partly successful insistence on the wearing of khaddar cloth by Congress supporters, had a triple yet related objective. Unvindictively, it would relieve the Indian of his dependence on foreign, including British, textile imports; it would therefore thwart the intentions of India's political aggressor; and it would encourage if not entirely establish rural self-reliance and independence. For some time it was expected of Congress members that they should personally engage in a definite period of spinning every day; but I gather that this is now frequently observed in the breach rather than the observance of the rule, although Gandhi himself faithfully "does his bit."

Gandhi's plan has certain positive advantages. Firstly, it helps the villager to make the best of his circumstances. Secondly, it is in any case necessary until or unless he can gain the alleged benefits of industrial expansion. Thirdly, it possesses intrinsic, ethical values, and emphasises the virtues of intelligent simplicity of living. It certainly impressed the British Government as a powerful weapon when it adversely affected British trade. During Gandhi's visit here for the Round Table Conference, he courageously visited Lancashire to assure the badly hit cotton operatives of his goodwill towards them and the reason for his village policy that threatened their livelihood.

Within limits the Gandhian economy can and should be pursued; but those limits do exist. I cannot see how otherwise than from the benefits of industrial

expansion the burden of primitive toil can be eased or the amenities we now assume are necessary can be made available for the masses. Electric light and power would be a definite boon, but this needs generating stations. Irrigation requires both nationwide planning and also the provision of hydro-engineering plant. Artificial fertilisers involve manufacturing centres. Better transport and locomotion require factories and workshops. Education itself would entail printing works. And I must add importantly that if Gandhi would furnish himself with artificial dentures it would meet with social approval, as well as requiring the indirect services of many trades in order to supply the complete article. (His teeth were knocked out when he was ejected from a South African train compartment by two English upholders of the colour bar, although that is no reason why he should not return good for evil in respect of his gums.)

The recognition of the imperative need for economic reconstruction and expansion is now generally accepted. Several economic plans have been published, and that known sometimes as the "Bombay" plan, advanced by a number of business magnates, including Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, President of the East India Cotton Association, Mr. J. R. D. Tata, and Mr. G. D. Birla. The Government of India also produced its plan. The Congress itself co-operated in a Commission to survey India's needs, and in its election manifesto it deals with the main points of its economic policy. The Moslem League, the Radical Democratic Party, and the Communist Party have also produced their proposals. There is no dearth of ideas, nor is there lack of complete appreciation of the need. They all

agree that economic production, both in agriculture and in industry, must be and can be substantially increased.

Estimates vary concerning the extent to which the total wealth of India can be substantially increased, the methods necessary, and the time that this would take. Here again other questions arise that are essentially philosophical in content. Gandhi himself no doubt would agree that more quantity of food and goods should be available, but he would dissent from the assumption that this entails vast industrial expansion. He would do so because of a conception of life that enshrines certain values he believes are imperilled by our modern mechanical power age. He considers the real purpose of life can be and is lost in quantitative production, and the removal of men from direct contact with the soil and the skill of craftsmanship. In this he is not alone, for there are many that have arrived at the firm conclusion that our western civilisation is on the wrong track. The famous play, "R.U.R.," dramatised symbolically and impressively the consummation of applied science; and the soullessness of the vast mechanism to which man is bound is the theme of much literature, as well as being the actual experience of the proletariat.

It is a salutary warning, and it compels us to inquire very seriously what are the values we should seek in order to make human life worthy and sound. Moreover, there is more than a fortuitous connection between mechanical production and the annihilating menace of total warfare. Science that is amoral can easily become immoral; and the nineteenth century contention that economic laws are irrelevant to moral considerations finds a parallel in the twentieth century

claim that lethal science applied to war should pursue its way undeterred by moral condemnation. Then, too, the disposal for profit of mechanical abundance has involved world competition for markets, which is one of the chief stimuli of modern war.

Nevertheless, any practical test of the immediate needs of the multitude seems to me to demonstrate conclusively that a considerable measure of industrial expansion is urgently necessary; but with it also a means of socially determining the nature of the goods produced, and of avoiding the present tyranny of finance-capital. Capitalist monopolies and combines are steadily replacing industrial and commercial competition, and the transference of these to public ownership at least places them on the basis of public service and responsibility. Even so, there are those who are apprehensive, not from the standpoint of profitable investment but because of their sensitiveness to the spiritual necessities of personality, lest socialised industries themselves subordinate the individual to a machine sanctified by social ethics.

The danger exists, but was the individual in the pre-mechanical age really more free? The vision of a happy, healthy peasantry seen idyllically in the past may be as illusory as in the imaginary future. Actually, he was frequently enslaved to primitive necessity and knew little of the glory of life known to the cultured mind. He, too, was subjugated to the will of others, whether feudal prince or dynastic monarch. There are States in India where subjects dwell under complete autocracy, even though in a few there may be the compensation of a certain amount of social progress. Mysore, Travancore, Hyderabad, and Jaipur have economic resources that have been devel-

oped by their Princes, and some social betterment has been effected. But generally this does not alter the fact that in the modern prototypes of the pre-industrial social structure men are as fully burdened as they are in the modern industrial world.

Even with every possible improvement within the orbit of simple village life the span of mortal years is bound to be hard, with little time or opportunity for mental enrichment or release from primitively necessitous duties. Some people may find rich spiritual satisfaction in complete ascetic simplicity, but this is either through particular disposition or because of intellectual advantages already acquired which give a permanent mental endowment. The contemplative life may be all sufficient to these; but to suggest to a famished, burdened mother or to a normal, eager young man that they should be content with meditation on the wonders of the invisible is a mockery.

For the normal Indian there are certain indisputable needs, and the villagers themselves, as I have mentioned, know exactly what those needs are. He needs food, clothing, shelter, light, education, medical services, and a few amenities. At present he gets insufficient of any of these, and the Indian national task is by economic reorganisation to assure that the population gets enough. Let us look again at the actual position:—

FOOD.—The estimated normal calorific standard of the average Indian is between 1,500 and 2,000, compared with the 3,850 we enjoy still in this country, despite shortage and rationing. I have been given various calculations regarding the extent of malnutrition in India. One given by a very cautious,

responsible person was that roughly one-third in India are very badly nourished, one-third are poorly nourished, and one-third could be said to have enough nourishment. Another, however, asserted that 75 per cent were in various stages of malnutrition. The calorific standard I have mentioned denotes a much lower general level than in Britain, and even allowing for differences in climate (although I do not see what basic difference this makes to physical need), it cannot be adequate for a normally healthy life. It is generally accepted that 2,650 calories is the minimum for that purpose.

