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THE GROWTH OF CIVILISATION

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THE GROWTH OF CIVILISATION

BY

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THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

ADYAR, MADRAS, INDIA

1925

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THE Brahmavidya Ashrama, Adyar, Madras, is a school for the synthetical study of universal knowledge and culture on the principle that these, in their racial, religious, national and individual aspects, are essentially related and mutually illuminating expressions of the one Cosmic Life. This book is based on lectures delivered in the Ashrama.

CONTENTS

I. CIVILISATION, AND THE CONDITIONS OF ITS GROWTH Pp. 1—37

Definitions and questions involved. Laws of nature and human psychology as aids to understanding and anticipating the growth of civilisation. Inadequate conceptions of human nature and environment now changing. Interaction of humanity and nature. The influence of necessity, fear and sloth. The error of the materialistic conception of civilisation. The development of altruism. The necessity of freedom from external domination. The law-breaker as aid to the growth of civilisation. The power of personality. Leadership and the national mould. The prophecy of one age the commonplace of another. Revolutions not sudden but gradually approached climaxes. The cycle of civilisation—prophet, priest, parasite; prophet, etc. Civilisations to be judged by their highest products.

II. THE GROWTH OF WESTERN CIVILISA- TION. Pp. 38—75

General unity of Western Civilisation. Movement from particular experiences to general principles. Contribution of Greece in institutions; Rome in

law, order and discipline ; Christianity in spiritual equality, individualism and social service ; Hebraism in business ability. Transition from the Greek City State through Roman imperialism to feudalism. Breakdown of feudalism through absence of initiative. Interaction of Church and State in the struggle for power. The rise and fall of Theocracy. Development of national consciousness. The Renaissance. Cultural, economical, political and religious development. Beginnings of capitalism, individualism and representative institutions. Capital, machinery and labour. The Industrial Revolution. The rise of rationalism and materialism. Imperial expansion. Idealism and social amelioration. Modern democracy. Rise of the Labour Party and advance in labour conditions. Death of materialistic Socialism. New ideas in international relationships. The physical world conquered—the superphysical yet to be conquered.

III. THE CIVILISATION OF INDIA Pp. 76—109

India's civilisation the reverse of the Western—moves from universal principles to details of practice. It began in a perfect conception of relationships and duties: no record of growth possible. Early grasp of the spiritual view of the universe and the transiency of physical existence. The immanence of God and the solidarity of life, the basic principles of Indian Civilisation. Practical application in the division of mutual social duties: each for all.

Physical simplicity organised to provide cultural opportunity. Religious and social tolerance universally practised. Personality as such not valued. Brahmans (teachers) freed from physical necessity for cultural and religious service. Danger of degeneration in a privileged class forestalled by checks in social organisation. These checks ultimately failed through change of environment. Ancient scheme of rulership—to enable the people to fulfil their *dharma* (duties). Bad kings deposed. Republics in India. Dynastic wars only between warrior caste: people and country unaffected. Village administration the stable base of Indian Civilisation. Indian democracy superseded by external autocracy. The merchant caste. Production of wealth encouraged—for the good of all. Individual simplicity led to national wealth because of national solidarity. The trade of India. Craft-guilds. The serving caste. Danger of physical well-being inducing spiritual inertia. Decay of Indian Civilisation through adaptation to foreign intrusions. Evils of dual leadership—foreign-physical and indigenous-cultural. Modern revival of Indian Civilisation.

INDEX P. III

BIBLIOGRAPHY P. II6



CIVILISATION AND THE CONDITIONS OF ITS GROWTH

A DEFINITION of Civilisation that will fulfil the demands of exact knowledge and scientific precision is difficult, since it has to combine in itself two very divergent factors. It should neither be so general as to become vague, nor so particular as to induce narrowness of vision. The field is wide; the factors and laws of the growth of Civilisation are the factors and laws of various other sciences interacting in certain ways at one epoch, and making quite a different combination in another. No definition can, therefore, be satisfactory from all points of view. Every definition must lie under the charge of being dogmatic in one way or another, having assumed certain hypotheses which critics might not accept. So wide is its scope that it is quite possible for a student "to acquire that command over his understanding which would enable him to believe what he wishes, without evidence, or to refuse his assent to what might be displeasing, when accompanied with evidence". (Max Nordau.) If, in order to safeguard

himself from the charge of bias or prejudice, the student tries to become exact in his definition, the limitations of time and space will constrain him to take only a few aspects of the complexities of Civilisation, and read into them the laws of only one or a few of the various sciences, Biology or Natural Science, for example, in which he may have met with more evidence of one kind than of another. Or, he may become so vague that his definition may not be a true definition at all.

A definition of a subject like Civilisation can, therefore, be, at best, only a partial expression of Truth, if it is not to be simply a platitude. It must serve only as a basis for the understanding of humanity in certain environments and of the ways in which it is trying to adapt itself to circumstances and to modify those circumstances to suit its varying needs and fulfil its fixed aspirations. A contemporary writer defines Civilisation as "the aggregate of the inequalities multiplied by the number of individuals having physical or mental intercourse with each other in pursuit of material, mental or spiritual wealth". (Hecht: *The Real Wealth of Nations*.) In other words, it includes the lowest common multiple of the virtues and characteristics of the innumerable people of a race having intercourse with one another in all the phases of their complex nature. The more this leavens the lives of a growing number within the race, the higher is the stage that a

particular Civilisation has reached. The less this affects practically the daily life of a majority of the individuals comprising the race, the more distant is the date of its fulfilment and fruition.

The definition, just quoted, valuable as it is because of its comprehensive nature, suffers from a certain amount of abstraction and vagueness which may render it difficult of complete realisation in minds that require something more concrete. A happier definition probably is that of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, who says that Civilisation "is a mould that each nation is busy making for itself to shape its men and women according to its best ideal". This is simple, and, to people who have convinced themselves that there is a Divine governance behind the history of nations, unexceptionable.

Dr. Tagore's definition presupposes a number of hypotheses, and gives rise to numerous questions. Is the nation conscious or unconscious of the mould? Is Civilisation shaping its men and women according to its best ideal with their consciousness awake, or when they are not conscious of it at all? Is the nation something apart from and more than its men and women? Is there at all a mould? Or, is it not reading into history what has been preconceived by prejudiced minds? Do not those who read between the lines in history, and see, in its unfolding, God's Plan for men, do violence to their reason by twisting facts of history to suit their original theory and read

something which is not at all discernible according to accepted laws of evidence?

Students who assume a spiritual basis to the manifested universe are not overwhelmed by these questions, especially of the latter kind. They know of God's Plan for men from evidence quite irrespective of history. When they approach the study of Civilisation, therefore, they do not come with the object of "justifying the ways of God to men," or proving the existence of the Divine Plan, or even to take on the rôle of the theologian for the conversion of the confirmed agnostic to the paths of religion. When they study Civilisations, precisely and analytically, it is not that they may "laugh at the actions of mankind, groan over them or even be angry with them," (Morley quoting Spinoza: *Politics and History*, p. 2) but that they may, in all humility and reverence, better understand the Plan, and intelligently co-operate with it in serving mankind.

We are not really doing violence anyhow to reason and to facts of history, when we see the hand of Destiny in the great cataclysms, the building of Empires and their fall, the rising of nations, the coming into prominence of great makers of history at particular epochs, the absence of any Saviour of a country at a moment of its peril. If we are, then we err in the company of a large number of famous thinkers like Carlyle and Hegel. With the growing power of the two sciences, till recently in

their infancy, Psychology and Statistics, the rationalistic interpretation of history as the result of a governance of the world from behind the scenes is taking an increasingly stronger hold of the minds of men. It is possible now to forecast the stage at which Civilisation will presently arrive, with a greater degree of precision than it was before, because of a clearer understanding of the laws of certain of those sciences whose jurisdiction in the aggregate extends to that condition which we understand by Civilisation. But a complete prognostication will not be possible, because of the play of a large number of forces on man on various planes, some more insistent and others less so at particular epochs of time. The more we understand the laws of work on these various planes, the more definite can our consciousness be of the line of growth of particular sections of the human race.

History, which in its widest sense "is the sum of the episodes of the human struggle for existence," (Max Nordau: *The Interpretation of History*, p. 12) is likely to land the searcher after Truth in a quagmire of chaos and confusion unless he approaches it in the scientific spirit, with a knowledge of what he is to observe and study. If he is not to lose sight of the wood for the trees, if he is not to lay too much emphasis upon the trivialities of struggles, mistaking them for world-conflagrations, he must have clearly in the background of his mind the nature of the

people whose history is being studied—the psychology of those people, their physical environments, the modifications which the people have so far made in those environments and how they achieved them. Studied in this way, the laws of the growth of Civilisation are more easily arrived at, and incidentally, the laws of God's Plan, Evolution, are further illumined.

It has been said that a Sociologist only “ prognosticates ” the past, because, having picked up the facts of the past, he can thread them together in the light of later knowledge and see clearly the working of the law of cause and effect. Our discovery of the future must necessarily fail in point of time and space, because we lack the data of complete knowledge of the laws of time and space. But, from this, one cannot rush to the conclusion that the study of Civilisation does not help in understanding mankind and its goal, for already we have arrived at a stage when we can consciously understand a few of the laws of the growth of Civilisation, and to that extent, we can co-operate less gropingly and blindly with the laws of Evolution. The time at which the dimly visaged goal of a particular Civilisation will be reached must for ever remain unknown, as there are innumerable possibilities and gradations in the transition from the present to the future. The direction of the road in Civilisation can easily and clearly be discerned by all students of Comparative History, though the

number of bypaths and blind alleys may be innumerable. MacIver says (*Community: A Sociological Study*): "Community has advanced along that road, not in any steady progress but in spite of halts, wanderings and retreats. As it has advanced, the meaning of its march has become, though still dim, yet clearer. Blind impulses are superseded by conscious forces, whereupon it appears that much that was blind in its operation—blind to us whom it impelled—was not yet meaningless, but continuous with what now reveals itself as our own conscious purpose. If that purpose grows still clearer, the movement of community will become more straightforward, towards an age for which the records of this present time will be a memory of old far-off days."

The growth of Civilisation may, alternatively, be termed—"History without proper names, dealing with the Biology of the Human Species," even as Max Nordau calls Sociology "History without proper names". (*The Interpretation of History*, p. 94.) The recorded history of nations is only the history of certain individuals, who, by the nature of their outstanding achievements and characteristics, have made themselves felt in their time, and marked by their existence a few steps on the path of their nation's life. They have created ripples in the otherwise even tenor of the lives of their contemporaries, or have caused radical changes in the manners and customs of their people. They have

broken old traditions and helped to create new ones. They have, to all outward appearances, changed the direction of their country's growth. They have destroyed institutions and built up new institutions in their place. But communal development is a unity. If the outstanding individual is successful in creating a niche for himself in recorded history, if in succeeding generations he is regarded as a prophet of a new age and not as a crank, it is because of the people of the time, who willingly, or perhaps even unwillingly, consented to follow him, having within themselves in varying grades of latency or potency the greatness which responded to the call of the greatness of the makers of history. The small or big changes recorded in the lives of nations, the reformations or revolutions, though inspired by a few personalities in their immediate past, have had their seeds slowly germinating in the minds of the people for a far longer period. These great changes are like "changing the heat of the fire, and applying it at various places in order to strengthen and temper humanity".

The laws underlying the growth of Civilisation have not yet become clear and definite. All human sciences suffer in common from the lack of definiteness and exactitude. It is only recently that there has arisen an all-round recognition of man's complex nature. The economist of the eighteenth century tried to think of an Economic Man—an abstract

being who had no existence, and who was supposed to be dominated by nothing except primitive and selfish motives. The biologist and the materialistic Socialist tried to apply the laws of Biology—the laws of the struggle for existence—to humanity as well. Comte tried to show that human sciences differed from exact sciences, like Astronomy and Mathematics, only in the degree of possibility of their error and deviation from Truth, and not in the kind of laws and topics to be studied. Nietzsche and Bernhardt on the one hand, Karl Marx and Lenin on the other, have based their programmes, the former in theory and the latter for practical application to revolutionise human society, on the doctrine of Might. Every one of these philosophers, writers or leaders have built their ideas on wrong foundations, and their interpretation has had to undergo great modifications, because Mankind refused to fit in with their theory for long, though it may have held good on occasions. The fundamental unity of man's nature (which is apparently a bundle of contradictory principles, incompatible with one another) has now come to be widely accepted, and every one of the social sciences is accordingly undergoing radical revision. Man is selfish; he is also altruistic. Might is Right, though frequently Right is Might. Man is concerned more with material wealth than a far-away Heaven to be reached after a life of austerity and self-denial; and

yet man will make and has been proved to have made any sacrifice in the name of Religion for a future state of happiness. Intellect is more powerful than mere sentiment, even though sentiment and emotion are more potent factors in man's life than intelligence. The psychologist is taking all these paradoxes into consideration and in the modern age bases his conclusions upon the action and interaction of the opposing forces, in the varying degrees of intensity in which they operate on man at particular epochs. As a consequence, the generalised laws of growth are vague and indefinite.

The first law to be taken into account is that the natural forces and laws at work everywhere contribute towards the growth of human Civilisation. Humanity does not stand in Evolution in a water-tight compartment of its own. The other kingdoms of Nature have got their laws of growth, and they also include humanity in one big sweep of Universal Brotherhood. The big cataclysms in the world, from the sinking of Poseidonis under the waves to the recent catastrophes of Japan, have got their say in the making of Civilisations. The tropical luxuriance of Africa, the variegated resources of India, and the natural bigness of the yet unexploited wealth of America contribute their share to the growth of relationships between the various human groups and to modifications of their manners and customs. Max Nordau points out that "the purely

natural events that are entirely outside the action of the human will have had a greater influence on the destiny, not only of individuals, groups or nations, but of human existence as a whole, than the whole range of what is assumed by historians to be essential and important, than the foundations of states, the establishment of Religions, the rise and development of social institutions, the conceptions of law and property, constitutional and metaphysical ideas". (*Interpretation of History*, p. 15.) The play of the world-forces, whether regular as they normally are, or convulsive upon occasion, contribute either to develop, change or revolutionise human society. Where the forces are regular, the law of growth can be made definite; where seismic and cataclysmic, it is indeterminate for the time and can be understood only as applied by the guiding hand of Destiny to make some preconceived move either to develop or to destroy. When the mould "that the nation is busy making for itself" is finished, when the people in it express as perfectly as possible, with their imperfect vehicles, the aspect of Truth which the Inner Ruler Immortal intended them to show out, we are told that Nature, which is "so careless of the single life," but which is "so careful of the type," ruthlessly destroys it, so that with better forms, the Truth may be still better expressed. When the virtues of a Civilisation in course of time turn by a curious trick of Nature's laws into vices, and threaten retardation

of human progress, down comes the Divine axe. When, in the words of Goethe, "Reason turns to nonsense, and benefit to nuisance," and the degradation is so low that there is no possibility of redemption, there is nothing remaining for it but annihilation in the interests of other Civilisations. History teems with examples of Nature's coming to save nations or to destroy them according as they have yet to fulfil their destiny, or, having done so, the spirit within having departed, their virtues have turned gradually into vices. But to observe this law, one must search for it; otherwise in the multitude of other events, it may easily be lost sight of. To the materialist, for instance, the unexplained unforeseen help or destruction might not mean anything designed or planned. It might appear to be taking facts out of their context and twisting them so as to fit into the pre-conceived notion of a Divine Government of the world. However this may be, no one can find fault at least with what Buckle says: "If we consider man's constant contact with the external world, we shall be convinced that there is an inner connection between the actions of Man and the laws of Nature." (*History of Civilisation*, Vol. I, p. 31.)

The laws of Nature include within their scope the laws of Biology, the laws of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. Mankind shares with animals the characteristics of the search for food and the preservation of the race. These are expressed

in all their crudity and through ugly forms in a savage state of society, while in advanced circles, they are removed to other planes of action, and the resulting evils of struggle, etc., are minimised or removed by counteracting laws being brought into operation. The *Hitopadesa*, a masterpiece of Hindu lore intended to teach political lessons in easy ways, points out that man and beast are alike actuated in their activities by the four primal instincts of appeasing hunger, desire for rest (sloth), fear and the propagation of the race. Fear and sloth indicate the law of economy of effort, by which the stronger always induces the weaker to work for him, thus creating a parasitical class—whether it be the man by the might of his muscle making his squaw do all the unpleasant work or the big capitalist by the power of his brain squeezing profits out of sweated wage-earners. This is always visible wherever any kind of exploitation takes place. Max Nordau is able to glean from an unprejudiced view of history (pp. 357-359) only this law of least effort whereby the stronger individuals make themselves parasites preying on the weaker and the eternal fleeing from pain—be it the attempt at escape of galley slaves or the inducement to put forth the best endeavour in furthering mechanical inventions. It is this law of parasitism, this struggle for existence, for which there has been evidence in recorded history out of all proportion to the real state of affairs, that has resulted in the materialistic

interpretation of history which has soiled the pages of philosophy from the days of Darwin through Karl Marx and Nietzsche down almost to the present day. Western history is synonymous with homicide, says George Peel, in *The Future of England*. "History down to the middle of the eighteenth century is only the biography of Might," says St. Simon. Recorded history of governments is so, and thus bears witness to the operation of the biological law in human society. But is the evidence complete? The Bishop of Winchester was able to observe in 1913, the year previous to the beginning of the world-war, that the main principles of Western Civilisation were equality of all men and absolute self-surrender. The Bishop only represents the other side of the exaggerations of Nietzsche and his school. History is not merely composed of the lives of rulers and their wars. Materialistic interpreters have not taken into account the social history of the people, their religious history, their literary history, their æsthetic history and their cultural history. Records of these are more difficult to obtain: patience, perseverance, and intelligence are required to unearth and elucidate them. In the meantime we have had the materialistic interpretation. Every philosophical historian who is materialistic tends to see man in one aspect only, and not man as a whole, as he lives and moves and has his being, as he suffers, seeks, loses his way and finds it again. A philosophy of history which thus fails to present the whole

living man is necessarily false (p. 78, Max Nordau). The world does not need much convincing that the biological law, valuable as it is in showing that man shares with the animal certain characteristics, is not only not the only law governing mankind, but also not the most important. The overwhelming power of religion over men, the extraordinary development of ethical ideas and the altruism shown by civilised men in the development of the spirit of humanity, in the treatment of children, animals, victims of cruel disease, criminals and slaves, shows that the law of the struggle for existence has always been and is increasingly being dominated by humanistic law.

One of the most important laws in the growth of Civilisation is freedom for the people in all the aspects of their being, physical, emotional and mental. Of course this freedom is not the unrestrained license of people without character, but the ordered, educated freedom which Kant and Hegel speak of. This freedom cannot come at an early stage in the growth of any Civilisation, as it cannot be understood at all and would still not be recognised, as the people would still be chafing against the existing restrictions of Society. They would still be educating themselves by readjusting their nature so as to fit in, without feeling pain, with the restrictions imposed by law. But, after a nation has gone through the stage of self-aggrandisement, and has come to realise, even faintly, the futility of building up a Power on the

foundations of Might, it begins to realise dimly its great need for liberty. The Civilisation which is dominant in the world to-day—that which is called Western Civilisation—has come to a stage where the principles of nationality and democracy have been recognised, in theory at least, as necessary for all peoples, however much vested interests may stand in the way of the practical realisation of these in the physical world and invent excuses for the continuation of the doctrine of the White Man's Burden. There *are* dissentient voices, but these are drowned in the clamour of high-sounding phrases such as Self-Determination, Rights of Small Nations, and Representation of Minorities. It is now generally understood that physical freedom is a great essential in the growth of any nation. This resolves itself into freedom for the individual as well as for the community itself.

In all communities we always find the majority of the people law-abiding and good, and in possession of all the passive virtues enjoined on man by all religions. They may not have developed the active virtues which make for real greatness. There are also law-breakers; and these resolve themselves into two groups, the smaller being really above laws, too great to be understood by their contemporaries, but still suffering from the legal sanctions attached to laws; and the other, the far bigger section, being too primitive and unevolved to realise the value of

community life and the necessity for the restraint of individual vagaries if the community is to live. A Bruno, a Galileo, a Bacon, a Voltaire, a Socrates may suffer the extreme penalties of the law, but they have made society the richer for their lives. They live an inner life of their own far more beautiful and inspiring than what the mere outward physical existence can give. If these were left to themselves unhampered, Society would go up by leaps and bounds, helped by the wealth of their thought and culture.

“ Honour to those whose words or deeds
Thus help us in our daily needs,
And by their overflow,
Raise us from what is low.”

In modern Civilisation, however, they cannot be left to themselves. All inner motives are judged by their outer conduct, and people have to be sacrificed for the sake of the shibboleth, Equality, even though every one knows that all cannot be equal in an evolving universe. In the ancient Indian Civilisation, it was possible to leave the high-caste man alone or give him only a nominal punishment for offences which, committed by a lower-caste man, would have been met probably by severe punishment. In the one case, the severe punishment was intended as a preventive of further ills, whereas in the other case of the person who knew or ought to have known what he was about, there was a greater amount of freedom. The

administrative law of Europe up to the nineteenth century was based on the same principle. But such a course will not be understood in modern days, and even if understood cannot be put in force, because of the lower standard of character exacted by society which is content now with the rigidity of external convention and conduct. As it is, a certain levelling-up has been done to-day, more liberty being given to the non-moral and less to the moral than was possible under the conditions of ancient society. If law and justice are to be efficient, and if judges cannot have an insight into the real motives of people, one cannot expect a high order of perfect justice. On the other hand, if there were means to ascertain the real natures of people, or if there existed some kind of excellent unexceptionable caste system, outer inequality would then be welcomed as an untold blessing. For this also, a kind of ideal monarchy or aristocracy would be required to preside over the destinies of nations in an absolutely paternal fashion. A democracy of the kind we know, and inequality of treatment of offences against the law due to prerogatives of caste, are incompatible with one another. A knowledge of Nature's law that if a person is to be outwardly free, he must have educated his inner self, so that an inner compulsion takes the place of outer law, will help in bringing about, in the course of ages, the desired change. Till then, equality of treatment of the sinner and the saint will be preserved for the

safety of the race. For every Saviour, whose crucifixion is an act of blasphemy, there are thousands of wrong-doers crucified. If the latter are not treated according to the strict letter of the law, their destructive tendencies may lead to there not being anybody left to be saved. The world requires Saviours badly who will not be crucified, and in order that it may be possible for them to live in society, there must be erected for them the barricade of privilege exempting them from common law—a supernormal, ideal moral caste must be recognised. The sooner such a caste system based on quality and service comes into existence, the quicker will be the growth of Civilisation.

This freedom from restraint to that class to whom the Inner Voice is the guide in physical action will lead to the exploration of an almost endless field in the emotional and mental worlds, and the riches thus gathered by the few will be at the disposal of the nation, as it is being more and more realised that all experiences of individuals benefit the group consciousness as a whole.

Unless a nation is also free from foreign dominance, it has very little chance of developing along the lines of its own growth. If individuals cannot develop to their full stature under conditions of repression, much more so is it the case with nations as a whole. Every nation grows in an atmosphere of its own. It may profit greatly in friendly intercourse

with others. It very rarely happens, however, that an individual belonging to one nation is fully able to understand another nation, because the expression of the two in the outer world differs widely. However sympathetic and willing to appreciate another nation, a person not born in a body of that race rarely takes kindly to all the traits which appear to be fundamental in its life. There is something which prevents the easy mixture of the two races. This does not mean that when two races come together, they do not learn anything. On the other hand both can and do mutually develop a good deal ; but by conscious free effort and not by external compulsion.

In recent days there arose the theory of the White Man's Burden which happily is now almost exploded. Missionaries of Western Civilisation have tried to "civilise" other races, forgetting that some of those races have had contact with much older Civilisations. It is no wonder that there have been great difficulties where the East and the West have come together, when the latter brought with it its assumption of superiority. The laws made by a foreign ruler, however beneficial they might be if applied in his own country, cause great misery in the country of which he is the self-appointed governor. Very frequently, he wonders at his own unpopularity and accuses the people of ingratitude, and this helps to increase his contempt for the race which he had come to civilise.

In the nineteenth century Europe developed the idea of Nationality, and the twentieth century has seen the rise of the doctrine of Self-Determination and Mandatory Rule. It is now recognised that where one nation rules another people, the Government must be responsible to the League of Nations, because the subject people have not yet come to the position where they can make proper use of the responsibility of their government to themselves. The next stage must soon follow—that of the ending of mandatory rule. For, it is not merely a responsible Government that is wanted, but a Government *responsible to the people of the country it governs*. It is *these* that are primarily concerned. It is *their* happiness that is at stake. A very well-meaning foreign benevolent despotism might easily defeat its own object. The Roman occupation of Britain and British rule in India were able to help the subject peoples to a certain extent. But they are the standard examples in history which show that a method of government in which the people are not taken into partnership with the rulers will deprive the subjects of initiative and make them depend for the necessities of life on the munificence of a philanthropic autocracy. Such a system stands self-condemned.

Foreign rule checks the growth of a nation in a number of ways. It deprives the people of the power of initiative. It tries to create and impose upon the subject people a mongrel Civilisation with

none of the features which make for the greatness of either of the nations, as separate entities, or even when they are friendly and sympathetic and stand on an equal footing without any assumption of superiority. It has always been observed that when two Civilisations meet—the one to command, and the other to obey implicitly, the result is the springing into existence of a half-caste class of people with power derived from the rulers, but with none of their culture and nobility, a class looked down upon alike by the rulers and the subject race, and showing the worst features of both. A third reason why foreign domination will be eliminated in the course of the growth of Civilisation is that the nation's line of growth is revealed almost exclusively to the leaders who are born and bred in that nation. The people subject to foreign rule will be pulled by two forces, immediate and material interests dragging them to the feet of the governors, and natural sympathy and understanding trying to lead them to the great people of their land. According to the temperament of each individual and the circumstances in which he is placed, the Government and the leaders get their respective partisans. In a self-governing community, parties are based on principles, but in a condition of foreign domination, the parties are always divided on racial lines. For the Government and the natural leaders of the people to stand on the same side is an impossibility, except on rare occasions. This conflict

of interest is bound to retard the growth of Civilisation, even if it does not make it take a retrograde step.

Another law in the growth of nations is the place of great individuals in society. Carlyle said that the history of nations is the history of individuals. This, like all epigrammatic statements, is only partly true. If we study the political or constitutional history of any country, we see that the brilliant epochs therein are those in which people of outstanding greatness in the military, financial, legal or political departments have been at the helm. These create the dynamic forces which move on from stage to stage the people who, by the law of inertia, tend to maintain a static condition. The history of the most interesting period of the Roman Republic, that is, of a century before the establishment of the Roman Empire, is practically the biography of seven or eight great Roman personalities of the time. This same Truth is illustrated by instances from the history of every land.

Such personalities, the representatives of the best in the community so far as their own department is concerned, are divisible into two types according to their inherent nature—those who, apparently living amongst others, belong so far to the future that they uncompromisingly and earnestly desire to bring about a change in the present ; and those who, more practical, take note of the circumstances of the times,

make allowances for the weaknesses and motives of the people, and are willing to a certain extent to humour them even in their pettinesses, so that it might be possible for them to live with them, and gradually coax and cajole them into moving slowly in the desired direction. Of the first type are made the great martyrs of the world, awe-inspiring and divine in the light of the wisdom of later generations ; from the second type come the great statesmen and practical reformers who move between the heights of popularity and the depths of condemnation, but who achieve, more or less even in their own lifetimes, at least a fraction of the reforms they had set their minds upon. Every nation has these two types of people in the various departments of its life—the Extremists and the Moderates, the Radicals and the Liberals, the fanatics and the compromisers, the idealists and the statesmen. Where the former sow, the latter reap. By the shock of their extreme opinions, by the rigidity of their lives, and by the unbending nature of the demands they make on the community for change, they prepare the storm which will later compel the people to leave the “safe” harbour of contented conservative static life and steer for the open sea of discussion and agitation, if they would save themselves from being hurled on the rocky coast of decadence and death. The people fear to move out of the “safe” grooves of life made for them by centuries of habit into which they were contentedly

sinking, in order to tread new paths wherein there will be fresh necessity for readjustment of their personal natures. And wherever personal readjustments take place, there is the necessary concomitant—Pain. When the people are considering how best to avoid this trouble, the moderate comes along preaching comparatively easier progress by stages, and succeeds in taking the people on a few steps in advance of where they were.

Why should the moderate succeed, where the enthusiast fails? Because the moderate is in touch with the realities of the present, while the enthusiast lives in a world of his own, a world which, however, will be also that of the community at a later stage. In the *Philosophical Theory of the State*, p. 14, Bosanquet says: "The popular rendering of a great man's views is singularly liable to run straight into the pit-falls against which he more particularly warned the world. This could be proved true in an extraordinary degree of such men as Plato and Spinoza, and still more astonishingly, perhaps, of the founder of the Christian religion. The reason is obvious. A great man works with the ideas of his age, and regenerates them. But, in as far as he regenerates them, he gets beyond the ordinary mind; while in as far as he operates with them, he remains accessible to it. And his own mind has its ordinary side; the regeneration of ideas which he is able to effect is not complete and the notions of the day not

only limit his entire range of achievement—where the strongest runner will get to must depend on where he starts—but float about unassimilated within his living stream of thought. Now all this ordinary side of his mind will partake of the strength and splendour of his whole nature. And thus he will seem to have preached the very superstitions which he combated. For in part he has done so, being himself infected ; in part the overwhelming bias of his interpreters has reversed the meaning of his very warnings, by transferring the importance, due to his central thought, to some detail or metaphor which belongs to the lower level of his mind. It is an old story how Spinoza, ‘the God-intoxicated man,’ was held to be an ‘atheist,’ when in truth, he was rather an ‘acosmist’ ; and in the same way, on a lower plane, the writer, who struggled through to the idea that true sovereignty lay in the dominion of a common social good as expressed through law and institutions, is held to have ascribed absolute supremacy to that chance combination of individual voices in a majority, which he expressly pointed out to have, in itself, no authority at all.”