**CLOTHING.**—Despite the scanty garments worn by Indians, there is actually a cloth shortage in many parts of India. Nor does hand spinning and weaving assist if the yarn for this purpose is not available. The average Indian consumption of cloth per head for all personal and domestic purposes in 1928-9 was 16·1 yards, while the Indian National Planning Committee estimated the minimum should be 30 yards. The world average is 42 yards, if the U.S.A. be included.

**SHELTER.**—Strangely enough I did not find from one villager an expression of this need. He probably is so accustomed to a mud hovel that he accepts it as a natural provision, like a tree, a stream, or a rock. And, of course, in the country-side climatic conditions do not make shelter so pressing as in Europe, or in Indian towns. Nevertheless, he has to shelter from the rains and the heat, and he needs some domestic privacy. At present this is scanty enough. In the towns overcrowding is shocking, and with many there is now no domestic shelter at all. The average floor

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the "Bombay Plan" from *The World Textile Industry*, Vol. I.

space per person in Bombay is under 28 square feet, whereas, according to the Bombay Rent Inquiry Committee Report, the minimum should be 100 square feet.

**LIGHT.**—This seems to be a minor item, but in fact there is such a shortage of kerosene, which is the chief source of illumination, that in very many areas the appeal for more kerosene is incessant. Scores of thousands of village households have no light at all after sunset.

**EDUCATION.**—At least six out of seven Indian adults are illiterate, probably more. The actual literacy statistics in the 1941 census gave the percentages of 12·2 for All India and 12·5 for British India; with the highest percentage of 25·7 in Delhi and the lowest of 7·7 in the North-West Frontier Province for British India; and 47·7 highest in Travancore and 2·3 lowest in Baluchistan for the States and Agencies. Female literacy is much lower than male, being 5 per cent compared with 18 per cent. In 1938–9, educational expenditure in India was 10d. per head of population, compared with our £2. 8s. 3d. Less than 25 per cent of the children who do receive education stay until the fourth class.

**MEDICAL SERVICES AND HEALTH.**<sup>1</sup>—As elsewhere indicated, the available services are terribly poor, and the estimated requirements are for 16½ doctors and 330 nurses for every doctor or nurse now available, with a corresponding increase in hospital accommodation. Before the war there were 42,000 doctors and only 4,500 trained nurses, but prevention is better than

<sup>1</sup> See Annual Report of the *Public Health Commissioner*.

cure, and if the life-expectancy figures are to be extended well beyond that of twenty-seven years, effective sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, and water supplies must be available in town and country alike. The provision of these would be sound economy, and avoid the wasteful burden of simply alleviating the disastrous consequences of bad conditions. Only one-sixth of the towns in British India have protected water supplies.

Here then is a brief glance at the main human needs. Now let us take an equally short glimpse at the present agricultural sources and supply. Food grains produced in India during the past years have ranged from fifty to fifty-five tons annually. This has been insufficient, and in 1939 India imported some 1,500,000 tons of rice from Burma. In pre-war years a sharp drop in home production necessitated the securing of further additional food grain imports. Land under cultivation amounted to 281,000,000 acres, about two-thirds being devoted to cereals or pulses, but it is said that another 170,000,000 fallow or culturable waste could be brought back into cultivation.

There are approximately 163,000,000 cattle in India (excluding buffalo), many of these, however, being worthless. The milk supply is only one-sixth per cow or buffalo compared with that in Britain, although the fat content of the milk is 25 per cent to 60 per cent greater.

This is only an index of the problem in the sphere of food alone. If, however, one tries to assess the full economic position it is startling to find the total Indian annual income per capita amounted in 1931 to

only Rs65, or £4. 17s. 6d., compared with £73. 10s. in the U.K., £105. 9s. in the U.S.A., and £16. 7s. in Japan.<sup>1</sup>

The central purpose must be to increase the total volume of wealth available to the Indian people; and closely allied to that, to assure it shall consist of primary necessities equitably distributed. This must involve an alteration of the percentage engaged in agriculture compared with industry, for at present only some 10 per cent to 15 per cent are engaged in the latter, and possibly another 15 per cent are engaged in services or supplementary to agricultural or industrial production. It is estimated that in 1931 only 17 per cent of the national income was from industry.

All the planners are well acquainted with these and other facts, and outline proposals by which industrial production shall expand and, while absorbing a larger proportion of the population, shall nevertheless enable agricultural production to increase its yield per acre. Although agricultural conditions in India may not be comparable to those elsewhere, there is no disagreement that the quantity and quality of food could be substantially improved. The most cautious estimate given me for food grains stated that, according to the plan of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, with an additional annual expenditure of Rs250,000,000 the quantitative increase could be 50 per cent within ten years and 100 per cent in fifteen years.<sup>1</sup>

One essential need is the provision of a much larger number of trained technical and managerial personnel. Dr. John Sargent's educational scheme

<sup>1</sup> See *The National Income of British India, 1931-32*, and *Statistical Abstract for British India*.

<sup>2</sup> See *Four Hundred Millions to be Fed*—Indian Government Bureau of Public Information.

for the provision, in stages, of compulsory basic education for all children between six and fourteen years in British India would require nearly 2,000,000 teachers alone. But apart from these India needs large numbers of administrative and supervisory heads, engineers, and technicians. One estimate is that 20,000,000 of these would not be one too many!

The Thakurdas-Tata-Birla Plan (available as a "Penguin" Special), after considering all the necessities of India, summarises the total capital required for its plan as follows:—

	£
Industry .....	3,360,000,000
Agriculture .....	930,000,000
Communications .....	705,000,000
Education .....	367,500,000
Health .....	337,500,000
Housing .....	1,650,000,000
Miscellaneous.....	150,000,000

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Total ..... £7,500,000,000  
(or Rs10,000 crores)

The authors of the plan claim that within fifteen years from the commencement of the operation of their plan, the per capita income could be doubled; and they also claim it is completely practicable both in respect of raising the necessary capital and in technical achievement. It would involve doubling agricultural production and a five-fold increase in industrial production. There would be three five-year plans with the total expenditure spread over the whole three periods.

While they state that, "In the critical years of planning, India will be dependent almost entirely on

foreign countries for the machinery and technical skill necessary for the establishment of both basic and other industries," yet they also emphasise this would progressively decline as the plan yields results. Meanwhile they would derive other financial resources from the gold and other hoarded wealth, sterling balances due from Britain,<sup>1</sup> the present favourable balances of trade, foreign borrowing, popular savings, and "created money" based on public confidence equated to *ad hoc* reserve bank securities.

The plan, inevitably, has been criticised both on the ground of over-optimism regarding the securing of capital and also that it would lead to excessive State control. Both the planners state in the first instance that they have in fact been cautious in their estimation; and in the second, that they fully appreciate the need of avoiding the danger, which they claim can be done. Obviously, they have been impressed by the vast national planning of the U.S.S.R., and insist that only a similar comprehensive scheme can possibly meet the urgent needs of India, but without imitating the ruthlessness and loss of liberty involved in the Russian venture.

The Government of India appear to proceed on the same essential basis, and while calling for a visualisation of development during the next fifty years also indicate what might be achieved during the next decade. Agricultural production, they suggest, could expand 50 per cent during that period, and the immediate aim should be to increase cereals by 10 per cent, pulses by 20 per cent, fats and oils by 250 per cent, fruits by 50 per cent, vegetables by 100 per cent, milk by 300 per cent, and fish and eggs by

<sup>1</sup> Sterling Balances due from U.K. amount to over £1,500,000,000.

300 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Drastic expansion should also take place in the social services, including education, and in industry, irrigation, and transport. Capital expenditure, in the Government plan, will depend on large public or private funds or savings, restriction of private expenditure to secure increased revenue, control over new company flotations in order to direct capital most fruitfully, and availability of existing surpluses.

As I have stated, there are several plans already published, and there is at least general agreement both that a national survey and plan are fundamentally necessary and are possible. Congress itself pronounces: "For this purpose it will be necessary to plan and co-ordinate social advance in all its many fields, to prevent the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of individuals and groups, to prevent vested interests inimical to society from growing, and to have social control of the mineral resources, means of transport, and the principal methods of production and distribution in land, industry, and in other departments of national activity, so that free India may develop into a Co-operative Commonwealth. The State must, therefore, own or control key and basic industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping, and other means of public transport. Currency and exchange, banking and insurance, must be regulated in the national interest."

In the rest of its election manifesto Congress proceeds to elaborate this policy, and elsewhere it goes into greater detail on specific schemes. Further, its policy (as must the policy of any political organisation worthy

<sup>1</sup> See *Post-war Planning*—Government of India Information Bureau.

of attention) would deal with the two powerful evils of the money-lender and the fragmentation of land, both of them indigenous curses of India requiring early reforms.

It is more than clear that, even starting from obvious needs partially met under existing circumstances, there is very great scope for expansion.<sup>1</sup> Thus, while 10,500,000 acres of India's 1,623,015 square miles were irrigated in 1878 and had expanded to 32,500,000 acres in 1938, it is estimated that this is only one-fifth of the total requirement. The Lloyd Barrage, finished in 1932 and serving 5,500,000 acres, has proved extremely beneficial. The Punjab Government has a vast scheme for constructing several dams, not only for water storage but also for hydro-electric generation. The success of the Tennessee Valley Scheme suggests a similar project or projects in India, both to avert damage by floods and more positively to serve nutritional, transport, and industrial purposes.

Transport by rail, road, sea, and air needs considerable expansion, and it is suggested that the two first services should be increased by 50 per cent and thousands of miles of roads metal-surfaced. Coal and minerals call for particular attention, together with steel production. At present over 28,000,000 tons of coal are produced per annum, about 3,000,000 tons of iron ore, and 2,000,000 tons of steel, the latter steadily increasing towards India's full requirements. The country has ample chrome, tungsten and other alloying necessities, and is the second largest manganese

<sup>1</sup> See *Four Hundred Millions must be Fed*—Government of India Information Bureau.

producer in the world. Indian heavy industry can expand vastly.

Afforestation would yield increasing economic returns, not only directly in timber but indirectly in counterbalancing the ravages of nature. Soil erosion has become a menace and, unless checked and prevented, will mean the loss of millions of acres. Fertilisers, improved methods of cultivation, including seeds, and selective breeding should lead to substantial improvement in the return for toil, and consequently a definite increase in the volume of real wealth. The yield in India in respect of both rice and cotton per acre is roughly only one-third the yield in the U.S.A., and this gives a further illustration of the improvement needed, and possible.

As some indication of possibilities it is worth-while considering what was achieved during the war. In addition to securing 2,250,000 men for the Army another 8,000,000 were absorbed in auxiliary work. The capacity of the Bengal-Assam railway was quadrupled; hundreds of vessels were built and a tonnage of 38,840,000 repaired; 130 new hospitals were built; £130 million of supplies, including textiles, were allocated to the U.S.A. forces; from steelworks, 1,500,000 tons annually went for the making of bridges, floating docks, armour-piercing steel, cranes, &c.; vast quantities of munitions, 50,000,000 pairs of boots, 400,000,000 tailored items, 4,500,000 parachutes, and immense quantities of foodstuffs, jute, mica, rubber, &c., went to meet British and Allied needs.

The natural and human capacity of India is incalculable, but enough is known to enable the calculable minimum needs of India to be met far more

satisfactorily than is the case to-day; provided, that is, that plans are adequate, the country is saved from devastating strife, and that latent energy and effort can be sufficiently inspired. A free India, with its own government and institutions, is alone likely to secure the synthesis of these requisites; and one must trust and believe that India is about to move forward boldly, imaginatively and constructively to a new era in which her people will escape from the wretchedness of absolute poverty, and all its associations will steadily disappear.