The idealists first create the thought-atmosphere of the desired change. Theirs is the work of the pioneer who has to bear the brunt of opposition, ridicule and calumny. It is the easier task of the reformer to gather things together and advance a step in progress. The impossibility of the idealists’

realising their ideal immediately is an important factor in the growth of nations. Idealists are of various kinds. It is possible that some idealists have got their principles all wrong. They may not see truly the path of the nation's greatness. The slowness of the assimilation of change is something like the nation being given a chance to realise what they are about after a process of slow thinking, and to stop advancing along a particular road if their instinct tells them it is all wrong. The doctrine of Non-Co-operation in India may be taken as an example of this. It was not in accordance with the genius of the nation, and the people had to give it up. Incalculable harm was done by it, and there was even a set-back in progress. But the harm is not irremediable. It would have been, if the natural conservatism of the people had not delayed putting the idea into complete practice. The persisting instinct of the nation is the voice of the National Being. Bosanquet puts it clearly in the following words: "The State (Nation) is, as Plato told us, the individual mind writ large, or our mind reinforced by capacities which are of its own nature, but which supplement its defects." (P. 154.) Where the views of leaders are ultimately found to be repugnant to the people, it is obvious that such views are not among the ingredients of the national mould. In the case of India, the old Aryan culture has withstood all attempts at its overthrow, though

there have been many opportunities in the continuous flow of invasions of foreigners for over two thousand years. The indigenous culture profited by learning from the various cultures of the invaders ; but at no time did it bow its head so low as to be trampled on by any foreign Civilisation. Only within the last half century were fears entertained seriously that India was being denationalised to the detriment of its glorious cultural heritage. But we already see her shaking off the evils of westernisation, after having gained something of what its individualism had to teach, and beginning to stand up for the old Aryan ideals, though modified to suit changed modern conditions. The old Civilisation has its roots too deep in the nation's heart to be easily disturbed by outer events.

It is gathered, then, that the growth of Civilisation is a slow process which does not allow of quick changes or drastic revolutions. History properly understood is only a gradual unfolding of a panorama, where one may find a placid, calm and steady evolution, and where the so-called revolutions in any sphere sink to their proper place as outer readjustments to suit the changed inner reality. It is true that there have occurred in the world's history a thousand revolutions, but they are simply the *accidents* or *outer* modes of expression of the evolving *substance* of humanity. The great and apparently violent quick changes are but the last

of a long series of events, the first of which began long previously in a new departure preached by a prophet probably not heard in his time. and whose importance was not noted because of the absence of a discriminating mind. If there had been such a mind watching the course of events as they took place in time, the nation would not have merely revelled in the outward shows of effete institutions whose life had passed away. But, when the courtier and the historian, the soldier and the capitalist, were busy warming themselves round the genial fires of old courts and institutions, they had neither the wisdom nor the desire to see that that which was holding their attention just then had put on only a spurious appearance of reality, the life within having begun to fade away in order that it might appear again in places where it might grow unimpeded by tradition. For tradition has always been, in history, the slayer of advance. In the meantime, the life has been gradually evolving in an unostentatious way in some quiet new institution, and the moment it is strong enough to break the old moulds, the historian comes forward attracted by the explosion and finds a "revolution". If he had not lost sight of the wood for the trees, if he had discriminated between life and form, if he had recognised the unified life of a people expressed in their thoughts and aspirations, instead of in the pretensions of the old traditions, he would have seen

the so-called violent changes in their proper light. The poet and the philosopher are more to be trusted in this than the record-keeper.

In brief, the process seems to be something like this. A standard is set up by the leaders of the people who slowly adjust themselves to it and are just about to settle down comfortably to a static condition. Away go the prophets preaching a new order. Society does not want to follow, but is constrained to do so, because of the shifting of the force of the consciousness of the National Being. The old conventions remain, and presently a revolution breaks them up, and society openly begins with new standards, with priests of the new order to preserve the teachings of the prophet whose words fell on deaf ears when he was alive. These priests become in course of time a privileged class without the real knowledge to cope with changing conditions. They live purely on tradition and oppose change, while the world wants change for its evolution. The two cannot go on together for long. A new prophet then arises and the cycle is repeated. Prophets—gradual realisation of the truth and wisdom of the prophet's words—priests of a high order—priests who are parasites—prophets again: this is the never-ending cycle in evolution.

We note in all Civilisations epochs of time when parasitism is rampant. All reformations and revolutions aim at getting rid of parasites, but the biological

law insists on bringing them in a cyclic order. Examined briefly, the parasites turn out to be the representatives of that class which was called out in a previous epoch by reason of its virtues to be the custodians of power for the guarantee of equitable rights of the members of the community. No better illustration can be cited than Plato's cyclic law as he formulated it for the political sphere. Monarchy was a good form of government. It became a parasite in course of time and became Tyranny. A revolution put an end to it and vested the power in an Aristocracy—the best form of government. But this was not immune from decay; it became parasitical and was called Oligarchy. Another revolution then shifted the power to the people—Democracy. For a time it worked well, but, parasitism once again prevailing, it became mere mob-rule. Another revolution had to bring back the old Monarchy once again. Taking any nation's history, we find the origin of the parasites in a necessity to found a privileged class to hold power in trusteeship for the people. The caste systems of the world, the industrial systems, feudalism, Holy Alliances—all these bear witness to the fact that what was once good and noble had turned to evil. Revolution is Nature's reply to parasitism.

It is being recognised more and more in modern philosophies that the community has got a conscious existence of its own. From the days of Prince

Macchiavelli, when state morality was plainly stated to stand on a platform of its own, without the possibility of comparison with individual morality, down to our own day, there has been a stream of thought positing the existence of a National Being who pervades the consciousness of the people in a race whether they are aware of it or not.

The question: Is the individual for the State, or the State for the individual? is answered in different ways at different epochs. At one time there is advance and conquest of new fields in various spheres; at another the nation rests and assimilates the conquests. In most cases the former synchronises with the time at which the idea that the individual is more important than the community is felt. At the time of assimilation, it is felt that the individual is but a part of a big machine, and his happiness and ease are valuable only in so far as the nation's happiness and ease are promoted. The individualistic era is the time of outer progress; but the inequalities created by individualism are so irritating that the National Being shakes up its consciousness and then there is a sort of levelling up and consolidation in a socialistic regime. Socialism presently leads to laziness and immoral parasitism, to escape which and to create initiative which is at a discount in that era, individualism once again springs up. Civilisation proceeds then on the two wheels of individualism and socialism. When the weakness of the one

becomes pre-eminent, the strength of the other comes to the rescue of the nation and vice versa.

These are some of the laws which govern the growth of Civilisations. Briefly, they serve to take the individual through the various stages of rank savagery, low mentality, selfishness and self-centredness, struggle for existence, aggrandisement, etc., to the stage where he realises the Unity of the Self, and becomes a conscious agent in actively helping in furthering God's Plan—Evolution. With all his angularities rubbed off, with an inner compulsion taking the place of outer law, the individual has been led by Civilisation to the place he is really to occupy in God's scheme. Civilisations, like human beings, have their child stage, then they gradually mature, and presently, when their work is over, they decay. All Civilisations are alike in the work they do, and hence do not afford any firm basis for comparison. The outer forms may vary, conventions may be different, the methods of expression may appear strange; yet the real work of all Civilisations is the same. A lack of sympathy and understanding, the absence of wideness of vision, the inherent conservatism and narrow-minded views of average people, may draw invidious distinctions; but the discerning eye must necessarily pierce the outer veil of dress and form, and see the spirit within, if the greatness of Civilisations, ancient or modern, is to be estimated at its proper value. Life, not the form, must be the

basis of judgment ; and, though the forms and outer expressions indicate to a certain extent the inner reality, they may not often be properly interpreted. From this, all ancient Civilisations which are dead suffer to a certain extent, owing to the absence of interpreters who lived and moved and had their being in them. Only monuments, graves, ruins are generally available for the student to go upon in unravelling the history of the Civilisation of some ancient race. But sympathy and the realisation of the purpose of life would bring the savant nearer the truth than merely a categorical study of dry details of length and breadth of pyramids, mummies and the like.

Civilisations have to be studied from the expression of life as shown in the living of some of the greatest of their children if they are to be appreciated at their proper worth. The ideals which they have put before themselves, the thoughts which flow from them and suffuse the atmosphere, their choice of expressions, these have at least as great a value as their outer appearances, their table manners, the fashions they set and so on. The Civilisation of India, for instance, is to be judged, not from the lives of the thousands of people from India leading a life of poverty and misery in the foreign slums of Africa, America and Australia, but from a Tagore, a Bose, a Sarojini, a Gandhi, and the reverence they evoke in the minds of average men. The life they live is inspired by the Civilisation of India, however faulty some of their traits may be,

if critically examined. What they are in the aggregate of their nature to-day, their admirers and followers will be in course of time, while they themselves will be purer and nearer to the ideals they set for themselves—these ideals themselves being indicated by the trend of the Civilisation at the time in which they lived.

All Civilisations have within their fold people belonging to various stages of progress. It is very unjust to judge of the stage of a Civilisation by those who do not belong to a high order of life either by their exalted spiritual life, their mental activity or by the development of their cultural and æsthetic qualities. On the other hand, what the great, noble and intelligent people in a particular Civilisation are to-day, that greatness, that nobility and that intelligence will become common property in the course of time. We know from Biology that Nature is trying experiments in the varieties of leaves and flowers that are produced—and in course of time, the acquired variations and characteristics are transmitted to their progeny, if Nature finds those variations and characteristics expressing her life in a truer way than before. So also, in the traits of the outstanding great figures in nations, such of them as fit into the archetypal mould of the nation's Civilisation are made permanent and add to the characteristics by which a nation is distinguished. The strength of a chain is that of its weakest link ; but, the strength of a particular

Civilisation depends on the extent to which an appreciable, even though small, proportion of the people understand, admire and revere the strength, nobility and greatness of the greatest in the nation, and set these qualities as standards to follow, at least at some future time and under less circumscribed conditions. The great man in his own time and place may be misunderstood and not estimated at his proper worth; but to those who are observant students of humanity and its tortuous paths of evolution, he is the signpost showing the trend of the Civilisation of the nation.

We read that Evolution leads from the indefinite to the definite, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, from the simple to the complex; that it proceeds in a spiral in rearranging "a series of like parts simply placed in juxtaposition," so that it may make "one whole made up of unlike parts mutually dependent". The watching of this particular process in connection with any one particular Civilisation is absorbingly fascinating. The slow growth of the people out of savagery, colonisations, invasions, foreign immigrations, trade adjustments, reformations and revolutions, inventions and catastrophes, the troubles these bring and the slow readjustments made by the people to suit their changed environments, the seemingly tragic sufferings caused by some kind of upheaval in one or another of the various spheres of human activity and conduct, in the

sweeping away of individuals in some mighty rush of sudden transformations, and the nation slowly rebuilding itself on a firmer basis, the richer for the shock ;—all these seem to cry aloud even to the most confirmed materialist that an Intelligence behind the scenes, with a particular motive of Its own, uses the human beings as so many pawns, moving them hither and thither for some superb consummation of Its own. And in this growth and change, in the convulsions and readjustments of Nature, where there is much more behind the scenes than in the open, it seems an idle task to compare the greatness of one Civilisation with that of another. There is much more hidden than expressed, there is so much which appears trivial and meaningless, there is a vast deal that appears uneconomic and wasteful, for the motive of the Intelligence behind the scenes is not known in its entirety. And then comes a time, when, with a start, the significance of all that was not understood leaps to the sight and stands out clear. The future has justified the past. It is this that offers the greatest refutation to the criticism that the Philosophy of History is theological and that it is based on unproven hypotheses. The justice of this refutation can be seen if one observes the unfolding of two of the world's great Civilisations—that which goes under the generic name of Western Civilisation, and the Civilisation of India.

II

THE GROWTH OF WESTERN CIVILISATION

THE study of Western Civilisation is in some ways more fruitful of results than that of most other Civilisations, because, unlike the older ones, either living or dead, which mostly sprang into the light of modern knowledge, full-grown and in their maturity, it has grown steadily from an age of comparative barbarism with all its stages recorded chronologically for the benefit of the observer. All the laws of growth referred to in the previous chapter can here be seen working in the various epochs of European history.

Western Civilisation is the Civilisation not of one nation only, but of a number of nations, races and peoples. It is, however, easy to study the whole as one subject for a number of reasons. In matters of religious, economic, political and social theories and practice, however the outer expressions may vary, the several nations of Europe are more or less on the same level. Until the nineteenth century introduced

the powerful factor of Nationalism, the people of all lands moved where they liked and did what they chose without compromising their nation as a whole by their movements and actions. If, in their wanderings outside the jurisdiction of their Government, they met with any restrictions or obstacles to their liberty in matters of trade or social conventions, they recognised these as counterparts of others existing in their own country. At least till the sixteenth century, (and, for a number of nations, till a later period) Europe acknowledged the sway of the Pontiff at Rome completely in Religion, and considerably in political matters. The resulting Theocracy secured for the whole of Europe a similarity of conditions, not only in the religious sphere, but also in the political, economic and social worlds. Above all, the peoples of Europe, especially of the western half, belong practically to two sub-races, the Teutonic and the Celtic of the Aryan Race—pure in some places, and the gulf elsewhere bridged considerably by all sorts of gradations of proportion in the mixture of blood. It has also to be remembered that the Christian nations succeeded to the common heritage of the old Roman Civilisation, the Greek Civilisation and the Israelite Civilisation, and shared the benefits amongst themselves more or less equally. The strength of the Roman Empire, which stretched its jurisdiction at the height of its power practically over the whole of Europe, secured this much to be

desired consummation. But at the same time, the distinction between the Celt and the Teuton, the work of different environments and the play of natural forces, created within the consciousness of Christendom separate entities which ultimately in the nineteenth century evolved the principle of nationality. We have therefore the convenience of being able to study the growth of one Civilisation with common outstanding characteristics, but with minor variations of sufficient importance to justify each nation's taking pride in the peculiar excellences of its own people. We have got the advantage of studying the effect of some of the institutions of Europe—political, religious, social or economic—on the different temperaments of Celt and Teuton. We see the trend of Civilisation, the straight roads and the bypaths all marked out with sufficient clearness to enable us to arrive at the laws of the growth of Civilisations; how individualism and communism alternate with one another; how the biological law of the struggle for existence operates; how emotion and idealism play a larger part in the growth of nations than mere reason; how people learn from their contact with fresh environments; and how revolutions are the explosions caused by traditional outer life not conforming quickly enough to changed inner realities.

The general tendency of the Western genius, as observed in the present, seems to be to search through

an infinite number of particulars towards some goal. Its method of advance has been scientific and historical, proceeding step by step, blundering on many occasions, weltering at times in revolutions and blood, but, nevertheless, progressing, probably unconsciously, to the present stage when it dominates the larger part of the surface of the earth. Its expression in the outside world is virility and physical activity ; its method of growth, individualism.

Looking back into history for its foundations, the student comes across three chief contributors to modern Western Civilisation—the results of the old Civilisations of Greece and Rome chiefly, and of some other nationalities to a lesser extent, Christianity, and the discovery of the New World. These have been the outer influences ; the others were its own creations, its institutions, and the reaction on it of these institutions.