Meanwhile, she is forever haunted with the prospect of recurrent famine. In 1943 the aftermath of the war and its attendant dislocation of transport provided the main aggravation. In 1946 it was the failure of the winter rains and gross world food shortage (though this was also largely a war by-product) that threatened to submerge millions below the bare subsistence level. The Indian "Grow More Food" campaign increased the normal production of food grown by nearly two million tons, according to the Indian Government Information Bureau, but was inadequate, particularly in view of the ever-increasing population and world food shortage. Even the most drastic and successful distribution of world food supplies will leave 1947 a serious problem, and there is no time to lose if India is very materially to increase her own food supply both in respect of increased acreage of cultivation and increased yield per acre. Even for the food she may import, considerable expansion of her exports are essential. In 1943-44 her exports were £149,000,000,<sup>1</sup> and her imports £89,100,000,

<sup>1</sup> But the changed price level affects these figures, and it is stated that compared with pre-war imports fell 40 per cent and exports 55 per cent.

the former including jute, cotton, hides and skins, sugar, tea, coffee, wool, flax, hemp, silk, timber, tobacco, and coal.

Without a sound economic foundation India's new political and social structure will not endure. In a mortal world the immortal spirit must dwell within a wholesome habitation. Indeed, the test of those values that give significance and glory to human life lies in their translation through our economic life. Morality is merely an individualistic fad unless it becomes embodied in a social structure that assures all men and women of the means of health and happiness. The most exalted experience must be able to inspire devotion to the solution of primary human needs, or it becomes an artifice and an evasion.

This impregnation of mortal activity with real spiritual and moral significance, I believe, cannot be fulfilled unless society itself controls and therefore owns the economic instruments upon which it depends for its life. The struggle of classes and nations arises from conflicting interests animated by an undeveloped or perverted moral consciousness; and superstition and ignorance are symptoms of this. The emergence of a consciousness that is illumined with the knowledge of moral responsibility for all human life can only become integrated in an appropriate social system.

In India the many problems of human life and relationship will not automatically be solved with the advent of political liberty and economic transformation, but they will then possess dignity. It is because India needs release from spiritual and physical squalor that she must employ her freedom to ensure her economic well-being. If she fails in this then political liberty will perish.

## CHAPTER XII

### RESURGENT INDIA

**O**N the way out to India, the pilot of our aircraft obligingly flew low, and circled around what the information slip described as "Kernak, the oldest city in the world."

From the air we saw much else to provoke reflection on the strange story of the human race. We were on a modern pilgrimage, but covering in six weeks what might have taken six years a few centuries ago. Below us lay the signs of the human pilgrimage of the past and the present, and much of the present was as melancholy as the remnants of the past. Sea, desert, and mountain spoke impassively of the earth before man or even life was known. For the most part it remained as it was in the beginning, brooding mutely and eternally.

Here and there were patches that intimated the emergence of organic life. Europe had its garment of browns and greens, but this seemed less than the stretch of waters, the yellow wastes, and the harsh, forbidding jagged folds of rock. Life could dissolve and still leave the earth much as it always had been, with just a little alteration of colour and the disappearance here and there of marks and smudges. That would be the only difference.

The witnesses of human occupation seemed almost of no particular significance. Whether they denoted five, two, or one thousand years ago, or a hundred or five years, mattered little: they were all fallen leaves.

The Pyramids were but casual excrescences near the edge of a sprawling plot in the corner of a vast expanse of sand. The Dead Sea was but a flat imitative miniature of the Mediterranean Sea. All the tokens of civilisation, I felt, were overwhelmed by the heartless implacability of elemental nature.

Modern Cairo is a trivial insult to buried Egypt. For that matter the scarred, forlorn little Sicilian town of Augusta seemed no better in its contrast to dead Imperial Rome. Egypt and Rome had long since come and gone; and with them had passed so much that men had believed splendid and enduring. Save for a few relics the efforts, ventures, and securities of human beings very much akin to ourselves had shrivelled away. Why do we in our conceit assume that this will not also be our lot, and that we are wiser than they ?

We passed over European soil pock-marked with craters. At a low altitude on our return journey we saw the typical modern ruins of Caen. Over the North African battlefield and around Tobruk we gazed at the bleak panorama of the debris of war. Here and there a desolate wagon was half sunk in the desert, and confused scratches conveyed remembrance of yesterday's violence. It seemed difficult to believe that but a few months before, on the surface beneath this aircraft droning its way undisturbed towards its goal, vast armies of human beings, with all their explosive apparatus, strove incessantly to strangle each other to death. Yet it was true, beneath ten ordinary British M.P.s there had raged quite recently a further version of an old, old drama. Brigadier Low, M.P., who had been a member of Montgomery's staff in the African campaign, must

have had strange emotions as he peered with us down on the now desolate stage on which he had played his part.

If civilisations thus come and go, and all the various furnishings of acts and scenes become simply confused relics, why be over-anxious respecting either Europe or India? European civilisation may also be drawing to a close. And despite all our concern about India, and the tensions within India itself, may it not be that we are all engaged in fretful futility? There is much to induce such a mood. How many millions in India have been born only to spend a few years in toil and then to perish in unfulfilment of even a modest experience of human joy? Famine itself has scythed again and again myriads of Indian lives. But apart from this, the extent of wasted Indian humanity is beyond computation. Melancholy reflections such as these are as old as man himself, and I am but echoing temporarily the sighs of all who have ever dwelt on human frustration. Sages and saints of all religions and races have spoken of the drear mutability of human experience, and frequently this has led them to explore for their and our compensation the inner realm of real or imaginary everlasting values.

Within the religions of India there is this constant overtone, and the emphasis on supernatural realities. The Hindu law of Karma is one explanation advanced to elucidate both the frailty of mortal life and its inequality. This present life of ours, it is said, is but a fragment, and we must look elsewhere than through a temporal keyhole if we would see and understand the meaning of human life. Immediate appearances are passing phenomena, a mere transitory, deceptive glimpse, *Maya*. Hence, fortune or misfortune, high

station or low, happiness or misery, are of secondary importance at the best. They are the temporary consolidations of accumulated life experiences, but more is to come. "As ye sow, so ye reap," but not in this brief mortality alone. Before and afterwards human life has its being; and only as we comprehend this do we penetrate the human mystery in some measure, and thus find meaning in vicissitudes, a counterpoise to the external injustices we suffer, and a corrective to worldly vanity.