The Greeks have contributed by far the biggest share to the foundations of Western Civilisation. Though, to suit later times, considerable modifications and improvements have been effected, no entirely new type of social organisation has been created, since the days of Pericles, in household, city or national economy. In the words of Cunningham, in *Western Civilisation*, “ just as all roads served to lead to Rome in the days of its Empire, so we find in investigating the origins of our varied life in modern Christendom that all lines of enquiry take us back to

Greece." The City State of Greece was a wonderful institution, which, on a small scale, worked out in all completeness as perfect a human society as was ever conceived of. In political life, in social matters, in economic development, the Greeks had rules of conduct which developed into ideal communities to which the modern philosopher may look back with regret and longing. If it were not idle to speculate, Greece may as well have been the nursery of Western Civilisation—where, bound within natural boundaries, each City State developed along the lines of its own growth, though never fundamentally differing in life from its neighbour, until it was ready to be transplanted in Europe, to grow on a larger scale and in countries without scientific frontiers what had flourished exceedingly there. The City State developing in the bosom of the common motherland, Greece, may be compared to the nations of Europe evolving on the common foundations of Christendom.

Briefly, the Civilisation of Greece made for the liberty of the individual through its perfect forms of democracy—but with the proviso that the individual was always to be at the beck and call of the State at the moment of its need. No better citizen of any country can there be in the world than the Athenian in his City. Free, cultured, having more or less an easy life, his personal wants being looked after by slaves, wealthy, steeped in the beauty of philosophy and art, the Athenian, till the time of Socrates, did

not dream of a possibility or even the desirability of freeing himself from the strong grip which the State had on him, whenever it wanted either his services or his money. All his philosophies, his experiences, his knowledge of politics and governments, of monarchs, aristocracies and democracies, the West inherited as a whole, when it started on its pilgrimage of life from a condition of comparative savagery. *Institutions are the gift of Greece to Europe.*

We cannot, it must here be said, regard the Arts of Greece as contributing to the growth of Western Civilisation, for in the beginnings of that growth, the Arts were not likely to be appreciated to any extent. The Roman conqueror of Greece, who was a representative of the Civilisation of Rome, had so little knowledge of the value of the unique productions of Greek Art that, when he ordered a general plunder of the cities and the removal of the art treasures to his own home, he gave instructions to the carriers that, if any of the artistic productions got spoiled on the way, they were to be replaced at the cost of the carriers, not understanding that it was quite impossible to copy the work of the older Greek Masters. The appreciation of Greek Art in modern European Civilisation comes as late as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Only one institution in Greece is removed in Western Civilisation—that of slavery. Its function

in the City State was to liberate the citizen from the worries of physical life, so that he could be free for the developing of his body and his wealth, his mind and culture, for the glorification of the State.

There is no place in Europe which has not had the benefit of the Roman Civilisation. Beginning as a City State, Rome advanced far and fast, and including Greece within her Empire, she assimilated her Civilisation, which then she could present to the inhabitants of Britain, Gaul, Spain, Germany and the valleys of the Danube at a time when they would not have recognised the value or the riches of that Civilisation directly by themselves and without aid. Villas, roads, trade, industry and other signs of development followed the Roman wherever he went. The Roman soldier and the Roman law imposed this Civilisation on Europe. *Order, Law and Discipline are the gift of Rome to Europe.*

At the same time as the Græco-Roman Civilisation was being imposed on Europe, there spread over the whole of the Roman Empire and even outside its boundaries the far-reaching influence of Christianity. Its effect on a hardy and warlike people was immediate and full. It gave to its followers the recognition of the value of individual life ; the idea of the equality of the spirit in all men ; an understanding of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man and a sense of the dignity of labour. Practically this translated itself into

individualism, the basis for democracy, the idea of Equality, and consequently the abolition of slavery and the organisation of industry on a new basis. *The ideas of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity—individualism and social service—are the gifts of Christianity to Europe.*

The scattering of the Jews over Europe contributed to the increase of the business ability and commercial activity of the people amongst whom the members of the Hebrew race settled. Thus endowed with the riches of the institutions of Greece, the law, order and discipline of Rome, the business acumen of the Israelite, and the teachings of Christianity, Europe bid fair, even at the beginning of her career, to develop rapidly and outstrip other Civilisations. It is no wonder that Western Civilisation is dominant in the world to-day. But the real interest lies not in the bequests which, as a child, Europe received, but in how she turned to account her resources, how she reacted to her environments and how she marched along stage by stage in the line of her growth. We can distinguish seven such stages if we include as the first the stage of the City State which really is outside the growth of European Civilisation, but whose being counted as a stage can be justified by her contribution of institutions to the otherwise infantile community of Europe. They are the City State stage, the feudal stage, the Theocratic stage, the stage of awakening consciousness of the individual, the individualistic

stage, the rationalistic stage and the stage at which the world is to-day. The City State stage has been dealt with above.

The transition from the City State to feudalism was caused by the failure of the former to contain any longer the spirit of the community. Having grown to its full stature, there was the desire for expansion which could not be gratified except at the expense of a neighbouring City State. Hence we enter on a phase of struggle for existence and supremacy. Sparta and Athens which united to repel the Persian invasion must necessarily be at each other's throat in a vain attempt at Empire-making. Greece is in travail in order to give birth to an Empire, but all the resulting Leagues and Associations are futile. Even Alexander's Empire comes and goes with meteoric rapidity. For the physical features of Greece are eminently unfitted for the building of an Empire.

The spirit of the old City State reincarnated in Rome with geographical possibilities for expansion. The conditions of life in Rome were such that either Rome became supreme over her enemies or else vanished out of history. The struggle for existence with neighbouring cities and tribes, with distant Italian States, with Carthage, with the frontier tribes, and then with other tribes still farther afield—on and on in an endless way (for there were no natural or scientific frontiers to speak of to set a limit to safe expansion) created for Rome as vast

an Empire as imagination could stretch in those days, an Empire which held together vast masses of people over a very wide area in subjection to a central authority, without any of the natural bases for unity amongst them. This Empire could not be built on the sentiments of a common language, a common religion, common blood, or a common set of habits and customs. It might be held together by military force; but disintegration was bound to appear the moment the central physical power of the Empire began to decline. The day came for tolling the knell of the Roman Empire.

The people in City States had lived a contented community life. Desire for expansion had brought about an Empire, and community life disappeared. The next stage in evolution demanded the welding of the two—an Empire with possibilities of those common natural ties which by the powerful force of sentiment and not merely by brute force would hold the people together as a community. The answer of Nature to this problem was feudalism—certainly not planned by human mind with forethought and care, but arrived at as a result of compromise between Empire and the liberty of the small community.

What happened in history was in this wise. The barbarians had succeeded in disrupting the Roman Empire, and under the capable leadership of Charlemagne aspired to rival old Rome in the extent of its jurisdiction. But without the facilities which Rome

had (the strength of character of the Roman soldier, the discipline of the Roman army, the network of the Roman roads and other civilising factors of Roman engineering skill and the statesmanship of the Roman administrator) it was almost an impossible feat to hold the conquered Empire together except by brute force and lightning marches of armies from one corner of the land to another. A Charlemagne, a Frederick Barbarosa, a Henry IV, could do such feats, but they were beyond the prowess of the average barbarian rulers. If the Empire was to exist, concessions and compromises had to be made, and local leaders taken under the wing of the Emperor for the mutual advantage of both. The noble could hold the land and rule it for the Emperor, a comparatively easier task, as his land was much smaller and enjoyed some of the characteristics by which community life becomes possible—the natural ties absent in a big Empire. The Emperor could gratify the vanity and the personal desires of the noble by making him an officer in his household, and entrusting him with some powers of administration, etc., which, unbacked by the Emperor's military strength, he could never dream of obtaining. The local noble made it possible for the Emperor to have his Empire, and the people to have their community life, as he was the appointed agent of the one and the natural leader of the other. As the representative of the Emperor, he contributed to the necessary military

equipment and served the Emperor against his foreign foes and internal rebellious chiefs. As the leader of the people, he administered justice and looked to the people's daily life, receiving their services for his needs and giving them the help of his protection. The individual need not and did not have anything to do beyond the limits of his immediate circle, except when, led by his own landlord, he went to fight—what did it matter for whom, so long as he did his work for the man he knew? But, he would widen the horizon of his knowledge, interests and friends, though very slowly.

The feudal stage, then, educated the people gradually,—too slowly even,—to take an interest in things beyond their immediate surroundings, and to get accustomed to the idea of comradeship with people who were in the ordinary routine of everyday life beyond the ken of their consciousness. However profitable it might be to people at that stage to develop *fast* and widen their sphere of interest and social intercourse, there was very little encouragement, in their self-contained manor, for expansion for those who felt the call of their inner nature to move out of the deep rut of custom and convention. At best, the people *en masse* were trained to know of the existence of a big Empire of which they formed a part—though it might not affect them except in times of war. In feudalism all initiative was checked. When the community is leading a single life, experiments

on the part of individuals have always to be deprecated, as they might involve society as a whole in ruin. The risk of experiments can be tolerated only in an individualistic society, where no one but the experimenter will be any the worse for the failure of the experiment, though the community may come in for a large share of the benefits if it turns out to be a success. On the other hand, there is no possibility of advance in the absence of experimentation. And this was exactly what feudalism suffered from.

When the people had learnt sufficiently in their economic and political lives that they could not exist as self-sufficing small communities in water-tight compartments, and when also the spirit of advance in individuals was making them chafe against the existing order of things, Civilisation was ready to take the next step. Feudalism is only a transitional stage leading the individual from small self-centred communities to Nations.

In history, feudalism was broken up either by strong monarchs who did not need any longer the services of powerful nobles to keep their people in order, or by the people developing a spirit of resistance against the feudal lords who kept them in check and did not allow them to grow according to what their reason and inclination dictated to them. In both cases, the immediate reason of overthrow was the selfishness and cruelty of the nobles, which caused the king to make common cause with the people and

overthrow his erstwhile tools. A helping hand was given by the Church in its eagerness to add political power to its religious authority. Feudalism was thus overthrown by statesmanly kings in England taking the people of the land into partnership with them in the art of Government, and relegating the aristocracy to the background. On the Continent, where this was not done and the king stood on a pedestal in solitary state, the sense of injury was brooded over by the people, until at last, towards the end of the eighteenth century, a big revolution took place and the people shook themselves free and declared their independence in economic and political matters. The king then shared the fate of the nobles. In England, the union of the King and People led to gradual change and growth; on the Continent, more violent methods became necessary.

The decay of feudalism showed that Europe was ready to enter on her next phase of development. Power must now go either into the hands of an unimpeded monarch or of the Church, both of whom were contending for supremacy. The time had not yet come when the monarch could come to his own, because the factor of sentiment welding the people together as one body in a nation had not yet developed sufficient strength. The Church, on the other hand, was in intimate contact with the people, and made itself loved and revered. It ministered to the spiritual needs of the people, controlled the educational

facilities of the time, encouraged the people in learning and industry, trained statesmen for their work, helped the people by charity in the hour of their need, organised pauper-relief and ordered its monks to lead simple and cultured lives in the midst of the people, setting an example to laymen, while the king was living in ostentatious solitude hedged round by power and privilege. Latin became, as a result of the work of the Church, the cultural common language of Europe; the monasteries were centres of attraction to foreign travellers who found in them a home in passing through the various countries of Europe; the priests encouraged the people to dignity of life by preaching to them the doctrines of Individualism; the Church mitigated the sufferings of the poor by abolishing slavery in Christendom and prohibiting Sunday labour. When Kings and Emperors were leading lives of ostentatious display in courts or fighting wars of conquest and aggrandisement in which the people had no merit, no honour, no reward, the Church was quietly creating that sentiment of common religion, common language, common customs and habits and manners, and mutual affection, love and esteem, which alone can make for a strong bonded community of people. It is no wonder that in the struggle between the Empire and the Papacy, the latter should easily win. The making of an unbreakable bond between the peoples of Europe was the work of Theocracy. Kings could be turned by the

Popes to govern according to a common model; arbitration in place of wars was possible in an increasing measure; individuals could find in the Church a protector against the autocracy of rulers, and an invasion of the East was made possible, Europe standing together as a man.

In passing, it may be noted that the resulting Crusades enriched the thoughts and ideas of Europe by making her people come in contact with an older Civilisation, rich, cultured, artistic, having an advanced knowledge of various sciences. When they were ready, the people could be taken to the next stage of developing individualism.

As in the Feudal State there was a privileged class, the nobles, who deteriorated and became selfish and had to be overthrown, so in the Theocratic State, there was a privileged class, the clergy. The *noblesse oblige* of the former, and the purity of life and motive of the latter, made it possible for them to be above the common law and enjoy the privilege of being judged by their peers. But the whirligig of time in due course turned these privileges into evils that had to be wiped out, before society became infected by them. Satisfied that they were freer than laymen from the jurisdiction of kings, held in great esteem and reverence by the people, the clergy had their heads turned. They became ignorant; they were no longer learned. They became rich and fashionable and led luxurious lives; they were no longer simple,

pious and hard-working. They began to vie with the nobility in personal pomp and greed of power ; they were no longer of the people, for the people. They became superstitious and fed the superstitions of the mob ; they ceased to be experts in the ritualism which makes the Roman Catholic religion so grand. They withdrew money from various countries to Rome to feed an idle court there ; they had long ago ceased to be inspirers of industrial systems. They conspired with kings in oppression of the poor ; they were no longer the protectors of the people against autocracy. Political, social, economic and even religious dissatisfaction had come about as a result of unchecked Theocracy.

It was then that the Renaissance came to act the part of the spark to set fire to the train which was to explode the sway of Catholicism in Europe as a political institution and even change the attitude of people towards it as a religious institution. By this time, the people had developed a vague consciousness of unity of the people within a nation. The beginnings of nationalism in Europe are laid in the fifteenth century, when the people begin to take an interest in wars as affecting them as well as their monarchs, even though they continue to be waged by kings for some time longer on personal grounds. There is a ferment going on in all spheres of human activity, and the modern age presently emerges with its outstanding characteristic of individualism. The next stage

at which we arrive is that of the awakening of the consciousness of the individual *qua* individual, freed from the thralldom of outer institutions—feudalism and the Church.

It has been said above that Christianity gave to the people a sense of individualism. This had hitherto been kept in check by the hierarchy of Roman priests who had laid stress on religious worship and social service to such an extent that, though the individual became a self-respecting individual, he still held himself to be but an atom in a mighty institution. But the Renaissance and the printing press let loose the forces of equality and fraternity and brought about a very noticeable change in a remarkably short time. There are no longer restrictions on the individual production of goods as in the preceding age when guilds had looked to the quality of the goods produced, the prices charged, the knowledge of the workmen, etc., for the mutual advantage of both the producer and the consumer. Any person is given the right to produce anything in his own way (barring monopolies), and thus come into existence the beginnings of capitalism, in which individual initiative and enterprise count a good deal more than mere honesty and fair dealing as understood by the morality of the time. In the political world, kings begin to be recognised as instruments for the welfare and growth of individuals, failure to recognise which sent an English king (James II) out

of the country, as it had sent his father (Charles I) out of the world altogether. In the religious sphere, the individual begins to exercise his reason in finding out which is the true word of God. Everywhere we see growing signs of change.

But Europe is not yet changed out of all recognition, because the principle of nationality, though yet in its infantile stage, checks all rash advance. In the economic sphere, we have the mercantile system laying down restrictions on every producer to look to the country's needs before speculating on private gains. The mercantile system may or may not be judged to have been a wrong economic principle, but it supplied the brake to stop the manufacturer and merchant in their headlong march towards individualism and the disruption of society. It tried to make the nation a self-supporting unit, even as the manor of old in the feudal age was self-sufficing. Thus corn was to be grown within the country in sufficient quantities to meet the demand of the nation; exports of corn were to be discouraged, manufactures encouraged and the export of money prohibited. In the political sphere, nationalism prevented the immediate arrival at a policy of *laissez faire* which, in the stage at which the people were, would have spelt ruin by bringing about an unbridled struggle for existence and individual advance. On the other hand, it demanded the safeguarding of the country's life and growth against powerful foreign enemies

This is the age of the beginning of secret diplomacy, the theory of Balance of Power, and the laying down of standards of morality for the State differing from those governing individuals. This is the age of the Tudor despotism in England and the beginning of the Bourbon despotism in France, tolerated in an age of incipient individualism in the interests of the well-being of the State. In the religious sphere, the individual suffers from a gross form of intolerance, just at the moment of the dawn of reason. A stereotyped form of religion is set up by the person in authority and is expected to be blindly accepted in the interests of the State. Catholic or Protestant, Presbyterian or Puritan, Low Church or High Church, uniformity was enforced in the matter of religion by the powers that be. The nations followed with but meek protests wherever their political ruler led them, because of the instinctive idea (an idea not reasoned out because the feeling of nationalism had not yet begun to be voiced) in the minds of the people that the State was a new being which demanded the individual's full allegiance in all matters, political, economic and even religious, and that if the individual suffered, it did not matter much, provided the National Being gained something. The individual's pain, belief or conscience was submerged in the State. This is the era of the monarch, symbolising in his person the body politic.

The real changes of this stage are seen plainly only in the next stage, and it is then that they bear fruit. Freed from the restraining hands of authority in all the three spheres of politics, economics and religion, the individual of the next stage could develop along the lines which he laid down for his own growth without outside guidance or pressure. The perils of nations had for the time ended. The theory of the Balance of Power, instead of being used for protection of weaker States, began to be assumed as a cloak to cover the selfish motives of aggressive nations. We read a definition of the Balance of Power by a wag as that theory by which "if one nation managed to steal something, other nations might try to steal something also". The political boundaries of nations come more or less to be regularly recognised. There is all round a greater feeling of security. It is recognised that individuals have more time now to follow their own inclinations without causing dislocation to society. This expression of individualism is seen earliest in England, though it appears in the countries on the Continent also. England readjusts her outer forms to suit the times, and her changes are therefore gradual and involve the least pain and cost. On the other hand, on the Continent, the tradition of monarchy and autocracy clouded the views of thinkers, and prevented their seeing the inner change; it but sowed the seeds of a coming revolution with the horrors of destruction, bloodshed

and misery. The writings of Voltaire and such philosophers were merely so many voices crying in the wilderness.

This individualism, which was powerful enough to change Europe either by reformation or revolution, led in the political sphere to the abolition of an increasingly large number of prerogatives and privileges which in a previous age belonged to the king. This resulted in the increase in power of the so-called representative institutions. But all individuals are not really free. The representative institutions are not really representative of all classes. In the name of the people, an oligarchy of powerful interests wrests privileges and powers from the king, and in the name of the king and law, exploits the people. This is the age when the doctrine of Non-interference is at its zenith. Beyond policing the country and protecting it from foreign incursions and domestic anarchists, executive Governments have no function. They are allotted by a generous Parliament the power of levying just sufficient taxes to meet the cost of the army, the navy and the police, and of course of the executive Government officers. But undue interference is not tolerated. Let the Government protect the people, see to the safety of their persons, good name and property, enforce contracts, allow inheritance and punish offenders, *and do no more*. This is the individualistic minimum. And for a time this ideal

was almost completely realised. In a community where all people have equal opportunities and equal equipment, physically, morally and mentally, no wiser scheme of affairs can be thought of. But alas for the excellence of the scheme! Nature does not tolerate this equality. The result of the practice of this individualism in a world of inequality, history records in blood-red letters.

In the economic world, individualism meant the abolition of the restraints caused by monopolies and guilds, and the ushering in of unchecked capitalism. It meant that the rich could form joint-stock companies and lead idle lives, battenning on the wealth created by the sweated labour of the poor. The labourer was supposed to be free to work or not to work—a change from the age when the Statute of Labourers imposed heavy penalties (even death in obstinate cases) on able-bodied workmen, if they refused to work on conditions imposed by the State,—without any reference to their wishes or convenience. But what freedom is that in which the alternative is either working on the conditions imposed by the capitalist or starving in the streets? All labour legislation was deprecated as interfering with the liberty of the capitalist entering into “free contracts” with workmen. Capital and labour were two independent agents of production, both of them equally necessary. Let them arrive at contracts with one another without fear or favour.

The Parliaments which were in power, and represented Capital only, saw no immorality in allowing an inanimate powerful factor to compete with animate beings who are subject to the laws of hunger and fatigue. All the evils of the industrial revolution are too well-known to require elucidation here. The creation of slums in overpopulated towns, underpaid work, overworked men, men either converted into beasts of burden or worse still into machines, indentured labour, child and woman labour, unhealthy competition, dirt and noise, disease and misery—these have been observed and described in detail *ad nauseum*—even to such an extent as to create in some quarters a powerful public opinion that machinery is an obstacle and not an aid to human progress, an illogical inference, as we shall presently see. Europe was fast degenerating to a stage when the principles of force were the dominating factor in society. Those who held power used it exclusively for their own ends, and those who had it not had to suffer. The biological law of the struggle for existence was in full operation. There was a lowering of the high standards of life imposed on man in a previous age. The minorities in power would not concede anything to the majority out of power, and the sacred name of “Freedom” was invoked to substantiate their plea. In the words of Mr. Harold Begbie (*The Weakest Link*, p. 43), “Look where you will, it is the spirit of I Myself which is

paramount. Life exists for Me ; all the dim æons behind have toiled to produce Me. This brief moment in the eternal duration of Time is only an opportunity for My pleasure and My ease. I care not a jot for the ages ahead and the sons of men who shall inhabit the Earth when I am dust beneath their feet. Give me My rights. Stand clear of My way. I want and I will have."

In the religious sphere, the doctrine of Individualism led to more toleration of religious observance. Unlike the effect of individualism in the economic sphere, this was a desirable reform. On the other hand, it led directly to some of those results which are described as the evils of the industrial revolution. In a preceding age, an outer uniformity in religious observance had developed a discipline in the people and in some instances helped to create a religious feeling where originally it was not there, and in others it had compelled abstention from acts, which, though not strictly on the wrong side of law, were still reprehensible and had been condemned by the Church on moral grounds. The removal of the religious restrictions benefited those who had an Inner Voice powerful enough to guide their outer actions, but so far as the majority were concerned, it bid fair to bring about chaos in society, where social service was subordinated to greed and individual advance. "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," was the order of the day.

Yet there was another side to the picture which has not been observed with as much attention as it deserves. In the political sphere, individualism accustomed the people to the sight of a king gradually divested of power, but in the plucking of whose feathers they had not a hand. There would be nothing presently to stand in the way of *their* plucking, in their turn, the oligarchic goose. If the kings—divine beings—could suffer diminution of their power and were not omnipotent, why not the demi-gods, the oligarchs? So in the later days of this stage, we have the beginnings of the struggle for parliamentary reform, whereby the Government may become more really representative of all classes of the people. The thoroughly individualistic programme of the oligarchs could then be modified to introduce a certain amount of paternalism for those classes which were too weak to survive unaided the struggle for existence. The beginnings of labour legislation are really laid in this age. The sphere of governmental duty gradually expands.

In the economic sphere, the change which involves so much pain to individuals heralds the coming of the time when natural forces could be yoked to the service of man, and the individual could be freed from the drudgery and pain of heavy work. Machinery makes possible what was considered impossible, and makes what was considered very difficult comparatively easy. In the transition

period, we have the question of unemployment and all the other rigours of life following an era of inventions which displace men by machinery. The machines, however, had very little to do with the suffering caused; they were simply the *accidents* which revealed the *substance* of human character. The machines did not prohibit high wages and more lenient treatment of workmen. The repressed selfishness of the people, which so far had no opportunity of showing itself, was now brought to the surface. Not that people were more cruel or more selfish than in preceding ages; only now the repressed factors were brought to the surface so that they might be recognised in their proper place and presently expelled. The ugly nature of man noted in this period could not have been eradicated even to the extent it has been to-day, if man had not been honest enough to meet the evil symptoms in the open instead of hiding them under the mask of philanthropy and kindness. Here was an opportunity for man to gain strength of character, not merely in the lower sphere of learning to be more capable of enduring pain, but also in the higher worlds of social service. It may be remarked that even before the hey-day of the industrial system had arrived, labour legislation had begun to be inaugurated by legislatures, initiated, be it noted, not by the sufferers—who had no voice in those days in matters concerning themselves or the nation—but by those who had everything to lose by

such laws, capitalists and rich aristocrats who were moved by pity and compassion for the dire sufferings of the multitude.

If it had not been for this Industrial Revolution, there would not have been at a later stage that freedom and facility for growth in the higher spheres of culture, morals, religion, æsthetics, art and science, made possible by the freeing of man for a number of hours from an endless round of physical labour in his search for food. When humanity had re-adjusted itself to the new environments where natural forces and laws were made to do service for man, and when, by labour legislation, trade unions and sundry other devices, physical pain was minimised, the mind and the emotions, which in a previous age had to be neglected—partly or in whole—had chances of attention and growth. What the slaves were in the City State stage, natural forces are in the modern age.

In the religious sphere, freedom from restraint and toleration might be expected to lead to a reaction from priestly pressure and to irreligious excesses. As a matter of fact, however, it really provided for the strengthening of religious realisation in those who were truly spiritual in their nature. It is to be noted that the age of the Industrial Revolution coincided with an era of ultra-religious activity. In England, for example, there was the vigorous work of Methodism and Evangelism.

What is more to the point, we have a larger organisation of social service. This was not observed and given due credit, because, in the race between the miseries caused by the birth of a new order, in which natural forces were allowed to play unhampered, and philanthropy and service to counteract those miseries, the evils easily outstripped the remedies. The failure of social service to overtake the evils of the Industrial Revolution even after the lapse of a century and a half does not indicate the decadence of the religious spirit; on the contrary, the measure of its success is evidenced by the vigorous stand made by the human spirit against the overwhelming odds of unthinking natural laws. The material evils are now almost overcome. The physical world is almost made perfect. The millennium of the physical world having been achieved, it only remains for the coming centuries to evoke the emotional, mental and religious natures of the mass of mankind and develop them as efficiently as the physical has been evolved.

The prize, for the time, however, lay with the oligarchs. They had everything their own way; they had seats in the legislature; they controlled the elections; they usurped the prerogatives of the King; they made laws suited to their own conditions; they opposed parliamentary reform and religious toleration; they stood for corn laws and opposed paternal legislation. But the time for their dismissal was fast approaching.

The rationalistic epoch was ushered in by Darwin ; and his scientific school raised the public, as far as they could be and would be raised by reason, to the sphere occupied by the oligarchs in the preceding age. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the biological law of the struggle for existence was discovered (1859), and philosophers were not lacking to apply the principle to the human species. Efficiency became the shibboleth in philosophic as in scientific circles. The absence of the domination of religion in everyday life, the self-absorbing love of gain, characterising the work of the capitalist, and the misery of the people led the thinkers of the time to a materialistic interpretation of history. " If A was able to kill B before B killed A, then A survived. And it would become the destiny of the race to become a race of A's inheriting A's qualities." Such was Bagehot's interpretation of Darwin in politics. (*Physics and Politics*, p. 188.) Benjamin Kidd quotes George Peel as saying that European history was a tale of blood and slaughter and that history and homicide are indistinguishable terms. (*The Science of Power*.) " We have now agreed," says Treitschke, " that war is just and moral, and that the ideal of eternal peace is both unjust, immoral and impossible." (Essay on *International Law* quoted by Kidd.) Nietzsche says : " I impeach the greatest blasphemy in time—the religion which has enchained and softened us," and again : " What have we to do with

the herd-morality which expresses itself in modern democracy? . . . It is good for cows, women and Englishmen." (Quoted by Kidd in *The Science of Power*.)

These philosophic historians forgot the religious instinct in man; they did not grant sufficient strength to the ideas of social service and humanity, were blind to the other agencies of human growth—sacrifice and sentiment, though these were existing all the time,—and only understood the development of history as based upon the law of parasitism. The world was full of struggle, and the only way to success, according to them lay through the ruthless exercise of Might. *Væ victis* was the law of growth. If, however, for any reason whatsoever, the stronger tolerated the weaker and sympathised with him, a day of reckoning would dawn when the weaker, having absorbed the strength of the stronger, would chastise him with his own strength. No more vivid description of this philosophy is there than in the writings of Nietzsche quoted profusely by Benjamin Kidd in his *Principles of Western Civilisation*. Kidd says (p. 128 *et seq.*):

“Progress is to him (Nietzsche) a gradual emancipation from the system of morality proceeding from that (religious) belief . . . ‘The great European narcotic of Christianity . . . has enabled the serf population in our civilisation to invent a slave morality, to enlist sympathy, to obtain votes,

to slowly gain predominance over their natural and destined superiors.' What is this ideal of 'sympathy and brotherly love' made by Western Liberalism to support the movements of the modern world? asks Nietzsche in effect. Mere contemptible consideration for the inferior, is the reply; mere lack of self-assertion in the natural superior. What is our Western Liberalism at best? Increased herding animality. What is Democracy itself? A declining type of the State in which the natural superior is enslaved with sympathies, so that he may be kept out of his own.

"Turning with fierce and concentrated scorn from all the ideals and tendencies which express themselves in modern democracy in Germany, Nietzsche delivers as it were to the occupying classes the gospel for them of the materialistic interpretation of history: 'A new table, oh my brethren, I put over you. Become hard. No more weak parleying about the rights of man, those empty formulas of a religion of which we have given up the substance. We are in possession, we are the superiors, we are the strongest. The best things belong to me and mine, and if men give us nothing, then we take them; the best food, the purest sky, the strongest thoughts, the fairest women . . . Be hard, O my brethren. For, we are emancipated. The world belongs to us. We are the strongest. And if men do not give these things we take them . . . What

inheritance have we in the sympathies which enslave us? We are the superiors. We are the stronger. A new commandment, O my brethren, I put over you. Become hard!' It is the materialistic interpretation of history."

This is the best exposition of the rationalistic epoch, when the mind was allowed full domination in the affairs of men. Everything looked bleak and dark. Religion was fading into unreality; and, when science came forward to announce the law of evolution as based on struggle, reason began to ask why men should struggle in vain in combating an invincible law of Nature. It were better to help on Nature by even chloroforming the excess population of the world—the unemployed, the paupers and the helpless. In this world of ours, where the production of food increases in arithmetical progression and humanity in geometrical progression, it is safest to co-operate with Nature and kill off the weaker, instead of unnecessarily postponing the evil day. So reason taught; but the people's instinct, or inner divine nature, revolted against such blasphemy. It knew that this reason was all wrong.