Reincarnation to many is a complete solution to the essential human problem, and the avatar, or incarnated perfect soul, becomes both a confirmation of moral aspiration and a blessed encouragement to those still struggling with adversity. Caste has come to be accepted as altogether an appropriate implementation of the karmic law, for thus does the child from birth enter his allotted sphere and accept the functional duty laid upon him by the impersonal law that dominates human experience. How dare we interfere; how in fact can we do so? The law is divine, and it is not for us to seek the thwarting of majestic principles far deeper than our foolish impulses or calculations. It is not for us to seek the intrusion of wayward human whims; but rather to acknowledge the powers and Power far greater than ourselves, and live in reverent obedience to the truth.

Beneath the jungle-growth of myths and legends lies this, one of the basic roots of Hinduism, although not the only root. Drawing in sap from the dark mystery of life, Hinduism passes it upwards through karma, but also through all the deeply embedded vital concepts of Brahma, the Universal Soul and Supreme God. The trunk and outgrowth are also extensions

of Him in manifold manifestation. Buddhism is the grandest and most impressive clarification and purified rejuvenation of the ancient religion, and apparently theologically agnostic in one of its ancient interpretations. Jainism and Sikhism are other variants, with their own attempts to rescue or extend assumed essential truths.

Islam has had considerable success in far more drastic pruning. Not to be lost in metaphor, one could claim it is a different tree entirely. If one wishes still to maintain the symbolism one could suggest Mohammed sought to eliminate all extraneous extensions save the central reality of God Himself—Allah. Whatever the historic or psychological significance of this or that extravagance, these were as nothing compared with the awesome fact of Allah, the all-powerful and supreme.

This is one India—the metaphysical India. In this, whether it be fact or delusion, rests a sense of invisible values that diverts the human spirit from over-concern with the fluctuations of social structures and mortal calamities. Even if this be dismissed as worthless to the rational mind, and an impediment to those who would liberate man from his many burdens, nevertheless it remains as a psychological fact. Insanity is a fact that maintains itself stubbornly despite diagnosis. Neither a neurotic nor a fool cease to be so because an intelligent man perceives the nature of neurosis or folly. Reason flickers fitfully in dank and fearsome caverns, and may gutter out into smoke. Moreover, there can be no guarantee that the mind pondering on human travail and frustration may not become cynical and morbid, and find refuge in metaphysical speculation. Whatever it may mean in the ultimate,

meanwhile, there are the cumulative impressions of pre-scientific ages that form part of immediate reality.

There is another India—the romantic India. This India is also an inescapable inheritance of the India of to-day. It finds glamour and pride in the exploits of its ancestry, and a secret source of inspiration that feeds the valour of present dreams of the future, and the deeds that would translate them into fact. God and the gods are in the background of this, Krishna and Arjuna and the exalted figures of the Bhagavad Gita; or there is simply Allah. But there are also more mortal heroes, some Gurus, or religious teachers; some Pandits, or venerable sages; some Maulvis, or learned Moslems; some Mullas, or Moslem divines; and many who are none of these but stalwart warriors and distinguished rulers.

Asoka and the Grand Mogul, Aurengzeb and Akbar, are not forgotten. Nor are Nadir Shah and Ranjit Singh among the Sikhs, nor Suraja-ad-Dowlah and those who strove to withstand the penetration of John Company, nor Rani of Jhansi and the leaders of the Mutiny. And in more recent years the names of those like G. K. Gokhale and B. G. Tilak are held in high honour. As English youth places within his mind pedestals on which are inscribed the names of those whom he holds in esteem that he may be influenced by their prowess, so are there cherished inscriptions within the minds of active Indian youth. Their fame and splendour may not be exactly as it is assumed, and legend may embellish fact or idealisation disguise unpleasant elements, but the names suffice to represent past glory. From these come tributaries of historic romance that lave the shores of thought.

There is a third India—the India of destitution, debasement, and exploitation. One could select a sorry record of British responsibility in this, as indeed has been done with savage ruthlessness more than once. It may sound melodramatic, but it is none the less apt to describe a period of Anglo-Indian relationship as a process of economic blood-transfusion for British benefit. Quotations by the score could be given from British spokesmen and writers that contain the implicit or explicit confession of almost conscienceless exploitation.

The words of the late Lord Brentford are by no means misleading when he affirmed: "We did not conquer India for the benefit of Indians. We conquered India as an outlet for the goods of Great Britain. We conquered India by the sword and by the sword we shall hold it." The noble lord was a doughty protagonist of the antiquated Church of England Book of Common Prayer, and his piety at least endowed him with a disturbing honesty.

Apart from such illuminating statements as that, there remains the stark evidence for all to see. It is the evidence of the passing of an old economy with its social advantages and disadvantages closely interwoven; and its replacement by another, capitalist and imperialist, also with advantages and disadvantages, but in any case leaving the vast mass of Indians almost helpless and hopeless in the grip of oppressive circumstances. It is possible to explain this circumstance as being simply the effect of natural dislocation and degeneration for which the British are not responsible; and that even if Britain had never conquered India misery would have abounded. Still further it would be legitimate to point out the vast

amount of benefit bestowed by British rule—the establishment of a superior penal code; the imposition of administrative unity; the provision of railways, roads, and bridges; the maintenance of law and order; the unlocking of natural resources; the expansion of industry; the introduction of western medical and surgical science; the dissemination of knowledge and ideas previously known but slightly; and even the influence of our democratic thought.

There is some truth in this, but it has so often been complacently emphasised as to justify the suspicion that it is done in order to disguise the negligence and the failure that is at least equally as real. Likewise, it tends to ignore the fact that part of this service to India was incidental to the process of extracting from India as much wealth and advantage as was possible for the benefit of Britain herself. The economic development was not designed primarily to benefit India, and such alleged benefits as those bestowed were by-products that fell like crumbs from the table the rich man loaded with good things for himself. The dividends on the British investment mainly accrued to British shareholders. The board of management can hardly claim particular virtue if it found it expedient to grant inducements or provide improved succour to the human agencies by which its profits were secured.