It is the fashion in certain circles to regard this philosophy of reason as emanating from Germany and holding good for that country only. But while in Germany this philosophy may have counted more votaries than elsewhere, though she produced the arch-materialists, there is no gainsaying the fact

that the whole of Europe suffered from it. European Civilisation was in peril of her reason, from which her instinct alone saved her. All countries were contaminated by this philosophy. Even the mildest, England, though denouncing it with her lips, gave the lie to her words in her action; for even England, whose idealism lifted her above the stage of mere rank materialism, and who has been known in history as the helper of liberty, did not scruple to restrict the liberty of others, to side with the capitalists, to terrorise the mob into submission to the established oligarchies of the merchant princes, the wholesale producers and the millionaires, in pursuing her policy of Empire-seeking.

The chief historical facts of this period are a further transfer of power from oligarchy to a better represented democracy (even though there was much scope for improvement), the spread of Europe to the farthest corners of the earth, the exploitation of those regions in the interests of Mother Europe, the using of the doctrines of the Church as half-way houses in the civilising process of the "uncivilised" foreigner, whereby he might be brought under subjection, the adopting of the policy of peaceful penetration where warlike penetration was impossible or inexpedient, and the development of the science of war to a fine art of wholesale murder.

It was the consciousness of this state of things that made many people wonder what the West was

coming to. Yet, under this frightful exterior, there was a policy of liberalism which was preparing for the safety of Europe and which showed itself openly in the next era—the modern age. From a point of view different from that of Nietzsche, the nineteenth century was full of idealism. There was an idealism visible in literature and poetry. There was an idealism in politics which was realised in the achievement of democracy and nationality. There was a considerable improvement in the condition of the poorer classes. All these influences were creating silently a force which was to become the nucleus of growth of the twentieth century.

What of the modern age? We are living within it, and so cannot appreciate it at its proper worth, if we have not sufficient imagination to project ourselves into the future and judge of the present from that standpoint. In 1913, the Bishop of Winchester, analysing Western Civilisation, did not find any difficulty in seeing its foundations in the principles of human equality and self-surrender. He judged, not by what lay on the surface, (if he had done so, he would have seen Europe trembling on the eve of an atrocious war) but by what was all the time the deep undercurrent in the history of the West.

In politics, we are in that era when it is no longer felt that War is the right thing, as it was in Germany a bare ten years ago. We are in the midst of the creation of a powerful public opinion that small

nations have their rights, that self-determination is the goal of all nationalities, that the Government of every country should be a responsible one, that attempts at arbitration by a universal tribunal should precede a declaration of war, that democracy should be expanded to include all adults (men and women alike) in the partnership of Government, that armaments should be kept down, that open discussion should take the place of secret diplomacy. The full achievement of these ideas may take time ; but the amount of success already won by the League of Nations warrants us in being optimistic. The British Empire has practically become a Federation of Free Nations with the exception of India ; and who knows if India will not presently take her place as an equal partner in an Indo-British Commonwealth ?

In the economic sphere, we see the successes of the Labour Party everywhere. Trade unionism has developed ; and the labourer has a self-dignity which he lacked a century ago. The slums are being quickly opened up : the material conditions of the poor are greatly improved. Co-operation and co-partnership are beginning to take a front place in production and distribution, and competition is being slowly displaced. There is a growing feeling in the direction of the nationalisation of mines, land and industry, so that the profits may not go merely to swell the riches of an idle class, but serve equally the people of the

nation as a whole. A more equitable distribution of wealth is coming into existence.

In the social sphere, we see education spread universally over Europe, old age pensions granted to the needy old, public health given adequate attention, prison-reform adopted in the treatment of criminals. Social service is becoming an increasingly prominent characteristic of Western Civilisation. There has been a consistent growth towards socialism. There was, it is true, a time, when that socialism threatened the old institutions of Europe—good and bad alike—because of a feeling of impatience and wrong conviction that all these institutions, governmental, social, religious, economic, only helped to bind the people to old systems by the powerful chains of tradition. Especially in Germany and in Russia, anarchism, terrorism and materialistic socialism (the result of the work of Karl Marx and Lenin), reared their ugly heads. The huge failure of life and the tragedy caused by Russian Bolshevism has turned public opinion towards an orderly socialism which is prevalent in most of the world to-day. Materialistic socialism has dealt itself its death-blow.

Looking over history, we thus take a bird's-eye view of the birth and growth of a mighty Civilisation. Recorded history has many mistakes to correct, and, when the time comes, let one hope that European Civilisation will be recorded in its proper light. The White Man's Burden may often have been a cloak for

political aggression in a neighbouring continent—but now that the doctrine of exploitation of one race by another is slowly being given up, it may not be long before people realise that many were actuated by an honest if mistaken motive of saving the world from what they considered barbarism, in the only way known to them. Missionaries may have been in many cases mere political tools and the forerunners of the trader and the soldier; but no one can deny that many of them were actuated by a holy zeal to save the people in the spirit of Jesus Christ. For instance, no better social servers have there been than the Salvation Army who have gone into the dirtiest slums, into the hovels of the lepers, into the colonies of criminals with the honest desire to alleviate human misery. Time will bring its reward to all worthy servants of humanity.

“The East achieves spirituality through spirituality; the West through materialism,” is a modern aphorism that pointedly expresses a Truth. The West has, so far, accumulated through its experiences a vast store of wisdom to be used in conquering fresh worlds. It has achieved knowledge; it has developed common sense, intelligence, virility, activity, efficiency, self-respect and social service. It has acquired these powers by slow plodding, by an approach through a multitude of tangible particulars, which has led it to dominate the seen physical world. It now only remains for the West, to go forth and conquer the unseen and superphysical worlds.

THE CIVILISATION OF INDIA

THE line of growth of Indian Civilisation is fundamentally different from that of Western Civilisation. The principal materials for the building up of a conception of the growth of the Civilisation of Europe have been taken from history, from which one can see how, stage after stage, the culture of the West developed, how the people adapted themselves to new environments and learnt new points of view, how they became stronger in character and in power, and how, by slow and painful individual experience, they built up the laws of human society by which the happiness of the people might be achieved with the least amount of friction, and by following which their inner nature might find as true an outer expression in the mundane realm as is possible of attainment in any scheme of things. But in the study of history there have been difficulties of interpretation, and, as has already been seen, too much weight has been attached to primitive human needs, the biological law and the like, while, at the same time, it has been almost impossible to take note as to how far an

individual phenomenon is representative of a type and how far it is unique, and as to how far people's conduct shows the community's way of thought in the political, social, economic and religious fields. Detailed history can even be said to have obscured the real issues, and to have caused the student to lose sight of the wood for the trees. In the inductive method of building up the laws of any science, there is always this difficulty; in the case of a human science, it is multiplied enormously.

Turning to the Civilisation of India, here, we find no such difficulty. There has fortunately been an absence of the "historical mind" in India as judged by the Western critic with the help of the so far available literature which can be called historical. This has been properly ascribed to the philosophical attitude of the people, their idealism and their conception of the comparative unreality of worldly phenomena. Western critics have observed that the Indian writers seem to have had no capacity for recording facts impartially, and that the reality has been obscured either by extraordinary panegyrics or by wholesale denunciations, resulting from the allowing of imagination and idealism to play havoc with veracity. It is hardly necessary to point out that if, in this matter, India has at all differed from the West, it is only in degree and not in kind. Be this as it may, it is a fact that we can see clearly into Indian Civilisation, and appreciate it by reason of

the fact that we are allowed an insight into the principles of conduct and the driving motives of the people underneath the surface without our being prejudiced by the petty trivialities, quarrels and annoyances of life which are bound to exist in every society, and which obscure the real deep issues that underlie the Civilisation as a whole by **making** the unessential appear as the essential. As it is, modern Indian history is a wasteful and profitless study, because after the manner of the Western conception of scientific history, we are shown the wars and bloodshed, the building and destruction of Empires, the crooked policies of statesmen, and the treacheries of allies; and these engross our attention to the detriment of our view of the calm, placid but highly cultured societies in Indian villages, where alone their real nature can be understood in their purity, truth, strength of character and sacrifice.

There is, indeed, a vastly increasing quantity of material being discovered about the merely political history of ancient India. Archæological evidence, combined with the study of coins and epigraphic records, gives one, if so minded, plenty of scope to revel in dry details. But to the average Indian, the mere detail does not have any interest except as a means to exemplifying the fundamentals which had come into existence even at the beginning of recorded history and which had created a high order of social culture. We are not given a sight of the

early struggles and difficulties of life of the Indian ; we do not see the people of India at school. When the historical picture is shown us, we see society moving along on oiled wheels smoothly and without friction. The disturbances caused by individuals, minor revolutions, attempts at anarchy, the failures of particular monarchs to keep within the strict spheres of justice and equity, and rebellions against existing systems could not fundamentally affect the line of the people's advance. Indian history, under such conditions, could, at best, but point out how far a particular individual fell from the high ideal set up for him by the social organisation. Leaders of the people in any sphere did not live among the people, struggling with them and sharing with them their pettinesses, but only came among them from the forest where they lived a life of simplicity and renunciation or from the Universities where, secluded, they ordinarily speculated and discussed on topics of the highest possible range. Priests, teachers, kings, soldiers, merchants, servants—all had their allotted duties reduced to a system, and performed them to the best of their ability. For, there was a realisation that, where the people fulfilled their *Dharma* (or social obligations), there lay the greatest possibility of liberty for all.

Of other ancient Civilisations more and more definite chronological details are being found, as excavations of the sites of ancient Egypt, Assyria,

Babylonia yield more and more of material for the archæologist. But with regard to India, however much new knowledge is possible to be got with regard to particulars and events, the *growth* of her Civilisation cannot be recorded. Even in the time of the Buddha (500 B.C.), the systems of philosophy in India express their teachings in the form of short aphorisms, and this would not have been possible without preceding millennia of thought. Even at that early date, the social organisation had become more or less settled. The Vedic age, the Epic age, the Buddhist age, the Rationalistic age, the golden age of Samskrit Literature, do not differ fundamentally from one another. To treat of the growth of Civilisation in India from the rationalistic point of view as R. C. Dutt has done, for example, is to lose sight of the fact that philosophy and metaphysics gripped the average Indian mind very tightly, and that before recorded history began, the Indian had learnt to assure himself of the comparative unreality of physical existence.

The basic principle of this philosophy is expressed in the term एकमेवाद्वितीयम् (Ēkamēvādviṭiyam)—the existence of the One without a second. This conception pervaded the whole atmosphere of the culture of India, and was responsible for the stupendous heights of splendour to which the country climbed in all spheres of even purely mundane activity.

One of the *Upanishads*, the *Isāvāsya*, begins by saying :

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्चजगत्यां जगत् ।
येनत्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः माघृथः कस्यस्विद्भनं ॥

“ This whole world is pervaded completely by the Lord of the Universe ; therefore, lead a renounced life without being greedy for anyone’s wealth.” The idea that the Supreme Being is immanent everywhere and in every one was reiterated times without number. The *Bhagavad-Gita* says :

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।
भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥

“ The Lord dwelleth in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, by His illusive power, *maya*, causing all beings to revolve, as though mounted on a potter’s wheel.”—And this was preached to everybody. The wise man was he who looked equally on all. The people believed that God “ having pervaded the whole universe with a fragment of Himself, remains ” greater and higher than all.

This philosophy was taught to the people in simple ways. One *Upanishad*—the *Chāndogya*—makes a particular instruction take a form something like the following : A teacher asks his pupil to take a spoonful of salt, put it in a cup of water, and bring it to him the next morning. When, at the time appointed, the pupil presents himself with the cup of water treated in

the specified fashion, the teacher administers to him a spoonful of the water from the top and asks how it tastes. "Saltish," is the answer. Water from the middle portion of the cup and from the bottom are then successively tasted and the tastes observed and noted. Then the teacher proceeds to instruct the pupil: "Water contained in this cup tastes saltish from whatever portion of the cup it is taken, though salt is nowhere visible ; in like manner, my son, the Self, (Brahman, God, or whatever name the Supreme Being may be called by), though unseen, pervades the whole universe." Taught so simply, this doctrine spread over the whole nation and developed into an axiom. Added to this, तत्त्वमसि ("Thou art *That*") was a mantra repeated by vast multitudes every day, so that by constant reiteration, one might attain to the realisation that God was equally everywhere. The pupils were then taught that it was for the sake of the Self in each that various activities were engaged in and that desire was an expression of the Self Himself. The *Upanishad* proceeds to tell us:

"Not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear, but for the sake of the Self, is the husband dear ; not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear, but for the sake of the Self is the wife dear ; not for the sake of the sons are the sons dear, but for the sake of the Self are the sons dear ; not for the sake of wealth is wealth dear ; but for the sake of the Self is wealth dear ; not for the sake of earthly

possessions are earthly possessions dear, but for the sake of the Self are earthly possessions dear ; not for the sake of the Brahman and the Kshatriya are the Brahman and the Kshatriya dear, but for the sake of the Self are the Brahman and the Kshatriya dear ; not for the sake of the people are the people dear, but for the sake of the Self are the people dear ; not for the sake of the Devas are the Devas dear, but for the sake of the Self are the Devas dear ; not for the sake of the *Vedas* are the *Vedas* dear, but for the sake of the Self are the *Vedas* dear ; not for the sake of entities are those entities dear, but for the sake of the Self are the entities dear ; not for the sake of anything is anything dear, but for the sake of the Self is anything dear."

To express the whole thing in brief, a Samskrit couplet came into vogue :

" I shall explain to you in a line what is explained in all the Shastras :

Brahman is Real ; the Universe is unreal ; the world is Brahman and naught else."

This conception of the immanence of God and the solidarity of life was neither a mere lip philosophy of easy-chair thinkers nor a pathway leading to a set of conditions where the people with their head in the clouds forgot to take note of the practical realities of physical existence. Elsewhere than in India it happens that philosophical tendencies and practical common-sense have very little to do with one another.

When the one is emphasised, the other has a tendency to take wings and fly away. That is the reason why in every Civilisation except the Indian, Science and Religion have opposed one another, the one standing for definiteness of details, the other for breadth of view—the two always requiring different adjustments of focus of vision. But in India, the philosophies have been scientific ; and when speculations have taken thinkers into the clouds, they have still made it possible for them to plant their feet firmly on the solid rocks of physical well-being. The communalism which might be expected to develop out of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the One Existence without a second, was checked and balanced by a highly specialised system of social organisation which took each individual at his own level, and dealt with him in ways that secured for him the greatest possible good and enabled him at the same time to help the community's growth. Socialism and communalism are dangerous systems in communities where the individual does not come into the community with the object of sharing what he has with his fellows, but becomes merely a partner in claiming rights. A social contract for gaining something by giving up something else, for acquiring as much as possible with the least possible outlay of force, money or intelligence, is bound to steer society straight for the rocks of destruction. Communalism can develop only where the members of the community

take their stand on duties and not on their rights. This is where India has differed from the West. Whereas the West has developed its strength by practising the virtue of self-reliance, asserting the rights of man, and struggling for existence or predominance, India has proceeded by the division of the people into classes and castes and the assignment of the duties of each to each. Thus has arisen an individualism of *Dharma* which is one of the main characteristics of Indian Civilisation: every man working in his own sphere, but each for all, has been the rule of India's culture. Tennyson's prayer: "Oh! when shall all men's good be each man's rule?" was answered in India three thousand years ago. And, however much individuals may have fallen short of their ideal, the requirements have been stated so clearly and forcibly that public opinion has always tried to pull up the generality to a high course of conduct. In order to free the people to pursue the paths of art, emotion and mind, the physical order of things was organised in as perfect a manner as possible, while at the same time, the struggle for existence amongst the members was minimised by setting up ideals of simplicity and desirelessness. Thus we have magnificence and plenty sitting but lightly and gracefully on a people with but simple wants. The political, economic and social organisations reached a degree of perfection that even in our modern day command admiration.

The philosophical truths of India are not, of course, the exclusive product of the Indian soil ; they are universal Truths and have affected the lives of thousands everywhere. But the distinction of India lies in the fact that, whereas elsewhere these truths have been the special field of great thinkers and leaders only, in India they have been made the food for thought of the man in the street by a profuse diffusion of them with commentaries thereon, through aphorisms, *Vedas*, *Shastras*, epics, *Puranas* and the like, studied in schools and Universities, discussed in academies and delivered as lectures or stories from street corners and places of congregation. The whole nation was thus suffused by religious feeling and saturated with philosophical thought. And, as religion did not eschew any side of physical activity, everybody could be religious without feeling that he was left out in the cold. This is another of the distinguishing marks of Indian Civilisation. Brahman or Sudra, prince or peasant, merchant, soldier or servant, rich or poor, each was practically affected by Hinduism, and in his own sphere performed his *Dharma* for the preservation of culture. Unlike Christianity or Islam, whose Mysticism and Esotericism gradually disappeared, Hinduism still offers solutions to life's problems at the stage at which it finds the people. The condition of religion in Europe and Western Asia necessarily led to the antagonism of Religion and Science, the bringing down of the standards of

Religion to suit the needs of the ignorant and the sinner, and the compelling of the thoughtful and free-minded to search for ultimate Truths outside the pale of their Church. But in Hinduism it was possible for everybody to have a place within the Church, as *Sanatana Dharma* (the ancient Hindu law of duty) prescribed rules of conduct for all, individually and severally; and hence it lives to-day very nearly as influential as it was at any time.

Further, intolerance has not been one of the vices of the Indian Civilisation. The six systems of Hindu philosophy and the three interpretations of the *Vedanta*—the *Advaita*, the *Visishtādvaita* and the *Dvaita*—differ in their solutions of life as widely as it is possible for any systems to differ; yet no follower of either system thought of acting towards the followers of the others with the mutual ferocity of Protestants, Catholics, Puritans and Independents within the fold of Christianity, or the Shiah and Sunnis within the Islamic faith. A particular course of righteous conduct was insisted on by public opinion; but what a person conceived of the philosophy of life was nobody's business but his own.

However much the philosophies of India differ from one another, their huge followings, leading a tolerant life, justify a few observations here on their importance. Though differing in the means of attaining the goal of spiritual realisation, they all

start on common foundations. Each of them accepts the truth of the authority and greatness of the *Vedas*, the existence of the Self, and the doctrines of *Karma*, *Dharma* and Reincarnation. Each of them has got as its objective the finding of the path leading out of *Dukha* (misery) which is caused in the manifested world by the *Avidya* (ignorance) of the multitude. Each of them taught the doctrine—“Thou art *Thai*”—the nameless Supreme Being, a description of Whom is possible only by repeating “It is not this ; it is not this”—the full understanding of Whom is impossible, in the description of Whom words fail, in the trying to cognise Whom, the mind falls back stupefied.

It is because of the grandeur of these conceptions of the superphysical that Orientalists changed their original idea of Indian philosophic literature as being the babblings of an infant humanity, and began to think of the *Vedanta* as teaching doctrines in the enunciation of which the mind must have reached “the acme of human speculation” (Max Muller). Such metaphysical thoughts must necessarily have baffled the average mind. But the few who occupied a high place in the esteem of their fellow-men—those really who set the standards of life for ordinary people from their forest seats or secluded Universities—saturated the thought-world with their views, and so it became possible for the man in the street to be influenced by these

philosophies. The differing details would require too much intellectual power to be appreciated by the mass of the people, but they readily understood the common factors of all the philosophies, and through that understanding, were preserved from intolerance of the views of others.

A third cause of toleration in India is found in the fact that after Civilisation had reached that stage where recorded history begins, personalities ceased to count as very powerful factors. With the exception of the Buddha, who wielded an enormous influence over the length and breadth of the country from the fifth century B.C., nobody could sway whole masses of people to revolt against approved systems. Even the Buddha did not preach a revolution. The Truths which he emphasised were already expressed in the philosophy of the *Sankhya*. Buddhism can be said in a sense to be an offshoot of Hinduism. When the personality of the Buddha was no longer there to keep the people in their new sphere, Hinduism drew back into its fold those who had been attracted by or been born into the Buddhist faith. Buddhism disappeared from the land of its birth, yet without apostacy. Particular teachers might start schools of their own, like Sankara, Ramanuja, Chaitanya, and so on, but their influence did not take away the people from the beaten track of *Sanatana Dharma*. They were more interpreters of various phases of the general faith than creators of religious revolutions. The philosophies,

great as they are, do not confer personal fame on their originators. Bādarāyana, Jaimini, Kapila, Patanjali, Gotama, Kanada—these are mere names only known among the deepest students, while the names of the philosophies, *Vedānta*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, are household terms.

One of the paradoxes of Indian life has been the understanding of the position of personalities. No person, however great, had any chance of getting a hearing from the people if he had proclivities towards heresy or revolution. At the same time, very few people dreamt of studying by their own unaided efforts the great *Vedas* and philosophies of life. The teacher was an imperative need for everybody, however clever and intellectual. His position was often higher than that of the king; nay—the teacher was revered as God Himself. From him alone the *Vedas* are to be learnt—not by one's own efforts. Those who were in a position to understand knew the significance of the warning given in an *Upanishad* :

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

क्षुरस्यधारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥

“Arise! Awake! Seek the Great Teachers and attend. For the great ones tell us that the path is difficult to tread, sharp even as the edge of a razor.” The teacher of *Parāvidya* (occultism) shared with his brother, the teacher of *Aparāvidya* (the lesser mysteries and sciences) his due meed of honour and

reverence. Thus we have the spectacle of people laying themselves unreservedly at the feet of their teachers and effacing themselves in their humility, yet thoroughly basing their mode of conduct not on an emotional impulse but on the time-worn principles laid down in the *Shastras* (scriptures). Thus individualism was never lost sight of.

It will be easily surmised that this kind of philosophy can be studied and practised only by those who have the convenience to follow their mental growth in comfort and peace. For this purpose, the social organisation created a class which was given the privilege of being able to call upon the community for the bare necessities of life, so that they might be freed for the purpose of bearing the onerous duties of research into the inexhaustible riches of the mental and spiritual worlds. To prevent this class from becoming either parasitical or luxurious, either of which conditions prevents the possibilities of higher work, a strict ideal was kept before them of simplicity, purity, abstinence and sacrifice. "Woe to the Brahman who is discontented with his physical conditions however bad they be." To this class belonged the duties of deep study and of teaching the community. They became the custodians of the Greater and Lesser Mysteries. They elaborated the rituals and ceremonies and led a life of sacrifice beginning with the fivefold sacrifice laid down in the *Dharma Shastras*. The sacrifice to the *Rishis* (sages) lay in

acquiring and disseminating seeds of learning and culture. The sacrifice to the *Devas* (angelic beings) consisted in performing the necessary rituals which were one of the integral parts of the Hindu religion. The sacrifice to the Ancestors lay in certain other ceremonies and making arrangements for carrying on the family geneology. The sacrifice to created beings was fulfilled by offering food to animals and birds. The sacrifice to fellow-beings lay in hospitality to guests.

These were intended not merely for individual salvation, but for the community at large. It was recognised that on this class of people depended the creation of the necessary environment in which it was possible for the material wealth, health, strength and vigour of the community to grow. Indian literature teems with examples of kings having in their cabinets great teachers who by the prowess of their mental and philosophic culture upheld the life and force of the State at large.

It is not difficult to imagine where lay the possibilities of degeneration in such a scheme. As elsewhere, the privileged class, liberated from a struggle for existence, must in course of time become a parasitical class, as the goods they delivered, not being physical, could not be checked by physical means. It is fatally easy for the mind to lie fallow ; and where powerful minds are the custodians of deep thoughts, it is easy for these to lose the sense

of responsibility to the present and to trade on the past. The monopoly of custody of rituals will also lead the priests into the creation of a condition of sacerdotalism by unscrupulous means, trading on the ignorance of the laity. Spiritual and mental power could be used with advantage against kings for purposes of material prosperity.

That this decadence did not set in sooner than it did in the Civilisation of India redounds greatly to the credit of the framers of the social organisation who provided suitable checks and balances against privilege turning into parasitism. The simplicity imposed on the Brahman class made it necessary for individuals of an ambitious nature to turn their attention to the acquisition of earthly distinction other than the material acquisition of property. The contested discussions going on in the Universities, supplemented by the great synods, in which kings presided, and great philosophers and thinkers competed with one another in metaphysical arguments, compelled Brahmans who had intellectual ambitions to be busy with their minds. Great learning was a necessary counterpart of their poverty and simplicity. The caste could decay only when the environment necessitated the substitution of material and physical ambition for spiritual growth. The decadence of the Universities, foreign incursions, growing materialism by contact with other Civilisations which presented only the materialistic aspects to India, increasing sloth on

the part of the privileged class, added to a growing spirit of democracy among the people, could alone lead to the confusion of the caste system. The hypotheses of the social organisers having been disregarded in the changing environments of the modern day, there was nothing to prevent the privileged class from turning into an exploiting class. Religious reformers rose from time to time to pull up the priests to the required level of the old days of Hindu autonomy. With foreign domination and the consequent disappearance of indigenous royal patronage and *parishads* (schools) and the increasing economic strain caused by a top-heavy administration, there was bound to be decay.

The political department in the social organisation of India was entrusted to a second class—the Kshatriya. Here, as elsewhere, checks and balances were provided to make the Government as equitable as possible. The political philosophy of the Hindus had attained a very high standard even before the Christian era. Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, Kamandaka's *Nitisara*, *Sukraniti*, the *Dharma Shastras* of Baudayana, Apastamba and Gotama, annotated and supplemented the laws of governance laid down by the original lawgiver, Manu. The genius of the social organisers had balanced the monarchic, aristocratic and democratic schemes of administration and provided a system of governance in which the good elements of the three were preserved. A very high ideal was set for the kings to follow. A monarch's greatness and

title to fame depended not on the innovations he introduced, but on his following as closely as possible the lines laid down in the *Dharma Shastras*. As has already been pointed out, in this sphere also, the machinery had been perfected before recorded history begins, and the system could run itself. Here, also, we are not allowed a sight of the people struggling to perfect their administrative system. Once the governance was made automatic, there was no more need for the monarch to be a genius. If he was great, he could add greatly to the comforts and conveniences of the people; if he was not, he could not bring the community to ruin, as he was expected by the people at large to stick to the customary equity of administration. Instances are on record to show that bad kings were dispensed with by the judgment of the people. Realising as they did the true value of the monarch's personality, the people did not consider the king to be absolutely indispensable, as there is evidence pointing to the existence of republics in ancient India, which can be seen in any textbook of Indian history.

Generally, however, monarchy was the rule. The King was the symbol of the unity of the nation. His justice (*Danda*) kept the community together; his power checked evil and prevented disintegration; his prowess made for the magnificence of the State, the wealth of the merchant classes, the stability of priestly existence. It was his obligation to hold the

balance even and see to the discharge of the duty of each class by each. He represented to the ordinary mind God in His Universe—protecting the weak and the downtrodden, punishing the wicked, rewarding the meritorious.

The daily programme of the King was laid down with much detail in the *Dharma Shastras*. His main functions, however, were the administration of justice, observing the condition of the people and helping them in all possible ways by a paternal vigilant watchfulness, engaging in wars for the purpose of enlarging the boundaries of the State, gaining honour and laying the foundations for enriching the royal exchequer. In the internal administration, the monarch had to associate himself with a cabinet of ministers carefully chosen from among those whose qualifications for ministership were enumerated in great detail in works on polity.

Indian history records the existence of Empire after Empire succeeding one another with such alarming rapidity, that it seems that there cannot have been any consolidation whatsoever of an Emperor's dominions, because, hardly does an Empire emerge out of the chaos and confusion of warring States, before it is disrupted, and a new combination of States takes place under the suzerainty of another Emperor. It would appear that not a single year passed without sanguinary wars being waged all over India. To the modern mind, the

conclusion would appear natural that such a kind of existence must have resulted in vast devastations, terrible sufferings for the people, destruction of their property, cattle and crops, and that a huge waste of life and wealth must have gone on unchecked without any counterbalancing benefit. As a matter of fact, the conditions were quite otherwise. The code of international law was very strict and commanded a much closer and readier allegiance than is possible for the Christian States to yield in the modern day. It must have been so, owing to the deeply religious nature of the people. Not only Indian chroniclers, but foreign travellers and visitors to the country from very early times record the absence of any suffering on the part of the non-belligerent people during these great wars. The actual fighting was confined to the military class, and it was laid down by the lawgivers that in the same way that one's own duty, unfulfilled, was reprehensible and punishable by the common law of the land, so also the duty of one discharged by another was full of danger. The kings, in their wars, desired the extension of useful lands for the increase of their glory and their revenue: they required an addition of contented and peaceful subject population. They did not want lands laid waste or a suffering discontented people to rule over. So, in the wars, each belligerent took care that his army did not damage the persons or the property of the peaceful

folk living on the disputed territory. Conquered land was to be ruled by the victor according to ancient custom, and therefore in the changing political boundaries of the States and personalities of the Emperors, the people did not suffer.

✓ One of the reasons why there was an absence of decadence of the country's prosperity in spite of the waxing and waning of the power of Emperors lay in the fact that the administration depended not on individuals but on a system. However big the Empire, however magnificent the kingly court, however learned the *parishads* of the State, the people depended for their resources, wealth and learning, not on the king and his council and nobles, even though these might add to their comforts and conveniences, but in the last resort, on their own village administration. The stability of the Indian Civilisation lay in the local governments of the Hindus. Kings authorised the villagers to carry on the administration in the old time-honoured way, reserving to themselves only the final appellate authority in the matter of justice. Legislation was restricted. The king appointed officers to represent him in every village, every group of ten villages, a hundred villages, a thousand villages, and so on, to superintend the local governments, watch the interests of the people, and report the progress of events to the king from time to time, in addition to their looking after the collection of the king's revenue. The actual

administration was in the hands of the local people. Here is seen in practice the dual authority of a central Government and a local government checking one another—the king's officer pulling up the local administrators to a sense of their responsibility, if their interest flagged, and the local administration doing away with the evils that necessarily follow upon centralised, military or inexperienced rule.