This having been stated, it can also be appreciated that there have been nobler activities inspired by religious or ethical motives that have done much to alleviate misery, and altruistically to enlighten the Indian people. It is also true that India has received substantial contributions from western knowledge and experience. Indians themselves are generous enough

to admit this, and have no desire to disparage or to repudiate such human service. There have been many who have gone from this country to India without condescension or patronage, with no mercenary or ulterior motive, and with a rich warmth of affection for their fellow-men in India, whether these be such as the late C. F. Andrews and William Paton, or such as Bradlaugh, Mrs. Besant, or Keir Hardie.

There remains the Indian scene, with its widespread wretchedness behind a facade of pomp and wonder. The durbahs and pageantry, the magic, superstition and mystery, the romance and entertainment, are no more India than West End Bond Street is typical of my own superficially mundane London constituency of West Leyton, or Buckingham Palace is a typical home of dockers. The real India is the India I saw in village and slum; in the patient crowds at railway stations or hanging precariously on the outside of trains; in the jostling bazaars and the squatting audiences of public meetings. It is the India of scanty meal-bowls, of women monotonously transplanting young plants in the sodden paddy-fields, of men and women toiling in the heat for a few annas per day, of children running about in the dust and mire when they should have been at school.

Of course, the real India does contain much else that is full of charm and promise. It holds many good and beautiful things. Some of these one can see in the touch of artists, in the eagerness of response to political appeals, in fraternal and domestic virtues that shine out despite all else. And I personally found it in the kindness and hospitality I received so abundantly. This assuredly is part of India also, and it will never be lost from my mind and heart.

The India of poverty, the India of romance, and the India of metaphysics are one. We may feel, as I do myself, that with the achievement of political freedom it is the economic foundation of a new India that demands primary sustained attention. Yet the other aspects of India are imperishable, even though their pattern and translation may alter drastically. The spirit of India can and will yield a golden harvest, but only as and when the economic soil of India is made wholesome and rich with social justice.

Russia in many ways provides an arresting example. I do not subscribe to Communist philosophy, and I deeply deplore much of her political technique and policy. Yet this she has done, and in doing so has provided a challenge for India and Britain alike: she has largely liquidated illiteracy within a quarter of a century; eliminated internal racial antagonism and brought peoples as varied as those in India into social cohesion; impressively raised the status of women; assured the child of its moral and social rights; controlled production in the interest of the whole community; and brought to worker and peasant a sense of social importance and responsibility.

Indian conditions and historic background are different in many respects from those in the Soviet Union, but there should be no inherent reason why India in her own way and working through her own institutions should not achieve as vast a transformation. I am positive this is the deep faith of many Indian leaders, who are eager to possess the opportunity of engaging in a stupendous task not alone for the sake of India but for the common people of the world.

I hope most earnestly that India and Britain will ere long create a bond of lasting friendship reached by the

free decision of both nations. For over 300 years we have been associated for good or ill, and the record of the last century culminating in the events of recent years has revealed that association in a sad and deplorable light. The association of the future must be completely different, and be generated by mutual respect and positive goodwill. In such a relationship India and Britain may learn much from each other, and enrich thereby the minds as well as the bodies of their citizens.

Much time could be spent in recrimination, but this is useless. Indians could draw up a severe indictment, well documented; and we could counter this, and even chide Indians with unscrupulous concentration on alleged evils while ignoring the good. If I plead that such an interchange is futile it could be said bitterly by my Indian friends that this is but an artful means of evading moral responsibility, while some of my English friends might be inclined to accuse me of pro-India bias against my own country. Nevertheless, I affirm that however profound may be the natural attachment we have to the land of our birth, there must be and is in the last analysis a higher loyalty. "My country, right or wrong," is a betrayal of my country; for the most genuine service I can render my country is to strive that it shall embody the virtues that are imperative to our common humanity. Goodwill and reconciliation must prevail.

Truth, beauty, and righteousness have their absolute as well as their relative meanings, and the absolute meaning must possess a final authority for our personal and national life. As a citizen of the United Kingdom I am conscious of my share of national responsibility, and speaking only for myself

and my consciousness of that share of responsibility; and leaving to others, whether British or Indian, their own judgment of what they consider is their share, I asked in India for forgiveness for whatever Indians considered needed to be forgiven. One of my Conservative colleagues in the Deputation considered in saying this I had "gone too far." I do not think so. It was not uttered in mock-humility, but in sincere recognition that pride and self-righteousness must be dissolved and we must remove barriers of enmity by frank confession of a share of blame if we are ever to experience a mutual interflow of the human spirit.

I am moved deeply by the thought that the group of ten M.P.s, of whom I was one, may have had some small part to play in encouraging human confidence and friendship between Britain and India. And it may be that we did something to prepare the way for the Government Mission and its measure of success. Needless to say, I most earnestly appreciate the arduous and patient toil that the Mission exercised, and I am sure that the three Ministers and their staffs performed wonders in their human contact with Indian leaders. This in itself will have incalculable, enduring influence for the future. In thus bearing my testimony to the three British Cabinet Ministers, I do not overlook or disparage what I am sure were the earnest efforts of the Indian political leaders.

On my return from India, one of the elderly, humble members of the House of Commons staff asked if I had been to the North-West Frontier. I informed him I had. He replied reminiscently, "Cor! I was out there in the Army before 1914. What a place! Y'know, we thought nothing then of kicking the backside of one of them natives. But

you can't do that now, can you? Times have changed, I know." I assured him you certainly could not do that now, and that times have most certainly changed. Whether in fact the man was exaggerating in retrospection, I do not know. "Times have changed" indeed, and there must be vaster changes still, inspired by understanding and constructive goodwill, and not simply directed by expediency and prudence.

We cannot infallibly foretell the future, but equally the future is not mechanically already determined. There is, of course, the inescapable sequence of cause and effect, and the present is the accomplishment of the past. But while the momentum of past and present runs on into the future, the will of man can guide this wisely, or falsely. Because of this, we can discriminate now between several possibilities, and in large measure direct events towards peace and brotherhood instead of war and enmity.

It is here where I believe we owe a debt of gratitude to Mahatma Gandhi. I do not blindly ignore his limitations, and I would definitely diverge from some of his teaching. But in his strenuous effort to establish moral authority as a criterion, and particularly in his persistent effort to translate this into a technique of struggle that casts aside violence and malice, he has performed a world service to mankind. Whether we think this is as practicable to the extent that he does, and whether he is himself either clear as to its implications or consistent always with his principle, does not diminish the challenging nature of his plea. And who knows but that reflection on the significance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki may not yet impel our human race to embrace the essential content of the

witness of this little old "half-naked Indian fakir," as a great but blind imperialist statesman described him.