The local governments were worked partly by village assemblies and partly in conjunction with the trade and merchant guilds which looked after the economic organisation of the locality. Apart from their economic function the administration of justice was their most important business. The various executive committees of each village were elected by the village community in general from amongst those in the village who combined in themselves plain and pure living and high thinking. For carrying on the administrative work of the village, committees were elected in the same way for various purposes. We have on record the existence of such committees for public works, water-supply, agriculture, gardens etc., apart from those for the administration of justice. Professor Radha Kumud Mukherjee has written in great detail about the functions, methods of election and routine of the committees, as also the qualifications of the people who voted in the elections and the disqualifications which would deprive individuals of the use of their franchise. It is more and more

recognised now that democracy was known and practised to the widest extent in India, until it was destroyed by being superseded by a central autocracy under British rule.

It was this perfected form of local administration that defied the shifting of political boundaries and made it possible for the Emperors to engage in extensive conquests for magnificence, ostentation and honour, by freeing them from the otherwise fettering dull routine work of home administration. No Indian history which treats only of the wars and conquests of the kings and emperors, without reference to the condition of the people of India, can be in any sense a history of the growth of the people. That is why Indian political history, with its categorical mention of the building up of Empires and their destruction, is so far from being the real history of the growth of the Indian people.

The business of the production and distribution of wealth was confided, in the social organisation of India, to a third class of people, who were called the pillars of society—the Vaishyas. The possibilities of struggles for existence were minimised by the reiteration of the ideals of simplicity and renunciation, while, at the same time, those who were so minded were not discouraged from turning their attention solely to the accumulation of wealth, without abating an iota of religious feeling. In fact, the accumulation of wealth was one of the four recognised

objects of human endeavour, taking its stand on a footing of equality with religion, love and salvation. The wording of the blessings invoked upon people, especially on ceremonial and matrimonial occasions, usually shows that an increase of material prosperity for all people was prayed for. It was realised that, however much a life of voluntary and conscious simplicity would make the ground fertile for the cultivation of culture and philosophy amongst the upper classes, in the case of most people who were mainly under the influence of physical environments, a life of renunciation and simplicity would react on their mental nature and make them simpletons of a low order. However much voluntary poverty in a cultured class might lead to the acquisition of strength of character, so far as the generality of people were concerned it would lead to the commission of sinful and immoral deeds. The *Hitopadesa* repeats Becky Sharp's philosophy that it is easy to be virtuous on £5,000 a year by asking to what sins a hungry person will not descend. In the same way as it was believed that a plentiful supply of the good things of the earth was possible as a result of the propitiating of the *Devas*—Elementals and Shining Ones—by the sacrificial rituals of the Brahmans, so was it equally felt that in order to develop the spiritual, cultural and mental powers of the comparatively weaker sections of the community, an endeavour to acquire wealth was necessary in order to minimise the

discomforts of life—so that the people might have the convenience to devote themselves to study and the propagation of culture.

Evidence in plenty has been accumulated to prove that “the droppings from the Indian soil fed distant nations”. The economic organisation of ancient India must therefore have justified the scheme of the originators of the social polity. The modern science of Economics is based on large-scale production, international needs, geographical division of labour and credit, and the satisfaction of an ever-increasing number of complicated wants. The ideals and conditions of life in ancient India made impossible any such science; but, in the adjustment of groups of people in the pursuit of wealth as a means to the community's happiness, India produced an economic organisation infinitely finer than any science that the purely economic mind has yet conceived, or, is, by its material limitations, capable of conceiving. The simplicity of life of large numbers of people contributed to the release of large quantities of the agents of production for the purpose of satisfying the needs of the community as a whole, for example, by making available, for the convenience of the people, tanks, a good water-supply, temples, beautiful buildings, town-planning, roads and the like. If it is realised to how great an extent the agents of production are wasted to-day for the simple gratification of individual non-productive wants, as

in restaurants, casinos, balls, dinner parties and meaningless changing fashions, one can understand how much possibility there must have been in a simple community dedicated to communal life for the development of productive organisations.

In the economic sphere, as in the political, there was a great deal of decentralisation. In the art of governance, local committees looked to local needs and freed the imperial Government for the development of the magnificence, the beauty, the architecture, the arts and the culture of the community for the benefit of the whole. So also in the economic region, the village was mostly self-sufficing. Rural genius of course contributed to the enrichment and the magnificence of king's courts, places of public meeting and worship, and so on. The shifting of centres of Empires by frequent changes in the fortunes of war contributed to the building of magnificent courts and temples and centres of art over the length and breadth of the land. The necessities of kingly courts would frequently transfer large masses of expert workmen from villages to chief cities and thus increase the production of goods at new centres. But the basis of the whole economic stability lay in the village economic organisation.

The far-reaching consequences of these are evidenced by the magnificent trade of which India was the centre for thousands of years. Radha

Kumud Mukherjee has shown the extent of trade and the development of shipping and maritime enterprise of the Hindus. India had a huge volume of trade in the export of her wonderful finished products to such distant countries as Rome, Greece and Egypt, Syria and Babylonia, China and Java. The ultimate success of this trade rested on the village crafts

The organisation of production in the village through *Sr̥nīs* and *Pūgas* (small village associations) offers a striking similarity to the mediæval craft-guilds of Europe. The rules of apprenticeship, the rights of master-craftsmen, the democracy of guild administration, monopoly of production, control of price, the hall-mark of quality of goods—these might almost appear to have been copied in their entirety from the West, were it not for the fact that the guilds in India had existed for millennia before the Christian era.

✓The collection of the king's taxes in kind and the maintenance of public granaries obviated the two great evils in the economic life of the India of to-day—famines and economic drain. The recurrence of famines so characteristic of modern India did not result in those ancient days in such catastrophes as those of modern times, because of the quickness and efficiency with which famine relief was organised through the decentralised village administration, from the king's granaries in the village. There was not

also the huge drain of wealth from the country, which, first in the shape of indiscriminate plunder by the various invaders beginning with Alexander, and later, through organised commercial exploitation, has helped to impoverish the country. At any rate, it required twenty-two centuries of foreign exploitation by invaders, merchants and rulers to bring India down from her ancient height of material prosperity to her present state of pauperism. The maintenance of ostentatious shows in kingly courts, the huge rewards for works of art and literature, the magnanimous gifts for religious and secular objects, the unstinted charity practised by monarchs on a lavish scale, the patronage of artists and bards, kept money and wealth in frequent and rapid circulation.

The Vaishya class—the makers of wealth—were in very truth the pillars of the State, because it was with the money that they created that the kings could patronise learning and literature, maintain temples and works of public utility for the commonweal, and increase the splendour of their country in various ways. The production of goods was the Vaishya's duty; the distributor was the king. The social organisation maintained always two props to society in each sphere of its activity—the one physical, the other superphysical. The *Sannyāsi* (religious devotee) and the *Sūdra* (servant) were the servants of humanity, the former with full-fledged knowledge in the mental and spiritual worlds, the

latter with physical muscle shouldering the drudgery of physical work with but comparatively little responsibility. Together they formed the foundation of the Indian Civilisation, the one by facilitating the work of the upper classes and the other by supplying the ideals of poverty, simplicity and service. The *Vānaprastha* (the forest-dweller) and the *Vaishya* (merchant and trader) were the pillars of society, the one class producing spiritual wealth, the other material wealth, for the well-being of the community at large. The *Grihastha* (householder) and the *Kshattriya* (warrior) were the protectors of the Civilisation, the one supporting the family and the other protecting the nation in all sorts of paternal ways. The *Brahmachary* (student) and the *Brahman* (priest), liberated from the responsibilities of looking to the physical well-being of themselves or their relatives and being supported by the State or the public, learnt and taught the sacred and secular sciences for the advancement of the community's benefit.

Such a beautiful picture we see when recorded history opens. Possibilities of decay are always present when Civilisation comes to the stage where the conditions of life become static. The danger from this in the Indian Civilisation was particularly great, because, to all outer appearances, the static condition had been reached at the earliest date of our exact knowledge of the people, through the

physical well-being having reached a high stage of efficiency in the political, economic and social spheres. As a matter of fact, however, the static condition had not been reached, because, in the unseen world of culture, the people could still mould themselves according to their real nature, the archetype of which had been set up by the great leaders of thought. Society had first created as perfect physical conditions as possible, so that people might have more time for perfecting their cultural vehicles. That such was the case in India for a number of centuries has been amply proved from historical records. But there is always danger in too much physical well-being resulting in sloth and indolence in the regions of superphysical existence, especially when the desire for knowledge could be satisfied by the already accumulated vast treasures of information in the regions of Mathematics, Astronomy, Science, Medicine, Engineering and the like, not to speak of the metaphysical knowledge contained in the *Upanishads* and *Shastras*. There must have come a time when society longed ardently for rest from constant dynamic changes—a condition easily achieved where physical plenty was in existence. Added to this, foreign masters, foreign environments, changes in outer life to suit the changed conditions under Muhammadan and Christian rulers, accelerated the decay of the high order of life existing for millennia. The antidote to the poison of static existence, namely, the

uncontested influence of new teachers and interpreters of the Law from amongst the people, was not available when both physical wealth and cultural wealth were no longer in the control of members of the same community. When material wealth lies within the patronage of foreign rulers, and cultural wealth is only available at the hands of the people's natural leaders, there arises a struggle as to who shall receive the allegiance of the populace. The majority of the people in any country being necessarily bourgeois, the ruler's gift soon appears the more real thing. Thus arises the divorce between principle and practice in India—the *Upanishadic* culture and the low standard of life standing out in glaring contrast to one another. The doctrine of Karma, instead of elevating the people, came to be interpreted as a fatalistic doctrine; the philosophy of the people, instead of making them mentally active, helped to emphasise the evils of fatalism; their real humility based on their non-egotistic philosophy has turned to cringing and to the decay of self-respect; their spiritual individuality has degenerated into an absence of discipline. Sacerdotalism and parasitism could not keep away for long. This debasement of the practice of life in India from its millennial ideal arises from the presence in the country of two sets of leaders, the one having the control of the physical well-being of the people, but not understanding their inner nature, the other having the cultural wealth but having no

encouragement or initiative for its continuance and development.

But the nation is slowly waking up to the glories of the past and the sad picture its life presents to-day. Having been enriched by the strength of individualism, self-reliance, and the assertion of rights learnt from the West, rejuvenated India is looking eagerly forward to the time when, emancipated from foreign domination, she can receive the gift of physical and superphysical well-being at the hands of her own leaders, and thus proclaim to all the world the Beauty which the Divine Ruler Immortal has decided should be expressed through the Culture of the Mother of the Aryan Race.

INDEX

- ADVAITA, 80, 81, 82, 84, 87
Alexander, 46
Aristocracy, 18, 31
Aryan culture, 27, 28
Aryan race, 39, 109
Athens(ian) 42, 46
Autocracy, 100
- BALANCE of Power, 57, 58
Barbarians, 47
Biology(ical law), 9, 12, 15, 67
Bolshevism, 74
Brahmachary, 106
Brahman(ism), 86, 91, 93, 101, 106
Britain, 44
Brotherhood, 10, 44
Buddha(ism) 80, 89
- CAPITALISM, 55, 60, 61, 67
Carthage, 46
Caste, 18, 19, 31, 93
Celtic sub-race, 39, 40
Charlemagne, 47, 48
Christianity, 41, 42, 44, 45, 54, 55
Christian nations, 39, 40
Church, The, 51, 52, 62
City State, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 65
Commerce, 45
Comte, 9

Co-operation, 73
 Crusades, The, 53

DEFINITIONS, 1, 2, 3
 Democracy, 16, 18, 31, 42, 45, 69, 100
 Despotism, 57
Devas, 92, 101
Dharma (Sanatana), 79, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89
Dvaita, 87

ECONOMICS, 102
 Education, 74
 Equality, 17, 44, 45
 Evolution, 6, 10, 67
 Extremists, 24

FAMINE in India, 104
 Fatalism, 108
 Fatherhood of God, 44, 84
 Fear, 13
 Federation, 73
 Feudalism, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51
 Foreign rule, 108, 109
 Frederick Barbarosa, 48
 Freedom, 15, 19

GAUL, 44
 Germany, 44
 God's Plan, 3, 4, 6
 Great individuals, 23
 Greece, Greek civilisation, 39, 41, 42, 46
 Greek Arts, 43
Grihastha, 106
 Guilds, 104

HEBREWS, 45
 Henry IV, 48

Hinduism, 86, 89

Hunger, 13

IDEALISTS (ism), 26, 27, 71, 72, 77

India, 73

Indian civilisation, 17

Indian history, 78, 79, 95

Individual (ism), 32, 41, 44, 45, 52, 53, 55, 59, 60, 62,
63, 109

Industrial Revolution, 61, 65, 66

Institutions, 43

Intellect, 10

Intelligence behind civilisation, 37

Inventions, 64

Israelitish civilisation, 39

Italy, 46

KARMA, 88, 108

King, The, 95, 96

Kshatriya, 94, 106

LABOUR (Party), 44, 64, 73

Latin language, 52

Law-breakers, 16

Law (European), 17

Lenin, 9

Liberals (ism), 24, 69, 72

Liberty, 42, 45, 47

Local government, 98, 99, 100, 103

MACCHIAVELLI, 32

Machinery, 64

Manu (Laws of), 94

Marx (Karl), 9, 14, 74

Materialism, 9, 14

Might, 9, 16, 68

Minorities, 16

Missionaries, 20, 75
 Moderates, 24, 25
 Monarchy, 18, 31
 Monasteries, 52

NATIONALITY (ism), 16, 19, 21, 27, 40, 54, 56
 Nature, 10, 11, 12, 18, 31, 70
 New World (discovery), 41
 Non-co-operation, 27

OCCULTISM, 90
 Oligarchy, 31, 66

PARASITES (ism), 13, 30, 93, 108
 Parliament, 59, 61
 Persia, 46
 Priests, 30
 Prophets, 30
 Psychology, 10

RADICALS, 24
 Rationalism, 5, 46, 69, 70
 Reincarnation, 88
 Religion, 10, 11, 57, 62, 65, 67, 68, 84, 86
 Renaissance, The, 54, 55
 Representative institutions, 59
 Revolution, 31
 Rights, 9, 16
 Rishis, 91
 Roman civilisation, 39, 41, 43, 44, 46, 48
 Roman Empire, 39, 41, 44, 46, 47
 Roman Law, 44

SACERDOTALISM, 93, 108
 Salvation Army, 75
 Sannyasi, 105
 Saviours, 19

- Science, 84, 86
 Secret diplomacy, 57
 Self-determination, 16, 73
Shastras, 86, 91, 94, 95, 96
 Slavery, 43, 45
 Socialism, 9, 32
 Social Service, 66, 74
 Sociology, 7
 Spain, 44
 Sparta, 46
 Spirituality, 75
 Standards of civilisation, 35, 36
 State, The, 32, 42, 43
 Struggle for existence, 67
 Sudras, 86, 105
- TAXES** in kind, 104
 Teutonic sub-race, 39, 40
 Theocracy, 39, 52, 53
 Toleration, 87, 88, 89
 Trade of India, 102, 103, 104
 Tyranny, 31
- UNEMPLOYMENT**, 64
 Universities, 93
Upanishads, 81, 82, 92
- Vaishya caste, 100, 105, 106
Vanaprastha, 106
Vedanta, 87, 88, 90
- WAR**, The Great, 72
 Western civilisation, 20, 37, etc.
 White Man's Burden, 16, 20, 74
- Yoga*, 90

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