Gandhi in time will pass from the visible mortal scene, yet his name will remain for long not only revered by generations of Indians, but in time by peoples of all nations and races. For Christendom he, a non-Christian, has made a great contribution in inducing a deeper, social discovery of the meaning and method of the Founder of the Christian faith.

Old civilisations leave their wreckage to speak of achievement and collapse. India has wavered in her fortunes, but she lives on with continuous centuries behind her. She can live through centuries to come, and build more nobly than ever she has done before. Poverty and squalor, ignorance and spiritual debasement, vainglorious individual luxury and ostentatious pride, bitterness and oppression, can pass away before a new life emerging. This is possible; and the past need not intimidate her or ourselves, for even as we became conscious within ourselves of priceless values we can make supreme amid a multitude of poorer legacies, so we can possess the power to transfer this to our mortal affairs.

The dust of India conceals not simply the deposit of the past but the potencies of the future. For the sake of the human race one hopes, prays, and strives that in pacific dynamic effort a resurgent India will confirm the faith of all whose souls remain unpoisoned by cynicism, and whose love of their fellows, whatever their colour, creed, or circumstance, remains their choicest treasure.

On Indian leaders rests a responsibility as immense as the problems they confront. In strange company are found astrology and modern sciences, florid temples

and mighty turbines, wretchedness and nobility. Kipling has been falsified, and East and West have met, both in their vices and their virtues. Wisdom, reconciliation and vision are necessities of a new inspiring India; and if Hindu, Moslem, Sikh, Parsee, Jain, Untouchable, Aboriginal and Christian will integrate their common Indian humanity by dedication of spiritual and moral endowments to the positive achievement of freedom, equity and social dignity then it will not be too lyrical to quote from Rabindranath Tagore—

“Morning cometh there, bearing in her golden basket the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth ”

THE END

## POSTSCRIPT

### A NOTE ON THE GOVERNMENT CABINET MISSION AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

THE nature of this book, even apart from the fact that while it was being written the Government Mission was engaged in strenuous and protracted negotiations, precluded detailed comment on Indian political issues. My purpose has been to give a descriptive sketch, together with certain general reflections. Certainly, what is now both necessary and desirable is that someone should give a worthy description of the discussions, difficulties, events and emotional cross-currents during the three months Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. A. V. Alexander were in India; and of subsequent developments, including the historic emergence of the interim Indian Government. Here, however, all that is appropriate and possible is this addition of a brief outline of the more important phases of that period.

After many interviews with Congress, League and other representatives, the exchange of correspondence and the exploration of various proposals, a Conference was held at Simla between the Mission and Congress and League leaders. This ended on May 12th without agreement having been reached. Thereupon on May 16th the Mission and the Viceroy issued their own recommendations. As stated in Parliamentary White Paper Cmd. 6821, these were as follows:—

1. There should be a Union of India, embracing both British India and the States, which should deal with the following subjects: foreign affairs, defence and communications, and should have the powers necessary to raise the finances required for the above subjects.

2. The Union should have an executive and a legislature constituted from British India and States representatives. Any question raising a major communal issue in the legislature should require for its decision a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities as well as a majority of all members present and voting.

3. All subjects other than the Union subjects and all residuary powers should rest in the provinces.

4. The States will retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded to the Union.

5. Provinces should be free to form groups with executives and legislatures, and each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common.

6. The constitutions of the Unions and of the groups should contain a provision whereby any province could, by a majority vote of its legislative assembly, call for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution after an initial period of ten years and at ten-yearly intervals thereafter.

They also proposed, as "the fairest and most practicable plan", for a representative Constituent Assembly; that each province should be allotted "a total number of seats proportional to its population", with the rough ratio of one to a million; that this provincial allocation of seats should be divided among "the main communities in each province in proportion to their Population"; and that "representatives allocated to each community in a province shall be elected by members of that community in its Legislative Assembly".

The three communities recognised would be general (all non-Moslem and non-Sikh), Moslem, and Sikh; and provinces would be associated in three Sections, (a) predominantly "General", (b) predominantly Moslem, and (c) almost equal. Four representatives would also be added from the Chief Commissioner's Provinces. The States representatives would number 93, and the total representation 389.

It was also proposed that "These sections shall proceed to settle provincial constitutions for the provinces included in

each section and shall also decide whether any group constitution shall be set up for those provinces, and if so, with what provincial subjects the group should deal", and that "The representatives of the sections and the Indian States shall reassemble for the purpose of settling the Union constitution". There was also a provision to enable a province to withdraw from a group after the new constitutional arrangements had come into operation, and another provision for an Advisory Committee to report to and advise on fundamental rights and minority safeguards, with "due representation of the interest affected". Finally, it was emphasised that a treaty between the Union Constituent Assembly and the United Kingdom was envisaged, and that an Interim Government should be formed immediately, with the support of the major political parties.

Reaction to these recommendations was at first, on the whole, cordial. Mr. Gandhi declared they contained "a seed to convert this land of sorrow into one without sorrow or suffering" and that subject to certain reservations he thought the Mission had every reason to be proud. On May 22nd Mr. Jinnah expressed his regret at the rejection of a complete sovereign Pakistan, his fear at Hindu predominance in the Constitution-making body, and his criticism of the possibility of increased scope and power for the Union Government. The Sikhs fiercely opposed the plan, and later Dr. Ambedkar's "All-India Scheduled Classes Federation" declared indignant dissent. On May 24th, Congress through its Working Committee, offered a number of criticisms but withheld for a while its final opinion.

The Moslem League proposed that the Punjab, N. W. Frontier, Baluchistan, Sind, Bengal and Assam should form one group (Pakistan) and that this should form a separate Constitution-making body; the joint Constitution-making body for the Union to discuss whether it would have a Legislature, and in

any case that there should be group parity of representation in any Union Executive or Legislature.

The Congress, however, emphasised the necessity of one comprehensive Constituent Assembly by proportional representation; that this body should draw up a Constitution for a Federal Union to deal with a wider range of subjects, leaving fewer for the groups; insistence on a Federal Union legislature; and rejection of the principle of parity.

On June 7th, the Moslem League, after reiterating that Pakistan was its "Unalterable objective", declared its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's Plan. The Princes also stated they would accept. Anglo-Indians asserted that the exclusion of their representative was "wanton injustice". The Viceroy issued invitations on June 16th to serve in the Interim Government, and these consisted of five Congress members (one being a Moslem); one member of the All-India Depressed Classes League, associated with Congress; one Parsee; one Sikh; one Indian Christian, and five Moslem Leaguers. Mr. Jinnah asserted, however, that this was a departure from the original formula of five, five, two, and its implied recognition of parity between Congress and League.

The Congress Working Committee on June 26th announced that while they considered the Mission's proposals fell far short of the Congress objectives and were open to considerable criticism, and while they contended "The Provisional Government . . . should function . . . as a *de facto* independent Government leading to full independence to come", yet they would recommend acceptance of the Constituent Assembly to the All-India Congress Committee. Meanwhile the Moslem League continued its allegation that the

proposed Interim Government was a departure from an assurance of parity given by the Viceroy, although it had agreed to participate in the Interim Government.

Dr. Azad, the then Congress President, repudiated Mr. Jinnah's objection to Congress nominees and the claim to League-Congress parity. Mr. Jinnah, however, continued to assert that there had been a serious departure from a previous understanding with the Viceroy, and that this was "to appease and placate Congress". The Viceroy declared that he had never given a guarantee to Mr. Jinnah that a provisional formula was conclusive and final.

Out of confusing interchanges of proposals and counter-proposals, recriminations, charges, protests and warnings for a while, this position emerged: the League accepted the Constituent Assembly, and also the Interim Government proposals, provided these conformed to the five, five, two, formula alleged to have been embodied originally; the Congress accepted the Constituent Assembly, but rejected the Interim Government if it involved recognition of parity or an interpretation of it that prevented their right to nominate a non-League Moslem or the inclusion of a pro-Congress Scheduled Classes representative.

The struggle over parity between Congress and League was, of course, crucial. The League claim to be the sole representative of the Moslems, if conceded by Congress, would virtually accept the League contention of "Two Nations" and the implicit partitioning of India. Moreover, however equitably the needs of numerical minority should be safeguarded, Congress claimed this should not over-ride the numerical preponderance of the majority who were Congress or non-Moslem League.

When the Mission and the Viceroy had announced their recommendations, they had made it clear that after careful examination they could not endorse the principle of a completely independent, separate, sovereign Pakistan, and their proposals were designed to secure an acceptable compromise. Mr. Jinnah and the League, however, wished to utilise the proposals as an advance towards Pakistan, while Congress accepted the necessity of considerable autonomy but desired as much as possible to preserve the significance and weight of Central Government in the interest of fundamental Indian unity.

Strenuous attempts were made to resolve the deadlock; but the League grew increasingly resentful and hostile. Mr. Jinnah stated "Congress are a Hindu organisation, and they do not represent any other community except Caste Hindus". Congress declared it could not join an Interim Government so composed as to give "the power of veto or obstruction to the Moslem League".

Meanwhile, the elections for the Constituent Assembly had taken place. Of the total 296 seats allocated to the three sections, of which 210 were General, 78 reserved for Moslems and four for Sikhs, Congress received 205, the Moslem League 73, Unionists three, Communists one, and various independents 14, inclusive of four Sikh seats not filled.

The Government Mission returned to the United Kingdom and on July 18th Lord Pethick-Lawrence reviewed the position in a speech in the House of Lords in which he expressed pleasure that both Congress and League had agreed to go into the Constituent Assembly, and explained in some detail the circumstances affecting the formation of the

Interim Government. He held that as both bodies had failed to agree on various bases for an Interim Government no one could be bound to any of the suggestions made, and therefore the Viceroy was faced with the responsibility of fresh negotiations.

On July 29th the Moslem League Council withdrew its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's proposals and threatened intense opposition, to include "direct action". Under the circumstances, the Viceroy was impelled to ask Pandit Nehru to make proposals for the immediate formation of an Interim Government, and this was accepted. Pandit Nehru made further unsuccessful efforts to secure the co-operation of Mr. Jinnah. The Sikhs, however, agreed to co-operate and enter the Constituent Assembly. Carrying their opposition a stage further the League announced its intention of boycotting the Constituent Assembly. In Calcutta fierce riots broke out and caused the loss of 4,000 lives; the Bengal Moslem League Government not only repudiating any share of blame but attempting to fasten it not only on to Congress but also the British Government !

In early July the Viceroy appointed a "caretaker" Government of eight ministers, but efforts continued to secure a representative Interim Government. Congress reiterated its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's plan, and on August 12th the Viceroy invited Pandit Nehru to make proposals for the formation of a Government. This was accepted, and on September 2nd the first responsible All-Indian Government came into being. Lamentable as was the refusal of the Moslem League to co-operate, the date has great historical significance.

Apart from the Moslem League, the new Government had generally a good reception, and Mr. Gandhi declared: "The door to 'Purna Swaraj' has at last been opened".

Still further efforts to bring in the Moslem League were made by the Viceroy, Pandit Nehru, the Nawab of Bhopal and others: Mr. Gandhi himself advancing a formula, about part of which he afterwards confessed he was not happy. However, ultimately, although without adequate prior agreement, the Moslem League decided to enter the Government, and on October 15th five Moslem League nominees were appointed Ministers. As two seats had been left open, this involved the resignation of only three existing Ministers (Bose, Ahmed Khan and Zaheer), but the Moslem League nominees included as their fifth Mr. Jagendra Nath Mondal, Bengal leader of Dr. Ambedkar's Scheduled Castes Federation! Thus the Government possesses two "Untouchables", although of two different organisations. There are alternative interpretations of the significance of this.

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A new chapter begins. The Indian leaders are confronted with vast and exacting problems, including the urgent need of economic reconstruction that will assure food, health and well-being of the masses. They must receive our utmost sustained good-will, and the earnest hope that pitiful futile bitterness and bloodshed will dissolve in the warmth of devotion to the transformation of India. It is not only India that so urgently requires this for her own true good. The human race itself can gain inspiration from her, and ample nourishment for faith in world liberty and peace.

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